

THE RIVER THAMES

London's Great Artery, With Its Crimes and Mysteries.

TRAPS FOR UNWARY VICTIMS.

Waterside Houses With Floors Opening at the Push of a Lever to Drop the Occupant into a Watery Grave—Ghost Boats of the River.

London's great artery, the river Thames, hides many a grim story under its murky waters. Some of these centuries old, some of them merely incidents of yesterday. Just as no other river has quite the same wonder as belongs to the Thames, so no other river is so wrapped in mystery, so surrounded with stories of tragedy and crime.

Many of the old waterside houses, which rise sheer with the bank, contain rooms in which the floor is built directly over the water—floors upon which one could stand in apparently perfect safety while some one in an adjacent room worked a lever which caused the floor to open and his victim to drop into the river.

A gambling club is said to have met in such a room once a year to play for tremendous stakes. The party played on until one of their members was ruined. Then the rest of the men went away in silence, while the ruined man went down into the dark waters.

One of the old waterside houses at Wapping, too, is among the bits of the Thames with a reputation for being haunted. A flight of steps leads from the house to the river, but these steps are disused, and the door at the top of them is walled up. Despite this, often people passing by on the river at night time swear to having seen two men come through the walled door and down the steps. Then, after lowering some bundle into the water, they return to the house. The identity of the men and the contents of their bundle remain among the insoluble stories of the Thames.

The Thames police force of about 800 men is employed to guard against all sorts of additions to the mysteries of the Thames, and their task is of far greater magnitude than might be casually imagined. Most imperative is it that each member of this force shall be an expert swimmer and understand the right methods for dealing with persons rescued from the water.

A very large number of persons are saved from intentional and accidental drowning in the river every year, an average number somewhere between seventy and a hundred. But the number of persons who are "found drowned" strikes a still greater average—it is never less and often more than 100 in a year—besides which it is well known that the waters of the river close above many persons of whom nothing more is ever seen or heard.

But if stones could speak the bridges across the Thames could tell many pitiful and grim life stories, especially Waterloo bridge, which has such sad associations as to have gained it the sobriquet of "The Bridge of Sighs."

Incidentally, Waterloo bridge is another part of the Thames which is said to be haunted. It is not so very long since a more than usually clear sighted man went to the police with the information that he had seen a woman jump from the parapet of Waterloo bridge. He had been crossing the bridge late one night, when he had noticed a woman in black walking in front of him. Suddenly he saw her make an appealing gesture, but before he could reach the woman she had disappeared.

That was all. There was no splash following her disappearance, and no result came from the search which was made. Those who are familiar with the history of the river said that the man had seen the ghost of Waterloo bridge—the tragic woman in black, of whom nothing is known save that she haunts the London "Bridge of Sighs."

Another mysterious thing about the Thames, which no amount of police supervision will destroy, is the "ghost" boats which have been and are frequently seen in various parts of the river. It is a fact that river police patrols have actually given chase to these ghost ships, to find there is nothing substantial to be found on reaching the place where the ships had seemed to be.

One of the most curious stories of this kind is that of the mysterious boat which was seen making its way along the water toward London bridge one day, about a quarter of a century ago. As she neared the bridge there was a tremendous explosion, a vivid burst of light, and then—nothing! Not so much as a splinter of wood remained of the boat which had been, and the story of it lingers from that day to this as one of the hundreds of tragic unknown things which form the secrets of the river of mystery.—London Answers.

Talent Required.
"If you go about it in a diplomatic way I believe you can get a good sized loan from Scandaworth."

"How do you mean?"
"Well, tell him two or three rattling good stories that will make him laugh uproariously and then recite the history of your misfortunes in such a way that he will shed tears."

"Umph! If I could do all that I'd go into vaudeville and be a monologist."—Birmingham Age-Herald.

He Needed It.
The Aviator—I've been five months completing and learning to control my machine. Mister B.—And what have you got for your pains? The Aviator—Embroidery.—London Telegraph.

Successful minds work like a gimlet—to a single point.—Rovee.

AN EVENING WITH DUMAS.

It Was a Cosmopolitan Crowd That Flocked to His Shrine.

Dumas sat like some bronze of a Buddhist temple, while his guests stood or moved about, conversing with him or among themselves, writes Francis Grierson in the Century, describing an evening with the great novelist. A famous comedian from the Gymnase exchanged jokes with the tragedian from the Theatre Francaise, a witty journalist was conversing with a gifted singer from the Theatre Lyric, an artist with flowing hair and a huge plume was begging a professional beauty to give him a series of sittings for her portrait, a novelist on the qui-vive for copy seemed to see, hear and appropriate everything and everybody all at once.

