XI

WESTMINSTER

Westminster is a Metropolitan borough. It is also a city and its formal name is the City of Westminster. In this larger official sense it is bounded by the CITY on the East, by Chelsea on the West by Oxford Street on the North, and the Thames on the South. It therefore includes the Law Courts, Whitehall, the Houses of Parliament, the Abbey, the Royal Residences, most of the great houses of the wealthy, and Hyde Park. The name Westminster however is commonly reserved to that restricted area that includes the Houses of Parliament, the Abbey, Little Saint Margaret’s and the immediate precincts of these commanding edifices. This is the centre of interest that makes the name stand for so much of supreme importance in history.

THE ABBEY

Standing opposite the west end of the Abbey and looking East we have in front of us one of the noblest scenes associated with the history of man. That patch of earth on which these buildings stand was once called Thorney Isle or the Isle of Brambles, a low, flat sandbank, rising a few feet above the Thames and covered with wild shrubs. It was surrounded by marshes, through which the Tyburn, dividing into two, wound on the North and on the South, encircling the island before entering the Thames. In Roman times a temple of Apollo and a villa stood on that island and later, about the third century, a little Roman British church stood beside the temple.

We will pay our first imaginary visit to Thorney in the sixth century. It is now desolate and forsaken. The Saxon conquest avoiding the walled CITY has overrun the country round about. Amid the tangled growth of brambles rise the ruins of Roman villa and Pagan temple and Christian church, ivy crowned and crumbling. There is a smell of rank vegetation and decay, scattered refuse, broken vessels, a skull half hidden by the mould, and the Thames rising and falling with the tides, but no sign of life.

A hundred years pass. Another change has come over Thorney. A Saxon manor takes the place of the ruins of the Roman villa; a
View looking east from Broad Sanctuary. Westminster Abbey, Saint Margaret's, Victoria Tower and the Clock Tower.
Saxon church stands where the Roman church and temple stood. Another hundred years bring us to the early eighth century and a slightly clearer view of Thorney. Its life is now enlarged. The Church has grown to an Abbey and a new monastic foundation of the Benedictines dedicated to Saint Peter, is nearing completion. It is called the West Minster or Monastery because it lies to the west of the City. Still stands the Manor House toward the river and all along the banks rise the huts of fishermen, for the Thames is full of fish. A day comes when the new Abbey Church of Saint Peter is complete. The next day is set apart for the hallowing. All has been made ready and the good monks go home to bed. The whole city sleeps. Edric, a fisherman, living at Thorney, is awakened by a loud voice calling from the opposite side of the river. A midnight traveller wants to be rowed across the Thames. Passing over in his boat Edric
finds a venerable looking man carrying in his hands some vessels pertaining to the sacred offices of a church. In silence he rows the visitor across the river. The stranger at once enters the newly finished church which immediately becomes lit up with an uncommon brilliance, and Edric, watching without, hears voices chanting psalms. Then the chanting stops, the lights go out and the stranger reappears.

"Edric," says he, "I am Peter, come down from Heaven to hallow my holy Church. My task is done. The lights you saw were the candles of Heaven and the voices you heard were the voices of angels. Tomorrow tell the Bishop what you have seen and tell him that I have left a sign and a token of my hallowing. To you also will I give a sign and a token to strengthen your belief, Oh Edric. Go you out on the river and cast your net and be prepared for such a catch of fish as will remove your doubting, and see that you give a
tenth to my holy church and that you and your brethren do likewise forever as a memorial of my visit."

Then Peter disappeared. Just why he had landed on the wrong side of the river on his arrival is not a question to be asked or answered by this generation.

Edric the fisherman did as he had been told and presently his net was as full of miraculous fish as Peter's had been once on the Sea of Galilee.

In the morning the King and his retinue, with the Bishop and clergy come up the river to hallow the Church. As they land Edric meets them with his tale of the midnight visitor and his wonderful fish story. Marveling, they enter into the Church where they find the incense fresh from Heaven lingering on the air. In the dust upon the altar a finger has written words in Greek and there on the floor are the drippings of the candles made in Heaven. What is there to do but believe? To doubt would be all but sacrilege. Better to proclaim the miracle far and wide, with a service of thanksgiving and a day of rejoicing. That done they all return to London to celebrate with a banquet and then Edric's part is fulfilled, for his finest and most miraculous salmon is served on the banquet board.

