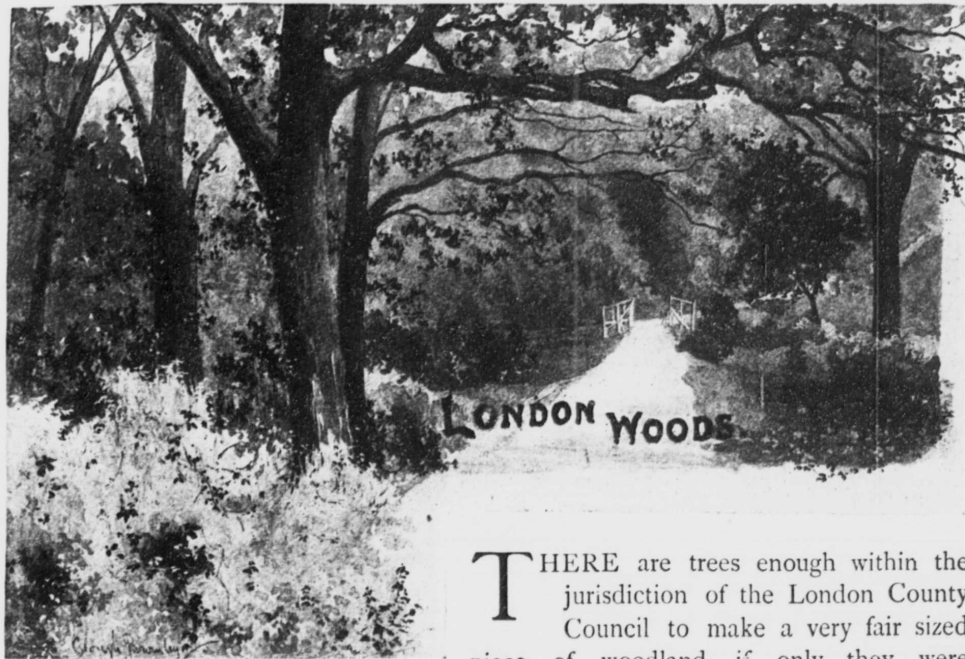




*In "Hadley" Woods.*

THERE are trees enough within the jurisdiction of the London County Council to make a very fair sized piece of woodland, if only they were gathered together and grouped, instead of being stretched out in prim parallel lines. But it would be a strange-looking and un-English piece of woodland at the best, for the town trees are foreigners, and so are most of the shrubs in our suburban gardens. We are accustomed to them in their urban surroundings, but it would startle us to come across a plane tree in a glade of the New Forest, or an aucuba in a Midland hedgerow. When we see a lime tree or an acacia we think instinctively of avenues and terraces; we know that the hand of man has been at work in the neighbourhood, and that bricks and mortar cannot be very far off. On the other hand, if we see an oak or an elm growing in a suburban garden we may feel sure that it was growing there before the builder laid hands upon the spot, and only some strange chance preserved it from the fate of being cut down, that shrubs from the Himalayas or far Cathay might grow over its decaying roots. The taste of the landscape gardener has decreed that the vegetable life of civilisation shall differ as far as possible from the life of the woods and hedges. When you enter the suburbs of a large town you leave behind you the sweet natural liberties of oak, elm and ash in exchange for the conventionalities of the shrubbery. Not that one would wish to speak altogether disrespectfully of the trees we meet with in the streets: there is something good to be said of the maple-leaved plane, a tree which so kindly puts forth its best foliage in the most smoke-laden atmosphere. But though it be a gentle tree, with pleasant manners, always looking its best under the most discouraging circumstances, yet it wears an apologetic air. Look at it when you will, either in its youth on the Thames Embankment, or in mature age in the gardens of Gray's Inn, it is but a substitute for something nobler, and seems, in the droop of its branches, to mutely claim the indulgence of the passer by.

