

FROM HAMPTON COURT TO LONDON.

By W. PETT RIDGE.

Illustrated from Photographs by W. H. BUNNETT.

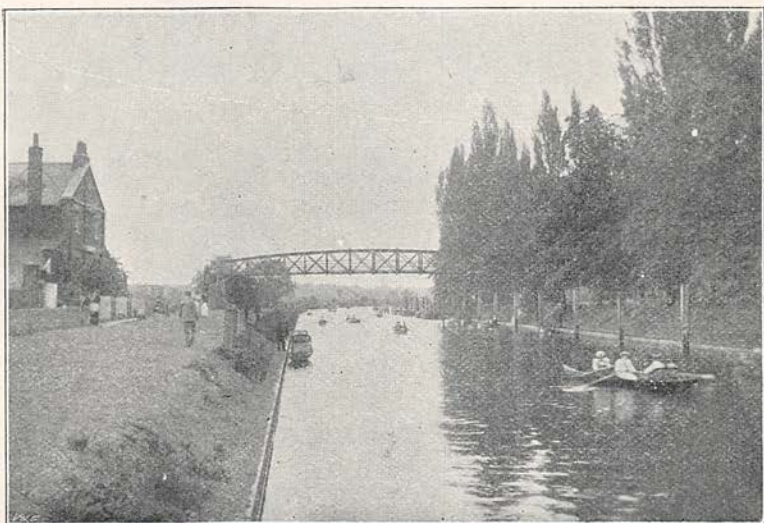


HE crowd near Teddington Lock cheered us just now and waved its hats ecstatically, and one or two Teddington infants, in their excited enthusiasm, went so far as to throw

a few pebbles at the straw hats of passengers. There was no special reason for these compliments, but we are touched by them; the steamer seems encouraged and goes north on its sinuous journey to London with great show of energy; the band of violins and throbbing harps and masterful cornet aft begins a swift and entirely new set of quadrilles. There is no singing on board yet, because the sun is still well up in the west, and amateurs prefer dusk to come before they offer vocal offerings, showing in this a

wise discretion, because in the case of failure it is useful to be able to hide.

The steamer left the Old Swan Pier at about ten this morning, and it has taken us to Hampton Court and left us there for a few hours, and is now taking back nearly as many passengers as it brought, but not the entire number, because with some the appetite for



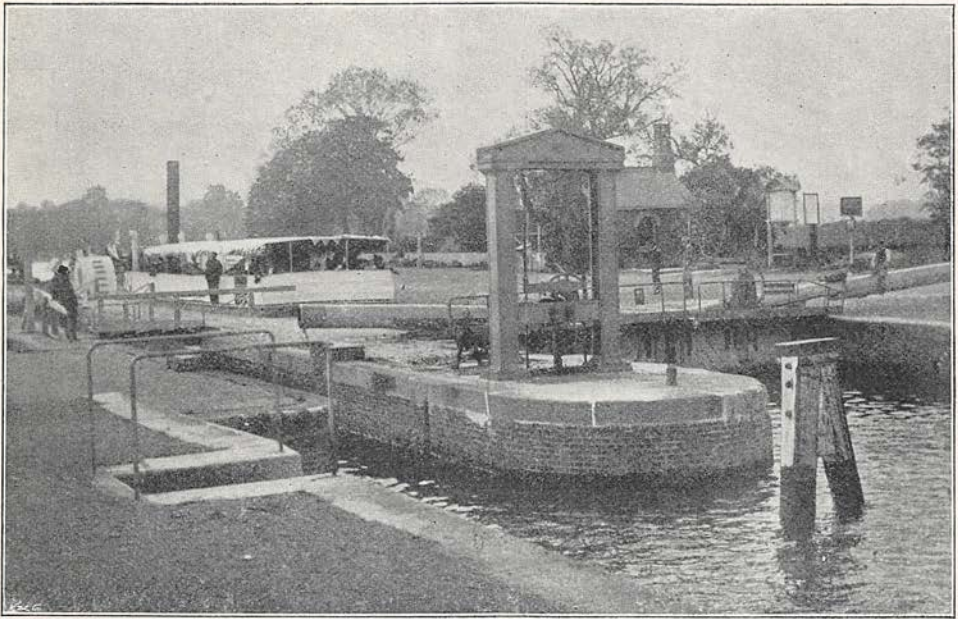
TEDDINGTON BRIDGE.

