

This tale, written in about 1590, is a description of the Lee and its tributaries as they were known at that time. William Vallans provides footnotes to explain some of his allusions and I have added extra comments where appropriate.

A T A L E O F TWO SWANNES.

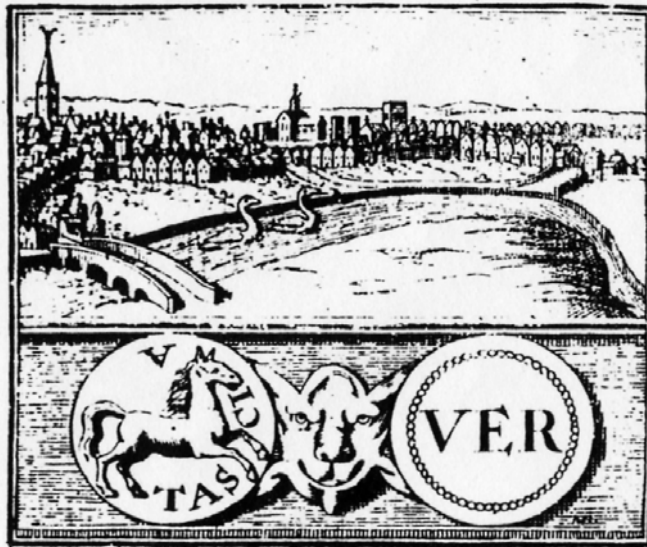
Wherein is comprehended the original
and increafe of the R I V E R L E E,
Commonly called W A R E - R I V E R :

Together with the Antiquitie of fundrie Places
and Townes feated upon the fame.

Pleasant to be read, and not altogether un-
profitable to be understood.

By W. V A L L A N S.

Publish'd out of the Study of T H O M A S R A W L I N S O N
of the *Middle-Temple* Esq;.



O X F O R D , Printed at the Theater, M D C C X L I V .

TO THE READER.

THE reasons be manifold (good reader) that mooved me to publish thys present Tale. First, that I might (in what I was able) illustrate, or make better known to the world, my countrie or place of byrth: to which (as Cicero saith) each man doth ow the third part of his life, and for which ther is no good man, but wil jeopard his life, adventure his safetie, and hazard the dearest things hee dooth possesse. Neither yet was there ever any man so brutish, but rejoyceth to hear his countrie commended, and is delighted when he heareth the same wel spoken off and praised. Such is the affection that every man beareth to it, that Ovid, expressing the same, said, he could not tel howe it came to passe, nor whence it should proceede. His words be these:

Nescio qua natale solum dulcedine cunctos
Ducit, &c.

Hence it came to passe that antiquity gave divine honor to such as had deserved wel of their countrie: either in peace, by inventing something to the profit or wealth thereof: or in war, by adventring their bodies in defence thereof.

Another reason was, that albeit neither my writing, nor other indvour whatsoever, be able to perfourm any thing that might either beautifie or adorne the places I speake of: Yet hereby I would animate, or encourage those worthy Poëts, who have written Epithalamion Thamesis, to publish the same. I have seen it in Latine verse (in my judgment) wel done, but the Author, I know not for what reason, doth suppress it. That which is written in English, though long since it was promised, yet is it not perfourmed. So as it seemeth, some unhappy Star envieth the sight of so good a work: which once set abroad, such trifles as these would vanish, and be overshadowed, much like the Moon and other Starres, which after the appearing of the Sunne are not to be seen at all.

Thirdly, being fully resolved to leave my country, I held best before my departure Cigneum aliquid canere: not unlike the Swans, who before their death do sing, as Virgil, Ovid, Horace, Martial with all the Poëts do constantly affyrme. The Philosophers say it is because of the spirit, which, labouring to passe thorow the long and small passage of her necke, makes a noise as if she did sing. Pythagoras did thinke their soules were immortal, and saith, how before their death, they rejoyce and sing as going to
a better

To the Reader.

VII

*a better Life. The maner of their singing M. Thomas Watson
in his Odes expreſſeth thus :*

Qualis ubi longo mœrore Cayſtrius ales
Confectus ſenio gravi, &c.

