

The unseen good : a summer quest.

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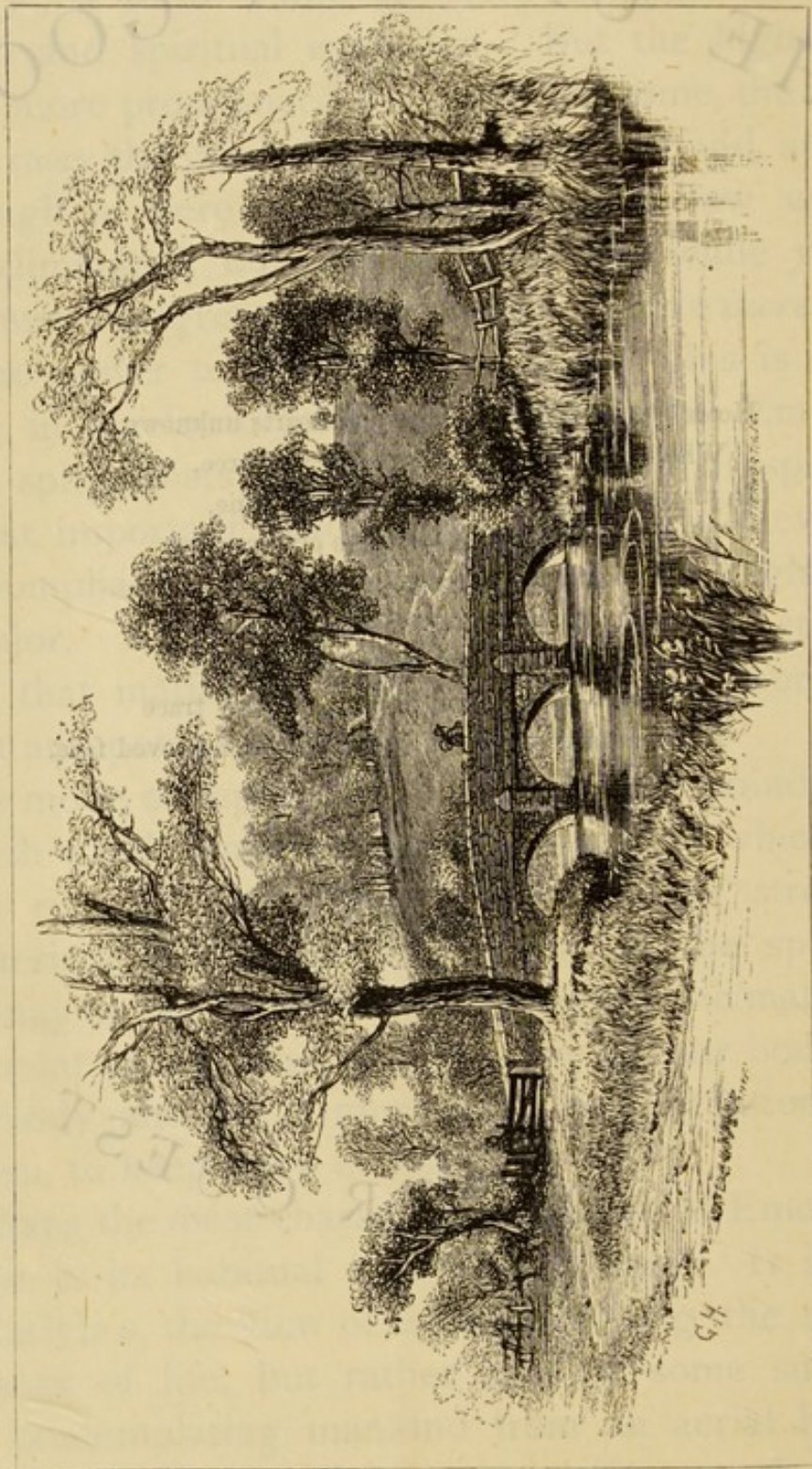
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THE UNSEEN GOOD

HOME! word to foreign ears and hearts unknown,
Whether in town or village the roof-tree,
In mansion or in hut the dear hearthstone,
'Tis where the parents and the children be ;
Though distant far beyond the cruel sea,
The exile worships toward the sacred place ;
When comely health and sunny fortune flee,
Sweet here to rest, and in fond memory trace
The years for ever past, beside some long-loved face.

A SUMMER QUEST

LONDON, 1884.



ON THE WAVEENEY.

(See page 30.)

LONDON, 1884.

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THE UNSEEN GOOD.

O send me not, when vexed with city life,
Whither mad Fashion makes her holiday,
By coast or spa ; but let me wander forth
In quest of nooks where nature, not unkind,
Harbours, within her leafy arms, the child
Of suffering ; that, in listening to his tale,
I may a lesson gain of glad Content,
And exercise the heart-enriching grace
Of Sympathy.

IT was towards the close of last July. I desired a change after the labours of a year, and contemplated a ramble in parts associated with earlier years ; I preferred a pensive trip, in consonance with feelings saddened by a recent bereavement. I had been privileged, last year, to pen a few notes of the interesting inmates of the Royal Hospital for Incurables at Putney Heath. That institution has, besides its 202 Indoor Patients, a roll of 475 Pensioners scattered through the Metropolis and the United Kingdom.* It is obviously better known on account of the former than the latter ; and it occurred to me to test the value of the benefit derived from a slight annuity in the homes of the sufferers by an actual visit as, unselected, they came within the range of a ten days' travel. Thinking that, perhaps, a few sketches would furnish desirable memorials of my visits, I invited a young friend with a turn for art to accompany me, and we set out together.

Once started, the nature of our search created a sense of diffidence. It was easy to propose a round of visits ; but, to be committed to calling on a number of invalids whom one had never seen was another thing. However, a gentle note had paved the way, and I did not doubt a good reception. Else, the breath of new hay, that greeted us when fairly outside Euston that morning, had been reassuring enough ; the corn, too, was fast ripening, and a host of nodding ears seemed to say we were on a right errand.

* See Pension Charts at the end.

Boxmoor is reached ; we step out of the station, and a shy, tanned boy is accepted as guide ; he will take us to Mrs. W.'s in Fuller's Road. The grass is springy as with subtle streamlets beneath ; a shallow river ambles along, cattle are collecting under the larger trees ; a canal keeps its sluggish way, save when the bargemen open and close the locks, and just here is a flat-bottomed craft unloading hay.

The guide leaves us at a cottage. I ask for Miss P., and am informed she does not live here now, but a little lower down. Mrs. W. says she is Miss P.'s sister-in-law, and has eight young children ; so the invalid, who required a room to herself, had recently left them. Mrs. W. sent two of the children, aged five and two and a-half years, to shew the way. Their aunt lived in a four-roomed cottage, fronted by a small garden ; the door stood wide open, and our young guides ushered us in after a juvenile fashion.

Miss P. was lying in a bed drawn close to the window ; she welcomed us cordially, and immediately entered into conversation. She said she lived alone in the house, but two sisters-in-law lived next door and saw to her wants ; one of her brother's children came to sleep with her, and some of the eight were always running in. I looked round the room ; there were some simple ornaments, a linnnet in a cage, and a busy clock making the most of its little day ; then to its bed-ridden tenant and the chubby nephew holding on to the footrail ; truly, she dwelt among her own people.

My invalid hostess was born in the ranks of industry ; she is now forty-three years of age. At fifteen she entered service, and, in nursing her mistress's children, caught a fever ; she had not recovered, when a shock to her nervous system, in consequence of a fatal accident to the baby, aggravated the illness. She was treated at the London and St. George's Hospitals, but paralysis came on at the age of twenty-three. Besides being very helpless, she frequently suffers from paroxysms of neuralgia, and it is, at times, heart-rending to witness her sufferings.

Ten years ago M. A. P. was elected to the pension of the Hospital. She has been relieved from the intense anxiety caused by a feeling of dependence, and lives in comparative comfort. Her clergyman says, "All her sufferings are borne with the most exemplary patience ; she never utters a word of complaint, but is quite content to submit to the will of her God, and leave all in His hands."

I need not say I was well rewarded in this visit to a suffering woman.



AT BOXMOOR.



