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of religious estates in the town of Huntingdon itself, and it is highly characteristic of the whole tribe that the very house in which the Lord Protector was born was monastic, and had been, before the Dissolution, a hospital dedicated to the use of the poor. For the Lord Protector was the son of this Robert, who by a sort of atavism had added to the ample income derived from monastic spoil the profits of a brewery. It was Mrs Cromwell who looked after the brewery, and some appreciable part of the family revenues were derived from it when, in 1617, her husband died, leaving young Oliver, the future Lord Protector, an only son of eighteen, upon her hands.

The quarrels between young Oliver and old Oliver (the absurdly wealthy head of the family) would furnish material for several diverting pages, but they do not concern this, which is itself but a digression from the general subject of my book.

The object of that digression has been to trace the growth of but one great territorial family, from the gutter to affluence in the course of less than 100 years; to show how plain "Williams" gradually and secretly became "Cromwell"—because the new name had about it a flavour of nobility, however parvenu; to show how the whole of their vast revenues depended upon, and was born from, the destruction of monastic system, and to show by the example of one

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Thames-side family how rapidly and from what sources was derived that economic power of the squires which, when it came to the issue of arms, utterly destroyed what was left of the national monarchy.

The new *régime* had, however, other features about it which must not be forgotten. For instance, in this growth of a new territorial body upon the ruins of the monastic orders, in this sudden and portentous increase of the wealth and power of the squires of England, the mutability of the new system is perhaps as striking as any other of its characteristics.

Manors or portions of manors which had been steadily fixed in the possession and customs of these undying corporations for centuries pass rapidly from hand to hand, and though there is sometimes a lull in the process the uprooting reoccurs after each lull, as though continuity and a strong tradition, which are necessarily attached for good or for evil to a free peasantry, were as necessarily disregarded by a landed plutocracy. There is not, perhaps, in all Europe a similar complete carelessness for the traditions of the soil and for the attachment of a family to an ancestral piece of land as is to be found among these few thousand squires. The system remains, but the individual families, the particular lineages, appear without astonishment and are destroyed almost without regret. Aliens, Orientals and worse, enter



SONNING VILLAGE.

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the ruling class, and are received without surprise ; names that recall the Elizabethans go out, and are not mourned.

We are accustomed to-day, when we see some village estate in our own country pass from an impoverished gentleman to some South African Jew, to speak of the passing of an old world and of its replacement by a new and a worse one. But an examination of the records which follow the Dissolution of the monasteries may temper our sorrow. The wound that was dealt in the sixteenth century to our general national traditions affected the love of the land as profoundly as it did religion, and the apparent antiquity which the trees, the stones, and a certain spurious social feeling lend to these country houses is wholly external.

Among the riparian manors of the Thames the fate of Bisham is very characteristic of the general fate of monastic land. It was surrendered, among other smaller monasteries, in 1536, though it enjoyed an income corresponding to about £6000 a year of our money, and of course very much more than £6000 a year in our modern way of looking at incomes. It was thus a wealthy place, and how it came to be included in the smaller monasteries is not quite clear. At anyrate it was restored immediately after. The monks of Chertsey were housed in it, as we have already seen, and the revenues of several of the smaller dissolved houses were added to it ; so that it was at the moment of its refoundation about three

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times as wealthy of it had been before. The prior who had surrendered in 1536, one Barlow, was made Bishop of St Asaphs, and in turn of St Davids, Bath and Wells, and Chichester ; he is that famous Barlow who took the opportunity of the Reformation to marry, and whose five daughters all in turn married the Protestant bishops of the new Church of England. But this is by the way. The fate of the land is what is interesting. From Anne of Cleves, whose portion it had been, and to whom the Government of the great nobles under Edward VI. confirmed it after Henry VIII's. death, it passed, upon her surrendering it in 1552, to a certain Sir Philip Hoby. He had been of the Privy Council of Henry VIII. Upon his death it passed to his nephew, Edward Hoby ; Edward was a Parliamentarian under Elizabeth, wrote on Divinity, and left an illegitimate son, Peregrine, to whom he bequeathed Bisham upon his death in 1617. It need hardly be said that before 100 years were over the son was already legitimatised in the county traditions ; his son, Edward, was created Baron just after the Restoration, in 1666. The succession was kept up for just 100 years more, when the last male heir of the family died in 1766. He was not only a baron but a parson as well, and on his death the estate went to relatives by the name of Mill, or, as we might imagine, "Hoby" Mill. It did not long remain with them. They died out in 1780 and the Van Sittarts bought it of the widow.

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Consider Chertsey, from which Bisham sprang. The utter dispersion of the whole tradition of Chertsey is more violent than that perhaps of any other historical site in England. The Crown maintained, as we have seen to be the case elsewhere, its nominal hold upon the foundations of the abbey and of what was left of the buildings, though that hold was only nominal, and it maintained such a position until 1610—that is, for a full lifetime after the community was dispersed. But the tradition created by Fitzwilliam continued, and the Crown was ready to sell at that date, to a certain Dr Hammond. The perpetual mobility which seems inseparable from spoils of this kind attaches thenceforward to the unfortunate place. The Hammonds sell after the Restoration to Sir Nicholas Carew, and before the end of the seventeenth century the Carews pass it on to the Orbys, and the Orbys pass it on to the Waytes. The Waytes sell it to a brewer of London, one Hinde. So far, contemptuous as has been the treatment of this great national centre, it had at least remained intact. With Hinde's son even that dignity deserted it. He found it advisable to distribute the land in parcels as a speculation; the actual emplacement of the building went to a certain Barwell, an East Indian, in 1753, and his son left it by will to a private soldier called Fuller, who was suspected of being his illegitimate brother. Fuller, as might be expected, saw nothing

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but an opportunity of making money. He redivided what was left intact of the old estate, and sold that again by lots in 1809 ; a stockbroker bought the remaining materials of a house whose roots struck back to the very footings of our country, sold them for what they were worth—and there was the end of Chertsey.

