

# WALTER BESANT

SOUTH LONDON

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*South London:*

# Содержание

PREFACE	4
CHAPTER I	6
CHAPTER II	31
CHAPTER III	55
CHAPTER IV	78
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	86

# Sir Walter Besant

## South London

### PREFACE

In sending forth this book on 'South London,' the successor to my two preceding books on 'London' and 'Westminster,' I have to explain in this case, as before, that it is not a history, or a chronicle, or a consecutive account of the Borough and her suburbs that I offer, but, as in the other two books, chapters taken here and there from the mass of material which lies ready to hand, and especially chapters which illustrate the most important part of History, namely, the condition, the manners, the customs of the people dwelling in this place, now, like Westminster, a part of London: yet, until two or three hundred years ago, an ancient marsh kept from the overflowing tide by an Embankment, joined to the Dover road by a Causeway, settled and inhabited by two or three Houses of Religious: by half a dozen Palaces of Bishops, Abbots, and great Lords: by a colony of fishermen living on the Embankment from time immemorial, since the Embankment itself was built: and by a street of Inns and shops.

I hope that 'South London' will be received with favour equal to that bestowed upon its predecessors. The chief difficulty in writing it has been that of selection from the great treasures

which have accumulated about this strange spot. The contents of this volume do not form a tenth part of what might be written on the same plan, and still without including the History Proper of the Borough. I am like the showman in the 'Cries of London' – I pull the strings, and the children peep. Lo! Allectus goes forth to fight and die on Clapham Common: William's men burn the fishermen's cottages: little King Richard, that lovely boy, rides out, all in white and gold, from his Palace at Kennington – saw one ever so gallant a lad? The Bastard of Falconbridge bombards the city: Sir John Fastolfe's man is pressed into Jack Cade's army: the Minters make their last Sanctuary opposite St. George's: the Debtors languish in the King's Bench. There are many pictures in the box – but how many more there are for which no room could be found!

I must acknowledge my obligations, first, to the Editor of the *Pall Mall Magazine*, where half of these chapters first had the honour of appearing, for the wealth of illustration of which he thought them worthy: and next to the artist, Mr. Percy Wadham, who has so faithfully and so cunningly carried out the task committed to him.

WALTER BESANT.

United University Club:

*September 1898.*

# CHAPTER I

## THE FIRST SETTLEMENTS

I propose to call the series of chapters which are to follow by the general name of 'South London.' Like their predecessors on 'London' and 'Westminster,' they will not attempt, or pretend, to present a continuous history of this region – or, indeed, a history at all: they will endeavour to do for this part of London what their predecessors have already attempted for the Cities of London and Westminster: that is to say, they will present such episodes and incidents, with such characters, as may serve to illustrate the life of the place; the manners and customs of the people; the characteristics of the Borough and its outlying suburbs. So far as history means the march of armies and the clash of armour, we shall here find little history. So far, also, as history means the growth of our liberties, the struggles by which they were won; the apparent decay, or defeat, from time to time, of the spirit of freedom, with its inevitable recovery: the reader and the student may be referred to the pages of a Stubbs or a Freeman – not to my humbler page. Great is the work, and worthy to be held in the highest honour, of those who trace out the irresistible march of national freedom: I cannot join their company; I must be contented with the lowlier, yet somewhat useful, task of showing how the people, my forefathers, lived, and what they thought, and

how they sang and feasted and made love and grew old and died.

My South London extends from Battersea in the west to Greenwich in the east, and from the river on the north to the first rising ground on the south. This rising ground, a gentle ascent, the beginning of the Surrey hills, can still be observed on the high roads of the south – Clapham, Brixton, Camberwell. It now occupies the place of what was formerly a low cliff, from ten to thirty or forty feet high, overhanging the broad level, and corresponding to those cliffs on the other side of the river, which closed in on either side of Walbrook and made the foundation of London possible. If we draw a straight line from the mouth of the Wandle on the west to the mouth of the Ravensbourne on the east, we shall, roughly speaking, indicate the southern boundary of our district; unless, as we may very well do, we include Greenwich as well. The whole of this region constitutes the Great South Marsh: there is no rising ground, or hillock, or encroaching cliff over the whole of this flat expanse. Before the river was embanked it was one unbroken marsh: for eight miles in length by a varying breadth of about two or two and a half miles, the tidal stream twice in the twenty-four hours submerged this space. Here and there lay islets or eyots, created, as the centuries crept on, by the gradual accumulation of branches, roots, reeds and rubbish, till they rose a few inches above high water; the spring-tide covered them – sometimes swept them away – then others began to form. In later times, after the work of embankment had been commenced, these islets

became permanent, and were afterwards known as Battersea, Bermondsey, Rotherhithe, Lambhithe, Newington, Kennington. Even then, for many a long year, they were but little areas rising a foot or two above the level, covered with sedge, reeds, and tufts of coarse grass, hardly distinguishable from the rest of the ground around them. Before the construction of the river wall, no trees stood upon this morass, no flowers of the field flourished there, no thorns and bushes grew, no cattle pastured there; the wild deer were afraid of it: there were no creatures of the land upon it. On the south side rose the cliff of clay and sand, continually falling and continually receding before the encroaching tide; on the north side ran the river; beyond the river the cliff stood up above the water's edge, where the tiny stream, afterwards named from the Wall, leaped bright and sparkling into the rolling flood. No man could live upon that marsh: its breath after sunset and in the night was pestilential.

Many streams poured into this marsh, and at low tide made their way across it into the Thames: at high tide their beds were lost in the shallows. Among them – to use names by which they were afterwards distinguished – were the Wandle, the Falcon, the Effra, the Ravensbourne, and others which have disappeared and left no name. And so for unnumbered years the tide daily ebbed and flowed, and the reeds bent beneath the breeze, and the clouds scudded overhead, and the wild birds screamed, far away from the world of men and women, long after men and women began to wander about this Island called Albion. No one took any



thought of this marsh, any more than they heeded the marshes all along the lower reaches of the river; and these were surely the most desolate, dreary stretches of water and mud anywhere in the world. Those who wish to realise what manner of country it was which stretched away on the north and south of the Thames may perhaps get some comprehension of it if they stand on the point at Bradwell in Essex, beside the ruined Chapel of St. Peter-on-the-Wall, and look out at low tide to east and north.

In a previous volume dealing with another part of the country called London I showed to my own satisfaction, and, I believe, that of my readers, that long before there existed any London at all, except perhaps a village of a few fishermen with their coracles, Westminster or Thorney was a busy and crowded place of resort, through which the whole trade of the country north of the Thames passed on its way to Dover and the southern ports. This position, new as it was, and opposed to the general and traditional teaching – opposed, for instance, to the traditional belief of Dean Stanley – has never been attacked, and may be considered, therefore, as generally accepted. When or how the trade of Thorney began, to what extent it developed, we need not here inquire. Indeed, I know not that any fragments of fact or of tradition exist which would enable us to inquire. The fact itself, as will be immediately seen, is of the highest importance as regards the beginning and early history of the Southern settlements.

The ancient way of trade, then, ran across the island called afterwards by the Saxons Thorney, the Isle of Bramble, now

Westminster. All the trade of the north passed over that little spot, on which arose a considerable town for the reception of the caravans. After resting a night or so at Thorney, the merchants went on their way. Those who travelled south, making for Dover, crossed over the ford, where there was afterwards a ferry. This ferry continued until the erection of Westminster Bridge in the last century: the name still survives in Horseferry Road. After the passage of the ford, the travellers found themselves face to face with a mile of dangerous bog, marsh and swamp, through which they had to plod and plough their way, sinking over their knees, up to the middle, before they emerged upon the higher ground, now called Clapham Rise. To the merchants driving their long chains of slaves and heavily laden packhorses and mules from the north, this was the worst bit of the whole journey. Every day there were rivers to be forded, in which some of their slaves might get drowned or might escape; there were dark woods, in which they might be attacked by hostile tribes; there were hills to climb; but nowhere, in the whole of their journey, was there a piece of country more difficult than this great swamp beyond the Ford of Thorney. They splashed and floundered through it, over ankles, over knees, up to the middle, up to the neck, in mud and muddy water. The packhorses sank deep down with their loads; they took off the loads and laid them on the shoulders of the slaves, who threw them off into the mud, and let them stay there, while they made a mad attempt to escape. Horse and mule; slave and slave-load; iron, lead, and skins: the merchant paid heavy tribute

while he crossed the marshes and waded through the shallows of the broad tidal river.

At some time or other, the idea occurred to an unknown person of engineering genius in advance of his time, that it might not be impossible to construct a causeway across this marsh; and that such a causeway would be extremely useful and convenient for those who used the Thorney Fords. Perhaps the causeway was his own invention; perhaps the work was the first causeway ever constructed in this country; perhaps the inventor began on the smallest possible scale, with a very narrow way across the marsh to the nearest dry ground, which was, of course, somewhere beyond Kennington; perhaps the work, colossal for the time, carried the merchants and their caravans across the whole extent of the marsh – five miles and more – to the rising ground of Deptford or Greenwich, the nearest point to Dover. The causeway was not unlike those which now run across the Hackney Marshes; that is to say, it was raised so high as to be above the highest spring tide, about six feet above the level of the marsh. It was constructed by driving piles into the mud at regular intervals, forming a wall of timber within the piles, and filling up the space with gravel and shingle, brought from Chelsea – 'Isle of Shingle' – or from the nearest high ground, where is now Clapham Common. The breadth of the causeway, I take it, was about ten or twelve feet. The construction of the work rendered the passage across the marsh perfectly easy, and greatly facilitated that part of the trade of the island which lay in the

midland and on the north.

When was this causeway, the first step in road-making, constructed? Perhaps it was a Roman work. I think, however, that it is older than the Roman occupation; and for these reasons. When London was first visited by the Romans it was already a flourishing city with a '*copia negotiatorum*;' in other words, it had already succeeded in attracting the greater part of the trade which formerly passed through Thorney. Had the Romans built the causeway, they would have constructed it along a line drawn from one of the two old ferries to Deptford. The causeway, therefore, must have existed when the Romans arrived upon the scene, together with, as we shall see immediately, the second causeway connecting the ferry with the first causeway. I dare say the Romans strengthened the work: turned it from a gravelled way, soft in bad weather, into one of their hard, firm Roman roads; faced it with stone, and made it durable. If South London were to be stripped of all its houses, the two causeways would be found still, hard and firm, beneath the mass of accumulated soil and rubbish, as the Romans left them.

If you draw a straight line from 'Stanegate,' close to the end of Westminster Bridge, as far as the beginning of the Old Kent Road, you will understand the lie of the causeway. And this causeway, understand, was the very first interference of the hand of man with the marshes south of the Thames. It was a way across the marsh: not an embankment against the river, but a way. It did not keep out the tide which flowed in on the other side – the

Battersea side: it was simply a way across the marsh. For a long time – we cannot tell how long – it remained the principal way of communication for the trade of Britain between the north and the south, the midland and the south, the eastern counties and the south.

Consider, next, the site of London, as it appeared to the merchants crossing the causeway. They saw, in the centuries of which no trace or memory remains, when they turned their eyes northward, first a level of mud, sprinkled with little eyots of reed and coarse grass, then the broad river, and beyond the river two streams, one fuller than the other, each in its own valley – that of the Walbrook was 132 feet wide at the present site of the Mansion House – falling into the river; a low cliff ran along the north bank, leaving stretches of marsh, as on the south, but, where these streams ran into the Thames, approaching close to the river, and actually overhanging it. On the river they saw numerous coracles, with fishermen catching salmon and every kind of fish in their nets. No river in the world was more plentifully stocked with fish; overhead flew screaming innumerable birds – geese, ducks, herne – which the trappers trapped, snared, shot with sling and stone by the thousand. On those cliffs overhanging the river, the travellers by the causeway saw the huts of the fisherfolk. Then, perhaps, they remembered the plenty of the markets of Thorney; the abundance of birds, the vast quantities of fish offered on those stalls. Those who were curious connected the coracles on the river and the birds

that flew up from the lowlands with these markets; they saw that London – 'the place or fort over the Lake' – was the settlement which furnished Thorney with a good part of her supplies. And this I verily believe to have been the real origin and cause of London. It was first settled by the humble folk who came here for the purpose of catching fish and trapping birds for the market of Thorney. This is a suggestion only; it will be set aside, most certainly, by those who are not pleased with the upsetting of old theories. To those who are able to realise the ancient condition of things and all it means, the suggestion will be received, I am convinced, as more than a theory: it will be regarded and accepted as a discovery.

