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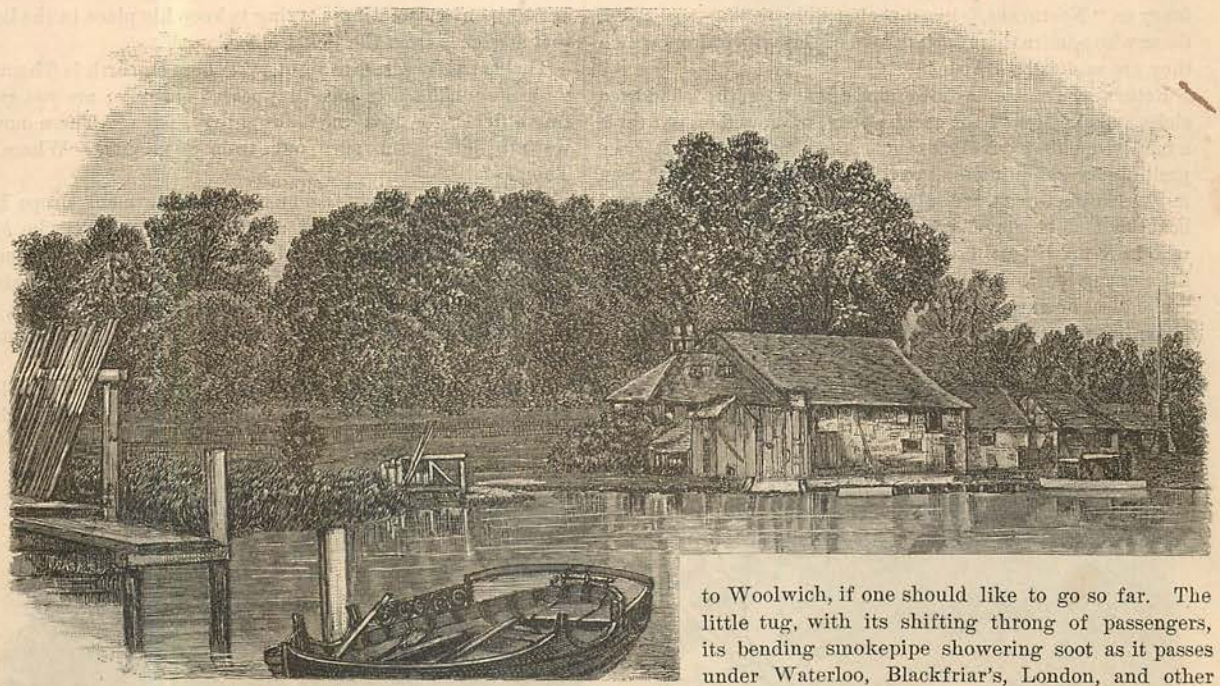
ON THE THAMES.

"What is so rare as a day in June?"



THE SWAN INN, PANGBOURNE.

BUT few of the many foreign or American visitors who crowd London during the season have the slightest conception of the luxury of repose and rest that is within their reach, when, worn out and exhausted by the toil and drag of gallery and museum, they long for some "boundless contiguity of shade." Into such knowledge we were initiated by the kind courtesy of an English friend; and while we would fain preserve the seclusion and silence that guard the classic sanctity of the Upper Thames from the penetrating tramp and inane gabble of the professional tourist, we would gladly place upon the appreciative lover of nature a debt of gratitude for the revelation of a new shrine.

It is quite "the thing," as suggested by the faithful guide book, to take a sail from Westminster to Kew, passing Lambeth, Vauxhall, Battersea, and the well-known stretch from Putney to Mortlake; or down the river from the same point to Woolwich, if one should like to go so far. The little tug, with its shifting throng of passengers, its bending smokepipe showering soot as it passes under Waterloo, Blackfriar's, London, and other bridges, is a matter of no small interest. But this noisy trip is the meed of the eager traveler who "sees everything and looks at nothing." The Thames, overhung with mist and smoke and grime, with the weary din of toil echoing everywhere, is not the rhyme-sung river of English bards, as the towers and domes of London represent not the land of Birket Foster, Seguin, and Leslie.

