

A REDISCOVERED PUTNEY RELIC ;  
AN INSCRIBED MOUNTING-BLOCK.

BY

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TWO or three years ago Mr. Ernest Dixon, F.R.H.S., drew my attention to an inscribed stone which he had found built into the walls of an old barn then being demolished in Wandsworth. A moment's inspection showed that the stone, really an old mounting-block, was a long lost relic which I had vainly endeavoured to trace when writing the history of Wimbledon Common.

The mounting-block, now, along with other antiques, has its temporary home in Mr. Dixon's Nursery at West Hill, Wandsworth, and awaits the time when some public-spirited society will take the responsibility of re-erecting the stone, and of suitably protecting it from mutilation.

The mounting-block was thus described by Manning and Bray in 1814: "At the foot of the hill going down from the heath [i.e. Putney Heath] towards Kingston is a stepping stone to assist travellers in alighting from, or getting on their horses. On it is the name of Thomas Nuthall, surveyor of Roehampton, 1654, and other words which are mostly unintelligible, but this may be read: From London Towne to Portse [=Portsea] Down, they say tis miles threescore."<sup>1</sup>

The stone mysteriously disappeared at some unknown date after 1814, for it is noticed by no subsequent writer. Nor do the older historians, Aubrey, Salmon, Lysons, and the anonymous author of "The Ambulator" (1782) mention the object, so that our only recognized source of information, until quite recently, was that supplied by the two county

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<sup>1</sup> O. Manning and W. Bray, 'Hist. and Antiqs. of the County of Surrey,' 1814, III, p. 285.

historians. And, indeed, had not the name of the erector been left on record, even this could not have been ascertained, because the face bearing that part of the legend has been reworked, and a thin slice cut away.

The present shape of the block is that of a plain rectangular pillar, 45 inches in height, and 18 inches wide at the bottom of the main face. The narrow sides taper from 15 inches to 12 inches, and the back is indented with a step, to allow the horseman to dismount at about 16 inches from the ground, or to climb to the top. I estimate that about a foot and a half of the stone was originally buried in the soil. To aid in ascending there was probably an iron stanchion set vertically on the top of the stone, for there still remains a hole near the off-edge, two inches square, cut diagonally. The back of the block has been badly hacked, and projects awkwardly, while the tread of the step now forms an inconvenient triangle. The damage was most likely done when the block was tooled to fit some corner of the barn wall. Then also the name of the Roehampton surveyor was removed. A smaller stepping-stone originally stood at the base of the larger, but this has entirely disappeared.

The remaining block is composed of a medium-grained Portland Oolite, which exhibits numerous fragments of fossils. This material, in the mid-seventeenth century, was coming into favour, not only for churches and mansions, but also for smaller objects, such as tombstones and obelisks. The stone has worn well, for, although parts of the inscription are badly weathered, the general surface has not suffered in a greater degree than some of the Portland stone specially selected by Wren, and hewn from the quarries a generation later. The block successfully stands a comparison, for example, with the stonework on the exterior of St. Paul's Cathedral.

A careful examination convinced the writer that the object was intended both for a milestone and a mounting-block, and that it served both purposes from the very first. Yet,

if we set aside Roman examples, mounting-blocks have an older history than milestones. In the South-East of England sarsens were employed for horse-blocks; masses of "pudding-stone" are naturally the Hertfordshire pattern; in Devon and Cornwall granite boulders were found to be both suitable and ready to hand; in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire ice-borne erratics were most sought after.

Under the names of joss-blocks, stirrup-stones, or upping-stocks, these objects were often fixed near the church porch, or were built into the churchyard wall, hard by the gate. Examples may be seen at Edlington and Laceby, in Lincolnshire, and at Hurstmonceaux, in Sussex.<sup>1</sup>

While some of these contrivances must have been in use for many centuries, milestones, especially dated specimens, were very rare in the seventeenth century, even on the best highroads. One of the best of those which I have seen consists of a small squat rectangular stone, and has neatly inscribed faces. It bears the date 1702 on its flat top. It stands at cross-roads half a mile East of Otford, in Kent, and, like our present example, seems to have fulfilled a double purpose. But one could not produce many such examples. The Turnpike system was not inaugurated until 1663.<sup>2</sup> The act (8 and 9 of William III, c. 16) ordering guide-posts to be erected at cross-roads came a generation later, in 1697;<sup>3</sup> the establishment of milestones dates only from 1720. At first, these were put up voluntarily, but in 1744 it was found necessary to use compulsion.<sup>4</sup> The earliest dated specimen among the few still remaining in the South-Western suburbs seems to be the stone at Mortlake cross-roads, which is marked 1751. The Putney Vale horse-block far ante-dated all these, although its primary purpose may not have been to mark distances.