Time was, no doubt, when the nobler oak grew where now the plane tree rears its mottled stem and spreads its scanty and monotonous foliage. But in Western London there is little left to tell of those earlier days. It must have been very long ago when Acton deserved its name of "the hamlet among the oaks." Even maps of the seventeenth century, usually so lavish in their suggestions of forest growth, do not venture to put more than one or two diminutive shrubs in Western

Middlesex. One must not, of course, confide in seventeenth-century maps, which are really impressionist studies rather than dull mechanical surveys. But still, if the engraver had met with any number of trees on his ride westward over Bagshot Heath, he would certainly have managed to convey the impression of a forest in that direction; and we know, by more certain evidence than that of early map-makers, that the flat ground to the north of the Thames was never wooded within historic times. In the days when there was a royal chase in Essex, and a much larger forest on the Surrey uplands, there were, in the valley between, only isolated patches of woodland, and most of these came in very early days into the hands of the cultivator, either as pleasure resorts for the king or as parks for the nobles. In the districts immediately to the west of London there may now be said to be no woods worth enumerating, almost the last remnant being a plantation near Feltham, which is now disappearing under the hands of the builder. But the south-western districts still retain, and, let us hope, will long continue to preserve, some bits of sylvan scenery which will vie in beauty with any that the home counties can show. The nearest relic of woodland in this direction is to be found within the limits of the old manor of Mortlake, which anciently comprised the districts we now know as Putney, Wimbledon, Barnes, and part of Kingston. Coombe Wood is now the only considerable tract of woodland remaining in this district, and it has suffered materially in the interests of railway travelling. It is not accessible to the general public, but the hospitality of Lord Archibald Campbell has rendered its pleasant glades familiar to many; though they may remember it less on its own account than as the background of the pastoral plays with which Lady Archibald delighted society a few seasons ago. That the Duke of Cambridge should present these woods to the nation is one of the things not generally expected. But perhaps seventy years hence, when the leases fall in, London may be able to make terms for the rescue from the builder of the nearest surviving piece of wild woodland in the south-western district. Two generations ago "Wimbledon Park" was a more beautiful bit of woodland than Coombe, and earlier still in the century there was much wood on the common. All the trees were pollards, the commoners having the right of lopping the trees for fuel in the autumn. The ancient ceremony of declaring the common open for this purpose took place on Michaelmas day, and the right continued until Lady day, when the common was declared closed. The custom of annual pollarding was very general in the case of woodlands adjoining open waste, and it has been a most valuable weapon in the hands of the Commons Preservation Society. It was to a large extent the existence of this custom and the continued exercise of it by the commoners of Loughton which led to the preservation of Epping Forest as an open space. But of course the custom has its drawbacks from the picturesque point of view. No trees can attain their proper growth under such conditions. The stem is deprived of all dignity, and one misses the wide-spreading branches of a real forest tree. In the primeval wood the trees grow farther apart; each covers a wide extent of ground, and suffers nothing to grow beneath its shade. In the pollarded copse the trees grow close to each other, and scarcely seem able to maintain their place in the struggle with the undergrowth. Where trees are grown for profit, pollarding is necessary at intervals, but the best traditions of woodcraft allow at least fifteen years to elapse between each operation. In the manorial waste, however, the trees were regarded not as shelter for deer, nor as producers of timber, still less as objects of beauty; they were regarded simply as providers of winter fuel. The oak pollards on Wimbledon Common were all cut down and sold in 1812, apparently without any attempt at resistance on the part of the commoners; nor was there at that time any public opinion to support them

if they had been disposed to resist. The furze and undergrowth were, however, suffered to remain, and the continual cutting of this by the poor of the parish was held sufficient evidence of customary right to save the common as an open space when, years afterwards, it was threatened with enclosure.

In 1857 the late Earl Spencer sold a portion of the estate, and the finest bit of woodland in the south-western district passed into the hands of the builder, and became known as "Wimbledon Park." Ten years later Wimbledon common had the honour of originating the movement for the preservation of open spaces. Putney Heath is the earliest of their trophies. It was on Wimbledon Common that the first battle of Englishmen with Englishmen was fought, a thousand years ago, and it was fitting that Wimbledon Common should have been the subject of the first contest in the prolonged struggle for the preservation of ancient rights in open spaces.



