

NUNEHAM.

DOWN THE THAMES IN A BIRCH-BARK CANOE.

"IT'S an alligator's skin!"
"Look at the Chinese junk!"
"That's made o' leather!"

Such and countless other remarks of men, boys, bargees, and fishermen were constantly overheard as a veritable birch-bark canoe was being paddled through locks, alongside fields, meadows, and parks, past villages and farm-houses, on its way from Oxford to Hampton Court. But people would have gazed with still greater astonishment had they known that a year previous this singular craft had covered the trunk of some stately birch in the Acadian forest. It was an unusually good specimen of the canoe of the Micmac Indian, and on either side of the stern a representation of the moose and of the fish of Nova Scotia was neatly scraped on the bark. Its weight was not more than sixty pounds, so that, at the numerous locks, if one did not care to wait until those big troughs were filled and emptied, he could very easily "portage" his craft in a few minutes.

It was in the month of July, when college halls and quads were well-nigh deserted, and only a few disconsolate undergrads were to be seen about the streets or

at the river, that the writer prepared to start off on a canoe trip down the Thames. Such a trip is one of the best remedies possible for that state of morbid melancholy that often comes over one after the students have "gone down." Before setting out there was a little mending to be done, but this was very shortly accomplished by boiling some resin with soap to the consistency of molasses candy, and daubing the mixture over the likely leaking spots. A friend took his seat in the bow, and together we started off, paddling with a rapid stream at the rate of about four miles an hour. A most charming afternoon favored the start. Earth, air, and sky blended in such lovely harmony about the fields and meadows of Oxford that one could not but sigh to leave. Passing Iffley, with its quaint Norman church just visible through the trees, and Sandford, where boating men love to rest their limbs over a tankard of "training beer," or to saunter about the lock, mill, and weir, we soon began to catch a glimpse of the old town of Abingdon, that was to terminate the first day's journey. One is not likely to forget the charm with which natural and artificial beauty are

linked together in this stretch of water between Sandford and Abingdon. No words could convey any adequate idea of the loveliness that gathers about the trees, the meadows, the cultivated fields and slopes, the old homesteads, the thatched roofs. One rests his paddle, and as he drifts lazily along with the stream, the distant sound of the Oxford bells blends mysteriously with the music of the lark singing from his invisible height, the notes of the cuckoo, and the cawing of the rooks. On this side and on that man and nature have lent each other a helping hand to produce picturesqueness and beauty. There is really an irresistible desire to land and stroll about the little retreat of Radley, on the right, that lies nestled amid elms, beeches, limes, and oaks, or to rest beneath the wooded slopes of Nuneham, that most beautiful of English parks. Wander as you will about this princely home of the Harcourts—where the trees bathe their branches in the hurrying stream; where the cattle graze, or horses run and frolic; where the sheep pant beneath a shady elm, or swans “row their state with oary feet” about the rustic bridge that spans a shaded stream, or where orchids, bluebells, buttercups, and daisies sprinkle their hues over sloping lawns—there is a fascination about everything that is sure to leave lasting associations.

At Abingdon we put up at the “Crown and Thistle”—that favorite resting-place of the Oxford under-grad. In the evening my friend returned by rail to Oxford, and so left me to start off alone the following morning. The sky was overcast, and a slight ruffle on the water indicated a storm sooner or later in the day. Paddling past elms, beeches, and “water-wooding willows,” through luxuriant meadows, and alongside banks covered with the prettiest wild flowers, a couple of hours brought the church-crowned height of Clifton in view.

The stream now battled with the rising wind, and stirred up a sea in which it was almost impossible to make headway. At a bend of the river where the above village is situated, the canoe, spite of all efforts, was suddenly swept toward the bank. This was a happy incentive to rest awhile. I accordingly landed, and lounged about on the green lawn, listening to an old inhabitant, whose chief topic of conversation was the excel-

