OLD CAMBERWELL.

II. EARLY HISTORY.

BY

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A brief survey of the earliest relics bearing upon the history of Camberwell may be useful. I have blended old and quite new materials in this.

It was, no doubt, in prehistoric days a settlement at the foot of the last spurs of the Surrey hills, when the great estuary of the Thames, to be embanked later by the Britons and Romans, crept in a vast shallow expanse of semi-stagnant water, with islets here and there, and tracts of wood and marsh, up to the rising ground of what are now Grove Hill, Champion, Denmark and Herne Hills. This great flood of waters, ebbing and flowing with the tides, got behind these low hills and filled the valley that lies between them on the north, and Hatcham, Forest Hill, Ladlands Hill, One Tree Hill (or Honour Oak Hill), Sydenham Hill, and the rest of the low range on the western crest of which now stands the Crystal Palace. The trough in the bottom was all marshy ground, intersected by streams and dykes, and the rising slopes were covered with patches of primæval gnarled oak forests, clumps of ancient gorse, thorns, and yews. These last in some cases still remain, with the wooded hillsides and watery meadows.* It is, there-

* In my own garden on Champion Hill, overlooking this still rural valley and the opposite hills, is one of the old yews, child of others yet more ancient; and in the space to the southward, now enclosed as a garden, but open meadow down to 1913, are several pink, white, and crimson thorn-trees, one of which, from its immense size, must be five hundred years old.

fore, in spite of the flood of bricks and mortar that has overwhelmed the neighbourhood during the last seventy years, comparatively easy to reconstruct the aspect of the country as it was in the days of the Roman invasion, and as it remained for many hundreds of years until the embankment of the Thames, drainage of the marshes, cutting down of the forests, cultivation of the hillsides and valley, gradually tamed this once wild tract, the haunt of the cormorant, bittern, owl, and wood-pigeon.* Herne Hill may take its name from an ancient heronry. Wildfowl and four-footed game must have abounded in the marshes and forests, the latter joining on to Norwood—the Archbishop's "Northwood" above Croydon. The old inn-sign on Upper Denmark Hill of "The Fox under the Hill" is still there to remind one of the days when Prince George of Denmark had a shooting-box hard by (the shell of which, if tradition is correct, still survives in a group of stuccoed houses) and came to hunt in the adjacent woods.†

Doubtless there was something in the nature of a

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* The two latter are still among our permanent residents; and the cuckoo and nightingale occasional visitors. Wood-pigeons and owls build in my garden, and the cuckoo comes to a thorn-bush at the bottom—and this within the "four-mile radius"—so hard is it to kill the rurality of Camberwell!

†At the time of writing an ancient house of the superior type ("Westbury House") is being pulled down—at the soulless bidding of Dulwich College—a little higher up the hill, which has remained until this day an almost unaltered country-house. Set down fifty miles from London, it would have seemed quite in its proper place. With its rough-cast walls, pantile roof, and massive chimney-stack with zig-zag toothing-course, its beautiful old seventeenth-century oak staircase and large fireplaces, one might have hoped it would have been spared by an educational institution that pretends to some artistic taste. In pulling it down (November, 1915) it is found to be of "post and panel" construction, with massive storey-posts 9 inches square and very sound.

navigable channel or waterway—a creek or backwater from the Thames—to the marshy forest land in this secluded valley between the two ranges of hills. Two streams at one time found their outlet from these hills to the river. It must have formed a natural fastness for the Britons when the Romans had gained a footing and were setting about to subdue the native tribes. Ladlands Hill, next to One Tree Hill, still exhibited on its northern side, when Allport wrote in 1841, the lines of a camp, somewhat confused by the slipping of the clay. I have seen the remains of these myself, now largely obliterated by building. Such a camp would occupy a strong and very obvious position, facing, as it does, the ancient British trackway (now an important tramway!) known to-day as Grove Lane and Dog-Kennel Hill.* My late father had a house on the summit of the hill, the title deeds of which traced its pedigree to a farmhouse existing in the sixteenth century, and probably much older. In the grounds was a pond fed by natural springs which had doubtless been there from time immemorial.