Far up in the heart of England, among the Cotswold hills, beneath a moss-covered boulder, a little stream gushes forth and starts a long journey. Companions, timid, yet eager and as venturous as itself, join it from time to time. Swelling and growing in importance, it winds its way beside the academic groves of Oxford, through field and meadow, lock and weir, rustling the long grass where the sedge bird makes her nest; gliding beneath the terraced bastion of royal Windsor—rippling by the gray walls of old Eton; widening and deepening past Runnymede, Hampton, and Richmond, until a swift and ofttimes soil-laden

current, it sweeps from the darkening shadow of the Temple and the Tower, to the purifying waters of the North Sea. How many stories it might tell of Roman, Dane, or Saxon who, somewhere on its banks in that long course of two hundred and twenty miles, in bloody strife or quiet conference, had in turn given a stroke for the making of England!

So faithful has been the pen and pencil of English poets and artists to their country, even though it were theirs by adoption only, that but little is left for a later hand, save to chronicle some new experience among nooks and corners already well known.

Hollar and Hogarth, though foreigners, both found patronage and favor from their well-executed views of Thames scenery, and both rest on its banks; the one at St. Margaret's, Westminster, the other in Chiswick churchyard.

There is, too, a touching sadness in the story of the great Turner's devotion to his beloved river, a devotion that ended only with his life. It was his delight, we are told, to watch from the windows of his little room at Chelsea the beauty of the dawn, the shifting lights of the day, the glory of the sunset, all reflected in turn from the smooth surface of the water. In later days, even the mysteries of gloom and shadow that Mr. Whistler evolves from the land of art and fancy as "Nocturnes," incomprehensible as they seem, find those who admire them for the love of the subject from which they are said to be drawn.

Returning from a day's wandering among the shadowed aisles and cloisters of the great abbey, we found on our table a modest-looking envelope, the contents of which, after the preliminary compliments, were as follows: "Having been in England before, you doubtless know already the principal beauties and points of interest. But I doubt if Americans, who have not been schooled on the subject, are aware of a little excursion to a certain part of the upper Thames which is the ideal of rural beauty. To-day is *un peu brumeux*, but let us hope that it will be fine on Wednesday, when we will, if you consent, meet at a quarter before ten A.M. at the Great Western Station, Paddington, where we take train for Taplow, the station next beyond Windsor. We walk down a pleasant road about eight minutes—to Maidenhead; take boat there, row up the river to Cookham, where we lunch; *same route home in the afternoon.* Let me hear from you. P. S.—Fail not at your peril. I being of the Star Chamber! and there still exist the Tower and the block!!!" This last clause, if nothing else, helped us to an immediate decision. An acceptance was at once dispatched, and Wednesday morning found us faithful to the appointment.