Let us put it in another way. Thorney was a place of great resort, as I have shown in these pages already: every day passed into Thorney, and out of Thorney, long processions or caravans of merchants with merchandise carried by slaves – the most valuable part of their merchandise – and by packhorses and mules; they waded through the northern ford; they rested for a night in one of the inns of the place: next day they waded through the southern ford, attained the causeway, and went south. Or else it was the reverse way. The place required a daily supply of food, and, as there were many travellers, a great quantity of food. If you go down the river from Thorney, you will find that the present site of London, on the two hillocks rising out of the river, was the first and only place where men could put up huts in which to live while they caught fish and trapped wild birds for Thorney. If,

therefore, the Isle of Bramble was a flourishing centre of trade long before London was a place of trade at all, then the original London must have been a settlement of fishermen and trappers who supplied the markets of Thorney.

In course of time – we are still in prehistoric times – the site of London was discovered by seamen and merchant adventurers exploring the rivers in their ships. It was found cheaper and easier and safer to carry goods to and from Thorney by way of sea than by land. To coast along from Dover to the strait between Rum – the Isle of Thanet, and the mainland – to pass through the strait and up the river, was found easier and cheaper than to undertake the costly and dangerous march from Dover to Thorney Ford. This way, then, was by many undertaken; and so a certain part of the trade along the old causeway was diverted.

The next step was the discovery of London as a port. There was no port at Thorney: on the site of London were the two natural ports of Walbrook and the mouth of the Fleet; there was a high ground safer and more salubrious than that of Thorney; ships began to anchor there, quays were erected, goods were landed; the high road which we call Oxford Street was constructed to connect London with the highway of trade – afterwards Watling Street; and the trade of London began.

Now, if you look once more at the map of the south as it was, you will observe that London at its first commencement had no communication with any part of the world except by water. The first road opened was, as I have said, the connection with Watling

Street; what was the next? It was a connection with the high road to Dover: that connection was the road which we now call High Street, Borough. These two roads were the first communication between London and any other place; all the other roads, to the north and south and west and east, came afterwards. It was necessary for London to have an open and direct connection, by land as well as by sea, with the then principal port of the country. The High Street formed that open communication; it began not far to the west of St Saviour's Church, opposite the Roman Trajectus, the mediæval ferry, now St. Mary Overies Dock.

Observe, however, that we are as yet very far from embanking the river, or draining the marsh, or making it inhabitable. If you walk across Hackney Marsh by one of its causeways any autumnal morning, especially after rain, you will understand something of what Southwark looked like. Two high causeways crossed the marsh, of which as yet not a square foot had been drained or reclaimed; yet the place was not so wild as it had been; the wild birds had been partly driven away by the noise and crowd of London, and by the concourse of ships sailing continually up and down. There was as yet no bridge. The ferry crossed the river backwards and forwards all day long. The causeways were crowded with people; but as yet nothing on the lowlands. Before the marshes could be drained the river had to be embanked.

No one knows when that was done. It was done, however. At some time or other a high earthwork was raised along the north



and south banks of the river, enclosing the marshes, converting them into pasture and arable land, and keeping out the tides of Thames. It was a work of the most signal benefit; it was also a colossal piece of work, measured by hundreds of miles, for it was continued all round the islets and coast of Essex. It was a work requiring constant repair, though most of it has stood splendidly. The wall gave way, however, at Barking in the time of Henry the Second; at Wapping in the time of Elizabeth; at Dagenham early in the last century: at each of these places the repair of the wall was costly and difficult. The embankment left behind it a low-lying ground, rich and fertile; orchards and woods began to grow and to flourish upon it; yet it was still swampy in parts, numerous ponds lay about on it, streams wound their way confined in channels, and let out through the embankment at low tide by culverts.

Whether the bridge came before the embankment I cannot decide. Yet I think that the embankment came first; for the existence of Southwark – that of any part of South London – depended not on the bridge, but on the embankment and the ferry. Given, however, the embankment; the two causeways; the bridge; two ferries – one at St. Mary Overies and the other lower down, opposite the Tower: given, also, direct communication with Dover, with Thorney – thence with the midlands and the north: there could not fail to arise a settlement or town of some kind on the south of the Thames.

Let us next consider the conditions under which the town of

Southwark began to exist and to continue for a great many years.

(1) There was no wall or any means of defence, except the marsh which surrounded it and prohibited the approach of an army except along the causeway.

(2) The ground lay low on either side the causeway, and south of the embankment. Although the tide no longer ebbed and flowed among the reeds and islets of the marsh, yet it was covered with small ponds, some of them stagnant, others formed by the many streams which flowed towards the culverts on the embankment, through which at low tide they escaped into the Thames; until some kind of drainage was attempted, the place caused agues and fevers for any who slept in its white miasma. In other words, not an embankment only, but drainage of some kind, had to be undertaken before life was possible on the marsh.

(3) There were no quays, no shipping, no merchants, no trade, on the south side. All merchandise coming up from the south for export at the port of London, all merchandise landed at the port for the south, had to be carried across the bridge.

(4) The crowds of people connected with the trade of London – the porters, carriers, drivers, grooms and stable-boys, stevedores, lightermen, sailors foreign and native, the *employés* of the merchants, their wives, women and children – all these people lived in London itself; they had their taverns and drinking shops; their sleeping places and eating places, in London; all the people employed in providing food and drink and sport, lived on the other side. South London had to be a place without trade,

without noise, without disturbance of workmen, without broils among the sailors or fights among foreigners.

(5) It stood on the south bank of a river swarming with fish.

(6) The only parts on which houses could be built were along the line of the causeways, or along the line of the embankment.

These were the conditions. We should expect, therefore, to find the place thinly inhabited; and to find that the houses were all built beside or along the raised ways. We should next expect to find along the causeways that the houses belonged to the wealthier class.

We should expect, further, to find no sailors' or working men's quarters. The former because there were no ships; the latter because there were no markets. Lastly, we should not be surprised to find the place very early occupied by inns and places of accommodation for those who resorted to London.

All this was, in fact, what did take place. The Roman remains are numerous; they are all found along the causeways; the existence of a Roman cemetery shows that it was a place of some importance. I say *some*, because its very limited extent proves that it was never a large place. I will return immediately to the Roman remains.

There was, however, one trade, one class of working men which took up its abode along the embankment of Southwark: it was that of the fishermen, driven across the river by the growth of London. There was no room for the fishermen with their coracles and nets along the line of quays on the north side; they

wanted a place to haul up their boats, and a place to spread their nets, – they could not find either in the north; nor would the fish be caught in waters troubled perpetually by oars and keels. The fisherfolk, therefore, put up their huts along the embankment; for long centuries afterwards the fisherfolk continued to live in South London. The last remnant of Thames fishermen occupied, well into the present century, a single court in Lambeth; it is described as unpaved, unglazed, unlighted, dirty, and insanitary. But the last salmon had been caught in the river; the Thames fishermen were by that time almost starved out of existence. I am sure that the south was always their place of residence; the foreshore offered them what they could not find on the north bank. To him, however, who considers the fisheries of the Thames, there are many points on which, for want of exact information, he may speculate and theorise as much as he pleases. For instance, later on, there were fishermen living at Limehouse. Some of the Thames watermen lived here also – the legend of Awdry the ferryman assigns to him a residence on the south; their favourite place of residence, however, was St. Katherine's first, and Wapping afterwards.

The Roman remains found up and down the place prove my assertion that the people who lived here were what we should call substantial. One need not catalogue the long list of Roman *trouvailles*; but, to take the more important, in the year 1819 there was discovered, in taking up the foundations of some old houses belonging to St. Thomas's Hospital, in St. Thomas's

Street, a fine tessellated pavement, about ten feet below the surface of the ground. In the following year, in the area facing St. Saviour's Grammar School, seven or eight feet below the surface, there was found another, of a more elaborate design. Only a part of this was uncovered, as the Governors of the School forbade further investigation: it remains to this day still to be examined and unearthed, under the present potato and fruit market. At the entrance of King Street, at a depth of fifteen or sixteen feet, were found a great many Roman lamps, a vase, and other sepulchral deposits. And in tunnelling for a new sewer through Blackman Street and Snow Fields, in 1818 and 1819, and again in Union Street, in 1823, numerous Roman antiquities were discovered. In Trinity Square was found a coin of Gordianus Africanus. In Deverill Street, south of the Dover road, other coins were discovered; in St. Saviour's churchyard, a coin of Antoninus Pius. It has also been proved that an extensive Roman cemetery existed on the south of the ancient settlement. In the year 1840, when excavations were going on for the purpose of building a new wing to St. Thomas's Hospital, another tessellated pavement was disclosed, with passages and walls of other chambers, all built on piles, showing that the houses beside the causeway were thus supported in the marshy ground; Roman coins and pottery were also found here. Another pavement was discovered on the opposite side, south of Winchester Palace. On the river bank, at the corner of Clink Street, an ancient jetty was found; and in the new Southwark Street, deep down, groups of piles, pointed

below, on which houses had been built. In many of the later buildings Roman tiles have been found. These remains are quite sufficient to prove that many wealthy people lived in Roman Southwark, and that they occupied villas built on piles beside the causeway.

Since, too, from the earliest times Southwark was famous for its inns, and since the same conditions prevailed in the fourth as in the fourteenth century, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the people who drove those long lines of packhorses laden with goods from London used Southwark as a place in which to deposit merchandise before taking it across the bridge; they halted in Southwark; they lodged in one of the inns: the place was most convenient for the City; storage was cheaper than on the river wharves; for strangers, the place was cheerful. In one respect, that of being a halting place and a lodging for traders, Southwark was like Thorney in its palmy days – a place of entertainment for man and beast. There was no forum here, as in Augusta; no place of meeting for merchants, such as Thames Street in Plantagenet times; there was no buying and selling, but there was continual coming and going, which made the place lively and cheerful.

Such were the origins of the settlements of South London. An embankment, a causeway, a fishery for the wants of Thorney first and of London next; then villas, put up by the better sort, attracted here, one believes, by the fresh air coming up the river with every tide, and by the quiet of the place. The settlement

began quite early in the Roman occupation: this seems to be proved by the extent of the cemetery. The draining and drying of the low lands went on meanwhile gradually, gardens and orchards taking the place of the former marsh.

The place has always, save at rare intervals, been entirely defenceless. The *Pax Romana* protected it. Remember that London itself was not walled till the latter part of the fourth century. Why should it be? For more than three hundred years, for ten generations, the City knew no wars and feared no invader. The 'Count of the Saxon Shore' beat back, and kept back, the pirates of Norway and Denmark; the Legions beat back the marauders of Scotland and Ireland. Southwark, like the City its neighbour, needed no wall and asked for no defence.

Twice, before the arrival of the East Saxons, we get a glimpse in history of South London. The first is the rout of the usurper, the Emperor Allectus, after the battle of Clapham Common.

