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WHERE COLONEL NEWCOME DIED.

BY HENRY J. VERNON.



STAIRWAY: CHARTER HOUSE.

HERE is no more pathetic passage in English fiction than the death of Colonel Newcome, in Thackeray's novel of "The Newcomes." It has but one rival, in the literature of its day: the death of the Chancery prisoner in "Pickwick." And the two descriptions, each so different, yet each so perfect in its way, illustrate very strikingly the opposite methods of the rival authors.

It is told of Lowell, that, being in London when the "Newcomes" was approaching its conclusion, he met Thackeray in the street. The novel had been appearing in serial numbers, and everybody was waiting eagerly for the end.

Thackeray looked so serious, even sorrowful: "as if bowed down," says Lowell, "by some personal grief," that the poet asked, kindly, what had happened. "Come into Evans's," answered Thackeray, "and I will tell you all about it; I have killed the Colonel." They went into the well-known eating-house—that famous resort of the wits of thirty years ago, but now, alas! no longer existing—and took seats at a table in a secluded corner. Then the novelist drew a manuscript from his pocket, and read that pathetic chapter, over which thousands and tens of thousands have since wept

sympathetically. "When he reached the end," says Lowell, "it was with a broken voice; and the tears were in his eyes." Those who know Lowell, himself one of the most tender-hearted of men, know that the tears must have been in his eyes also.

The "Gray-Friars" of the novel, where Colonel Newcome is supposed to have died, is the old Charter House, originally a Carthusian monastery; but for the last two hundred and seventy years, a charitable foundation for decayed gentlemen. Attached to it, however, and part of the foundation, is a grammar-school for boys, and here, as we are told in the story, the Colonel was educated. At the other end of the foundation, among these decayed gentlemen, he sought refuge, in his old age, when his fortunes were wrecked. The spectacle of the gray-haired veteran, laying aside his pride of birth and rank and accepting alms as a bedesman, is, as I have always thought, one of the most heroic, as well as affecting, in fiction. "Should I ever go to (29)

London," I used to say to myself, "one of the first things I shall do will be to hunt up the Charter House, and see where this tender-hearted yet brave old warrior died."

I suppose I am not alone in thus connecting the incidents of fiction with the places where they are supposed to have occurred. The blasted heath near Dover is but little to us, if not the one over which poor mad Lear staggered. At Holyrood Palace we do not look merely for Mary, Queen of Scots, but instinctively also for Flora MacIvor, and Rose Bradwardine, and for all the gallant throng that gathered, in the pages of "Waverley," around "Prince Charlie." I shall never forget driving all round Russell Square, in London, for the first time, in quest of the

house where Nora, the heroine of that charming novel, "Quits," is supposed to have lived with her uncle; and I am quite sure I found the very one; and just as sure, if the great hall-door had been open, that I should have seen Nora herself coming down the staircase, dressed in that famous black velvet gown, her only one, radiant with youth and beauty.

But when I found myself, at last, in the great British metropolis, it was some time before I met anyone who could tell me exactly where the Charter House was. Everybody had heard of it, but nobody had ever taken the trouble to look it up. I am not the first American, I suspect, who has been surprised at the strange indifference which Englishmen, even highly-cultivated ones, exhibit towards the historical localities of their island. This indifference, too, is frequently accompanied by an ignorance, which increases an American's astonishment. In the rush and struggle of this nineteenth century, all reverence for the past seems to have been lost. I know, personally, one eminent author, who goes, every summer, to climb the Alps, yet who has never cared to visit Dartmouth, whence the Armada sailed, or to see Stratford-on-Avon, where Shakespeare was born and died. Few, even

of the great dignitaries of the Church, are familiar with more than their own cathedral. Charles Kingsley once said to the writer of this article: "You Americans, at least some of you, have seen more of our great minsters than I have, or anyone I know." Dean Stanley spoke in the same



INNER GATEWAY: CHARTER HOUSE.

strain. "The man, in all England, who knows most about Westminster Abbey," he said, "is an American. I myself do not know, in some particulars, half so much as Colonel Chester." (Alas, both Stanley and Chester are now dead.) Buryleigh House, Hatfield House, Hardwicke Hall, Arundel Castle, Raglan Castle, Naworth, Leeds, Knole, Penshurst itself, are but names, and very vague ones, to nine out of ten, even of educated Englishmen. I had to pilot the way, for some London acquaintances, to Crosby Hall, where the crown was offered to Richard III, none of them knowing, at that time, (twenty years ago,) where the old mansion stood, though it was, and is, one of the finest existing specimens of the domestic architecture of the fifteenth century. In a like manner, I found, that, if I wished to see the Charter House, I must discover its whereabouts for myself.