*In Coombe Wood.*

The most conspicuous trophy of this struggle is the singular group of venerable beeches situate near the churchyard at Stoke Pogis, where Gray wrote his "Elegy." The Burnham Beeches lie at a distance of twenty-five miles from Whitehall; yet they are more properly included in the list of London woods than many that lie nearer, for they belong now to the City Corporation.

From the neighbourhood of the Beeches you can see the tower of Windsor Castle and the northern fringe of what was not long ago a royal forest. It seems impossible to believe that the Great Forest of Windsor existed within the lifetime of men who are still living; but in fact that forest was enclosed so recently as 1813. With the exception of Epping and Hainault (then known as Waltham Chase), it was the last survivor of fourteen great forests enumerated by Spelman, the Elizabethan antiquary, in the home counties. Windsor Forest extended into three counties, and its circumference exceeded a hundred and twenty miles. It touched Cobham and Chertsey on the east, Guildford on the south, and Hungerford

on the west. These limits were considerably reduced at intervals during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; but still at the beginning of the present century it contained twenty-four thousand acres. The whole of that area disappeared under the Act of 1813; and Windsor Forest now lives only in tradition, save as to the patches of woodland apportioned to the Crown in the neighbourhood of the Great Park. Near the Castle there is not much to remind one of the native woodland, but beyond the end of the Long Walk you can still enter a region of glades shaded by giant trees, which were old when Henry VIII. rested from the chase beneath their branches, or when Surrey meditated the praises of the fair Geraldine under their shade. They have watched over English poetry from Spenser to Shelley, for it was among these groves that "Alastor" was written. The spirit of the old trees entered even into the frigid soul of Pope, and impelled him to show in his "Windsor Forest" that even in its most artificial periods English poetry was never wholly divorced from its old loves the greenwood tree, the russet plain and the purple-dyed heath.

To the south and south-east of the Great Park are numerous oases of woodland preserved by individual caprice from the ravages of the plough. These outlying spurs of the Great Forest of Windsor extend from Virginia Water southward to Guildford and eastward to Kingston, Epsom, and Leatherhead—in fact, to the very gates of Greater London.

Weybridge station furnishes the best introduction to the characteristic scenery of Surrey. Notwithstanding its nearness to the capital, there is to be found a peculiar kind of wildness in Surrey which is not exactly paralleled in any other county except Hampshire. It is not, of course, the wildness of a Yorkshire moor or a Scotch glen, but it is removed quite as far from the pastoral luxuriance of the Midlands and the Thames valley. Its great characteristic is the heather and gorse-clad commons, mingled with trees grown in a milder climate than seems suited either to heather or gorse. We have the heather on the northern moors, but we have not the trees as well. A walk from Weybridge to Leatherhead will introduce the pedestrian to much of this characteristic scenery. At the outset Weybridge common, with its sand and heather, lies between the parks of Oatlands and Burwood. Immediately to the south of Weybridge rises St. George's Hill, where sandy wastes with clumps of heather and gorse are associated with yews and hawthorns. This hill is very little known to Londoners, but it is quite as well worth visiting as Box Hill. The view over the Thames valley is magnificent. On the south slope of the hill towards Cobham is a fir wood where are more squirrels than anywhere else so near town, while the bracken below is a paradise for rabbits. Southward of Cobham is the rural heart of Surrey—a country of woodland interspersed with common, upon which grow gorse and ling surrounding the noblest of ancient oaks. Part of this country is still a wilderness, notwithstanding railways and steam ploughs. There are roads overrun with bracken and bramble and thistle fighting out their ancient battle on the uplands. It is not a little singular that this remote district—as remote in some senses as Glaramara or Schiehallion—should be fixed upon as the site of the Cathedral or Apostolic Church of the Irvingites, while within a reasonable walk of it is an interesting relic of the older faith—the church of Stoke D'Abernon, with the oldest brasses in England. If this long walk is continued to Leatherhead the pedestrian will pass Norbury Park, which is one of the few parks where Nature has been allowed to make her own selection among trees. Brayley, the county historian, notices that where the oak has decayed in this park the beech has succeeded it, and where the beech has decayed ash has sprung up in its place. The succession of oak and beech has been noticed elsewhere, and the supplanting