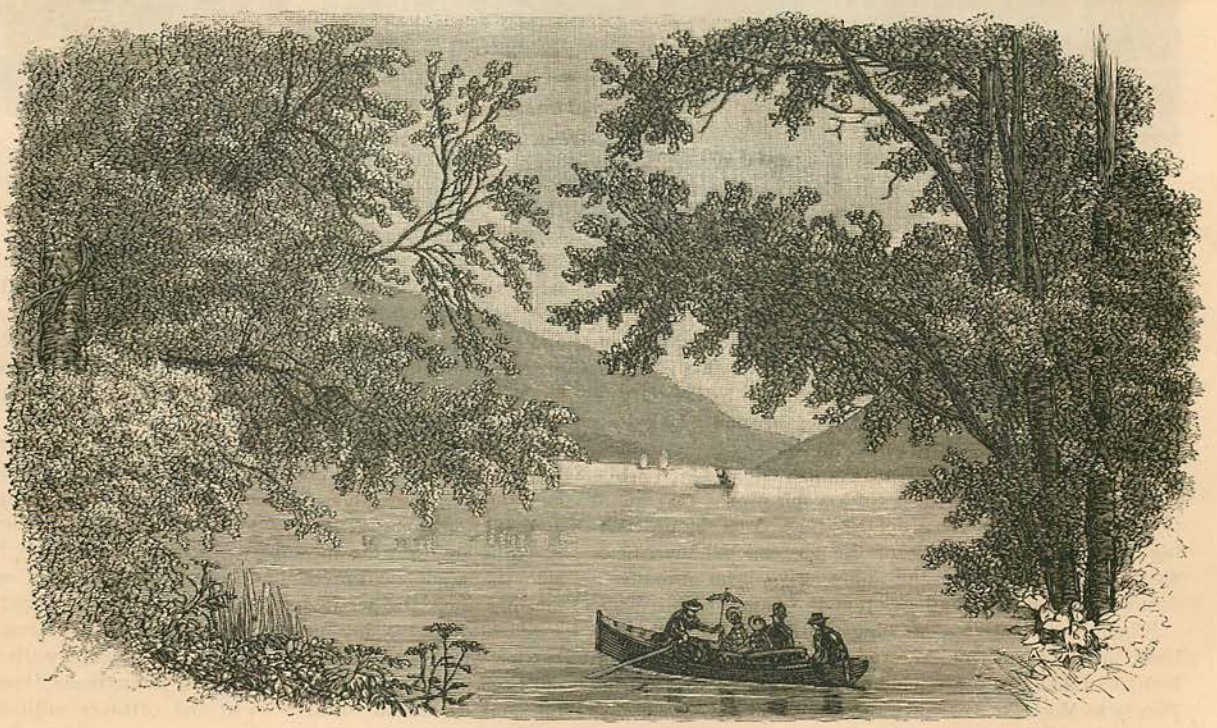
Our friend, besides being a man of much culture and a popular lecturer, had on one occasion, by his devotion to an Englishman's *vade mecum*, won for himself the humorous title of "Guv'ner with the h'umbrella." As we followed the crowd down the long platform that led into the station, sure enough, there was the well-known black-silk friend raised aloft. This characteristic signal led us to the "Guv'ner" at once.

The train for Ascot was to leave just before the one we expected to take. It chanced to be "cup-day" at the races, so the ten minutes in the waiting-room were far from tedious. Here a pretty well-preserved sire had in charge the young ladies of his family—daughters two—whose pink silk frills peeped persistently from beneath the smothering gray alpaca dusters, with which they had prudently covered their dainty costumes. They evidently have something on their minds, and torment papa, who is trying to keep his place in the line that stretches from the ticket office.

Their anxiety comes to light. "Where on earth is Thomas with the lunch? He has disappeared entirely; are you getting a ticket for him too? Do hurry, papa! There now, we are left! I'm sure our train is moving. Where *is* Thomas?"

Poor papa, in his confusion and bewilderment, drops his change, is entirely ignorant as to how many tickets he *has* bought, and at last is hurried helplessly along by the young ladies to the compartment already secured by the missing Thomas, who, in all the glory of top boots and buttons, is patiently guarding the precious hamper on the platform within.

Young gentlemen—shade of Beau Brummell, be present!—arrayed in the latest—faultless in harmony, style, and color



NEAR MAIDENHEAD.

from gloves to gaiters, crowd through next. More ladies, more Thomases, more papas. At last they are all in place, and with puff, shriek, and smoke, are borne away. Then we of the higher culture, pilgrims to a holier shrine, find the way to our quiet compartment, and roll out from London town.

The luxurious freedom of a private compartment was soon appreciated. With childish eagerness we changed from window to window, on either side, attracted by some new feature. It was an ideal day. Clouds enough flecked the blue sky to relieve its intensity a soft sunshine permeated and pervaded all things, creating an atmosphere of peace and rest.

We sped through smooth stretches of field and meadow, where the green waves of growing grain chased each other until lost to sight; where red and white clover and the ox-eyed daisies, guarded by blossoming hedgerows, nodded and whispered through the long hours of the day; where

WHITCHURCH LOCK.

browsing cattle and spirited thoroughbreds held solemn conclave—all seen for a moment, but deeply impressed. An English landscape, with its exquisite finish, however limited in extent, has a peculiar charm for the American eye accustomed to the wilder, freer scope of nature in the western world. But the expressions of delight that cannot always be repressed are ever met with some gracious answer. "Ah, but in America, everything is so large, so grand." The courteous flattery has its weight.

"Slough! All out for Slough!"

It is our first stop, and the watchful guard peers in to see that no careless traveler shall go beyond his destination; then the key turns in the door, and we are off again.