Which verſes A. F. hath engliſhed on this wiſe :

Like to the ſilver Swan, who ſeeing death to be coming,
Wand'reth alone for a while through ſtreams of lovely Cayſter:
Then to the flowing bankes all faint at laſt he repairth,
Singing there, ſweet bird, his dieng ſong to Cayſter:
Geving there, ſweet bird, his laſt farewell to Cayſter:
Yeelding up, ſweet bird, his breath and ſong to Cayſter.

*The laſt, and not the leaſt motive was my friendes requeſt,
whoſe importunate demaund, without breach of amitie, I could
not gainsay: to whom, as alſo to thy favourable conſtruction
(curteous and friendly reader) I commit the ſame.*

JOHN TURNER of the worke.

TO tell a Tale, and tell the trueth withall,
To write of waters, and with them of land.
To tell of Rivers, where they riſe and fall.
To tell where Cities, Townes, and Caſtles ſtand.
To tell their names both old and new,
With other things that be moſt true.

Argues a Tale that tendeth to ſome good.
Argues a Tale that hath in it ſome reaſon.
Argues a Tale, if it be underſtood,
As looke the like, and you ſhall find it reaſon.
If when you reade, you find it ſo,
Commend the worke and let it goe.

A Tale of TWO SWANNES.

WHEN nature, nurse of ev'ry living thing,
Had clad her charge in brave and new aray ;
The hils rejoyst to see themselves so fine;
The fields and woods grew proud thereof also;
The medowes with their partie-colour d coates,
Like to the Rainebow in the azur'd skie,
Gave just occasion to the cheerfull birdes,
With sweetest note, to sing their nurse's praise;
Among the which' the merrie *Nightingale*
With swete and swete (her brest again a thorne)
Ringes out all night the never ceasing laudes
Of God, the author of her nurse and all.

About this time the Lady *Venus* viewd
The fruitfull fieldes of pleasant *Hartfordshire*:
And saw the river, and the meades thereof
Fit for to breede her birdes of greatest prise.
She calles in haste for winged *Mercurie*,
And sendes him to *Cayster*, silver streame.
Fetch me (saith she) two Cignets of the best,
And in the Laund, hard by the parke of *Ware*,
Where builds for his suicceeding race,
Thy speedie comming I will there await.
The messenger of all the heav'nly court
Makes haste away to doo his mistresse quest:
And from the brood two Cignets of esteeme
He sleely takes, unseene of any Swannes,
Which in that river be so plentifull.

Nightingale: “And when the Moon shone in the heavens the Nightingale flew to the Rose-tree, and set her breast against the thorn. All night long she sang with her breast against the thorn, and the cold crystal Moon leaned down and listened. All night long she sang, and the thorn went deeper and deeper into her breast, and her life-blood ebbed away from her.” (Oscar Wilde’s version of the fable) [RT]

Cayster: A river in Boetia, where is supposed the fairest and largest Swannes doo brede

Fanshawe: One of the remembrancers of her Majesties court of Exchequer: an upright Justicer, and one that especially tendereth the profit of Ware, whereof he hath purchased the Lordship.

To *Ware* he comes, and to the Launde he flies,
Where *Venus*, like the Goddess of great Love,
Sate lovely by the running river side,
Tuning her Lute unto the waters fall,
Wherewith she did record the love and armes
Of mightie *Mars*, the God of dreadfull warre.

The present come, she layeth downe her Lute,
And takes these Cignets of so great esteeme,
Throwing them both into her river *Lee*:
And posted straight up to the throne of *Jove*,
Where lovely, like to verie love it selfe,
Shee set her selfe upon her yeelding knee,
And craves of him but onely this request,
That her two Swannes might prosper in the streame,
And rule the rest, as worthie King and Queene.
The mightie *Jove*, unwilling to denie
His daughter's sute, for feare of further ill,
Graunts her request: and more to pleasure her,
Saith, that these two so fruitfull shall become,
That all the Swannes, yea, the verie Thames
Shall be replenisht with their princely race.
Venus yeeldes thanks, and hastes her selfe away
To mount *Troclya*, where she tooke her rest.

Long liv'd these Swannes in *Lee*, with great increase
Of honour, royaltie, and in high 'state
Inricht with issue of the fayrest breede,
That lives in *Severne*, *Humber* or in *Trent*,
The chieftest floudes that water *English* ground.
Three times had *Venus* us'd them for to draw
Her Ivory Chariot through the loftie ayre.
A special] favour (as the Poets say)
Graunted to such, as she holdes in accompt.