of every other tree by the ash is a matter of common observation. But what is remarkable about Norbury, though it is not noticed by the chronicler, is that the yew tree appears really to be the monarch of the domain, and to have kept all the other trees in check, even if it has not actually slain them. It is possible that if man had not interfered with the course of selection the yew and the ash would have monopolised between them the forests of Southern Britain.

In the days when England was an "isle of blowing woodland," London had a complete belt of forest surrounding it on all sides, with the exception of a gap on the south-east, which was occupied by morass, and another gap on the west, where to the north of the Thames there was a space of clear country.

How dense was the woodland to the south we may estimate from the fact that it took a hundred years for our English forefathers, advancing from the Isle of Thanet, to possess themselves of London. They could not come by way of Bermondsey because the morass stretched up to the high ground of Peckham; and from thence right round to the river again at Richmond the forest formed an impenetrable obstacle. When London was taken by the Saxons, it was not from the side of the sea, but from the little strip of open country on the west, that its assailants were able to reach it.

The greater part of the southern woods must have disappeared before the days of the Norman settlement, for those mentioned in Domesday Book are isolated patches entirely separated from the great mass of the Andredesweald, which still lay stretched beyond the Croydon hills. There is nothing now existing in Surrey to which we can give the name of primeval forest, but there are many trees still standing which must have lived through all these vicissitudes. The yews in the "Druids' Walk" of Norbury Park, near Leatherhead, the beeches in the same enclosure, some of the oaks at Purley and Addington, and the yew trees at Warlingham and Chelsham, are trees of whose antiquity any county might be proud.

Nearer London the trees of forest rank are scantier, but there are still places



*The Duke of Cambridge's Luncheon House, Coombe Wood.*

within the fifteen-mile radius, which the Committee on Commons fixed as the limit of metropolitan open spaces, where the wayfarer might for a moment fancy himself back in the days of the long bow. In the south-eastern district there is a quadrant of woodland patches extending from Plumstead to Croydon, from the Dover Road to the Brighton Road. If the exigencies of civilised life did not prevent it, a man might still walk along this quadrant, passing three parts of the way under the shade of oak or beech or pine. Nearly all of this is now park land, and has been cropped or replanted to suit the taste of the owners; but many old trees remain, and those that are not old are at least the legitimate successors of the old forest growth. Most easterly of the London woods is that which formerly stood on the land of the Abbey of Plumstead. None of the Abbey wood is now left, but fortunately part of the domain has been secured to the public, and through the generous assistance of private individuals a bit of modern woodland has been added to the open space. Plumstead Common and Bostall Heath were amongst the first fruits of the labours of the Commons Preservation Society. They were threatened with destruction by the Provost and Scholars of Queen's College, Oxford, who were lords of the manor of Plumstead, and who offered the common for sale in building lots, and enclosed the heath to let for agricultural purposes. Fortunately the residents had public spirit enough to level the fences, and to encounter the College in the Law Courts. Still more fortunately it happened that Sir Julian Goldsmid was a local landowner: he not only gave the commoners active support in the defence of their rights, but when the open space was saved, he offered sixty-two acres of woodland at such a modest price as enabled the Council to add it to the common.

