

## CHAPTER XLIII

## KEW.

"So sits enthroned, in vegetable pride,  
Imperial Kew, by Thames's glittering side,  
Obdient silt from realms unfurrowed bring  
For her the unnamed progeny of Spring."—DARWIN.

Situation and Soil of Kew—Its Etymology—The Village—Suffolk Place—Kew House—Sir Henry Cape's Orangery—Kew House taken as a Royal Residence—Its Demolition, and a New Palace built, which was also pulled down—The Present Palace—Bubb Dodington at Kew—News of the Death of George I. brought to the Prince of Wales—Feud between the King and the Prince of Wales—Death of George II.—Seclusion of George III.—Queen Charlotte's Christmas Trees—The King's Insanity—The King and the Artist—Death of Queen Charlotte—Attempt to Assassinate the Duke of Cumberland—Marriage of the Duke of Clarence and the Duke of Kent—Kew Observatory—The Parish Church—The Graves of Zoffany, Meyer, and Gainsborough—The Rev. Richard Byam—Stephen Duck—Caleb Colton—Granville Sharpe—Sir Arthur Helps—Francis Bauer—Sir John Puckering—"The Pilgrim" Inn—The River Thames—Kew Bridge.

"How fresh the meadows look above the river," writes Tennyson; and nowhere are his words more true than here. The Thames takes a sweep from Barnes to Richmond, which produces a peninsula of meadow-land, at the extremity of which is the pleasant village of Kew. Kew was formerly a hamlet belonging to Kingston, but included within the royal manor of Richmond. In 1769 it was constituted by Act of Parliament a distinct parish. It is bounded on the north and east by the River Thames, on the south-east by Mortlake, and on the south and west by Richmond. The soil is chiefly a light porous sand, and the greater part of the land is occupied by the Royal Gardens, the remainder being appropriated to the purpose of raising asparagus and other vegetables for the London markets.

Its name has been variously spelt as Kayhough, Kayhoo, Keye, and Kewe, whence, as Lysons observes, "its situation near the waterside might induce one to seek for its etymology in the word Key, or Quay." Kew has to contend with all the disadvantages of a flat surface; like Versailles, too, the soil was once swampy and ungrateful: the wealth of a nation drained and fertilised both.

The village itself consists of a collection of shops and private houses, with one or two inns of moderate size, built about the margin of a green some dozen acres in extent, near the centre of which stands the parish church, and, close by, on the west side, the principal entrance to the gardens. A large number of houses have been built of late years on the Richmond Road, which runs southward from the corner of the green, and forms all along the eastern boundary of the gardens. The houses hereabouts have been mostly built since the opening of the Kew Gardens railway station, from which there is access to Ludgate Hill, Waterloo, and nearly all the other London termini. Just over the bridge is the station for

the South-Western loop line trains. The area of the parish is about 350 acres, and the population, according to the latest census returns, is about 1,700, showing an increase of 700 during the preceding decade. Kew has its local institutions, its fire brigade, its cricket club, its Kew Gardens Public Rights Defence Association, and its Educational Institute, &c.

Leland, in his *Cygnæ Cantio* ("Itinerary," Vol. IX.), notices Kew as the abode of the Dowager Queen of France, the Princess Mary of England, widow of Louis XII. of France, and the sister of Henry VIII. She married, *en secondes nocés*, Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, whose third wife she was. Leland describes Kew as a handsome town or village—"villa elegans."

A mansion called Suffolk Place is mentioned in a court roll of Queen Elizabeth as having been pulled down and destroyed. This was probably the place of residence of the Duke of Suffolk. Leland says that the duke's house was erected in the reign of Henry VII., not many years before he wrote, and, according to report, by a steward of the royal household.

The original Kew Palace figures constantly in "Bubb Dodington's Diary" as the head-quarters of the party who hung about Frederick, Prince of Wales; the prince lived there chiefly when in the "country," and not at Leicester House or Carlton House, and the princess resided there in her widowhood, and here she brought up her son, afterwards George III., and his brother, Prince Edward. Here the young king and his brothers were taught riding and fencing by Signor Angelo.

The royal family were very fond of the place, and took a keen interest in laying out the grounds. Dodington writes in February, 1749:—"To dinner at Kew . . . worked in the new walk at Kew. All of us, men, women, and children, worked at the same place—a cold dinner." On another occasion he records having walked with the