In 1913 Mr. F. Call, a local gardener, brought to me the lower part of a Roman drinking-vessel which he had dug up in some vacant ground on the other side of the road (Grove Lane) almost immediately opposite to this pond. The vessel is of a type which is found all over England; and by a curious coincidence I had recently been presented with the upper part of another of identical shape and pattern, and modelled in the same red clay, covered

* This name also bears witness to the rural nature of the neighbourhood. Until a few years ago this narrow, steep incline was bounded by hedges of thorn and open fields. The hedges have disappeared in the widening for the trams, as also a range of long-disused kennels and a keeper's lodge of eighteenth-century date.

with a biscuit-coloured "slip," found at Rustington, Sussex. Hull Museum has other examples. The restored shape is as here drawn, $10\frac{1}{4}$ inches high by 7 inches diameter, and is very elegantly modelled. It is ornamented with diagonal pricked lines on the upper part of the bowl and mouth-piece: the latter has a combed pattern of wavy lines, and there are delicate quirked mouldings round the neck and waist, with a roll and hollow to the mouth and foot. The hollow in the latter is deeply stained with the rust of an iron ring, of which fragments remain, showing that it was slung by straps from this to the person who carried it. At the junction with the bowl there is, inside the neck, a disc of clay, perforated with ten holes. A sponge kept in the neck would serve to moisten the lips.

Now it appears to me as a logical induction (1) that the Roman legions must often have marched up Grove Lane, and when they had reached the top of the hill, before descending and crossing the swamp to the camp on the opposite crest, they would naturally halt at this wayside spring to fill their water-bottles; (2) that this vessel found throughout England, of identical size, shape, material, colour and ornamentation, is, in fact, the regulation water-vessel of the Roman soldier; and that some such legionary, having filled his bottle at the spring, in crossing the trackway to rejoin his companions may have stumbled over a rut or tree-root and broken the vessel, kicking its fragments into the bushes, where they gradually got covered and buried under a foot of clay until the bowl was recovered by my gardener friend. Roman coins have been found in the mud of the pond.

Evelyn records in his diary, under date October 28, 1685: "At the Royal Society an urn full of bones was presented, dug up in an highway, whilst repairing it, in a field in Camberwell, in Surrey; it was found intire with its cover, amongst many others, believ'd to be

ROMAN WATER VESSEL FOUND IN GROVE LANE, CAMBERWELL, 1913.
(Top added by P. M. Johnston.)

truly Roman and antient." One wishes he had told us whereabouts the highway or field lay.

A Mr. Bagford, writing to Hearne the antiquary, on February 1, 1714-15, says: "At Peckham of late years was dug up in the middle of the highway, a famous glass Roman urn, which I the more willingly take notice of because urns of this kind are rare, and are not commonly seen."

A few years ago my friend Dr. Edwards, of Camberwell House, was given a small saucer-shaped vessel, in a hard, smooth, grey ware, probably of Roman date, which was dug up beneath a great water-conduit, itself of some antiquity, in the rear of his house on the south side of the Peckham Road.

In 1685 the foundation of a stone defensive work, as it appeared to the finders, was discovered near St. Thomas à Watering, in the Kent Road. Defoe says of this: "At the end of Kent-street there was a very strong fortification of stone, the foundations of which were dug up in the year 1685; this ran 'cross a garden about a quarter of a mile from the Stones-end. In digging up of this foundation, there appeared two ancient pillars of a large gate.* Upon each of them had been placed heads with two faces curiously cut in stone, one of which was taken up, but the other lying in a quick sand from whence the springs flowed out pretty freely, was rendered more difficult to be taken up; and the curiosity of the people being not very great, they contented themselves with getting up one of the heads, which was placed over the gardener's door, where it remained for several years, until it was known to the learned Dr. Woodward, who purchased it, and kept it