M. A. P.

per. golden



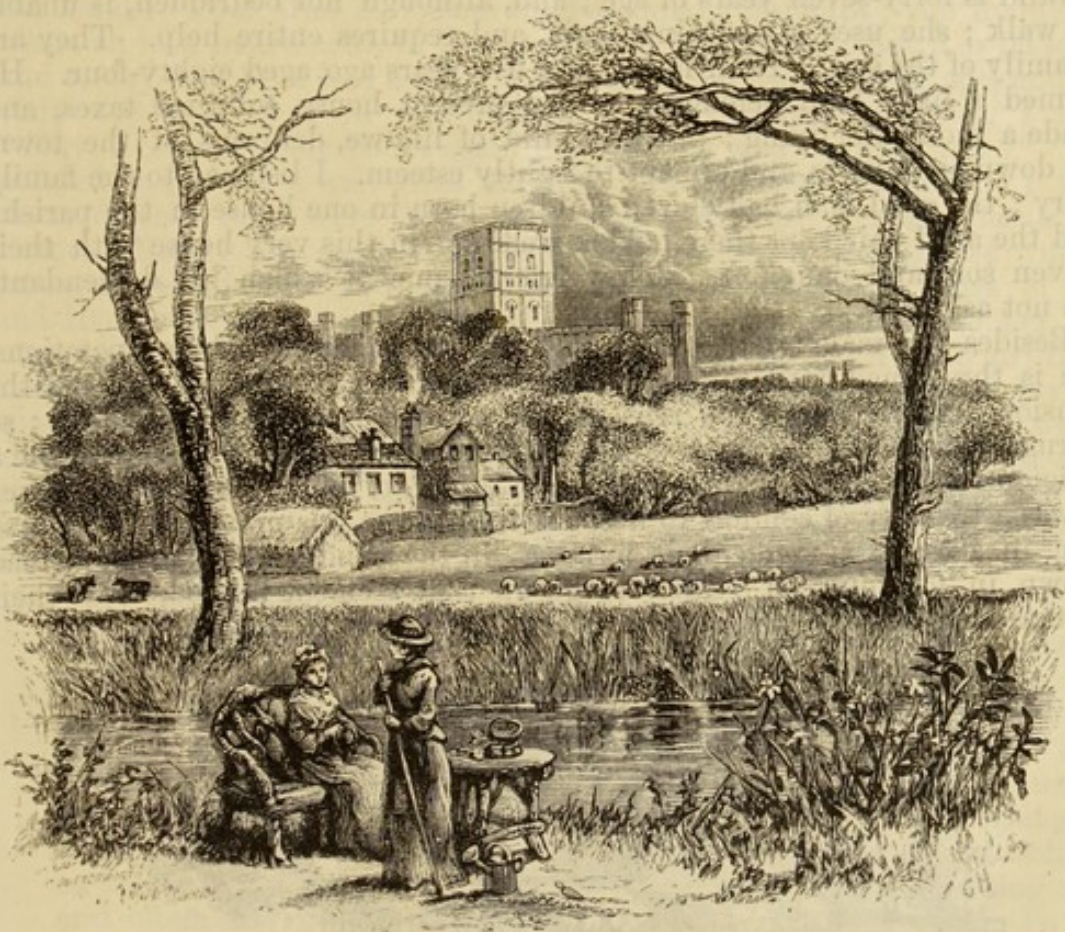
YEW AT ST. ALBAN'S.

There is classic ground in Hertfordshire ; memories cling around the unromantic city of St. Alban's. Tradition gives to the Belgæ the credit of founding a town on the Ver. It is associated with Cassivelaunus, prince of the Cassii, whose name has still an echo in the neighbouring Cashio. Here the warlike queen of the Iceni wreaked a red vengeance on her fellow-countrymen, for favouring the dominant power of Rome. And here died the protomartyr Alban, a Roman officer who sheltered a Christian, embraced his religion, and suffered in his stead, A.D. 286. Three centuries after the town became Saxon, and took a new name, Watlingcastor, from the high-road it stands upon. In 793, Offa of Mercia founded a monastery, whither he removed the remains of the saint. Here the insurrection of Jack Straw was stamped out, and, later on, the first blood was shed in the wars of the rival Roses. Cardinal Wolsey was abbot of the monastery, giving earnest, in his monkish realm, of the spirit that afterwards arrogated precedence of royalty.

The object of my visit was an elderly maiden lady, Miss C. W., living in a neat cottage in Verulam Road. She opened the door, greeting us pleasantly, and we were soon chatting. Miss W. is seventy years of age, and suffers from a curvature of the spine, which unfortunately increases, dwarfing her stature year by year. She keeps about, and, with the help of a niece, manages to maintain her roadside home. Until lately she had a lodger, the mistress of the infant school, who paid her rent ; her leaving was a serious loss. Her life has been one of those good-to look back upon ; respectably brought up, she nevertheless determined on being a self-helper ; at eighteen she entered the service of a lady ; and, as housekeeper, companion, and nurse, remained with her till her death, thirty-six years after. She attributes the spinal mischief to her custom, for a long period, of supporting the lady in walking. As is too frequently the case, there was no provision left for her, and at fifty-four she found herself a paralyzed cripple, almost without means. Two sisters helped her according to their ability ; but they are dead. The annuity of the Hospital has been her mainstay for upwards of nine years, and her future is, at any rate, not haunted with the shadow of want. She said, "I am thankful to say the pension I receive from the Institution has been a great comfort and blessing to me ; I have lived as frugally as I could, and have many little comforts." It was clearly so ; her room was a picture of thrift and cleanliness, and its occupant, bent in her easy-chair, gave an unmistakable impression of quiet content. She thanked me for the call, and I left, feeling she had made me her debtor.

I had another client in Verulam ; so we made our way to Prospect Road. The name seemed to have been given on the principle of *lucus a non lucendo*, for the front view was that of a row of red-brick cottages the reverse of picturesque. My new friend was sixty years of age, and has not yet bidden farewell to good looks, though she has suffered for thirty years from serious trouble in the liver and the lungs. She has been a recipient of the pension nearly twenty-four years. Previously, she had been an inmate of University College, Brompton, Middlesex, and the Royal Free hospitals. One day, a benevolent gentleman visited her in the last-named, and learned that she was a candidate at the Royal Hospital for Incurables at Putney ; he said he would go and see it. After doing so, he became a subscriber, and joined the Board, of which he continued to be an active member till his death. Miss D. had been a nurse ; and, when disabled, busied herself with fancy work, which had soon to be relinquished. She referred with much feeling to having been a member of Bedford Chapel, under the ministry of the late eloquent Rev. Thomas Jones.

After a pleasant interview, the sisters asked us to see their garden. It was a strip running down to the Ver, giving a view of the town, rising above a sloping green field, topped by the towers of the Abbey, that framed itself between the trees ; there was a fitness in the name " Prospect " after all. We bade the sisters, who had prepared us a neat luncheon, with raspberries from their garden, good morning, and left, refreshed in body and in spirit.



FROM A. D.'S GARDEN.

Who has not read Charles Lamb's visit to "Mackery End in Hertfordshire," with his cousin, Bridget Elia, after an absence of forty years?



I could hardly look for a similar reception at Apsley End in Hertfordshire, for I was not in search of a "comely brood" like "the Brutons." It was natural to walk in at the door, open to the summer air. I was greeted with the same aspect of neatness, amounting to what is sometimes called, I know not why, gentility. I am more and more struck with these country dwellings; in their cheap simplicity they seem to put our bald, high-rented homes to shame. Apsley End has other cottages, wood-built, straw-thatched, with leaning, heavy-browed gables, trussed up with rude timbers. My

companion was moved, and could not be pacified till he had put one in his sketch-book. Village women pacing up and down, mechanically twisting straw-plait, eye us from a distance, and we are half inclined to ask them to pose as a roadside group.

The household consists of the pensioner, Miss P. P., and her sister. The invalid is forty-seven years of age; and, although not bedridden, is unable to walk; she uses a reclining chair, and requires entire help. They are a family of the soil. Their father died five years ago, aged eighty-four. He farmed a little land belonging to the present house, collected taxes, and made a moderate living; just the kind of life we, denizens of the town, set down as humble, and are apt to lightly esteem. I listened to the family story; the good man had eleven children born in one house in the parish; and the aged pair kept their golden wedding in this very house with their eleven sons and daughters. They left a name of which his descendants are not ashamed.

Besides the malady for which Miss P. has undergone three operations, she is threatened with cancer, probably hereditary. She has received the pension sixteen years; the rent of the cottage is paid by a brother; so a frugal home in her native village has been preserved. She showed me a religious book her clergyman had given to her, of which I forget the name; it was a treasury of comfort to her. A little niece was upon a visit; a bird sang in a cage; a maidenhair fern was in the window, in the box it had grown in for fourteen years. A group they seemed, framed, with their several languages, to cheer one of God's sick human children.



APSLEY END.



ALMSHOUSES AT SOUTH WEALD

Romford lay in the course of our wanderings ; one would not select it in the hope of finding a theme for the pencil ; but I knew something of a pensioner there, and was glad to have an opportunity of seeing her again. The district by St. Andrew's Church is peopled with the industrious poor, and the cottage of E. A. was soon discovered. I recognized her as she opened the door and invited us to her little front room. She walked with difficulty, carrying, if the expression may be used, her head in her hands. Poor Miss A. suffers from a spinal complaint ; she frequently wears an iron instrument, to keep her head in position ; but it is irksome, and to-day had been laid aside. I had seen her three years ago, and the visit was still fresh in my memory. After a few inquiries, I said, "May I look at your books again ? What are you reading now ?" She pointed to two on a well-filled shelf, and said, "Look at those." I took them down ; they were *Royal Bounties*, and *Royal Commandments*, by Frances Ridley Havergal. She had been reading them, indeed ; many passages were fervently underscored. E. A. is thirty-five years of age, and lives with a married sister, who has given up this room to her, and attends carefully upon her. "My sister," she said, "has a little girl three and a half years old, and God has given me a trust to influence her for good." I cast my eyes on the floor, unable to make a remark ; it was a view of contemplative and active Christianity, a treasure in an earthen vessel, that made me, for the time, half ashamed of being in health.

I will give the account of her case as nearly as possible in her own words :—

"I am the daughter of a tradesman, but through failure in business my father became a journeyman. He died in 1856, leaving my mother with ten children, six being under twelve, I being eight. My eldest sister took me till I was sixteen, when I went to service, but did not get on very well, as I was not strong, and had to work very hard. But God, who is all love, took me by the hand, and my sister's district-visitor recommended me to a friend of hers, a clergyman, living at St. John's Wood. But my heart was diseased, and I was obliged to leave. My master and mistress were very kind in helping me, and often sent for me to stay with them for a little change. In the year 1871 my beloved master and friend died. I was sent for to receive a parting blessing from him ; his last words to me were, 'Live unto God.'