But that was by no means the end of it; on the contrary it was but the beginning of tradition and the foundation of custom. The legend became an article of faith. The peculiar sanctity of a place so divinely favoured led to the right of sanctuary to which Westminster had a special claim. Most important of all, Edric's injunction from the Keeper of the Keys of Heaven to give a tenth of his catch of fish to the Church, became at once a vested right and for centuries Westminster Abbey continued to receive and to claim as a right a tithe of all fish caught in the Thames. I am by no means sure that the same right is not exercised still, but today the receipts would not be important. In former times they would represent a large revenue for the Thames swarmed with fine salmon and other fish. In addition, a successor and representative of Edric held office at least as late as the end of the fourteenth century. He was a Thames fisherman and he had the right to sit at the table with the Prior of Westminster once a year, and to demand of the cellarer as much ale and bread as he wished. It is quite evident that these privileges of Edric's successive representatives were first enjoyed by Edric himself and handed down among the customs then established. I do not know whether a Thames fisherman still sits at Somebody's table at West-
minster Abbey, demanding ale and bread from the cellarer. If not it only shows how faint our beliefs have become, and how pitiful our faith compared to the faith of our fathers.

From the consecration of that Abbey by Saint Peter in the eighth century another hundred years go by and again Thorney presents a scene of desolation. The Danes have raided the little island and again it is claimed by the brambles that cluster about Saint Peter’s shrine and its deserted monastery. Still another century and the Benedictine foundation is restored by King Edgar. In the century following comes Canute the Dane, crowned King in 1016. His countrymen have settled to the West of London over toward Thorney which the King chooses for his residence. On the site of the Saxon
Manor he builds himself a palace. The Abbey, now two hundred years old, renews its life under the shadow of the Royal Dwelling.

In less than a decade after the death of Canute, Edward the Confessor, last but one of the Saxon line of kings, succeeded to the throne and soon began to lay the foundations of the great Abbey that replaced the older building. It was finished in fifteen years and in place of the little Saxon Abbey with its dozen monks there now rose the stately Westminster, with its fourscore monks and mitred abbots, officially styled to this day the Collegiate Church of Saint Peter's in Westminster. The style of its architecture was Norman and it was of surpassing beauty and of imposing magnitude, for the Church with cloisters, refectory, dormitory, infirmary, chapter house and all its monastic additions, divided the whole island of Thorney with the Royal Palace where Edward the Confessor lived in the halls of his predecessors, and dying was buried in his Abbey where his saintly fame soon brought pilgrims flocking to his tomb. Within a century of his death he was canonized by the Pope and when yet another century had passed, Henry III had a splendid new shrine erected behind the High Altar to receive the coffin of the saintly King and at the same time he began to rebuild the Church in the pointed style, just then coming in, gradually replacing the Confessor's Church on its own foundations. In this way the choir and transepts of the new church came to be completed in 1269 and the Confessor's Chapel was also built about his newmade shrine.

Apparently without compunction or misgiving this new builder destroyed the splendid fabric of the Norman Church built by one whom he considered sacred, to replace it by a different fabric, only because the style of architecture had changed. Dean Stanley makes the remark that the building of Westminster Abbey by Edward the Confessor was the precursor of the Norman Conquest. That is true for it was the passage from the Saxon way of building to the Norman way, from the little Saxon fabric with wooden rafters to the great Norman fabric with vaulted roofs, stout pillars and rounded arches. The rebuilding of the Abbey by Henry III on the other hand represented the transition from the Norman to the English style.