Towards the close of the third century the succession of usurpers who sprang up everywhere in the outlying portions of the Empire contained six who came from Britain. What effect these movements had upon the security of South London we have no means of learning. The history, however, of Carausius and his successor Allectus affords material for reflection. The former, who was of Belgian origin, rose to be the Count of the Saxon Shore – in other words, Admiral of the Roman Fleet. In this capacity he kept the seas free from pirates; enriched himself, became famous for his courage and his generosity; usurped the

title of Cæsar, fought with and defeated the fleets of Maximian, and reigned in Britain for seven years. His headquarters were Boulogne and Southampton; near the latter place – at Bittern – is still seen the quay at which his ships were moored. His rule, of which we know little, was certainly strong and firm. Coins exist in great numbers of Carausius. They represent his arrival: 'Expectate, veni' – 'Come, thou long-expected!' Then his triumph: 'Shout IO ten times.' He held gladiatorial sports at London; he appointed a British senate. Then came the time when he must fight or die. Like the King of the Grove, the Usurper held his throne on that condition. Carausius, for some unknown reason, would not fight when the chance was offered – therefore he died. Another King of the Grove, Allectus by name, one of his officers, killed him and reigned in his stead. Then he, too, had to fight for crown and life. He accepted the challenge; he awaited with an army of Franks and Britons the arrival of the Roman forces sent to quell him: he awaited them in London. When the enemy drew near, he led out his men across the Bridge, and gave battle to the Roman general, Asclepiodotus, on the wild heath south of London, immediately beyond the rising ground – we now call the place Clapham Common – and there he fell bravely fighting. He had enjoyed the purple for three years. Perhaps, when he crossed the Bridge, conscious that he was going to meet his fate – either to continue an Emperor for another spell or to die – he reflected that for such a splendid three years' run it was worth while to risk, and even to lose, his life at the end.



This is, I say, the first glimpse we get of South London in history. We see the army marching across the Bridge and along the Causeway, shouting and singing. We see them a few hours later, flying from the field, rushing headlong over the Causeway, through the lines of villas to the Bridge. The terrified people, those who lived in the villas, are running over the Bridge after them. Once across the Bridge, the soldiers found that there was left in the City neither order nor authority. They therefore began to sack and pillage the rich houses, and to murder the inhabitants. Remember that all over the Roman Empire none were permitted to carry arms except the soldiers. Therefore there could be no defence. The pillage went on until the victorious general had got his army – or some of it – across the Bridge. How long it would take to bring up his troops, whether the Bridge was held by the Franks, whether the defeated army made any organised opposition, we know not. All we are told is that the Roman soldiers fought hand to hand with those of the dead Usurper in the streets of London, and that the latter were all massacred.

In the year 457 we get a second glimpse of Southwark in the flight of another defeated host. The Britons had gone forth to fight the Saxon invaders; they met the enemy – Hengist and Æsc his son – at 'Creaganford' – Crayford: they were defeated; four thousand of them were killed; they fled; they never stopped until they reached London Bridge; we can see them flying bareheaded, without weapons, along the Causeway and through the narrow gates of the Bridge. Alas! the old villas along the Causeway are

deserted and in ruins; the place has been desolate for many years – since the Saxons began to swarm about the country; the former residents, if they are living still, are behind the walls; and their sons are carrying on the war which is to last two hundred long years, and to leave its memories of hatred behind it for fifteen hundred years at least. The gardens are grown over, the orchards are neglected, the inns are empty and ruinous.

Before long there falls the silence of death upon the walled City and the Bridge and the settlements of the South. All alike are deserted: the tide idly laps the piles of the rotting Bridge; it rolls along the empty wharves, bearing no keel upon its bosom; there is no boat on the river, there is no smoke from any house; there is no life, no sign of life, in the place which had formerly been so crowded and so busy. The timbered face of the embankment gave way and crumbled into the river; the Causeway was eaten by the tides here and there; the low grounds once more became a marsh, and the wild birds returned, undisturbed, to their former haunts.

I have elsewhere ('London,' ch. i.) described the natural reasons which led to this desertion of the City. It appears to us strange and almost impossible that a great city should be so utterly deserted. Where, however, are the cities of Tadmor, of Tyre, of Carthage? Where are the great cities of Asia Minor? The conqueror not only took the City and killed some of the people; he cut off the supplies, and therefore forced them to go. This was most certainly the case with London. Roger of Wendover, it is

true, tells us that in the year 462 the Saxons took possession of London, and then successively of York, Lincoln, and Winchester, committing great devastation. 'They fell on the natives in every quarter, like wolves on sheep forsaken by their shepherds; the churches and all the ecclesiastical buildings they levelled with the ground; the priests they slew at the altars; the holy scriptures they burned with fire; the tombs of the holy martyrs they covered with mounds of earth; the clergy who escaped the slaughter fled with the relics of the saints to the caves and recesses of the earth, to the woods and deserts and the crags of the mountains.'

I do not suppose that Roger of Wendover (he died in 1237) had access to documents of the time. I would rather incline to the belief that, given certain undoubted facts of battle, murder, and sacrilege, he presented the world with a little embroidery of his own. An Assault on London is, however, possible; in which case the desertion of the City would be only hastened. With the ruin and desolation of Augusta came also the ruin of the southern settlement.

This silence – this desolation – lasted some hundred years. Then the men of Essex – the East Saxons – came down, a few at a time, and took possession of the deserted City; the merchants began timidly to bring their ships again with goods for trade; the East Saxons learned the meaning of bargains; Augusta was dead, but London revived. The City preserved its ancient name, but the southern settlement lost its name. We know not what the Romans or the Britons called it, but the Saxons called it

Southwark. And they repaired the embankment and restored the ancient causeways, and cleared away the ruins.

Another point of difference: in London the new streets, laid out without rule or order, grew by degrees; they did not follow the old Roman streets, which were quite obliterated and utterly forgotten – one cannot imagine a more decisive proof of complete desertion and ruin. In Southwark, on the other hand, the streets remained the same – they were the two causeways and the embankment – because none others were then possible. High Street, Borough, is still, as it always has been, the ancient causeway connecting the new port of London with the Dover road.

Between the years 600 and 1000 Southwark suffered the vicissitudes which must happen in a period of continual warfare to an undefended suburb. In times of peace, when trade was possible, the place was what the Iclander Snorro Thirlsen calls an 'emporium.' All the merchandise carried to London from the south for export lay there waiting to be carried across the quays: the merchants themselves found accommodation there. But we cannot believe that when the Danish fleets brought their fierce warriors to the very walls of London, Southwark – or any other settlement – would continue to exist unfortified. That the place remained without a wall, except for certain temporary walls put up by the Danes, proves that it was regarded by itself as of small importance. This is also proved by another fact – namely, that the place was always occupied without defence.

When, for instance, the Danes held London for twelve years, leaving it a wreck and a ruin, can we believe that any people remained in Southwark? In times of peace the fishermen lived here for greater convenience of their work; London by this time was impossible for them, because it was walled all along the river side. If peace was prolonged, inns were set up for the merchants: people built houses along the causeway. When war began again, and the enemy once more appeared, Southwark was again abandoned. This is the history of South London for a thousand years – alternate occupation and abandonment.

There exists a very singular heresy concerning Southwark. I would deal with it tenderly, because one, if not more, of the heretics is a personal friend of my own. It is that the site of the first or original London was on the South; that Roman London stood on the site of Southwark; and that, at some time or other, there was a transference of sites, the whole of Roman London migrating to the other side. It is even maintained that the name of Walworth proves that there was once a wall round the city of the south. To me the name of Walworth indicates the proximity of the high causeway running through its midst. The consideration of the site – the marshy, wet, and unwholesome site – is quite sufficient for me. At no time, not even in the time of the Lake dwellers, have marshes been selected by choice for the building of cities. Before the Embankment and the Causeway, the South of London was impossible for the residence of man.

The transference of sites is a theory often called in to

account for, and make possible, other theories. Thus, the late James Fergusson invented the transference of sites in order to bolster up certain theories of his own on the Holy Places of Jerusalem. Here, however, there is no theory: only a statement by a geographer evidently ignorant of the boundaries of an obscure province of a district in a distant country which he had never seen. London, Ptolemy said, was in Kent. All the Roman remains, as we have seen, are found by the Causeway and the Embankment – there never could have been any wall; and, indeed, the only answer that is required to such a theory is to point to the natural conditions of the site. Is it conceivable that people would settle themselves in a marsh when they had firm and dry ground across the river?

## CHAPTER II

### EARLY HISTORY

Southwark, then, had no reason for existence at all except for its connection with London by bridge and ferry, and especially by bridge. Before the Ferry and the Bridge there was no Southwark. The history of Southwark is closely connected with the Bridge. It was on the south end of the Bridge that all the fighting took place, London very generously handing over her battles to her daughter of the south. I propose, in this chapter, to discourse about the Bridge and one or two of its earlier battles.

It is sometimes stated, confidently, that before the Bridge there was the Ferry. Why? To carry people across the river and 'dump' them down in the marsh? But people had no business in the marsh. First came the Bridge and the Causeway to connect it with the Dover road. Then traffic began to cross the Bridge and to meet the Dover road. But as yet there was no ferry. Then came the Embankment, and the appearance of houses along the Causeway and on the Embankment. As the trade of London increased, so Southwark – I would we had the Roman name – increased in proportion. Inns were created for the convenience of merchants, trade was drawn from Thorney on the south by the Bridge, just as it was diverted on the north by the military way connecting the great high road with London. When the Causeway

was always filled with caravans and long trains of heavily laden packhorses; when the inns were crowded with merchants and their slaves; when the Bridge was all day covered with passengers and carriers; then the Ferry was demanded as a quicker and an easier way of getting across. Two Ferries, there were; perhaps more. One of these ran from Dowgate Dock to St. Mary Overies; the other crossed the river lower down, nearer the Tower. So things remained for nearly two thousand years – say, from A.D. 100 to A.D. 1750. If a man wanted to get across the river, he did not make his way to London Bridge, and painfully walk across amid the carriers and the caravans, the plunging horses and the droves of oxen; he stepped into the boat and was ferried across. We must not look on the Bridge as a means of getting across the river for the people: it was not; it was the means of conveying merchandise to and fro; it was a construction most important for military purposes; it was a barrier to prevent a hostile fleet from getting higher up the river; but, for the ordinary passenger, the boat was the quicker and the easier means of conveyance.

When was the Bridge built? It is impossible to say. It was not there A.D. 61, when Queen Boadicea's troops sacked the City and murdered the people. It was there when Allectus led his troops out to fight the Roman legions. It was there very early in the Roman occupation, as is proved by the quantities of Roman coins of the four centuries of their tenure found in the bed of the river on the site of the old Bridge. It is also proved by the fact that Southwark was a settlement of the wealthier class, who could not



have lived in a place absolutely without supplies, had there been no bridge. We may take any time we please for the construction of the Bridge, so long as it is quite early – say, before the second century.

The building of the Bridge can be arrived at with such great certainty that I have no hesitation in presenting a drawing of it. As this Bridge has never before been figured by the pencil of any artist, it will be well for me to indicate the steps by which its reconstruction has been made possible.

The Britons themselves were quite unable to construct a bridge of any kind, unless in the primitive methods observed at Post Bridge and Two Bridges, on Dartmoor, by a slab of stone laid across two boulders. The work, therefore, was certainly undertaken by Roman engineers. We have, in the next place, to inquire what kind of bridge was built at that time by the Romans. They built bridges of wood and of stone; many of these stone bridges still remain, in other cases the pieces of hewn stone still remain. The Bridge over the Thames, however, was of wood. This is proved by the fact that, had it been of the solid Roman construction in stone, the piers would be still remaining; also by the fact that London had to be contented with a wooden bridge till the year 1176, when the first bridge of stone was commenced. Considerations as to the comparative insignificance of London in the first century, as to the absence of stone in the neighbourhood, and as to the plentiful supply of the best wood in the world from the forests north of the City, confirm the theory that the Bridge

was built of wood. We have only, therefore, to learn how Roman engineers built bridges of wood elsewhere, in order to know how they built a bridge of wood over the Thames. And this we know without any doubt.

