

WINCHESTER

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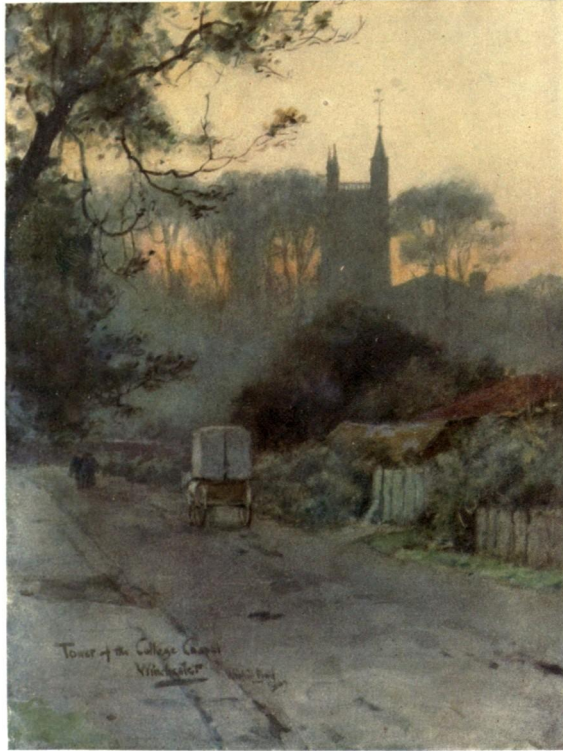
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TOWER OF THE COLLEGE CHAPEL, WINCHESTER

The graceful pinnacles of 'Two Wardens Tower,' as the tower of College Chapel is called, forms a picturesque feature in all views of the southeastern quarter of the city. Originally built by Warden Thurburn in 1488, it was rebuilt in 1863, in memory of two well-known later wardens, Barter, Warden of Winchester, and Williams, Warden of New.

The view is taken from near Wharf Bridge.

Preface

THE following volume treats in somewhat fuller detail the Winchester sections of the larger work on Hampshire published last year under similar auspices. Where much of the ground traversed is identical much has been necessarily repeated, and a considerable portion of what follows is little more than an amplification of what has been already dealt with in the earlier volume.

The present work in no way aims at being a history, though much of it is cast into a historical mould. Still less is it a guide-book. Its aim has been selective, and it makes no pretence to completeness. In following out some of the numerous avenues of Winchester interest, which seem to open out continually in fresh and unsuspected directions as soon as one commences to wander through her confines, many have received but a cursory examination, and many more have been entirely ignored. The author can only hope his readers will be able to accompany him with pleasurable interest along those which inclination and circumstance have led him to explore.

The authorities consulted have been numerous, and from the following published sources of information, as well as many others, valuable information has been obtained:—

Bede, *The English Chronicle*, The Winton Domesday, *The Liber de Hyda*, Rudborne's *Major Historia Wintoniae*, various of the *Annales Monastici*, the valuable historical documents published some time back by the Hampshire Record Society, Milner's History, Mr. Kirby's and Mr. Leach's volumes on Winchester

College, Dean Kitchin's *Winchester* in the Historic Towns Series, and Adams's *Wykehamica*. The author regrets that, through a *lapsus calami*, the title of Bramston and Leroy's *Historic Winchester* was misapplied in the Hampshire volume to Dr. Kitchin's book. For this error he here apologises. Finally, the author wishes here to express his thanks to many friends who in various ways have assisted him in what has been to him a most pleasant task, viz., that of serving in some degree, though but inadequately, as chronicler to his adopted city.

THE AUTHOR.

WINCHESTER, *JUNE 1910.*

WINCHESTER

CHAPTER I

‘WYNGESTER, THAT JOLY CITÈ’

Me lyketh ever, the lengerè the bet,
By Wyngester, that Joly citè.
The ton is god and wel y-set,
The folk is comely on to see;
The aier is god both inne and oute,
The citè stent under an hille;
The riverès renneth all aboute,
The ton is ruelèd upon skille.

Benedicamus Domino,

Alleluia,

Alleluia.

Fifteenth-century verses, DE WALDEN MSS.