* Query—thrown down, or partially demolished. It will be noted that the first of these dates coincides with the year in which Evelyn records the discovery of the urns. This, perhaps, gives us a clue to the place where they were found.

in his valuable collection of curiosities."* The second head appears to have been dug up in 1690, and is described as a Janus' head, in *marble*. "One side represented the countenance of a bearded man, with the horns and ears of a ram: a jewel or other ornament depended on each side of the head, which was crowned with laurel. On the opposite side was the countenance of a young woman in ancient head-attire, which, at the same time that it covered the head, projected from it."† The sculpture, of which Manning and Bray give a rude woodcut (Vol. III, 400), was entire, and appeared to have been fixed originally to a square column. It was eighteen inches in height. Allport (p. 27) quotes "the learned and ingenious Dr. Harris" as saying: "I am apt to fancy it to have been the very *Deus terminus* which was placed near the ferry at Lambeth, where the roman ways parted. Montfaucon, in his travels, tells us there were several crossways in old Rome, called Jani, where there stood a statue of Janus, usually with two, but sometimes with three, or more faces."‡ As to the Lambeth ferry, "the learned and ingenious" writer is a little too ingenious; and, as Allport remarks, his "conjecture appears to have been formed without any accurate knowledge of the circumstances under which the relic was discovered." He adds: "There can be little doubt . . . that these heads when first discovered retained their original position [*sed quære*] on the piers of a Roman gateway, Janus being considered by that people the god of gates, and symbolically of the opening year."§ One would give something to know where these two ancient relics are now. They are too solid to have disappeared into space. It would be appropriate

* "Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain." By a Gentleman. Third Ed. 1742. Vol. I, pp. 234-5.

† Dr. Horseley, quoted in Manning and Bray, III, 401.

‡ Hist. of Kent, fo. 3. § Allport, p. 28.

that casts of them should be taken and preserved in some public building in Camberwell.

It appears likely that the gate with the Janus heads and the "fortifications of stone" were not unconnected with the Roman causeway, formed of large blocks of squared chalk, strengthened and supported by stout oak piles, about fifteen feet wide, which was discovered in 1809 during the excavations made in forming the Surrey Canal. It extended about 250 yards in a north-easterly direction, across the marshes from the Kent Road to the Thames at Rotherhithe, and it is recorded that four or five hundred cart-loads of chalk were removed from the section that was laid bare, showing, as Allport remarks, great discipline and resources on the part of the constructors.* The Surrey historian, Bray, considered that this causeway was connected with the camp on Ladlands Hill, at the back of which he fancied he could trace its course towards Sydenham Hill and Woodcote, the supposed Noviomagus of the Romans. Allport, however, thought that the road was more probably "the middle section of the road leading from Forest-hill to the summit of Dulwich wood, which is a straight, firm, broad level, clearly distinguishable from the quagmire at either extremity, and not unlike a Roman work." His testimony is that of a shrewd and cautious first-hand observer, who, moreover, studied these things before the tide of building had altered so many ancient landmarks. I may add that my own inspection of a length of this road in Sydenham gave me the distinct impression of its Roman origin. It is called the "Roman

* *Mr. S. J. Lilley, F.S.A., of Peckham, a noted local* antiquary, who contributed to Manning and Bray's "History of Surrey," had a handsome pen-tray made out of one of the oak piles and presented it to William Bray, of Sheire, giving a duplicate to the Society of Antiquaries.

Road" to this day. South Street, Peckham, now Rye Lane, and Coldharbour Lane, are also of possible Roman origin.

On the northern border of the Parish of Camberwell was a dyke or wall, called within living memory Galley Wall. It probably had some connection with this causeway, and derived its name from the time when there was a channel or creek from the Thames navigable by the Roman galleys, which entered it to discharge their cargoes for transport over the causeway to the firm roads inland.*

In later days the Danes, in their marauding expeditions, doubtless used both dyke and causeway, and Sweyn pillaged the countryside when his army wintered at "Grena wic" (Greenwich), as the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle tells us, in 1013. It should be added that the Romans constructed more than one of such causeways across the Surrey marshes, of which the most prominent is that still called Newington Causeway by Southwark. Compare also Brixton Causeway, a raised road running north and south by the River Effra. I have seen for myself that deep excavations on Denmark Hill have revealed an ancient road formed with wattles and hardcore.

