

Old Canterbury

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IMAGINE a summer's day and you and I standing without the City wall. Before us is the only remaining gate, but as this portal now stands open day and night, we enter without let or hindrance, after admiring the solid masonry, erected at the expense of Archbishop Simon of Sudbury in 1380 on the site of the Norman Gateway. Six other gates originally gave entrance to the city, but all have been demolished and this had a narrow escape about 1850 for Wombwell, with his menagerie came to the city, and finding the gateway too low and too narrow to admit his cages petitioned the Mayor of Commonalty to demolish it. The corporation discussed the proposition, half of them being in favour of acceding to the request and half against it. The Mayor gave his casting vote against the showman and so the gate still stands.

Passing up the narrow sunlit street, with its gabled houses overhanging the pavements on either side, we pass on the right hand side, the church of the Holy Cross, which was built about the same time as the Gateway, the original church having stood over the old Gateway. This was in the troublous days of the young King Richard II, when Sudbury as Chancellor of the Kingdom, had imposed a poll tax which led to the rebellion under Wat Tyler. Alas, poor Wat! He was slain by the Mayor of London, William Walworth, whose dagger appears on London's coat of arms unto this day. Holy Cross Church contains some excellent wood carvings and is celebrated for the production of the first Miracle plays in England.

A little further on is the School of Art established by the celebrated animal

painter, Sidney Cooper, and presented by him to his native city. Close by stands the ancient Church of St. Peter and a few steps further on bring us to the King's Bridge and the old house of the Canterbury weavers, of which a pen and ink sketch is here reproduced. The river shewn in the sketch bends round and rejoins the main stream which passes under the roadway outside the west gate so that the land between the gate and the bridge forms an island known as Binnewith, which, being interpreted, is "inside the bend."

On this island, approached by a narrow pathway from the High Street, stands the House of the Grey Friars or little brethren of St. Francis of Assisi, the first of whom, nine in number, landed in England in 1224. Here in the 17th century lived Richard Lovelace, the poet, who wrote—

"Stone walls do not a prison make
Nor iron bars a cage,
Minds innocent and quiet take
That for a heritage."

Opposite to the weavers' house stands the old hospital of St. Thomas the Martyr, founded by Archbishop Hubert Walter, between 1193 and 1205 for the reception of Pilgrims to St. Thomas' shrine. Behind the weavers' house stood the home of the Black Friars, the first of whom arrived in England in 1220 when Stephen Langton was Archbishop.

Passing on beyond the old Guildhall and some delightful houses of quaint designs and ornamental facings we arrive at the Chequer of the Hope, the famous hostelry for Pilgrims in the days of Chaucer, which is at the entrance to La Merserie, now known as Mercery Lane.