THE magic of the city—whence comes it? Every people, every age has felt it, this mysterious sense of personality, this deep, alluring spell which age after age, nation after nation, has woven round the city of its dreams. Rome, Naples, Damascus, Mecca, Seville, each of these has been and still is a name to conjure with, while the long pent-up fervour of national feeling with which the Hebrew of old time invested the thought of Salem, the City of Peace, has from its very intensity and sincerity established it in the eyes of all Christendom as the permanent type of that New Jerusalem, the Heavenly City, the centre of all divine influence and of every divine appeal.

And here in England, dull, matter-of-fact, money-grubbing England, have we not too, under our leaden skies, cities also not unworthy of a claim on our regard—cities which possess the same picturesque and appealing elements which have, in people of warmer and more emotional type, evoked such feelings of

romantic devotion, of national pride, and the rich glow of enthusiastic attachment? True, such feelings express themselves here in less exuberant and conscious manner, but they exist, and have existed all through our history, and the old fifteenth-century singer quoted above, whose quaintly expressive verses sum up so happily even for us of modern time the attractions of the delightful old mediaeval city which is our common theme, was doubtless one who felt this to the full. ‘Wyngester, that Joly citè,’ that is his keynote—a note at once sincere but restrained.

He is no pilgrim, rapt in enthusiastic devotion, singing of

urbs caelestis, urbs beata,

as he approaches the city of his passionate desire; but a plain, sober-minded citizen, who sees in the town which shelters him a ‘Joly citè’ of attractive aspect and pleasantly seated, surrounded by the mingled delights of hill and stream; and, moreover, one ‘ruelèd upon skille,’ as becomes the mother of municipalities.

And to lovers of Winchester—and who that knows it is not of these?—it must ever be a pleasant task to follow out in detail the themes suggested by our mediaeval singer—to enjoy one by one those attractive features which endear it still to us, as it did to him. To clamber up the breezy heights which gird it round, for the sake of the ‘aier’—that air which, as the poet Keats himself remarked, is alone worth “Sixpence a pint”; to trace the windings of the ‘riverès renning all aboute’—both within its confines and beyond; to linger in its streets and catch the echoes of its wonderful past, with even more appreciation than our fifteenth-century poet was capable of feeling. For our singer, sincerely appreciative as he was, had one sense lacking—the sense of history. The present only appealed to him; but to us, as we thread its quaintly-inconvenient, narrow

streets, its passages and gateways, it is something more than merely a 'Joly citè,' a city of comfort and good rule; it is a city of dreams as well, a city haunted with the sense of a mighty past, a living testimony alike to the permanence of our national institutions and to the dignity of the associations to which they make appeal.

Winchester, then, is a city with an atmosphere—an atmosphere of the reality and range of historic things, through which the gazing eye can peer, mile after mile as it were, till it loses itself in a vaguely distant and indistinct horizon, where the mists of myth and legend blur the outline and mingle inextricably together fact and fancy, record and surmise.

For in Winchester antique tradition and historic association are not a mere adjunct or picturesque accident: they are the keynote of its very existence. In Winchester we stand on the threshold of national history; here we may, as it were, study history *in situ*, as perhaps we can study it nowhere else in the land—in the soil beneath our feet, in its stones, its institutions, its quaint survivals of early or mediaeval, Tudor or Stuart days.

Where else but in Winchester can we meet with so many picturesque reminders of an ancient feudal past,—reminders which have survived not because they are merely picturesque, but simply because here they have not outlived their usefulness or natural appropriateness? The Cathedral bedesmen, the brethren of St. Cross, the scholars of 'Sainte Marie College,' the almsmen of Beaufort's Order of Noble Poverty, the brethren of Christe's Hospitall, the masters of the College, and the college queristers also, the ecclesiastical dignitaries of the diocese with their quaintly uncomfortable attire,—each and all of these wear their distinctive

garb as a matter of course, just as centuries ago every one wore the garb distinctive of his rank or occupation. Anywhere else one of these might excite remark: here they pass unnoticed. They are part of the place, part of the spirit of the past, which, dead elsewhere, here survives in vigour and undiminished vitality.