The nearest approach to wild woodland within fifteen miles of London (at all events on the south side of the Thames) is to be found within reach of the Chelsfield and Halstead stations on the South-Eastern Railway (direct Tonbridge line). The Knockholt beeches, on the summit of the hill above Halstead, are a familiar object to those who have looked south-eastward from the Crystal Palace, and they may be seen on a clear day from the top of Parliament Hill, or even from Harrow. The view from them is less known, but to the lover of woodland it is more interesting; for here, within a circuit of a few miles, are clustered some genuine remains of the Andredesweald. Hereabouts the forest retained its pristine character certainly later than Elizabethan times; and within the memory of men still in the prime of life the Cudham woods (a spot hallowed by its associations with Charles Darwin) enjoyed much of their ancient wildness. Quite recently—within the last twenty years, in fact—their area has been much curtailed, and the ground which was sheltered by oak and beech now grows whole-fruit jam in its earlier stages. Still there are sufficient vestiges of woodland left to make the view from the Knockholt beeches an object-lesson in English history. To look from the summit of the hill over to the glimmer of sunlight on the glass of the Sydenham Palace, with the smoke of London behind it, and then to turn towards the woods below, is to step back at least three centuries. You can realise that this was once a land of forests, and the cultivated patches are but clearings. It is the woods that are old, and the fields and pastures are new.

Nearer London there are naturally still fewer relics of woodland. Of the belt which once stretched from Peckham, through Sydenham, nearly to Croydon, little is left but the reminiscences contained in the names Forest Hill and Norwood. There is, indeed, one patch which, being inclosed by the Dulwich College authorities, has up to the present escaped the ravages of the builder. This is all that is left to us of the great wood, where in the early years of the present century gipsies and vagrants made their home. The last of the troglodytes was

one Matthews, a notorious character in his day, who for thirty years lived in a cave in the Dulwich woods, and died in a good old prehistoric fashion, being murdered at the entrance of his cave in the year 1803. The Norwood gipsies formed at one time a numerous community, and two of their "queens" lie buried in the neighbourhood—one, Margaret Finch, buried at Beckenham in 1740, at the reputed age of a hundred and nine; and her successor, probably the last of her line, buried with some marks of rude pomp at Dulwich in 1768. At the time when Thomas Campbell settled at Sydenham it was still a village in the wood, which was probably at that time not much less in extent than when, in the Parliamentary survey of 1646, it was described as the "Nor Wood, of 830 acres, in which the inhabitants of Croydon have mastage for swine without stint." This survey refers only to the portion of the wood lying within Croydon manor, and does not include the woodlands on the northern slopes, which covered the



*Enfield Woods from Clay Hill.*

districts now known as Gipsy Hill, Upper Norwood, and Sydenham Hill. Aubrey speaks of it (after the Restoration) as a great wood, wherein was an "ancient remarkable tree called Vicar's Oak, where four parishes meet in a point." One other oak in the same wood had, in Aubrey's day, acquired an evil reputation. It bore mistletoe; and one who cut it was stricken with lameness, another with sudden blindness, while a third who, in 1678, attempted to cut down the tree fell instantly and broke his leg.

The name Norwood was obviously given with a reference to something in the south; and this something was the community clustering round the archiepiscopal palace at Croydon—a community principally of "colliers" or charcoal burners. The north woods furnished the colliers of Croydon with the raw material of their trade. In the days when sea-borne coal was an occasional luxury, charcoal from Croydon furnished the kitchen of the private citizen of London, and a charcoal fire cooked the dinners at the Mansion House. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Croydon seems to have had much the sort of reputation which Sheffield

or Masbro' has at present. A wit of the Restoration period speaks of it as a place "cloath'd in black, where you may well smell, but never see, your way." Those who associate the smoke of the charcoal burners with a clearing in the Vosges or the Black Forest may probably think the description overstrained; but more sober chroniclers give but an indifferent account of the sanitary state of the Croydon valley. Between the edge of Norwood and the present site of Croydon was a dismal swamp, in the hollow of which the smoke must have lain heavily. Across this morass there were apparently only two forest paths—one leading in the direction of Streatham, and the other to the site of a woodland house of refreshment which in later times became locally famous as the "Jolly Sailors"; to which house of entertainment people used to drive from London for a day in the woods. On the Croydon edge of the morass stood a farm known as Collier's Water, once the property of John Gilpin, who retired here in dignified seclusion, unconscious of the immortality which Cowper was shortly afterwards to confer on him.