<sup>1</sup> W. Johnson, "Byways in Brit. Archæol.," 1912, p. 157.

<sup>2</sup> Sjdney and Beatrice Webb, "Eng. Local Govt.: The Story of the King's Highway," 1913, pp. 114-15; H. D. Traill, "Soc. Eng.," 1895, iv, p. 491.

<sup>3</sup> Webb, p. 157. Traill, iv, p. 603.

<sup>4</sup> Webb, p. 156.

Dealing with that part of the inscription which is still legible, we notice that the distance from London to Portsea would be surprisingly accurate, if only the sixty miles were reckoned from the block itself, and not from London. "They say" implies that the mileage was "computed," precisely how, one is unable to gather. The old English mile of 5000 English feet had been definitely superseded by the present mile of 5280 feet under a statute of Elizabeth (35 of Eliz. c. 6).<sup>1</sup> Without doubt this act was the cause of many discrepancies, long surviving, because "computers" seemed to cling to the old short mile. Strangely enough, however, the measured mileages obtained by Ogilby (1675), with his wheel "dimensurator," nearly always appeared greater than the older estimates, not less, as by the use of a larger unit, should have been the case. Thus, too, John Norden (1625) gives 150 miles from London to York, about three-quarters of the actual amount.

More than a century after Nuthall's time, Paterson's careful measurements ran thus: Portsdown, 67 miles; Portsea Bridge, 68 $\frac{1}{4}$  miles.<sup>2</sup> Cary (1828), and Bowles (1782), give 68 miles to Portsea Bridge; Owen (1805) gives 69 miles.<sup>3</sup> At the present day, the *ninth milestone*, undated, but probably belonging to the second half of the eighteenth century, stands by the cemetery gate in Putney Vale, but it may possibly have been moved uphill a little from its old position. This milestone reckons from "The Standard, Cornhill," but its position seems to correspond with that of Ogilby's ninth mile,—milestones, it will be remembered, had not yet arrived.<sup>4</sup> Once fixed, the site would appear to have been retained, as a study of the map, published by the two

<sup>1</sup> E. Nicholson, "Men and Measures," 1912, p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> D. Paterson, "Descrip. of . . . Roads in Eng. and Wales," ed. 1808, pp. 18-20.

<sup>3</sup> J. Cary, "Traveller's Companion," 1828, C. Bowles, "Post-chaise Companion," 1782, 1 p. 58. W. Owen, "New Book of Roads," 1805, p. 98.

<sup>4</sup> "Roads out of London: photographic reprints from Ogilby's 'Britannia', 1675," ed. T. F. Ordish, 1911, Pl. V. cf. C. and H. Greenwood's "Map of Surrey," 1822-3.

Greenwoods, a century ago, will testify. It is curious, however, that, according to Paterson, the first half of the Portsmouth road, though originally measured from the Standard, Cornhill, was subsequently reckoned from "Stone's End, King's Bench, in the Borough of Southwark, 6 fur. 16 poles from the Surrey side of London Bridge."<sup>1</sup> Unless the first of these starting points has been restored, the milestone, despite its legend, should read  $8\frac{1}{4}$  miles. In other words, its true position should be three-quarters of a mile farther from London, near the Beverley, which is the parish boundary of Putney. On the whole, the probabilities tell against this latter hypothesis. The point is trivial so far as it concerns Nuthall's mileage, but it has some importance, as will shortly appear, with respect to the proper site of the block.