"Soon after the funeral the home was broken up, but I found a happy home with two ladies, friends of my late master's daughters, who took me out of sympathy, thinking, as they lived at Brighton, the air might make me stronger. So I stayed with them some years; it was the happiest period of my life. The ladies gave their whole time for the good of others. It has been good for me to watch their unselfish lives; they are always trying to make life bright and happy for the poor.

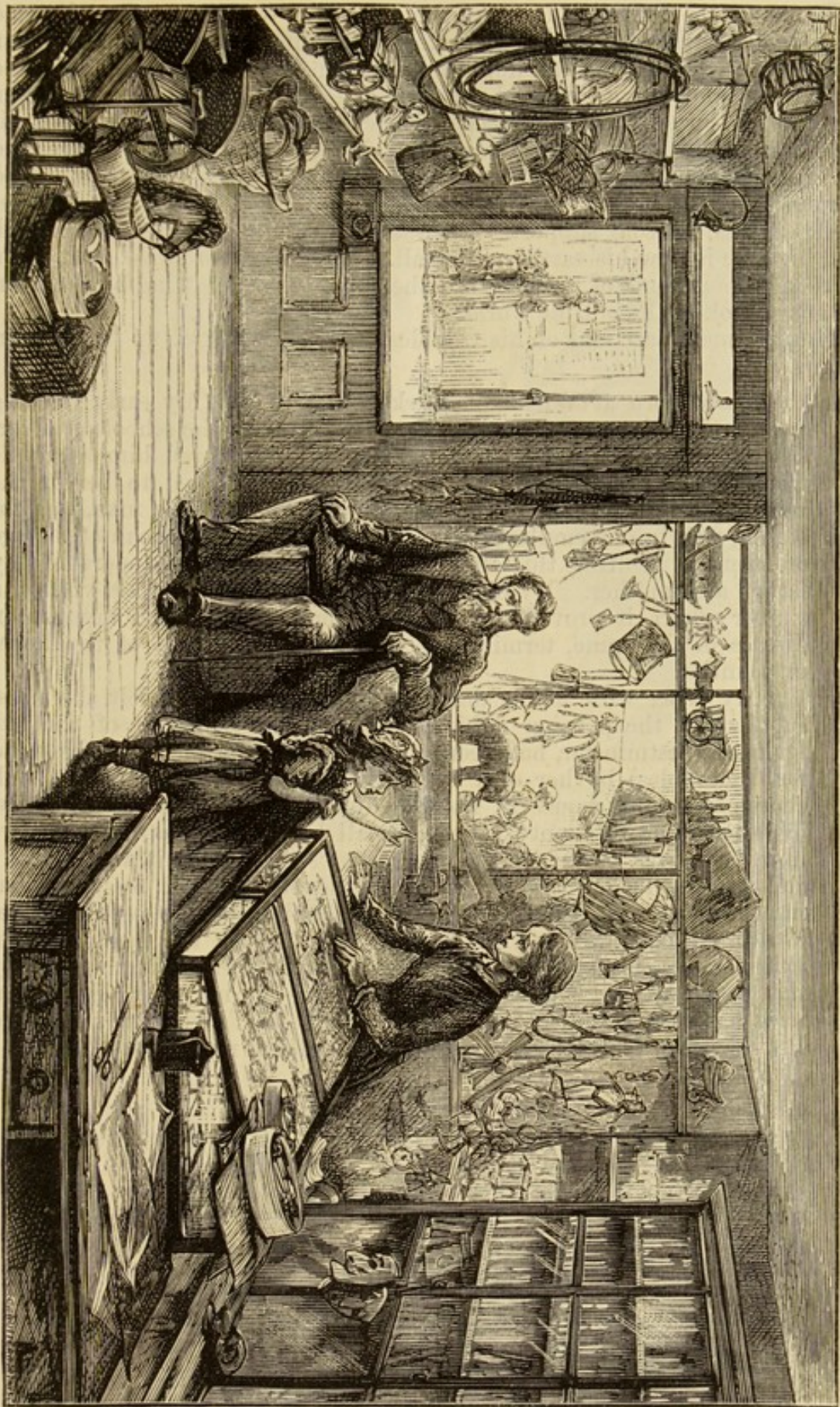
"After living with these dear ladies seven years, I became very weak and ill, and the doctor ordered me away for three months' rest. My mistress then sent me to a physician in London, who took me into his hospital for a time. She then took me away home with her, and with kind nursing I recovered a little, but I had to leave that happy home, and settle down as an invalid. They entirely kept me three or four years, hoping I might get better. They furnished me a little room in which I live now; but, finding I did not improve, they thought it would be better to secure me the pension I now enjoy, saying they would always be my friends till death should part us. 'I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall continually be in my mouth.'"

The sun of an August forenoon made the gritty ascent from Brentwood station a march of toil. On the opposite hill, the new buildings of the County Lunatic Asylum were projected, a mass of unrelieved red brick, whose very aspect added to the sultriness of the hour. We came to cross-roads marked by a granite monument. It is a martyr's memorial, with an inscription to the following effect:—

"To the pious memory of William Hunter, a native of Brentwood, who, maintaining his right to search the Scriptures, was condemned, at the early age of 19, by Bishop Bonner, to be burned at the stake near this spot, March xxvi. MDLV. Erected by public subscription, 1861."

Turning to the left, we are directed to a small farmhouse, where Miss M. A. F. resides. You feel at once that this is a case in which the benefit is wisely allotted. The patient, now fifty years of age, is a person of education and culture. Her father was brought up as a surgeon, and carried on the business of a chemist. He died, leaving his daughter the only and best legacy in his power, a good education. At eighteen she went out as a governess, and taught in schools and families till disabled by chronic rheumatism setting fast her lower extremities. This painful disorder has made rapid advances; the right hand is perfectly crippled, and the hip and left ankle are dislocated. The little daughter of the farmer is her personal attendant. She enjoys her life in the spaces allowed by her malady, corresponds with old pupils, from two of whom she received a present of flowers this very morning.

But Miss F. has a stronger tie. At South Weald, about two and a half miles away, her mother lives in an almshouse, of which she is also matron; she is eighty-two years old, and frequently walks over to Brentwood to see her daughter. We made an evening walk to Weald, but the lady was not at home; still, we were rewarded by the discovery of a charming bit of country. We borrowed a couple of chairs, pumped ourselves a glass of water from the Gothic well-house; my companion fell to sketching, and I to chatting with the inmates on the flowered sward in front.



W. O.

To return to Brentwood. Inquiring for Mr. W. C., we were directed to a small toy-shop. We were admitted by a slim, well-mannered woman. Following her, through the shop, into the living-room, we were introduced to her husband, whom we said we had called to see. He was sitting in the fireside corner, neatly dressed in black; his hair was white, and his face had a calm, thoughtful expression. W. C. is fifty years of age, and for nearly one-half of his life has been disabled by spinal disease and paralysis. His wife has been his main stay, and, till he became a pensioner in 1866, was his sole support. Their only child, a daughter, is married, and his wife is now his earthly all-in-all. W. C. can just move from room to room; he is fond of getting into the shop, whence, sitting by the door, he gets a look at the outside world.

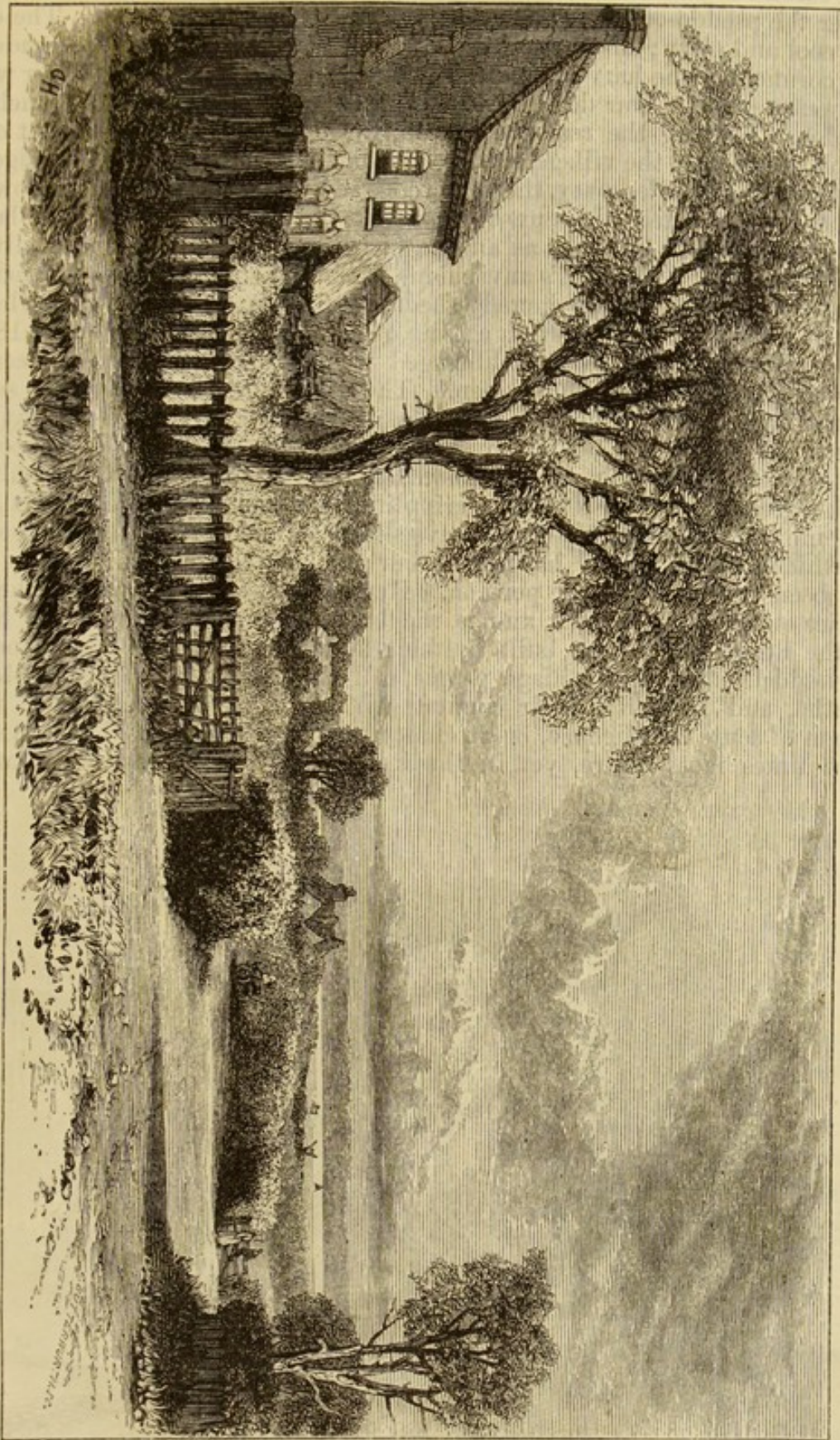
He gave me an account of his troubles which I will sum up in his own words.