Then there is also Radley : which begins as an exception, but fails. It was a manor of Abingdon, and after the Dissolution it fell a prey to that one of the Seymours who proved too dirty and too much even for his brother and was put to death in 1549. It passed for the moment, as we have seen several of these riverside manors do, into the hands of Mary. But upon her death Elizabeth bestowed it upon a certain Stonehouse, and the Stonehouses did come uncommonly near to founding a family that should endure. Nor can their tradition be said to have disappeared when the name changed and the manor passed to the nephew of the last Stonehouse, by name Bowyer. But Bowyer did not retain it. He gradually ruined himself : and it is amusing at this distance of time to learn that the cause of his ruin was the idea that coal underlay his property. Everyone knows what Radley since became : it was purchased by an enthusiast, and is now a school springing from his foundation.

Or consider the two Hinkseys opposite Oxford, both portions of Abingdon manors ; they are granted in the general



THE VALE OF SHIPLAKE, FROM HENNERTON.

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loot to two worthies bearing the names of Owen and Bridges : a doctor.

These were probably no more than vulgar speculators upon a premium—"Stags," as we should say to-day—for a few years afterwards we find a Williams in possession of one of the Hinkseys ; he is followed by the Perrots, and only quite late, and by purchase, do we come to the somewhat more dignified name of Harcourt. The other Hinksey, after still more varied adventures, ends up in the hands of the Berties, obscure south-country people who date from a rich Protestant marriage of the time.

Cholsey, again, with its immemorial traditions of unchanging ecclesiastical custom, receiving its priests in Saxon times from the Mont St Michel upon the marches of Brittany, and later holding as a manor, from the Abbot of Reading, remains with the Crown but a very few years. In 1555 Mary handed it over to that Sir Robert Englefield who was promptly attainted by her successor. It gets in the hands of the Knowleses, then of the Rich's, and ends up with the family of Edwardes—seventeenth-century Welshmen, who, by a plan of wealthy marriages, became gentlemen, and have now for 100 years and more been peers, under the title of Kensington.

The mention of Sir Robert Englefield leads one to what is perhaps the best example in the whole Thames Valley of

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this perpetual chop and change in the holding of English land ; that example is to be discovered at Pangbourne.

Pangbourne also was monastic ; and the manor held, as did Cholsey, of Reading Abbey. In the race for the spoils Dudley clutched it in 1550. When he was beheaded, three years later, and it passed again to the Crown, Mary handed it (as she had handed Cholsey) to Sir Robert Englefield. His attainder followed. Within ten years it changes hands again. Elizabeth in 1563 gave it to her cofferer, a Mr Weldon. This personage struck no root, nor his son after him, for in 1613, while still some were alive who could remember the old custom and immemorial monastic lordship of the place, Weldon the younger sold it to a certain Davis.

Davis, one would hope—in that seventeenth century which was so essentially the century of the squires, and in that generation also wherein the squires wiped out what was left of the Crown and left the King a salaried dependant of the governing class—Davis might surely have attempted to found a family and to achieve some sort of dignity of tradition. He probably made no such an attempt, but if he did he failed ; for only half-a-century later the unfortunate place changes hands again, and the Davises sell it to the Breedons.

The Breedons showed greater stability. They are actually associated with Pangbourne for over a century, but even this experiment in lineage broke down, through the

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extinction of the direct line. In 1776, by a sham continuity consonant to the whole recent story of English land, it passes to yet another family on the condition of their assuming the name of Breedon—which was not their own.

All up and down England, and especially in this Thames Valley, which is in all its phases so typical and symbolical of the rest of the country, this stir and change of tenure is to be found, originating with the sharp changes of 1540, and continuing to our own day.

Anywhere along this Berkshire shore of the Thames the process may be traced ; even the poor little ruined nunnery of Ankerwike shows it. The site of that quiet and forgotten community was seized under Edward VI. by Smith the courtier. Then you find it in the pockets of the Salters, after them of the Lysons. The Lysons sell it to the Lees, and finally it passes by marriage to the Harcourts.

The number of such examples that could be taken in the Valley of the Thames alone would be far too cumbersome for these pages. One can close the list with Sonning.

Sonning, which had been very possibly the see of an early bishopric, and which was certainly a country house of the Bishop of Salisbury, did not pass from ecclesiastical hands by a theft, but it was none the less doomed to the same mutability as the rest.

In 1574 it was exchanged with the Crown for lands in

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Dorset. The Crown kept it for an unusually long time, considering the way in which land slipped on every side from the control of the National Government at this period. It is still royal under Charles I., but it passes in 1628 to Halstead and Chamberlain. In little more than twenty years it is in the hands of the family of Rich. Then there is a lull, just as there was in the case of Pangbourne, and a continuity that lasts throughout the eighteenth century. But just as a tradition began to form it was broken, and in the first years of the nineteenth century Sonning is sold to the Palmers.

Parallel to the rise of the squires and their capture of English government has gone the development of the English town system. And this, the last historical phase with which we shall deal in these pages, is also very well and typically illustrated in the history of the Thames Valley. That valley contains London, which is, of course, not only far the largest but in its way the fullest example of what is peculiarly English in the development of town life; and it contains, in the modern rise of Oxford and Reading, two of the very best instances to show how the English town in its modern aspect has sprung from the industrial system and from the introduction of railways. For neither has any natural facilities for production, and the growth of each in the nineteenth century has been wholly artificial.

The most recent change of all, with which these notes will



CLIFTON HAMPDEN.

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end, is, one need hardly say, this industrial transformation. It has made a completely new England, and it nourishes the only civilised population in the world which is out of touch with arms, and with the physical life and nature of the country it inhabits, and the only population in which the vast majority are concerned with things of which they have no actual experience, and feel most strongly upon matters dictated to them at second or third hand by the proprietors of great journals.

What that new England will become none of us can tell; we cannot even tell whether the considerable problem of maintaining it as an organised civilisation will or will not be solved. All the conditions are so completely new, our whole machinery of government so thoroughly presupposes a little aristocratic agricultural state, and our strong attachment to form and ritual so hampers all attempts at reorganisation, that the way in which we shall answer, if we do answer, the question of this sphinx, cannot as yet even be guessed at.