an adventurous life has been satisfied by the journey up, and they have decided to return to town by railway. Having known each other for several hours, several mature ladies on board have exchanged autobiographies, and one, whose sister years ago so far forgot herself and what was due to the family as to marry a mere journeyman painter, and to live at Kingsland, has communicated this information to nearly everyone on board. A friendly scent of tea comes up from the saloons below to the crowded deck, and cups are brought up by anxious slaves to composed, languid young ladies seated under the awning, and are by them sipped with an air of gentility that countesses fail to catch. It is the high

would much rather step overboard than confess ignorance) is for the moment taken aback.

"Well," he says slowly, "they're bound to call it something—ain't they, now?"

His companion agrees with this; but why, she asks, why call it Ham? It is not a pretty name, says the young lady, and it is not a foreign name, and she declares, with something of contempt, that there's no sense in it. The young man makes haste to leave a subject which has proved so perplexing, and looking around for a safe topic, remarks that it is a jolly good sunset; whereupon his companion remarks icily that she is tired of sunsets, and the youth, thus again extin-



TEDDINGTON LOCK.

ambition of the youths to convey to their fair companions that the Thames has for them no secrets, and that the riverside is to them as an open book.

"That's 'Am over there."

"'Am what?"

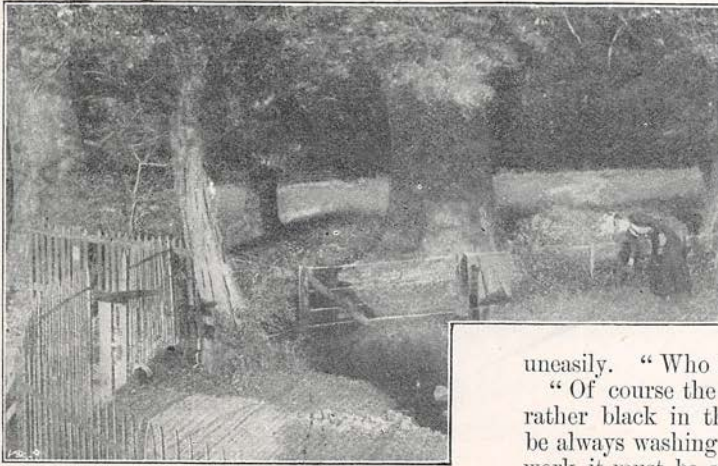
"Just 'Am. That's the name of it. Spelt like 'am what you eat. Very old, historical sort of place, so I've been given to understand. Got some windows, ain't it? All sorts of foreign families, and what not, that have had to leave their country, have come over and settled down there. See?"

The young lady sipping her tea asks, with but a casual interest, why the place is called Ham, and the informative young man (who

guished, sighs and takes her empty cup down the gangway with a perplexed air. A breeze, cool, not to say impudent, steals under the awning and blows ladies' hats awry and disarranges their hair, causing them to exclaim, "Nuisance!" It catches, too, the large straw hat of a short gentleman, and with it plays a game of flying kites, bearing the short gentleman away swiftly to the other end of the steamer, where he providentially anchors himself to an automatic machine, and thus avoids being carried into mid air. To the left, the sun is going down slowly, and with so much gorgeousness, that those who do not share the languid young lady's objection have to shade their eyes as they watch its gradual

fall. The sun endeavours to win over even the languid young lady to the general body of its admirers, and sends, when it is

"Day after day, week after week."
 "Year after year." The old ladies seem to enjoy their duet of sympathy very much. "Growing old in the service of the company that you've served so faithful."