So, one morning, I set forth. Now I know nothing more delightful than to ramble about the streets of London, on some such quest as this. You are aware, in a general sense, which way you ought to take. But you have to stop, every now and then, to make sure you are right; and all the time you are stumbling on famous localities, that had been no part of your errand; but

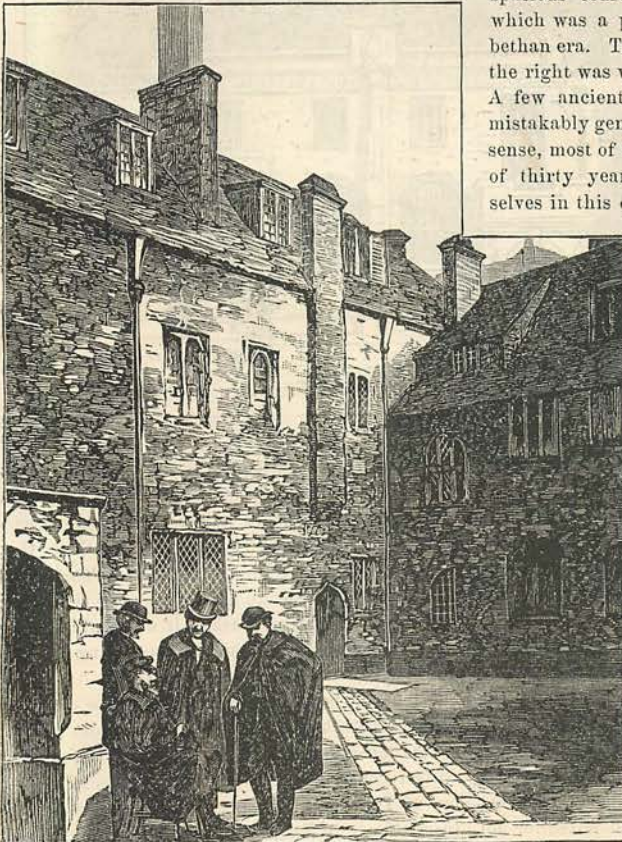
which start up and look you in the face, as it were, and compel you to make their acquaintance. More than once I had gone out, after a late breakfast, to visit some particular spot; but the dinner hour had overtaken me, in consequence of such interruptions, before my purpose had been achieved.

It was very near so on this occasion. First, I found myself in Oxford Street, made immortal by DeQuincey; "stony-hearted Oxford Street," as he calls it: and immediately the whole splendid panorama of his "Opium-Eater" passed before me: the night drive in the stage-coach, after Waterloo; the awful phantoms of his fevered dreams; the angels' ascending and descending, to his childish imagination, in the stream of sunlight from the stained-glass windows of the church. Then I came to Holborn. Here, on my left, was Gray's Inn, with its quaint, half-timbered, gable-fronted houses, that go back to the days of Henry the Eighth. Its cloistered seclusion was so great, its atmosphere so full of bygone centuries, that I half expected to see

not only Coke, in his black skull-cap, coming across the green, but Littleton, or Glanvil, or Fitzherbert himself. A sharp turn, after awhile, brought me into an open space, surrounded by other tumble-down buildings. This, I knew, must be Smithfield, where so many of the martyrs had suffered. For one moment, hearing a step behind me, I started, and turned, almost sure it was John Rogers, with his wife and nine little ones, coming to the stake. After this I lost myself, for nearly half an hour, in a labyrinth of narrow, tortuous lanes, until, suddenly, I came upon one of those old-fashioned squares, so common in London; and before me rose a stone gateway, gray with age, and bearing a pediment supported by two lions with scrolls, which I recognized from the descriptions I had read, to be the object of my pilgrimage.

Passing through this gateway, I found myself confronted by a range of Tudor buildings, two stories high, with a gable and a mullioned window in the centre. Beneath this window was another gateway. This led into a comparatively spacious court-yard, on the opposite side of which was a picturesque edifice of the Elizabethan era. This I knew must be the Hall. To the right was what I supposed to be the chapel. A few ancient gentlemen, and they were unmistakably gentlemen, even in the conventional sense, most of them wearing cloaks of a fashion of thirty years before, were sunning themselves in this quadrangle. They seemed to be quite at home, and bowed courteously in welcome, as I appeared; and I took it for granted, from this, that they were the bedesmen, such as Colonel Newcome had been.