But long before the various historical causes at work had begun to produce the great modern English town, long before the use of coal, the development of the navy, and, above all, the active political transformation of our rivals during the eighteenth century, had given us that industrial supremacy which we have but recently lost, the English

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town was a thing with characteristics of its own in Europe.

In the first place, it was not municipal in the Roman sense. The sharp distinction which the Roman Empire and the modern French Republic, and, from the example of that republic, the whole of Western Europe, establish between town and country, comes from the fact that European thought, method of government, and the rest, were formed on the Mediterranean : but the civilisation of the Mediterranean was one of city states ; the modern civilisation which has returned to Roman traditions is, therefore, necessarily municipal. A man's first country in antiquity was his town ; he died for his town ; he left his wealth to his town ; the word "civilisation," like the word "citizen," and like a hundred words connected with the superiority of mankind, are drawn from the word for a town. To be political, to possess a police, to recognise boundaries—all this was to be a townsman, and the various districts of the Empire took their proper names, at least, from the names of their chief cities, as do to-day the French and the Italian countrysides.

Doubtless in Roman times the governing forces of Britain attempted a similar system here. But it does not seem ever to have taken root in the same way that it did beyond the Channel. The absence of a municipal system in the fullest sense is one of the very few things which differentiates the



SHILLINGFORD BRIDGE.

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Roman Britain from the rest of the Empire, others being a land frontier to the west, and the large survival of aboriginal dialects.

The Roman towns were not small, indeed Roman London was very large ; they were not ill connected with highroads ; they were certainly wealthy and full of commerce ; but they gave their names to no districts, and their municipal institutions have left but very faint traces upon posterity.

The barbarian invasions fell severely upon the Roman cities of Britain, in some very rare cases they may have been actually destroyed, but in the much more numerous cases where we may be reasonably sure that municipal life continued without a break throughout the incursions of the pirates, their decay was pitiful ; and when recorded history begins again, after a gap of two hundred years, with the Roman missionaries of the sixth and seventh centuries, we find thenceforward, and throughout the Saxon period, many of the towns living the life of villages.

The proportion that were walled was much smaller than was the case upon the Continent, and even the most enduring emblem and the most tenacious survival of the Roman Imperial system—namely, the Bishop seated in the chief municipality of his district—was not universal to English life.

It is characteristic of Gregory the Great that he had intended, or is believed to have intended, Britain, when he

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had recivilised it, to be set out upon a clear Latin model, with a Primate in the chief city and suffragans in every other. But if he had such a plan (and it would have been a typically Latin plan) he must have been thinking of a Britain very different from that which his envoys actually found. When the work was accomplished the little market town of Canterbury was the seat of the Primate; the old traditions of York secured for it a second archbishop, great London could not be passed over, but small villages in some places, insignificant boroughs in others, were the sites of cathedrals. Selsey, a rural manor or fishing hamlet, was the episcopal centre of St Wilfrid and his successors in their government of Sussex; Dorchester, as we have seen, was the episcopal town, or rather village, for something like half England.

In the names of its officers also and in the methods of their government the Anglo-Saxon town was agricultural.

With the advent of the Normans, as one might expect, municipal life to some extent re-arose. But it still maintained its distinctively English character throughout the Middle Ages. Contrast London or Oxford, for instance, in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, with contemporary Paris. In London and Oxford the wall is built once for all, and when it is completed the town may grow into suburbs as much as it likes, no new wall is built. In Paris, throughout its history, as the town grows, the first concern of its

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Government is to mark out new limits which shall sharply define it from the surrounding country. Philip Augustus does it, a century and a half later Etienne Marcel did it ; through the seventeenth century, and the eighteenth, the custom is continued : through the nineteenth also, and to-day new and strict limits are about to be imposed on the expanded city.

Again the metropolitan idea, which is consonant to, and the climax of, a municipal system, is absent from the story of English towns.

Until a good hundred years after the Conquest you cannot say where the true capital of England is, and when you find it at last in London, the King's Court is in a suburb outside the walls and the Parliament of a century later yet meets at Westminster and not in the City.

The English judges are not found fixed in local municipal centres, they are itinerant. The later organisation of the Peace does not depend upon the county towns ; it is an organisation of rural squires ; and, most significant of all, no definite distinction can ever be drawn between the English village and the English town : neither in spirit nor in legal definition. You have a town like Maidenhead, which has a full local Government, and yet which has no mayor for centuries. Conversely, a town having once had a mayor may dwindle down into a village, and no one who respects

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English tradition bothers to interfere with the anomaly. For instance, you may to-day in Orford enjoy the hospitality, or incur the hostility, of a Mayor and Corporation.

On all these accounts the banks of the Thames, until quite the latest part of our historical development, presented a line of settlements in which it was often difficult to draw the distinction between the village and the town.

Consider also this characteristic of the English thing, that the boroughs sending Members to Parliament first sent them quite haphazard and then by prescription.

Simon de Montfort gets just a few borough Members to his Parliament because he knows they will be on his side ; and right down to the Tudors places are enfranchised—as, for example, certain Cornish boroughs were—not because they are true towns but because they will support the Government. Once returning Members, the place has a right to return them, until the partial reform of 1832. It is a right like the hereditary right of a peer, a quaint custom. It has no relation to municipal feeling, for municipal feeling does not exist. Old Sarum may lose every house, Gatton may retain but seven freeholders, yet each solemnly returns its two Members to Parliament.

From the first records that we possess until the beginning of the nineteenth century, the line of the Thames was a string of large villages and small towns, differing in size and wealth

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far less than their descendants do to-day. In this arrangement, of course, the valley was similar to all the rest of England, but perhaps the prosperity of the larger villages and the frequency of the market towns was more marked on the line of the Thames than in any other countryside, from the permanent influx of wealth due to the royal castles, the great monastic foundations, and the continual stream of travel to and from London which bound the whole together.