'TWIXT TEDDINGTON AND RICHMOND.

low enough, a brilliant glance at her under the awning, but the languid young lady only complains bitterly to her returned and anxious companion, and, turning her back to the sun, opens a yellow parasol to shield her from its warm attentions. A grimy-faced man looks out of the aperture over the engine-room. The passengers look at him wondering.

"Like to have as many sov'reigns——"

"Beg pawdon, mem?"

"I say," repeats a genial old lady to the grimy-faced man, "I say, I shouldn't mind having as many sov'reigns as times you've been up and down this river."

"Well," remarks the grimy-faced man, "it's like this. I——"

"You must get very tired of it," remarks the old lady's sister. "The meenotony, I mean."

"And the smell of the engines."

"And the feeling that so many lives depend upon you."

"And the going on all through the summer——"

"Morning, noon and night."

"Look 'ere!" interrupts the grimy man uneasily. "Who are you calling names?"

"Of course the work naturally makes you rather black in the face, because you can't be always washing—can you, now? Trying work it must be at the best of times; and I don't wonder you can't keep yourself so neat and tidy as you might wish."

"If I was the company," chimes in the other lady in her turn, "I should feel that the least I could do with an old servant like you, that's been with 'em no doubt for the best part of a lifetime, was to see that your family didn't have to bear the expense of putting you away when——"

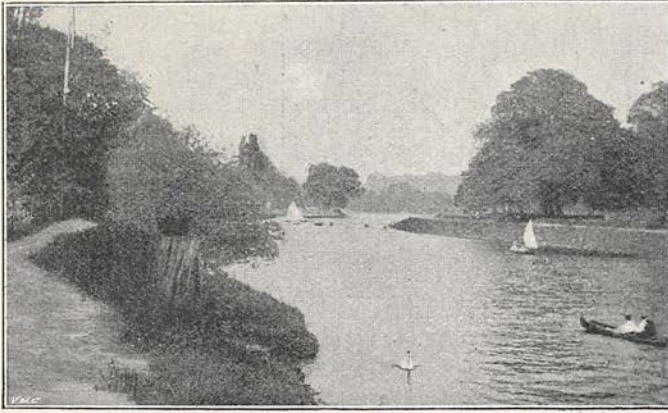
"I say," says the grimy-faced man, protesting, "give us a chawnce. You're reckoning me up at a fine old rate, you are. Why, I ain't been in this service not five minutes! This is my first trip."



AFTERNOON TEA ON EEL-PIE ISLAND.

"Then I *do* think," remarks the elder lady with dignity, "you might have mentioned it at first, my good man."

"Lot o' chance to mention anything," grumbles the grimy-faced man, preparing to swing down to the engine-room, "when the fair sect begins to cackle."



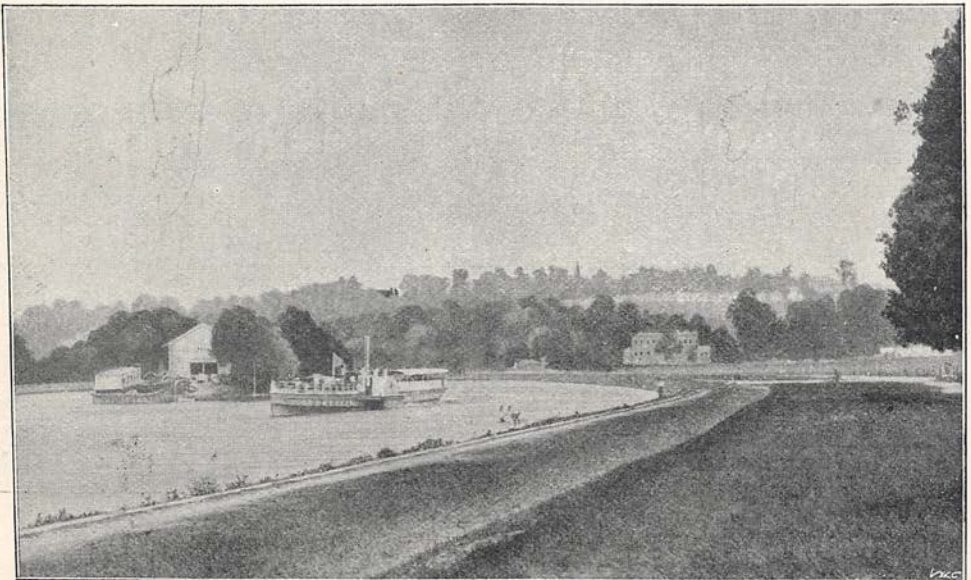
LOOKING TOWARDS RICHMOND.

