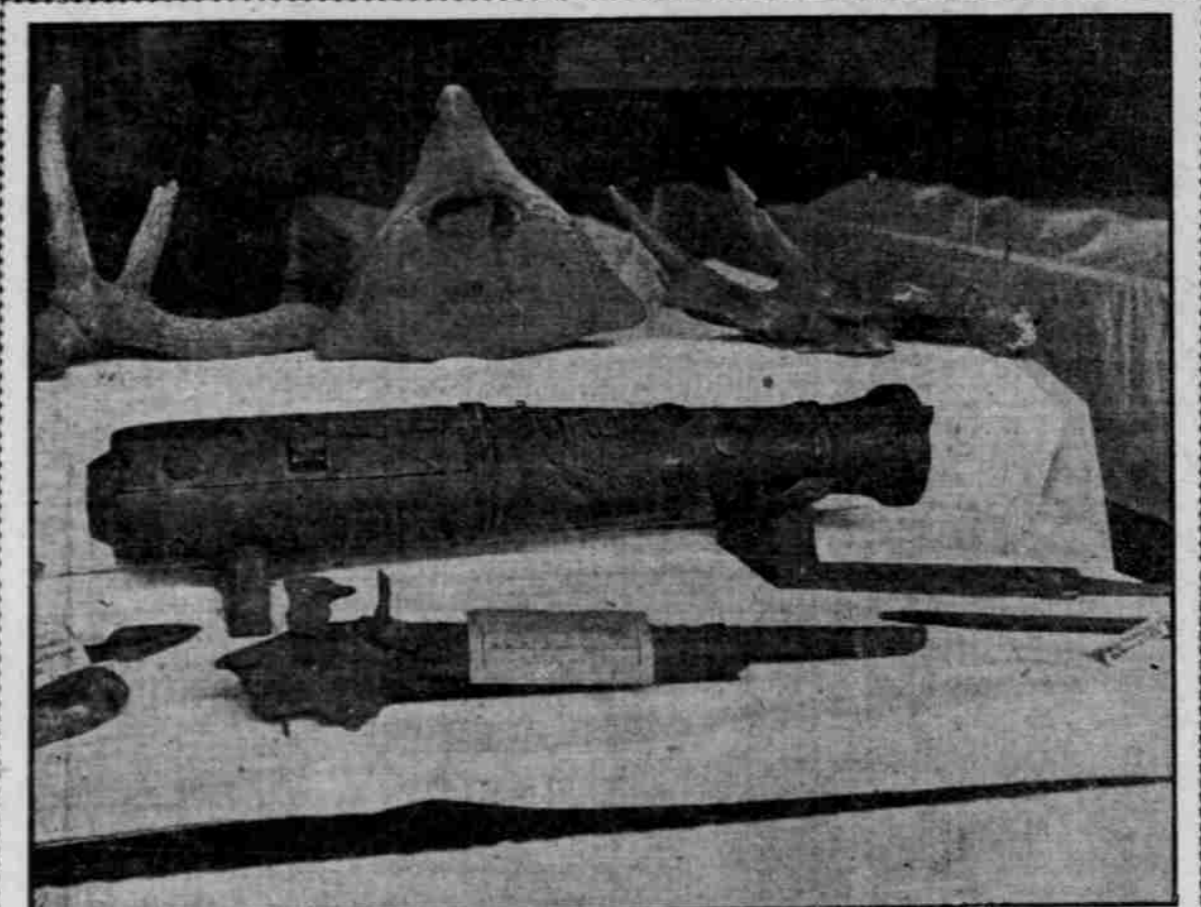


OLD "FATHER THAMES" HAS RECORD FILLED WITH ROMANCE AND TRAGEDY

Scene of Royal Pageants and Pool of Commerce, It Dominates London's Life—Mystery Lurks Along Banks, and Its Muddy Bed Yields Relics, Centuries Old.



CURIOS BROUGHT TO SURFACE BY THAMES DREDGES.

BY R. CROSLLEY. LONDON, Dec. 24.—(Special)—No river in the world possesses a history so fascinating and strangely varied as the Thames. In a few months, when Coronation ceremonies are in full swing, it will be the scene of a pageant widely different in its character from any of those which took place in the days when it deserved its title of the "Silent Highway." Meanwhile it has been giving up relics held in its silty bosom hundreds of years, including a barge used by the Romans when Julius Caesar ruled in early Britain. English writers usually refer to it as "Father Thames"—the father of London's mighty commerce.

generally chosen by those bent on drowning themselves, in preference to any other, and oddly enough they almost invariably jump over the down-river side, probably with some hazy idea of floating out to sea. "It believes," said an official, "that one of the chief reasons why Waterloo bridge has so many suicides is that there are seats in the stone recesses formed over the piers, and the unfortunate sit there brooding over their troubles until they come to the desperate decision to drown themselves. They have only to jump on the stone seat, which forms an easy step to the parapet, and they are over in a jiffy."

vessels to see that no dangerous or explosive goods are on board, seeing that all craft carry proper lights, and dredging the river in order that the channel may not be impaired by the accumulation of silt. It has been during their dredging operations at various points of the river that the men of the Thames Conservancy have brought to the surface many an object of antiquarian or romantic interest. The vertebra of a whale, dredged up in Woolwich Beach in 1892, recalls the fact that whales were frequent visitors to the Thames prehistoric times; and a relic of the glacial period has been preserved in an elk horn, found in the river at Isleworth.