Now as these Swannes began to waxen old,
As time outweares eche creature that doth live:
It pleased them to send throughout their realme,
For all their subjectes of the highest bloud:
With full intent to make a progresse cleane
Throughout their land to see the boundes thereof,
And ev'ry brooke that harbours anie Swanne,
With all the Isles that unto them belong.
No sooner was this message knowne abroad,
But there resorted to their being place

Lee: Called also Lygan, Lygean and Luy

Such troupes of milke-white Swannes, as well beseem'd
 The royall state of two such princes great.
 Among which troupes the King and Queene made choise
 Of fortie Swannes of high and royall bloud,
 For to attend upon their Majesties.
 Then looke how *Cynthia* with her silver rayes
 Exceedes the brightnesse of the lesser starres,
 When in her chieftest pompe she hasteth downe
 To steale a kisse from drousie *Endymion*:
 So doe these princes farre excell in state
 The Swannes that breede within *Europa's* boundes.

And in this pompe they hie them to the head,
 Whence Lee doth spring, not farre from *Kempton* towne,
 And swiftly comming downe through *Brooke-hall* parke,
 Leaves *Wethamsted*, so called of the corne.
 By *Bishops-Hatfield* then they came along,
 Seated not farre from antient *Verolane*:
 His Citie, that first spent his blessed life,
 In just maintaining of our Christian faith.

When they had past *Hartingfordbury* towne,
 A quite contrarie course they doe finde out
 And though it were some labour gainst the streame
 To trace this River, feeding christall Lee;
 Yet worthily they holde their first resolve,
 And up by *Tewing*, wide of *Butlers* house, .
 To *Digswell* haste, where *Horsley* dwelt of late:
 And then to *Welwine*, passing well beknowne,
 And noted .for a worthie stratagem:
 I meane the Danes, who on *S. Bryces* night
 Were stoughtly mured by their women foes.
 To *Whitwell* short, whereof doth burbling rise
 The spring, that makes this little river runne.

The first arme of increase
 (Mimram)

Cynthia: The moone (who stole a kiss from sleeping *Endymion*, a shepherd) [RT]

Brooke-hall.: Brocket Hall [RT]

Verolane: Verulam or St Albans [RT]

Butler: Or Boteler, newly resident family at Tewin Hall [RT]

Horsley: "Horsley, of Digswell, in the county of Hartford, esqr., whoe was receaver of the Dutchie for Queene Elizabeth. ..."

S. Bryces In 1002 Aethelred was told that the Danish men in England "would faithlessly take his life, and then all his councillors, and possess his kingdom afterwards." In response, he "ordered slain all the Danish men who were in England." The massacre took place on 13th November, St Brice's night [RT]

Thence backe againe unto the chieftest towne
Of all the shire, and greatest of accompt,
Defended with a Castle of some strength,
Well walled, dyched, and amended late,
By her, the onely mirror of the world,
Our gracious Queene and Prince ELIZABETH,

Not far from hence stands many a milke-white Swanne,
Attending for to entertaine their Prince
Among the which was one of chief accompt
That busked up his winges in greatest pride,
And so salutes this worthie companie
And with a speech that well did him beseeme,
He tels " how that. neere *Walkhorne*, *Capel's* seate,
"The *Bene* doth rise, and give his proper name
"To *Benington*, and so to *Watton* runnes
"And then by *Staplefoord*, to *Beneghoo* heere
"Where we, with all the Swannes and Cignets both,
" That live in Bere, doe rest at your command.
Right graciously the Princes tooke his speeche,
And so departed towardes *Edwardes Ware*.
But ere they come unto the *Meade* or *Laund*,
Where Venus first did put them in estate,
They passed up a river of good depth,
The greatest branch that feedeth christall Lee,
With speedie pace (as Swannes doe use to swimme)
They passe to *Wadesmill*, and to *Thundrich Church*,
And so to *Standon*. honour'd with the house
Of worthie *Sadler* Knight, and Counseller
To all the Children of King *Henry* seventh
Whose sonne surviving holdes the verie path,
That leades to vertue and to honours throne.
By *Puckhridge* likewise they do swiftly passe :
And so to *Horne-meade* more and lesse, and then
To *Withihall*, to *Buckland* and to *Barckwav* both,
Where is the head and eerie utmost bound
Of this surpassing cleere and goodly streame.

