

***WILLIAM
HARRISON***

A scenic view of a city, likely Elizabethan England, featuring a bridge, cranes, and buildings under a blue sky with white clouds. The foreground shows a concrete railing and a paved path leading down a hillside covered in greenery.

***ELIZABETHAN
ENGLAND***

***WILLIAM
HARRISON***



***ELIZABETHAN
ENGLAND***

William Harrison

Elizabethan England

From 'A Description of England,' by William Harrison

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THE CAMELOT SERIES.

GREAT WRITERS.

The Canterbury Poets.

“FOREWORDS.”[1]

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I am unwilling to send out this *Harrison*, the friend of some twenty years' standing, without a few words of introduction to those readers who don't know it. The book is full of interest, not only to every Shakspeare student, but to every reader of English history, every man who has the least care for his forefathers' lives. Though it does contain sheets of padding now and then, yet the writer's racy phrases are continually turning up, and giving flavour to his descriptions, while he sets before us the very England of Shakspeare's day. From its Parliament and Universities, to its beggars and its rogues; from its castles to its huts, its horses to its hens; from how the state was managd, to how Mrs. Wm. Harrison (and no doubt Mrs. William Shakspeare) brewd her beer; all is there. The book is a deliberately drawn picture of Elizabethan England; and nothing could have kept it from being often reprinted and a thousand times more widely known than it is, except the long and dull historical and topographical Book I.[2]—*The Description of Britaine*—set before the interesting account in Books II. and III., of the England under Harrison's eyes in 1577-87.

How Harrison came to write his book[3] was on this wise. Reginald Wolfe, the Printer to Queen Elizabeth, meant to publish “a universall Cosmographie of the whole world,[4] and therewith also certaine particular histories of every knowne nation.” For the Historical part of the work, he engagd Raphael Holinshed, among other men; and when the work was nearly done, Wolfe died, after twenty-five

years' labour at his scheme. Then the men who were to have borne the cost of printing the *Universall Cosmographie* were afraid to face the expense of the whole work, and resolv'd to do only so much of it as related to England, Scotland, and Ireland.[5]

Holinshed having the History of these countries in hand, application was made to Harrison, who had long been compiling a *Chronologie*[6] of his own, to furnish the Descriptions of Britain and England. He was then Household Chaplain to the well-known Sir William Brooke, Lord Cobham (so praised by Francis Thynne[7]), and was staying in London, away from his rectory of Radwinter in Essex, and his Library there. He had also travelld little himself, only into Kent, to Oxford and Cambridge, etc., as he honestly tells Lord Cobham.

Still, mainly by the help of Leland—"and hitherto Leland, whose words I dare not alter"—as well as of "letters and pamphlets from sundrie places & shires of England," and "by conference with diuers folk,"[8] and "by mine owne reading,"[9] together with Master Sackford's charts or Maps,"[10] Harrison—notwithstanding the failure of his correspondents[11] and the loss of part of his material—"scambled up," what he depreciatingly calls "this foule frizeled Treatise of mine," to "stand in lieu of a description of my Countrie." But, he says, "howsoeuer it be done, & whatsoeuer I haue done, I haue had an especiall eye vnto the truth of things." And this merit, I think every reader will allow Harrison. Though he swallowd too easily some of the stories told in old chronicles,[12] etc., though (in his 2nd ed. only) he put Chertsey above, instead of below, Staines, on

the Thames,^[13] etc., yet in all the interesting home-life part, he evidently gives both sides of the case, “speaks of it as it was; nothing extenuates, nor sets down aught in malice” (*Oth.*, V. ii. 341). When he tells with pride, on the one hand, of the grand new buildings and the many chimnies put up in his day; on the other hand, he brings in the grumble:

“And yet see the change, for when our houses were builded of willow, then had we oken men; but now that our houses are come to be made of oke, our men are not onlie become willow, but a great manie, through Persian delicacie crept in among vs, altogither of straw, which is a sore alteration.