The Ladlands (or Ludlands) camp was described by Bray as of oblong formation, with a double ditch, and my friend Mr. H. E. Malden, the latest historian of Surrey, whose attention I drew to the last remains of the banks and ditches, behind the houses on Overhill Road, between Honour Oak and Lordship Lane

* S. J. Lilley, quoted by Allport, p. 22. The etymology of "galley," it should be stated, is probably not earlier than the 13th century. I think it likely that the particular causeway was not Newington Causeway, but the long-lost one of which a section was brought to light in 1809 in Camberwell.

Stations, confirms the view that it was of Roman formation. The late Mr. S. J. Lilley would go further and persuade us that the last stand of Boadicea (or Boudicca = "the Victress") against the Roman general, Suetonius Paulinus, in A.D. 60, took place in the valley between the hills on the south-east of Camberwell parish—instead of at Battle Bridge,* near Pentonville, on the other side of London, as is popularly supposed. The historian Tacitus gives the following account of the battle:—

"Suetonius having with him the 14th legion, with the standard-bearers of the 20th, and some supplies from the places thereabouts, almost to the number of ten thousand fighting men, resolved without more ado to engage the Britons; and to this purpose encamps his army in a place accessible by a narrow lane only; being fenced in the rear by a wood; as sensible he should have no enemy but on the front, and that the plain was open, so that there would be no danger of ambuscades in it. He drew up the legion close together in the middle, with the light soldiers on both sides and the horse as the two wings about them. The Britons went shouting and swarming up and down in such vast numbers as never before were seen, so fierce and confident of victory that their wives were brought along with them, and placed in carts in the outmost part of the plain to see it." At a given signal, "the legion, not stirring but keeping within the strait (which was of great advantage to them) till the enemy had spent their darts, sallied out in a wedge upon them. The auxiliaries gave them the like shock; and the horse, breaking at last upon the enemy, routed all in their way that could make head against them; the rest fled, but with great diffi-

* Battle Bridge more probably marks the scene of a great victory by Alfred over the Danes. In reality there is nothing to connect it with Boadicea.

culty, for the passes were blocked up by the waggons quite round."

Commenting on this, Allport says: "Here, without gloss or comment, is as graphic a sketch of Ladlands-hill, the valley behind it, the friendly wood, and Peckham Rye-common, as could reasonably be desired!" And he goes on to remark that the wording of Tacitus in the original conforms even more closely to a description of the lie of the country, "and must strike all who have passed round the south side of the camp as peculiarly descriptive of the valley that separates Primrose (or Ladlands) and Forest-hills, though its sides are now denuded of their sylvan honours":—"*Deligit locum arctis faucibus, et a tergo, silva clausum*"—"He chose a place, the entrance to which was narrow, and shut in from behind by a wood." The narrow entrance would, in fact, be the ancient trackway, Dog Kennel Hill, till recently pinched in between the banks or hedges, and only about 100 yards from the spot where the Roman drinking-vessel was lately discovered.

It strikes me that this theory is at least worthy of attentive study by those interested in Roman-British history, and I hope that this réchauffé will be my excuse for dwelling at such length upon it. The discovery of the vessel has at least served to focus attention anew on a very interesting theory.*

If Ladlands—or as it should be, perhaps, more correctly, Ludlands—is suggestive of a hoary antiquity, so also is Coldharbour Lane, the ancient track from

* The same intelligent gardener, Mr. F. Call, now serving with the Army in France, who found this Roman vessel, brought me, in 1908, a pretty little cream-jug of glazed clay, of fifteenth-century date, which he had dug up in a garden on the brow of the hill. He is a born antiquary.

