

# **WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL**

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Winchester Cathedral by William Benham

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**WILLIAM BENHAM**

**WINCHESTER  
CATHEDRAL**



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# Winchester Cathedral

*By*

The Rev. William  
Benham, D.D.

*Hon. Canon of Canterbury*

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Herbert Railton

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M D C C C X C V I I

## Winchester Cathedral

**T**RAVELLERS from London to the ancient and once royal city of Winchester get a very fine view, as they draw near it, of a wide stretch of downs on both sides of the railway, but that on the left much the widest. The great sweeping undulations of smooth green turf, with here and there a wood dotted over them, have been the scene of many a conflict in olden days, and many legends and traditions belong to particular sites. Half the counties of England claim the house of the tragedy of the "Mistletoe Bough," but the village of Owslebury, of which I can see the church

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tower and the windmill, claims to possess the fatal chest itself. More certain is the story that in this church the last Mass was sung in the days of Edward VI. The priest refused to give up the old service, and Sir Thomas Seymour, brother of the Lord Protector, dragged him from the altar and had him murdered there and then. This Seymour had enriched himself with the property of the Church, and every one of his children came to beggary.

One conspicuous object has disappeared which I well remember on the most isolated of these downs: the Semaphore. The roof of the house, which stood on the apex of the hill, was furnished with signals, and there was a continuous line of them all the way to London. They were established in 1795, in the period of the great French war, to convey intelligence from Southampton and Portsmouth to London. The electric telegraph has superseded them, and most if not all of

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these "houses set on a hill" have been pulled down.

If we could take a bird's flight from our carriage window to the top of those downs, we should get a beautiful view. On one side is a great panorama of villages towards Alresford and Alton, with Tichbourne down below us ; on the other side that long white streak amid the deep green is Southampton Water, with the New Forest on the farther side of it ; and those downs beyond are the broad acres of Wilts, and with a glass you can see Salisbury spire.

But I am letting imagination and memory run riot, for I am in the train and not on the Winchester downs. As the said train slackens speed we catch one glimpse, and only one, of the low central tower of the Cathedral. Very little of the city is visible from the station, for it lies in a hollow, and the shoulder of the hill which flanks the Station Road on the city side hides it.

But just for a moment let us change our



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imaginary route, and come up the other way from Southampton. The estuary narrows into the clear sparkling river Itchen ; not majestic like Father Thames, nor picturesque with hills and deep reaches like the Dart ; yet with a tranquil beauty of its own, with the rich meadows and villages on its banks. The down on our left, clothed as usual with short grass, and ever and anon showing a white chalk-pit, is Hursley Down, and who that hears of Hursley will fail to associate it with the name of John Keble ? And so after a twelve-mile run we are once more nearing Winchester, but the approach on this side is one of rare beauty. Look at that magnificent Norman church, with the simple yet beautiful buildings around it, and the fine gateway, and beyond it the meadows and the shining river. That is the noble hospital of St. Cross, the work of two of the most famous bishops of Winchester ; Henry de Blois, brother of King Stephen, built the church, and Cardinal Beaufort the



The Abbey Mills

