

The rooms inside are lofty and handsome, and irregular in plan, some of them being octagonal. They have magnificent doors and lintels, copied from those in the Mansion House, London. The principal sitting-rooms are adorned with magnificent mantelpieces of Italian marble, carved in bold relief; and one of the rooms on the first floor has its panels painted with figure subjects of classical and Italian type. In the grounds, which stretch down to the river from the palace, are one or two fine yews, a standard plum-tree of fabulous age, and a fine cedar of Lebanon, which is mentioned in the parliamentary return in the reign of Charles I.

In connection with this part of the town is told a good story, which shows that modern sovereigns cannot always get their own way in their own dominions, and even in their own neighbourhoods. All those who are acquainted with Richmond must know Asgill House, must remember the iron turnstile near it, and the swinging gate at the opposite corner, at the entrance to the path leading by the river-side to Kew. The path was formerly available to travellers on horseback; but as they were found to interfere in a manner very inconvenient with the towing-line of the barges, &c., George III. issued an order that for the future the path should be restricted to the use of foot passengers only; and, for the rigid enforcement of this order, he caused some iron turnstiles and swing gates to be set up, and a man was appointed to guard them.

It happened one day that the king himself, accompanied by one of the princes, forgetful of his own commands, rode along the path from Kew Palace towards Richmond, and coming to the gate, called out to the watchman to open it.

"Can't open this gate, sir; can't let nobody through o' horseback."

"Can't open! can't open! Then, how are we to get out?" exclaimed his Majesty.

"Which way did you come in, sir?"

"Came in at Kew, came in at Kew, to be sure."

"Then you must please to get out again that way, sir; can't let you out this."

"What! what! what! not let me out, eh? Do you know who I am?"

"No, sir; but if you were the king himself I couldn't open the gate for you. I've got my orders, and I stick to 'em."

"King! king! king! look, my good fellow, I am the king!"

"Oh, to be sure," said the man, with a knowing grin; "no doubt o' that; but I can't let you through, notwithstanding."

"I assure you, my fine fellow," said the prince, "this is the king, and I am the——"

"Ay, ay, sir, and you are the Emperor of *Chany*: no doubt of that, neither; but if you were the Emperor of *Roosey* into the bargain, my orders are not to open this gate to nobody whatsoever o' horseback; so it don't signify to me."

The king, perceiving that no impression was to be made upon this rigid disciplinarian, was about to return, when a gentleman, coming up at the moment, took off his hat on recognising his Majesty, and stood respectfully still, just whispering to the gate-keeper, "The king, the king." The man, alarmed for the consequences of what he now conceived to be his misconduct, trembling and awe-struck, opened the gate.

"No, no, no; won't go through, won't go through," answered the good-natured king. "Do your duty, quite right. Home—home (giving the man a guinea); here's a picture of the king for you, that you may know him when you see him again; but don't let him go through, don't let him go through." So saying, his Majesty returned by the way he came, congratulating himself probably that he had, at all events, one faithful subject.

In the Park, near the present Observatory, at a short distance north-west of the palace, stood the monastery of Sheen, a convent of Carthusian monks, instituted by Henry V. in the year 1414. The buildings were of considerable extent, and around them grew up in course of time the hamlet called West Sheen, which has long since been swept clean away.

The history of the convent is short, but impressive. At this place King Henry, with the view of expiating the murder of Richard, by which his family had mounted the throne of England, founded the priory here for forty monks, which he denominated the "House of Jesus of Bethlehem." And upon the same principle he also founded at Sion, now the seat of the Duke of Northumberland, on the opposite side of the Thames, a convent for sixty nuns of the order of St. Bridget.\* An old account in the British Museum tells us, that in these convents, by order of the royal founder, a constant succession of holy exercises was ordained to be kept up night and day to the end of time. Anthony Wood, following Beccalett, says that "at seven years of age, Cardinal Pole was sent to the monastery at Shene, to be trained up in religion and grammar amongst the Carthusians there"; and he afterwards, when about the age of twenty-five or twenty-six, "retired to his old

\* See Vol I., p. 41.