Camberwell to Brixton Causeway, the eastern part of which lies in Camberwell parish.

I am not aware of any tangible relic of the Saxon rule having come down to us. There must undoubtedly have been a village here in the centuries that preceded the Norman Conquest. We know from Domesday that the lands of Camberwell were held "in the time of King Edward" by one "Norman," doubtless so called because he was one of the foreigners whom our last Saxon monarch favoured, and who must have materially assisted the plans of Duke William—a situation not without its parallel in our own days. But I can find no mention of the place by name in history prior to 1086.

Besides the Domesday account, to which I shall return, and the record of the gift of the advowson of the Church "to God and the monks of Saint Saviour Bermondseye" by William de Mellent, Earl of Gloucester, in 1154, the later history of Camberwell is for some centuries very uneventful.†

As showing the amount of woodland in the parish, besides the entry in Domesday, we learn that one hundred acres on the manor of Friern were grubbed up in the reign of Henry I. Much more must have remained, however, as the privilege of free warren in Hacheham and Camberwell is mentioned in the thirteenth century as among the rights of the lords of those manors, and it is interesting to note that the birds of the warren were divided into land and waterfowl, the land birds being subdivided according to their customary haunts in wood or meadow. The quail, the

† The church was well dowered with glebe-land—sixty-three acres of meadow-land are mentioned in Domesday, some parts being over a mile distant from the church, on Grove Hill. With the increased value of land they have brought a great revenue to the living. The wood in 1086 supported sixty hogs.

rail, pheasants, woodcocks, mallards, and herons are specifically mentioned.*

The tradition obtains that the ubiquitous King John (who surely has left his mark on as many places as Queen Elizabeth!), while hunting within the parish, killed a stag, and was so gratified with the good sport that he granted a fair to be held yearly at Peckham, the scene of the "kill." This fair must not be confused with the still older fair of Camberwell, which was first held in the Churchyard, but, owing to scandals, was shifted to Camberwell Green, where it continued, with growing abuses, till the middle of the nineteenth century.

Eight knights' fees are mentioned as appertaining to Camberwell and Hatcham (Hechesh'm) in the latter part of the twelfth century, four of which were in Camberwell proper; and if these be taken at the usual

* Escheat 23, Edw. I, etc., cited by Allport. Dulwich Wood is still something more than a name. It has been gradually disappearing from the time when the founder of Dulwich College, Edward Alleyn, in 1626, decreed "that twentye acres thereof be sold or felled yearely, of the growth of ten yeares, and not under, the said woodfalls to be made at seasonable times." . . . . Twenty acres per annum would soon reduce forest land to open country, but Rocque's map, 1744, shows all the southern part of Dulwich as densely wooded, from the district between Lordship Lane and Sydenham Hill Stations, as they now are, and on to the west and south, joining up to the great woods of Norwood. Here and there, in the bottoms and on the slopes, are still patches of stunted gnarled oaks of small growth, many dead, and of great age, the remnants of the forest. Beside these ancient oaks, native to the heavy clay soil, elms are exceptionally numerous, and many very tall trees are to be found in the district, especially on Denmark, Champion, and Herne Hills, and in Dulwich Hamlet round the College. In Half Moon Lane is the shell of an enormous elm, which is said to have sheltered Queen Elizabeth. It is certainly old enough to have done so. Honour Oak Hill is named after a similar tradition connected with the year 1602.

valuation of those days—viz., twenty pounds—Camberwell must have increased very much in value, and its inhabitants at that date must have included a number of men of weight. In early escheats (from about 1292) the *Curia*, or courthouse of the head manor, is referred to.*

In the fourteenth century we have the mention of a capital messuage of the annual value of six shillings and eightpence; and in the same period buildings in "Camerwelle" and "Pecham" are frequently alluded to. The name of one such is given in 1418 as Rodershull, belonging to R. Barnard. Somewhat later, buildings are still more prominent in the escheats, with details showing advancing cultivation and comfort, such as houses with gardens, pastures set within hedgerows, farms, barns, cottages, and orchards. A messuage is spoken of called "Green-place," in Camberwelle—evidently a mansion fronting the village green—and another manor-house, that of Friern, in Dulwich—represented by a dairy-farm to-day.