The Seconde
(Beane)

The third
(Rib)

Walkhorne: Walkern which anciently belonged to the Lords Fitz-Walter, is one of the most ancient possessions of the Capels, Earls of Essex, in this county; it having been purchased by Sir William Capel, Knt. in the twenty-first of Henry the Seventh. [RT]

Edwardes Ware: Builded in the year of our Lord 914 by K. Edward the sounne of K. Alfred

Meade or *Laund*, The broad valley between Hertford and Ware [RT]

Sadler: Sir Ralph Sadler (d. 1587) [RT] *Withihall*: Wyddial [RT]

Returning backe againe. the companie
Were marshalled and set in order brave.
And this was done least that undecently
They should passe by the gusted towne of *Ware*.
Thus ordered, they come by *Byrches* house,
That whilom was the Brothers Friers place
Then by the Crowne, and all the Innes of Ware .
And so approching to the late built bridge,
They see the barges lading malt apace;
And people wondering at so great a troope
Among the which, a man whose silver heares
Seem'd to excell the whitenesse of the rest,
Bespake them thus:

" Long have I liv'd, and by this bridge was borne,
" Yet never saw I such a companie
" So well beseene, so order'd and so faire.
" Nay (as I thinke) the age that is by past,
" Nor yet the same that after shall insue
" Never beheld, nor lookt upon the like.

The people listened to this aged man,
As one they lov'd, and held in reverence.
And as they stoode, behold a sodaine chance
From South-side of the bridge, hard by the same,
Two goodly Swannes with Cignets full fifteene
Present themselves and theirs unto the Prince
Excusing well their slacknesse and offence
In not appearing at their first command.
The Queene beholding such a goodly broode,
Receiv'd them all, and pardon'd everie misse
Demanding where they us'd and all their state.
After a becke in signe of humble thankses,
The Cocke made answer with a modest grace.
" A place there is, not farre from hence (O King)
" A chalkie hill. beneath the same a hole,
" Cai'd *Chadwell* head, whence issues out a streame,

A rivelet or ril
(Chadwell Spring)

Byrches House: Priory of Grey Friars, granted by Henry VIII on 21 May 1544 to Thomas Byrch, one of the Yeoman of King's Crown.

...the late built bridge: There was a bridge over the river as early as 1191, so this was a newly rebuilt structure [RT] " The Bridge was reedified lately, and the arches made of stone at the charges, viz. 140. poundes geven by her Majestie. The rest by the Towne and Countrie."

Chadwell A piece of folklore is connected with both this site and Amwell. Recorded by William Vallens herein and referred to by Cussans, it relates how the two sites were connected by an underground tunnel. [RT]

" That runnes behind broad Meade that you see here:
 " A little rill, yet great inough for us,
 " And these our breede, yet (gratious Prince) behold
 " A tale there is deliver'd unto us
 " From hand to hand, how that a haunted ducke,
 " Diving within this *Chalk-well* head or hole,
 " Was forced underneath the hollow ground
 " To swimme along by waies that be unknowne
 " And afterward at *Amwell* spring (they say)
 " Was taken up all fetherlesse and bare

The King and Lordes tooke pleasure at the tale,
 And so made haste quite through the arched bridge
 To *Amwell*, when they easilie did 'spie
 The spring and rill that comes out of the hill,
 And is suppos'd to rise at *Chadwell* head.

The fifth
 (Amwell Spring)

Beneath the same comes down a little stream
 That fosters Swannes, and comes from *Haddam* small
 And so by *Haddam*, where the Bishops house
 Hath bene of long, and so to *Wydford* towne :
 And here at *Amwell* falles into the Lee.

The sixth
 (Ash)

Then troupes this traine to *Stansted*, call'd *Le Thele*,
 And *Stansted* where as *Bashe* did lately build,
 Whose sonne yeeldes hope of vertue worth the place
 And livinges which his father purchast him.

