

tary Cecil, came to him "in most humble wyse complaynyng" and so put an end to the schemes of the man learned in the law.

Queen Katherine of Arragon showed some considerable interest in St. Katherine's, and she and Henry VIII founded the Guild of St. Barbara there; many great and honourable personalities of the time were associated in that Guild, among them Cardinal Wolsey. Its first duty appears to have been to pray "specyally for the gode Estate of our Soverayne Lord and Moost Crysten and Excelent Prince Henry VIII and Queen Kateryn, Founders of the seid Gyld," also "for the Good Estate of Thomas Wolsy, of the Tyle of Seynt Cecylle of Rome, Preest, Cardynal, and Legatus a latere of our Holy Father the Pope, Archbishop of York and Chanceler of England, Brother of the same Gylde." Then there are to be prayers for "the Duke of Buckyngham and my lady his Wyfe" for "the Duke of Norfolk and my Lady his Wyfe" and so on through many others. Some authorities hold that it was a memory of his love for Katherine of Arragon that led Henry to spare St. Katherine's just as, because her shrine lay in Peterborough Cathedral, he spared Peterborough, but the last Queen of Henry, the widowed Katherine Parr, violated the Charter of Queen Eleanor. She gave the mastership of this rich foundation to a layman, Sir Thomas Seymour, whom she afterwards married. He stole the splendid plate of St. Katherine's and was responsible for the disappearance of many important documents. Ultimately, as you doubtless know, he was executed on Tower Hill for High Treason. After him there followed other Masters, some good and some bad.

In the reign of Mary, Calais was taken by the Duke of Guise, together with Guisnes and the Castle of Haines. The English were driven out and settled in the Precinct of St. Katherine's, so that it was often spoken of as Haines and Guisnes, and this led in time to the extraordinary name which a passage in it afterwards assumed—Hangman's Gains.

The Precinct of St. Katherine's calls for some attention. That the dwellers there enjoyed considerable status and dignity through their connection with the Hospital is undoubted; in an address of Sympathy to Queen Charlotte in 1820, they commence their manifesto in the following words: "We a small but particular portion of your Majesty's affectionate subjects, inhabitants of the ancient Precinct of St. Katherine" and the Queen received their address with "peculiar satisfaction."

Queen Charlotte was the last Royal Patroness of the original St. Katherine's, one too who took a close interest in its welfare. After her death the Regent, later George IV, was in power and there was no Queen to protect St. Katherine's! A Bill was brought into Parliament involving the destruction of the Hospital. The Bill was keenly debated, and it was pointed out by the opposition that, had Queen Charlotte been alive, its promoters would not have dared to introduce it. This Bill sounded the knell of St. Katherine's. By a very small majority—I think it was two—the Bill was passed—such is the danger of majorities; that one sent the most precious and ancient structure in East London under the waters of the river! The "humble wyse complaynynges" of more modern inhabitants of the Precinct were unavailing now! Little wonder that those despoilers of graves, dating back to the 12th century, were spoken of jeeringly as the "Ressurrectionists." St. Katherine's was dismembered however much the smug perpetrators of this vandalism might talk about the £50,000 obtained for reconstructing another St. Katherine's in Regent's Park in addition to the £125,000 obtained from the Company who promoted the construction of St. Katherine's Dock. The lovely old monuments and carvings were lifted out of their setting, they were no more that lovely

unity the historic Royal Hospital and Collegiate Church of St. Katherine's by the Tower, glorious in the aspirations and the ideals it stood for, its traditions and the part it played there, by the busy river and the grey, sinister shadow of the Tower; the tangible expression it had been of a "perpetual" pledge with the future, entered into by Matilda, wife of Stephen, and the "spirited Ellianore"; connected with it are great names, that of one of the first Christian Martyrs, those of some thirty-two Queens of England, Cardinal Wolsey, John Holland, the Hon. George Montague, George Baxter, M.A., Sir Julius Caesar, LL.D., Davis Lewis, LL.D., Judge in the High Court of Admiralty, Raymond Lully, a great philosopher and alchemist, at least one well-known surgeon of the middle ages and many more who added glory to the name of St. Katherine's.

But you cannot amass gold on tradition and association said the politicians. It meant nothing to the coming of the machine age that, for seven centuries, St. Katherine's had stood there among the smoke and squalor of East London, an age-long, sacred place with towers pointing to the skies, reminder of a spiritual world beyond the restless river and the tangle of streets that were the setting wherein a Queen had placed this one precious and lovely jewel of East London. And so no longer, as the ships pass up and down the River, in the darkness, do sailors dip their flags in the night to the starry lights of St. Katherine's gleaming on the dark water a welcome or a farewell, a last benediction often from the oldest religious community in the land.

It is interesting to note that when the Queen Victoria Jubilee Institute for Nurses was founded it bore connections with St. Katherine's, but these were obliterated unfortunately in a later Charter; perhaps some day means may again be found to reunite the great District Nursing Organisation of Great Britain with the old name and inspiration of St. Katherine's.

The lecturer concluded her remarks with a beautiful extract from Sir Walter Besant's *History of East London*, which closes as follows:—"In the modern Chapel at Regent's Park you may see the old monuments, the carved tombs, the stalls, the pulpit taken from the ancient church; it is the putting of old wine into new bottles. Whenever I stand within those walls there falls upon me the memory of the last service held in the old church, when, amid the tears and lamentations of the people who loved the venerable place, the last hymn was sung, the last prayer offered—before the place was taken down."

HELEN KELLER'S FAREWELL.

Cheering Message to British Blind.

"Every blind person who presses forward to accomplishment is a ray of encouragement to others," said Miss Helen Keller in a farewell message to the British blind, among whom she has just passed fifteen months.

The words were prompted by the "sight" of blind masseurs and masseuses giving expert electrical treatments at the Alfred Eichholz Clinic in Great Portland Street, which the famous deaf-blind authoress visited when passing through London on her return to America.

"At the moment," she said, "man is groping through the void for the right solution of his difficulties. He lives in a world of suspicion and perplexity, but in the end he will see the light and there find God."

"This Clinic," Miss Keller added, "illustrates how the blind are becoming more and more fitted to serve. After generations of effort, we are gaining the confidence necessary to overcome our handicap. Much has been done for us, and now we want to do something ourselves."

The Alfred Eichholz Clinic, which is run by the National Institute for the Blind, was recently opened by the Prince of Wales.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)