

We will now ask the reader to accompany us, in imagination, in a steamboat trip down the river as far as the jurisdiction of the Lord Mayor extends, pointing out by the way such objects of interest as are worthy of notice. First of all we pass in rapid succession Billingsgate Market, the Custom House, the Tower of London, Wapping, Rotherhithe, Deptford and Greenwich, and the various docks and wharves on either side, all of which places have been duly described in OLD AND NEW LONDON,* to the pages of which the reader is referred.

Execution Dock, at East Wapping, is the name of one of the outlets of the river, and preserves the memory of many a tale of murder and piracy on the high seas; for here used to be executed all pirates and sailors found guilty of any of the greater crimes committed on ship-board. "Opposite Blackwall," writes John Timbs in his "Curiosities of London," "we remember to have seen the gibbets, on which the bodies were left to decay." And Charles Knight, in his "London" (1844), remarks—"There are some now alive who yet remember the bodies of the pirates opposite Blackwall wavering in the wind—'a gibbet's tassel'—one of the first sights that were wont to greet the stranger approaching London from the sea." Hogarth has commemorated this exhibition of a barbarous custom in his picture of "The Thames Gibbets." Much more interesting objects to be witnessed now in a voyage down the Thames are our training ships for seamen—the *Warspite*, *Arctusa*, and *Chichester*—three fine specimens of the "wooden walls of old England," which have been set apart for the purpose of preparing young lads, mostly orphans and friendless, to become the sailors of the future. Off Greenwich lay for many years a hospital ship for "seamen of all nations"; this was the old *Dreadnought*, a vessel which had been famous in many sea-fights of Nelson's day. Its inmates, however, were a few years ago transferred to one of the wings of Greenwich Hospital, and the old vessel was broken up. A floating small-pox hospital is now moored in the river near this spot; it is formed of two old war-ships, fitted up for the purposes of a hospital, and connected with each other by a wooden bridge.

After leaving Blackwall the river winds round the south side of the Victoria and Albert Docks, and North Woolwich Gardens, by the several broad reaches known as Bugsby's Reach, Woolwich Reach, and Gallion's Reach, to the mouth of the

Roding at Barking Creek. On our right we pass the town of Woolwich, with its dockyard and arsenal, and the high grounds of Charlton, backed by Shooter's Hill away in the distance. Next follow, on the Kentish side, the monotonous levels of Plumstead and Erith Marshes, the former of which is much used by the Military Academy for gunnery practice of all kinds. The sewage outfalls of the Metropolitan Main Drainage Works at Crossness Point, with those at Barking on the opposite shore, render the Thames hereabouts at times little better than an open sewer. Opposite Crossness Point, shut in from the river by a broad embankment, is the sheet of water known as Dagenham Breach. Dagenham Church forms a conspicuous landmark on the rising ground amid the trees in the distance. We next pass the village of Erith, with its picturesque church nestling at the foot of the steep hill of Belvedere. On the eastern side of Erith; the waters of the Thames are augmented by those of the Darent—

"The silver Darent, in whose waters clear
Ten thousand fishes play and deck his pleasant stream."

The Darent in its course has been joined by another "faire" river, the Cray, and the conjoined streams enter the Thames very near "Long Reach" tavern.

Passing from Erith Reach into Long Reach, we descry on the Essex side of the river the chalk cliffs of Purfleet, on one of which was placed the standard of England when our "tight little island" was threatened by Spain in the time of Elizabeth. The government magazines, built here about the middle of the last century, provide storage for 60,000 barrels of powder. The building is very solidly constructed, the walls being of great thickness. Much lime is burnt about here for the use of the London and Essex builders, and the little "flete," or creek, from which the village takes its name, is generally filled with barges loading with lime and chalk. The *Cornwall* juvenile reformatory ship is moored off the shore at Purfleet.

Greenhithe and Northfleet follow Erith on the Kentish side of the river. They are both large and populous villages, and on the high ground above the former are several modern villa residences, commanding extensive views both of the river and of the opposite county of Essex. On an eminence close by stands the parish church of Stone, one of the largest and most interesting in all West Kent. It is in the early English style, and is rich in architectural details. As we glide along, the green lawns of Ingress Abbey, stretching pleasantly down to the water-side, soon come in sight. The

* See Vol. II., pp. 42, 52, 66, and 125; and Vol. VI., pp. 134, 143, and 164.