“I was born at Wickham Market, in Suffolk. My early training was by Christian parents, and I may say it was in the school of adversity, for my father met with an accident that rendered him a cripple from my earliest recollection, and this he continued to be for the remainder of his life. I came to London when a young man, was, for eight years, in one employ, and was promoted to be foreman at the age of twenty. During this time I contributed to the support of my father and mother. My employment being very laborious, viz., on a timber wharf, it proved too much for my strength, and brought on disease of the spine, terminating in complete paralysis of the lower extremities.

“My wife, with heroic devotion and perseverance, felt she must supplement the pension (which, with the kind interest of the late Duke of Westminster, had been gained for me from the Royal Hospital for Incurables) by her own industry, and for seven years she took charge of a large house in London during the absence of the family. We then came to Brentwood; the small house and shop in which we now reside was vacant, and by the aid of some friends it was secured; and for fourteen years my wife has devoted herself to it without intermission; but, I am sorry to say, it has been at the expense of her health. I am now fifty years of age, and although the heavy hand of affliction has been on me for nearly half that period, I can truly say that goodness and mercy have followed me all my days; every real need has been supplied, and I trust, if it be God’s will, the same kind Providence will watch over me the remainder of my journey.”



MARTYR'S MEMORIAL.



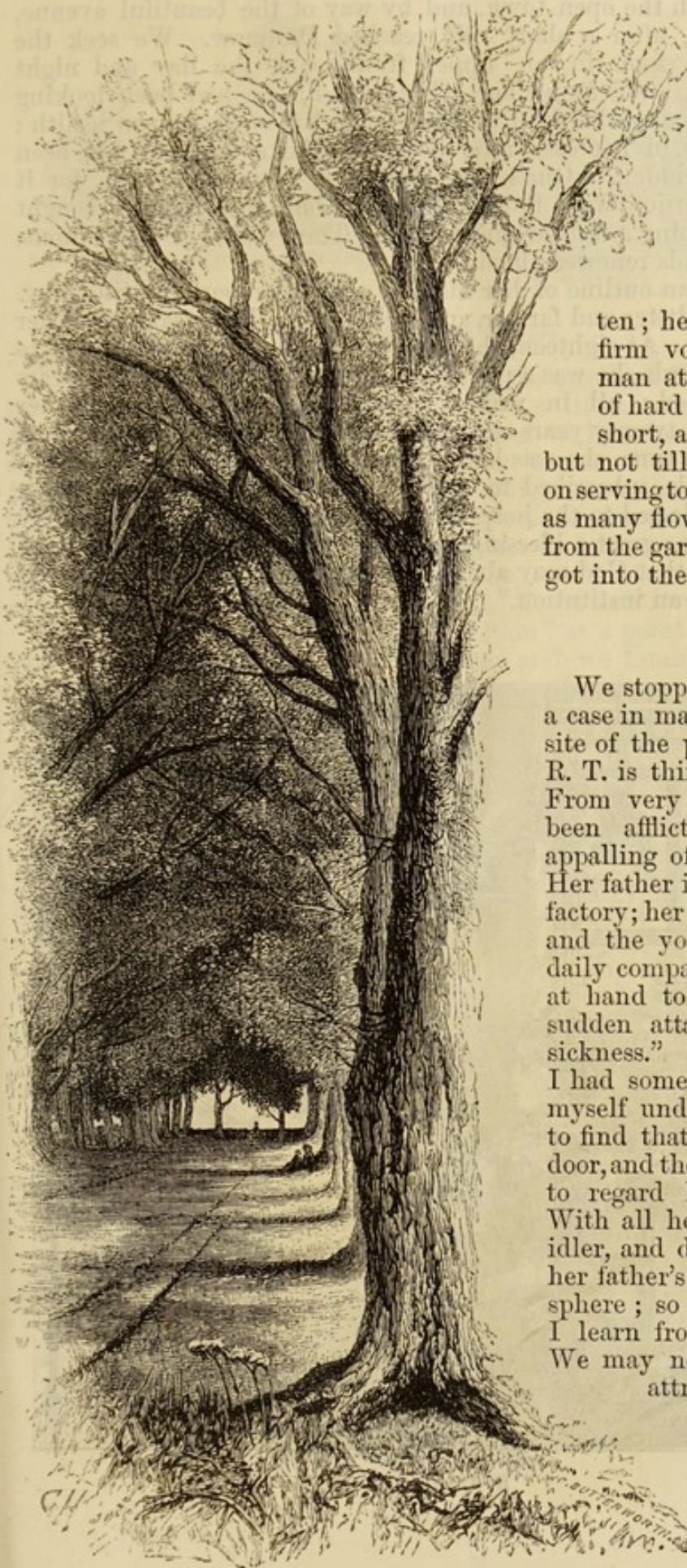
COTTAGE OF N. S.

A second day in Essex. The morning train to the far east was drawn up under the pseudo-ecclesiastic shed of the Great Eastern Railway. The day was cool and clear ; distances shewed with effect. The ride lay by meadows and cornfields ; the harvest was well begun ; the dry corn filled the air with a wheaten odour. Our destination was Wickham Bishops, on the branch to Maldon. Leaving the roadside station, we followed a gradual ascent of a couple of miles, to the village, scattered on the highest ground. On a ridge in front, about six miles away, the blue roofs, red buildings, and church towers of Maldon stood steeped in sunshine ; below, the broad expanse of the Blackwater, seeming, in full tide, as an arm of the sea, lay like a plain of silver. The chime of a blacksmith's anvil alone broke the silence as we approached a cottage flanked by two homely sheds, betokening the trade of a wheelwright ; a tree stood by, and on a stone over the door was cut the date, 1802.

We were admitted by a middle-aged woman, one of the most cheerful persons I remember to have seen. The Incurable was not far to seek. In the fire-corner, enthroned in an easy chair certainly not built by Mr. Ward, sat Miss M. S., aged seventy. Rheumatic Arthritis is the polite name of the tormentor that, without shortening life, contrives to fill it with a great amount of suffering, crippling and crumpling the fingers and stiffening the limbs. My friend says she has suffered for nineteen years, all which time her sister has nursed her ; during the last nine years she has been in receipt of the pension. Her brother, an old man, a bachelor, carries on his father's trade, and is the breadwinner. They were all born in the house, which was built by their father, and was the first home of his wedded life. The village people call this family of celibates Mary, Martha, and Lazarus ; their country wit has some reason. M. S. is a person of acute intelligence, brisk, chatty, and fond of a joke. The suffering is at times most severe, yet, in the intervals, a beneficent compensation



M. S.



AVENUE AT WITHAM.

restores the balance of animal spirits, and a sense of the once enjoyed pleasure of existence returns.

The brother joined us. He had the marks of three-score and ten; he spoke with a clear, firm voice, and seemed a man at home with his lot of hard work. Our time was short, and we hurried away, but not till the Martha, intent on serving to the last, had snatched as many flowers and gooseberries from the garden for us as could be got into the space of a good-bye.

We stopped at Witham to visit a case in many respects the opposite of the preceding one. Poor R. T. is thirty-one years of age. From very early years she has been afflicted with that most appalling of maladies, epilepsy. Her father is employed at a drill factory; her mother died recently, and the young woman lost her daily companion and one always at hand to succour her in her sudden attacks of the "falling sickness." She is also deaf, and I had some difficulty in making myself understood. I was glad to find that an aunt lived next door, and the neighbours appeared to regard her with sympathy. With all her troubles she is no idler, and does her best to keep her father's house. Each to one's sphere; so reads the lesson that I learn from this afflicted girl. We may not be ornamental or attractive, but we may occupy our talent, and it shall be done unto this last even as to the first.