One of our party remarked, as we left the station, that when Mr. Sala lectured in New York, he mentioned that at the time of the last illness of the Prince Consort, when the end was hourly expected, the lecturer, full of anxious expectation, rose before the dawn and looked from the window of his home at Slough, and in the early light of the morn he discerned the flag on the distant towers of Windsor Castle, where the royal sufferer lay, floating at half mast. The story was finished; the noble heart of Prince Albert had ceased to beat.

As we sped along the picture was recalled, for there to the south was the stately pile, the flag to-day proudly floating over the stony battlements of the Round Tower, as signal that the Queen was in residence.

Hardly had the castle faded from view, when the call of "Taplow!" told us our destination was reached.

We left the train, and the question at once arose, should we walk or drive to Maidenhead, some two or three hundred yards distant? The run from London had taken about fifty minutes, so there was no need of rest, and the bit of roadway before us, with crimson poppies, daisies and buttercups on one side, and a wooded park on the other, was very inviting.

We decided in favor of the walk, and eight or ten minutes later were turning into the well-kept garden in front of "Skindle's," a famous old inn, well patronized by the boating men from all parts of England. Only a step farther was the river itself, spanned by the substantial bridge of the Great Western Railway.

A small armada of boats, punts, shells, and other craft was moored at Bond's boat-house in the foreground. On the opposite side of the river a pretentious villa, ivy covered, stood at the head of a sloping lawn. Masses of crimson geraniums glowed in the sunlight, and rustic seats and benches were placed conveniently about.

It was nearing high noon. The row up the river, though only a matter of three miles, would take at least an hour. We did not wish to anticipate what might be in store for us at Cookham, yet something done to sustain nature, under the extra drain upon sentiment and enthusiasm, might be prudent; so we went in at Skindle's for a bit of cheese and biscuit, to which, for the stronger members of the party, was added a tankard of beer.

We found no difficulty in securing from Mr. Bond a boat suited to our party. An honest-looking English lad—one of the young Bonds, perhaps—was to manage the oars, while our friend sitting in the center would do the steering by

means of a couple of ropes attached to the rudder. A long crimson velvet cushion added a touch of luxury and a deal of comfort to our little craft. Soon all was in readiness, we turned our faces up stream, and at last were to know in truth,

"—THE CHRISTALL THAMES WONT TO SLIDE,
IN SILVER CHANNELL, DOWNE ALONG THE LEE;"

the inspiration of Milton and Spenser.

A few strokes of the oars send us flying ahead, and before we realize what our young boatman—whose name we find is Joe—means to do, we are drawn up beside a short flight of stone steps on the left bank. A moment later and Joe has a long line out, and following the beaten path on the edge of the river is vigorously towing us toward the lock, some distance ahead.

Joe brings us faithfully and quickly to Boulter's Lock, and while he winds up his line and joins us in the boat again, the lock-keeper, seeing us, comes out of his picturesque cottage, and begins to turn the crank by which the great wooden gates in front of us are opened. Joe dips his oar, and we seem lost to all the world, the closed gates behind and the damp, moss-covered stone walls on either side. When the upper gates open, it is a curious sensation to feel one's self borne upward by the rising waters until the level of the stream above is reached. The descent of the Thames is so great that these locks are quite numerous from Oxford as far down as Teddington, and with the usual accompaniment of the keeper's cottage and garden, the rushing weir, and weather-beaten mill, they add much to the natural beauty and simplicity of the river. Artists complain of the substitution of solid wrought-iron structures where the old locks have gone to decay; but it is very natural that the Thames Conservancy, charged with the care of the river, should think more of the study of practical economy than artistic effect.

The lock safely passed, on our right is a beautiful islet of willows, beyond which we see and hear the waters of the dangerous weir rushing and tumbling—a wicked enough maelstrom if by any chance a luckless boat should be drawn into its whirling current.