Cricklade, Lechlade, Oxford, Abingdon, Dorchester, Wallingford, Reading, and Windsor—old Windsor, that is—were considerable places from at least the period of the Danish invasions. They formed the objective of armies, or the subject matter of treaties or important changes. But the first standard of measure which we can apply is that given us by the Norman Survey.

How indecisive is that standard has already been said. We do not accurately know what categories of wealth were registered in Domesday. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, barbaric in this as in most other matters, would have it that the Survey was complete, and applied to all the landed fortune of England. That, of course, is absurd. But we do have a rough standard of comparison for rural manors, though it is a very rough one. Though we cannot tell how much of the measurements and of the numbers given are conventional and how much are real, though we do not know whether the plough-lands

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referred to are real fields or merely measures of capacity for production, though historians are condemned to ceaseless guessing upon every term of the document, and though the last orthodox guess is exploded every five or six years—yet when we are told that one manor possessed so many ploughs or paid upon so many hides, or had so many villein holdings while another manor had but half or less in each category ; and when we see the dues, say three times as large in the first as in the second, then we can say with certitude that the first was much more important than the second ; *how* much more important we cannot say. We can, to repeat an argument already advanced, affirm the inhabitants of any given manor to be at the very least not less than five times the number of holdings, and thus fix a *minimum* everywhere. For instance, we can be certain that William's rural England had not *less* than 2,000,000, though we cannot say how much *more* they may not have been—3,000,000, 4,000,000, or 5,000,000. In agricultural life—that is, in the one industry of the time—Domesday does afford a vague statement to the rural conditions of England at the end of the eleventh century, and, dark as it is, no other European nation possesses such a minute record of its economic origins.

But with the towns the case is different. There, except for the minimum of population, we are quite at sea. We may presume that the houses numbered are only the houses

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paying tax, or at least we may presume this in some cases, but already the local customs of each town were so highly differentiated that it is quite impossible to say with certitude what the figures may mean. It is usual to take the taxable value of the place to the Crown and to establish a comparison on that basis, but it is perhaps wiser, though almost as inconclusive, to consider each case, and all the elements of it separately, and to attempt by a co-ordination of the different factors given to arrive at some sort of scale.

Judged in this manner, Wallingford and Oxford are the early towns of the Thames Valley which afford the best subjects for survey.

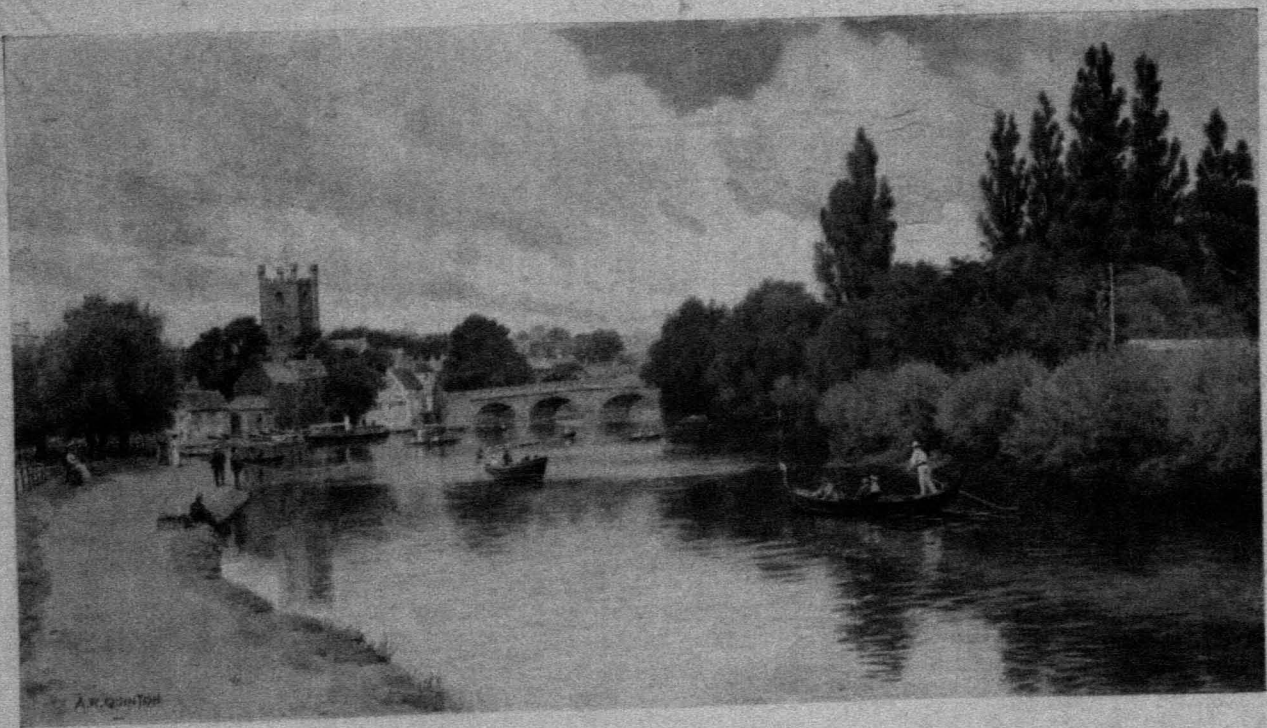
Wallingford in Domesday counted, closes and cottages together, just under 500 units of habitation. It is, of course, a matter of conjecture how much population this would stand for. A minimum is here, as elsewhere, easily established. We may presuppose that a close, even of the largest kind, was but a private one; we may next average the inhabitants of each house at five, which is about the average of modern times, and so arrive at a population of 2500. But this minimum of 2500 for the population of Wallingford at the time of the Conquest is too artificial and too full of modern bias to be received. Not even the strongest prejudice in favour of underrating the wealth and population of early England, a prejudice which has for its object the emphasising of our modern

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perfection, would admit so ludicrous a conclusion. But while we may be perfectly certain that the population of Wallingford was far larger than this minimum, to obtain a maximum is not so easy. We do not know, with absolute certainty, whether the whole of the town has been enumerated in the Survey, though we have a better ground for supposing it in this case than in most others. Such numerous details are given of holdings which, though situated in the town, counted in the property of local manors that we are fairly safe in saying that we have here a more than commonly complete survey. The very cottages are mentioned, as, for example, "twenty-two cottages outside the wall," and their condition is described in terms which, though not easy for us to understand, clearly signify that they could be taken as paying the full tax.