We passed through the open town, and by way of the beautiful avenue, to the station, and, after a short ride, reached Dunmow. We seek the Causeway, and are soon in an upper front-room, the day and night abode of Miss S. L. We found her lying in bed; she had been looking for a visit, and gave us a thankful welcome; she has never known health; the principal factor in her case is a disease of the spine; she has been eighteen years bedridden. One's eyes travelled round the room, for it was decked to profusion with flowers; indeed, one would have thought the invalid was keeping a festive anniversary. They were her companions, and thoughtful friends renewed them.

Miss L. gave me an outline of her history. She was born at Stebbing. Her father was a maltster and farmer, and well-to-do. The weakness of her childhood increased. At eighteen, she was removed for special treatment to Maidstone. Afterwards she was a patient of Dr. Gull; then for seven years sea-bathing was tried; all in vain. Circumstances changed with her father's death, about twenty years ago; the business collapsed, means came to an end, and, for a time, she was haunted with the prospect of the work-house. Good friends subscribed to avert such a calamity; and, eleven years ago, she was elected to the hospital's annuity. She says, "I sincerely hope the pension is as great a blessing to many others as it is to me, and I most earnestly pray that God may abundantly reward the kind friends who subscribe to so good an institution."



S. L.



COLCHESTER CASTLE.

The morning waxed warm as we made the ascent of North Hill, Colchester. An element of distraction came, for a little, across the idea of our pilgrimage. Thirty years ago I happened to live in this town. It was associated with early efforts and sanguine hopes. Here parents lived and friendships were formed. It was my delight to walk in its broad streets and feel its appetising breezes. I must see the old house and find former friends. The tribute to the past was hastily paid, and we prepared for a drive of five miles to Langenhoe, a village near to where the Colne, fruitful of oysters, widens on its way through the Essex flats to the sea.

We are directed to the "Abberton Lion" as a point of inquiry, for the inns are the landmarks of the country, and we found ourselves near to Manwood Cottage. Mrs. M. A. M. was lying in the front room, a neatly furnished apartment, the door of which opened to the road. It was easy to see that the patient was in great suffering; her complaint was rheumatism, having its seat in the nervous system. She was sixty-two years of age. Her delicate frame quivered with pain; I feared to agitate her by conversation, especially in the first moments of our interview. A relative, wife of a nephew, to whom she has been indebted for much needed help, was in the room, and we learned something of her history. M. A. M. has known better days; she kept a young ladies' school near Colchester, and, by extreme self-denial, saved the greater part of her earnings, enough to maintain herself during the first three years of illness. The long sickness of her husband was a drain on her slender means, and when her nephew offered her this cottage rent-free, she came hither, looking pain and poverty in the face. She had no sooner taken up her abode in Langenhoe than the rector visited her. He was touched with her sad condition,



ST. MARY'S TOWER.

procured her nomination, and had the gratification of seeing her elected as a pensioner last year. When I contemplate a life devoted, like this, to pain and weakness, I do not the less wonder at the Divine medicine that can not only make it endurable but relieve it with seasons of heart-satisfaction. Mrs. M. has since written me, at much cost I know. She says—

“I hope you made a safe journey after your kind visit. Harvest is fast coming to a close with this lovely weather; I can see the beautiful fields from my window, but I am forbidden to visit them. I sincerely hope the dear Institution will be the means of comfort to poor sufferers like myself, whilst I earnestly and daily pray for Divine help to bear with patience the afflictions it is His will I should suffer in this short life.”

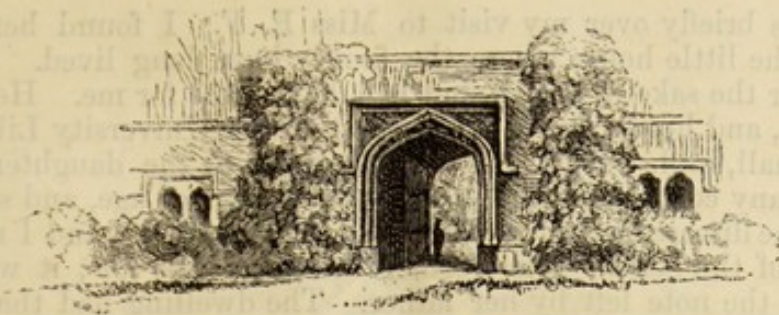
One might think that the Home at Putney, with its many helps, would be more fit for such an one than the isolation of a country cottage; but her relatives and village friends, and “the dear people at the rectory,” are her world, despite winter and weather, and the poor lady is best off at Langenhoe.

We came back by Rowhedge, a village on the river. Farmers, tradesmen, and fishermen divide the population. Wivenhoe builds ships on the opposite shore. I was glad of a glimpse of a once-favourite haunt and a row over the ferry.

Returning to Colchester we called on Miss M. E. P., a pensioner. She is paralyzed in the right side. Until 1878 she carried on a dressmaking business, supporting an aged mother, now dead. Miss P. is fifty-four years of age; a young niece lives with her, and the two keep a comfortable but frugal home. We had much talk about Colchester and its people. There is a painful interest in such conversations. One seems to speak of names rather than persons, as of what we shall be ourselves in some brief years.



ROWHEDGE FERRY.



GATEWAY AT TRINITY

I know of few places in England that so well repay a visit as Cambridge. A ramble here many years ago opened my eyes as to a new world ; so I was not sorry to find an excuse for seeing again its venerable colleges, grown over with the association of great and learned persons ; once more to walk in those gardens by the Cam, that are scarcely less than enchanted ground. These scenes were in keeping with the pensive tenor of our wanderings. There were three visits, however, to be paid, which left scant opportunity for a stroll of sentiment.

From the railway station, a safe distance from classic haunts, we marched direct to the cemetery in the Huntingdon Road, and approached the caretaker's lodge. The good man, who was also sexton, was at the moment exercising the duties of gardener in the quickset avenue leading to the place of graves. I asked, did Mrs. F. reside at the lodge ? and he led the way to the end of the walk. It was a Gothic structure, the porch overhung with honeysuckle. Mrs. F. was in an armchair by the window, two sticks, her aids in walking, by her side. She was a comely person, in spectacles, dressed in black, and wore a white cap ; I learned her age to be fifty-six. A three-light casement, hung with white muslin curtains, stood open, a canary was perched in his cage, a pitcher with flowers was on the centre table, and a folio Bible on a side one, and the walls were hung with pictures of modest pretensions. Outside there was a double row of Irish yews, and the ground was dotted over with the gold-tinted green of the *Thuja Aurea*.

The caretaker was brother-in-law to Mrs. M. F., and, on marrying her sister, had given the invalid also a home. Such a retreat must have been welcome, for her life had been one of change, and she was a cripple from chronic rheumatic-gout. Her father had a good business at Pewsey, but failing sight prevented his carrying it on, and the children—three motherless girls—had to turn out into the world and maintain their father. M. entered service as a lady's-maid, and at twenty-nine married the son of an officer who had fought at Waterloo. Within three years he died, leaving her with two children, the elder of whom has not been heard of for three years, and the younger is, unhappily, not able to assist her.

Fortunately, the ladies whom she had served were not unmindful of her ; they caused her to try various remedies giving any hope of restoration, vapour baths in London, and mineral waters at Bath and Buxton, besides treatment in several invalid homes. But the affection was too deep-seated to yield, and the activities of a useful life had to be abandoned in despair. "Words," she says, "cannot express my comfort, and the blessing the pension has been to me in my great affliction, during the past two years. It is my sincere wish that it may be as great a blessing to many others, as it has been to me."

I will pass briefly over my visit to Miss E. F. I found her, with her mother, in the little house where the family have long lived. The father was away for the sake of health, but had left a note for me. He is seventy years of age, and holds a subordinate post in the University Library. The salary is small, and, were it not for the pension, the daughter would be devoid of many comforts. She is thirty-nine years of age, and suffers from epilepsy. The disease has somewhat dulled the perception, and I missed that recognition of the benefit I had come almost to look for; it was warmly expressed in the note left by her father. The dwelling had that aspect of not-more-than-enough-ness, in which neatness in furniture and appointments evidences the self-respect of the occupants. On the front parlour table, among other books, lay a copy of *A Glimpse of a Good Work*, an illustrated pamphlet about the Hospital at Putney Heath. I endeavoured to throw cheerfulness into our short conversation, and left a trifle saddened.