“Now haue we manie chimnies; and yet our tenderlings complaine of rheumes, catarhs, and poses. Then had we none but reredosses; and our heads did neuer ake. For as the smoke in those daies was supposed to be a sufficient hardning for the timber of the house, so it was reputed a far better medicine to keepe the goodman and his familie from the quacke or pose, wherewith, as then, verie few were oft acquainted.”^[14]

—when he describes the beauty, virtue, learning, and housewifery, of Queen Elizabeth’s Maids of Honour, he yet acknowledges that as the men

“our common courtiers (for the most part) are the best lerned and indued with excellent gifts, so are manie of them the worst men, when they come abroad, that anie man shall either heare or read of.”

Even the Papist Monks,[15] whom—as a marrid Protestant parson and vicar—he hates, he praises for their buildings. And when he does abuse or chaff heartily any absurdity, like Englishmen’s dress,—“except it were a dog in a doublet, you shall not see anie so disguised as are my countrie men of England,”—we may be sure it was deservd; Shakspere does it too[16] (*Merchant*, I. ii. 80; *Much Ado*, III. ii. 36, etc.).

Harrison’s book will inform and amuse the reader.

Besides writing the *Descriptions of Britaine and England* for Holinshed’s *Chronicle*, William Harrison also translated for it, from Scotch into English, Archdeacon Bellenden’s version of Hector Boetius’s Latin Description of Scotland. This work took him only “three or foure daies” he says: “Indeed, the trauell taken heerein is not great, bicause I tie not my translation vnto his [Bellenden’s] letter.” Harrison dedicated this translation—the *Description of Scotland*—to the Maister Sackford, or Secford, whose “cards,” charts, or Maps, had been of such use to him in his account of the English rivers in his *Description of Britaine*.

Happily for us, William Harrison was not one of those dignified prigs who are afraid of writing about themselves in their books. He tells us that he was born in London[17]—“I will remember the fame of London my natiue citie.”[18] Also that he was first at St. Paul’s school, and then at “Westminster[19] school (in which I was sometime an vnprofitable Grammarian vnder the reuerend father, master Nowell, now deane of Paules).” And again of the Deans of the see of London (or St. Paul’s), “I will deliuer in like sort the names of the deanes, vntill I come to the time of mine old master now liuing in this present yeare 1586, who is

none of the least ornaments[20] that haue beene in that seat.” He was at both universities.[21] When speaking of Cambridge and Oxford, he says—

“In all other things there is so great equalitie betweene these two vniuersities, as no man can imagin how to set downe any greater; so that they seeme to be the bodie of one well ordered common wealth, onlie diuided by distance of place, and not in freendlie consent and orders. In speaking therefore of the one, I can not but describe the other; and in commendation of the first, I can not but extoll the latter; and so much the rather, for that they are both so deere vnto me, as that I can not readilie tell vnto whether of them I owe the most good will. Would to God my knowledge were such, as that neither of them might haue cause to be ashamed of their pupill; or my power so great, that I might woorthilie requite them both for those manifold kindnesses that I haue receiued of them.”[22]

He must have graduated at Oxford first, for in 1569 he proceeded to the degree of Bachelor of Divinity at Cambridge under a grace[23] which calls him M.A. of Oxford of seven years’ standing.[25] He was before this, Household Chaplain to Sir Wm. Brooke, Lord Cobham, to whom he dedicated, as we have seen, his *Description of England*, and who gave him the Rectory of Radwinter in Essex,[26] to which he was inducted on February 16, 1558-9, and which he held till his death. On January 28, 1570-1, he became a pluralist,[27] and obtained the vicarage of Wimbish in Essex, [28] but resignd it in 1581, his successor being appointed on

the 16th of November in that year. Between 1559 and 1571 he must have married Marion Isebrande, “daughter to William Isebrande and Ann his wife, sometye of Anderne, neere vnto Guisnes in Picardie, and whome” (he says in his Will, referring no doubt to the sometime supposed unlawfulness of priests’ marriages) “by the lawes of god I take and repute in all respectes for my true and lawfull wife.” By her he left issue,^[29] one son Edmund, and two daughters,—one, Anne, unmarried, and another the wife of Robert Baker. He tells us how his wife and her maid brewed him 200 gallons of beer for 20s., as he was “scarse a good malster” himself, and a poor man on £40 a year (Goldsmith’s sum too). And no doubt his kindly “Eve will be Eve, tho’ Adam would saie naie,” tho’ said of widows, shewd that he understood the sex, was “to their faults a little blind, and to their virtues very kind”—or however the old saw runs. At Radwinter he must have worked away at his *Chronologie*, collected his Roman coins, got savage with the rascally Essex lawyers, attended to his garden:

“For mine owne part, good reader, let me boast a little of my garden, which is but small, and the whole *Area* thereof little aboue 300 foot of ground, and yet, such hath beene my good lucke in purchase of the varietie of simples, that notwithstanding my small abilitie, there are verie neere three hundred^[30] of one sort and other contained therein, no one of them being common or vsuallie to bee had,”

kept his eyes open to everything going on round him, and lookt after his parishioners, when he wasn’t writing his

Description of England in London, or visiting at Lord Cobham's house in Kent.

On April 23, 1586, William Harrison was appointed Canon of Windsor, and was installed the day after. The Dean has kindly sent me the following extract from the Chapter Book, St. George's Chapel, Windsor—

Anni Install.	Canonici.	Anni obitus.
1586.	Gulielmus Harrison 24 ^{to} Aprilis, loco Ryley, Theologiæ Baccalaureus. Obijt, et Sepultus est Windsoriæ, et White Successit.—Rector fuit de Radwinter,[31]	1593.

but says there is no grave-stone or other notice of where Harrison was buried.[32] (I can't get a line from the now rector of Radwinter.)

For the following abstract of Harrison's Will, I am indebted to Colonel Chester—

(81 Nevell.) "William Harrison, Clerk, parson of Radwinter and Prebendary of Windsor—dated at Radwinter 27 July 1591—to be buried at Radwinter or Windsor, as I may die at either place. My goods to be divided into 4 equal parts 'of which one parte and an halfe shall remaine vnto Marion Harrison *alias* Marion Isebrande and the daughter of William Isebrande sometyme of Anderne, whome by the lawe of god, I take for my true and lawfull wife;'[33] another part and a half equally to my son Edmund and my daughter Anne—

my son in law Robert Baker and his wife I remember not in this my will, as I have already given them their portion; to the quire in Windsor 40s.; to the poor of Radwinter 40s.; to the poor children of the hospital at London 20s.; to the poor of St. Thomas Apostle in London 20s.; to each child of my son Baker 10s.; to each child of my cousin Morecroft, Clerk 5s.—‘I make & ordayne the sayed Marion Isebrande *alias* Marion Harrison, daughter to William Isebrande and Ann his wife, sometyme of Anderne neere vnto Guisnes in Picardie, and whome by the lawes of god I take and repute in all respectes for my true and lawfull wife,’ and my son Edmund Harrison, my Executors.—Witnesses, Mr. Wm. Birde, Esq., Thos. Smith, yeoman; Lancelott Ellis, vicar of Wimbishe; & Thos. Hartlie the writer hereof.”

His Will was proved on November 22, 1593, by the said Edmund Harrison, son and executor named therein, the relict and executrix Marion, being dead. Letters of administration to the goods, etc., of Marion Harrison, late of New Windsor, in the county of Berks, were granted on December 12, 1593, to her son Edmund Harrison.

William Harrison had opinions of his own about public and social matters in his day, and also had often racy ways of expressing those opinions. I’ll extract some. He calls Becket “the old cocke of Canturburie;” notes how the Conferences of clergy and laity stirrd the parsons “to applie their books ... which otherwise ... would giue themselues to hawking, hunting, tables, cards, dice, tipling at the alehouse, shooting of matches, and other like vanities;” he complains of the subsidies and taxes that the clergy are made to pay, “as if the church were now become the asse

whereon euerie market man is to ride and cast his wallet;" also of "the couetousnesse of the patrones, of whom some doo bestow aduousons of benefices vpon their bakers, butlers, cookes, good archers, falconers, and horsekeepers," while others "doo scrape the wool from our clokes;" he notes how Popish "images ... and monuments of idolatrie are remooued" from the churches, "onelie the stories in glasse windowes excepted," which are let stay for a while, from the scarcity and cost of white glass; he'd like to get rid of Saints' Days; he commends the decent apparel of the Protestant parsons, as contrasted with that of the Popish blind sir-Johns, who went "either in diuerse colors like plaiers, or in garments of light hew, as yellow, red,^[34] greene, etc., with their shooes piked,^[35] ... so that to meet a priest in those daies was to behold a peacocke that spreadeth his taile when he danseth before the henne;" and then he denounces the cheating at elections for College fellowships, scholarships.