An explanation may be offered which would help in reconciling the "threescore" of tradition with the 68 or 69 miles of fact. Augustus de Morgan, in a half-forgotten but enlightening essay, showed that the "computed" mile, which, unlike the "reputed" one, was obtained by some kind of reckoning, always gave a figure smaller than, or the same as, the measured distance, but never greater. This peculiarity we have already noted. De Morgan went further. By a series of averages, deduced from a survey of well-known highroads, he showed that 120 measured miles represented 100 computed ones, and he concluded that the "computation" stood for straight measurements from town to town.<sup>2</sup> How this was done, and what kinds of maps were available as a basis, he does not tell us. But if his theory be sound, the 60 miles of "They say" stands for 70 measured miles—a surprisingly near estimate.

Is there any good reason why such a stone should be set up in the year 1654? That year was not pre-eminently fateful in national history, but, oddly enough, it marked the

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<sup>1</sup> Paterson, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-20.

<sup>2</sup> Art. "Mile" in *Penny Cyclop.* 1839, xv, pp. 110-13.

promulgation of three Ordinances dealing with "Highwaies." Two of these relate to the "amending and repair" of roads, and do not here concern us, but the third (12 April, 1654), gave orders that Surveyors should be chosen in every parish and it defined their duties.<sup>1</sup> Surveyors of highways are first alluded to in 1555 (2 and 3 of Philip and Mary, c. 8). They were to be appointed by the constables and churchwardens, but, even where this was done, the duties, being both onerous and unpaid, were often shirked.<sup>2</sup> Can it be that Thomas Nuthall was one of the surveyors who had just been compulsorily appointed, and that he wished to mark his term of office in an appropriate and enduring manner?

Let us see what can be learned about Nuthall. First, although he is described as "of Roehampton," the words simply mean that he was resident there. Roehampton, which was a hamlet of Putney, contained, in 1617, only 33 houses and two inns.<sup>3</sup> The combined population of Putney and Roehampton in A.D. 1600 was approximately 650, and, a century later about 1700.<sup>4</sup> Nor, although the parish, with its hamlet, formed part of the manor of Wimbledon, was the surveyor a manorial officer. The feudal system was in rapid decay, customary highways belonged to the past, and in fact, the inhabitants of the parish, as just stated, were responsible for appointing surveyors.

We next examine the Putney parish registers, and learn that our Thomas Nuthall died in 1672, leaving, among other children, a son of the same name. The second Thomas lived until 1712, and left a family, among whose members was a third Thomas Nuthall.<sup>5</sup> Thenceforward the name drops out of local history, nor can I find traces in the records

<sup>1</sup> Webb, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-21, 25.

<sup>2</sup> W. H. Holdsworth, "A Hist. of Eng. Law," 1924, iv, p. 156. *cf.* Webb, pp. 14-17, 24.

<sup>3</sup> E. Hammond, "Bygone Putney," 1898, p. 83.

<sup>4</sup> W. Johnson, "Wimbledon Common," 1912, p. 144.

<sup>5</sup> W. A. Bannerman and A. C. Hare, "The Par. Register of Putney in the County of Surrey," 1913, i, p. 32, *et passim*.

of the neighbouring parishes—Mortlake, Richmond or Wandsworth.

The Court Rolls of Wimbledon Manor, of which Roehampton was a township, mention the name of Thomas Nuthall fourteen times between the years 1645 and c. 1709. The lists contain the Christian name of Thomas only, so presumably the three generations are all included. After 1709 the name disappears from the Rolls. In lists of tenants, the great majority of whom had neither title nor other distinction, the Nuthalls, all three, are frequently marked by the addition "Gent."<sup>1</sup> The insertion, or omission, of the designation evidently depended upon the caprice or the industry of the scribe. From these particulars we may safely infer that Nuthall, the surveyor, besides being a copyholder of Wimbledon Manor, was also a freeholder of some importance.

There is confirmatory testimony. By the Act of 1654, c. 3, already cited, it was provided that surveyors must be householders having lands worth £20 a year, and £100 worth of personal estate.<sup>2</sup> A further item of interest, having a double significance, is afforded by a note made by the late Mr. Cecil T. Davis, until recently librarian for Wandsworth, and widely known as a painstaking local historian. The note runs: "Nuthall, Thomas, on 6th December, 1648, is reported to be a Papist, and has £1500 in the Earl of Portland's hands. He is possibly Thomas Nuthall, surveyor of Roehampton, 1654, . . ."<sup>3</sup>

For the cautious "possibly" of Mr. Davis, I venture to substitute "almost certainly," if not indeed the last word without qualification. The Registers tell of no other family of this name throughout the period 1620-1734, and a close study of the dates proves that the second Thomas

<sup>1</sup> "Extracts from the Court Rolls of the Manor of Wimbledon" (Wimb. Com. Committee) 1866, pp. 229-75, *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> E. Cannan, "Hist. of Local Rates in Eng.," 2nd edn., 1912, p. 119.