To the south of Croydon—and, indeed, all along the slopes of the chalk downs—are bits of woodland which, though now existing as isolated and inclosed patches, exhibit better specimens of forest trees than are to be found elsewhere round London. The King's Wood, which once stretched from Sanderstead to Warlingham, still lines the highway. The juniper tree flourishes here, and, it is said, nowhere else in the county. The old oaks of Purley still stand, as they stood when Horne Tooke "diversed" beneath their shade. The yews of Warlingham and Chelsham are the finest memorials of the time when yew trees formed our first line of defence. At the foot of the hill below West Wickham church is a magnificent group of old oaks; and in the small wood on the way between West Wickham and Addington are some still more ancient, among the hollow stems of which Millais selected the model for his picture of the "Proscribed Royalist."

The road from Croydon over Banstead Downs gives a succession of views over those detached outliers of the Andredesweald, which the march of agriculture has still left standing. The Banstead commons are themselves of great interest as a memorial of the most stubbornly fought contest (with one exception) in the whole record of the fight for the preservation of open spaces. The legal contest lasted altogether for thirty years, and the triumph of the Commons Preservation Society was consummated only in 1893 by the adoption of a scheme under the Metropolitan Commons Act for the preservation of the downs and heath as open spaces for ever. The view from the downs to the south and west opens up more considerable patches of woodland, with still finer trees. Box Hill, the Vale of Mickleham, and Norbury Park are probably known by name to many who have never visited them. Norbury Park boasts the possession of the finest groups of ancient trees in the kingdom; and, without quite admitting a claim which may perhaps be contested by Ampthill or Clumber, it must be allowed that Evelyn's praises are not exaggerated, though he does not mention some of the features which most strike a modern visitor. The Druids' Walk of yews is unlike anything else in England, and the beeches have here found a soil exactly suited to them. Box Hill, it may be hoped, is really well known, not only by name but by actual acquaintance; for it has been the favourite resort of picnic parties ever since the days when Jane Austen's Emma arranged her "exploring" party there, and was so rude to Miss Bates under the shade of the yew trees. The commercial value of boxwood is no longer quite what it was a century ago, when £10,000 was given for all the wood of more than twenty years' growth on the hill; but it is still wanted in quantity sufficient to ensure the culture of the tree. This is not the only place where it grows wild, for there is a natural wood of box trees on an estate in the Chilterns;

but the tree has not yet been persuaded to regard itself as a native, and Box Hill is likely to remain the only wood of box-trees in the British Isles which is accessible to the public. One historian has suggested that the original planting of the hill took place in the time of Charles I., but the fact that the name is older by four hundred years than the era of the Stuarts sufficiently refutes the calumny.

The woods in the south and west of London are merely isolated local patches, and—with the single exception of Windsor—never formed part of any forest; but the woods of the north and north-eastern districts can boast of a much more dignified ancestry. When our Norman conquerors landed, the whole face of East Anglia was covered with a vast forest, extending from the Thames to the Wash, where it joined the forest of Lincolnshire, known as the Bruneswald. The woods of Essex had for a hundred years kept the East Saxons at bay, and they enabled the band of English outlaws to defy the Norman Conqueror for many years after he had harried the North and quieted the Midlands. Readers of Charles Kingsley's story of the Fenland struggle might perhaps be led to infer that in early Norman days Essex was open country, and that the forest began only on the north and west borders of the Fens; but in fact all the land that was not covered with water was covered with trees from the river Lea to the cliffs of Cromer. Two fragments of the southernmost end of this great forest survived the clearings of later centuries: one long known as Waltham Chase, of which Epping Forest is a legacy; and the other the great wood belonging to the Abbey of St. Albans, which does not appear to have ever had any one name, but of which the woods now dotted over Middlesex and Hertford are the relics. In these woods the boar and the wild ox continued to roam until late in the twelfth century.