It is of the river's weird and seamy side that I would tell—the mysteries and tragedies which have been hidden in its dark waters, the crime which still flourishes along its crowded banks, and the recovery of varied treasures, lost overboard from craft of all sizes, from the earliest times to the present day. How few people know anything of the marvellous and intricate network of organizations by which order is so silently and ceaselessly maintained on the river which daily bears on its bosom the richest freight in the world! The River Police, the Customs House, the Port of London and Sanitary Authorities, the Thames Conservancy, Trinity House have each their separate and well-defined duties; though for 18 months the newly created Port Sanitary Authority has shown the Thames Conservancy of its responsibilities east of Teddington and incorporated the duties of the ancient and historic Company of Thames Watermen.

But there is always a watchful eye on the floating stage below, noting their movements, and ready to row out into the stream in the waiting boat to meet a plunge is taken. It is seldom indeed that the would-be suicide is drowned at Waterloo bridge. "Only the other night we noticed a man walking up and down on the bridge above," said the same official, "and we knew at once by his movements that he was a candidate for suicide, and surely enough a few moments afterwards we saw him step on the parapet. Our man shot him just in time, and he was pulled back and taken off to the depot."

Prehistoric Relics Uncovered. Implements of the Bronze Age, a spear-head, an old hunt-lock musket, a broad cannon inscribed with Chinese characters, the remains of an early Briton's sword, and a bronze Greek or Roman helmet (now in the British Museum) are among the "wreaks" articles dredged up from the river. They were found in Woolwich in 1906, when the Conservancy made sweeping dredging operations at Brentford in 1906, when the Conservancy men came upon a number of pointed stakes deeply imbedded in the river's bottom. They proved to be the remains of the fortifications constructed by the Britons against the Roman invaders. At that period Brentford was the first place above London where there was a ford or passage across the river, the whole of the Thames Valley being covered with forests and swamps. And today the London County Council officials in building a new County Hall have come upon a Roman barge that they are preserving with close care.

River Police Kept Busy. Of all these bodies, the River Police are naturally more concerned than any with what the public regards as the tragic side of life on the river. Crimes of violence on the Thames have undoubtedly decreased since the novel by Charles Dickens in the matchless pen-pictures which are to be found in many of his novels. But thieves and freshets are numerous as ever, these river vermin specializing in their various departments of dishonesty just as thieves do on land. These are still "river-rangers"—men who climb noisily on board vessels lying in the Pool at night, while the watchman is asleep, and help themselves to any portable articles, often descending to the cabins when they find the coast is clear.

Rescue-Room Provided. A special room is provided at the Waterloo Bridge depot for the reception of the rescued, the room being furnished with a bed, bath, and hot-water bottles of various sizes for applying to the patient. That the provision of the room is necessary may be judged from the fact that some desperate man or woman jumps off Waterloo Bridge on an average every week in the year. Only a day or two ago one of these unfortunates threw himself over the parapet, and was hauled out by the police and was if a warm bed within four minutes of his jump from the bridge.

Stolen Jewels Recovered. Many years ago a thief stole a number of gold watches from a Cornhill jewelry store and being hotly pursued, he threw them over the bridge at Blackfriars. He afterwards was sent down at the spot indicated by the thief, recovered most of the watches. The proceeds of another robbery were recovered at London bridge, one gold watch being found by the diver lodged on the projecting buttress.

Better Police Quarters Given. For the watching of this criminal army a police force numbering nearly 350 officers and men is stationed along the river, the main divisions being at Wapping, Blackwell and Waterloo. The head depot has been at Wapping ever since the government took over the force from the East India Company in 1832, and for many years the men were housed in an old gun sloop, moored within a few hundred yards of Wapping Old Stairs, which still serves as a new and palatial building has taken the place of the old police depot, with accommodation for 32 men, living rooms for the inspectors, a mess, a drying-room for the men's coats, and a series of cells for the prisoners they bring in.

Deaf Mutes, Expert "Lip-Readers," Report Horrifying Discovery. Silent Actors in Moving Picture Shows, They Say, Use Vilest Language—\$200,000,000 Saved Annually by Closing Bucketshops—Other Stirring News From Windy City.

When Mrs. Allen Christopher sprang into the limelight by giving away the secrets of the "brick trust" and then went to jail for contempt by order of Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis because she would not reveal more facts in her possession, the innocent bystanders awoke to the fact that in Mrs. Christopher they had a very unusual woman.

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A Word to Our Thousands of Patrons

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hands through the water while being rowed in a boat, has been responsible for the loss of countless valuable rings, the cold water causing the fingers to contract so that the rings slip off easily. One woman, while on a houseboat at Caverham, recently lost her rings valued at \$1000, in a particularly annoying manner. She left them on the table at lunch time, and when the cloth was cleared, the servant shook the crumbs overboard and in so doing shook out the rings as well. The Conservancy employed a diver, who searched the spot for several days at a cost to the city of \$50, but the bottom of the river was so covered with rank weeds that the recovery of the rings was hopeless.

patronage of the large downtown houses. Of these houses there are 17 and two more are shortly to be opened. They are all within or adjacent to the elevated loop. Removed from the loop are about 25 other houses of the second class, where the prices, though much below the first-class standard, are still too high to be within the frequent reach of the great mass.

manual signs. "If the police could have heard the last remark of that man on the screen, they would arrest the manager of this show." To the average spectator the things going on in the pictures seemed innocent enough, although the alleged vile language was used almost invariably in screen dramas of the sensational sort popular in certain parts of the city.

DEAF MUTES, EXPERT "LIP-READERS," REPORT HORRIFYING DISCOVERY

Silent Actors in Moving Picture Shows, They Say, Use Vilest Language—\$200,000,000 Saved Annually by Closing Bucketshops—Other Stirring News From Windy City.

BY JONATHAN PALMER. CHICAGO, Dec. 24.—Federal raids upon bucket shop establishments and the arrest of fifty or more of the attaches of these concerns in Chicago are looked upon as the beginning of the end of a system of gambling and graft that has siphoned untold millions of dollars from its victims.

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