The real elements of uncertainty lie, first in the number of people normally inhabiting one house at that time, and secondly, in the exact meaning of the word "haga" or "close."

As to the first point, we may take it that one household of five would be the least, ten would be the most, to be present under the roof of an isolated family; but we must remember that the Middle Ages contained in their social system a conception of community which not only appeared (and is still remembered) in connection with monastic institutions, but which inspired the whole of military and civil life. To put it briefly, a man at the time of the Conquest, and for



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centuries later, would rather have lived as part of a community than as an individual householder, and conversely, those indices of importance and social position which we now estimate in furniture and other forms of ostentation were then to be found in the number of dependants surrounding the head of the house. A merchant, for example, if he flourished, was the head of a very numerous community ; every parish church in a town represented a society of priests and of their servants, and of course a garrison (such as Wallingford pre-eminently possessed) meant a very large community indeed. We are usually safe, at anyrate in the towns, if we multiply the known number of tenements by ten in order to arrive at the number of souls inhabiting the borough. To give the Wallingford of the Conquest a minimum of 5000, if we were certain that 500 (or, to speak exactly, 491) was the number of single units of taxation within the borough, would be to set that minimum quite low enough.

The second difficulty is that of establishing the meaning of the word "haga." In some cases it may represent one single large establishment. But on the other hand we can point to six which between them covered a whole acre, and no one with the least acquaintance of mediæval municipal topography, no one for instance who knows the history of twelfth-century Paris, would allow one-sixth of an acre to a single average house within the walls of a town. A close

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would have one or more wells, it is true ; some closes certainly would have gardens, but the labour of fortification, and the privilege of market, were each of them causes which forbade any great extension of open spaces, save in the case of privileged or wealthy communities or individuals.

From what we know of closes elsewhere, it is more probable that these at Wallingford were the "cells" as it were of the borough organism. A man would be granted in the first growth of the town a unit of land with definitely established boundaries, which he would probably enclose (the word "haga" refers to such an enclosure), and though at first there might be only one house upon it, it would be to his interest to multiply the tenements within this unit, which unit rendered a regular, customary and unchanging due to its various superiors, whatever the number of inhabitants it grew to contain.

If we turn to a comparison based upon taxation we have equal difficulties, though difficulties of a different sort. We saw in the case of Old Windsor that a community of perhaps 1000, probably of more, but at anyrate something more like a large village than a town (and one moreover not rated as a town), paid in dues the equivalent of thirty loads of wheat. Wallingford paid the equivalent of only twenty or twenty-two. But on the other hand the total Farm of the Borough, the globular price at which the taxes could be reckoned upon



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to yield a profit, was equivalent to no less than 400 such loads.

Judged by the number of hagæ we should have a Wallingford about five times the size of Old Windsor. Judged by the taxable capacity we should have an Old Wallingford of more than ten times the size of Old Windsor.

Here again a further element of complexity enters. It was quite out of the spirit of the Middle Ages to estimate dues, whether to a feudal superior or to the National Government, or even minor payments made to a true proprietorial owner at the full capacity of the economic unit concerned. All such payment was customary. Even where, in the later Middle Ages, a man indubitably owned (in our modern sense of the word "owned") a piece of freehold land, and let it (in our modern sense of the word "let"), it would not have occurred to him or his tenant that the very highest price obtainable for the productive capacity of the land should be paid. The philosophy permeating the whole of society compelled the owner and the tenant, even in this extreme case, to a customary arrangement; for it was an arrangement intended to be permanent, to allow for wide fluctuations of value, and therefore to be necessarily a minimum. If this was the case in the later Middle Ages where undoubted proprietary right was concerned, still more was it the case in the early Middle Ages with their customary feudal dues; these varied infinitely from

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place to place, rising in scale from those of privileged communities wholly exempt to those of places such as we believe Old Windsor to have been, which paid (and these were the exceptions), not indeed every penny that they could pay (as they would now have to pay a modern landlord), but half, or perhaps more than half, such a rent.

Where Wallingford stood in this scale it is quite impossible to say, and we can only conclude with the very general statement that the Wallingford of the Conquest consisted of certainly more than 5000 souls, more probably of 10,000, and quite possibly of more than 10,000.

Having taken Wallingford with its minute and valuable record as a sort of unit, we can roughly compare it with other centres of populations upon the river at the same date.

Old Windsor we have already dealt with, and made it out from a fifth to a tenth of Wallingford. Reading was apparently far smaller. Indeed Reading is one of the puzzles of the early history of the Thames Valley. We have already seen in discussing these strategical points upon the river what advantages it had, and yet it appears only sporadically in ancient history as a military post. The Danes hold it on the first occasion on which we find the site recorded, in the latter half of the ninth century : it has a castle during the anarchy of the twelfth, but it is a castle which soon dis-

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appears. It frequently plays a part in the Civil Wars of the seventeenth, but the part it plays is only temporary.

And Reading presents a similar puzzle on the civilian side. It is situated at the junction of two waterways, one of which leads directly from the Thames Valley to the West of England, yet it does not seem to have been of a considerable civil importance until the establishment of its monastery ; and even then it is not a town of first-class size or wealth, nor does it take up its present position until quite late in the history of the country.

At the time of the Domesday Survey it actually counts, in the number of recorded enclosures at least, for less than a third of Old Windsor ; and we may take it, after making every allowance for possible omissions or for some local custom which withdrew it from the taxing power of the Crown, for little more than a village at that moment.