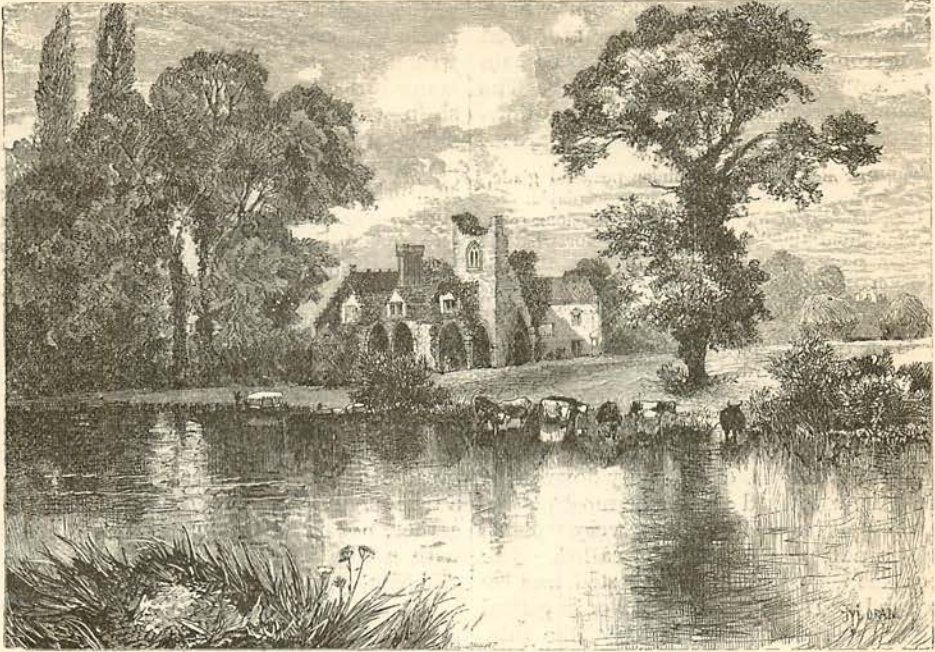
lence of the Clifton ale. On the opposite side,

“by the rushy-fringed bank,
Where grow the willow and the osier dank,”
swans glided gracefully to and fro, and a time-worn punt was discharging its freight of barge horses and bargees. The bargee is an interesting specimen of humanity. Day after day he stands loungingly at the ponderous rudder, scanning with a cynical air everything and everybody that comes in his path. His existence is an almost complete isolation from his fellow-men, against whom there seems to be an old-standing grudge. He is ever ready to chaff, and scarcely any passer-by escapes his vulgar sarcasm. He will sustain sallies of repartee until his voice is no longer audible; but it often happens that his spirit becomes subdued as the boys taunt him with, “Who ate puppy pies under Marlow Bridge?”*

The river now at times took a very winding course, and so the wind was alternately favorable and adverse. A sail, readily improvised out of an old umbrella, carried the canoe along with a fairy-like movement over many a long reach, but it finally succumbed to the natural fate under such circumstances.

As I approached that ancient town of Wallingford where Matilda the mother of Henry II. found refuge after her escape from Oxford Castle, and where the Fair Maid of Kent breathed her last, the bells and sun-dials were reminding one and all of the dinner hour. I stopped a short time for lunch, and then set out again with renewed energy. But the course continued to be exceedingly rough. Wind and wave had increased, and for a while there was every reason to despair of making any progress. My predicament aroused not only the alarm but even the ridicule of people from the banks. Some sportive youths followed for more than a mile along the meadows, and just then an idea suggested itself that proved as great fun for the boys as it was a relief to the canoeist. A long rope was brought from the neighboring village, and I soon found myself being towed along at a rapid rate by a dozen or more

* This expression had its origin in the story of the landlord of the inn at Medmenham, who, hearing that bargemen intended to plunder his larder, baked a pie of young puppies, which they took, and ate under Marlow Bridge, believing them to be rabbits.



MEDMENHAM ABBEY.

little chaps, who fairly ran themselves out in their excitement over the sport. They made a succession of spurts over a distance of two miles, and then were dismissed with thanks and a gift of a penny each, with which they seemed particularly pleased.

The locks formed an agreeable variety in the journey. The lock-keeper's house is charmingly picturesque and neat. Vines and flowers grow about his door, and a patch of ground adjoining marks off a garden where he spends most of his time and labor. The river here seems brought to a stand-still, for the ponderous gates of the lock oppose a lake-like surface of water. But one has only to listen for a moment, and the rushing noise, not far distant, tells him that the rapid-flowing stream has gone to feed a mill, or to struggle its way through the wooden rafters of the weir.