A young poetess and an aged dramatist were discussing the latest plays. A Russian countess, tall, slender, insinuating, clad all in black, made me think of a character I had seen in a fantastic pantomime. She gazed about mysteriously and, stopping at Dumas' chair, placed her long, thin hand on his shoulder for some moments, like a ghostly visitor with a fatal message, and then glided away. Austrians, Italians, Germans, mingled their accents with the accent of the true Parisian. But Dumas was more than a Parisian; he was a cosmopolitan at a time when there were no cosmopolitan Frenchmen, and he gave me the impression of a man who had seen life in every aspect.

He might as well have said in so many words: "My mind is made up. Do not give yourself the trouble to tell me what is going on in England or America or in the country of the Grand Turk or among the nabobs of India. I know as much as they know. You see me sitting here contented enough as things are. All these charming women of talent are my friends" (as a matter of fact, there was not an old woman in the room). "A man is not the author of books like 'Monte Cristo' without some recompense."

No one would have taken him for a celebrated author. He had the air of a man who had done nothing all his life but invent, taste and prepare luxurious dishes at a restaurant patronized by wealthy gourmets.

NUNOBIKI WATERFALLS.

Bewitching Night Scene at a Popular Japanese Resort.

A sight in the summer life of Japan not easily forgotten is procured in a night visit to the Nunobiki waterfall, just outside Kobe on the northeast.

There are two falls, the lower or female fall of forty-three feet and the upper or male fall of eighty feet, the water gushing in each case out of the hill above and falling down the gorge to a whirling pool below. It is reached by an easy, winding climb up the cliffs of the "Million Fireflies"—tiny electric bolts in thousands among the trees—and the thousands and thousands of gayly clad women and children visitors sheltered by the more somber clad men give the traveler two distinctly delightful sensations before reaching the illuminated falls themselves.

The tiny lights come and go among the trees in a bewitching way. The angle light, says the Kobe Chronicle, which illuminates the higher fall will perhaps appeal to many rather than the colored lights thrown on the lower fall, and the lamp rays giving the fountain the hues of the rainbow may be regarded as artificial. Nevertheless the general effect is attractive.

To any one who knows China it is impossible not to draw a comparison favorable to the Japanese in viewing the crowd. Entrance to the gorge is perfectly free, yet thousands flocking there every evening are neatly dressed, in summer garments, every one clean and respectable, while the conduct of the great crowd is orderly and marked by a sense of quiet enjoyment. Such a scene would be almost impossible in China, and until the idea of personal cleanliness can be introduced among the swarming millions of that country we are afraid the Japanese will continue to look down upon their neighbors as inferior.

Origin of the Census.

The origin of the American census dates back to Revolutionary days, being traced to the Census club of Boston. This club was composed mainly of persons engaged in shipbuilding. It was one of the most radical opponents of British oppression. The Census club and the Merchants' club of the same period used to meet before elections and agree on candidates for town and provincial offices. "Census" is believed to be a corruption of "caulkers."

The Heat of Australia.

Australia is the hottest country on record. I have ridden for miles astride the equator, but I have never found heat to compare with this. Out in the country in the dry times there appears to be little more than a sheet of brown paper between you and the lower regions, and the people facetiously say that they have to feed their hens on cracked ice to keep them from laying boiled eggs.—Sydney Telegraph.

Her Hard Task.

"That's a beautiful girl you have in your store," said the man acquaintance. "I've seen her in the window several days as I passed."
"She isn't an employee," the milliner answered wearily. "She's a woman trying to decide on a new hat."—Buffalo Express.

Weather Note.

"Looks like rain for our outing tomorrow."
"Just our luck! How would it do to telephone the weather bureau?"
"No good. But you might make an appeal to the electric house."—Boston Transcript.

OUR COAST LIGHTS

These Beacons Are Invaluable Aids to Navigation.

THE SERVICE NEVER SLEEPS.

Night and Day at All Seasons of the Year the Flash of the Lamp or the Song of the Fog Siren Welcomes or Warns the Watchful Mariner.

The work of safeguarding navigation on the coast of the United States is a far greater and more complex problem than most people appreciate, for there is a multitude of complex conditions to be met, each one varying with the peculiarities of its location. The territory to be covered is also unusually great, as it includes not only the entire ocean fronts of the country, both on the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, but of Alaska, the Hawaiian Islands, portions of the West Indies and the great lakes as well, and the service never ends either by night or day, summer or winter.