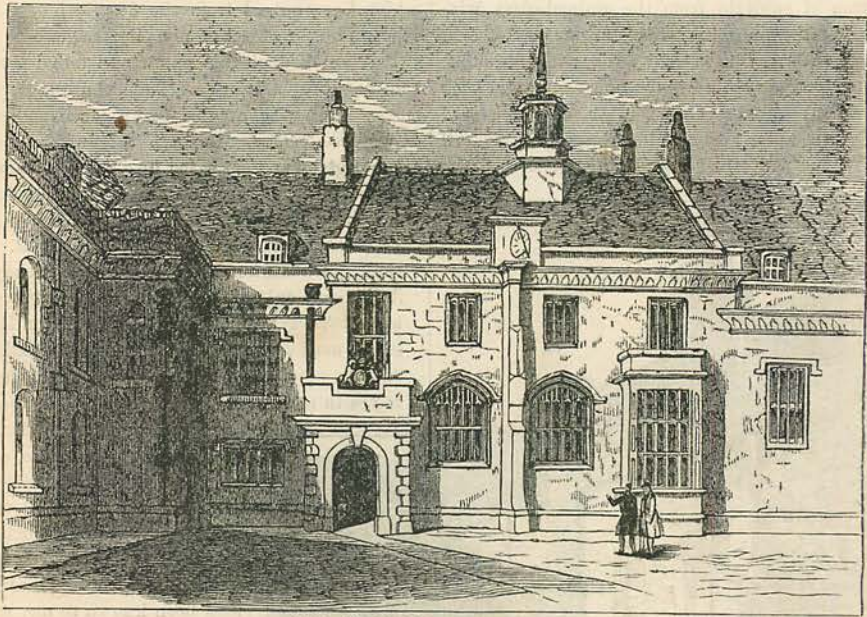
The history of the place had long been known to me, with all the stormy vicissitudes through which it had passed. How Sir Walter de Manning, in the fourteenth century, had founded here a Carthusian monastery, following the fashion of an age that found expression for its piety or its patriotism in establishing such institutions, where now, under similar influences, we endow colleges, hospitals, art-galleries, public parks, or free libraries. How, at the Reformation, the old Charter House shared the fate of all the other monasteries, and



QUADRANGLE: CHARTER HOUSE.

was dissolved, its estates being confiscated to the king. How a pathetic tragedy was enacted at this dissolution; for the prior, being unable, as he thought, conscientiously, to take the oath of supremacy, knew he must share the fate of Bishop Fisher and Sir Thomas More; and so, foreseeing his doom, called the brethren together; solemnly bade them farewell; begged pardon if he had offended anyone; and gave and received forgiveness, the whole assembly being dissolved in tears. How other tragedies, almost as sad, gathered about the gray old walls. But how, for a little while, there was mirth and feasting here. First, when Elizabeth, in the early weeks of her reign, spent a few days within the old walls; and afterwards, when the place came into possession of the

fourth Duke of Norfolk, the grandson of that accomplished Earl of Surrey who fell a victim to the rage and jealousy of Henry the Eighth. This duke it was who rebuilt large portions of the edifice, occupied it as his palace, and lived there in great splendor, until, being entrapped into a conspiracy to place Mary, Queen of Scots, on the throne, he too was sent to the block. How, after various other mutations, the place was finally bought by Sir Thomas Sutton, a successful merchant in the reign of James the First, and converted to its present use. It was in the school belonging to the foundation that Thackeray himself was educated, and the recollection of this, doubtless, led him to select the place as the scene of Colonel Newcome's last days.



HALL AND CHAPEL: CHARTER HOUSE.

A custodian came forward, on our entrance, and civilly offered to show us through the buildings. He took us first to the great dining-room. This was not, however, the one used by the monks, but one built by the ill-fated Duke of Norfolk, in the sixteenth century. It is in the Tudor style: stately and magnificent, as all such things in that day were; richly wainscoted throughout, and the wainscoting adorned with most elaborate carvings. Next, he led us up the grand staircase, ornamented with massive balusters; and lighted, at the first landing, by five tall lancet windows. After this, he showed us one of the chambers for the old bedesmen, that just then had no tenant. He apologized for not taking us into one that was occupied, by saying:

“They are all gentlemen here, you know: real gentlemen, though decayed in fortune, and it would hurt their pride to see themselves on exhibition.” We were conducted, next, to the cloisters, which are those originally belonging to the monastery, and are the oldest portions of the buildings. Finally he asked if we would like to visit the chapel, and on our answering in the affirmative, led the way towards it.

