S. BARING-GOULD

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1. County and Shire. Meaning of the word.

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If we take a map of England and contrast it with a map of the United States, perhaps one of the first things we shall notice is the dissimilarity of the arbitrary divisions of land of which the countries are composed. In America the rigidly straight boundaries and rectangular shape of the majority of the States strike the eye at once; in England our wonder is rather how the boundaries have come to be so tortuous and complicated—to such a degree, indeed, that until recently many counties had outlying islands, as it were, within their neighbours' territory. We may guess at once that the

conditions under which the divisions arose cannot have been the same, and that while in America these formal square blocks of land, like vast allotment gardens, were probably the creation of a central authority, and portioned off much about the same time; the divisions we find in England own no such simple origin. Our guess would not have been wrong, for such, in fact, is more or less the case. The formation of the English counties in many instances was (and is—for they have altered up to to-day) an affair of slow growth. King Alfred is credited with having made them, but inaccurately, for some existed before his time, others not till long after his death, and their origin was—as their names tell us—of very diverse nature.

Let us turn once more to our map of England. Collectively, we call all our divisions counties, but not every one of them is accurately thus described. Cornwall, as we shall see, is not. Some have names complete in themselves, such as Kent and Sussex, and we find these to be old English kingdoms with but little alteration either in their boundaries or their names. To others the terminal *shire* is appended, which tells us that they were *shorn* from a larger domain—*shares* of Mercia or Northumbria or some other of the great English kingdoms. The term county is of Norman introduction,—the domain of a *Comte* or Count.

Although we use the term county for Cornwall, we should not in accuracy do so, as just stated, for it is a Duchy, and has been such since March 17, 1337, when Edward of Woodstock, eldest son of King Edward III, was created Duke of Cornwall. Nor can it be called a shire, for Cornwall was a territory to itself. In 835 Athelstan drove the Britons across the Tamar and made that river the boundary between the Briton and the West Saxon of Devon.

The ancient name of Cornwall and Devon was Totnes, i.e. *Dod-ynys*, "the projecting island," and the Celtic population was that of the Dumnonii. It was not till the tenth century that the name Cornweales appears, signifying the Welsh of the Horn of Britain. The Latin form of Cornwall is Cornubia. The ancient British settlers in the present department of Finistère called that portion of Gaul Cornouaille.

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2. General Characteristics.

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On many accounts Cornwall may be regarded as one of the most interesting counties of England, whether we regard it for its coast scenery, its products, or its antiquities. It has lain so much out of the main current of the life of England that it was hardly mixed up with the politics of the nation till the time of the Civil War.

Its situation, projecting as it does into the sea, by which it is washed on all sides but one, has naturally caused the natives to take to the water, and has made Cornwall to be the mother of a hardy breed of fishermen and sailors. But the county being also rich in mineral wealth has from an early age caused a large portion of the manhood of the land to seek their livelihood in mines; and the peculiar conditions of Cornwall have thus determined the professions of a large proportion of its males to be either on the water or under ground.

Luxulyan Village

The interior of the county cannot be regarded as beautiful, consisting of a backbone of elevated land, wind-swept, and over a large area covered with mine-ramps and the skeletons of abandoned machine-houses standing up gaunt amidst the desolation. But the valleys are always beautiful, and the Bodmin moors, if not so lofty and broken as Dartmoor, are yet fine, and Brown Willy, Rough Tor, and Kilmar are really noble tors.

On the Bodmin moors is Dozmare Pool, the only lake, excepting Loe Pool, that exists in Cornwall. It is small and shallow. There were others formerly, now encroached on or smothered by morass.

Dozmare Pool

In Cornwall it is quite possible to take a stride from the richest vegetation into the abomination of desolation. It has been said in mockery that Cornwall does not grow wood enough to make coffins for the people. The old timber was cut down to supply the furnaces for smelting tin, and it is true that there is not in Cornwall as magnificent timber as may be seen in other counties, but the valleys are everywhere well wooded, and the Cornish elm, that grows almost like a trimmed poplar, stands up lank above the lower trees and coppice.

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3. Size, Shape, Boundaries.