The Confessor's shrine within the new fabric had a roof of gold, adorned with golden images of the Saints, and it blazed below with rich mosaic and coloured enamel, the precious work of Italian craftsmen. In the body of the shrine and raised high above the floor was placed the coffin where it still remains; but the costly sepulchre,
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stripped of its golden roof and mosaic covering is today a sadly mutilated monument. The Royal Chapel—the Chapel of Saint Edward—remains intact, and there, gathered in their royal tombs like pilgrims round that ruined shrine, lie the Plantagenet Kings and Queens. There too, over against the high altar screen, stands the Coronation Chair enclosing in its scarred and battered wooden frame a block of stone—the ancient Stone of Scone. Hard by that Seat of Majesty is the simple tomb of Edward I as though he would guard the sacred relic that he wrung from the Scottish Kings and on which his successors have ever since been crowned.

Successive generations continued rebuilding the Abbey and Henry VII in his time added at the East end the beautiful perpendicular Chapel that bears his name and that contains his tomb, a black marble mausoleum protected by a bronze grill decorated with the arms and devices of the Tudors. On the top of the tomb, the work of Torigiano, the marble effigies of Henry and his Queen turn their faces toward that vaulted roof where a magic chisel has transformed the solid masonry into a vibrant thing—light as the silken banners of the Order of the Bath that float above the carven seats of the knights along the walls.

In the North aisle of Henry VIIth’s chapel rises the lofty tomb of Elizabeth who is accompanied by her sister Mary Tudor and in the corresponding position in the South aisle, the similar tomb of her victim Mary Queen of Scots keeps it company in this “Temple of Silence and Reconciliation.”

The most beautiful tombs in the Abbey are a group of three early ones in the Sanctuary and there are many more to claim attention but I have neither the will nor the space to describe the crowded sepulchres where so many lie, all up and down the aisles, in the transepts and in the nave.

There are the graves of the statesmen and of the poets and there is the grave of Thomas Parr, who was 152 years old and lived in ten reigns, inclusive of Edward IV and Charles I. That was his claim to a place in the Abbey. He has had no rivals.

As for those offending monuments that strike many of this generation as so false and so profane in their plebeian advertisement, much has been said about them and they have received scant courtesy. Some have not hesitated to advocate their removal, but others feel that it is more becoming to refrain and leave them for the judgment of a generation farther removed that may have cause to cherish them.
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Whatever else they may be, they are a part of this place, a part of all it means and all it seeks to convey to the ages. Whether it strikes one of us as false or as true no one has any right to delete so much as one syllable of that message. One of the things the Abbey teaches us is not to trust the evanescent canons of art and besides the Abbey is not a Museum of the Fine Arts or a Temple of the Muses; it is no other than the greatest human document that the ages have produced.

The oldest grave is that of Sebert and his wife Ethelgoda. The latest is that of an unknown soldier killed in the Great War. A slab in the floor of the nave marks the position of his grave and pilgrims come in millions there and nations lay their tribute on that tomb. No one knows his name, or who he was, or whence he sprang, but Nelson was not honoured so. He whose battle cry was "Victory and Westminster Abbey" was not laid there among the Kings or given the splendid sepulture of that Nameless One.

THE ABBEY CLOISTERS

The visitor who passes through the door in the South wall of the Church into the East Walk of the Cloisters will notice, as he approaches a low passage leading to his left, that he is now in a part of the Abbey that is guarded by policemen and not by vergers. The passage referred to leads to the Chapter House which with the adjoining Chapel of the Pyx is Crown property and not under the jurisdiction of the Dean. At the Dissolution of the Monasteries, Henry VIII appropriated these parts and they have never been returned. The beautiful Chapter House was built by Henry III who removed the Confessor's Chapter House, leaving only the Norman crypt that lies beneath. The crypt, formerly a treasury of the Abbey, is reached by a narrow stairs descending from a nook in the Poets' Corner of the Abbey Church. Its walls are seventeen feet thick and within that Norman Crypt of the Chapter House during the War of 1914-1918 were placed for safety the Coronation Chair, the sword of Edward III and some other treasures of the Abbey.