The size of Oxford at the same period we have already touched upon, but since, like every other inference founded upon Domesday, the matter has become a subject of pretty violent discussion, it will bear, perhaps, a repeated and more detailed examination at this place.

Let us first remember that the latest prejudice from which our historical school has suffered, and one which still clings to its more orthodox section, was to belittle as far as possible the general influence of European civilisation upon England ; to

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exalt, for example, the Celtic missionaries and their work at the expense of St Augustine, to grope for shadowy political origins among the pirates of the North Sea, to trace every possible etymology to a barbaric root, and to make of Roman England and of early Mediæval England—that is, of the two Englands which were most fully in touch with the general life of Europe—as small a thing as might be.

In the light of this prejudice, which is the more bitter because it is closely connected with religion and with the bitter theological passions of our universities, we are always safe in taking the larger as against the smaller modern estimates of wealth, of population and of influence, where either of these civilisations is concerned, and, conversely, we are always safe in taking at the lowest modern estimate the numbers and effect of the barbaric element in our history.

To return to the ground we have already briefly covered, and to establish a comparison with Wallingford, the word “haga,” which we saw to be of such doubtful value in the case of Wallingford, is replaced in Oxford by the word “mansio.” The taxable units so enumerated are just over 600, but of these much more than half are set down as untaxable or imperfectly taxable under the epithets “Uasta,” “Uastæ.” What that epithet means we do not know. It may mean anything between “out of repair,” “excused from taxation because they do not come up to our new standard



COOKHAM FERRY.

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of the way in which a house in a borough should be kept up, and because we want to give them time to put themselves in order," down to the popular acceptance of the word as meaning "ruined," or even "destroyed."

We know that at the close of the eleventh century, or indeed at any time before the thirteenth, the small man who lived under his own roof would live in a very low house, and that, space for space of ground area, the cubical contents of these poor dwellings would be less than those of modern slums. On the other hand, we know that the population would live much more in the open air, slept much more huddled, and also that a very considerable proportion—what proportion we cannot say, but probably quite half of a Norman borough—was connected with the huge communal institutions—military, ecclesiastical, and for that matter mercantile, as well—which marked the period. We know that the occupied space stood for very much what is now enclosed by the line of the old walls, and we know that under modern conditions this space, in spite of our great empty public buildings, our sparsely inhabited wealthy houses, and our college gardens, can comfortably hold some 5000 people. We can say, therefore, at a guess, but only at a guess, that the Oxford of the Conquest must have had some 3000 people in it at the very least, and can hardly have had 10,000 at the most. These are wide limits, but

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anyone who shall pretend to make them narrower is imposing upon his readers with an appearance of positive knowledge which is the charlatanism of the colleges, and pretends to exact knowledge where he possesses nothing but the vague basis of antiquarian conjecture.

It is sufficiently clear (and the reading of any of our most positive modern authorities upon Domesday will make it clearer) that no sort of statistical exactitude can be arrived at for the population of the boroughs in the early Middle Ages. But when we consider that Reading is certainly underestimated, and when we consider the detail in which we are informed of Old Windsor, Wallingford, and Oxford, with the neglect of Abingdon, Lechlade, Cricklade, and Dorchester, one can roughly say that the Thames above London possessed in Staines, Windsor, Cookham, probably Henley, perhaps Bensington, Dorchester, Eynsham, and possibly Buscot, large villages varying from some hundreds in population to a little over 1000, not defended, not reckoned as towns, and agricultural in character. To these we may add Chertsey, Ealing, and a few others whose proximity to London makes it difficult for us to judge except in the vaguest way their true importance.

In another category, possessing a different type of communal life, already thinking of themselves as towns, we should have Cricklade, Lechlade, Abingdon, and Kingston among

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the smaller, though probably possessing a population not much larger than that of the larger villages ; while of considerable centres there were but three : Reading the smallest, almost a town, but one upon which we have no true or sufficient data ; Wallingford the largest, with the population of a flourishing county town in our own days, and Oxford, a place which, though in worse repair, ran Wallingford close.

Henley affords an interesting study. At the time of the Conquest, Bensington was no longer, Henley not yet, a borough. To trace the growth of Henley is especially engrossing, because it is one of the very rare examples of a process which earlier generations of historians, and notably the popular historians like Freeman and the Rev. Mr Green, took to be a common feature in the story of this island. They were wrong, of course, and they have been widely and deservedly ridiculed for imagining that the greater part of our English boroughs grew up since the barbarian invasions upon waste places. On the contrary most of our towns grew up upon Roman and pre-Roman foundations, and are continuous with the pre-historic past. But Henley forms a very interesting exception.

It was a hamlet which went with the manor of Bensington, and that point alone is instructive, for it points to the insignificance of the place. When the lords of Bensington went hunting up on Chiltern they found on the far side of the hill,

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it may be presumed, a little clearing near the river. This was all that Henley was, and it is probable that even the church of the place was not built until quite late in the Christian period; there is at anyrate an old tradition that Aldeburgh is the mother of Henley, and it is imagined by those who wrote monographs upon the locality that this tradition points to the church of Aldeburgh as the mother church of what was at first a chapel upon the riverside.

When we first hear of Henley it is already called a town, and the date of this is the first year of King John, 1199.

It must be remembered that the river had been developed and changed in that first century of orderly government under the Normans. Indeed one of the reforms which the aristocracy made much of in their revolt, and which is granted in Magna Charta, is the destruction of the King's weirs upon the Thames. But the weirs cannot have been permanently destroyed; though the public rights over the river were curtailed by Magna Charta, the system of regulation was founded and endured. It was probably this improvement on the great highway which led to the growth of Henley, and when Reading Minster had become the great thing it was late in the twelfth century, Henley must have felt the effect, for it would have afforded the nearest convenient stage down the river from the new and wealthy settlement round the Cluniac Abbey. In the thirteenth century—that



A. R. QUINTON

MARLOW FROM QUARRY WOODS.