Richmond Park away to the right; the Terrace, high and stately; Kew Gardens not far off. Information to this effect being given by the crew of the *Queen Elizabeth*, the passengers throw off some of the reserve that has hitherto possessed them, and confidence arrives with the sense of being nearer to home. Singing comes from the fore-part of the steamer, and here, under the awning, a few shy tentative efforts are made in the

same direction, but stolid middle-aged couples stare at the shy singers with so much of reproof, that the singers cough slightly and stop. Presently a lady in white gives way with correct reluctance to the persuasions of her friends, and, opening her parasol to protect her from the glare of the middle-aged couples, commences slowly and deliberately a song of sentiment. A square of cheerful youths come forward, and finding by the first verse that the song has no chorus, are for the moment disappointed; but they confer with each other, and, before the second verse is started, they have agreed upon a scheme, and it is speedily apparent that they have decided, by the substitution of a swift bass line, to give to the lady in white's decorous soprano song a rollicking and a nautical air.

Dear 'eart, I cannot say farewell!
 (Cheerily, me lads, yo-ho!)
 Thou'rt more to me than words can tell!
 (Cheerily, me lads, yo-ho!)
 I weep for thee by night by day;
 The world is nort when thou'rt away:
 Dear love, your Clara bids you stay.
 (Cheerily, me lads, yo-ho!)

It is an ingenious thought of the square of



RICHMOND IN THE DISTANCE.

(The "Cardinal Wolsey" steambot en route.)

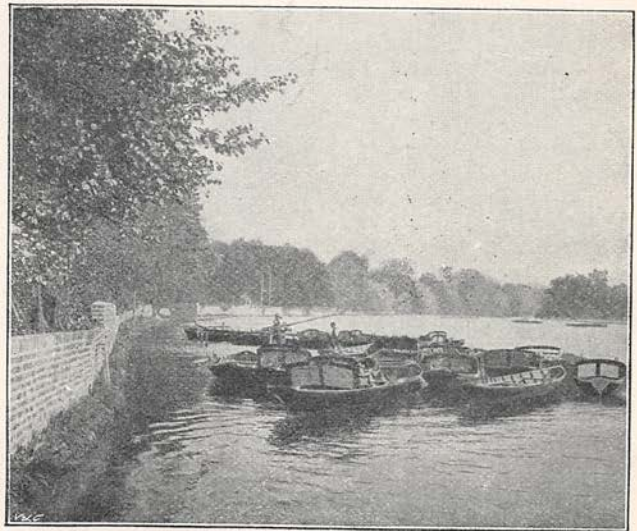


LOOKING TOWARDS TEDDINGTON.

joyous youths, well conceived and dexterously worked out, but when the lady in white is made aware of the existence of the chorus she stops instantly, and, shivering with annoyance, declares that she will not sing another verse for fifty thousand pounds. As there is no prospect of collecting even this amount, the lady in white reverses her parasol, and, declining to be comforted by her friends, remains behind it in ambush and refuses steadfastly to re-enter public life. A man, who brings with him the scent of the refreshment saloon, blunders through the people and offers to dance, and, as everybody shouts "No," does dance, but is presently snatched at by his wife and shaken. "Making a laughing-stock of yourself at your age!" says the wife bitterly. "Why don't you be a ve? More trouble than 'alf a dozen children, you are." Thus admonished, the bemused man stumbles on, and when the yellow funnel of the *Queen Elizabeth* has bowed for the third time to the Richmond bridges, forms a debating society near the same funnel by advancing the proposition that Salisbury's no good, and that Sir William Harcourt (whom he calls

Swillye-marker, for short) is worse. This definite statement brings up swiftly those with political tastes, who form a group and argue excitedly with a plenitude of: "Allow me to finish my argument, if *you* please"; and "No, no, sir—*now* you're begging the question"; and, "Anybody but a bigoted fool would say the same as I do!" and one old fragment of Park oratory that it is always pleasant to meet: "I advise you, my good friend, to go 'ome and study John Stuart Mill."