A Chapter House is in itself a peculiarly English Institution, a chamber architecturally designed to be the meeting place of a deliberative Assembly. The Abbey Chapter House fulfilled its destiny as a permanent part of English History but it was first the place where the whole monastery met under the presiding rule of the Abbot for the government of the Abbey.
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It is a stately structure, round in plan, with lofty roof supported on groined vaults and with a graceful central pillar. Opposite the entrance is the stone stall on which the Abbot presided over the weekly meetings of the brethren, who, as they filed in two and two, wore the flagstones into ruts. Around the circumference of the chamber run the stone seats where they took their places, and where in the order of procedure they made themselves heard in the assembly.

The special claim that History has on this Chapter House is that it was the first meeting place of the House of Commons after it separated from the Lords in 1282 and continued to be the regular meeting place of the Commons till 1547 when that body moved to Saint Stephen's Chapel in Old Westminster Palace. Then the Chapter House was used for keeping State documents and among other ancient records Domesday Book and its oaken chest might be seen there down to 1865 when all were moved to the Record Office in Chancery Lane.

A few steps beyond the passage leading to the Chapter House is a Norman Archway closed by a massive door with seven locks. This is a remaining part of the Confessor's building and its uses give it a peculiar distinction. From the time of the Confessor till that of Edward I it was the Treasury of England. This use illustrates the close connection between the Palace and Abbey. In this Treasury were kept the most honoured of the National trophies and relics,
The Chapel of the Pyx in Westminster Abbey, once the Treasury of England. The structure against the wall on the left is usually regarded as an altar; it is believed by some to be the Tomb of Huguin, Treasurer of Edward the Confessor. The Watcher's Beam is seen between the central pillar and the opposite pier.
including the sword of Wayland Smith and the Black Rood of Scotland. It is called the Chapel of the Pyx because there the Norman, Plantagenet and Tudor Kings kept the Pyx or chest containing the standard pieces of gold and silver used in testing the coins of the realm, but it was also the Royal Treasury which with its ponderous walls and seven locked door with seven keys held by seven different Abbey officials was considered robberproof. The spell was broken in 1303. In June of that year, Edward the First was at Linlithgow fighting the Scots when news came to him that his treasury had been robbed. It was surely the most daring robbery in history for the robbers got away with about three million pounds sterling, at present values, in gold and left Edward's crown and the regalia strewn on the floor. The Abbot of Westminster and forty eight monks together with thirty two laymen were arrested and committed to the Tower. At the trial the Abbot and all but two of the holy men were able to make out a case for themselves but a suspicion has always attached to them and it is hard to see how the robbery could have been carried out without their connivance. The subprior and the sacristan were implicated together with some of the laymen. Dean Stanley, the historian of the Abbey, assures us that, attached to the door of the Treasury and also to some of the adjacent doors, are to be found
some remaining pieces of human skin which he gives us to understand are the tangible evidence of the indemnity demanded by Edward I of the robbers. Perhaps I ought to call them reparations but in any case they were paid and they were ample enough to line the doors. I confess that I have not seen the evidence but I have not lived in the Abbey like Dean Stanley.

After the robbery the relics and the Regalia continued to reside in the same place as formerly but the Treasury was established elsewhere and the Pyx was placed in the custody of the Goldsmiths Company where it still remains. The relics and Regalia were

![The West Cloister, looking north, Westminster Abbey.](image)

destroyed by the Commonwealth Government which broke into the Chapel and removed them. Included in this destruction was the Regalia of the Saxon Kings. The present Regalia of England, which is kept in the Tower, is taken for one night to the Abbey in token of old guardianship and on the eve of Coronation Day is deposited in Jerusalem Chamber.

The Chapel of the Pyx and adjoining Norman Undercroft, together with the crypt of the Chapter House, are the oldest parts of the Abbey and date from the eleventh century. A few steps south from the door of the Chapel of the Pyx the Dark Cloister opens to the left and leads to the Little Cloisters. From the Dark Cloister one reaches also the Norman Undercroft now incorporated in West-
minster School which occupies a group of buildings including the monks' dormitory and refectory. The dormitory is over the East Cloister and the refectory runs the length of the South Cloister with which it connects by a door. Ashburnham House designed by Inigo Jones, formerly the property of Lord Ashburnham is now also incorporated in the School. It has many fine architectural features, especially the exquisite carving round the doorways and the beautiful staircase. In the Cloisters were buried the abbots, and in the enclosed garden were the graves of the monks. Along the South Cloister may be seen, close against the stone seat ranged along the wall, the stone effigies of the Norman Abbots carved in the slabs above their graves.