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is, in the first hundred years after the earliest mention we have of the place—Henley became rapidly more and more important. It seems to have afforded a convenient halting place whenever progress was made up river, especially a royal progress from Windsor. Edward I. stayed there constantly, and we possess a record of three dates which are very significant of this kind of journey. In the December of 1277 the King goes up river. On the sixteenth of the month he slept at Windsor, on the seventeenth at Henley, the next day at Abingdon ; and in his son's time Henley has grown so much that it counts as one of the three only boroughs in the whole of Oxfordshire : Oxford and Woodstock are the two others.

It was in the thirteenth century also that a bridge was thrown across the river at this point—that is, Henley possessed a bridge long before Wallingford, and at a time when the river could be crossed by road in but very few places. The granting of a number of indulgences, and the promises of masses in the middle of the thirteenth century for this object, give us the date ; and, what is perhaps equally interesting, this early bridge was of stone.

It is usual to think of the early bridges over the Thames as wooden bridges. An older generation was accustomed to many that still remained. This was true of the later Middle Ages, and of the torpor and neglect in building which followed the Reformation. But it was not true of the

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thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The bridge at Henley, like the bridge of Wallingford and the later bridge of Abingdon, was of stone.

It was allowed to fall into decay, and when Leland crossed the river at this point it was upon a wooden bridge, the piers of which stood upon the old foundation. How long that wooden bridge had existed in 1533, when Leland noticed it, we cannot tell, but it remained of wood until 1786, when the present bridge replaced it.

In spite of the early importance of the town, it was not regularly incorporated for a long time, but was governed by a Warden, the first on the list being the date of 1305, within the reign of Edward I. The charter which gave Henley a Mayor and Corporation was granted as late as the reign of Henry VIII. and but a few years before Leland's visit. From that moment, however, the town ceased to expand, either in importance or in numbers ; the destruction of Reading Abbey and of the Cell of Westminster at Hurley just over the river, very possibly affected its prosperity. At the beginning of the nineteenth century it had a population of less than 3000, and sixty years later it had not added another 1000 to that number.

Maidenhead follows, for centuries, a sort of parallel course to the development of Henley.

Recently, of course, it has very largely increased in popu-

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lation, and in this it is an example in a minor degree of what Reading and Oxford are in a major degree—that is, of the changes which the railway has made in the Thames Valley. But until the effect of the railway began to be felt Maidenhead was the younger and parallel town to Henley.

For example, though we cannot tell exactly when Maidenhead Bridge was built, we may suppose it to have been some few years after Henley Bridge. It already exists and is in need of repair in 1297. Henley Bridge is founded more than a generation earlier than that.

“Maidenhythe,” as it was called, has been thought to have been before the building of this bridge a long timber wharf upon the river, but that is only a guess. There must have been some local accumulation of wealth or of traffic or it would not have been chosen as a site for the new bridge which was somewhat to divert the western road.

Originally, so far as we can judge, the main stream of travel crossed the Thames at Cookham, and again at Henley. Why this double crossing should have been necessary it is useless to conjecture unless one hazards the guess that the quality of the soil in very early times gave so much better going upon the high southern bank of the river that it was worth while carrying the main road along the bank, even at the expense of a double crossing of the stream. If that was the case it is difficult to see how a town of the import-

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ance of Marlow could have grown up upon the farther shore ; that Marlow was important we know from the fact that it had a Borough representation in Parliament in the first years of that experiment before the close of the thirteenth century.

At anyrate, whatever the reason was, whether from some pre-historic conditions having brought the road across the peninsula at this point, or, as is more likely, on account of some curious arrangement of mediæval privilege, it is fairly certain that, in the centuries before the great development of the thirteenth, travel did come across the river in front of Cookham, recross it in front of Henley, and so make over the Chilterns to the great main bridge at Wallingford, which led out to the Vale of the White Horse and the west country.

The importance of Cookham in this section of the road is shown in several ways. First the great market, in Domesday bringing in customary dues to the King of twenty shillings—and what twenty shillings means in Domesday in mere market dues one can appreciate by considering that all the dues from Old Windsor only amounted to ten pounds. Then again it was a royal manor which, unlike most of the others, was never alienated ; it was not even alienated during the ruin and breakdown of the monarchy which followed the Dissolution of the monastic orders.

To this day traces remain of the road which joined this market to the second crossing at Henley.



THE BELL, HURLEY.

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We may presume that the importance of Cookham was maintained for some two centuries after the Conquest, until it was outflanked and the stream of its traffic diverted by the building of the bridge at Maidenhead.

Just as this bridge came later than the Bridge at Henley, so it was inferior to it in structure ; it was, as we have seen, of timber, but such as it was, it was the cause of the growth of Maidenhead much more than was the bridge at Henley the cause of the growth of Henley. The first nucleus of municipal government grows up in connection with the Bridge Guild ; the Warden and the Bridge Masters remain the head of the embryonic corporation throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and even when the town is incorporated (shortly before the close of the seventeenth century), by James II., the maintenance and guardianship of the wooden bridge remained one of the chief occupations of the new corporation.

It was just after the granting of the Charter that the army of William III. marched across this bridge on its way to London, an episode which shows how completely Maidenhead held the monopoly of the western road. The present stone bridge was not built to replace the old wooden one until the last quarter of the eighteenth century, parallel in this as in everything else to the example of Henley ; and this position of inferiority to Henley, and of parallel advance to that town, is

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further seen in the statistics of population. In 1801, when Henley already boasted nearly 2000 souls, Maidenhead counted almost exactly half that number. The later growth of the place is quite modern.

The antiquity of the crossing of the Thames at Cookham is supported by a certain amount of pre-historic evidence, worth about as much as such evidence ever is, and about as little. Two Neolithic flint knives have been found there, a bronze dagger sheath and spear-head, a bronze sword, and a whole collection or store of other bronze spear-heads. Such as it is, it is a considerable collection for one spot.

Cookham has not only these pre-historic remains ; it has also fragments of British pottery found in the relics of pile dwellings near the river, and two Roman vases from the bed of the stream ; it has further furnished Anglo-Saxon remains, and, indeed, there are very few points upon the river where so regular a continuity of the historic and the pre-historic is to be discovered as in the neighbourhood of this old ford.