The country now gained in loveliness. Wooded slopes lay on one side, and here and there a church spire embosomed in trees. Presently the secluded little villages of Streatley and Goring—the one on the right, the other on the left, and joined by a picturesque wooden bridge—became visible. It seems as if their charming site had been too much for the wind to withstand, for here everything was quiet.

As I paddled under the overhanging trees, and followed the graceful windings of the stream, the effect was quite enchanting. It was rather late in the afternoon, and this fact, together with the peculiar beauty of the spot, led me to put up at the Swan, that comfortable old inn of Streatley. The chalk downs sprinkled with yews and junipers, the picturesque church of Goring nestled among the trees, the magnificent panorama to be obtained from the background of hills, certainly make this spot one of the sweetest gems of Thames scenery.

The next day was by no means pleasant; and, as a further inconvenience, the canoe refused to be made proof against leaking. Yet for all this one could not but enjoy the beauty of Pangborne and the surrounding country. Undulating plains, lofty hills interspersed with grand old trees that picturesquely surround here and there a village spire or farm-house, give a most captivating loveliness to the pastoral and cultivated lands around. As I skirted the shore, my eye now and then caught a glimpse of the purple and yellow loosestrife that decked the water's edge; water-lilies carpeted the surface of the quiet nooks, and water-rats played about their burrowed retreats in the bank.

One soon passes a rustic inn where, tradition says, King Charles the First went from his prison-house at Caversham to "amuse himself with bowls." The circumstance is alluded to in the following lines, written on an old sign-board:

"Stop, traveller, stop. In yonder peaceful glade,
His favorite game the royal martyr play'd.
Here, stripp'd of honors, children, freedom, rank,
Drank from the bowl, and bowl'd for what he
drank;
Sought in a cheerful glass his cares to drown,
And changed his guinea ere he lost his crown."

After a short paddle the canoe entered a delightful stretch of water that disclosed to view the lock and moss-roofed mill of Maple-durham lying amid a rich foliage of trees. The thickly wooded banks shut out the wind, and one drifts lazily down with the stream toward one of the most picturesque spots on the Thames—a very "painter's paradise," as it has been called. The lock-keeper was deeply interested, and remarked: "It's rayther haird woork gettin' along with sich a craft a day like this. You'll find it a wee bit better 'twixt this and Caversham." His prophecy, however, was anything but true, for the wind blew across an unusually open country, and more than two hours were spent in going a distance of two miles.

Toward evening the sky brightened, and as the sun shone through the parting clouds, the famous old bridge of Henley came in sight, and that splendid stretch of water where every summer the amateur regatta gathers a gay and enthusiastic meeting of aquatic votaries.

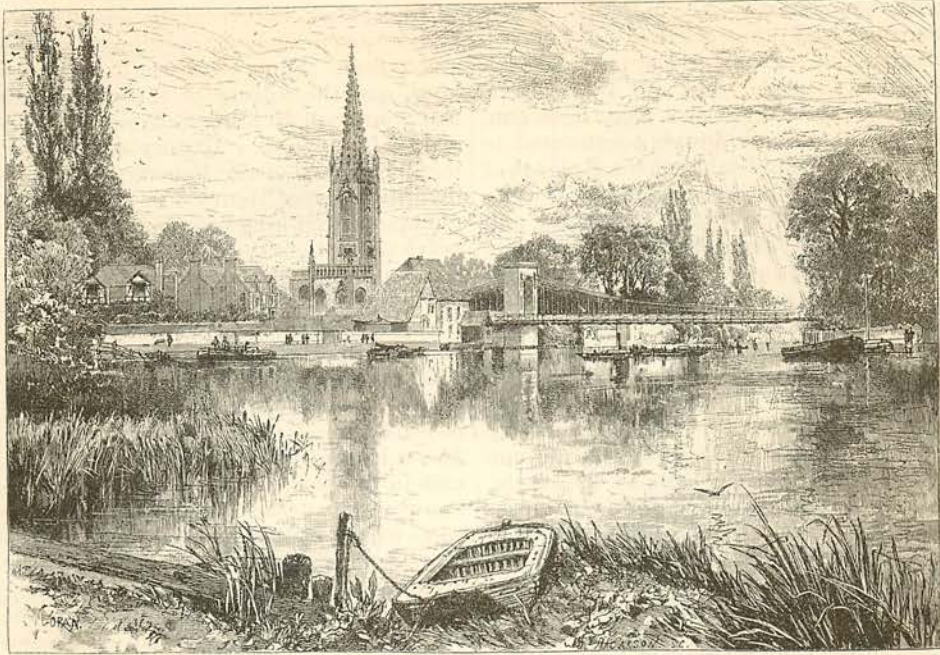
One leaves Henley, and passing islets of osier beds, arrives at a bend in the river that discloses the captivating surroundings of Medmenham. The ruined abbey lies close by the river, nestled among trees, and its ivy-grown walls are the favorite resort of boating parties from the adjacent villages. The inscription, "Fay ce que voudras," conspicuous above the door, recalls the licentiousness of a band of fashionables in the last century who made the cowl the cloak of the most infamous orgies.