First: they drove piles into the bed of the river – not upright piles, but inclined at an angle; they placed two piles side by side, and opposite to these two more; they connected the two piles by ties and the opposite piles with them by transverse girders. Across them they laid a huge beam – a tree roughly hewn, and across these beams they laid the floor of stout planks. The weight of beams and planks and the parapet put up afterwards, with perhaps other planks for greater safety, pressed down the piles and held them in place. To prevent the current from carrying them away, each double pair of piles was protected by a 'starling,' formed by driving upright smaller piles in front at the piers and enclosing a space, which was filled up with stones, so that the force of the current was not felt by the great piles.

In this way the Roman Bridge was built. You will understand it better from the drawing, which shows the Bridge taken from the Embankment near the present site of St. Mary Overies Church. The gate is the river-gate in the long straight wall which ran along the bank of the river. The wall, it is obvious, must have been pierced at several points for the convenience of trade and the quays: one supposes that these posterns could be easily closed and defended. This river-wall, we shall presently see, was standing in the time of Cnut. Some parts of it stood until the building of

the stone Bridge in the last quarter of the twelfth century. The Roman Bridge was also the Saxon Bridge, the Danish Bridge, and the Norman Bridge.

In course of time the river-wall was removed, bit by bit: its foundations still lie under the pavement and the warehouses. The gate was altered. I do not suppose there was much of the original structure left when the East Saxons took possession of the City after a hundred years of desertion and decay. But a gate of some kind there must always have been. The breadth of the Bridge allowed, according to FitzStephen, two carts to pass each other. That means about sixteen feet. Like the very ancient stone bridges of Saintes and Avignon, the Bridge was from sixteen to twenty feet broad. The river-gate stood at the south end of Botolph Lane, some seventy feet east of the present Bridge: the second Bridge – the first of stone – stood between the first and third, having St. Magnus' Church on the north and St. Olave's on the south side; together with its own chapel of St. Thomas on the Bridge itself, to place it under the special protection of the saints most dear to London hearts.

The Bridge, and especially the south end of it, was a field of battle whenever the way of war came near to London. The first glimpse, as we have seen, which we catch of it is when Allectus and his forces crossed the river by the Bridge to give battle to the legions of Asclepiodotus on the Heath beyond the rising ground. A few hours later, on the same day, their columns routed, their general dead, we see the defeated troops once more

flying across the narrow Bridge. There was no one to lead them, or they could have held the Bridge against all comers; there was no drawbridge to pull up, or they could have kept the Romans out by that expedient. One wonders if all their officers were lying dead on the field, with Allectus, for the troops, who were Franks for the most part, seem to have left the Bridge without a guard, and the river-gate wide open, while they melted into little companies, who ran about the City pillaging the houses and murdering the unfortunate people.

By the Roman law the people were unarmed: no one could carry arms except the soldiers. The law was a safeguard against rebellion; but it opened the door to military revolts, and it destroyed the military spirit among the civil population – always a most dangerous thing for a State. The Roman legions poured into the City; they found Allectus' Franks at their murderous work, and they cut them down. If it is true, as stated by the historians, that they were all cut off to a man, London must have been a horrible shambles.

The second glimpse of the Bridge is also that of a routed army flying across the narrow way to seek shelter between the walls. It is in the year 467. They are the Britons flying from their defeat in Kent. After this there is silence – absolute silence, leaving not so much as a whisper, a tradition, or a legend; the silence that can only mean desertion – silence for a hundred and fifty years.

When London reappears, it is in humble guise: the City has shrunk within her ancient walls; and these have fallen into decay.

Southwark no longer exists. We learn that the Bridge has been repaired, because there is easy communication with Canterbury. Yet in the Danish troubles there is no fighting on or for the Bridge. Why? simply because there were no defenders of the Bridge on the south. In 819 and in 857 the Danes entered London and 'slaughtered numbers,' apparently without opposition. In 872 they occupied London, apparently without opposition. We hear of no siege, of no fighting on the Bridge; of no shelter behind the walls. Yet there was a defence at York, at Reading, at Nottingham – behind the walls. Why not in London? Because in London the walls, 5,500 yards in length, had become too long to man, or to defend, or to repair. The Danes ran into the City through the shattered gate; they leaped over the broken wall. What happened to the people; what street fighting was carried on, what slaughter, what plunder, what horrible treatment of women – we may understand from the page of the historian Saxo relating other sacks and sieges by the gentle Dane. As for the trade, the wealth, the name and fame of London – they all perished together. It was a ruined city, with a miserable population of craftsmen enslaved by the Dane, that Alfred reconquered. The Bridge itself was broken down; the settlements of the south were deserted: even the fishermen had left the Thames above and below London, and sought for safety in the retired creeks and safe backwaters along the coast of Essex. The London fisherman sallied forth in his coracle from the marshes behind Canvey Island, and from the slopes of Hadleigh. Alfred repaired the walls and the Bridge

and rebuilt the gates. Something like peace was restored to the City and order to the country. Then trade, which welcomes the first appearance of safety, began again. If the merchant feared the pirates of the Foreland, he could march across the Bridge to Dover; or he could land at Dover and march across Kent to the Bridge. Then the old settlements on the south Causeway were rebuilt and new inns sprang up, and Southwark began again.

A hundred years of rest from the 'army,' as the 'Chronicle' calls the Danes, gave Southwark time to grow. It is spoken of by the Danish historian as an 'emporium.' I understand from the use of this word that the trade of London was carried on principally by way of Dover, because the seas were swarming with pirates. Southwark was a halting-place and a resting-place, such as Thorney had been of old.

The prosperity of the settlement, however, received another blow when the Danes once more, mindful of their former victories, sailed up the river with hope of again taking London. Southwark was defenceless. There was never any wall about the place: its population was migratory. When the enemy appeared the people of Southwark retreated across the Bridge. The Danes landed, pillaged, and burned; they then went away. Some of the people returned, especially the fishermen, whose huts were easily repaired. When, however, the attacks became more frequent, and the Danes appeared every year, Southwark was deserted. But in London itself they were grievously disappointed; for their grandfathers had told them that it was a feeble and a helpless

place, perfectly incapable of resistance, with walls through whose wide gaps a whole army could march; and they fondly expected to find it in the same condition. But it had been growing, unseen by them, in population and resource and power.

In the year 992 the City showed its strength in a manner which was extremely startling to the Danes; for it equipped a great fleet, manned the ships with stout-hearted citizens, sent the ships down the river, met the Danish fleet, engaged them, and routed them with great slaughter. Two years later they returned, eager for revenge – the revenge which they vainly sought in six successive sieges. The army on this occasion consisted of Norsemen and Danes in alliance, under the two kings, Olaf of Norway and Swegen of Denmark. They were firmly resolved to take the City: with their warriors they would attack it by land, with their ships by water. They had no ladders; they had no knowledge of mining; they had no battering-rams; they could, and doubtless did, endeavour to break down the gates with trunks of trees; but the gates were well manned and well defended. On the river-side one half of the town kept open their communications; the other half were exposed to the arrows of the sailors, but had arrows of their own. How long the siege lasted I know not; the 'Chronicle,' all too brief, tells us only that the enemy discovered that they could not prevail, and that they withdrew.

The appearance of a Danish or Norwegian fleet, whose ships were models to King Alfred when he founded the English Navy, must not be gathered from the drawings of the Bayeux

tapestry, where the ships are conventional in treatment. We have, fortunately, one actual surviving specimen of a ship of King Olaf's time. It is the famous ship of Gokstad, in Norway. Look at the two pictures on this and following page. One is taken from the tapestry, the other is the Gokstad vessel. The former carries about a dozen men, rather high out of the water, with straight sides, and would certainly capsize. The latter is a long, light, swift vessel, built for speed, and able to sail over quite shallow water; she is constructed on lines which, for beauty or for usefulness, cannot be surpassed even at the present day: she rides lightly, drawing very little water. She is clinker built; the planks overlying each other are fastened with iron bolts, riveted and clinched on the inside. She is built of oak; her length from stem to stern, over all, is 78 feet; her keel is 66 feet; her breadth is 16½ feet; her depth is no more than 4 feet; the third plank from the top is twice as thick as the others; she is pierced by portholes for as many oars. The ship is pointed at both ends; she is steered by a rudder attached to the side of the stern; on each side hang 16 shields; she carried 64 rowers, and probably as many men besides. The decorations lavished on the ship were profuse. The figure-head was gilt, the stern was gilt, the shields were gilt; the ships were painted in long lines of bright colour – you can see that in the ships of the Bayeux tapestry. The whole of the vessel – bows, figure-head, gunwale, stern-post – were covered with carvings; the sails were decorated with embroideries; the mast was gilt. Verily the 'fleet shone as if it were on fire.'



Such were the ships which came up, nearly a hundred in company, with Olaf and Swegen. Low in the water they came, the oars sweeping in a long, measured swish of the water: swiftly flying up the broad river, the sunshine lighting up the colours and the gilding of the ships, and the bright arms of the company on board. It was a company of tall and strong men; young, every one, with long fair hair and blue eyes. From the grey walls of the town, from the Bridge on the river, the citizens saw the splendid array rushing up to destroy them if they could. At the Bridge, the foremost stop: they go no farther; those behind cry 'Forward!' and those in front cry 'Back!' The Bridge would suffer none to pass; and so, jammed together, perhaps lashed together, as when Olaf was to meet his death five years later in his last splendid sea-fight, they essayed to take the city by assault. They shot arrows with red-hot heads over the walls, to strike and set light to the thatch; they shot arrows at the citizens on the walls; they tried to scale the piles of the Bridge. If they could get within the City, these splendid savages, there would be slaughter and pillage, ravishing of women, firing of the thatch, the roar of flames and the clashing of weapons, and next day silence, long teams of slaves and of treasure lifted into the ships, bows turned outward; and the fleet would leave behind it a London once more desolate and naked and forlorn, as when the East Saxon entered towards the end of the sixth century. It was a day of fate, and big with destiny. Had the Danes succeeded, we know not what might have been the history of London and of England.

When they were beaten off, the people of Southwark went back to their homes, and the daily business of life was carried on as usual. We may observe that if there had been a permanent settlement here – a town of any importance – they would have built a wall to protect it. But there was never any wall; the place could be approached by the Causeway or by the river; no one ever at any time thought of protecting Southwark.

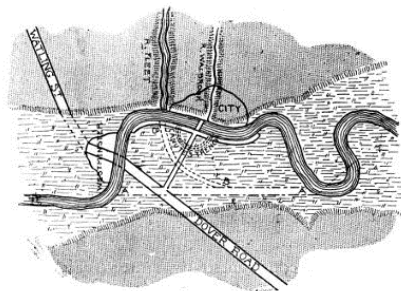
But now a worse time fell upon the place, as well as upon London. The whole country, almost unresisting, was ravaged by the Danes: Swegen came over and proved the English weakness, and saw that time would help him, if he waited. Time did help him, and famine helped him as well.

In 1009 occurred the second siege of London, this time by Thurkitel, who afterwards entered into the service of Ethelred. He ravaged Kent and Essex, took up his winter quarters on the Thames, apparently at Greenwich, and laid siege to the City – but in vain. It is of course obvious that without ladders, mines, battering-rams, or wooden towers, the City could never be taken. The people beat him off at every assault with great loss. It seems as if the whole valour in England was at the moment concentrated in London.

The third siege of London was in 1013, when Swegen returned. This time, mindful of his former failure, and of Thurkitel's failure, he left his ships at Southampton; he marched upon London by way of Winchester, which he took on the way; but although he came up from the south, he did not attack

from the south, nor did he encamp on the south. The reason is obvious: the Causeway was narrow; to fight on the Bridge was to engage a mere handful of men; there was no place except that and the Causeway. Swegen, therefore, passed over the ford of Westminster, and attacked the walls on the north side. Within the City was Thurkitel, now in the English service; by his help or counsel, the Londoners drove Swegen off the field. He withdrew. But all England rapidly submitted to his arms; therefore London, too, seeing that it was useless to hold out alone, sent hostages and submitted. It is reported that they were terrified at the threats of Swegen: he would cut off their hands and their feet; he would tear out their eyes; he would burn and destroy – and so forth. But these promises were the common garnish of besiegers; they no more frightened the defenders of London at this time than they frightened the defenders of any other city.

