

# OLD FATHER THAMES AND HIS

Father Thames is to be busy this year. One tunnel is being talked of and another is being built, as we read on another page, and there is to be an inquiry into the possibility of a Barrage which would turn the Thames above Woolwich into a lake, so that the river through London would be tideless and at a constant level. Ships would enter this lake through six great locks built in the dam.

THE story of the Thames as a river goes back long before the days of man.

It was the great tributary of an immense European river flowing through land that now forms the bed of the North Sea. It was then a great river flowing through the South Midlands and passing out of present-day England through the Wash. At a later period in geological time it broke through the chalk hills of the Chilterns and Berkshire Downs and gradually became confined to the great west-to-east basin through the bottom of which it flows today, a peaceful and beautiful river.

Compared with the great rivers of Asia and America its course is short and its width is narrow, yet it is one of the most important rivers in the world, for its position in England has made London not only the capital of our Motherland but the great trading and commercial centre of Europe and the world. The wharves and warehouses lining its tidal shores stand at the hub of the land area of the earth.

The Thames rises at Thames Head on the south-eastern flank of the

Cotswolds, only twenty miles from the Atlantic coast, and flows in an eastern direction across the south of England for 210 miles until its waters are lost in the North Sea at the Nore. As it flows its level falls, and when its waters reach London they are 360 feet lower than at Thames Head. Indeed, the waters of its tributary the Churn, rising from the Seven Springs, come from a height of 700 feet above the level of the sea.

## Washing the Soil of Ten of Our Fairest Counties

As it flows along it washes the soil of ten of our fairest counties—Gloucester, Wiltshire, and Oxford, Berkshire and Buckingham, Middlesex and Surrey, London and Essex and Kent. From the slopes and hills of these counties and the counties that range beyond them the Thames receives some twelve big rivers and many small rivers, rills, brooks, and rivulets, for the most part nameless. After a great rainstorm has lashed the hills and valleys and meadows that form

its basin of 5924 square miles, all these streams, big and little, hurry their turbid waters in full spate into the main river. In the days of drought the ditches and the rills dry up, but the rivers, fed from the springs in the chalk, flow steadily in, as clear and as pure as crystal.

Beautiful are most of these tributaries, and many of their names are in a tongue spoken by the ancient peoples who dwelt on their banks long before Caesar came to ford it on his conquering march fifty years before the birth of Christ.

The Isis (a classical translation of the ancient word Ouse) is the name often given to the Thames as it springs from the Cotswold Hills, from whose summits can be seen the Atlantic tide as it flows up the estuary of the Severn. The three first tributaries of note braw down from the same Gloucestershire range: the Churn, which, after passing Cirencester, crosses the border into Wiltshire to join the Thames near Cricklade; the Coln, with Bibury and Fairford on its banks, flowing in at Lechlade; and half a mile to the east the Leach, which arrives at the meeting-place of three counties.

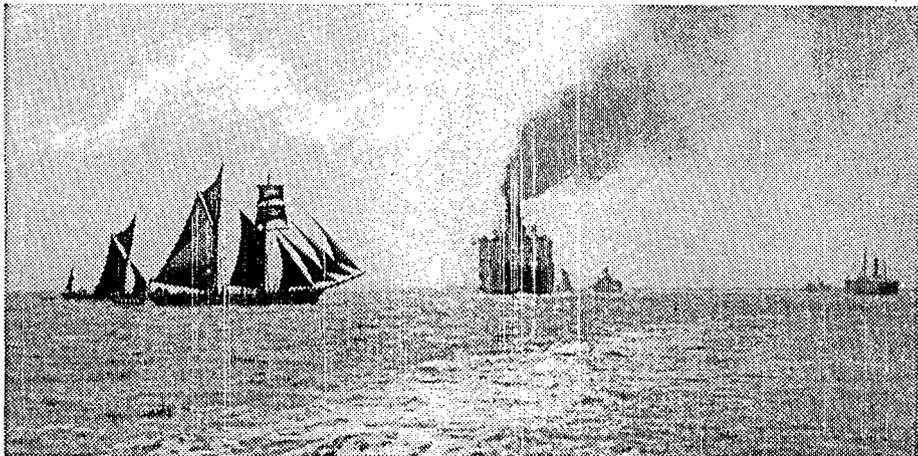
The Thames from this point forms the boundary for over 100 miles between Berkshire on the south and Oxford and Buckingham on the north. Until it reaches Oxford it is held to an easterly course by the hills of the Vale of the White Horse. Through the northern bank breaks another and a longer river, the Windrush, which rises near Temple Guiting in North Gloucestershire and flows south and east

through the right-hand bank at Abingdon, having flowed 18 miles from its source at Compton Beauchamp.