The steamer hurries along by the side of Kew Gardens. Landsmen going our way shout badinage, which is replied to by the alert square of cheerful youths, who volun-



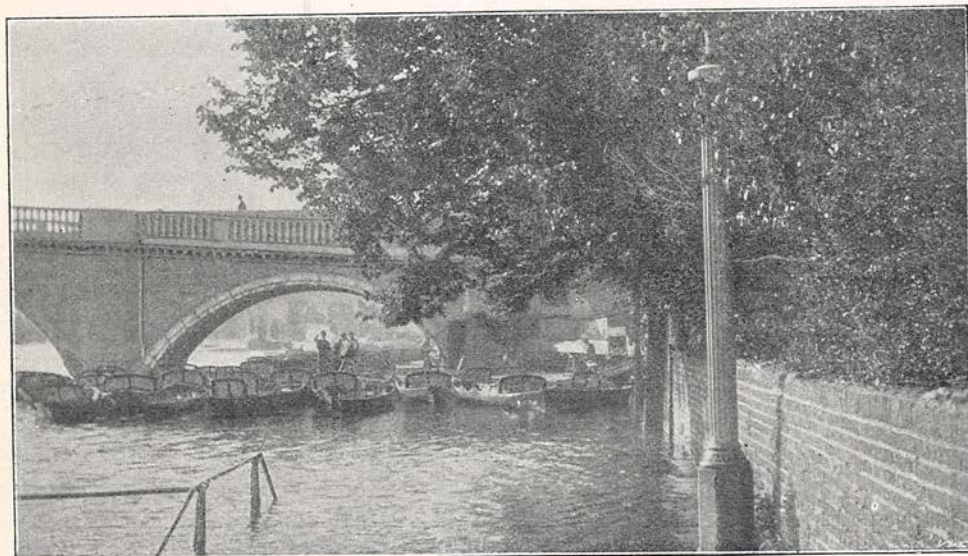
A CORNER NEAR MESSUM'S.

teer for our defence, and do the work, considering all things, well; showing great adroitness in selecting from the remarks bawled from the riverside and from the rocking small boats only those which can be effectively answered, and ignoring those which present difficulties.

"Why don't you punt a bit, you there on the steamer, or else get out and push?"

"Steamer'll be all right," shout our defenders, "if you turn your face away. Sight of it interferes with the machinery!"

bridge more awake than ever. Lights appear in the saloon below, and faces on deck are indistinct excepting when a match is struck and features are for the moment illumined; the river is dark, and surges away thickly and mistily to the banks as the *Queen Elizabeth* cleaves it. A grey sky in front now, with clouds of a darker grey; a star looks through a slit in the clouds to see if there are any other stars out belonging to its set. The band is playing some lazy old Austrian waltz that comes to us only in intermittent



RICHMOND BRIDGE.

"You'll look well when you get 'ome, you will!"

"You won't!"

"Wouldn't be in *your* shoes for something, old man!"

"How could you, when you take 'levens?"

"That face of yours makes us tired. Pawn it 'fore you come down again!"

"Likely thing. You'd buy the ticket like a shot!"

Kew Bridge. A few of the passengers asleep; as compensation, captain on the

bars, because the breeze takes much of it to the bank, and to the lighted houses, and to the sleeping barges. Under the awning the deck is quiet, for everyone is tired, and when a burst of laughter comes up from the saloon below, the deck passengers say reprovingly, "Hush!" And presently a lighter glare in the sky ahead, extending over a wide space, which means that the *Queen Elizabeth* is near to London—London, that big, dear, good-tempered town, which so many of us love as though in very deed it were our mother!