

**THE
TOWER OF LONDON**
VOLUME 1

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INTRODUCTION

To the English race the Tower of London will always be the most interesting of its Monuments; for it forms a group of buildings that for eight centuries has been the very heart of the English capital, and, since the victor of Hastings raised the great Keep—or White Tower—through all the succeeding centuries, the Tower has been closely connected with the history of England.

It would be vain to search any other city, Rome itself not excepted, for another such group of buildings, or to match the historic interest and splendid record of the ancient Norman structure. The Tower is indeed rife with interest; the most dramatic events of our country's history during more than seven hundred years have been enacted within or near its walls.

To see it is to conjure up a vision of scenes, some brilliant and stately, some tragic and awful, but all full of deepest interest to the hearts and minds of Britons, to whom the history of their land is dear.

Although several works—some voluminous, such as the two ponderous quartos by John Bayley, published in 1825, and some more recent, such as the histories of the Tower by Britton and Brayley, and, more recently still, those by Lord de Ros and Doyne Bell—have appeared, I venture to think that in writing the present account of the Tower I have not undertaken a thankless or a useless task.

My object in giving the following book to the public has been a hope that to those who already know the Tower some fresh

knowledge may perhaps be added to their acquaintance with that noble old pile; and that to those who do not know it, the admirable illustrations taken from the building itself by Messrs Colls, and the reproduction of old views and scenes connected with the Tower from the days of Charles the First to those of Queen Victoria, will enable them to realise its incomparable historic interest.

Until the reign of Edward the Third the records of the Tower are miserably meagre and scanty. It would require a far more imaginative mind than I possess to infuse any life or movement or interest into them. It has been my humble intention merely to narrate in this work what is of undoubted authority as regards the history of the Tower, and were I even capable of adding colour to the dry chronicles of historical fact in these pages, it would be distasteful to me to try to enhance the interest of this narrative by setting down that which I have no good evidence for regarding as strictly true; or to attempt to adorn the dry facts, which the old chroniclers have given us, by imaginary incidents and tales for which there is no better evidence than that coming from the author's imagination. An historical novel such as that most entertaining work the "Tower of London," by Harrison Ainsworth, is a delightful effort of the writer's imagination; but a book which professes to be a history must not be a hotch-potch of truth and fiction. That would be the worst of literary frauds. Feeling strongly on this matter, I must beg my readers to pardon the dulness of my records relating to the early history of the Tower, but I can assure them that what I have written is, as far as possible, accurate history; and, at the same time, beg them not to be disappointed if they find no flights of fancy in these pages.

RONALD SUTHERLAND GOWER.



The Tower of London
(From a Sketch by H. Colls.)

THE TOWER

CHAPTER I

THE BUILDINGS

NOTHING has come down to us of any authentic value regarding ancient London until Tacitus writes of Londinium as a place celebrated for the numbers of its merchants and the confluence of traffic. In the days of the Roman occupation St Albans, then called Verolanium, was a far more important place than Roman Londinium; and, perhaps, it was Verolanium whereto Cæsar marched in his second descent on Britain in B.C. 54, and which he described as a place “protected by woods and marshes.” Such a description would equally apply to Londinium, and, for aught we can know to the contrary, the town Cæsar describes as being surrounded by woods and marshes may have been our capital.

To the north of Roman London stretched vast primeval forests, and where St John’s Wood now stands, the wild boar roamed in trackless thickets. Marshes lay to the west and south, on the sites of Westminster and Southwark; a less likely place for the situation of a great capital, with the exception of St Petersburg, could not be found in Europe. On what is now Tower Hill stood a Celtic fortress, protected by the Thames on the south, and by forests and fens on the north. This fortress was admirably placed, protecting the approach from the seaward side of the river, and guarding against any attack from the land side. The Romans were evidently of this opinion, for after conquering the woad-stained Britons, they erected a fortalice, defended by strongly fortified walls, upon the same site.

This Roman fortress was the origin of the Tower of London.

Roman London, or rather Augusta, for so it was originally termed by the Romans, began at a fort named the Arx Palatina, overlooking the river a little to the south of Ludgate, a wall defended by towers, running in a south-easterly line along the river bank to another fort on the present site of the Tower, which was also named the Arx Palatina. Thence the wall took a northerly direction, reaching as far as the present Bishopsgate; it then turned due west to Cripplegate; then south by Aldersgate to Newgate, meeting the first wall at Ludgate. Roman London was indebted to the Emperor Constantine for these defences.^[1]

Theodosius is supposed to have restored this wall in the reign of Valentinian, but we have no further records of any work upon it until A.D. 886, when Alfred the Great repaired it as a protection against the Danish invaders.^[2]

The late Sir Walter Besant is my authority for saying “that there is a large piece of the Roman wall, extending 150 feet long, built over by stores and warehouses immediately north of the Tower, just where the old postern used to be, and where the wall abutted on the Tower.” It should be remembered, when judging of the circumference of the Roman wall, that London covered little more ground in those days than does Hyde Park at present: from Ludgate to the Tower the Roman wall extended only about a mile in length, and three and a half miles from the Tower to Blackfriars.