The end of Swegen, as everybody knows, was that St. Edmund of Bury killed him for doubting his saintliness.



## SKETCH MAP

We now come to the three successive sieges by King Cnut. The expedition with which he proposed to reduce London was far finer and more powerful than that of Olaf and Swegen. The poetic description of it says that the ships were counted by hundreds; that they were manned by an army among whom there was never a slave, or a freeman son of a slave, or one unworthy man, or an old man. Freeman asks what nobility meant if all were nobles? A strange question for one so learned! The nobles of Denmark were simply the conquering race; nobility consisted in free birth, and in descent from the conquering race, not the conquered: it was not necessarily a small caste; it might possibly include the larger part of the people.

Cnut anchored off Greenwich and prepared for his siege. First of all, he resolved that the Bridge should no longer bar the way. He therefore cut a trench round the south of the Bridge, by means of which he drew some of his ships to the other side of it. He then cut another trench round the whole of the wall. In this way he hoped to shut in the City and cut off all supplies: if he could not take the place by storm, he would starve it out. There are no details of the siege, but as Cnut speedily abandoned the hope of success and marched off to look after Edmund, his investment of the City was certainly not a success.

He met Edmund and fought two battles with him; with what result history has made us acquainted. He then returned and

resumed the siege of London. Edmund fought him again, and made him once more raise the siege. When Edmund went into Wessex to gather new forces, Cnut began a third siege, in which, also, 'by God's help,' he made no progress.

In twenty years, therefore, the City of London was besieged six times, and not once taken.

Antiquaries have written a good deal on the colossal nature of the canal constructed by Cnut; they have looked for traces of it in the south of London before it was covered over by houses; they have gone as far afield as Deptford in search of these traces; they have even found them; and to the present day every writer who has mentioned the canal speaks of it and thinks of it with the respect due to a colossal work. Freeman himself called it a 'deep ditch.' How deep it was, how long it was, how broad it was, I am going to explain.

It was in the year 1756 that the painstaking historian, William Maitland, F.R.S., announced that he had been so fortunate as to light upon the course of the long-lost trench of King Cnut.

He had found certain evidence, he said, of its course, in a direction nearly east and west from the then 'New Dock' of Rotherhithe to the river at the end of Chelsea Reach, through Vauxhall Gardens. The proofs were, first, certain depressions in the ground; next, the discovery of oaken planks and piles driven into the ground for what he thought was the northern fence of the canal, near the Old Kent Road; and next a report that, in 1694, when the wet dock of Rotherhithe was

constructed, a quantity of hazel, willow, and other branches were found pointing northward, with stakes to keep them in position, forming a kind of water fence, such as, it is said, is still in use in Denmark. It will be seen that Mr. Maitland's theory has but a small basis of evidence, yet it seems to have been generally accepted – partly, I suppose, because it was so colossal.

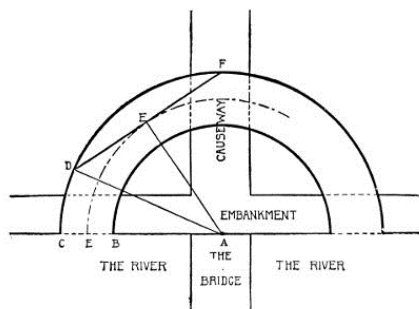
The canal thus cut would actually be a little over four miles and a half in length. Another writer, seeing the difficulties of so great a work, suggests another course. He would start from the site of the New Dock, Rotherhithe, and end on the other side of London Bridge, a course of only three and three-quarter miles!

Let us ask ourselves why it should be a 'deep' ditch; why it should be a long ditch; why it should be a broad ditch.

Wherever Cnut began his trench, whether at Rotherhithe or nearer the Bridge, he would have the same preliminary difficulties to encounter: that is to say, he would have to cut through the Embankment of the river at either end, and he would have to cut through the Causeway in the middle. In these cuttings he would perhaps have to take down two or three houses, huts, or cabins, all deserted, because the people had all run across the Bridge for safety at the first sight of the Danes, if there were any people at the time living in Southwark – which I doubt.

We may, further, take it for granted that Cnut had officers of sense and experience on whom he could depend for carrying out his canal in a workmanlike manner. A people who could build such perfect ships would certainly not waste time and labour in

constructing a trench which would be any longer or deeper or wider than was absolutely necessary.



Now the shortest canal possible would be that in which he was just able to drag his vessels round without destroying the banks. In other words, if a circular canal began at C B, and if we drew an imaginary circle round the middle of the canal, what was required was that the chord D F, forming a tangent to the middle circle, should be at least as long as the longest vessel. Now (see diagram) —

$$AD^2 - AE^2 = DE^2$$

If  $r$  is the radius, AD and  $2a$  the breadth BC, and  $2b$  the length of the chord DF —

$$r^2 - (r - a)^2 = b^2 \therefore r = (a^2 + b^2)/2a$$

This represents the length of the radius in terms of the length and breadth of the largest vessel in the fleet, and is therefore the smallest radius possible for getting the ships through. Now, the ship of Gokstad, already described, was undoubtedly one of the finest of the vessels used by Danes and Normans. The poets certainly speak of larger ships, but as a marvel. Nothing is said about Cnut bringing over ships of very great size. Now, that vessel was 66 feet in length, considering the keel, which is all we need consider; 16½ feet in breadth, and 4 feet in depth. She drew very little water; therefore a breadth of canal less than the breadth of the vessel was enough. Let us make the chord 70 feet in length, so that  $b = 35$ . Let us make the breadth of the canal 12 feet. Therefore  $2a = 12$  or  $a = 6$  and  $r = 105$  feet very nearly. Measuring, therefore, 105 feet on either side of London Bridge, we arrive at a possible commencement of Cnut's work. That is to say, if he made a semicircular canal, in that case the length of the canal would be 320 yards, which is certainly an improvement on four miles and a half, or even three miles and three-quarters.





## THE GOKSTAD SHIP

There is, however, more to consider. Why should Cnut make a semicircle when an arc would serve his turn? All he had to do was to draw an arc of a circle with the radius just found, to clear any obstacles in the way of approach to the Bridge, and use that arc for his canal. This is most certainly what he did: I am quite certain he adopted this method, because it was the only sensible thing to do. He would thus get off with a canal about fifty yards long, of which the only difficulty would be the cutting through the Embankment and the Causeway.

What would be the depth of the canal? Look at this section of the Gokstad ship. With her breadth of sixteen feet, she had only four feet in depth; without her company and crew, and their arms and provisions, she would thus draw no more than a few inches – certainly not more than eight inches or so. Freeman's deep canal therefore comes to eight inches at the most. But there is still another consideration which lessened the labour materially. The ground behind the Embankment was a little lower than the river at high tide: the Danes, therefore, had only to construct a low wooden containing-wall of timber on each side in order to make their canal without excavating an inch. When that was done, the cutting of the Embankment let in the tide and did the rest. In this simple manner do we reduce Cnut's colossal work of a deep canal, four miles and a half long, into a piece of construction and demolition which would take a large body of men no more than

a few hours.

If, however, there actually was any digging to be done, we must remember that the ground was a level; that there were no stones or rocks in the way, and that it consisted of a soft black *humus*, the result of ages of successive growths of sedge and coarse grass, formerly washed twice a day by the brackish waters of a tidal river. The object of the canal once attained, the ships drawn back again, Cnut, of course, left the place to be repaired by any who pleased. The broken Embankment let in the tide; the broken Causeway cut off any approach to the river; but Southwark was deserted. When things settled down a little, workmen were sent across from London, and the broken places were repaired. Then all traces of the canal disappeared.

Thirty-six years later, in 1052, Earl Godwine arrived at Southwark with a fleet and an army. He had no difficulty in passing the Bridge; he waited till flood-tide, and then sailed through 'on the south side.' It is quite impossible to explain this statement, or to make it agree with the difficulty felt by Cnut. The Bridge may have sustained some damage; there may have been a drawbridge; or Godwine's ships may have been smaller: one knows nothing. I merely state the fact as the Chronicler gives it.

One more glimpse of the Bridge from Southwark before we pass on to more modern times.

After Hastings, William marched northwards. Arrived near London, he advanced to Southwark, where he found the Bridge closed to him – closed, I believe, by knocking away some of the

upper beams. This, of course, he expected; his friends within the City, of whom he had many, kept him acquainted with the changing currents of popular opinion. It is commonly stated that the citizens were terrified by the sight of Southwark in flames at his command. Southwark in flames! A few fishermen's huts were all that remained of the suburb, whose population since the time of the *Pax Romana* had been so precarious and so changeful. Five hundred years of battle, war between kings and tribes, invasion and ravage by Dane and Norseman, had not left of Southwark, once so beautiful a suburb, anything more than these poor huts and ruins of huts. William's soldiers burned them, because wherever a soldier of that period appeared, the thatch always caught fire spontaneously. William saw the flames, and regarded them not, any more than he regarded the flames that followed in his track all the way from Senlac. He gazed across the river, and remembered that twice had London defied all the strength of Swegen; that three times had London beaten off the great King Cnut when all England had surrendered; that in six sieges London had always been victorious; he knew, because his friends in the City would allow no mistake on that point, that the spirit of the citizens was as high now as it had been then; that they still remembered with pride the defeat of Cnut; and that not a few were anxious to treat William the Norman as they had treated Cnut the Dane. One knows not, exactly, what things went on within the walls; what exhortations, what wild talk, what faction fight; how the citizens rolled, and surged, a mass of wild

faces, about their Folk-mote by St. Paul's. But of one thing we may be quite certain: that William did not expect the citizens to be afraid of him; and that, in fact, they were not afraid of him, whether he set fire to the huts of Southwark or not; they were not afraid of William, whatever the historians say. As for the Bridge, the old Roman Bridge, by this time there could hardly have been a single pile remaining of the original structure; yet it was constantly repaired.

We may restore to Norman London, therefore, not only the grey wall rising out of the level ground, without any ditch or moat outside, but also the Bridge of wooden piles with the transverse girders and beams for additional security, so that the old Bridge contained a whole forest of timbers like those which support the roof of an ancient hall. It was continually receiving damage. In the year 1091, a mighty whirlwind blew down a good part of London, houses and churches and all. It has been assumed that the Bridge was also destroyed; but the 'Chronicle' is silent on the subject. In 1092 there was a great fire in London; it is again assumed that the Bridge was destroyed, but again the 'Chronicle' is silent. In 1097, however, it is plainly stated that the Bridge had been almost washed away, and that it was repaired.

In 1136 the most destructive fire ever experienced by London, save that of 1666, spread through the whole City, from London Bridge, which it greatly damaged, all the way to St. Clement Danes on the west, and Aldgate on the east. One wonders what ancient monuments – walls of Roman churches, villas, and baths,

still surviving halls and chambers of the Forum – were destroyed in this fire; Saxon houses of the better sort, with their great halls and courtyards; small Saxon churches of wood or stone, with low towers and little windows. Possibly there was no great loss: it was already seven hundred years since Augusta was deserted. Roman remains must have been scanty; the City was chiefly built of wood, with thatched roofs; the splendour of the latter centuries had not yet commenced. The Bridge, however, was either wholly or in part destroyed. It was repaired, because, fifty years later, FitzStephen, in his description of the City, speaks of the citizens watching the water sports from the Bridge. Indeed, the Bridge was now absolutely necessary to the City. A hundred years of order in the City – with the seas cleared of pirates, the Danes kept down, and merchants filling the river with ships, and the quays with merchandise – crowded the Bridge all day long with trains of packhorses, and the less frequent rude carts with broad grunting wheels which would have quite taken the place of the horse but for the bad roads. Southwark, during this period of rest, had become once more a town, or at least a village. Still, along the Embankment stood the thatched huts of the fisherfolk; but they were pushed farther east and west every year, until Lambeth and Rotherhithe were their quarters when the fish deserted the river and their occupation was gone. The Roman inns were gone, but new ones were springing up in their places. Bishops and abbots were looking on Southwark as a place of fine air, open to every breeze and free from the noise and crowd of London;

ecclesiastical foundations were already springing into existence. In a word, the settlements of the south, after four hundred years of ruin and desertion, were once more beginning a new existence. The day when William rode up to the south end of the Bridge, and looked across upon a City that had not yet made up its mind about his reception, marked a new birth for the long-suffering suburb of the Embankment and the Causeway. A hundred years later still – in 1176 – they began to build their Bridge of Stone.