Westminster Abbey from the Dean's yard.

No one can walk through the East Cloister without pausing in front of that plain little tablet in the wall that says so meekly sweet amid all these memories: JANE LISTER, DEAR CHILDE, breathed over a faded flower of youth.

In the West Cloister is the grave of John Broughton, buried there in 1789. Below his name and date there is a blank space on the slab in the pavement that covers his grave. That space was intended for the words CHAMPION OF ENGLAND, but whoever was dean in 1789 jibbed at that and the space was left blank. But everyone knows that the great Broughton was the Prince of Prize Fighters in his day, the Champion Heavyweight of Britain. If I am not mistaken he was also the inventor of the modern boxing glove. The West Cloister was the original place of the Westminster School for there the Master of the Novices used to preside over his disciples.
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The Abbey has been called correctly enough the Temple of Silence and Reconciliation, but it is much more than that. It is many things and I think that it is preeminently the Apotheosis of the National Character. At its inception an act of homage to Saint Peter on the part of a pious King. Then a temple rising like a prophet's vision round the Sovereign's dust. Then generations of Kings and Queens entombed around the shrine of Sacred Majesty. Saint Peter is supplanted. Courtiers and statesmen cluster round the kings as the widening circle grows. Philosophers, poets, soldiers, sailors, divines, historians, explorers, men of science, artists, antiquarians, physicians, actors and actresses fill up the ranks of the National Valhalla and the prize fighter is there to redress the balance.

There is no committee or high tribunal and no superior authority to decide who shall be honoured and who shall be excluded, nothing but the national instinct. For method or uniformity in honouring the Nation's dead you may look in vain. Neither rule nor regularity is observed. Order has no sanction and congruity no hearing. If there is any conformity it is to Nature's great and inexorable plan of inequality, partiality and caprice. Lord Byron is turned away and St. Evremond is admitted. Shakespeare is not buried in the Abbey but you will find the tomb of Chaucer and the grave of Spenser who died for lack of bread, and of Ben Jonson who in his old age was saved by his friends from abject want. Bacon is not among the philosophers, nor has he a line to his name in the Abbey, but the author of the Beggar's Opera is among the wits and the lines on his tomb record his own philosophy.

Life is a jest and all things show it;
I thought so once and now I know it.

Neither Keats nor Shelley has a memorial, no one knows why; but Longfellow has a monument, because the Nation has never discovered that Americans are not compatriots. It is very human and altogether English. It is a microcosm of the National life expressed in terms of death.

Westminster School is descended from a monastic college as old as the Abbey itself. It was remodeled by Queen Elizabeth who founded the King's Scholars, a distinguished feature of a very distinguished school, that must be one of the oldest schools of England. No longer a dependent of the Abbey, Westminster School is one of its surviving glories, and as if in memory of the severed ties
the boys attend service in the Abbey and have a right to seats in the choir at each Coronation.

Even the assent of the people of England to the election of the sovereign has found its voice in modern days through the shouts of the scholars from their recognized seats in the Abbey. (Dean Stanley.)

From the School one may walk through the Dean’s Yard where the drowsy stillness is shaded by great elm trees that seem like a sacred grove for pigeons. At No. 7 Dean’s Yard is the Royal Almonry Office, not to be confounded with the Almonry of Westminster Abbey. From that office the King’s alms are distributed at Christmas and at Easter. On one of these occasions the distribution takes place at a service in the Abbey, a surviving custom of great antiquity which I have described in another place.
From the Dean’s Yard one may pass to the Jerusalem Chamber and the adjoining dining hall of the Abbots’ house, now the dining hall of Westminster School. The long tables are great timbers from the ships of the Armada. Through Dean’s yard the visitor passes out through the Dean’s gate facing the Westminster column opposite the West front of the Abbey and so into Broad Sanctuary.