There are many fragments of this old Roman wall still above ground, and until 1763 a square Roman tower, built of alternate layers of large square stones with bands of red tiles, one of the three that guarded the wall, was still standing in Houndsditch. In

1857 a portion of the Roman wall was discovered near Aldermanbury postern, whilst a portion of a Roman bastion is still to be seen at St Giles's Church, Cripplegate; another fragment being visible in a street called London Wall Street. There are more Roman remains at the Old Bailey and near George Street, Tower Hill. Fragments are also visible near Falcon Lane, Bush Lane, Scott's Yard in Cornhill, and in underground warehouses and cellars near the Tower. In the Minories there are yet more remains of this ancient Roman wall. In Thames Street, oaken piles, which were the foundation of the wall, have been discovered. They supported a layer of chalk and stone courses, upon which rested large slabs of sandstone cemented with a mixture of lime, sand, and powdered tiles. The upper part of the wall was coated with flint, and this again was strengthened by rows of tiles.

The most interesting of these remains, however, is in the Tower itself—a fragment of the Roman fort or Arx Palatina (the place of strength), which was laid bare some few years ago when some buildings abutting on the White Tower were removed. It is built of the same materials as the fragments of the Roman wall, and shows that William the Conqueror not only erected the most formidable fortress in his newly-conquered country upon the site chosen by the Romans, but that he also incorporated the remains of their handiwork in his building. Whether Alfred the Great restored the Arx Palatina as well as the wall we do not know, but even if the fort were ruined, the fragment now at the base of the White Tower would have shown the Conqueror the value and importance of its defensive position, protecting as it did the eastern end of the city, and guarding the seaward entrance of the Thames. William's site, however, covered part of the land belonging to the ancient boundary of the Roman occupation, and to provide the necessary

space he pulled down a large portion of the Roman wall between the spot where the White Tower now stands and the river front of the fortress.

In the days of our first Norman kings, a single square tower or keep, usually situated on a hill surrounded by an artificial ditch or moat, was considered sufficient protection. One might give a long list of such towers or keeps both in England and Normandy, for William the First, not content with overawing the Londoners with his great tower in their city, built others at Dover and at Exeter, at Nottingham and at York, at Lincoln and at Durham, at Cambridge and at Huntingdon. Under Duke Rollo and his immediate successors the Normans built their fortresses by the side of navigable rivers, on islands, or near the sea, since these fortresses were not merely destined as defences, but also for places of safety. They were, in fact, places of refuge for the people of the surrounding country, who fled to them with all their possessions, and particularly their live stock, at the approach of an enemy. By their situation, safety, if necessary, could be obtained by taking flight on the neighbouring river or sea.

In Normandy—at Fécamp, at Eu, at Bayeux, at Jumiége, and at Oisel, to name but a few of these Norman keeps—this custom obtained. At Rouen, as in London, the principal fortress built by the Norman duke stood by the riverside, and not on the hills at the back of the town. None of these places mentioned above were stronger or more imposing than the great Norman keep in London, known for centuries as the White Tower, receiving that title at first, probably from the whiteness of its stone, and in later times from the continued coatings of whitewash which it received. Of the many castles in Normandy and Touraine of the same period as the White Tower, that of Loches resembles it most nearly in size and

form. Loches is now almost a ruin, as are most of the Conqueror's castles, but the great White Tower remains intact despite the storms, sieges, and fires through which it has passed during eight centuries. It is still the Arx Palatina of London and of the British Empire.

Although in situation the Tower cannot compare with such grandly-placed castles as Dover or Bamborough, Conway or Carnarvon, or vie in beauty of scenery with Warwick or Windsor, it remains the most historic building in our land; not even the mausoleum fortress of Hadrian in old Rome can compete in interest with the Norman fortress—palace—and State prison of London; Edinburgh Castle alone approaches it as regards its influence on the history of the capital it defended, for the northern fortress was also the home of its national sovereigns for centuries, its country's chief prison, the store-house of its regalia, and its city's strong place of defence; and, like the Tower, it has been guarded from its foundation up to the present time without a break, by its country's armed defenders.