Here was the cradle of Saxon rule and Saxon civilization; here also the cradle of national historical record. Here Saxon Alfred ruled and prayed and wrought; here Danish Cnut took the golden crown from his brow and laid it in token of humility upon the Holy Altar; here Norman William wore his crown yearly at Easter-tide; here Curfew first was pealed, and here ever since it has continued to peal; here Rufus was buried, “many looking on and few grieving”; here Henry I. ruled and earned the title of the ‘Lion of Justice’; here Matilda fought with Stephen in the dark days of civil warfare; here John received the papal absolution, having sunk the English crown to a lower depth than any other sovereign either would or could have done; here Henry III. was born, and here he held wild revel; here later on was founded the great college of William of Wykeham, whose motto—“Manners makyth man”—has served as an inspiration for generations of public school boys for over 500 years; here Henry VIII. welcomed and fêted the puissant Emperor and second Charlemagne, Charles V.; here his daughter Mary was married to a Spanish prince; here James I. kept his Court, and here Raleigh received his shameful condemnation and sentence; here, with alternate fortune, Cavalier and Roundhead strove together, till Cromwell himself captured its citadel and razed its fortifications to the ground; here Charles II. repeatedly kept his Court; here he presented the Corporation with his own portrait, and it may even be, left the citizens to pay for the gift—for the Merry Monarch was often forgetful, and always short of money; here was

perpetrated the most infamous, perhaps, of all the crimes of the terrible Bloody Assize, the judicial murder of Dame Alice Lisle for an act of natural humanity; here died and here was laid to rest that most charming and natural of women novelists, the bright and vivacious Jane Austen.

Yes, if a poet could do for Winchester what Longfellow did for Bruges, and could conjure up the scenes of the past and the personages whose memories still linger here, what a rare series of absorbing pictures, what a medley of historic personalities, what a wealth of varied types should we see embodied before our eyes! Rude Belgic tribesmen of pre-Roman days, Roman legionaries, rough, wild Berserkers and Danish vikings, Saxon thegns and Norman knights, abbots and priors, merchants and gildsmen, friars and pilgrims,—these and many more would contend for our notice, mingled with kings and queens, prelates and chancellors, bishops and cardinals. If historical memories can sanctify any spot in the realm, surely Winchester must be sacred soil.

To separate Winchester from the history which is enshrined within her is a thing impossible and unthinkable. It is in the light of her historic past alone that Winchester can be rightly viewed; and attractive and fair as are her buildings and her natural surroundings, it is only in their historical setting that they can be adequately appreciated.

Let us, before we set foot within any of her streets, endeavour to get some general mental picture of the city in which so many associations are centred and enshrined; let us take our stand on the bold hill which dominates the city towards the east, St. Giles's Hill. Had we mounted up here on the 1st of September—the feast of St. Egidius—some six or seven centuries ago, it would have been a

busy and motley throng that we should have had to elbow our way through. Englishmen from every county, foreigners from every land—Frenchmen, Germans, Poles, and Jews—all mingled together in hopeless confusion. A city in miniature—street after street of wooden booths, all enclosed in a wooden wall or palisade—would meet the eye. And the inhabitants! What varied types should we see—merchants and chapmen, citizens and countrymen, pedlars and ballad-mongers, all eager and excited, bargaining, jesting, quarrelling—a babel of tongues, peoples, and languages; while here and there a bailiff or officer wearing a bishop's mitre figured on his livery passes along and scrutinizes the merchandise. No friendly reception does he meet with, for this is the Great Fair held in honour of St. Giles, where merchants from all parts of Europe congregate to buy the wool for which the south of England is so famous, and during the sixteen days that the fair lasts no merchant or shopman in Winchester, or ten miles round, may buy or sell except within the fair itself, and whoever is a welcome and popular figure, it is not the Lord Bishop of Winchester nor the bishop's bailiff, for all merchandise must first pay toll—and heavy toll—for the bishop's exclusive benefit, before it may pass within the barriers, and be exposed for sale.

But to-day it will be the city, lying at our feet to the westward, which will interest us, and there will be nothing on the hill to turn our attention from it as we note its chief points one by one. It is a beautiful picture of mingled red and grey that lies before us. The Cathedral—a mass of grey stone—here presents its most interesting aspect to us: a mass of grey stone set with pinnacles and flying buttresses and heavy square tower. To its left lies the College, hidden partly behind the trees of the Close and the Deanery garden, the light, graceful 'Two Wardens' tower of its

