

BOULOGNE TO AMIENS

five or six, shallow, green, and not over-wholesome; some quite narrow and foul, running beneath clusters of fearful houses, reeling masses of rotten timber; and a few mere stumps of pollard willow sticking out of the banks of soft mud, only retained in shape of bank by being shored up with timbers; and boats like paper boats, nearly as thin at least, for the costermongers to paddle about in among the weeds, the water soaking through the lath bottoms, and floating the dead leaves from the vegetable baskets with which they were loaded. Miserable little back yards, opening to the water, with steep stone steps down to it, and little platforms for the ducks; and separate duck staircases, composed of a sloping board with cross bits of wood leading to the ducks' doors; and sometimes a flower-pot or two on them, or even a flower—one group, of wall-flowers and geraniums, curiously vivid, being seen against the darkness of a dyer's backyard, who had been dyeing black, and all was black in his yard but the flowers, and they fiery and pure; the water by no means so, but still working its way steadily over the weeds, until it narrowed into a current strong enough to turn two or three windmills, one working against the side of an old Flamboyant Gothic church, whose richly traceried buttresses sloped down into the filthy stream; all ex-