

rather than of speed." He adds a list of the sires and mares kept here, and also states that "from prudential motives the royal stud at Hampton Court was broken up, only one or two sires and mares being kept."

Sir Richard Steele was, for a time, surveyor of the royal stables here; and the Earl of Albemarle, Groom of the Stole, lived for some years at the "Stud-house," which is still the official residence of the Master of the Horse, though not generally occupied as such.

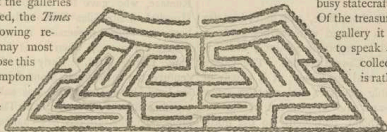
In December, 1882, the entire palace had a narrow escape from being destroyed, a large portion of the upper rooms in the east wing, overlooking the gardens and the fountain court, and which were in the occupation of private families, having been accidentally burnt.

In a leading article, congratulating the country on the fact that the galleries have been spared, the *Times* made the following remarks, which may most appropriately close this chapter:—"Hampton Court is pre-eminently the palace of the ordinary Londoner's predilection.

This is not, perhaps, because of its historical interest as a relic of Wolsey's magnificence, or as the home of the Stuarts and the elder Georges, nor even exclusively because of the interest attaching to its gallery of pictures. Its place in the heart of Londoners is largely due to more homely associations. It is easily and quickly reached from London, and its surroundings are rich in everything that the country-going Londoner has learnt to love. Its stately and rich-toned buildings, its well-kept gardens, its spacious parks with their matchless trees, and its unrivalled situation on the banks of the placid Thames, all give it an attraction which for variety of charm can hardly be matched in England. To this must be added the fact that the palace contains the only national collection of pictures which is open to the public on Sundays, and this, perhaps, accounts as much as anything else for the pre-eminent popularity which Hampton Court enjoys. Thousands to whom the historical associations of the place are rather vague, thousands more whose enjoyment of a gallery or pictures is

neither very intelligent nor very keen, find their way throughout the summer to Hampton Court, and return much the better for their outing, even if their knowledge of history remains as vague as ever, and their feeling for art as cold. For this reason alone—because of the simple and wholesome pleasures it affords in one way or another to every visitor—the destruction of Hampton Court would have been regarded as an irreparable calamity. Apart from its surroundings, moreover, which we suspect attract more visitors than its contents, the palace itself is a building which the country could ill afford to spare. It is a record of pomp of Wolsey and of the genius of Wren, and its history includes associations as diverse as the theological lucubrations of James I. and the revels of his scapegrace grandson, the gloomy broodings of Cromwell in his hours of dejection, and the busy statecraft of William III.

Of the treasures of its picture gallery it is unnecessary to speak at length. The collection, as a whole, is rather copious than select. Some few pictures are undoubtedly of priceless value; the art



PLAN OF THE MAZE.

of the world would be palpably the poorer for their destruction. Others, again, are interesting as specimens of painters whose works are rare, or as commemorating events of moment in English history. But these are only a small percentage of the whole. The remainder are interesting rather because they have long hung on the walls of Hampton Court, and seem to partake of the character of the place, than because they can claim any very eminent merit of their own. There is some royal furniture also of ancient date in several of the public rooms of the palace, and a portion of this is reported to have been damaged by the floods of water employed to extinguish the fire. Such things have a certain popular interest, no doubt, but if anything was to be destroyed, it is safe to rejoice that a capricious fate has spared the pictures and only taken the upholstery. If by an irreparable stroke of fortune the Holbeins, the Mantegnas, or any other of the real treasures of the gallery had been destroyed, it would have been a poor consolation to learn that Queen Anne's bed had been preserved, or even that her portmanteau was safe."