Haddam, where the Bishops house: In 1870, John Marius Wilson's Imperial Gazetteer of England and Wales described Much Hadham..... A palace of the bishops of London once stood here; and the site of it is now occupied by a private lunatic asylum. [RT]

Thele: The earliest name of this parish seems to be Thele At the end of the 13th century it took an alternative name from the bridge over the Lea and was called Pons de Thele, In the 16th century it begins to be called St. Margaret's Theale and Stanstead Thele, the first from its church and the second from the fact that the village of St. Margaret's adjoins the village of Stanstead Abbots, from which it is divided by the bridge over the Lea. [RT]

Bashe: Edward Baeshe (1507?-1587) was an English naval administrator and politician. In 1550 became surveyor-general of victuals for the navy. His son was Sir Ralph Baeshe K.B. who took part in King Charles II's coronation. [RT]

And here againe out of the kingly streame
They passe by *Roydon* through little *Estwyke* quite,
Then they salute *Hunsdon* the nurserie
And foster house of thrise renowned Swannes
Whose honour, and whose noble progenie
Gives glorie to that honourable house.
Lord, how they live all glorious as the sunne,
With types and titles fit for their degree,
As kinsmen to our most redoubted Queene,
And men of high desert unto the state !

The seventh
(Stort)

From hence to *Sapsford*, and to *Starford*, cald
The Bishops: then to *Farnam* and to *Maunden*,
And so to *Clavering*, where it riseth first,
And then comes downe againe into the *Lee*.

From *Stansted* unto *Hodsdon* goe these Swannes,
From thence to *Broxborne*, and to *Wormley* wood
And so salute the holy house of Nunnes,
That late belong'd to captaine *Edward Dennie*,
A knight in Ireland of the best accompt
Who late made execution on our foes,
I meane of *Spanyardes*, that with open armes
Attempted both against our Queene and us
There now Lord *Talbot* keepes a noble house.

Estwyke: Eastwick [RT]

Hunsdon: The Lordship of Hunsdon was created, by Elizabeth I, for her maternal cousin, Sir Henry Carey, after she granted Hunsdon to him in 1559. [RT]

Sapsford: Sawbridgeworth [RT] *Starford cald The Bishops*: Bishops Stortford [RT]
Maunden: Manuden [RT]

holy house of Nunnes.... In 1536 the site of Cheshunt Nunnery, or the priory of the nuns of St. Mary de Swetmannescrofte, was granted to Sir Anthony Denny. He was succeeded by his eldest son Henry Denny, who in 1564 sold the estate. In 1590, however, Edward Denny, younger brother of Henry, bought back the estate, which he then sold in 1592 to Sir William Cecil. [RT]

Edward Dennie: In the Autumn of 1581 Denny was put in command of an expedition to Ireland, to quash the rebellious O'Tooles who held the mountains near Dublin. In 1588 the Spanish Armada was beaten off and the remaining ships continued to sail around the coast of Scotland and Ireland in a desperate attempt to get back to Spain. A violent storm near Tralee caused most of the ships to be wrecked and Denny captured many Spaniards. [RT]

Talbot: Probably Gilbert Talbot, 7th Earl of Shrewsbury (1553-1616) [RT]

Now see these Swannes the new and worthie seate
 Of famous *Cicill*, treasoror of the land,
 Whose wisdom, counsell, skill of Princes state
 The world admires, then Swannes may doe the same
 The house it selfe doth shewe the owners wit,
 And may for bewtie, state, and every thing,
 Compared be with most within the land.
 Downe all along through *Waltham* street they passe,
 And wonder at the ruines of the Abbay,
 Late suppress, the walles, the walkes, the monumentes,
 And everie thing that there is to be seene.
 Among them all a rare devise they see,
 But newly made, a waterworke : the locke
 Through which the boates of *Ware* doe passe with malt.
 This locke containes two double doores of wood,
 Within the same a Cesterne all of Plancke,
 Which only fils when boates come there to passe
 By opening of these mightie dores with sleight,
 And strange devise, but now decayed sore.
 And as they stayed here, they chaunst to see
 The stately crosse of *Elnor*, *Henries* wife.
 Then *Enfield* house, that longes unto our Queene,
 They all behold, and with due reverence
 Salute the same.
 From hence by *Hackney*, *Leyton*, and old-Foord,
 They come to *Stratford*, cal'd also the *Bowe*
 And underneath the bridge that thwartes the streame
 And partes the shires of *Middlesex*, and *Essex* both.