Harrison also tells us that he had for a time the "collection" (of MSS., maps, etc.) of "William Read,^[36] sometime fellow of Merteine college in Oxford, doctor of diuinitie, and the most profound astronomer that liued in his time." He has a cut at the Popes' nephews—"for nephues might say in those daies: Father, shall I call you vncle?"—says that he knew one of the Norwich-diocese churches turnd "into a barne, whilst the people heare seruice further off vpon a greene: their bell also, when I heard a sermon there preached in the greene, hanged in an oke for want of a steeple. But now I vnderstand that the oke likewise is gone." After saying what England in old time paid the Pope,

he asks, “and therevpon tell me whether our Iland was one of the best paire of bellowes or not, that blue the fire in his kitchen, wherewith to make his pot seeth, beside all other commodities.”

In describing the Universities, Harrison dwells again on the packing and bribing practist at elections for fellowships and scholarships, and how “poore mens children are commonlie shut out by the rich,” whose sons “ruffle and roist it out, exceeding in apparell, and hanting riotous companie which draweth them from their bookes^[37] vnto an other trade.” He also complains of the late-nam’d “idle fellowships” that are still a disgrace to our Universities, tho’ now their holders don’t work for “eighteene or peradventure twenty yeeres,”

“For after this time, & 40 yeeres of age, the most part of students doo commonlie giue ouer their woonted diligence, & liue like drone bees on the fat of colleges, withholding better wits from the possession of their places, & yet dooing litle good in their own vocation & calling.”

And he repeats, in milder words, Ascham’s^[38] caution against sending young men to Italy, for “an Italianate Englishman is a devil incarnate,” as the Italians themselves said.^[39] “And thus much at this time of our two vniuersities, in each of which I haue receiued such degree as they have vouchsafed, rather of their fauour than my desert, to yeeld and bestow vpon me.”

Of his chapter on “Degrees of the People of England” the most interesting parts to me are those on the evil of sending young Englishmen to Italy; the anticipation of the modern J.

S. Mill & Coöperative doctrine of the evil of too many middlemen in trade (the argument will cover distributors as well as importers), and lawyers in business; the improvement in the condition of yeomen; the often complained-of evil^[40] of “our great swarmes of idle seruing men;” and our husbandmen and artificers never being better tradesmen, tho’ they sometimes scamp their work.

Harrison’s chapter “Of the Food and Diet of the English” is very interesting, with its accounts of the dinners of the nobility “whose cookes are, for the most part, musicall-headed Frenchmen and strangers,” and who eat “delicates wherein the sweette hand of the seafaring Portingale is not wanting.” Then it notices the rage for Venice glass among all classes—as Falstaff says, A.D. 1598, in *2 Hen. IV.*, II. i. 154, “Glasses, glasses, is the only drinking.” This is followed by capital accounts of the diet of the gentlemen and merchants, and the artificers; the bread^[41] and drink of all classes; and how Mrs. Wm. Harrison brewd the family beer, “and hereof we make three hoggesheads of good beere, such (I meane) as is meet for poore men as I am, to liue withall, whose small maintenance (for what great thing is fortie pounds a yeare, *Computatis computandis*, able to performe?) may indure no deeper cut;” with touches like *Theologicum* being the best wine of old, because “the merchant would haue thought that his soule should have gone streightwaie to the diuell, if he should haue serued them [the monks] with other than the best;” and this kindly opinion of working-men, for which one can’t help liking the old parson^[42]:—

“To conclude, both the artificer and the husbandman are sufficientlie liberall, & verie freendlie at their tables; and when they meet, they are so merie without malice, and plaine without inward Italian or French craft and subtiltie, that it would doo a man good to be in companie among them.... This is moreouer to be added in these meetings, that if they happen to stumble vpon a peece of venison, and a cup of wine or verie strong beere or ale ... they thinke their cheere so great, and themselues to haue fared so well, as the lord Maior of London, with whome, when their bellies be full, they will not often sticke to make comparison, because that of a subject there is no publike officer of anie citie in Europe, that may compare in port and countenance with him during the time of his office.”