Doorway in Ashburnham House, Westminster, now incorporated in the Westminster School together with parts of the Monastic Buildings of the Abbey. From a photograph made for the Society for Photographing Old Buildings.

Broad Sanctuary

Here let us pause while the traffic of London sweeps around and consider the memories preserved in the name of the ground on which we stand. Here the civil power had no authority, for in that precinct the sanctity of the Abbey extended its protection to the fugitive pursued by the agents of the law. Here the criminal had right of
sanctuary and here the hunted offender was safe from the private vengeance of his enemy. Within this sacred precinct was a massive tower with a strong door where the fugitive might find lodging and shelter, but material defences were not necessary, for the sanctity of the place was sufficient. Broad Sanctuary extended on the West and North of the Abbey as far as Parliament Square and its boundaries

Archway in Ashburnham House. From a photograph made for the Society for Photographing Old Buildings.

were the inviolate line of the Church's authority. To ignore those boundaries in the pursuit of an enemy or in vindication of the law was sacrilege. The King himself would not venture on so dangerous an errand and Cardinal Wolsey dared not take thence his enemy. Among all who took sanctuary there few were so wronged as the Queen Mother, Elizabeth Woodville, widow of Edward IV. Twice she took sanctuary from Richard Duke of Gloucester and there

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her son, Edward V, was “born in sorrow and baptized like a poor man’s child.”

Just outside the western bounds of this sanctuary, over towards the end of Tothill Street, there stood a great gatehouse built by Richard II, massive as a fortress and destined for a prison. Its gloomy chronicle of events is sharply accentuated at one point. It was there that Walter Raleigh spent the night before his execution when he wrote his last thoughts on life.

Even such is time that takes on trust
Our youth, our joys and all we have
And pays us naught but age and dust,
Which in the dark and silent grave
When we have wandered all our ways
Shuts up the story of our days.

After sentence had been passed on him in Westminster Hall, he was conveyed thence in a carriage to the Gatehouse. The Dean of Westminster who came to pray with him was embarrassed by his high spirits. Then came his wife to spend their last evening together. She left him shortly after midnight. In the morning he “was very cheerful and merry, ate his breakfast heartily and took a last whiff of his beloved tobacco, and made no more of his death than if he had been about to take a journey.”

Among the other prisoners who were confined in the Gatehouse was the Royalist Richard Lovelace who there wrote a little poem that everybody knows.

Stone walls do not a prison make
Nor iron bars a cage;
Minds innocent and quiet take
That for a hermitage.
If I have freedom in my love
And in my soul am free,
Angels alone that soar above
Enjoy such liberty.

If it had been a very dreadful prison, the Cavalier Poet would probably not have felt like writing such sweet and tender sentiments, but it is true that the Gatehouse prison afterwards acquired a very bad reputation. Dr. Johnson denounced it as a disgrace to London and it was removed in his time.

To return to Broad Sanctuary, it possessed a greater degree of sanctity than other places to which a similar privilege attached.
Every Church afforded the same form of protection and there were in London two special chartered sanctuaries that, owing to the security afforded them within their sacred bounds, became strongholds of thieves and robbers, where the frontier was a deadline that no outsider dared to trespass. Across that deadline the inhabitants of the sanctuary conducted raids upon the peaceful inhabitants of the City. These sanctuaries were the notorious St. Martin le Grand—now occupied by the General Post Office, and Alsatia, a name applied by the lawless inhabitants to Whitefriars adjoining the Temple, now the territory of the Press.

Broad Sanctuary never was subject to the abuses that made St. Martin le Grand and Alsatia a menace to their neighbours and a scandal to the City. At Westminster the right of sanctuary remained what it was intended to be, a refuge where anyone might find safety from the vengeance of the law or from the persecution of his fellowmen. The privilege of Sanctuary was abolished in 1697.