In the closing years of the fourteenth century an ancient way, called Bretynghurst- or Dredyngherst-road, which intersected the eastern portion of the parish, is described as lying in Kent. It took its name from one of the manors.† The sixteenth century gives us the

* Doubtless the same that Haimon the Sheriff resided and held his court in in 1086, on the site afterwards occupied by the mansion of the Scotts from the beginning of the sixteenth century. The Skynners had preceded them in the fifteenth century, and it should be possible to reconstruct the ownerships back to Haimon in the eleventh century and to his predecessor "Norman" in the time of the Confessor. This house, pulled down towards the close of the eighteenth century, stood at the foot of what is now Camberwell Grove.

† My friend Mr. Arthur Bonner, F.S.A., kindly informs me that he has found the manorial name as "Brittinghurst" in 1221 and 1229, and "Bretinghurst" in 1226.

names Sop-lane and a street called Greenhundred—probably a road on the east side of Camberwell Green, where still are a few very old houses. There is a tradition that two of Henry VIII's children were put out to nurse in a house somewhere on Camberwell Green.

But the Kent road—now Old Kent Road—which borders the northern part of the parish, has much more history attaching to it than any other thoroughfare of Camberwell. It is, of course, the old Roman road from London to Dover, and along it have passed not only the Roman legions, the conquering Normans and defeated Saxons, but the countless Crusaders for best part of two centuries, embassies from the Continent, our Kings and nobles returning with their armies from foreign wars, and, last but not least, the pilgrims repairing to Canterbury, "the holy blisful martir for to seke," during three and a half centuries. The site of St. Thomas à Watering—the pond or spring where the companies of pilgrims first pulled up to water their horses and refresh themselves on their way out of London—was at the junction of what is now the Albany Road with the Kent Road. Part of the great road was then dignified by the title of the Kinges'-street; and in those days, when London Bridge was the only bridge across the Thames, the one approach to both London and Westminster, it is easy to imagine the importance of the road and to picture the wonderful scenes it has witnessed. In his prologue to the "Canterbury Tales" Chaucer says:—

> And forth we riden a litel more than pas
> Unto the watering of seint Thomas.
> And there our host bigan his hors' areste.

We can picture Chaucer himself, shrewdest of observers, drawing rein at the pond, with the host of the Tabard and the rest of the strangely assorted company, of which

he has left us such an imperishable presentation—the Knight and his son and the attendant Yeoman; the Prioress and her attendant Nun and three Priests; the Monk and the Friar; the Merchant; the Clerk of Oxford; the Sergeant-at-Law; the Franklin; the Haberdasher, Carpenter, Weaver, Dyer, and Tapestry-maker—all in the garb of a brotherhood; the Sailor and the Cook; the Physician; the Wife of Bath; the Town Parson and the Ploughman; the Reeve, Miller, Sompnour, Pardoner, and Maunciple—all wonderful fourteenth-century types, as true to the life of their far-off day as were Dickens's characters to the time in which he wrote.

The Monk Lydgate celebrates in a poem the return of Henry V and his victorious army with their French captives, after the Battle of Agincourt, on the 23rd of November, 1415—500 years ago to a month, and almost to a day, from this time of writing! The fifth stanza relates how—

> The King from Eltham rode, and with him came
> His pris'ners, noble lords, and men of name;
> And as he reached Blackheath, with anxious eyes,
> Beneath his feet, beheld the city rise.
> And, as he blessed it, made the wish a prayer,
> Commending it to his dear Saviour's care.
> *Wete ye right well that thus it ought to be*
> *Glory to Thee most holy Trinity!*

The poet is describing the scene, which, although first gazed upon from the high ground of Blackheath, was nearer and more vivid when the King and his host reached St. Thomas à Watering. It would be at that place that, as the song relates, "the mayor and aldermen in scarlet dight," and a great multitude of the clergy and people who had come out of London, met the royal victor and his army, and, after due obeisance and greetings, escorted them back in triumph to London.