## CHAPTER III

# A FORGOTTEN MONASTERY

The earliest maps of South London are those of the sixteenth century. But it is perfectly easy from them and from the historical facts to draw a map of all that country lying between Deptford and Battersea which we have agreed to call South London. Thus, to put the map into words, there were buildings all along both sides of the Causeway as far as St. George's Church; in the middle of the Causeway stood St. Margaret's Church, facing St. Margaret's Hill; on the right-hand side, just under the Bridge, was St. Olave's Church. The Bridge was thus protected on the north by St. Magnus, on the south by St. Olave – two Danish saints – and in the middle by the patron saint of its chapel, St. Thomas à Becket. There were houses along the Embankment on either side, but more on the west of the Causeway than on the east. A few houses were built already on the low-lying ground near the Causeway; for instance, on the south and south-west of St. Mary Overies. On the east of St. Olave's a single straight lane with no houses ran across country to Bermondsey Abbey; on the west of the Causeway another lane led to Kennington Palace, from which another lane led to the Causeway from Lambeth and Westminster to the Dover Road. That was the whole extent of Southwark.

The place was essentially a suburb. There were no trades or

industries in it, except that of fishing; the fishermen had their cottages dotted about all along the Embankment; a few watermen lived here, but that was perhaps later: other working men there were none, save the cooks and varlets of the great houses, and the 'service' of the inns. Because the air was fresh and pure, blown up daily with the tides; and because the place was easy of access, by river, to Westminster and the Court, many great men, ecclesiastics and nobles, had their town houses here: the Bishop of Winchester, the Bishop of Rochester, the Prior of Lewes, the Abbot of Hyde, the Abbot of Battle, the Earls of Surrey, Sir John Fastolfe, also the Brandons. Also, because it was easy of access by bridge and river to the City, the merchants brought their goods and warehoused them here in the inns at which they stayed, while they went across the river and transacted their business. It was a suburb which, in modern times, would be described as needing no poor rate. Later on there grew up, as we shall see, a class of the unclassed – a population of rogues and vagabonds, thieves, and sanctuary birds.

The government of the place as a whole was difficult, or rather impossible. There were several 'Liberties;' the Liberty of Bermondsey; that of the Bishop of Winchester; that of the King; that of the Mayor. The last contained the part of the Borough lying between St. Saviour's Dock on the west and Hay's Dock on the east, with a southern limit just including St. Margaret's Church. This very small district was called the Gildable Manor: it was conceded by the King to the City of



London in the thirteenth century in order to prevent the place from becoming the home and refuge of criminals from the City. As the other liberties remained outside the jurisdiction of the City, the alleviation gained was not very great: criminals still dropped across the river, finding shelter on the Lambeth Marsh or the marsh between Bermondsey and Rotherhithe. It was from this unavoidable hospitality to persons escaping from justice that Southwark received a character which has stuck to it till the present day. In the centuries which include the twelfth to the fifteenth, however, South London, so far as it was populated at all, was the residence of great lords and the place of sojourn for merchants from the country. As yet the reputation of Southwark was spotless and its dignity enviable. London itself had no such collection of palaces gathered together so closely. As for the land, that lay low, but was protected by the Embankment from the river. Many rivulets flowed slowly across the misty meadows; many ponds lay about the flats; there was an abundant growth of trees everywhere, so that parts of the land were dark at midday by reason of the trees growing so close together. The rivulets were pretty little streams; willows grew over them; alders grew beside them; they were coloured brown by the peaty soil; on their banks grew wild flowers – the marsh mallow, the anemone, the hedgehog grass, the frogbit, the crowfoot, and the bitter-wort; orchards flourished in the fat and fertile soil. The people had almost forgotten the special need of their Embankment. Yet when, in the year 1242, the Embankment at Lambeth was broken

down, the river rushed in and covered six square miles of country, including all that part which is now called Battersea.

Remember, however, that as yet there was not a single house upon the whole of Lambeth Marsh, nor upon the whole of Bermondsey Marsh. The houses began near what is now the south end of Blackfriars Bridge; they faced the river, having gardens behind them. On the other side of the Bridge the houses extended farther, going on nearly opposite to Wapping.

The place was well provided with prisons; every Liberty had its own prison. Thus there were the Clink of the Winchester Liberty, that of the Bermondsey Liberty, the 'White Lion' of Surrey, the King's Bench, and the Marshalsea, all in the narrow limits we have laid down. And there were also, for the delectation of the righteous and the terror of evil-doers, the visible instruments for correction. In every parish there was the whipping post – one in St. Mary Overy's churchyard, put up after the time of the monks; one at St. Thomas's Hospital; there was the pillory for neck and hands, generally with somebody on it, but the pillory was movable; there was the cage – one stood at the south end of the Bridge – women had to stand in the cage; there were stocks for feet wandering and trespassing; there were pounds for stray animals.

Markets were held in the churchyard of St. Margaret's; in the precinct of Bermondsey Abbey; and along the street called 'Long Southwark' – now High Street – from the Bridge to St. Margaret's Hill. But we must not suppose that the markets of Southwark

presented the same crowded appearance, and were carried on with the same noise and bustle, as those of Chepe and Newgate on the other side.

Everything, in those days, was quiet and dignified in Southwark. The Princes of the Church arrived and departed, each with his retinue of chaplains and secretaries, gentlemen and livery. Kings and ambassadors rode up from Dover through Long Southwark and across the Bridge. The mayor and aldermen in new cloaks of red murrey and gold chains sallied forth to meet the King returning from abroad. Cavalcades of pilgrims for Canterbury, Compostella, Seville, Rome, and Jerusalem rode out of Southwark when the spring returned; and every day there arrived and departed long lines of packhorses laden with the produce of the country and with things imported for sale in London City. Pilgrims, merchants, travellers, all put up at the Southwark inns. The place was nothing but a collection of inns; the ecclesiastics stayed here for a few weeks and then went away; the great lords came here when they had business at Court and then went away again; the merchants came and went: by itself the place had, as yet, no independent life or character of its own at all.

There were two Monastic Houses. Both were stately; both are full of history. Let us consider the House of Bermondsey, because it is less generally known than the other of St. Mary Overy or Overies.

The Abbey of St. Saviour, Bermondsey, was the Westminster

of South London. Like Westminster, Bermondsey stood upon a low islet in the midst of a marsh; at the distance of half a mile on the north ran the river; half a mile on the west was the Causeway; half a mile on the south was the Dover road. It is significant of the seclusion in which the House lay that the only road which connected it with the world was that lane called Bermondsey or Barnsie or Barnabie Lane, which ran from the Abbey to St. Olave's and so to London Bridge. It was not, like Westminster, a place of traffic and resort. It lay alone and secluded, separated from the noise and racket of life. When the marsh had been gradually drained and the Embankment continued through Rotherhithe to Deptford and beyond the Greenwich levels, the Abbey lands round the islet became extremely fertile and wooded and covered with sheep and cattle.

The House was founded in the year 1182 by one Ailwin Childe, a merchant of the City, an Alderman also and one of the ruling families of London. He was the son of an elder Ailwin, who was a member of that 'Knigheten Guild' which, with all its members and all its property – the land which now forms the Ward of Portsoken – went over to the Priory of the Holy Trinity. Religion of a practical and real kind was therefore hereditary in the family. The elder Ailwin became a monk, the younger founded a monastery; his son, the third of the family of whom we know anything, became the first Mayor of London, and remained Mayor for twenty-four years – the rest of his life.

The whole of history from the ninth to the fifteenth century is full of a pathetic longing after a religious Order, if that could be found, of true and proved sanctity. One Order after the other arises; one after the other challenges respect for reputed holiness of a new and hitherto unknown kind: in fact, it commands the respect of the people who always admire voluntary privation of what they value so much – food and drink; it receives endowments, gifts, foundations of all kinds; it then departs from the ancient rule, and quickly loses its hold upon the people. This is the simple history of Benedictine, Franciscan, Cistercian, and all the rest. However, at the close of the eleventh century the Cluniac was in the highest repute for a rigid Rule, strictly kept: and for an austerity strictly enforced. It was a Cluniac House which Ailwin Childe set up in Bermondsey, and which Earl de Warren, who also founded the Cluniac House of Lewes, enriched.

This Priory, with thirty-seven other Houses, was an Alien owing obedience to the Abbot of Cluny. A large part of its revenues, therefore, was sent out of the country, and it received its Priors from abroad. In the reign of Henry the Fifth the growing dissatisfaction on account of the Alien Priories came to a head, and they were all suppressed, or at least cut off from obedience to the Mother Convent. The Priory of Bermondsey was therefore raised to the dignity of an Abbey, with an English Abbot, and so continued until the Dissolution.

The Abbey was one of the many places of pilgrimage dotted

about round London – places accessible in a single day's journey. Thus there were the three shrines of Willesden, Muswell Hill, and Gospel Oak, each possessing an image of the Virgin to which miraculous powers were attributed. At Blackheath there was another holy shrine; at Bermondsey there was a Holy Rood which was daily visited in the summer by pious pilgrims from London. The Rood had been fished up from the Thames, and no one knew its history; but the merit of a pilgrimage to the Abbey and of prayers said before the shrine was considered very precious. It was, moreover, an easy pilgrimage. A boat taken below the Bridge would take the pilgrim over to the opposite shore in a few minutes, where a cross standing before a lane leading out of 'Short Southwark' showed him the way. It was but half a mile to the Abbey of St. Saviour and the Holy Rood.

'Go,' writes John Paston in 1465 to his mother, 'visit the Rood of North door and St. Saviour in Bermondsey among while ye abide in London; and let my sister Margery go with you to pray to them that she may have a good husband or she come home again.'

One can hardly expect that the Abbot of Cluny should resign this valuable possession without a remonstrance. He made, in fact, the strongest possible remonstrance. In 1457 he sent over three monks with orders to lay the case before the King, and to invite his attention especially to the papers showing the clear and indisputable right of the Mother Convent to the House of Bermondsey. These monks, in fact, did present their case to the King, with the documents. But no one heeded them; they could

hardly get a hearing; no one replied to their arguments. This neglect was perhaps the cause why one of them died while in this country. The other two went home again, having accomplished nothing. One of them on the eve of their departure wrote a piteous letter to the Abbot of St. Albans: —

For the rest, be it known to you, my Lord, that after having spent four months and a half on our journey, and following our Right with the most serene Lord the King and his Privy Council, we have obtained nothing: nay, we are sent back very disconsolate, deprived of our Manors, our Pensions alienated, and, what is still worse, we are denied the obedience of all our Monasteries which are 38 in number: nor did our Legal Deeds, nor the Testimonies of your Chronicles avail us anything, and at length, after all our pleading and expenses, we return home moneyless, for in truth, after paying for what we have eaten and drunk, we have but five crowns left, to go back about 260 leagues. But what then? We will sell what we have: we will go on: and God will provide. Nothing else occurs to write to your Paternity: but that as we entered England with joy, so we depart thence with sorrow: having buried one of our Companions – viz. the Archdeacon, the youngest of our company. May he rest in Peace! Amen.

There is not at the present moment a single stone of this stately House visible, though there were many remains above ground one hundred years ago. It is a pity, because there is the association of two Queens, not to speak of many great Lords of

state Functions, and of Parliaments, connected with this House secluded in the Marsh.

The first of the two Queens is Katharine of Valois, widow of Henry the Fifth. The story is the most romantic, perhaps, of all the stories connected with our line of sovereigns and Queens and Royal Princes. It is not a new story, and yet it is not so well known that any apology is needed for telling it once more.