It is a strange chain of events which has preserved to us ten square miles of ancient woodland in the close neighbourhood of the capital. If Harold had not prostrated himself before the crucifix at Waltham on his way from Stamford Bridge to Senlac there would have been nothing left of Epping Forest by this time except the name. When the sacred image bowed before the last of the English the fame of the Abbey was established before all Christendom, and with the reputation for superior sanctity came worldly recognition and reward. Richard I. gave the "great wood" to the community which guarded the sacred image, and henceforward it was known as Waltham Chase. In Camden's time it was "a chace of vast extent, full of game, the largest and fattest deer in the kingdom." When the monasteries were despoiled the ownership of the soil passed into private hands, but the Crown retained the sporting rights and the commoners retained the right of grazing cattle and lopping wood. A century later the Forest was threatened with extinction by Charles I. "for supply of his weighty affairs," and it was saved only by the turbulence of the commoners. A very few years later the Parliament would have sold the forest rights for the supplies of the Commonwealth, but the sagacity of Cromwell saved the wood from destruction. From this time it no longer served the purposes of royal sport: the verderers ceased to exercise their prerogatives, and the lords of manors began the work of encroachment. In 1653, when the Long Parliament ascertained the limits of the Forest, it contained sixty thousand acres; in 1793, when the Land Revenue Commission reported upon it, they could find only nine thousand acres remaining unenclosed. That Commission, with an amount of foresight for which we seldom give credit to past generations, recommended that further inclosure be prevented in the interests of the increasing population of the capital. The recommendation was duly pigeonholed and forgotten: Epping Forest was left for another fifty years to the tender mercies of the lords of manors, varied by the annual incursion of the Epping Hunt. The estates of the neighbouring landowners

grew gradually larger at the expense of the public. But all the while the silent force was at work which was eventually to preserve the remainder of the woodland. Every year, on the eve of Martinmas, as the clock struck twelve, the cottagers of Loughton lopped the branches of the pollard oaks and beeches. In 1848 the attention of Parliament was again directed to the Forest, and a Select Committee of the House of Commons recommended that it be disafforested and the Crown rights sold to the lords of manors, reserving a small portion for recreation. Within a few years this was accomplished, and the eighteen lords of manors in the circuit of the Forest became the owners of the sporting rights, at the price of £5 an acre. Then inclosure began on all sides, and in fifteen years a third part of the remaining forest area had disappeared behind fences. The largest single encroachment was that of the Rector of Loughton, who took in at once thirteen hundred acres; and it was upon this ground that the battle of the Epping Forest rights was fought.

Here for many centuries the inhabitants had maintained the custom of annual lopping, beginning each year at midnight on St. Martin's Eve. On the anniversary after the Rector's inclosures, in 1866, a labourer named Willingale and his two sons went out at midnight, according to their custom, broke through the Rector's fences and lopped the trees for two hours. They were prosecuted, convicted of malicious trespass, and sentenced to two months' hard labour. One of the sons died in prison, but when Willingale and his remaining son came out they had saved Epping Forest. For the injustice of their conviction accomplished that which the injustice of the encroachments would never by itself have accomplished—it roused public indignation. Money was forthcoming to fight the battle of the Loughton commoners, and a suit was begun in the name of Willingale claiming a declaration of the right of the inhabitants of Loughton to lop the Forest trees. Through many devious windings this suit prolonged itself over four years, and ultimately became abated by the death of Willingale, who to the last refused to accept any money compensation. But the suit had served the purpose of keeping the Forest *in statu quo* until time had produced a more formidable champion. The Corporation of London, as purchasers of land for a cemetery at Wanstead, had become commoners of a manor at the south end of the Forest, and an action was instituted in the name of the Commissioners of Sewers against sixteen lords of manors, claiming rights of common over the whole extent of the Forest, an injunction against further inclosures, and the removal of all fences recently erected. The suit was terminated in 1873 by a judgment the delivery of which was perhaps the most remarkable judicial achievement in the annals of the English bench. After a hearing of twenty-three days Sir George Jessel proceeded at once, without pause and without the use of a single note, to pronounce a judgment dealing with as tangled and intricate a mass of case law and evidence as ever was submitted to a court. He pronounced for the plaintiffs on all points, granted an injunction against further encroachments, and ordered all fences to be removed which had been erected within twenty years. The defendants did not venture to appeal against this decision, and the Forest as an open space was saved. There were still, however, many points of detail to be settled, and it was not until nearly ten years later, after the passing of an Act of Parliament and the investigations of a special arbitrator, that the Forest was declared open by Her Majesty in person.

