

insist on calling it "Turpin's stone." Lord Byron has vividly described an encounter with footpads on Shooter's Hill in one of his cantos in "Don Juan," and the old newspapers record many such adventures. For instance, a paragraph in 1773, says:—"On Sunday night, about 10 o'clock, Colonel Craige and his servant were attacked near Shuter's Hill by two highwaymen well mounted, who, on the Colonel's declaring he would not be robbed, immediately fired, and shot the servant's horse in the shoulder. On this the footman discharged a pistol, and the assailants rode off with great precipitation."

Dr. Watson, tutor to the Princess Charlotte, when that princess was residing at Shrewsbury House, obtained from the Shooter's Hill cut-purses the privilege of approaching "the Daughter of England" without having his brains blown out. Shrewsbury House is said to have been acquired by gambling, and soon after lost again by the same process. To highwaymen smugglers succeeded in the possession of Shooter's Hill wood. Cargoes of spirits, tobacco, and tea, were brought up here from the river craft, and hidden away among the bushes and fern-brakes.

In 1767 there was some prospect of improvement on Shooter's Hill; at all events, a project with that view was started, if the following paragraph from a newspaper of that date means anything:—"In the circle of the new town to be built on Shooter's Hill is to be a bason of water, and in the centre of that bason a circular island, on which a coffee-house is to be erected, and over it an assembly-room, the entrance to be by four

bridges, from which there are to be four grand streets to be made out for Greenwich, Woolwich, Gravesend, and the high road over Shooter's Hill." A few months later a further notice appears, inviting subscription for the purpose of carrying out this notable project, and, of course, promising wonderful gains to those who might determine to join in the undertaking.

Shooter's Hill at that time was surrounded by woods and copses, and it was this advantage of covert which made the spot so pleasant to highwaymen. On the top of the Hill was formerly a beacon. In the old accounts of the churchwardens of Eltham various payments are recorded "for watching the beacon on Shutter's Hill." Mr. J. Hewitt, in his account of "Old Woolwich," mentions six men being hanged here, within the memory of an old villager, for robbery with murder, four on the top of the hill by the waterworks, and two down by the Eltham road.

Shrewsbury Lane and its continuation, Plum Lane, which form the connecting links between Woolwich and Shooter's Hill, figure in the map of Woolwich (1778). From the name of Plum Lane and the analogous name of Plumstead, it may be assumed that the plum was at one time the staple fruit of this neighbourhood, as the apple and cherry are in the more central districts of Kent. A pottery—or, as it is called in the map above referred to, "Pott Houses"—formerly existed near Shrewsbury Lane, but it seems to have disappeared about fifty years ago. It stood within the angle of the present Herbert Road, Ripon Road, and Eglinton Road.

CHAPTER V.

PLUMSTEAD AND EAST WICKHAM.

"Where gentle slopes the golden harvest crowned."—CRABBE.

Situation and Extent of Plumstead—Census Returns—Domesday Records of Plumstead—The Manor passes to Queen's College, Oxford—Burnage Town—Bostall, or Bostal—Suffolk Place Farm—The Soil and Climate—Plumstead Common—The old Artillery Practice-butt—The Slade—Bramble Briers, otherwise Bramblebury House—Brick-kilns and Sand-pits—The Cemetery—The old Parish Church—Extracts from the Parish Registers—The new Parish Church—Other Churches and Chapels—Brookhill School—Woolwich Union—Railway and Tramcars—Geological Formation of the District—Plumstead Marshes—The Main Drainage Works at Crossness Point—East Wickham—Descent of the Manor—The Church—A Curious Fresco Painting.

THE east end of Woolwich gradually dies away into Plumstead, which, a century or less ago, was still a rural village, though it now can boast of a High Street, which is scarcely to be distinguished from the High Street of Woolwich, of which it is a continuation. Second-class villas, workmen's cottages, and small shops and public-houses, make

up its accessories, and help to swell the population into a good-sized town. The growth of Plumstead may be gathered from the fact that, whereas in 1851 it numbered only 8,000 souls, its population now exceeds 33,000.

At the beginning of the present century there were only about 200 houses in the whole parish,