Between this point and Marlow the river takes a winding course through a beautifully rich valley. Lounging in the bottom of the canoe, I drifted lazily with the stream past that memorable old spot, Bisham, where the "mortal parts" of Richard Neville, the "King-Maker," Edward Plantagenet, and others repose within the walls

of the ancient church, and alongside the banks where Shelley, sixty years ago, wrote his "Revolt of Islam." I was just being lulled by the canoe's motion into a sleep, when a noisy steam-launch brought me to my senses, and I looked up to find myself passing under the graceful suspension-bridge of Marlow. There, on the right, was the famous old inn, "The Crown," with which many an angler has happy associations. There the fisherman's punt—so characteristic a feature of life on the Thames—is always to be seen, secured by a pole at either end, and equipped with chairs, fishing-rods and lines, nets, a water-tank, a rake, bait consisting of gentles, worms, and a so-called ground-bait made up of clay and soaked bread-crumbs. In such a craft the angler, a true model of patience, sits for hours together, nor is he unfrequently rewarded with a fine catch of roach, chub, dace, gudgeon, pike, or barbel.

It was late in the evening when I drew up my canoe on the landing-place at Cookham. The rain that had been falling for the past half-hour had made things so uncomfortable that the hospitality of the old inn, "Bel and Dragon," seemed a genuine blessing. The good landlord gave me a change of clothes, and supplied every possible comfort. It would be difficult to find a place where one could spend a few weeks more happily than at Cookham, situated as it is in the most beautiful and richly cultivated of English landscapes, and possessing river attractions in which the Thames remains unsurpassed.

One was naturally loath to leave so lovely a spot, yet before ten o'clock the following morning the canoe was being paddled in the direction of Windsor, some twelve miles distant. This part of the river comprises the most delightful scenery in England, and as one approaches Cliefden, nature and art blend in loveliest harmony. The river winds gracefully under hills thickly shrouded in trees from all quarters of the globe, and a beautiful mansion, dating its first foundation from James's favorite, George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, smiles over pretty lawns and cultivated slopes upon the "silver-winding stream" below. It is doubtful whether in beauty and grandeur combined Cliefden can be surpassed, or even equalled, anywhere in England. A few hours' sunshine about these charming grounds of the Duke of Westminster is sufficient to atone



MARLOW.

for whole days of previous rainy weather. The woods echo with the singing of birds; the sedge-warbler from her nest on the swaying rushes seems to be serenading a circle of graceful swans; the river flowing smoothly by "makes all things double" in its glassy surface; the angler sits in his punt moored under the bank, and casts a sullen look at the pleasure-boats that occasionally break in upon his quiet.

The swans showed a special antipathy to the canoe. Poor creatures! No doubt I ventured too near the osier beds where they had their nests. They have certain territorial rights assigned them by different authorities, and they are ever on the alert to defend themselves against any intruder. Passers-by seem to take pleasure in exciting their irritable natures; but they have a kind friend in the fisherman, who watches over them, and receives a shilling for every cygnet that he successfully rears.