The long regular stroke from Joe's sturdy arm has brought us in sight of Cliveden on the right—a noble country seat, belonging to the Duke of Westminster. Our sense of courtesy did not permit the thought of landing, though one or two rustic boat-houses were temptingly convenient. We had already visited Eaton Hall, a baronial pile near Chester, owned by this nobleman, and the finished beauty of its well-tended gardens and parterres was in striking contrast with the luxurious richness of the park and wood here. The original mansion at Cliveden, burned in 1795, was said to have had its foundation by George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham. We could get only occasional glimpses of the towers through the bowery trees, but, looking back over the course we had come, taking in the beauty of island and shore, we were willing to add our testimony to the record, that this little stretch was truly the gem of the Thames. Henley and Marlowe, and the reaches of the river beyond Cookham are better known to the enthusiastic crowds whom the regattas attract; but for a quiet day of rest and satisfaction the row from Maidenhead to Cookham fills every desire.

Now, on the left, is a mysterious island, hedged closely about with lilac bushes. Bending low, we catch glimpses of a garden, bright, blossoming flowers and growing plants. Soon a villa, whose light stone chimneys tower above the trees, comes in sight. A broad piazza overhung with roses, India jars blue and yellow standing about, rustic baskets filled with *begonia* and trailing tradescantia, hanging between the pillars, completes the study. In the foreground, a flight of steps leads from the garden to the water. At the foot of these, a gentleman, some five or six and thirty, in a negligé suit of flannel, hands a lady, young and fresh, into a little boat. She seats herself near one end, arranges her frills and flounces, and raises a pink parasol; he seizes the oars with an accustomed hand, and they dash across our bow, their little shell speeding down the river like a flying bird.

We are wild with curiosity.

"Joe! You must know, what place is this;—who are these people?"

"This is Formosa," said Joe very dryly; "h'it's a h'island. H'an old lady with 'er daughters lived 'ere last season. I dun-no who's let it this summer. H'its a purty place though."

Indeed it is, and well named Formosa—Beautiful! Surely, it was from subject such as this, seen from Cliveden wood, that Calderon drew his picture "Sighing his Soul into his Lady's Face."

Cookham Lock, just beyond Formosa, is said to be the most beautifully situated of any on the river. The fall here is about three and a half feet. The lock is built of wood. Reeds, flags and rushes, dashed with brilliant color by purple and yellow weeds, form a bordering on the weather-stained edges. The view ahead is shut off by overhanging willows, but passing these there is a smooth stretch to Cookham, which we see in the distance on the left bank.

The swans that are hovering about the landing-place descry us; gathering themselves into a white winged convoy, they come with stately dignity to welcome us. A few moments more and we have reached the wooden pier, where Joe makes our boat fast alongside many others.

We direct our steps at once to the little inn on the bank; as we are to have but an hour there will be no time for explorations. The landlord greets us on the piazza, here are the roses too, and with gentle apology ushers us in.

"Luncheon? Certainly; our dining-room is occupied, unfortunately, by a large party from Marlowe, just now, but would you come into this little parlor? We can lay the table in a moment here. And what would you like? Shall we bring a bit of the cold lamb, or perhaps the lady would like some meat-pie? We have some nice fresh strawberries too, to-day!"

The questions were soon answered. Cold lamb, meat-pie, peas, salad, strawberries, etc., etc., the menu extended itself to the good host's perfect satisfaction, and he disappeared like mother Eve, "on hospitable thoughts intent."

The windows of our little parlor overlooked a well-kept lawn that sloped to the river's edge. Our friends, the swans, skimming back and forth, along the garden, seemed to invite us to come out and be sociable, so taking some bread, which had already been placed on the quickly arranged table, we stepped through the low casement, and crossing the lawn seated ourselves on one of the rustic benches that stood under the shade of a great tree in one corner.

The swans are quite a feature on this part of the Thames, and are said to be much disliked by the fishermen, who think they eat the spawn. They are owned by two companies, the Dyers and the Vintners, to whom the privilege of owning swans was granted, as a mark of royal favor, years ago. Each corporation has its own mark, one or two nicks in the bill, and all swans unmarked by a certain age belong to the Crown. The operation of Upping or Marking, takes place in July or August, and is usually made a gala day, people coming out from London to watch the process. It is done by men in boats, and is quite painful. The poor swans make great resistance, and are said to be quite depressed for days afterward. It is estimated that in all there are five or six hundred on the river. We had a fine opportunity, in this half hour spent in their company, to study the selfish imperious-