But real sunshine was found in another place of call. It was a little shop in the King's Parade, opposite the open Gothic screen that incloses the quadrangle and buildings of King's College. A lady asked us into a small drawing-room on the first floor, saying her sister would be with us immediately. Miss A. H. soon entered, and after courteously greeting us, entered into conversation. I was struck with her refinement and intelligence, and was half reluctant to express a wish to learn something of her history. I was already aware that she was a sufferer from asthma, coupled with a malady that wholly unfitted her for the active duties of life. She was the daughter of a tradesman, and had followed the profession of a governess, until compelled to relinquish it. Her sister, by this little business, had been able to help her; till, early in 1880, many friends, including the Provost of King's, urged her to apply for the pension, and secured it for her in May, 1881. Miss H. is now forty-eight years of age. I found her extremely willing to afford me any information of her case. I listened with the deepest interest, and feel I cannot do better than follow, as nearly as possible, her narrative:—

“I had only attained my third year, when my mother was left a widow with five children under eight years of age. Education for her fatherless girls was her first thought, hoping thereby to make the best provision for their future. But my delicate health was a serious hindrance. At fifteen I felt my deficiency, and longed to enjoy the same educational advantages as my sisters. Fortunately, a wealthy cousin took pity on me, and sent me to a school where I enjoyed superior advantages, notwithstanding the frequent drawbacks occasioned by fits of intense headache. At the end of two years, I obtained a situation as resident governess, receiving the greatest consideration. Through kindness, aided by medical treatment, I was able to retain my new home for two and a half years, but unfortunately, much to my grief, in obedience to medical advice, I had to resign it and seek a period of rest. After a few months had elapsed, I tried a situation as nursery governess, but, alas! my hopeful scheme quickly came to an end, and I was completely broken down. Change of air was tried, and seemed to restore me; and in six months I made a new attempt to earn my living, but with an empty purse, for doctors' fees had completely drained my hardly-earned resources. But my spirit was not easily daunted, and I obtained a renewal of my engagement in the same

family. My joy in again meeting the dear little ones was short-lived; my duties soon revived the latent disease; a physician was consulted, who pronounced me totally unfit to care a living. Discouraged, after being ordered up, I returned to my home, in establishing a new system of medicine, and I was cut off by a malignant fever, which I had contracted from



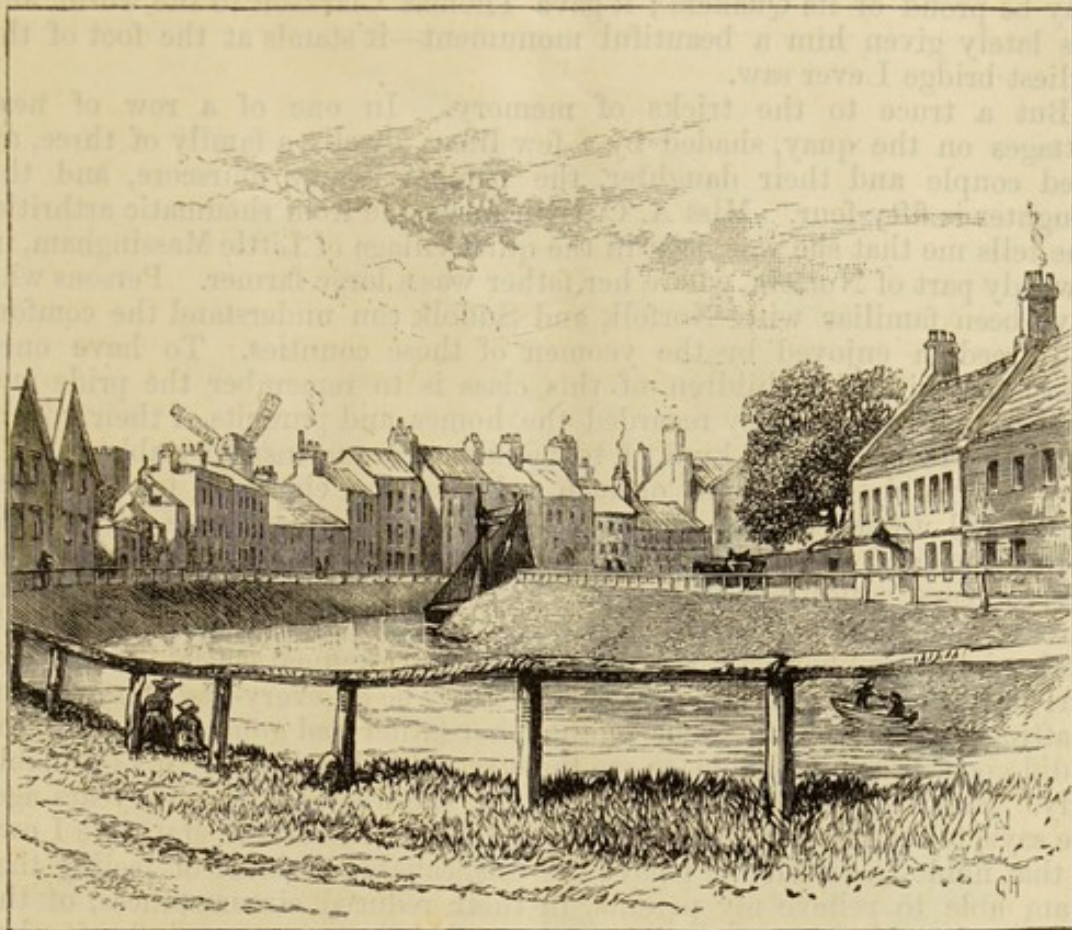
M. F.

family. My joy in again meeting the dear little ones was short-lived; my duties soon revived the latent disease; a physician was consulted, who pronounced me totally unfit ever to earn a living. Nothing discouraged, after being 'patched up' once more, I joined my sister in establishing a private school, but again my old symptoms returned, and I was cut off from my favourite vocation for ever. I had a doctor's bill to pay, and no means to meet it, and weak faith at last found vent in silent tears. I next tried needlework, and purchased a sewing-machine; but, in spite of my endeavours, my health grew from bad to worse, and my cherished sewing-machine, the foundation of many castles in the air, was relinquished, and I was ordered to keep a recumbent position. For several years my life seemed to hang on a thread, and expenses were increasing. Suddenly, I thought I would write a simple story, and sell it by subscription among my friends; lying on my couch, I wrote in pencil. The first succeeded, and also the second, but before the third had been fairly launched I became a confirmed invalid. Then came an operation, and also a further debt. I sold my trinkets and family relics, and was still in debt. My life seemed useless, and I prayed that it might be taken away. In the midst of my perplexities some true and unknown friends secured me the pension of the Royal Hospital for Incurables, and I have learned from experience the comforting truth of the promise, 'My God shall supply all your need.' Surely no pensioner has reason to offer more sincere thanks to the subscribers than myself."

I asked to be allowed to purchase two of Miss H.'s books, *Jessie Seymour's Portrait*, and *What would Mother Say?* She has a tale in manuscript she wishes to give for the benefit of the Institution. The sun shone that afternoon; it lighted up the spires of King's chapel, it played through the fretwork of the screen, but to me a diviner light shone through the trials, the fears, and the tears of this lady. She has written me with kind hopes that the acquaintance may not cease. We may not meet again, but the remembrance of this afternoon will be always fresh.



CLARE BRIDGE.



THE NENE AT WISBECH.

We are penetrating the fens. My taste may be pitied, but a ride through the fen district gives me a sense of complete satisfaction. The scene is boundless ; you are in a land-ocean ; an airy stillness refreshes, while it incites to meditation. It is a rescued country ; populous villages and fat meadows repose secure from flood, thanks to the labours of past generations. The low-lying cot of the fenman is the sign that the waters are conquered, and that swift river and in-stretching sea will not again waste the well-tilled plain. It is pleasant to trace the arrow-like dikes, to see the up-turned earth of a purple that in a painting would be fabulous ; to smell the incense of burning turf ; to watch the glories of the setting sun, sending his horizontal beams in a flood of colour over a plain without visible limit. It is not the accident that one is breathing his native air that makes the ride to Wisbech so exhilarating this morning. I have wandered years ago on these banks of the Nene, as in full flood it winds into the town, reflecting the houses by day and the lights at evening ; and now, with the air, comes, for a moment, something of the feeling, only with an added melancholy, of a youth long past.

I owe some pleasant recollections to this fen town. It was then a place of some importance ; it sent away, by ship, vast quantities of corn ; now, the dilapidated granaries overhang the river. Here, on the North Brink, is the house, unchanged in appearance, where I had the privilege, for a short time, to dwell with one whose name as a good minister of Jesus Christ is still held in honour in the town. Yon neat, massive mansion recalls another name, still extant, of a family, members of the Society of Friends, then, as now, chief in every work for the public good. Wisbech

may be proud of its Quakers ; it gave Thomas Clarkson to the world, and has lately given him a beautiful monument—it stands at the foot of the ugliest bridge I ever saw.

But a truce to the tricks of memory. In one of a row of neat cottages on the quay, shaded by a few limes, dwells a family of three, an aged couple and their daughter, the parents nearly fourscore, and the daughter is fifty-four. Miss A. C. is an incurable from rheumatic arthritis. She tells me that she was born in the quiet village of Little Massingham, in a woody part of Norfolk, where her father was a large farmer. Persons who have been familiar with Norfolk and Suffolk can understand the comfort and freedom enjoyed by the yeomen of those counties. To have once associated with the children of this class is to remember the pride and pleasure with which they regarded the homes and pursuits of their youth, compared to which any kind of town-existence was insupportable. A. C. grew up in the enjoyment of such a home, the eldest of ten children, happy and useful, with no thought of the dark days in store. The dark days came, and Miss C. entered a family as governess. She remained twelve years, educating all the children, and enjoying the esteem of the parents and the affection of her pupils. In itself, this was no mean life's work ; but, alas ! her activities ended here, and rheumatism laid its grip on her, and has held her a fast prisoner. It may be an every-day story, but in chatting with Miss C. and her mother (her father had gone out) I felt that it did good, like a medicine, to see the strong filial feeling of this estimable lady. Referring to the pension, to which she was elected nine years ago, she says, "I cannot express in words the deep sense of the gratitude I owe to that noble Institution. I have the unspeakable comfort of feeling that I am able to relieve my parents, in their reduced circumstances, of the additional burden of my maintenance, and, helpless as my infirmity has made me, still to do my part in binding the home and the family together."