As one leaves the beautiful surroundings of Cliefden, and passes under the bridge of Maidenhead, the imposing turrets of Windsor Castle are distinctly visible, crowning the summit of a distant hill. But it is an unexpectedly long time before that regal castle is reached, so winding is the stream, and so many interesting

spots intervene. One stops to admire Taplow Bridge, with arches of extraordinary span, to meditate a moment under the shadow of Bray church, concerning that wonderful vicar, commemorated still in English song, or to learn something of a quaint mansion, Down Place, prettily situated on the right bank of the river. Here lived that famous bookseller Jacob Tonson, and here one Christopher Catt served up "mutton pies" to a table of thirty-nine men of high social and intellectual rank, who formed the well-known "Kit-Cat Club," and whose portraits, as painted by Sir Godfrey Kneller, were for a long time preserved in one of Tonson's rooms.

The canoe sped swiftly on, and in a very short time, while the curfew bell was ringing out the hour from Cæsar's Tower, I found myself beneath the massive pile of Windsor Castle on the right, and the charming buildings and play-ground of Eton College on the left. It would be out of place here to give a description of either of these very imposing structures. One can not help contrasting the present magnificence of the royal residence with that crude hunting lodge that sheltered William the Conqueror after his day's chase about the neighboring forests, or

with the fortress-like buildings where tournaments and other brilliant displays celebrated the festival of England's patron saint, St. George. The old Bell Tower, beneath which prisoners were once confined; the Round Tower, constructed to receive the round table of the Knights of the Order of the Garter; and St. George's Chapel, the burial-place of present and past royalty—these three structures present a particularly striking appearance from the river. Yet it would seem that one must lose most of the charm of this spot if he fails to stroll along the forest walks, the elm-shaded drives, and the farm lands of the great park, or to enjoy that finest of English views from the noble terrace that surrounds the walls, antique towers, and embattlements of the castle. Among the more striking points that meet the eye are the Gothic chapel and buildings of Eton, occupying a most beautiful site amid trees and "sweet meadows" on the opposite side of the river,

"Where grateful Science still adores
Her Henry's holy shade."

The grand old playing fields, sloping gracefully down to the river, and adorned with stately elms and pretty green lawns, are wonderfully captivating. It seems as if nature and art could not have produced a lovelier spot for the early boyhood of such men as Gray, Fox, Wellington, Hallam, and Gladstone.

I soon left this tempting spot, and followed the sinuous course of the stream, varied with lines of willows and water-lilies along its bank, and dotted here and there with picturesque islets. One of these—Magna Charta—lying nearly opposite the long level meadow of Runnymede, recalled many historical associations, for

"There was that Charter seal'd, wherein the crown
All marks of arbitrary power lays down."

I spent some time at the little cottage on the island, and examined with a certain degree of curiosity a stone table, on which an inscription declares that "On this island, in June, 1215, King John of England signed the Magna Charta."

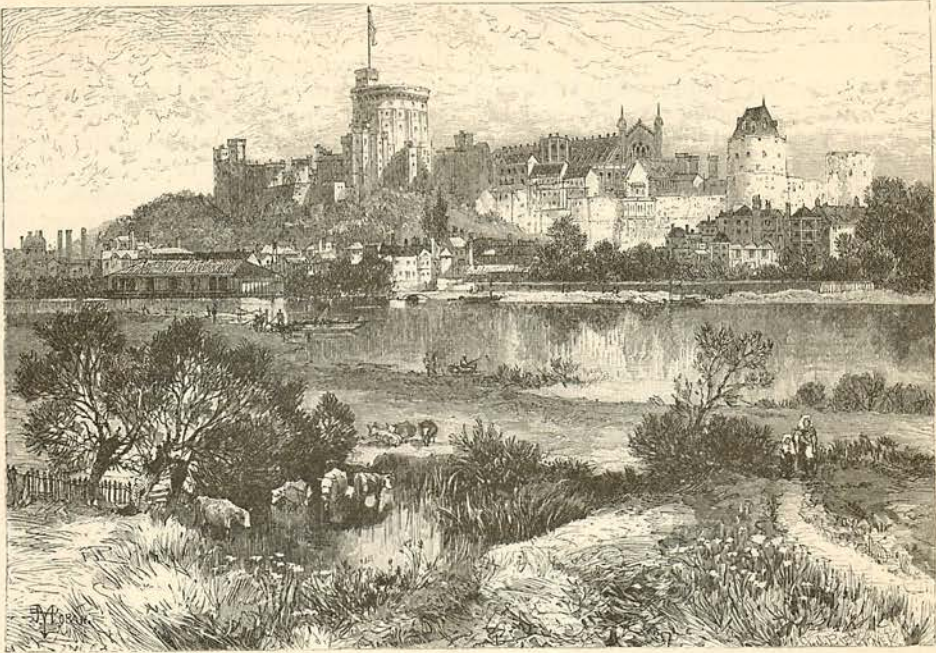
There was little to justify any further delay until I reached Chertsey, where the ancient abbey and that lovely point of view, St. Anne's Hill, were sufficient inducements to draw up the canoe. There are, indeed, very few remains of this once