Chapter VII.[\[43\]](#) is the amusing one on the “Apparell and Atire” of English folk already referred to (p. [xiii.](#) above); and though it’s not so bitter as Stubbes’s or Crowley’s, yet it’s fun, with its “dog in a doublet,” and its beard bit, if a man “be wesell becked [beakt], then much heare left on the cheekes will make the owner looke big like a bowdled hen, and so grim as a goose, if Cornelis of Chelmeresford saie true.”

In the chapter on the Parliament the only personal bit is Harrison’s saying that he copies from Sir Thomas Smith,[\[44\]](#) “requiting him with the like borrowage as he hath vsed toward me in his discourse of the sundrie degrees of estates in the commonwealth of England.” But in the next chapter, “Of the Laws of England,” after a dull account of the Trial by Ordeal, etc., we get Harrison breaking out again against the Lawyers, their prosperity and rascality, and taking fees (as

barristers often do still) and doing nothing for 'em, with a good bit about Welshmen's love of law-suits. We also find a pleasant notice of John Stow, the hard-working chronicler so shamefully neglected in his own age: "my freend *John Stow*, whose studie is the onelie store house of antiquities in my time, and he worthie therefore to be had in reputation and honour."

The chapter "Of Prouision made for the Poore," notes the weekly collection made in every parish for the deserving poor, and gives Harrison's opinion on the Malthusians of his day:—

"Some also doo grudge at the great increase of people in these daies, thinking a necessarie brood of cattell farre better than a superfluous augmentation of mankind. But I can liken such men best of all vnto the pope and the diuell, who practise the hinderance of the furniture of the number of the elect to their vttermost, to the end the authoritie of the one upon earth, the deferring of the locking vp of the other in euerlasting chaines, and the great gaines of the first, may continue and indure the longer. But if it should come to passe that any forren inuasion should be made, which the Lord God forbid for his mercies sake!—then should these men find that a wall of men is farre better than stackes of corne and bags of monie, and complaine of the want when it is too late to seeke remedie."

The sham beggars, he says, "are all theeues and caterpillers in the commonwealth, and by the word of God not permitted to eat." Then he makes extracts from Harman

about the rogues, among whom, by statute, are “plaiers and minstrels,” Shakspeare and his fellows, etc.

In the chapter on the “Punishments appointed for Malefactors,” our author notes that “our condemned persons doo go ... cheerfullie to their deths, for our nation is free, stout, hautie, prodigall of life and bloud;” that the punishment for “robbing by the high waie” (like Sir John Falstaff’s), “cutting of purses,” “stealing of deere by night” (like Shakspeare’s, if he ever stole deer from Sir Thomas Lucy, who had no park in his time), was death; and that the punishment for adultery and fornication was not sharp enough:—

“As in theft therefore, so in adulterie and whoredome, I would wish the parties trespassant, to be made bond or slaues vnto those that receiued the iniurie, to sell and giue where they listed, or to be condemned to the gallies: for that punishment would proue more bitter to them than halfe an houres hanging, or than standing in a sheet, though the weather be neuer so called.”

He also complains of the robberies by unthrift young gentlemen, and “seruing-men whose wages cannot suffice so much as to find them breeches;” and that selfish men, and even constables, in the country, won’t leave their work to follow up thieves and take them to prison:^[45] this “I haue knowne by mine owne experience.”

The chapter, “Of the manner of Building and Furniture of our Houses,” is perhaps the best, and the best-known, in the book. It describes how English houses were built, and notes these new things, 1. that rich men were beginning to use stoves for sweating baths; while, 2. all men were using glass for windows; 3. that timber-houses were giving way to brick and stone; and that though our workmen were excellent, their demands for high wages often causd strangers to be employd in building; 4. the increast richness of furniture, not only in rich men’s houses, but in those of “the inferiour artificers and manie farmers,” who “now garnish their cupbords with plate, their ioined beds with tapistrie and silke hangings, and their tables with carpets & fine naperie, whereby the wealth of our countrie ... dooth infinitelie appear;”