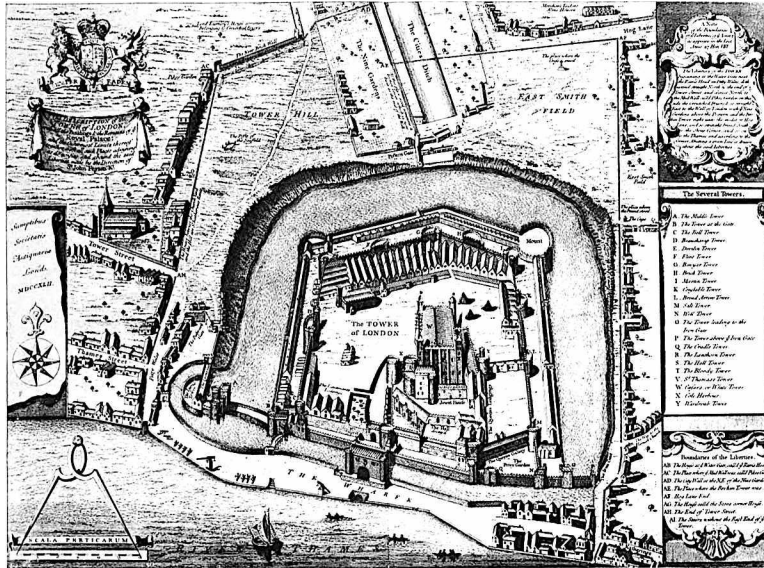
Every part of the Tower of London is pregnant with history and tradition. The proudest names of England—Howard and Percy, Arundel and Beauchamp, Stafford and Devereux—gain added interest from their association with the Tower and its story. Above all, it is for ever honoured as having been the last home of Eliot, of Russell, and of Sidney; it has been sanctified by More and Fisher, "Martyrs," as a writer on the Tower has well said, "for the ancient, as also was Anne Askew for the purer faith." And to Anne Askew's name I would add that of Sir John Oldcastle, Lord Cobham, one of the first and noblest of English martyrs.

When William lay dying in the Priory of Saint Gervais, near Rouen, in the summer of 1087, the Great White Tower which he had built in London had been in existence for some ten years. Probably only that tower was then completed, with the great ballium wall between the Keep and the river. Stowe, the earliest English writer on antiquarian subjects, writing in Queen Elizabeth's reign, has told us in his priceless "Survey of London," that the White Tower was completed in 1078. Its architect, Bishop Gundulf of Rochester, was not consecrated until 1077, and was then occupied in building Rochester Cathedral and a portion of Rochester Castle; the keep, which still rears its ruined walls over Rochester and the Medway, was not built until a century later. In Mr G. J. Clarke's work on "Mediæval Military Architecture"—a work as important to students of English architecture of the Middle Ages as is that of Viollet le Duc to French architecture—we are told that Gundulf died about the year 1108, at the good old age of eighty-four, in the reign of the first Henry. Possibly the Palace at the Tower and even the Wakefield Tower had been commenced by Gundulf, as well as some buildings of the inner ward, but this is uncertain. These buildings would include the great curtain wall extending from the Wakefield Tower to the Broad Arrow Tower, and the cross wall of the Wardrobe Gallery, and the building known as Coldharbour, these being the buildings which formed the nucleus of the palace of the Norman kings.

The Wardrobe, the Lanthorn, and Coldharbour Towers have perished; the Lanthorn Tower has been rebuilt. In 1091, according to Stowe, the White Tower was, "by tempest and wind sore shaken," so much so that it had to be repaired by William Rufus and Henry I. In the same year that Rufus built the Great Hall at Westminster he surrounded the Tower with a wall, causing his

subjects much discontent thereby, especially as he forced them to work at these defences.

Sir Walter Besant recommended—and no one spoke with higher authority on aught appertaining to old London and its history—any one who desires to make himself acquainted with the appearance of the Tower in the days of Queen Elizabeth, to study the plan drawn up by Haiward and Gascoigne in 1597, which they styled “A True and Exact Draught of the Tower Liberties.” In that plan it will be seen at a glance that the fortress, palace, armoury, arsenal, and State prison of England’s capital, had its principal entry towards the west—in fact, that the western approach was the only entrance by land, the eastern entrance, known as the Iron Gate, being but seldom used. Supposing that the visitor of Elizabeth’s day had passed through the no longer existing Bulwark Gate, he would next pass under another gate, called from its proximity to the menagerie of wild animals, the Lion Gate, which was connected by a walled causeway over the moat, about a hundred feet in width, with the Lion Tower, which has disappeared; from the Lion Gate, which has also been pulled down, the scarp would be reached.



*Plan of the Tower in 1597
by Haiward and Gascoyne.*

The Lion Tower, with its barbicans and *tête-du-pont*, had the honour of a moat to itself, but all this has disappeared, Lion Gate, tower, barbican, *tête-du-pont*, have all vanished with the lions and other wild beasts which were kept here from the days of the Norman kings until the year 1834, when they were removed to Regent's Park and formed the nucleus of the Zoological Gardens.