Many similar scenes are recorded of this historic spot; but it had a darker side, when, in later days especially, it became the custom to execute criminals here, so that the place became the Tyburn of South London. Mr. Allport has been at the pains to collect particulars of a few of the tragedies that have been consummated at St. Thomas' Waterings. Thus: In 1498, Ralph Wilford, "a shoemaker's sonne borne in Byshopsgate-streete, of London, was hanged at Saint Thomas Waterings, on Shrove Tuesday, for naming himself to be Edwarde, Earle of Warwicke, sonne to George, Duke of Clarence; which Edwarde, Earle of Warwicke, was then (and had been all the reign of this Kinge) kept secret prisoner in the Tower of London."*

We have next an echo of the early days of the Reformation. On the 8th July, 1539, Griffith Cleark, Vicar of Wandsworth, with his chaplain, his servant, and a friar named Waire, were hanged and quartered at Saint Thomas' Waterings, for denying the King's supremacy.†

When Sir Thomas Wyatt was beheaded for rebelling against Queen Mary he suffered the usual barbarous sentence of being hanged, drawn and quartered, and one of his quarters was exposed here.

On the 12th July, 1598, John Jones, alias Buckley, a Franciscan friar, was cruelly hanged at St. Thomas' Waterings; and here also were hanged for conscience' sake John Rigby, a Catholic layman, on 21st June, 1600; and John Pibush, a priest, on 18th February, 1601. So much for the religious toleration of the Reformation. There is but little to choose between the fierce bigotry of Mary and the cold-blooded tyranny of good Queen Bess.

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* Stow, "Chronicles of England," p. 873.
† Hollinshead's "Chronicles."

The later history of Camberwell can be more conveniently treated in connection with the old houses within the parish, taken together with the monuments in the old church.

The late Professor Skeat, writing in 1907, gave me his opinion on the origin of the name Camberwell. He wrote: "*Camer* is obviously an older form than *Camber*, the *b* being 'excrescent' after *m*, as in *chamber*, *humble-bee*, etc. You can only get further by comparing it with other English place-names. They are . . . Camer-ton, in Cumberland and Somerset, and Cammeringham, in Lincolnshire.* In a word like Camberwell it is the fact (in nine cases out of ten) that the former part of the word is a man's name, usually in the genitive case; or else some English (Anglo-Saxon) word that gives intelligible sense. As *no* A.S. word is known resembling *Camer*, the chances are that it is a man's name. The name is not anywhere recorded; but that proves but little. In this case, the form *Cammer-ing-ham* becomes of much importance. The old spelling would be *Camering-ham*, with one *m*, as the Hundred Rolls give also a place-name Camering-ton. Now names ending in *-ing* are 'tribal,' and the ending *-ing* stands for *-inga* (= sons of), genitive plural of *-ing* (son of). This proves that the *Camer-* portion really represents a man's name. Such a name must have had the form *Camera*, a weak masculine, with a genitive case, *Cameran*, for it is only a *weak* masculine, as a rule, that drops its *-an* in composition. A strong masculine,

* The learned Professor began his list with Camberley, which, as we Surrey people know, is a purely modern name of a place also quite of yesterday created by military exigencies, the name being devised to do honour to the Duke of Cambridge. It was first called Cambridge Town, in emulation of York Town, but modified to Camberley at the instance of the Postal Authorities.

such as *Camer*, would have made a genitive *Cameres-*, and that would have (if regular) given a modern Camberswell, with an *s* in it."