OLD MILL, MAPLEDURHAM.

ness of the cock-bird. No sooner did poor Madam possess herself of a tempting bit of bread than her lord and master, by a series of nips and pinches with his hard bill, compelled her to drop it and take herself away, for the moment, at least, while he enjoyed a double share. Sounds of merriment from the party in the dining-room remind us that the supreme moment of the day must be near for us too. We are not mistaken; the landlord is beckoning to us from the window. As we enter, he assists each to their place at the table with an air of no small triumph. The spread before us is certainly attractive. The fresh cloth, the fragrant bouquet of garden-flowers in the center, the sparkling salad, the luscious berries, formed a combination to be appreciated, and brought keen sympathy for those well-known lines of Shenstone, that could, with equal truth, have been written here instead of at Henley.

"Whoe'er has traveled life's dull round,
Where'er his stages may have been,
May sigh to think he still has found
His warmest welcome at an inn."

There was, certainly, nothing lacking in the reception at Cookham.

Time speeds. The luncheon is over. The shadows on Cliveden wood are growing deeper. From the window we see Joe untying the boat, and shaking up the cushions. The actions are suggestive. Reluctantly we gather together our things and make ready to depart. We had entertained a faint hope that time would, at the least, be found to wander up the street a little, and visit the church, with its old brasses and quaint inscriptions. Above all, we hoped to have seen the marble bust of the lamented artist Frederick Walker, R. A., who did so much to make this portion of the river familiar. It cannot be so; the sacrificial moment comes. Joe dips his oar for the homeward journey. Cookham soon stands in retrospect. The graceful swans follow in our wake, and we glide on—and on, until, in dreaming fancy, we seem to hear the song of Lohengrin, as with wistful backward gaze he waves a long farewell. We sweep around the curve of the willows and Cookham is lost to sight.

Going with the stream required but little labor, and in the quiet drifting it was pleasant to take in again the scene of the morning. My companions, in the bliss of an afternoon cigar, talked of everything; of the Pyrenees, of Spain, of a new translation of Don Quixote. We listen for a while, and then, with full liberty of musing, begin to dream of "green fields farther off." Cliveden and Formosa are passed while we picture to ourselves the many windings and turnings of old "Father Thames," through sheltered nooks and grassy meadows beyond the sequestered spot on his banks to which we had penetrated. Oxford is nearly sixty miles beyond Cookham, and between the two points we know are famous stretches. Wooded heights crowned with handsome country seats, ivied churches, where under old brasses rest knights and ladies of "lowde Renowne." Between Henley, nine miles above Cookham, and Wallingford, the river is made most picturesque by more than a half-dozen locks. The old mill at Mapledurham is as choice a bit for the pencil as an artist could desire, and beyond the lock at Whitchurch, rises Pangbourne, that tempts the oarsman irresistibly to try the hospitality of its old inn. The trial matches of the Oxford University crews are annually rowed just below Wallingford, about twenty miles from Oxford. It was our good fortune, a week later, to stand on Folly Bridge, at Oxford, and witness the "procession of boats," as it is called, on the grand triumphal day when the victor crew stand in their boat, at the head of the river beneath the shadow of the University Barge, and receive, in turn, the salute of their less fortunate rivals. Both banks of the river—here a small stream, indeed—are lined with spectators. Every point that commands a view is filled. Christchurch Meadow is gay with citizens and visitors in holiday attire. Invited and honored guests crowd the University Barge, from which floats in proud disdain the colors of the winning crew. A band of music wakens the "under-grads" to more than their usual enthusiasm, and their shouts are loud and long as the Exeter, or Baliol, or Magdalene boat, in which they may be interested, emerges from beneath the bridge. The salute is made by the crew standing, with elevated oars, and is a curious spectacle when seen for the first time. It was rather too vigorously given by one crew, and, whether

purposely or not, ended in a capsize of the tiny shell, a bath for the oarsmen, and a general splashing of the spectators near.

We are digressing. Joe does not approve of abstraction. He cannot distinguish it from melancholy. With kind intent he recalls us to consciousness by some remark of personal bearing. A conversation rather jerky on Joe's part follows, and we find that Joe too has seen something of the world.