Henry I. had kept some lions and leopards at his palace of Woodstock, and on the occasion of Frederic II. of Germany sending three leopards to Henry III., these animals were sent to the Tower. Besides lions and leopards, an elephant and a bear were also about that time in the Tower menagerie. In 1252 the Sheriffs of London were ordered to pay fourpence a day for the keep of the bear, and also to provide a muzzle and chain for Bruin while he

caught fish in the Thames. During the reign of the three first Edwards, the lions and other animals had food given them to the value of sixpence a day, their keeper only receiving three halfpence per diem. One of the Plantagenet Court officials held the office, and was styled “The Master of the King’s Bears and Apes.” In old views of the Tower can be seen the circular pit or pen in which, down to the days of James I., bear-baiting took place—to watch this brutal “sport” being one of this not altogether admirable monarch’s favourite amusements.

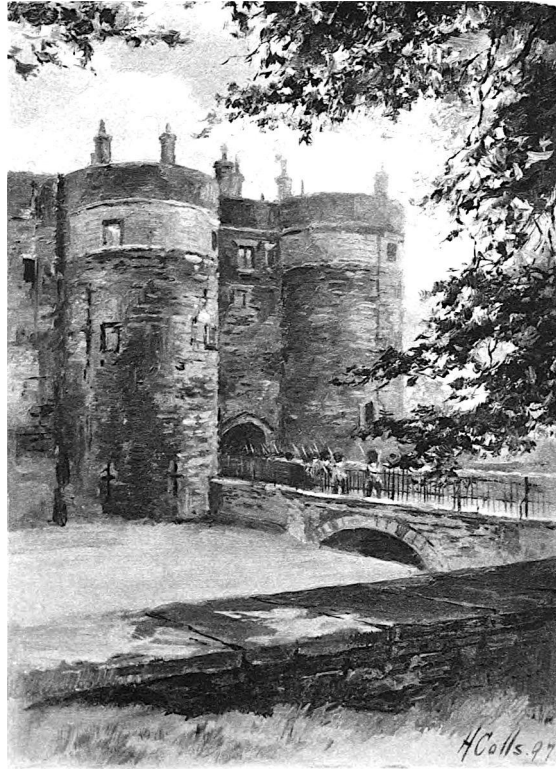
In his account of a visit paid to the Tower in the reign of Elizabeth, the German traveller, Paul Hentzner, writes of the Royal menagerie as follows:—

“On coming out of the Tower we were led to a small house close by, where are kept variety of creatures—viz. three lionesses, one lion of great size, called Edward VI., from his having been born in that reign; a tyger; a lynx; a wolf excessively old; this is a very scarce animal in England, so that their sheep and cattle stray about in great numbers, free from any dangers, though without anybody to keep them; there is besides, a porcupine, and an eagle. All these creatures are kept in a remote place, fitted up for the purpose with wooden lattices at the Queen’s expense.”

Hentzner, who visited England as tutor to a young German nobleman, gives a vivid account of what was considered most noteworthy in London in the days of Elizabeth, and in this the Tower looms large. His Journal was translated into English from the German and published by Horace Walpole, who had it printed at Strawberry Hill. We shall meet with Hentzner again in the White Tower.

Early in the eighteenth century there were eleven lions in the Tower, and in the *Freeholder* Addison alludes to the Tower menagerie; later on, Dr Johnson would growlingly inquire of newly-arrived Scotchmen in the metropolis, "Have you seen the lions?" In the place where formerly lions roared and bears were baited, the ticket office and visitors' refreshment rooms now stand. In France or Germany here would probably be an attractive restaurant or café; but in these matters we English are woefully behind our neighbours, and it would be as difficult to find an appetising luncheon in the Tower as it is to understand why the art of cooking is so neglected in our country.

Near here, in 1843, when the moat of the fortress was drained of its waters and cleared of its rubbish, many stone cannon shot were found, shot which had probably been used when the Yorkists besieged the Tower in 1460 and cannonaded it from the other side of the Thames. In Elizabeth's day this portion of the fortress was named the Bulwark or the Spur-yard—the origin of the latter term is not known.



The Byward Tower.

The moat, some hundred feet wide at its widest, was formerly flooded with the waters of the Thames, and is now used as a parade and playground for the garrison. It dates back to the Norman Conquest, and was deepened by William Longchamp, Bishop of Ely in the reign of Richard I. Death was the penalty for bathing in its waters in the reign of Edward III.—a severe law, but one may hope that a sentence so severe for so apparently trivial an offence was not actually enforced; perhaps death was the result of some one having taken his bath in the Tower moat in the unsanitary days

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