The lighthouse service comprises a force of 5,000 men, on whom devolves the duty of maintaining over 14,000 aids to navigation of various kinds, including lighthouses, lightships, light buoys and beacons of various descriptions, together with many fog signals, and an important incidental duty is that of protecting the shores in the neighborhood of stations from damage by erosion that might endanger the structures.

The desirable distribution of lights and other aids along a coast depends on its maritime development and its physical characteristics and is influenced by the prevailing meteorological conditions. Thus the north Atlantic coast has a large foreign and coasting trade, and the shores are intricate and in part rugged, and along this coast the main lights are, with few exceptions, placed at such intervals that their areas of visibility overlap. On portions of the coast of simple contour, and with smaller traffic, there are unlighted stretches between the lights which stand on the projecting capes. The design and construction of lighthouses vary with their location and the surrounding conditions, no two being exactly alike.

Next to the lighthouse, the lightship is one of the most picturesque objects seen along our coasts. This vessel is ninety-two feet on the water line, twenty-five feet beam and has a draft of eleven feet four inches. It is built of steel and incombustible materials throughout and has five water tight bulkheads. It is self propelled, being provided with an internal combustion oil burning engine of 200 horsepower, and has an oil vapor or gas light fifty feet above the water, located on a tubular mast, through which access to the light can be safely had in any weather. The fog signal is a siren using compressed air, and a submarine bell is also fitted. Fifty-two light vessels are maintained, and that there may be no interruption of the service there are fourteen reliever ships, so that if anything happens to a ship or station another can be quickly sent to take its place. All of these vessels are very strongly built to enable them to withstand the severe service they are required to perform and have flush decks for increased safety.

Only one light, that at Navesink, N. J., is equipped with electric light for which current is generated at the station, but there are thirty minor stations where electric lights, either incandescent or arc, are used which obtain current from outside sources. In most of the coast lights oil vapor lamps are used having mantles of either thirty-five or fifty-five millimeters diameter and arranged either singly or in groups giving light intensities of from 600 to 2,500 candles. These lamps are not only very powerful and reliable, but are much more economical than the old oil wick lamps, as they require but from 0.6 to 0.88 gallon per candle power per year as against 4.5 to 7.6 gallons for the old oil lights. The increased illuminating efficiency is about eight times.

Beacons, both fixed and floating, are numerous and depend on either gas or electricity for their lights, and these are especially valuable in inaccessible places where attendance is difficult. These, however, are only put in stations of subordinate importance. The majority of such beacons use gas and are provided with tanks of sufficient capacity for storing a supply of acetylene gas for about five months.

Fog signals are of particular value in many places, and these are distributed along the coast, according to conditions prevailing. Thus on the coast of Maine there is an average of 1,057 hours of fog during the year, while on the south Atlantic and gulf coasts the average is only 180 hours. There are 328 fog signals from Cape Lookout northward out of a total of 567 maintained by the service. There are 127 fog signals on the American shores of the great lakes and eighty-three on the northern Pacific and Alaska shores, while in Porto Rico and Hawaii, where fog is rare, no signals of this kind are required.

The principal fog signals used are air sirens, steam whistles, reed horns, bells controlled by clockwork and submarine bells operated by compressed air, all of which are valued by sailors.—Engineering News.

Initial Velocity.

Rusticus—I tell ya, a dollar don't go far in N'York! The Wise Un—Eh! Ought to, seel'n the speed it goes at—Jude.

Sympathy is a key that fits the lock of any heart.

THE ROPES OF MAUL.

An Ancient Legend of the Sun From the South Seas.

One of the most picturesque legends connected with the solar beams is that told in the islands of the south Pacific, where sunbeams are known as "the ropes of Maul." It is related that in former times the sun god Ra was not so regular in his habits as he is today. In fact, he caused the south sea islanders much annoyance by setting in the morning or at noon or at other inopportune times, just when his light was needed for the daily tasks of mankind.

The great hero Maul undertook to cure him of these erratic habits, and the first step was to make the sun god prisoner. This was accomplished by laying a series of six snares made of strong coconut fiber along the sun's path in the sky. When the deity next rose from Avalok, or the land of ghosts, the first snare encircled him, but slipped down and only caught his feet; the second slipped, too, but caught the sun god's knees; the third caught around his hips.

Still Ra pressed on, scarcely hampered by these contrivances. The fourth snare tightened around his waist, the fifth under his arms, and finally the sixth and last caught him around the neck and almost strangled him. Then the sun god confessed himself vanquished and in fear of his life promised Maul that he would in future adjust his daily journeys more in accordance with the comfort and convenience of mortal men.