Of the sister forest of Hainault not a vestige remains, save in the name of a road. Yet till the year 1851 this was a finer piece of woodland than Epping. It disappeared entirely from the face of the earth within six weeks, the magnificent oaks of the King's Wood being dragged up by steam ploughs with grappling anchors attached to them, in the interests of high farming. The Royal Commissioners who



*South Croydon, from Croyhamhurst Woods.*

recommended this course little thought that in forty years honourable members would rise in their places to assure Parliament that farming in Essex was dead, and that the land would shortly again relapse into a wilderness. Even if it did,

we shall never live to see another Hainault Forest, and we may be thankful that Charles Dickens saw it and preserved some recollection of it in "Barnaby Rudge."

The difference in fate of the two divisions of Waltham Chase is due to a difference in their history. On the dissolution of the monasteries the soil of Epping passed into private hands, while the soil of Hainault remained under the Crown. Hence the latter passed entirely under the control of the Commissioners of Woods and Forests, while the Crown had no rights over Epping save the obsolete right of hunting deer.

On the west of Waltham Chase only a small strip of marshland along the river Lea separated one great wood from another. Enfield Chase, in the days when it was the favourite hunting ground of James I., covered nearly eight thousand acres, and extended from Enfield to Barnet and from Potters Bar to Tottenham. The memory of this royal forest is preserved in fiction as the scene of the closing episode of Scott's "Fortunes of Nigel." It existed, little disturbed by buildings, until 1777, when an Act was passed for its inclosure, and the whole area was divided, three thousand acres going to the Crown and the rest being distributed among the manors, parishes and tithe owners. In John Evelyn's time there were twenty-five square miles, within a distance of fourteen miles from London, where "there is not a house, barne, church or building besides three lodges . . . a solitarie desert, yet stored with not less than three thousand deere." Though Enfield Chase has ceased to exist as a forest for a hundred and twenty years, there are still large portions of it remaining, and the lodges still exist in name and situation, though the buildings are new. Trent Park and Beech Hill Park contain hundreds of acres of the old woodland, still in a wild condition. These are no longer accessible to the general public; but in Hadley Common there remains a piece of the chase as yet uninclosed, extending over more than two hundred acres; and near Winchmore Hill and Wood Green are two other portions over which public rights of way have been preserved.

It is rather remarkable that Spelman, in his list of English forests in the time of Elizabeth, does not mention Enfield Chase. He enumerates seventy-six forests, fourteen of which are in the home counties, but not one is mentioned either in Middlesex or in Hertford. But as the antiquary places Hatfield Forest in Essex, the inference is that he grouped under this term not only Enfield Chase but the two great stretches of woodland which in mediæval days were known together as the Forest of St. Albans, and in later days were known separately by the names of Northaw and Southaw. The name Northaw survives in a village not far from Potters Bar station, three miles north of Monk Hadley. The district is still largely woodland, and the two principal estates in the neighbourhood contain large areas of natural untrained forest growth. This is the eastern fringe of the great wood, of which the western fringe is now represented at Oxhey and Ruislip, near Pinner station.

Southaw Forest is restricted by the county historians to the woods about Barnet, but it must anciently have been much more extensive. The jurisdiction of the Abbot of St. Albans reached to points which are now included within the London postal delivery, and disputes arose between the Abbot and his brother of Westminster as to the right to execute justice upon marauders on the branches of a particular oak. The younger Abbey lost no opportunity of extending its domains northward into the country of its rival, and Edward the Confessor granted to Westminster part of the produce of his woods of Kingsbury and his lands in the parish of Hendon. This district, though no longer woodland, is at least beautifully wooded, and contains a number of shaded and secluded footpaths not to be surpassed in extent and variety anywhere near London.

J. B. CARLILE.