famous abbey, that from the seventh century enjoyed such extraordinary wealth and power. Some stone walls, a graveyard, and the tolling of the old curfew bell alone remain to remind one of Erkenwald's foundation. History tells us that this monastery of the Benedictines was a favorite resort of Henry VI., and here the remains of that king found a resting-place previous to their interment at Windsor. A picturesque old place, the Porch House, marks the home of the poet Cowley. His pretty gardens looked out upon St. Anne's Hill, and were interspersed with shady trees, one of which, a famous old horse-chestnut, is pointed out as that beneath which the poet frequently sat. There is something singularly unfortunate in Cowley's career, and one longs to know more of the latent worth of that poet whom Milton ranked with Shakspeare and Spenser, and who enjoyed the highest esteem of Pope and Johnson. There is a beautiful touch of pathos in the lines of Pope over that solemn procession that followed the remains of Cowley down the Thames to Westminster Abbey.

"O early lost! What tears the river shed
When the sad pomp along his banks was led!"

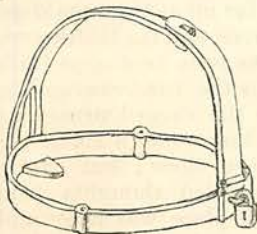
If one should walk a mile or so to the west of Chertsey, up the slope of St. Anne's Hill, he would reach that delightful spot where Charles James Fox lived and worked during the summer months. The gardens, woods, and lawns, and the view over the surrounding country, are all so charming that one can well understand how it was that Fox "loved the place with a passionate fondness." He no doubt revelled in the joys of country life. "Where is Fox now?" was asked of General Fitzpatrick at a critical stage in the French Revolution. "I dare say he is at home, sitting on a hay-cock reading novels, or watching the jays steal his cherries," was the reply.

Setting out from Chertsey, my canoe began to leak quite freely, and this was an excuse for landing at the meadows of Coway Stakes, where accounts say Cæsar encountered the "woad-stained" Britons under Cassivelaunus, who had sought to impede his progress by planting stakes on the bank and in the bed of the river. The scenery was not particularly interesting at this point, and so soon as the canoe's stern was well besmeared with soap—the only expedient at hand—I paddled on to



WINDSOR CASTLE.

ward that extremely picturesque bridge of Walton that Turner has made the subject of one of his most charming pictures.



THE SCOLD'S BRIDLE.

Here the old village church contains many interesting objects, one of which—the scold's bridle—does not speak very well for the Walton women of two centuries ago, for the inscription upon this curious contrivance tells of one who suffered great material loss “through the instrumentality of a gossiping, lying woman.”

“Chester presents Walton with a bridle,
To curb women's tongues that talk too idle.”

The unfortunate female with tongue tied fast was led about the streets, or exposed to public gaze in the market-places.

This portion of the Thames is a favorite resort of anglers, who can be seen day in and day out in their punts, moored close by the bridge, or under the shade of Oatlands Park—once the cherished home of the young Queen Elizabeth. One old fellow seemed to be having fine sport with

the bream that swim in such abundance in these waters, while his companion was sulkily complaining of his luck. The latter could not understand it, and would not be told that it was from any want of skill and experience that he failed to hook a fish.