[5.] “the multitude of chimnies latelie erected;” [6.] “the great (although not generall) amendment of lodging, for

(said they) our fathers (yea, and we our selues also) haue lien full oft vpon straw pallets, on rough mats couered onelie with a sheet, vnder couerlets made of dagswain or hopharlots (I vse their owne termes), and a good round log vnder their heads in steed of a bolster or pillow.... Pillowes (said they) were thought meet onelie for women in childbed. As for seruants, if they had anie sheet aboue them, it was well, for seldome had they anie vnder their bodies, to keepe them from the pricking straws that ran oft through the canuas of the pallet, and rased their hardened hides.”... [7.] “The exchange of vessell, as of treene^[46] platters into pewter, and wooden spoones into siluer or tin. For so common were all sorts of treene stuffe in old time, that a man should hardlie find four peeces of pewter (of which one was peradventure a salt) in a good farmers house, and yet for all this frugalitie (if it may so be iustly called) they were scarce able to liue and paie their rents at their daies without selling of a cow, or an horsse, or more, although they paid but foure pounds at the vttermost by the yeare.”

The farmer was very poor too; and yet now, though his £4 rent is raised to £40, he can not only buy plate, and featherbeds, etc., but can purchase a renewal of his lease, 6 years before the expiration of the old one; and the paying the money “shall neuer trouble him more than the haire of his beard, when the barber hath washed and shaued it from his chin.” Against these signs of prosperity, these fat kine, are 3, nay 4, lean kine, which eat up their plump brethren,

“three things ... are growen to be verie grieuous vnto them, to wit, the inhansing of rents, latelie mentioned; the

dailie oppression of copiholders, whose lords seeke to bring their poore tenants almost into plaine seruitude and miserie, dailie deuising new meanes, and seeking vp all the old, how to cut them shorter and shorter, doubling, trebling, and now & then seuen times increasing their fines; driuing them also for euerie trifle to loose and forfeit their tenures (by whome the greatest part of the realme dooth stand and is mainteined), to the end they may fleece them yet more, which is a lamentable hering. The third thing they talke of is vsurie, a trade brought in by the Jewes, now perfectlie practised almost by euerie christain, and so commonlie, that he is accompted but for a foole that dooth lend his monie for nothing."

Interest has run up to 12 per cent.; wherefore, "helpe I praie thee in lawfull maner to hang vp such as take *Centum pro cento*, for they are no better worthie as I doo iudge in conscience." The 4th grievance is that Gentlemen (!) have actually "themselves become grasiers, butchers, tanners, sheepmasters, woodmen, and *denique quod non!*"

The chapter, "Of Cities and Townes in England," is dull, but has a short account of the antiquities found in old Verulam, and Harrison's visit there in the summer of 1586 or 1585; and his groan over the decay of houses, their destruction by greedy land-owners, and the hard fare of poor men. He evidently would have put a limit to the land that one man might hold. In "Of Castles and Holds," he wants the East coast fortified (p. 265), notes the frequency of old camps "in the plaine fields of England," and says:—

“I need not to make anie long discourse of castles, sith it is not the nature of a good Englishman to regard to be caged vp as in a coope, and hedged in with stone wals, but rather to meet with his enimie in the plaine field at handstrokes, where he may trauaise his ground, choose his plot, and vse the benefit of sunne shine, wind and weather, to his best aduantage & commoditie.”

In the next chapter he describes the Queen’s palaces, but prefers the Henry VIII. buildings to the Elizabethan:

“Certes masonrie did neuer better flourish in England than in his time. And albeit that in these daies there be manie goodlie houses erected in the sundrie quarters of this lland; yet they are rather curious to the eie, like paper worke,^[47] than substantiall for continuance: whereas such as he did set vp, excell in both, and therefore may iustlie be preferred farre aboue all the rest.”

He then gives an interesting account of the virtues of the Queen’s Maids of Honour, the vices of the Courtiers; the studies of the young Ladies, and the medical powers of the old; all of them being able to cook admirably, and the Carte or Bill of Fare of the dinner having been just introduced. Lastly he notes the admirable order and absence of ill-doing in the Queen’s court. Her “Progresses” he approv’d of.