<sup>3</sup> Cecil T. Davis, "Putney Notabilities," 1912, p. 15.

Nuthall was but a youth in 1648. Obviously, the person "reported" was none other than our surveyor.

The Earl of Portland referred to above was a strong Royalist and doubtfully a Protestant.<sup>1</sup> From 1642 to 24 June, 1646, he was with Charles at Oxford, and sat in the Royalist Parliament there. Next, he defended the town of Wallingford, until its surrender on 27 July, 1646. In October of that year he was heavily fined—to the extent of two-thirds of his estates—but the fine was afterwards greatly reduced.<sup>2</sup> Now this nobleman owned Putney Park until 1640, in which year he sold it.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, as revealed by a Parliamentary Survey, made in 1649, he still held property in Roehampton.<sup>4</sup> There is a fair presumption, then, that Nuthall was involved in the Earl's affairs, but what resulted from the inquiry I am unable to say, as I have not succeeded in tracing Mr. Davis's original authority. The basis of the charge was probably this, that Nuthall was locally known to have strong Stuart sympathies.

Supplementary evidence, now to be adduced, confirms Nuthall's social position, but weakens the charge of his being a Roman Catholic. In a Lambeth Palace manuscript, quoted by Lysons, this note occurs: "The tithes of Mortlake and East-Sheen were let by the Parliamentary Commissioners in 1656 to Thomas Nuttall (*sic*) and John Lyford, for £75 per annum and the taxes."<sup>5</sup> These parishes adjoined Roehampton, and as the name Nuthall does not, so far as I am aware, occur in the Mortlake records, one may conclude that the first person mentioned is our Thomas Nuthall, no longer suspected by the Commonwealth officers, and that his Roman Catholicism, if existent, was not of an aggressive kind.

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<sup>1</sup> "Dict. Nat. Biog.," under "Weston, Jerome, 2nd Earl of Portland," 1899 ix, p. 336. Clarendon "Hist. of the Rebellion," Bk. v. para. 136, vi, para. 401.

<sup>2</sup> Dict. Nat. Biog., *loc. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>4</sup> *Surrey Archaeol. Coll.*, 1871, v, p. 141.

<sup>5</sup> D. Lysons, "Environs of London." 1796, iv, p. 602.



Seeking for an interpretation of the worn part of the inscription (Fig. 1), I was struck by the word in the seventh line, which seemed to be "Ocksford." This, together with a reading, "he left them," and another, "4 TE AN SIX," suggested to my friend, Mr. W. J. Maxton, of Hayling Island, that the lower lines might be of a commemorative and not a milliary character. It is possible that in 1646 Nuthall was already assisting the Earl of Portland. In 1647 Putney formed the headquarters of Cromwell's army, which had been removed from Kingston, in order that a closer watch might be kept on Charles at Hampton Court.<sup>1</sup> An Army Council was actually held in Putney parish Church.<sup>2</sup> Again, in 1648, three thousand men of Surrey met on Putney Heath, and marched by way of London Bridge and the City to Whitehall, in order to petition Parliament to restore to Charles his due honours and rights.<sup>3</sup> Lastly, on 27 April, 1646, Charles left Oxford, and rode in the direction of London, passing through Dorchester, Henley, and Uxbridge to Hillingdon, where, receiving no favourable news from London, he turned northwards for Harrow and St. Albans on his way to Newark.<sup>4</sup> A few writers, who cite documentary authority, state that Charles did not change his course until he reached Brentford.<sup>5</sup>

Did Nuthall, then, consider that he could safely set up a horse-block, and inscribe it with a jingle to commemorate *some event connected with his late sovereign*? That would be possible, provided the inscription were equivocal or non-committal. Yet it would be extremely dangerous. Roman Catholics were still under bitter suspicion. Two seminary priests had recently been executed, the first in 1651, and the second in the very year of the stone, 1654.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> E. Law, "Hist. of Hampton Court Palace," 1891, ii, pp. 132-5.