**Westminster Palace**

We have seen how King Canute built himself a palace at Thorney on the site of older buildings and how Edward the Confessor occupied and enlarged the same Royal dwelling. William the Conqueror resided there at times and it was probably his principal dwelling while the Tower was building. His son William Rufus started to rebuild the Palace of which he lived to complete only the Banqueting Hall now called Westminster Hall. His successors continued during many generations to add building after building until the area now
occupied by the Houses of Parliament including New Palace Yard, so called because it was the great forecourt of William Rufus's new palace, was occupied by the King's House, Westminster. It was the principal Royal dwelling till Henry VIII moved to Whitehall which Wolsey's fall left vacant. Westminster Palace was like a little city enclosed by towered walls. The appearance that it presented must have been picturesque in the extreme. When its courts and halls and galleries and gardens were filled with colour, with the splendour of a mediæval court and its gorgeous retinue, it must have been very wonderful. Among its historic halls were the Painted Chamber, the

Westminster Hall. Built by William Rufus as a new banqueting hall for Westminster Palace. It has witnessed many historic scenes including trial of William Wallace, the trial of Charles I and trial of William Hastings. It is now incorporated in Westminster Palace or the Houses of Parliament and this view is the one seen from New Palace yard. From an old print.

Prince's Chamber, the Star Chamber, Saint Stephen's Chapel, Westminster Hall and the Old House of Lords. After 1547 the House of Commons met in Saint Stephen's Chapel having moved over from the Chapter House of the Abbey. The walls that enclosed the Palace enclosed also the Abbey. There was a private communication between the two, and the church was in fact the Royal Chapel attached to the Palace of Westminster.

All of the Palace buildings with one exception were burned down in 1832 in a great fire. The one exception was Westminster Hall, William Rufus's great banqueting hall, which may give an idea of the scale of the Palace. This hall and the crypt of Saint
Stephen's Chapel, which also escaped, have been incorporated in the New Houses of Parliament begun after the fire and finished in 1857. When the ground was being cleared of the débris left by the fire, a vast system of crypts, cellars, vaults and foundation walls belonging to the Palace of Canute and his successors were uncovered. To give a solid foundation for the new buildings these were filled in with cement, and on those venerable foundations the Houses of Parliament stand. In the erection of that great pile, Saint Stephen's Chapel, which bore the same relation to the Palace as St. George's bears to

The Interior of Westminster Hall, built by William Rufus as a banqueting hall. The fine oak roof with hammer beams was restored by Richard II. It is now incorporated in the west side of the Houses of Parliament.

Windsor, was rebuilt on its old foundations and above its old crypt which, not being injured, was kept intact. The restored chapel is known as Saint Stephen's Hall and a plate in the floor marks the position of the Speaker's Chair when the House of Commons used to meet in Saint Stephen's Chapel. It adjoins Westminster Hall, now used only on rare occasions, a noble old edifice whose oaken roof with its hammer beams was restored by Richard II. It was formerly used as a law court and it is crowded with memories of historic scenes. The trial of Wallace, the trial of Raleigh, the trial of Charles I, and
the trial of Warren Hastings, stand out among events the most stirring in the history of England and the Empire.

The space between the houses of Parliament and the Abbey is called Old Palace Yard. One great figure in the long procession moving across that space is revealed with distinctness among innumerable shadows. Of all the varied scenes enacted in that Palace precinct since the days of the Confessor, one scene remains indelibly impressed on men's minds. Shakespeare who had been dead two years was spared that scene, as strange, as tragic and as great as anything his genius had created for the stage. But there was a young law student at the Temple, one Oliver Cromwell, who doubtless saw it all and there was a lad in Cheapside named John Milton who may have witnessed it too, and this is what they saw.

It is a chill November morning. The pavements and the roofs are covered with a mantle of hoar frost. Early though it is, Old Palace Yard is filled with people. From every window others look down—waiting. There is no movement. It is an expectant crowd, subdued and mournful, but here and there a suppressed voice is heard in angry tones. The venerable pile of the Palace, its roofs whitened with the frost, its hoary battlements and turrets outlined against the eastern dawn, fills in the prospect, closing the view like a scene on the stage. A little advanced in the foreground stands a scaffold draped in black. The waiting is not prolonged. In the centre of the approaching group is a weary man whose hair and beard are turning grey. There is a great dignity in his look and he walks with firm step and proudly, head erect. The heart within him is a broken heart but it is the heart of an Englishman. And all England is regarding him.