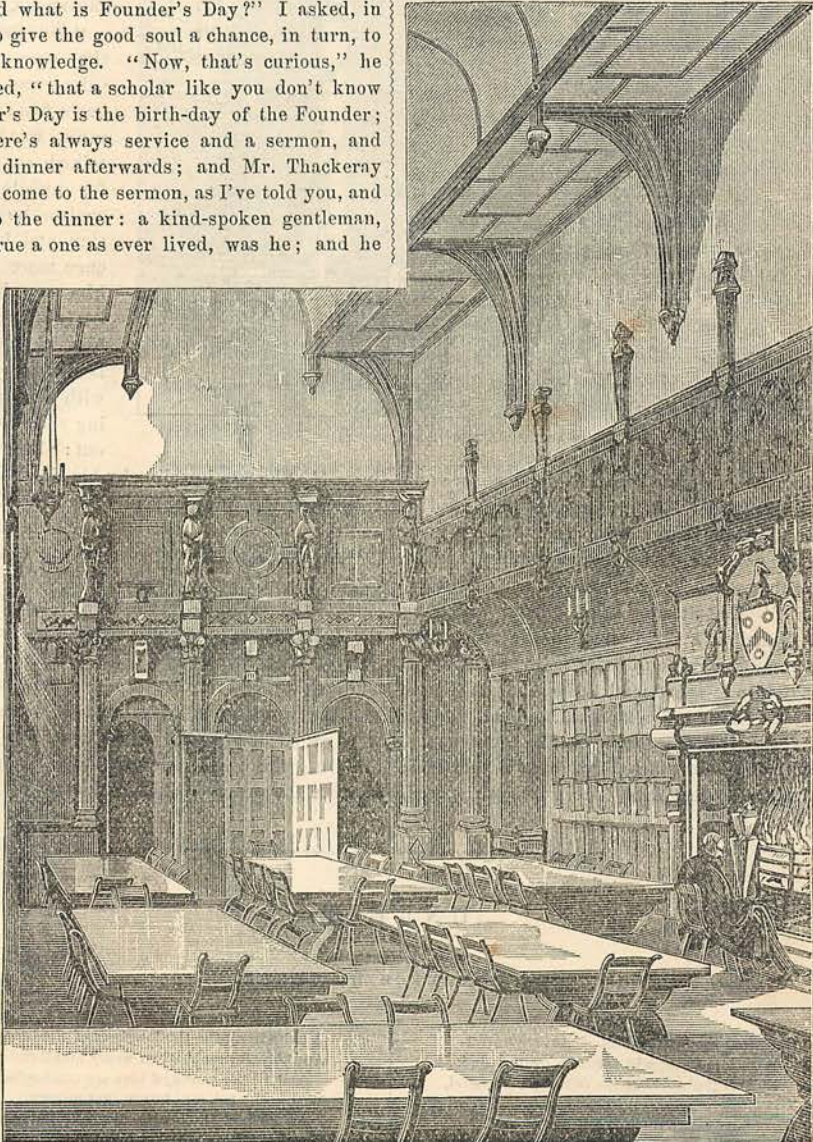
We had to pass through a long, narrow corridor to reach the chapel; and in this corridor I saw, on the left-hand wall, a tablet of marble, apparently recently erected. “Why, that is in memory of Thackeray,” I said, stopping to read the inscription. “Yes; it has just been put up,” replied the custodian, “and is in Latin, they tell

me; but as few visitors come here I have found no one yet to explain it. Can you do it, sir?" I remembered enough of my college learning, fortunately, to construe the very simple inscription, and interpreted it for him, at which he seemed greatly pleased, appearing to look upon me as some learned scholar, if not a veritable Oxford don in disguise. In the chapel he pointed out, almost directly opposite Sutton's tomb—for the rich merchant was buried here—a seat, which he said Thackeray always occupied when he came to hear the sermon, on Founder's Day.

"And what is Founder's Day?" I asked, in order to give the good soul a chance, in turn, to air his knowledge. "Now, that's curious," he answered, "that a scholar like you don't know Founder's Day is the birth-day of the Founder; and there's always service and a sermon, and then a dinner afterwards; and Mr. Thackeray used to come to the sermon, as I've told you, and staid to the dinner: a kind-spoken gentleman, and a true a one as ever lived, was he; and he

has written quite a book about us, I've been told, though I've never seen it."