Cicill: Robert Cecil (c1565 – 1612) 1st Earl of Salisbury, English lord treasurer, lived at Theobalds until 1607 when he exchanged Theobalds for Hatfield at the request of King James II. [RT]

Elnor, *Henries* wife: Elnors Crosse, commonly called Waltham Crosse. K. Henry the first set it up in memory of his wife (who died in Lincolnshire ;) and wheresoever her body was caried, there he erected a Crosse with the armes of England, Castile, and Poutoys, geyen on the same, of which the Crosse in Chepe, and Charing Crosse be two of the fayrest.

At last (though long and wearie was their way)
 They come unto the mouth of river Lee,
 Where all the Swannes of that part of the *Thames*
 Attend to see this royall companie
 So that from *Woolwich* to *Blackwall* was seene
 Nor water, nor the medowes thereabout.
 For looke how in a frostie night or day,
 When Snowe hath fallen thicke upon the ground,
 Eche gasing eye is dasel'd with the sight,
 So Lillie-white was land and strand beseene
 With these faire Swannes, the birdes of lovely love,
 After a noyse in signe of passing joy,
 A Swanne of Thames invites the King and Queene
 Upon a day prefixt, to see and celebrate
 The marriage of two Rivers of great name.
 Which granted, everie one departes his way,
 The King and Queen againe into their Lee:
 Where yet they live in health and happie state,
 Or if not so, they dyed but of late.

FINIS

A Commentary or Exposition of certain Proper Names used in this tale (local only) by William Vallens, in addition to some of the footnotes above.

Ware. Buildd in the year of our Lord 914. by K. Edward the sonne of K. Alfred. This towne since the building thereof hath greatly increased, and by procuring to themselves the free passage of their bridge greatly hindered the Shire-towne of Hartford. For in old time the bridge was chained and kept by the Bailiefe of Hartford, but in the time of King John, when the Barons warred one against another, and against the King himselfe, the townesmen, trusting to their Lord Wake, brake the chaine, and have ever since enjoyed their passage, whereby it is greatly encreased, and is likely still to doo, as well for that by meanes of the Lord Treasurer the river is made passable for boates and barges, as also through the diligence of the Townesmen, who, with helpe of M. Fanshawe, have erected a new markette house, with entent to procure certaine Fayres to be helde there yeerely.

Bishops Hatfield or Hethfield: John Morton Bishop of Ely buildd there a house which nowe belongeth to her Majestie.

Hunsdon: Hunsdon. as Leland reporteth, belonged once to the Bohuns and Bernyers, from them to the Howards. Tho. duke of Northfolk, suspecting that a tower of the house would fall by reason of the height, tooke downe a part thereof. And King Henrie the eight making an exchange with the Duke, newly reedified the house; since whose time it is

honoured with the title of a Baronnie, which Henry Cary, Lord Chamberlaine of her Majesties household, liefetenant of Northfolke and Suffolke, and Captaine of Barwike, at this day enjoyeth.

Hartford: Hartford hath bene in olde time of good account, as well by reason of the Castel as also of the Priory. The Castel was builded by Edward senior in the ninth yeare of his raigne, as Henry Huntington saith, whose wordes be: *Edvardus Anno 9, regni sui construxit Herefordium castrum non immensum sed pulcherrimum tamen inter Benefician, Mimeram, & Ligeam, flumen non paofunda sed clarissima tamen.* This Castel hath since beene increased by the Clares, and then by the Dukes of Lancaster. For Roger de Clare in Henry the second his time was created Erle of Hartford. And Robert Fitzwalter that came of the same house in King Stevens time did boldly afirme that the keeping of the Castel did of right belong unto him. Henry the third gave the Castel with the honour belonging to it to William Valence Erle of Pembroke, Anno 1247. After it fell to the Dukes of Lancaster, who used to lodge at it verie often. In the yeare of our Lord 1357, the Queene of Scottes, sister to King Edward the third, departed this life, lying at Hartford with her sister in law the Queene of England, and in the year 1458, for a fray made in Fleetestreet in London, the King sent the principals of Clifford, Furnivall, and Barnardes In, as Prisoners to Hartford Castel. King Henry the sixt used often to keepe his Christmas there: and, to conclude, King Edward the sixt was nursed and schooled there.

Waltham, a market towne. The Abbay was builded by King Harold, who shortly after he had built it was slaine by William the Conqueror. His mother with great and earnest sute obtained his body, and intoumbed the same in the Abbay.