Ra was then allowed to proceed on his way, but Maul prudently declined to take off the ropes, which may still be seen hanging from the sun at dawn and when he descends into the ocean at night. Hence the islanders say, when they behold the beams radiating from the sun, "Tens to Taura a Maul!"—"See the ropes of Maul!"—Philadelphia Inquirer.

ECCENTRIC NORTH RIVER.

Curious Pranks of a Tortuous New England Stream.

Westerners tell of the queer behavior and changes of course indulged in by the Missouri river, and Texans aver that for pure cussedness and general sulkiness no stream of water can approach the Rio Grande. There is, however, a stream in New England whereof the rest of the country hears little and which should in justice be accorded a place in the list of queer behaving bodies of water.

This is the North river in Massachusetts. It has its source in a pond near Hanson, whence it proceeds in a tortuous course to the sea at Scituate. Now, the distance by air line from Hanson to Scituate is only ten miles, but by the North river it is forty.

New Englanders aver that when the tide is coming in the North river runs upstream, and not only that, but the upper part of it, which is fresh water, also runs up. Thus this queer stream presents the strange spectacle of a fresh water river proceeding uphill.

The North river's claim to eccentricity is not, however, limited to this fact. It is so crooked that it doubles on itself. At one spot near Hanover this river, by accomplishing three loops, moves toward the sea for a distance of only fifty feet and wanders about for a distance of about fifteen miles in doing it.

In November, 1898, the North river got very cantankerous. It moved its mouth three miles to the northward, thus making a present to the town of Marshfield of a deep harbor. In so doing it killed three men and converted many thousand acres of good meadow land into a salt marsh.

Historically the North river is of note as being the scene of the last Indian raid on the coast settlements.—Philadelphia Record.

The Stationer.

"Stationery" has etymologically as much to do with standing as has "stationary." The original stationers, or stationarii, were so called because they sold their books upon stalls or "stations"—in London round about old St. Paul's cathedral, in some cases against the walls of the cathedral itself. This is one of the many trades the names of which have no direct allusion to the commodities sold. "Grocers," for instance, were so called either because they sold "ten gros," wholesale, or because they were "engrossers," monopolists.—London Chronicle.

Always.

Time haunted her. She laughed at him, she resorted to a thousand devices whereby to discomfort him, but he was not to be shaken off. At length she lost her temper.

"Can't you see," she flared out reluctantly, "that there's no room for you where beauty dwells?"

"There is always," Time rejoined, touching his scepter significantly, "room for one mower."—Boston Herald.

A Hard Job.

One of the hardest jobs I know of is to take a ride, when you're feeling nice and sociable, in a left hand drive machine with a fellow who is deaf in the right ear and has to stop the car and turn his head toward you every time you make a remark to him.—Farm Life.

Youthful Observer.

The New Parson—Well, I'm glad to hear you come to church twice every Sunday. Tommy—Yes, I'm not old enough to stay away yet.—London Opinion.

Right at Home.

Sometimes it is hard to find the city of happiness, but it will narrow the search if you remember that it is in the state of mind.—Youth's Companion.

The foundations of justice are that no one shall suffer wrong; then that the public good shall be promoted.—Cicero.



"Jim! Come on in here. I want to talk to you. And bring in some wood when you come."

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Lowell and Mahaffy.

James Russell Lowell and Professor Mahaffy met for the first time at a friend's house in Birmingham, England, and talked together for four hours. When Lowell drove away in the carriage he exclaimed to his host, "Well, that's one of the most delightful fellows I ever met, and I don't mind if you tell him so!" The friend did so, and Mahaffy received the compliment with equal grace and modesty. "Poor Lowell!" he exclaimed. "To think that he can never have met an Irishman before!"

Candied Flowers.

Rosebuds boiled in sugar and made into a preserve are eaten by Arabians, while in China candied rosebuds and jasmine flowers are equally popular. The common yellow lily that grows in marshes and ponds is utilized by the Turks as the main ingredient of an agreeable conserve. Candied violets are very common in France, while in Roumania and Bulgaria many flowers are used for flavoring.

A Disappearing Sea.

The Caspian sea is said to be gradually disappearing. This sea is about 730 miles in width. Its area is estimated to be 170,000 square miles. Notwithstanding its size, parts of the sea are very shallow. In the southern portions, however, a depth of over 3,000 feet has been registered.



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