He treats “Of Armour and Munition;” but, says Harrison, “what hath the longe blacke gowne to doo with glistering armour?” Still, he echoes the universal lament of Ascham, the Statutes, etc., etc., over the decay of Long-Bow shooting in England:—

“Certes the Frenchmen and Rutters deriding our new archerie in respect of their corslets, will not let in open skirmish, if anie leisure serue, to turne vp their tailes and crie: ‘Shoote English,’ and all bicause our strong shooting is decaied and laid in bed. But if some of our Englishmen now liued that serued king Edward the third in his warres with France, the breech of such a varlet should haue beene nailed to his bum with one arrow, and an other fethered in his bowels, before he should haue turned about to see who shot the first.”

He then says that all the young fellows above eighteen or twenty wear a dagger; noblemen wear swords or rapiers too, while “desperate cutters” carry two daggers or two rapiers, “wherewith in euerie dronken fraie they are knowen to work much mischief.” And as trampers carry long staves, the honest traveller is obliged to carry pistols, “to ride with a case of dags at his saddlebow, or with some pretie short snapper,” while parsons have only a dagger or hanger, if they carry anything at all. The tapsters and ostlers at inns are in league with the highway robbers,^[48] who rob chiefly at Christmas time, to get money to spend at dice and cards, till they “be trussed vp in a Tiburne tippet.”

Passing over the chapter on the “Navy,” Queen Elizabeth’s delight in it, and the fast sailing of our ships, we come on a characteristic and interesting chapter “Of Faires and Markets.” This subject is within Harrison’s home-life, as a buyer; and it’s on the buyer’s side, which includes the poor man’s, that he argues. Magistrates don’t see the proclamation price and goodness of bread kept to; bodgers are allowd to buy up corn and raise the price of it; to carry it

home unsold, or to a distant market, if they want more money than the buyer likes to give; nay, they've leave to export it for the benefit of enemies and Papists abroad, so as to make more profit. Again, pestiferous purveyors buy up eggs, chickens, bacon, etc.; buttermen travel about and buy up butter at farmers' houses, and have raised its price from 18d. to 40d. a gallon. These things are ill for the buyer and the poor man, and should not be allowed:—

“I wish that God would once open their eyes that deal thus, to see their own errors: for as yet some of them little care how many poor men suffer extremity, so that they may fill their purses, and carry away the gain.”

Good doctrine, no doubt; but “*nous avons changé tout cela.*” However in one thing the modern Political Economist can agree with Harrison:—

“I gather that the maintenance of a superfluous number of dealers in most trades, tillage always excepted, is one of the greatest causes why the prices of things become excessive.”

There's a comical bit about the names for ale, “huffecap, mad dog, angels' food,” etc., and the way

“our maltbugs lug at this liquor, even as pigs should lie in a row, lugging at their dames teats, till they lie still againe, and be not able to wag ... and ... hale at hufcap, till they be red as cockes, & little wiser than their combs.”

In his chapter "Of Parks and Warrens," Harrison tells us how coney warrens have increast, from the value of the creatures' black skins and the quick sale for young rabbits in London; and what a shocking thing it is that one Lady has sold her husband's venison to the Cooks, and another Lady has ridden to market to see her butter sold! it's as bad as an Earl feeling his own oxen to see whether they're ready for the butcher! He then gives us a refreshing bit of his mind on owners of parks who enclose commons:

"And yet some owners, still desirous to inlarge those grounds, as either for the breed and feeding of cattell, doo not let dailie to take in more, not sparing the verie commons whervpon manie townships now and then doo liue, affirming that we haue already too great store of people in England; and that youth by marrieng too soone doo nothing profit the countrie, but fill it full of beggars, to the hurt and vtter vndooing (they saie) of the common wealth.

"Certes, if it be not one curse of the Lord, to haue our countrie conuerted in such sort, from the furniture of mankind, into the walks and shrowds of wild beasts, I know not what is anie. How manie families also these great and small games (for so most keepers call them) haue eaten vp, and are likelie hereafter to deuoure, some men may coniecture, but manie more lament, sith there is no hope of restraint to be looked for in this behalfe, because the corruption is so generall."