<sup>2</sup> S. R. Gardiner, "Hist. of the Great Civil War," 1893, ii, pp. 254, 382.

<sup>3</sup> "Wimb. Common," p. 144.

<sup>4</sup> Gardner *op. cit.*, i i, pp. 97-9, F. C. Montague, "Hist. of Eng." 1907, pp. 320-1. "Camb. Mod. Hist." 1906, iv, p. 335.

<sup>5</sup> W. Godwin, "Hist. of the Commonwealth of Eng.," 1824, ii, p. 144. J. H. Jesse, "Memoirs of the Court of Eng. under the Stuarts," 1857, i, p. 403.

<sup>6</sup> F. C. Inderwick, "The Interregnum," 1891, pp. 149-150, (Details given) Gardiner, "Hist. of the Commonwealth and Protectorate," 1897, ii, pp. 462-3.

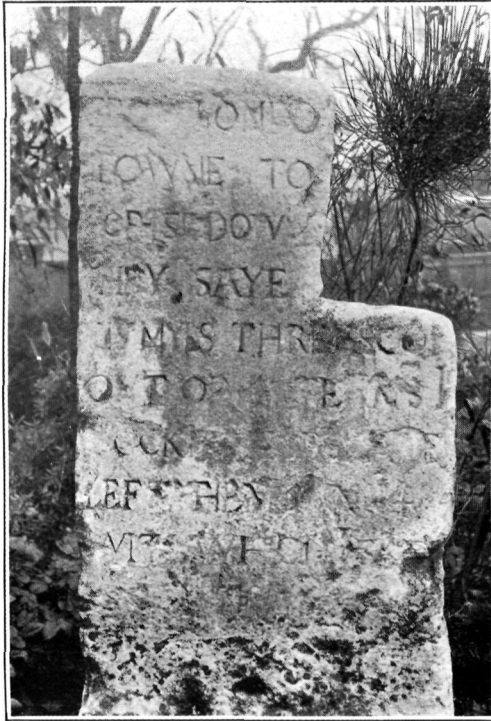


FIG. 1. MAIN, OR WEST FACE

Working on this hypothesis, Mr. Maxton and the writer spent a considerable time in attempting to make sense of the lines, but *without much success*. The inscription, though belonging to one date as a whole, seemed to have been slightly re-cut in places, and even tampered with. Then came an anti-climax; the supposition was completely destroyed, but an enigma was still left which each reader may solve for himself. Searching through the volumes of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, I found, under the year 1787, a quarter of a century before the time of Manning and Bray, a communication from "J.L.," written from "D—, Kent," referring to the stone.

"It is placed on Putney Common," runs the letter, "opposite the nine (*sic*) mile-stone, and, by its shape, seems to have been formerly made use of by travellers on horseback in dismounting. The height of it, at least as much as now appears out of the ground, is 28 inches, and the square of the top part about 12 inches. The stone at the bottom, making the lowest step, is detached; the rest is one piece. I suspect that the ground has been more or less raised about it since it was first here placed, as the earth when first I saw it was even with the bottom line, and the word "STONE," I supposed, was meant to finish the inscription on that side; but, on my removing the earth, which I had some difficulty in doing, for want of a proper instrument, I found another complete line, though not legible to any degree of certainty. I, however, think the ending of this last line to be "NOT MORE," as I have expressed in the sketch. Not having myself a satisfactory thought of the occasion of the stone's being placed where it is, I content myself with having made a pretty accurate draught of it."<sup>1</sup> The writer concludes by asking readers to give their "sentiments" respecting the stone, but there was no response. His own legends are here given:—

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<sup>1</sup> *Gent. Mag.* 1787, lvii, pt., ii, p. 1046.