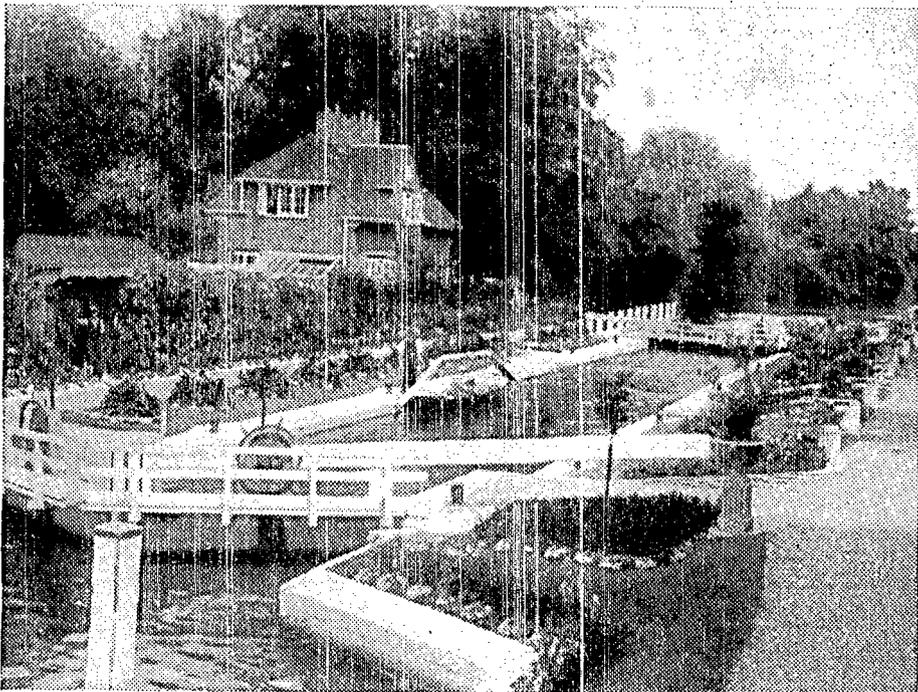
Oxfordshire contributes one more tributary, the Thame, which rises beyond Tring in Hertford and winds its way westward through the lovely Vale of Aylesbury to cross the border of Buckingham at Thame, a town bearing the name of both the tributary and the river it feeds. The lofty Chilterns now come close and keep the Thames flowing south to skirt Reading, where the Kennet comes along from its source in the Marlborough Downs, passing the town of this name.



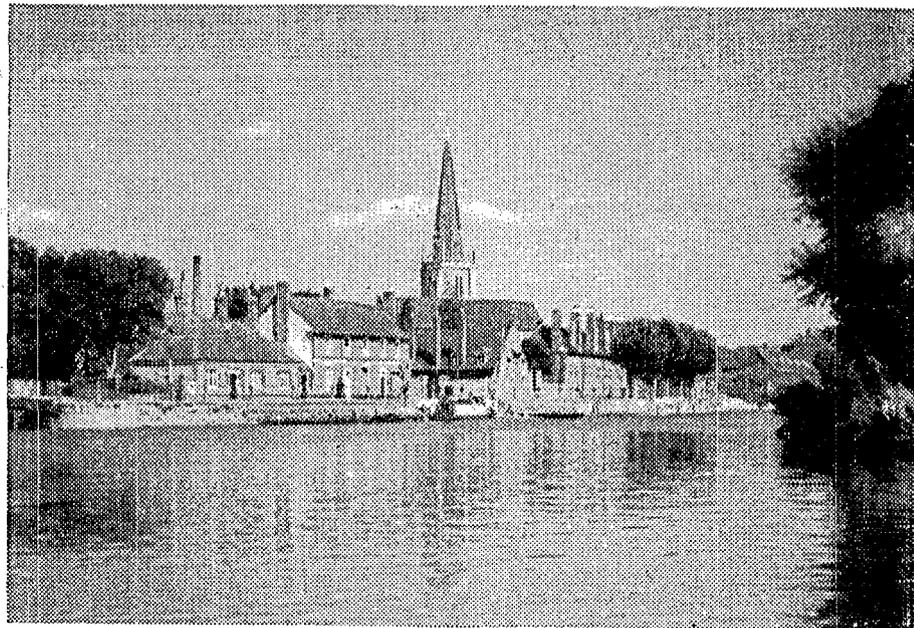
Ships and Wharves



The wide river at Gravesend where pilots join big ships to take them up to London



A Garden on the Thames—The beautiful lock at Sonning in Berkshire



The quiet rural scene at Abingdon in Berkshire

through Oxfordshire, passing Burford and Witney.

After a mile or two the southern hills turn the Thames north for five miles, but after receiving the waters of the Oxfordshire Evenlode it quickly turns south to gladden Oxford and to receive the Cherwell beside Magdalen's haunting tower. The Cherwell has taken its rise at Charwelton and flows for 30 miles due south through Northamptonshire and the whole of Oxfordshire, passing Banbury on its way.

The White Horse Ridge now ends, and down its vale past Uffington comes the Ock, the first big river to break

The river now bends north, and between Shiplake and Wargrave there enters the Loddon flowing from the south through Twyford. Many miles, enriched by the river's loveliest scenery, go by before another Coln breaks through many openings in the north bank near Staines after passing through a shallow valley in which stands Uxbridge. From this point to Chiswick the river forms the line dividing Middlesex from Surrey. From Surrey comes the Wey, having thrust its way up through the North Downs at Guildford. The next tributaries are smaller ones, the Mole