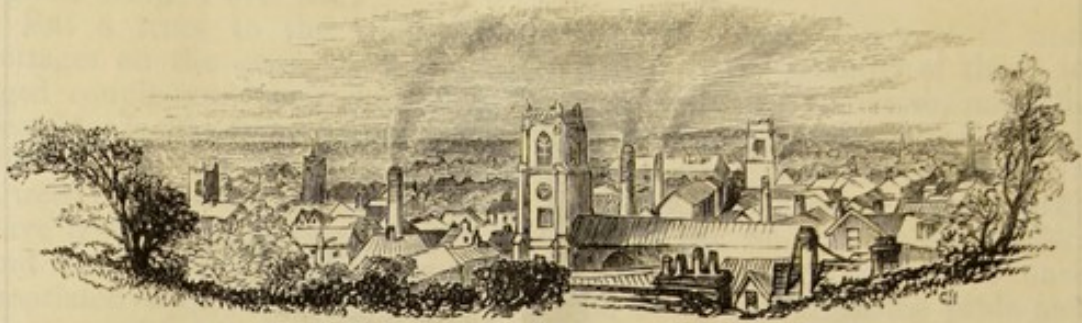


FENMAN'S COTTAGE.



• A. C.'S HOME.

and chimney
The house is a two-story structure of stone and is surrounded by
his many-coloured specimens in terms strange to me. I could not but admire

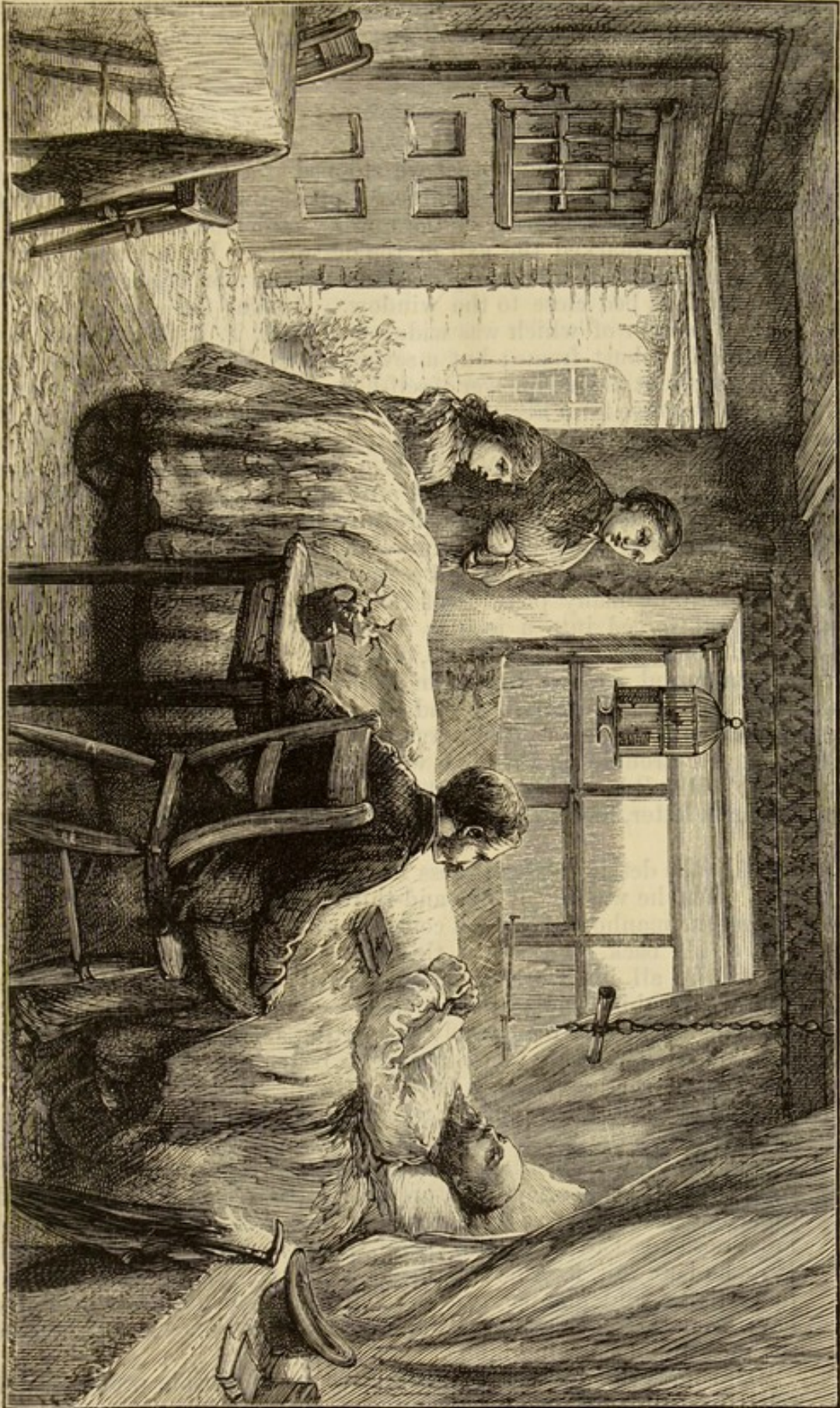


FROM NORWICH CASTLE.

Who enters Norwich by the Thorpe station may imagine that he has arrived at a city in mourning. The glass portions of a roof, scarcely above the carriage tops, are opaque with dirt. The dingy walls seem hung with native crape, and the earthy refreshment-room savours of bile and indigestion; in expectation of a Royal visit, the patriotic Railway Company were draping the exits with second-hand baize, that enhanced the gloom. One was glad to break away into the light and air of this city of the east. Norwich is entitled to lord it over her sisters in Suffolk and Essex. Has she not a cathedral, associated with the courtly, contemplative Bishop Hall? Is not her castle a landmark? Is not her triennial musical festival in St. Andrew's Hall the fashionable pilgrimage of the eastern world? Does not her cattle-market fill the pastoral heart with unspeakable emotion? Are not her citizens men of the highest public spirit, and prone to enterprise? Witness her very streets; there are no stones left to praise them, for a few years since they were carpeted with noiseless wood.

We took our way by the church of St. Giles, with its noble tower of black flint, past Chapel Fields, to Grapes Hill. There we found Mr. T. P. D. I had known him as a former inmate of the hospital, but we had not met since he became a pensioner in 1874. I was glad to see him in such fair health, and he was evidently pleased to see us. Mr. D.'s case was brought under notice fourteen years ago by the late Mr. William Banting, as one of complete paralysis—a man of fine frame, but forty-seven years of age, unable to move hand or foot. Well-educated, highly intelligent, the greater seemed the wreck; and the greater, too, the pity; for Mr. D. has succumbed to troubles not of his own causing. He had lately inherited an old-established business in the City of London, and kept a "box" in Surrey. But his apparent prosperity was built upon the sand, and he found himself in danger of ruin; he struggled against it in vain; the ruin came, in fortune and in health. At Putney he recovered, by slow degrees, the use of his hands, and partially of his feet; and, in 1874, he obtained leave to exchange his position for that of a pensioner, selecting Norwich as his place of residence. With the newly-found freedom of his hands he acquired skill in wood-carving, and, by this means, supplemented the aid of the pension. Being a zealous entomologist, he applied himself to collecting and classifying beetles, and, finding many sympathetic friends, a new life opened to him, which, notwithstanding his still crippled state, had its aims and enjoyments.

After some reference to past times, we asked to see his insect collection. He handed us a two-volume dictionary of *Coleoptera*, and discoursed about his many-coloured specimens in terms strange to us. I could not but admire



T. R.

the spirit that had survived great disasters, and resigned itself to the small remainder of its mercies. Mr. D. inquired after many of his old friends at Putney, and intrusted me with messages I had soon an opportunity of delivering to them in person.

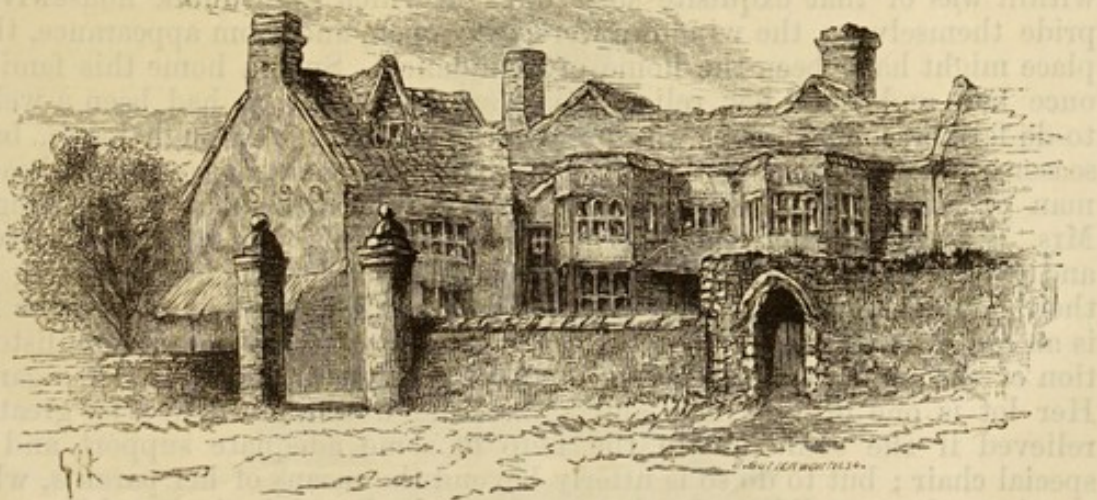
It was late in the afternoon that we stopped at a cottage in St. Martin's Lane. The surroundings were humble. Opposite was the church, recently struck by lightning. A corner of the tower was demolished, and a rent in the chancel wall marked the exit of the destroyer. From the end of the front garden we discerned the object of our visit, a man of about fifty years of age, lying in a bed close to the window. He was the only occupant of the room, the door of which was wide open. Mr. T. R. is a man of large and apparently robust frame; but a severe spinal disease has confined him to his bed, without the least power of self-help, for eleven years. His wife and a daughter of twelve form his little household. A friend lately supplied him with an iron bedstead on wheels, so that, on fine summer days, he enjoys a ride through the old city. Mr. R. is a most cheerful man, with great powers of conversation. He told me much of his history. He especially interested me by dwelling on the pleasure he derived from imagination. "When I lie awake," he said, "I amuse myself with composing addresses on religious subjects. Last night I employed myself in thinking of your visit, and forming many pictures of the kind of person I should see." I found myself forced into a jocular vein. "Does your wife make you Norfolk dumplings?" said I. "No," he said, "there is no need, for they bring them round, and we buy them at the door at a halfpenny each." I laughed, almost with tears. I had seen touching specimens of patient resignation within the last few days, but was not prepared for such a triumph over trouble as this. I was curious to have some particular account of Mr. R.'s case, and a gentleman who visits him has kindly written me a letter, of which the following is the substance:

"All the details of his illness I do not fully remember, but I know that when he was about five-and-thirty, getting towards the prime of a vigorous manhood, he was a constant sufferer from pains in the lower part of his back. He was at this time—as I believe he had been for practically all his working life—engaged in the shoe-trade, having attained by this time to one of the best paid departments, the shoe-finishing. He was honourably supporting a family of five or six sons and daughters, an active member of his benefit society—indeed, a good specimen of the best class of British artizan. The pains in his back at length caused him to apply for advice, and, as the disease appeared to gain in strength, he at length went into the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital. Here it would appear the medical faculty of the staff was completely baffled as to the nature of his disease; at any rate when he came out he was suffering from spinal abscesses, and was told that he must not expect to be able to sit up, much less stand and work again. How he bore this terrible intelligence I do not know, but am able to judge that it did not paralyze his Christian hopefulness, which must have been then a characteristic of his, as it has been since I have had the pleasure of knowing him.

"Of course the question of how to live was a terrible problem. His relatives were of the small farmer and shopkeeping class, and could not maintain him for long, and his family was still on his hands.

But his ingenuity was not at a loss. He contrived to manufacture an ink for shoemakers' use, which, for five or six years, he was able to sell at a profit of two pounds per week. This, considering the nourishing food he was compelled to feed his running sores with, was not too much for his requirements. But an incurable, bedridden invalid is not a match for the Yankee inventor; and some two or three years before he obtained the hospital's pension, an American ink, which answered the purpose better than his, and the like of which he was unable to successfully prepare himself, quite stopped the sale of his own composition. But he argued that the connection he had got together among the shoemakers might still be of service to him, and he forthwith invested his small savings in a barrel of the American ink which had beaten him, and a few shoemakers' sundries; and, by retailing these, he is still able to earn several shillings a week. Of course, this little business could not be carried on by himself personally; as you know after your visit, he has had the help of a hard-working, devoted wife, who not only ladles out the pints of ink to customers, but earns a few shillings a week by horsehair-weaving.

"It was shortly after the disheartening event of the adoption by the shoe-trade of the American invention, that I was led to visit Mr. R., and I may say I am never more thankful for anything than for that almost chance visit I made him early in 1881. I have scarcely ever, in the course of scores of visits I have paid him, found him in any way despondent, and never impatient, or peevish, or fretful. He is a great reader, and, as a matter of course, has much time for thinking; and if I want enlightenment as to some by-gone event, or, what is more, an intelligent and thoughtful opinion on such matters as the social status of the working-man, working-men's clubs, the influence of the Salvation Army, or any vexed social problem, I am sure to find what I want from him. I never visit his humble room, but I come away refreshed in heart, and thankful that I have been an instrument in relieving a noble spirit from the dread of becoming a burden on his friends."



BISHOP HALL'S PALACE.



M. B.'S HOME.

If the reader cares to consult a map of the eastern counties, he will notice a river running like a ribbon between Norfolk and Suffolk; its winding course has given it the name of the Waveney. It is the name assumed, not long since, by the present owner of the fair lands of Flixton. A pleasant name for a pleasant stream; for in truth it is so, as one can vouch who passed his schooldays on its banks, in the shadow of the fine old tower of Beccles, and remembers, as if it were yesterday, the sound of the muffled peal that bemoaned the death of England's last king, travelling like a musical wail through the valley.

We are crossing the Waveney this morning, near Harleston, on the road to the village of Weybread, to see our last client. The stream is narrow and low, the land rising on either side, but there are signs that in winter it may be a dangerous flood.

Miss M. B. resides with her parents, in a small house at the crossing of two roads. Mrs. B. came out to meet us with a hearty greeting. The house within was of that exquisite cleanliness on which the Suffolk housewives pride themselves; the windows were wide open, and from appearance, the place might have been the home of abundance. Such a home this family once had, and not a few relics of it were here. Mr. B. had been a well-to-do farmer, for 240 acres was not a mean holding. Through losses, bad seasons, and domestic affliction all went, and he is now, at seventy, a headman of labourers, or bailiff, as he is grandly called, at a weekly wage. Mrs. B. is an educated lady. She paints beautifully on satin and velvet, and gives a few lessons in drawing, but it is a poor living. They cling to their house, though the rent, £12, is raised with difficulty. Poor Miss B. is an object of real pity. She is thirty-one, and suffers from a severe distortion of the spine, which evidently affects most seriously the chief organs. Her lot is one of weariness and pain. She would, no doubt, be greatly relieved if she could obtain the help of some adequate support and a special chair; but to do so is utterly beyond the means of her parents, who are themselves candidates for the annuity of the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution. The old man accompanied us to the gate, and we had further talk. I learned that his first wife was a Miss G. of H. Hall; her

brother, Philip G., was a schoolmate of my own, a tall, fair youth of kind heart and gracious speech ; he is dead. It is said we live in a little world ; years pass, and we find ourselves face to face with old forms, or the shadow of them. We read the names of former friends upon their tombstones, and their possessors live for a moment to us, and all is again a silent void.

We turned away, and strayed on the grassy bank. My companion took out his sketch-book. The stream was rippling in the beams of a summer noon, that threw a shimmering reflection upon the old arch, to be sent back, broken and quivering, in the shallow water. A cart with two men passed on to the bridge ; we scarcely observed it. A friendly halloo made us look up ; it came from the old man and his son ; the next moment it had turned into the road and was out of sight. A few more strokes, and the sketch was done. Our task, too, was finished.

PATIENT READER, who may have borne with me thus far, let me intreat of you a kindly thought for the Institution of whose out-door work I have endeavoured to give a sample. It has gained many friends through a sight of the well-appointed Home, and the Two Hundred who are spending their remaining days, supported by the comforts that wealth and benevolence can secure for their relief. If your sympathy has been aroused by any one of the cases I have tried to depict, remember it is but as the five hundredth part of that UNSEEN GOOD wrought in homes near and far. The amount of a single pension would scarcely lessen the sum of a year's enjoyment to you ; but it would yield a hundredfold in relief and happiness in some poor home, and infinitely more in the satisfaction that flows from an act of beneficence. If you confess that my test, applied at random, has not failed, then let the measure of your giving be, next to your ability, the sense of the mercies you have yourself received.



BECCLES TOWER.

[Please turn over.]

THE
ROYAL HOSPITAL FOR INCURABLES.

Treasurer: JOHN DERBY ALLCROFT, Esq., F.R.A.S.

In offering the foregoing narrative, the Board desire respectfully to present to the benevolent a specimen of the *out-door* work of the Institution. Although established for nearly thirty years, it is not generally known that this charity, besides maintaining the beautiful Home at Putney Heath, is also a large

PENSION SOCIETY FOR INCURABLES.

The Pensioners are, in fact, more than twice as numerous as the Inmates; 475 incurable persons, above the pauper class, yet truly necessitous, receive each £20 per annum, the sum paid to them last year being £9,331.

The reader is invited to examine the two carefully prepared

PENSION CHARTS

appended to this pamphlet; each red spot denotes a Pensioner living at the present time, and the distribution of the grants over the Metropolis and the United Kingdom is seen at a glance.

The twofold work involves great cost, for which the resources of the Hospital are now quite insufficient. Last year they required to be supplemented by a loan of £5,000, which is still unrepaid; nearly 500 names disappear annually from the list of subscribers; these vacancies must be filled; and, unless an ever-generous public comes to their aid, the Board may have no alternative but to reduce the rate of election. They issue this appeal with the earnest hope that it may create new interest in the good work.

The Home at Putney Heath is open to visitors every week day from 12 to 6; no order is required.

Annual Subscriptions, Half a Guinea and upwards; Life Subscriptions, Five Guineas and upwards, with votes in proportion to the amount.

Information may be had on application to the Secretary, 106, Queen Victoria Street, London, E.C.

FREDERIC ANDREW, *Secretary.*

January, 1884.