I. *Side facing West* (Fig. 1).

FROM LONDO  
TOWNE TO  
PORTSE DOWN  
THEY SAYE  
TIS MYLS THREE SCORE  
OVT OF 4 TEAMS I  
TOCKE 5 HORSE AND  
LEFT THEM 5 IN 4  
WITH WHICH I SENT  
YOY VP THIS STONE  
..... NOT MORE

II. *End facing road* (Fig. 2).

THIS YONGS  
STONE CAMOVT  
OF WODYARDS  
BARNS AND  
CRAMPHARNS

III. *East side* (Fig. 3).

THO NVTHALL  
SVRYAYER OF  
ROWN ANO  
DO. 1654.

. There are several points of interest about these inscriptions, with their undoubted suggestion of a seventeenth century "Bill Stumps," from which class, however, they differ in being genuine. The stone was opposite the ninth milestone, so that, if that object stood at or near its present position, that is, near the foot of the steepest part of the hill, we know at what spot the block should be replaced. Personally, I believe that the milestone may have been about 100 yards lower down the hill. Again, since the face shown in Fig. 1 was placed towards the west, and the end (Fig. 2) fronted the road, it is plain that the block was on the off side of the road for a horseman coming from Kingston, and such a traveller would have to cross over if he wished to dismount and walk up the hill. (The milestone must originally have been on the north side, like its next companion, which still remains by the "Robin Hood" inn.) A descending horseman would



FIG. 3. WEST FACE AND BACK.

rarely want to use the stone, but would have it conveniently on his near side. Further, the step (S. Fig. 4), which is now missing, stood towards the then unenclosed heath, where there is now an iron fence. The Westward position of the main face, with its rhyme, shows that the idea of a milestone was quite secondary—the present milestone was, of course

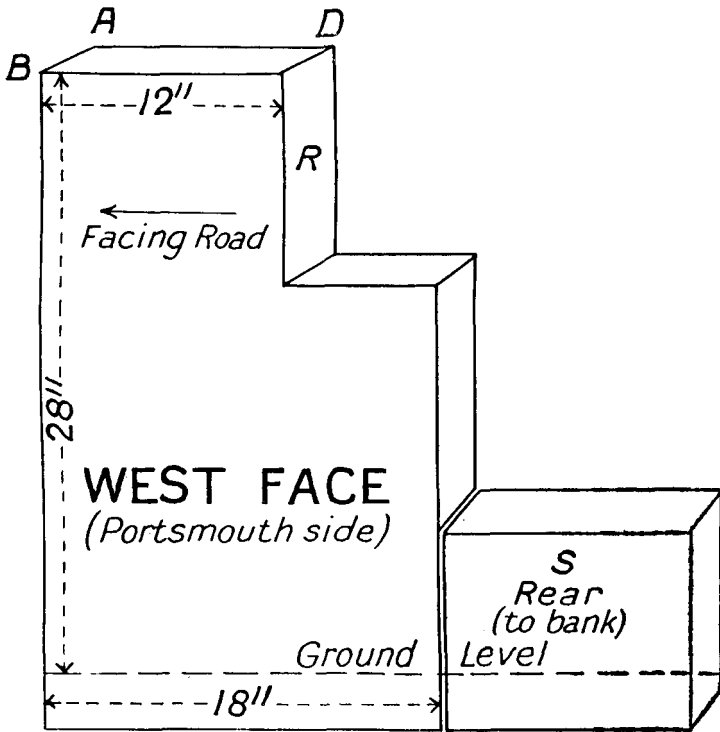


FIG. 4. MOUNTING-BLOCK AS IT APPEARED IN 1737.

non-existent. It is none the less remarkable that its "locus" should be found to be already fixed by the mounting-block.

The shape of the complete block is noteworthy. Of the numerous mounting-stones still remaining in London, I cannot recall an example which is quite similar. A few are single unstepped blocks, of which one sees specimens in St.

James's Square and Bayswater. Others, like those in Hyde Park and the two dated examples (1830) in Waterloo Place, have been formed by placing a short block on a longer one, thus giving a step at each end. Still again, we meet with stones of the single-step pattern; there are two such in Hays Mews, while another stands in South Bruton Mews, all near Berkeley Square.