"We may fairly conclude that Camber-well meant 'well belonging to a man whose name began (at any rate) with *Camer-*'; the exact form being probably *Camera*, a quite possible A.S. weak masculine name. The patronymic *Camering* goes a long way to prove it. There are *many hundred* names constructed like this."*

Such a derivation of the name appears to me both reasonable and probable, taken in conjunction with the undoubted fact of the existence from the earliest times of a well, or wells, reputed to possess healing properties. *The* well was, in all likelihood, that which existed till quite lately near the head of Camberwell Grove, rather less than half a mile south of St. Giles's Church.† I have been informed that Roman and other coins have been found in the mud at the bottom. This was by no means the only well for which Camberwell was anciently famous. Wells Street, off Southampton Street, marks the site of other old wells. The mixed clay and gravel soil of the extensive parish abounded in natural springs and ponds, and from the earliest

* My learned friend, Mr. H. E. Malden, it is only right to state, dissents from Prof. Skeat's derivation. He would prefer "*Camera*—also Cambra—old French Chambre . . . an official residence, or court-house," with "*Vill*, where the sheriff did business—the 'County Council Office' of the period." Such a derivation, however, ignores both the Well, with its healing properties, and the existence of Camberwell in the pre-Conquest period.

† I have many times seen this ancient well, which was situated on a piece of open ground at the upper, or south, corner of Grove Park, rented for some years by my late brother, J. M. C. Johnston. A pair of houses and their gardens now occupy this picturesque piece of wooded ground.

times many wells must have been sunk. One such has left us its memorial in Milkwell, the name of an estate, belonging prior to 1305 to St. Thomas's, Southwark, and after that date to St. Mary Overy, lying between Herne Hill and Coldharbour Lane—a name perpetuated in the modern Milkwell Road. Dr. John Coakley Lettsom, who acquired a large strip of what is now Camberwell Grove and Grove Hill, in the year 1779, built himself a house, still standing, near the top of the hill, with two or three rustic cottages, of which Fountain Cottage,* about half-way up the Grove, had a large pond or lake and elaborately engineered waterworks to supply it and the ornamental fountain which gave its name to the cottage. He seems to have been the author of a large brick water-conduit to supply all the houses on his estate, sections of which remain underground in the gardens on the eastern side of the Grove.† It is broken in two by the railway that tunnels beneath the Grove about half-way down its length, but I believe it to be entire in Grove Hill Road, and I have been

* Fountain Terrace perpetuates the name: nearly opposite is a curious, low, cottage-like house in the artificially rustic style of the end of the eighteenth century, which still retains its thatched roof—the only thatched house within three miles of the centre of London. It was built by Dr. Lettsom.

† On Jan. 1st, 1917, the roadway at about the middle of the Grove suddenly "yawned" and swallowed up a horse and cart that was going down the hill. The driver was injured, and the horse had to be killed. It was a section of Dr. Lettsom's conduit that had caved in, releasing a flood of pent-up waters! Dr. Lettsom was a famous physician in his day, and used the drastic methods then in vogue. He signed his prescriptions, "I. Lettsom"; and a wag wrote out the following, in imitation of one of those formulæ:—

"When patients comes to me for cure,
I physics, bleeds and sweats 'em.
If after that they choose to die,
It can't be helped—I Let's 'em."

assured by a boy that he and his companions have crawled in it as far as to Dulwich—a statement hard to believe or to confirm. Another young person of the opposite sex has told me that she and other girls explored it for some hundreds of yards in the northward direction.

From all this it is, I think, clear that the "well" in the name Camberwell commemorates an actual well: and that from an early date—*i.e.*, from as far back as the Norman Conquest, or earlier, healing properties were ascribed to this holy well, from the fact that the parish church is dedicated to St. Giles the Abbot, or hermit, patron saint of cripples—to whom also St. Giles's, Cripplegate, and St. Giles's-in-the-Fields are dedicated. His feast is on September 1st, but the great fair held in Camberwell down to 1855 used in the olden days to occupy three weeks, concluding with September 1st. Latterly it was kept on the 18th, 19th, and 20th August. There used to be an old tavern in Church Street, with the sign of "The Hermit's Cave," in allusion to St. Giles.