chapel contrasting strikingly with the solid tower of the Cathedral—a noticeable and attractive object. Almost between the two lies a green patch of meadow, with grey walls and ruins round it. This is Wolvesey, with its memories of Alfred and the English Chronicle. Beyond Wolvesey and the College we shall see St. Cross, like the Cathedral in outward form, but a cathedral in miniature. Close at our feet in the foreground lie the Guildhall, with its clock, and the statue of the great Alfred, and the line of the High Street can be clearly followed till it terminates with the West Gate at its far extremity. On either side of the city are seen the many channels of the river Itchen—here and there rises the tower or spire of one of the numerous city churches—and far away on the high ground to the left appears a clump of trees which, under the name of ‘Oliver’s Battery,’ recalls the thought of the grim Lord Protector to us. It is a pleasant and, indeed, poetic picture at any period of the year, and perhaps most poetic on an afternoon in late autumn, when the light smoke from the houses and the thin mists from the river have mingled together to weave a silvery grey network, through which the details of the city seem, as it were, to filter slowly and dreamily—a harmony of haze and mist, to which the imagination can most sympathetically attune itself, a vague dreamland scene which fancy seems almost naturally to repeople with the shadows of the past.



ST. CATHERINE'S HILL, WINCHESTER

The fine bold chalk hill which dominates the river valley to the South of Winchester, has memories of early Celtic days, of Cnut, and of the *ancien régime* at Winchester College. Round its summit is the 'ring' of the great refuge camp of præ-Roman days which it is estimated required some 3000 people to defend it. Cnut made a grant of 'Hille' and other lands to the old minster. On the summit there was once a pilgrimage chapel dedicated to St. Catherine. St. Catherine's Hill was formerly the playing area for College boys on 'remedies' or holidays, and the curious 'mismaze' cut on its summit is supposed to have been their handiwork.

CHAPTER II

EARLY DAYS

Et penitus toto orbe divisos Britannos.

ANTIQUITY and long-continued vitality such as have fallen to Winchester—for to go back to its early humble beginnings takes us back very far indeed—lead us naturally to look for causes, and prompt the questions, Why, in the first instance, did a human community settle here at all? What through so many alternations of human vicissitude and political circumstance has operated to maintain these intact? *Tempus edax rerum*—Time, the devourer of constituted things, is written not so much on its stones, as in its stones, yet Winchester remains Winchester still. For, be it noted, there is nothing in the nature of things which gives to cities and communities any prescriptive claim or assurance of permanence. We have not, indeed, to travel far from Winchester to find instructive instances, to the very contrary, among its earliest neighbours and contemporaries. Silchester, Sarum, Portchester, its early British contemporaries, which once flourished even as Winchester, have long since sunk, the last named into inanity, the two former into dissolution so complete that no trace now remains, save what little the ploughshare or the antiquary may from time to time unearth; and that little would probably, but for the worms' unceasing activity, have long since perished beyond recall. For with cities, as with the animal world, the secret of continued vigour is the secret of continued adaptation to environment; towns and cities, like other organized existences, are just as old as the arteries which feed them, and as long as function is efficiently performed, so long will there be health to perform it.

And yet as years go, Winchester is old,—how old none can say. Ancient Neolithic interments on St. Giles's Hill, old Celtic barrows on Morne (*Magdalen*) Hill behind, carry us back far indeed beyond the days of permanent settlement, and her continuous existence goes back far beyond the days of any written historical record, yet all these years she has retained her identity and her vigour unimpaired. What physical causes have contributed to this we shall perhaps be better able to appreciate if we quit St. Giles's Hill and clamber up to the top of St. Catherine's Hill, the bold chalk hill which dominates the view southward from the city. An interesting hill it is, with modern associations which we will not stop to consider now, but turn our thoughts to the view before us. Below us is a flat-bottomed valley, a mile or two across, with the numerous winding channels of the river intersecting the water meadows at our feet. To our north lies the city, seen from this point to excellent advantage, occupying the flat of the valley, and creeping up the hill slopes on either side, while far away in the distance the chalk upland seems to roll away, ridge succeeding ridge, till all detail is lost in distance.

Two thousand years or more ago, the country which we are now gazing over would have borne a fundamentally different character, though its superficial aspect, viewed from this point, might not, apart from signs of human agency, have been so very dissimilar. For at that time practically the whole of the south of England, through all the lower levels, was a wild stretch of brake and forest all but impenetrable, the haunt of wolf and wild boar, of beaver and badger, alternating at the lowest points with swamps and morasses, which formed the beds of the valleys, and either fringed the edges of the streams or mingled composedly with them. This was the great Weald Forest, of which a few detached patches

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