As I paddled on, the river seemed to lose those charms that gave such peculiar loveliness to the scenery of the Upper Thames, though here and there some pretty villas gave a pleasing character to the banks. One of these, standing some distance back, with beautiful grounds sloping down to the river, and weeping-willows dipping their branches in the stream, is celebrated as having been for twenty-five years the country residence of Garrick after his retirement from the stage. Here the actor entertained at dinner parties and garden parties such men as Horace Walpole and the Duke of Grafton; and here every May-day village children loved to romp, and partake of the cakes, wine, and other good things that Garrick set apart for them. The first thing that attracted my attention, as the canoe neared this charming villa of Hampton, was an octagonal structure, apparently a summer-house, but originally built to receive Roubiliac's statue of Shakspeare, which was

being executed according to Garrick's order, and for which the vain actor sat as a model.

It was now but a short paddle to Hampton Court—my journey's end—and the sight of Wolsey's old palace was particularly welcome after three days of comparatively solitary life on the Thames. There was a picnic party in the neighborhood when I arrived. One of the London steamboats had landed hundreds of men, women, and children, who seemed everywhere—about the town, in the palace grounds, under the chestnuts of Bushy Park, and along the banks of the river. Some were losing themselves in the

“Maze”; some were admiring the wonderful “vine” and its huge clusters of Black Hamburgs; others were “doing” the palace, or whiling away the time on a rustic seat beneath some shady tree. That spot where kings resided from the time of Henry VIII. to that of George II. has now become a public thoroughfare. The rooms once frequented by royalty are now assigned to the widows of such men as have done their country noble service, or are thrown open to the throngs of sight-seers who go to look at the pictures, or to satisfy their curiosity in whatever tends to reveal the domestic life of the royal household.

A N N E.

CHAPTER III.

“By this means was the young head furnished with a considerable miscellany of things and shadows of things: History in authentic fragments lay mingled with fabulous chimeras, wherein also was reality.”—CARLYLE.

“Wassamequin, Nashoonon, and Massaconomet did voluntarily submit themselves to the English, and promise to be willing from time to time to be instructed in the knowledge of God. Being asked not to do any unnecessary work on the Sabbath day, they answered, ‘It is easy to them; they have not much to do on any day, and can well take rest on that day as any other.’ So then we, causing them to understand the articles, and all the ten commandments of God, and they freely assenting to all, they were solemnly received; and the Court gave each of them a coat of two yards of cloth, and their dinner; and to them and their men, every one of them, a cup of sack at their departure. So they took leave, and went away.”—*Massachusetts Colonial Records.*

DR. GASTON sat in his library, studying a chess problem. His clerical coat was old and spotted, his table was of rough wood, the floor uncarpeted; by right, Poverty should have made herself prominent there. But she did not. Perhaps she liked the old chaplain, who showed a fine, amply built person under her reign, with florid complexion, bright blue eyes, and a curly brown wig—very different in aspect from her usual lean and dismal retinue; perhaps, also, she stopped here herself to warm her cold heart now and then in the hot, bright, crowded little room, which was hers by right, although she did not claim it, enjoying it, however, as a miserly money-lender enjoys the fine house over which he holds a mortgage, rubbing his hands exultingly, as, clad in his thin old coat, he walks by. Certainly the plastering had dropped from the

walls here and there; there was no furniture save the tables and shelves made by the island carpenter, and one old leathern arm-chair, the parson's own, a miracle of comfort, age, and hanging leather tatters. But on the shelves and on the tables, on the floor and on the broad window-sills, were books; they reached the ceiling on the shelves; they wainscoted the walls to the height of several feet all around the room; small volumes were piled on the narrow mantel as far up as they could go without toppling over, and the tables were loaded also. Aisles were kept open leading to the door, to the windows, and to the hearth, where the ragged arm-chair stood, and where there was a small parade-ground of open floor; but everywhere else the printed thoughts held sway. The old fire-place was large and deep, and here burned night and day, throughout the winter, a fire which made the whole room bright; add to this the sunshine streaming through the broad, low, uncurtained windows, and you have the secret of the cheerfulness in the very face of a barren lack of everything we are accustomed to call comfort.

The Reverend James Gaston was an Englishman by birth. On coming to America he had accepted a chaplaincy in the army, with the intention of resigning it as soon as he had become sufficiently familiar with the ways of the Church in this country to feel at ease in a parish. But years had passed, and he was a chaplain still; for evidently the country parishes were not regulated according to his home ideas, the rector's authority—yes, even the