Manning and Bray did not copy the legible part of the inscription quite accurately (*say* for *saye*; *miles* for *myls*; *surveyor* for *survayer*, etc.) Nor does "J.L.'s" careful copy leave us without one or two difficulties. The N of "Down" does not appear on the face, but in certain lights was plainly visible on the riser two years ago. The final E in "three-score" is also missing, and so on. The recorder in the *Gentleman's Magazine* would scarcely supply the omitted letters by conjecture, because he does not give the terminal N of "London," and his sketches seem to be quite faithful. Most probably the riser (R) has been cut back vertically about an inch, as was certainly the case with the east face (along line AB). The missing letters would be afterwards completed on the riser by another hand.

A few notes on the inscription may be helpful. The lettering is beautifully worked. The TH is effective, and one notices that the 5 is of the type common on tombstones of that period. Yong (with variants Yonge, Younge, and Young) and Woodward (assumed for Wodyard) are names which occur in the parish register about the date of erection. Yong might possibly be read as "Wong" (a field or unenclosed land) but the word would scarcely be used in Southern England. "Barns" may be the plural of Woodward's Barn, or probably the village of Barnes, which was frequently so spelt. "Rown" for Roehampton, is an abbreviation of the alternative name "Rowhampton." "Crampharns," must, I think, mean "crampirons," that is, either a grappling iron, or, more likely a bar with its ends bent so as to bind the stones firmly together.<sup>1</sup> Yet no signs of such bracing

<sup>1</sup> New Oxf. Dict.; under "Crampiron." Old forms, *crampiron*, *crampirou*.

remain, unless the hole on the top surface has such an origin.

The statement about the teams indicates that there were 10 horses in four unequal teams, and that half the animals were taken to drag the two stones. Since these did not weigh, on a liberal estimate, more than half a ton in all, the burden was not heavy, even for bad country roads. The concluding line of the doggerel, Mr. Maxton suggests, may have read "In 4 days and no more."

The major puzzle, that of deciphering the words, having now been removed, there remains a minor one, quite as tantalizing. How came it to pass that a parish surveyor, or his agent, was willing to spend time and money in carving an inscription, part of which usefully repeats an apparently familiar rhyme, while the other part represents oracular rigmarole about teams and cramp-irons with such paltry details as schoolboys or labourers might scribble on a gatepost? One cannot tell, but may guess that such workmanlike lettering and clever execution may hide a mild mystery,—some parochial quarrel, perhaps, or a desire to establish a non-perishable bill of costs. Or again, the lines may preserve a conundrum, jocularly expressed. Still further, has some original legend been interfered with and turned into doggerel? "What song the Syrens sang," says Sir Thomas Browne, "or what name Achilles assumed when he hid himself among women, though puzzling questions, are not beyond conjecture" And so it is with the Putney horse-block. The old-time surveyor left behind him a riddle, which is more interesting than many antiquarian problems the solution of which is almost self-evident, and which stand in no need of discussion.

To every imaginative person who cherishes the past the stone speaks clearly. Along the dim aisle of years such a thinker sees a cavalcade of wayfarers fading into perspective. They approach the stone and make use of it gratefully. Among these, alas, are highwaymen. Even in Ogilby's day,



the place was "not rarely infested by robbers,"<sup>1</sup> and so matters continued until the time of Jerry Abershaw, whose lair was the kitchen of the "Bald-Faced Stag," or the dense thickets of the neighbouring heath. But others, more worthy, must have passed this way. William Smith, the "Father of English Geology," may have dismounted in order to inspect the "diluvial" gravels of the plateau. The grumbling, but keen-eyed Cobbett, halts to denounce the "ragamuffin" soil of the district, as no doubt, Arthur Young had done before him. One espies, too John Wesley, riding around his world-parish; Parson Gilpin, of Boldre, stopping to admire the oaks of "Putney New Park"; and Gilbert White, riding up to Lambeth to visit his brother Thomas the ironmonger. Still backwards in time come the industrious Daniel Defoe, on one of his "Tours" to the West, and John Aubrey, searching for antiquities. Besides all these, we discern postboys from Portsmouth, bringing news of Portobello or Lexington, heralds from the West Country, with tales of Sedgemoor and Torbay,—pilgrims, merchants, courtiers, generals, parliamentary commissioners, perchance the grim Cromwell himself, quizzing the inscription and nodding dubiously, and wondering whether the humdrum lines might conceal a political gibe after all.

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<sup>1</sup> "Roads out of London," p. 8.