I had been looking at the seat, saying to myself that Thackeray must have had it in his eye when he described the Colonel at chapel. "As true a gentleman as ever lived," I repeated to myself, thinking of the Colonel; and suddenly, before me rose the vision of the old soldier. I saw him come tottering in, take his seat, and reverently bow his head in prayer. My eyes were dim with tears, nor am I ashamed to tell it. Then



DINING-HALL: CHARTER HOUSE.

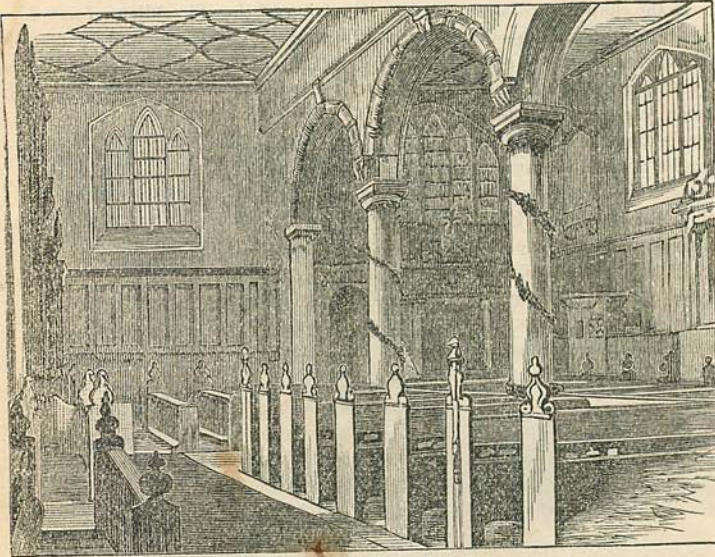
the scene changed: in imagination I was in the little room upstairs, with Clive and Ethel, and the old man's early love, Madame de Florac; and the old man was dying, and beginning to wander in his mind. But I must go to the book itself for the rest.

The French lady fell instantly on her knees, and remained rigid in prayer.

"Some time afterwards Ethel came in, with a scared face, to our pale group. 'He is calling for you again, dear lady,' she said, going up to Madame de Florac, who was still kneeling; 'and

just now he said he wanted Pendennis to take care of his boy. He will not know you.' She hid her tears as she spoke.

"We went into the room, where Clive was at the bed's foot; the old man within it talked on rapidly for awhile; then again, he would sigh and be still; once more I heard him say hurriedly: 'Take care of him when I'm in India,' and then with a heart-rending voice he called out: 'Leonore, Le-



CHAPEL: CHARTER HOUSE.

"Thomas Newcome began to wander more and more. He talked louder; he gave the word of command, spoke Hindoostance as if to his men. Then he spoke words in French rapidly, seizing a hand that was near him, and crying: '*Toujours, toujours!*' But it was Ethel's hand which he took. Ethel and Clive were in the room with him; the nurse came to us, who were sitting in the adjoining apartment; Madame de Florac was there, with my wife and Bagham.

"At the look in the woman's countenance, Madame de Florac started up. 'He is very bad; he wanders a great deal,' the nurse whispered.

onore!' She was kneeling by his side now. His voice sank into faint murmurs; only a moan now and then announced that he was not asleep.

"At the usual evening hour the chapel-bell began to toll, and Thomas Newcome's hands, outside the bed, feebly beat a time. And just as the bell struck, a peculiar sweet smile shone over his face, and he lifted up his head a little, and quickly said: '*Adsum!*' and fell back. It was the word we used at school, when names were called; and lo, he whose heart was as that of a little child, had answered to his name, and stood in the presence of The Master."

UNREST.

BY CLARENCE H. URNER.

Oh, when the heart is full of strange unrest
With idle cares, which reason cannot bind,
And all the world seems faithless or unkind,
The fancy wanders on in eager quest
Of realms where there is nothing to molest
The brilliant visions of the dreamy mind!
And it is sweet, if but in dreams we find

A balm to soothe the longings of the breast.
And thus for each, when weary and forlorn,
And all the words of love are comfortless,
Within the far, dim future, yet unborn,
An Eden of the heart springs up to bless
Yet, few alone shall ever hail the morn
Which brings a day of perfect happiness.