

**RIVER LEGENDS; OR,
FATHER THAMES
AND FATHER RHINE**

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River legends; or, Father Thames and Father Rhine by E. H. Knatchbull-Hugessen

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E. H. KNATCHBULL-HUGESSEN

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RIVER LEGENDS

OR

FATHER THAMES AND FATHER RHINE

BY THE RIGHT HON.

E. H. KNATCHBULL-HUGESSEN, M.P.

E. H. Knatchbull

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY GUSTAVE DORÉ



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RIVER LEGENDS

OR

FATHER THAMES AND FATHER RHINE

I HAD been down to spend a summer's day at Eton. Dear old Eton! There is no place where a summer's day can be more happily spent, especially by those to whom the spot is hallowed by the memory of boyish days. The "playing-fields" are delightful, in spite of the passage through the same being a service of danger when cricket-balls whiz recklessly past your ear, and a courteous "thank you!" invites your hand to restore to its owner the engine which has nearly broken your head. "Poet's Walk" is charming, although its memories may not be entirely pleasant if you chance in your boyhood to have been "fag" to some "sixth-form" master whose tea you had to carry out to that pleasant resort. The "school-yard" also is not without its recommendations, though when one has attained the mature age of forty-five one feels rather as if one had no business there, standing among a crowd of fellows of a younger and happier age, the only idler among the number.

On the particular day of which I speak, I had rambled about with those boys I knew, gathered as much pleasure as I could from the memories which clung around the precincts of the old college, and afterwards strolled out along the banks of the river in the direction of Surly. The weather being rather hot, although evening was approaching, I thought it well to halt in the immediate neighbourhood of Surly Hall, and having seated myself in the shadiest place I could find, began to think over the various "Fourths of June" and "Election Saturdays" which I had witnessed in that famous locality, until I not unnaturally fell fast asleep. I do not know how long I remained in this comfortable state, but I was suddenly aroused by the sound of voices, and immediately opened my eyes and looked around to discover the quarter from which they proceeded. It was not long before I was enlightened upon this point.

Nearly opposite the spot upon which I had seated myself was a little island in the very middle of the river, dividing the water which flowed on each side of it and left it high and dry. This island was of no great size, and, I should imagine, of no great value either, being covered with reeds and willows, and apparently fit for nothing except to afford shelter to moor-hens and water-rats, which creatures probably found it an exceedingly convenient habitation. Upon the present occasion, however, beings of a different nature altogether appeared to have taken possession of the island. At a plain deal table were seated two ancient individuals of kingly and majestic mien. He who sat at the end of the table wore a white beard of mighty size, which streamed downward to his waist; whilst his companion,