He lived in France for two years; was groom at the *château* of a baron. "Did he like it?" we ask. "If he could 'a learnt to talk like the others he w'ud 'a liked hit well 'nough; but he ben't no scholar, so he could no mor'n ask for sume'n to eat, when he cum away;" and we retraced the morning's course.

We parted with Joe where we had met him, at the boat-house—he expressing a desire to go to America, and we hoping we should find him just here again some fine summer's day in the future.

The train was on time at Taplow, and an hour later brought us again to Paddington Station. The drive homeward led us between Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park. The stately carriages with blazoned crest kept up the giddy whirl. On Rotten Row, the devotees of fashion, members of parliament, and people about town met in blind equality. The setting sun mirrored itself in the smooth waters of the Serpentine, the last rays gilded the statue of Achilles, and lent a deeper tint to the blush of the rhododendrons.

Months of winter and storm and sleet have passed since that day, but when memories of old England, resting beyond the great water come to us, the glitter and the glare, the fashion and the folly, quickly give place, and we see instead, a quiet river, an old inn, and the rooks wheeling and flying over Maidenhead Bridge. EMMA M. TYNG.

The New Year.

LIKE a young maiden, comes the year,
Bright with youth's first glory;
Where's the golden pen to write
Her life's yet hopeful story?
Gladness waits on all her steps,
Crowned her brow with flowers;
Mirth and music, sisters gay,
Wing the pleasant hours.

Ah! young year, thou'lt yet grow old,
Thy step will lose its fleetness;
The coronal which decks thy brow
Will miss its bloom and sweetness;
And shadows dark will fill the sky,
And dreams, so fondly cherished,
Will go to build the funeral pyre
Of hopes that early perished.

Yet blessings on thee, thou New Year!
We will not cloud thy promise
By shadows of the loves and hopes
Which in the past went from us;
But count each year a precious gem
Unto our life's crown given,—
A golden chain which lengthens out
Until it reaches heaven.

J. E. B.

THE SHORES OF NOTHING.*

BY LIZZIE W. CHAMPNEY.

Author of "THREE VASSAR GIRLS," etc., etc.

(*Continued from page* 79.)

CHAPTER VII.

UNDER SEAL OF CONFESSION.

THE most suggestive object in a cathedral is the confessional. To an imaginative mind, its rich dark carvings of cherub head, and ghostly crucifix and skull, bring to mind all the tragedy and romance, the pathos and passion of life. The heavy folded draperies have muffled the whispers of love, of guilt, and despair. The air is thick with human emotions that have sobbed themselves out here. What a key the confessor holds to the mysteries and secrets, the plots and schemes of the world about him. The villain walks in, masked with the face of innocence: the priest alone knows the secret of his crime. The fair lady crushes her sorrow in silver clasps: only the priest suspects that her gayety is assumed, that her heart is breaking. Remorse and hatred, revenge and terror, lurk in the shadowy corners. Bitterness, world-weariness, grief beyond consolation, infamy, disgrace, and eternal regret come to us here in the half imagined mocking laugh of the Evil One; while patience, pity, pardon and hope are heard in the softly whispered "Go and sin no more" of the Crucified.

To every novel the reader acts in a certain sense the part of father confessor. He knows, or should know, the hidden motives which determine the actions of the characters, and while he does not control them, he has the privilege, denied to any character in the romance, of reading the thoughts and designs of all.

To the reader the author now leads the plotting and deceptive Maria, that she may confess her crooked ways, and unmask the petty mystifications in which it was her delight to disguise herself and her doings.

It was of little service to Maria's friends that her capacity for scheming and duplicity were equally well known. Her very reputation for double-dealing made others incredulous; when she acted from the best of faith, her frankness was considered a deeper kind of dissimulation and her most careless acts the result of a preconceived scheme. Kitty had been on her guard with Maria from the first, and yet it would have been impossible for any one to have been more deeply deceived than Kitty at this present time. She believed that Maria and Hugh Erskine were betrothed. That this was not openly acknowledged, that there was no sly love-making, no banterings or allusions from the other members of the party, did not in the least militate against the idea. Very likely neither Mrs. Erskine nor Mr. Lindsay were aware of the existing state of affairs, and Kitty was certain