Some had been his fellows in the Temple, some had drunk with him at the Mermaid, some had known him as the gallant favourite at a brilliant court, some had fought beside him in Ireland in the service of the Queen and some had been with him when he drove his questing keels through perilous seas to shores unknown. And now they see him once again—see him with a front as bold as when he stormed the Spanish Main.

Home is the sailor, home from the sea,
And the hunter is home from the hills.

The sheriff asks him respectfully whether he will step within and warm himself at the fire before ascending the scaffold. "Nay,
if it please you we will have it over quickly." Without help he
reaches the scaffold. Turning towards the headsman standing there
he touches lightly the edge of the axe. "Sharp medicine," says he.

A few words of farewell with his face raised towards the
hushed assembly. Then there is a response that rolls across Old
Palace Yard and out from the windows where some of England’s
greatest stand. Then he lays aside his cloak and kneels and bows
his head till his neck rests on the curving surface of the block, so
artfully carved to fit between a man’s head and shoulders. Standing
over him, the headsman seems nervous and hesitant.

"Strike, man!" They are his last words.

His body was laid in St. Margaret’s, Westminster. There in the
chancel you may read his name. His head, wrapped in a cloth, was
carried from the scaffold on that morning to a closed carriage not
far away in which his lady sat waiting to receive it. She took it
home and laid it in a shrine she had made for it and kept it all her
days and when she died she left it to her son—and that is the end of
the story.

The Houses of Parliament are by tradition a Royal Palace and by
virtue of that fact are in the custody of the Lord Great Chamberlain,
an hereditary office not to be confused with that of the Lord Chamber-
lain. It has a King’s Robing Room used by the King during his
State visits; a Royal Gallery and a Prince’s Chamber, besides the
House of Lords, the House of Commons and more than a thousand
chambers and apartments, the Speakers House and miles of passage.

The exterior of Westminster Palace presents a richly ornamented
late Gothic style of architecture dominated by Victoria Tower on
the South end and by the Clock Tower on the North. Its Western
front is partly occupied by Old Westminster Hall incorporated on that
side, but the East front rising from the river presents in an unbroken
stretch the outlines of a well proportioned and stately building, a
legend expressed in modern terms but with a fine sense of its ancient
glories. It shows what the Nineteenth Century could do.

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It is interesting and instructive to compare these two ancient
cities, London and Westminster, lying side by side on the same
bank of the Thames. In its history Westminster is not identified
with the stout resistance of London or with that intense civic loyalty
and impregnable defense that accentuates the Citty’s history down
to the present time. The history of Westminster leaves one to infer that it has been remarkably indifferent to all these things. Until it became a Metropolitan borough, almost the only government that city had known was an ecclesiastical government, following its traditional position of an estate attached to the Abbey. Its population had inherited no experience of government and it had no civic consciousness. Yet Westminster was the birthplace of modern constitutional government and remains the seat of national administration and of organized Society as represented by parliament.

It is the peculiar quality of London on the other hand that it always had a strong civic consciousness and also, from the time its history becomes clear, the kind of assurance that is born of long experience with the management of its affairs. What was the source of that consciousness and that assurance and how did London gain that experience? The Saxons were not city builders; they knew only village life. These attributes did not come in with the Normans for it preceded and survived the coming of the Norman monarchy. They could only have been derived from a Roman London that preserved its identity and passed on its customs and traditions. Its walls are down but its defences, built up of Charters of the City, Charters of the City Companies, customs that have the force of law and privileges that no one can explain and that owe their firm validity to their never having been questioned, or being questioned have been successfully maintained,—these defences have been proof against all assaults up to the present day. It seems to me that the modern historians who have presented the view that London derives its singular position from Roman times have an irresistible argument that could be developed much farther than has yet been done.

Quite apart from London’s historic and traditional preëminence, each of these two cities occupies in the affairs of today a separate and distinct preëminence of its own. The City of London is the financial and economic centre of things and the City of Westminster is the political centre of a far flung system.