Henry died August 31, 1422. His widow, Katharine, began to live in the seclusion fitted for her sorrow and her widowhood. Among her household, the office of Clerk to the Wardrobe was filled by a young and handsome Welshman named Owen Tudor, or Theodore. He was the son of a plain Welsh gentleman of slender means, if any, who was in the service of the Bishop of Chester. He distinguished himself at Agincourt in the following of some nobleman unknown. It has been said, with singular ignorance of the time, that he was a private soldier – that is, a man with a pike or a bow, dressed in a leather jerkin which the men threw off when the battle began. The opportunities for a common soldier to distinguish himself in such an action were few, nor do we ever hear of a king raising a man from the ranks, as Henry raised Owen Tudor, to the post of Esquire to the Body. It is possible, but most improbable, that Owen Tudor was regarded as a common soldier: since his father was a gentleman in the service of the Bishop of Chester, he himself would go to war as a gentleman in the service and wearing the livery of some noble lord.



In this way, however, his promotion began. When the King married, Owen Tudor was attached to the household of the Queen. After the death of Henry he accompanied the Queen and remained in her service as Clerk to the Wardrobe. In this office he had to buy whatever was wanted by the Queen – her silk, her velvet, her cloth of gold. He was therefore brought into much closer and more direct relation with the Queen than other officers of the household. He pleased her by his appearance, his accomplishments, and his manners. Tradition says that he danced very well. There is no reason to inquire by what attractions or accomplishments he pleased. The fact remains that he did please the Queen, and that so much that she consented to a secret marriage with him. It was a dangerous step for this Welsh adventurer to take: it was a step which would cover the Queen with dishonour should it become known. That the widow of the great and glorious Henry, chief captain of the age, should be able to forget her husband at all; should be capable of union with any lower man; should ally her royal line with that of a man who could only call himself gentleman after the fashion of Wales: would certainly be considered to bring dishonour on the King, the royal family, and the country at large.

The marriage was not found out for some years. The Queen must have been most faithfully and loyally served, because children cannot be born without observation. Owen Tudor must have conducted matters with a discretion beyond all praise. No doubt the ordinary members of the household knew nothing

and suspected nothing, because several years passed before any suspicion was awakened. Three sons and one daughter, in all, were born. The eldest, Edmund of Hadham, was so called because he was born there; the second, Jasper, was of Hatfield; the third, Owen, of Westminster; the youngest, Margaret, died in infancy.

Suspensions were aroused about the time of the birth of Owen, which took place apparently before it was expected and without all the precautions necessary, in the King's House at Westminster. The infant was taken as soon as born to the monastery of St. Peter's, secretly. It is not likely that the Abbot received the child without full knowledge of his parents. He did take the child, however; and here the little Owen remained, growing up in a monastery, and taking vows in due time. Here he lived and here he died, a Benedictine of Westminster.

It would seem as if Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, heard some whisper or rumour concerning this birth, or was told something about the true nature of the Queen's illness, for he issued a very singular proclamation, warning the world, generally, against marrying Queen dowagers, as if these ladies grew on every hedge. When, however, a year or so afterwards, the fourth child, Margaret, was born, Humphrey learned the whole truth: the degradation, as he thought it, of the Queen, who had stooped to such an alliance, and the humble rank and the audacity of the Welshman. He took steps promptly. He sent Katharine with some of her ladies to Bermondsey Abbey, there to remain

in honourable confinement: he arrested Owen Tudor, a priest – probably the priest who had performed the marriage – and his servant, and sent all three to Newgate.

All three succeeded in breaking prison, and escaped. At this point the story gets mixed. The King himself, we are told, then a lad of fifteen, sent to Owen commanding his attendance before the Council. Why did they not arrest him again? Owen, however, refused to trust himself to the Council – was not Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, one of them? He asked for a safe-conduct. They promised him one by a verbal message. Where was he, then, that all these messages should be sent backwards and forwards? I think he must have been in Sanctuary. He refused a verbal message, and demanded a written safe-conduct. This was granted him, and he returned to London. But he mistrusted even the written promise; he would not face the Council: he took refuge in the Sanctuary of Westminster, where they were afraid to seize him. And here for a while he remained. It is said that they tried to draw him out by sending old friends who invited him to the taverns outside the Abbey Precinct. But Owen would not be so drawn. He knew that Duke Humphrey would make an end of him if he could. He therefore remained where he was. I think that he must have had some secret understanding with the King; for one day, learning that Henry himself was with the Council, he suddenly presented himself and pleaded his own cause. The mild young king, tender on account of his mother, would not allow the case to be pursued, but bade him go free.

He departed; he made all haste to get out of an unwholesome air: he made for Wales. Here the hostility of Duke Humphrey pursued him still: he was once more arrested, taken to Wallingford, and placed in the Castle there a prisoner. From Wallingford he was transferred again to Newgate, he and his priest and his servant. Once more they all three broke prison, 'fouly' wounding a warder in the achievement of liberty, and got back to Wales, choosing for their residence the mountainous parts into which the English garrisons never penetrated.

When the King came of age Owen Tudor was allowed to return, and was presented with a pension of £40 a year. It is remarkable, however, that he received no promotion, or rank; that he was never knighted; and that the title of Esquire was the only one by which he was known. It certainly seems as if the claim of Owen Tudor to be called a gentleman was not recognised by the King or the heralds. Perhaps Welsh gentility was as little understood by these Normans as Irish royalty – yet, so far as length of pedigree goes, both Welsh and Irish were very superior to Normans.

The two sons, Edmund and Jasper, were placed under the charge of Katharine de la Pole, Abbess of Barking, and sister of the Earl of Suffolk. When the King came of age he remembered his half-brothers: Edmund was made Earl of Richmond, Jasper Earl of Pembroke; both ranked before all other English Earls. Edmund was afterwards married to Margaret Beaufort, who as Countess of Richmond was the foundress of Christ's and St.

John's Colleges, Cambridge. Her son, as everybody knows, was Henry VII.

As for Owen Tudor, that gallant adventurer, who began so well on the field of battle, ended as well, fighting, as he should, for his step-son and King, under the badge of the Red Rose. When the Civil Wars began he joined the King's forces, though he was then nearer seventy than sixty. He fought at Wakefield; he pursued the Yorkists to Mortimer's Cross, where another fight took place. The Lancastrians were defeated. Owen was taken prisoner, and was cruelly beheaded on the field. It was right and just that he should so fight and should so die. He survived his Queen twenty-four years.

The unfortunate Katharine, whose *mésalliance* gave us the strongest sovereigns we have ever had over us, did not long survive the disgrace of discovery. As to public knowledge of the fact, one cannot learn how widely it was extended. Probably it grew by degrees: chroniclers speak of it without reserve, and when the sons grew up and were acknowledged by the King there was no pretence at concealment. To be the son of a French Princess and a Welsh gentleman was not, after all, a matter for shame or concealment. Katharine carried down to the Abbey a disorder which she calls of long standing and grievous. It killed her in less than a year after her imprisonment among the orchards and meadows of the Precinct. It is said that her remorse during her last days was very deep; not for her second marriage, but for having allowed her accouchement of the King to take place at

Windsor, a place against which she was warned by the astrologer. 'Henry of Windsor shall lose all that Henry of Monmouth shall win.' Alas! had Henry of Windsor been Henry of Monmouth himself, he would have lost all there was to lose. Could there be a worse prospect, had Katharine understood the dangers, of hereditary disease? On the one side the grandson of a leper and the son of a consumptive; on the other side, the grandson of a madman and a Messalina.

Katharine dictated her will a few days before her death. She asks for masses for her soul: for rewards for her servants: for her debts to be paid. And she says not one word about her children by Owen Tudor. She confesses by this silence that she is ashamed. She confesses by this silence that, being a Queen, and of a Royal House, she ought not in her widowhood to have been mated with any less than a King.

'I trustfully,' she says in the preamble, addressing her son the King, 'and am right sure, that among all creatures earthly ye best may and will best tender and favour my will, in ordaining for my soul and body, in seeing that my debts be paid and my servants guerdoned, and in tender and favourable fulfilment of mine intent.' The words are full of queenly dignity; but – where is the mention of her children? Perhaps, however, she knew that the King would provide for them.

Another Queen died here: the Queen 'to whom all griefs were known' – Elizabeth Woodville. It is not easy to feel much sympathy with this unfortunate woman, yet there are few scenes

of history more full of pathos and of mournfulness than that in which her boy was torn from her arms; and she knew – all knew – even the Archbishops, when they gave their consent, knew – that the boy was to be done to death. When one talks of Queens and their misfortunes, it may be remembered that few Queens have suffered more than Elizabeth Woodville. In misfortune she sits apart from other Queens, her only companions being Mary Queen of Scots and Marie Antoinette. Her record is full of woe. But in that long war it seems impossible to find one single character, man or woman – unless it is King Henry – who is true and loyal. All – all – are perjured, treacherous, cruel, self-seeking. All are as proud as Lucifer. Murder is the friend and companion of the noblest lord; perjury walks on the other side of him; treachery stalks behind him: all are his henchmen. Elizabeth met perjury and treachery with intrigue and plot and counter-plot: she was the daughter of her time. She was accused of being privy to the plots of Lambert Simnel and Perkin Warbeck: she was more Yorkist than her husband; she hated the Red Rose long after the Red and the White were united by her daughter and Henry the Seventh. That she was suspected of these intrigues shows the character she bore. We must make allowance: she was always in a false position; Edward ought not to have married her; she was hated by her own party; she was compelled in the interests of her children to be always on the defensive; and in her conduct of defence she was the daughter of her age. These things, however, deprive her, somewhat, of the pity which we ought to

feel for so many misfortunes.

She, too, had to retire to the seclusion of Bermondsey, where she could sit and watch the ships go up and down, and so feel that the world, with which she had no more concern, still continued. It has been suggested that she retired voluntarily to the Abbey. Such a retreat was not in the character of Elizabeth Woodville, so long as there was a daughter or a kinsman left to fight for. Like Katharine of Valois, she made an end not without dignity. Witness the following clause in her will: —

*Item.* Whereas I have no worldly goods with which to do the Queen's Grace, my dearest daughter, a pleasure, neither to reward any of my children, according to my heart and mind, I beseech God Almighty to bless her Grace with all her noble Issue, and, with as good a heart and mind as may be, I give her Grace aforesaid my blessing and all the aforesaid my children.

In this chapter it has been my endeavour to restore an ecclesiastical foundation which has somehow dropped out of history and become no more than a name. If this were a history of South London it would be necessary to devote an equal space to other houses; to the churches and to the two ancient hospitals 'Le Loke' and St. Thomas's. It is impossible, even in these narrow limits, to speak of the religious foundations of South London without mention of the other great House, more ancient than that of Bermondsey. Few Americans who visit London leave it without paying a pilgrimage to the venerable and beautiful



church which glorifies Southwark. There were great marriages and great functions held in the Church of St. Mary Overy: Gower, that excellent poet whom the professors of literature praise and nobody reads, died and lies buried in this church; it was the church of the playerfolk: here lie buried Edmund Shakespeare, John Fletcher, Philip Massinger, and Philip Henslow. Here lie buried, in that 'sure and certain hope' which the Church allows even to them, the rufflers, 'roreres' and sinners of Bank Side and Maiden Lane; the brawlers and the toppers and the strikers of the Bear Garden and the Bull Baiting. Here were tried notable heretics: Hooper and Rogers, and many more, while Gardiner and Bonner thundered and bullied. From this church the martyrs went forth to meet the flames. The people of Southwark needed not to cross the river in order to learn such lessons as the martyrdoms had to teach them. The stake was set up in St. George's Fields, where they could read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the undesigned teaching of Bonner and his friends.