The chapter "Of Gardens and Orchards" is interesting, not only as containing the bit quoted above on Harrison's own garden, but for its note of how vegetables, roots, and

salad herbs, that had gone out of use since Henry IV.'s time, had in Henry VIII.'s and Elizabeth's days come into daily consumption, so that men even eat dangerous fruits like mushrooms. Also, hops and madder were grown again, and rare medicinable herbs. Gardens were beautified, plants imported; orchards supplied with apricot, almond, peach, fig, and cornel trees; nay, capers, oranges, lemons, and wild olives. Grafting was practist with great skill and success; even dishwater was utilis'd for plants. And as to roses, there was one in Antwerp in 1585 that had 180 leaves on one button or flower, and Harrison could have had a slip of it for £10 (£60 now?) if he hadn't thought it "but a tickle hazard."

The chapter "Of Woods and Marshes" is interesting, from Harrison's laments in it over the destruction of English woods, which he saw yearly disappearing around him,^[49] one man, as he says, having turnd sixty woods into one pair of breeches.^[50] And then, mov'd by the thought of what will become of England without its oaks, the unselfish old parson utters the four dearest wishes of his heart:—

"I would wish that I might liue no longer than to see foure things in this land reformed, that is: (1) the want of discipline in the church: (2) the couetous dealing of most of our merchants in the preferment of the commodities of other countries, and hinderance of their owne: (3) the holding of faires and markets vpon the sundaie to be abolished, and referred to the wednesdaies: (4) and that euerie man, in whatsoeuer part of the champaine soile enioieth fortie acres of land and vpwards, after that rate, either by free deed, copie hold, or fee farme, might plant one acre of wood, or sowe the same with oke mast, hasell,

beech, and sufficient prouision be made that it may be cherished and kept. But I feare me that I should then liue too long, and so long, that I should either be wearie of the world, or the world of me; and yet they are not such things but they may easilie be brought to passe.”

This same chapter contains the capital bit about the oaken men and willow houses and their smoke-dried inhabiteurs, quoted above; and a strong protest against rascally tanners and wood-fellers who, for private gain, evade the laws; also some good advice about draining.

In his chapter on “Baths and Hot Wells,” Harrison says that he’s tasted the water of King’s Newnham well, near Coventry, and that it had “a tast much like to allume liquor, and yet nothing vnpleasant nor vnsauorie in the drinking.” From his description of Bath it is clear that he had been there, unless he quotes an eye-witness’s words as his own. His chapter, “Of Antiquities found,” tells us of his own collection of Roman coins which he intended to get engrav’d in his *Chronologie*, though, he says, the cost of engraving,

“as it hath doone hitherto, so the charges to be employed vpon these brasen or copper images will hereafter put by the impression of that treatise: whereby it maie come to passe, that long trauell shall soone proue to be spent in vaine, and much cost come to verie small successe.”

His words seem to imply that he’d visited Colchester (as no doubt he had) and York, in his search for coins. His account “Of the Coines of England,” Chapter XXV., ends his Book II., the first of his *Description of England*.

This section^[51] is longer than I meant it to be; and it doesn't bring out the religious side of Harrison's character. But I hope it leaves the reader with a kindly impression of the straightforward racy Radwinter parson and Windsor canon. A business-like, God-fearing, truth-seeking, learned, kind-hearted, and humorous fellow, he seems to me; a good gardener, an antiquarian and numismatist, a true lover of his country, a hater of shams, lazy lubbers, and evil-doers; a man that one likes to shake hands with, across the rift of 200 years that separates us.

F. J. FURNIVALL.

3 ST. GEORGE'S SQUARE, PRIMROSE HILL,
LONDON, N.W., 13th July, 1876.

EDITORIAL NOTE.

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“How easy dost thou take all England up:
From forth this morsel of dead royalty——”

No book is more quoted and less read than *Holinshed's Chronicles*. Since the original editions of 1577 and 1587 (the latter an expansion of the former), the work has been but once republished. Early in this century a syndicate of the great London booksellers issued an expensive reprint, far more inaccessible to the general reader than are the folios of the time of Elizabeth. Even morsels of the work have never been attempted until the issue by the “New Shakspeare Society,” a dozen years ago, of Dr. Furnivall's