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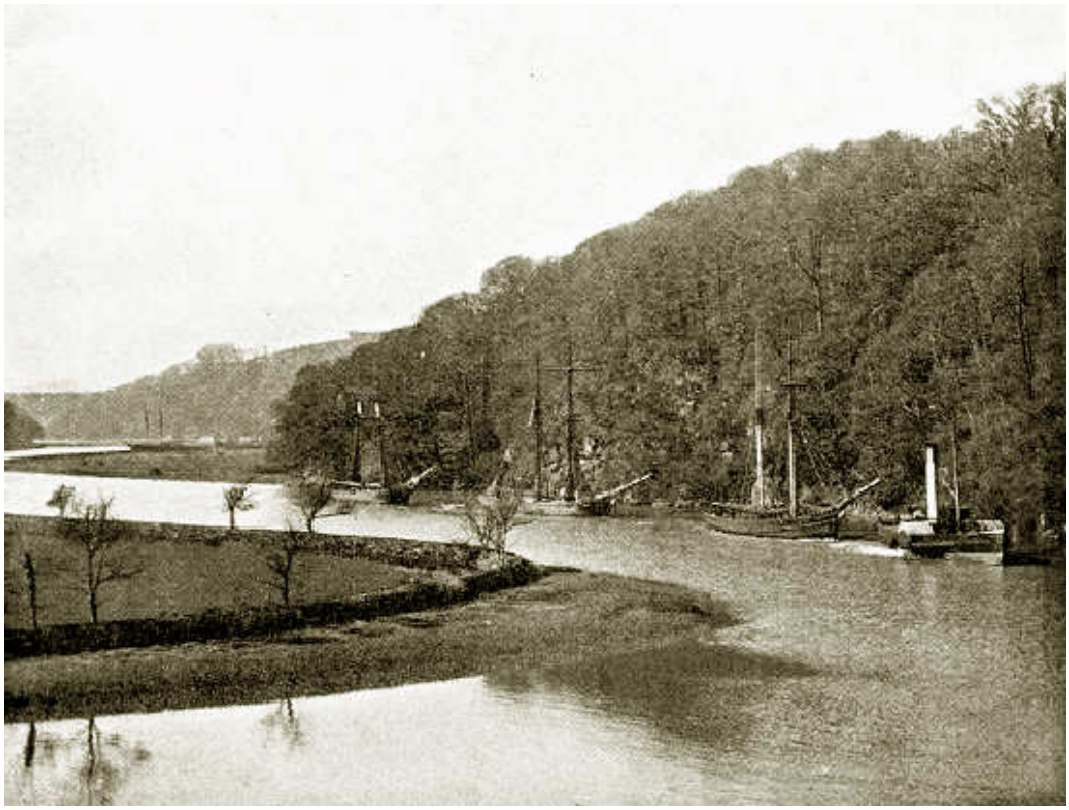
Cornwall bears a certain resemblance to Italy, each is like a leg or boot, but Italy stands a-tiptoe to the south, whereas Cornwall is thrust out to the west. But, whereas Italy is kicking

Sicily as a football, Cornwall has but the shattered group of the Scilly Isles at its toe.

It touches but one other county, Devonshire, on the east; on all other sides it is washed by the sea, the Atlantic on the north and the English Channel on the south. The heel is the curious projection of the Lizard, and the toe is Land's End. On the east the river Tamar forms mainly the boundary between itself and Devon, except just north of Launceston, where a small portion of Devonshire juts into Cornwall, bounded on the south by the river Attery, and comprising the parishes of North Petherwin and Werrington. This is due to the land in these parishes having belonged to the Abbey of Tavistock, and the monks desiring to have all their lands comprised in one county. The area of Cornwall is 886,384 acres, or 1385 square miles.



The Tamar, near Calstock

It is the most westerly county in England, and also the most southerly. Its greatest length from the N.E. corner beyond Morwenstow to the Land's End is 80 miles; and its greatest breadth between Marsland Mouth and Rame Head is 46 miles. But it shrinks towards the toe, and between St Ives' Bay and Mounts Bay it is not five miles across.

The Scilly Isles, situated twenty-five miles S.W. from the Land's End, are a part of Cornwall, and have an area of 4041 acres. Formerly, a part of the township of Bridgerule, with 1010 acres on the Devon side of the Tamar, belonged to Cornwall, but has now been dissevered and annexed to Devonshire.

The north coast is sadly deficient in harbours. Bude Haven can accommodate only the smallest vessels, Boscastle is a dangerous creek, Padstow Harbour is barred by the Doom Bank lying across the entrance, and there is none other till we reach St Ives' Bay. On the south coast are Mounts Bay, Falmouth, Charlestown in St Austell Bay, Par, Fowey, Looe, Cawsand Bay, and the Hamoaze that opens into Plymouth Sound. Of these only Falmouth Harbour, once the great station for the packet boats, is good.

The Scilly Isles comprise 145 rocky masses, six only are large islands, and five only are inhabited. The other inhabited islands about Cornwall are very small, these are St Michael's Mount and Looe Island. The promontory of Lleyn in Cardiganshire presents a curious resemblance to Cornwall, and as Cornwall has its detached group of islands in Scilly, so Lleyn has its Bardsey.

Grimsby Channel and Eastern Islands, Scilly

4. Surface and General Features.

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Bodmin

To the east and north-east is the large granite mass of the Bodmin moors. It is these striking granitic masses, here and further west—at the Land's End, at St Breage, in the district north of Helston, and again north of St Austell—which form the bolder features of the county. A remarkable depression lies between Marazion and St Ives' Bay, utilised by the railway from Hayle to Marazion road. It almost seems as if the whole of Penwith, the portion west of this trough, had at one time been an island, with a channel of sea between it and the mainland. On the other hand, at a remote period there can be no doubt that there extended far out broad low-lying lands which are now covered by the sea, for forest beds have been found in Mounts Bay, in Padstow Bay, at St Columb Major, and elsewhere, showing that there has been a subsidence of the land. This has given rise to the fable of a drowned realm of Lyonesse, but this Lyonesse never existed in or near Cornwall;