It is the custom of historians to point to the martyrdom of Cranmer and the Bishops as the chief cause of the overwhelming Protestant reaction. So great was the horror, they say, of the people at the death of the Archbishop, that the whole nation was roused – and so on. For myself I like to think that, as the people would feel now, so, *mutatis mutandis*, they felt then. Was there any such mighty horror felt in London when Cranmer died in Oxford? Not so much horror, I believe, as when from

their own ranks, from their own houses, from their own families, men and women and boys were taken out and led to execution. Violent deaths – by beheading, by hanging, by the flames – were witnessed every day. How many were hanged by Henry VIII.? The deaths of nobles did not touch the people; they looked on unmoved while the most innocent and most holy men in the country – the blameless Carthusians – suffered death as traitors; they looked on at the death of Sir Thomas More; when witches were burned they looked on. It was when they saw their own brothers, sisters, cousins, dragged out and put to death without a cause, that they began to doubt and to question. Nay, I think it was not the manner of death that affected them, because burning was a thing so common: it was the sentence itself passed on honest and godly folk, and the behaviour of the people at their death. Tender women chained to the stake suffered without a groan, only praying loudly till death came; people remembered, they recalled with tears afterwards, how the martyr and his wife and his children knelt on the ground for one last prayer before the stake; they remembered how the sufferer stepped into his place with a smiling face and welcomed the fiery lane that led him to the place where he longed to be: was this, they asked, the courage inspired of God, or of the devil? They remembered how another washed his hands in the mounting and roaring flames; how the clouds parted at the prayer of another, and the smiling sun of heaven shone upon him; and it was even like unto the countenance of the Blessed Lord. The sight and

the remembrance of the sufferings of their own folk, not the execution at a distance of an Archbishop and a few Bishops, moved the people and remained with them, and enveloped the Church of Rome with a hatred from which it has not wholly recovered even in these latter days.

The foundation of St. Thomas's Hospital belongs to both the great Houses of Southwark.

It was the general Rule in all religious Houses that there should be a provision for the poor, the sick, and those who were orphans. St. Mary Overy had a hospital adjoining the priory which was an almshouse certainly, and probably an orphanage as well. It was under the care of the Archdeacon of Surrey. Attached to St. Saviour's was an almonry intended for the same purpose. But the Abbey was entirely secluded: it lay far from any highway; there were no houses, except farm buildings for the monastery's labourers; there were no poor, no sick, and no orphans. So that, when the great fire of 1213 destroyed Southwark and crossed the river by the Bridge into London, the monks of St. Saviour's bethought them that to make their almonry useful it would be well to rebuild it half a mile to the west, on the Southwark Causeway. This was done, and the Hospital of St. Mary was united with it, and the new foundation which Bishop Peter de Rupibus most liberally endowed was named after St. Thomas. At first it was not a hospital especially for the sick, as St. Bartholomew's and St. Mary of Spittal. It was a fraternity like St. Catherine's by the Tower, for brethren and sisters under a master,

with bedesmen and women, and a school, and an infirmary; but not, as St. Bartholomew's was from the beginning altogether, only a hospital for the sick.

As for the religious life of the place, it was in most respects like that of London. There were no houses for Friars, but the Friars came across the river *en quête*, 'mumping,' on their begging rounds; and in the taverns were put up boxes for the contributions of the faithful (towards the end these contributions fell off sadly). There was plenty of life and colour in the streets: serving men in bright liveries of the great Houses – the Bishops of Winchester and Rochester, the Abbots of Lewes, Hyde, and Battle – went about their errands; there were Gilds, notably that of St. George, which had their processions and their days: there were crosses and images of saints, at which the passer-by doffed his hat – in the wall of Lambeth Palace was an image of St. Thomas à Becket overlooking the river, to which every waterman and bargee paid reverence.

Some of the punishments of the time were ordered by the Church. There was whipping, but not the terrible murderous flogging of the eighteenth century; there were hangings, but not for everything. Mostly to the credit of the Church, punishment was designed not to crush a man, but to shame him into repentance, and to give him a chance of retrieving his character. A man might be set in the stocks, or put in pillory, and so made to feel the heinousness of his offence. This punishment was like that which is inflicted on a schoolboy: the thing done, the boy

is taken back to favour. The eighteenth century branded him, imprisoned him, transported him, made a brute of him, and then hanged him. Did a woman speak despitefully of authority? Presumptuous quean! Set her up in the cage besides the stoulpes of London Bridge, that everyone should see her there and should ask what she had done. After an hour or two take her down; bid her go home and keep henceforth a quiet tongue in her head. This leniency was only for offences moral and against the law. For freedom of thought or doctrine there was Bishop Bonner's better way. And it was a way inhuman, inflexible, unable to forgive.

# CHAPTER IV

## THE ROYAL HOUSES OF SOUTH LONDON

All round London, like beads upon a string, were dotted Royal Houses, Palaces, and Hunting Places. On the north side were Westminster, Whitehall, St. James's, Kensington, Shene, Theobald's, Hatfield, Cheshunt, King's Langley, Hunsdon, Havering-atte-Bower, Stepney, the Tower; on the south side were Kennington, Eltham, Greenwich, Kew, Hampton, Windsor, a tradition attaching to Streatham, and the House of Nonesuch, built by Henry VIII. at Cheam. Most of these royal houses are now clean forgotten. Eltham preserves some ruins left of Edward IV.'s buildings; it still shows the moat and the old bridge, and the line of its former wall; but tradition, which has quite forgotten its memories of the Edwards and the Tudors, describes it as the Palace of King John. The sailors – now, alas! also gone – have deprived Greenwich of Edward VI. and Elizabeth. Theobald's is gone altogether, Nonesuch is wholly cleared away. Of Kennington, of which I have to speak in this place, not one stone remains upon another; not a vestige is above ground; the people on the spot know of no remains underground; its very memory is gone and forgotten: there is not even a tradition left, although part of the ruins were still standing only a hundred years

ago.

The reason for this oblivion is not far to seek. The palace was deserted; it was pulled down before 1607 – Camden says that even then there was not a stone remaining – there was not a single house within half a mile in every direction. There was no one, when the last stones had been carted away, left to remember or to remind his children that there had been a palace on this spot. Another house was built here, but no tradition attached to it. Two hundred years passed, and then came the destruction of the second house; in 1745 there was not even a cottage near the spot. This being so, it is not difficult to understand why the site was forgotten.

The moat remained, however, and apparently some of the substructures; a building of stone and thatch, part of the offices of the palace, also stood. They called it the 'Long Barn,' and when the distressed Protestants were brought over here in 1700 as many as the place would hold were crammed into the Long Barn. Market gardens lay all over the country between Kennington Road and Lambeth, and on the site of the palace there was not a single person left who could carry on the tradition of the king's house that once stood here. Roque, the map-maker of 1745, knew nothing about it. In 1795 the Long Barn was taken down. At the beginning of the century houses began to rise here and there; streets began to be formed: at least three streets cross the gardens and the site of the palace; but there is not one tradition of a place which, as we shall see, was full of history for six hundred





what a yearning and madness he had been drinking. He went across the river – there was, I repeat, no other house in Lambeth except this, so that it must have been here – to attend the wedding of his standard-bearer, Tostig the Proud, with Goda, daughter of the Thane Osgod Clapa, whose name survives in his former estate of Clapham. A Danish wedding was always an occasion for hard drinking, while the minstrels played and sang and the mummers tumbled. When men were well drunken the pleasing sport of bone throwing began: they threw the beef bones at each other. The fun of the game consisted in the accident of a man not being able to dodge the bone which struck him, and probably killed him. Archbishop Alphege was thus killed. The soldiers had no special desire to kill the old man: why couldn't he enter into the spirit of the game and dodge the bones? As he did not, of course he was hit, and as the bone was a big and a heavy bone, hurled by a powerful hand, of course it split open his skull. One may be permitted to think that perhaps King Hardacnut, who is said to have fallen down suddenly when he 'stood up to drink,' did actually intercept a big beef bone which knocked him down; and as he remained comatose until he died, the proud Tostig, unwilling to have it said that even in sport his king had been killed at his wedding, gave out that the king fell down in a fit. This, however, is speculation.

Forty years after this event, when Domesday Book was compiled, the place was in the possession of a London citizen, Theodric by name and a goldsmith by trade. It was still a royal

manor, because the goldsmith held it of Edward the Confessor. It was then valued at three pounds a year. It is impossible to arrive at the meaning of this valuation. We may compare it with that of other estates, with the rental and price of other lands, with the cost of provisions, and with the wages and pay of servants and officers; and when we have done all, we are still very far from understanding the value of money then or at any subsequent time. There are, you see, so many points which the writers on the value of money do not take into consideration. There is the price of bread; but then there were so many kinds of bread – wheaten bread, barley bread, oat bread, rye bread; and how much bread did a family of the working class consume? Flesh, fish, fowl, but how much of either did the working classes enjoy? Rent? But on the farms the "villains" paid no rent. There is, in a word, not only the market prices that have to be considered, but the standard of comfort – always a little higher than the practice – and the daily relations of the demand to the supply. So that when we read that this manor of Kennington was worth three pounds a year we are not advanced in the least. As most of the land was still marshy and useless, we may understand that the value was low.

We next hear of Kennington in 1189, when King Richard granted it on lease, or for life, to Sir Robert Percy with the title of Lord of the Manor. Henry III. came here on several occasions; here he held his Lambeth Parliament. He kept his Christmas here in 1231. Great was the feasting and boundless the hospitality of this Christmas, at which this king lavished the treasures of the

State.

The site of the palace is indicated in the accompanying map. If you walk along the Kennington Road from Bridge Street, Westminster, you presently come to a place where four roads meet, Upper Kennington Lane on the left, and Lower Kennington Lane on the right; the road goes on to the Horns Tavern and Kennington Park. On the right-hand side stood the palace. In the year 1636 a plan of the house and grounds was executed; but by that time the mediæval character of the place was quite forgotten. It was a square house, probably Elizabethan; the home of King Henry III. at some time or other had been completely taken away. The site of the moat, however, was left, and there was still standing the 'Long Barn.' The only way to find out what the palace really was in the thirteenth or fourteenth century is to compare it with another palace built under much the same conditions, and intended to serve the same purpose. Fortunately there still stand, some miles to the east of Kennington, at Eltham, important remains of such a contemporary palace, with a description of the place as it was before it was allowed to fall into ruins.

We are not at this moment concerned with the history of Eltham. Sufficient to note that it was a great and stately place for five hundred years and more; that it passed through the hands of Bishop Odo; of the Mandevilles; of the De Vescis; of Bishop Anthony Bec; and of Geoffrey le Scrope of Masham. As a royal residence its history begins with Henry III., who kept

his Christmas here in 1270, and ends with Elizabeth, who came over here occasionally from Greenwich. Here Isabella, wife of Edward II., gave birth to a son, John of Eltham. The greatest builder at Eltham was Edward IV.

The house in 1649, fifty years after Elizabeth had visited it, is said to have contained a chapel, a banqueting-hall, rooms on the ground floor and first floor called the King's side and the Queen's side. There were buildings and rooms of all kinds round the courtyard. The number of chambers in all was very great, and it is said, further, that the large courtyard covered a whole acre in extent. Such an area would give about two hundred and ten feet to each side of a square. This would be large for a college at Oxford or Cambridge. It would cover about the same area as that of New Palace Yard. There were, however, other courts; four courts in all are spoken of. The lesser courts were used for the 'service,' the kitchens, butteries, pantries, stables, rooms for the servants, the barracks for the men-at-arms who accompanied the king, the grooms, armourers, makers and menders, bakers and brewers, cooks and scullions, and the women servants, and the wives and the children. A strong stone wall, battlemented, with loopholed turrets, surrounded the palace; a broad and deep moat defended the wall; the bridge which crossed the moat had a drawbridge; the gate had its portcullis. The palace, in a word, was a fortress, for there was never a king in England who would have dared to keep his court, or to sleep, in an unfortified manor house, or outside a fortress – certainly not Henry III. or Edward IV. – unless, of

course, it was on the tented field in the midst of his army.

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