It was in the course of the Middle Ages, and after the Conquest, that new Windsor rose to importance. It is not recognised as a borough before the close of the thirteenth century ; it is incorporated in the fifteenth.

Reading certainly increased considerably with the continual stream of wealth that poured from the abbey ; it possessed in practice a working corporation before the Dissolution,

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was famous for its cloth long before, and had become, in the process of years, an important town that rivalled the great monastery which had developed it ; indeed it is probable that only the privileges, the conservatism, of the abbey forbade it to be recognised and chartered before the Reformation.

Abingdon also grew (but with less vigour), also had a manufactory of cloth, though of a smaller kind, and was also worthy of incorporation at the end of the Middle Ages.

Staines cannot take its place with these, for in spite of its high strategical value, of its old Roman tradition, of its proximity to London and the rest, Staines was throughout the Middle Ages, and till long after, rather a village than a town. Though a wealthy place it is purely agricultural in the Domesday Survey, and the comparative insignificance of the spot is perhaps explained by the absence of a bridge. That absence is by no means certain. Staines after all was on the great military highway leading from London westward, and it must have been necessary for considerable forces to cross the river here throughout the Dark Ages and the early Middle Ages, as did for instance, at the very close of that period, the barons on their way to Runnymede ; and far earlier the army that marched hurriedly from London to intercept the Danes in 1009, when the pagans were coming up the river, and whether by the help of the tide or what not, managed to get ahead of the intercepting force. But if a

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bridge existed so early as the Conquest, we have no mention of it. The first allusion to a bridge is in the granting of three oaks from Windsor for the repairing of it in 1262. It may have existed long before that date, but it is significant that in the Escheats of Edward III., and as late as the twenty-fourth year of his reign—that is, after the middle of the fourteenth century—it is mentioned that the bridge existed since the reign of Henry III., which would convey the impression that in 1262 the bridge had first needed repairing, being built, perhaps, in the earlier years of the reign and completed, possibly, but a little after the death of King John.

This bridge of Staines was most unfortunate. It broke down again and again. Even an experiment in stone at the end of the last century was a failure, because the foundations did not go deep enough into the bed of the river. An iron absurdity succeeded the stone, and luckily broke down also, until at last, in the thirties of the nineteenth century, the whole thing was rebuilt, 200 yards above the old traditional site.

Staines is of interest in another way, because it marks one of those boundaries between the maritime and the wholly inland part of a river which is in so many of the English valleys associated with some important crossing. The jurisdiction of the port of London over the river extended as high as the little island just opposite the mouth of the Colne. On



MEDMENHAM ABBEY.

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this island can still be seen the square stone shaft which is at least as old as the thirteenth century (though it stands on more modern steps), and which marks this limit, as it does also the shire mark between Middlesex and Buckingham.

We have, after the Dissolution it is true, and when the financial standing of most of these places had been struck a heavy blow, a valuable estimate for many of them in the inquiry ordered by Pole in 1555. This estimate gives Abingdon less than 1500 of population, Reading less than 3000, Windsor about 1000; and in general one may say that with the sixteenth century, whether the population was diminishing (as certainly contemporary witnesses believed), or whether it had increased beyond the maximum which England had seen before the Black Death, at anyrate the relative importance of the various centres of population had not very greatly changed during those long five centuries of customary rule and of firm tradition. The towns and villages which Shakespeare would have passed in a journey up the river, though probably shrunk somewhat from what they had been in, let us say, the days of Edward I. or of his grandson, when the Middle Ages were in their full vigour and before the Black Death had ruined our countrysides, were still a string of some such large villages and small walled boroughs as his ancestry had seen for many hundred years, disfigured only and changed by the scaffolded ruins here and there of the great religious founda-

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tions. Windsor, Wallingford, Reading, Abingdon, and even Oxford, were towns appearing to him much as Lechlade to-day remains or Abingdon still. As for the riverside villages their agricultural and native population was certainly larger than that which they now possess ; and in general the effect produced upon such a journey was of a sort of even distribution of population gradually increasing from the loneliness of the upper river to the growing sites between Windsor and London, but in no part exaggerated ; larger everywhere in proportion to the importance of the stream, or of agricultural or of strategical position, and forming together one united countryside, bound together even in its architecture by the common commerce of the river.

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries did little to disturb this equilibrium or to destroy this even tradition. The opening up of the waterways and the great improvement of the highroads, and the building of bridges, and the expansion of wealth at the end of the eighteenth century had indeed some considerable effect in increasing the population of England as a whole, but the smaller country towns, in the south at least, and in the Thames Valley, seem to have benefited fairly equally from the general change. The new canals, entering at Oxford and at Reading, gave a certain lead to both those centres, and even the Severn Canal, entering at Lechlade, did a little

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for that up-river town. The new fashion of the public schools (which had now long been captured by the wealthier classes) also increased the importance of Eton, and towards the close of the period the now rapidly expanding capital had overfed the villages within reach of London with a considerable accession of population. But it is remarkable how evenly spread was even this industrial development.

The twin towns of Abingdon and Reading, for instance, twin monasteries, twin corporations, had for all these centuries preserved their ratio of the up-country town and the larger centre that was the neighbour of London and Windsor. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, in spite of the general increase of population, that ratio was still well preserved : it is about three to one. But the Railway found one and left the other.

The Railway came, and in our own generation that ratio began to change out of all knowledge. It grows from four, five, six, to *seven* to one. After a short halt you have eight, nine and at last—after eighty years—more than *ten* to one. The last census (that of 1901) is still more significant : Abingdon positively declines, and the last ratio is *twelve*.

It is through the Railway, and even then long after its first effect might have been expected, that the Valley of

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the Thames, later than any other wealthy district in England, loses, as all at last are doomed to lose, its historic tradition, and suffers the social revolution which has made modern England the unique and perilous thing it is among the nations of the world

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