The Thames about Oxford is often called the Isis. Camden gave currency to the derivation of the word from the combina­tion of the names Thame and Isis. But it can be shown con­clusively that the river has borne its present designation from the earliest times. Caesar *(De Bell. Gall.* v. II) says that at the time of his invasion of Britain it was called Tamesis. Dion Cassius (xl. 3) and Tacitus *(Ann.* xiv. 32) both call it Tamesa, and in no early authority is the name Isis used. In early Saxon times the river was called Thamis, as may be seen in a grant before a.d. 675 to Chertsey Abbey by the sub-king Frithwald. In the first statute passed for improving the navigation of the river near Oxford (21 Jac. I.) it is called the river of Thames, and it was only in a statute of George II. (1751) that the word Isis appears. The name Isis has indeed the authority of Spenser as applied to the Thames in its course above Dorchester *(Faerie Queen,* Bk. iv. canto xi. stanza 24), but there is ample evidence to show that long before his time the name of the river through­out its course was not Isis but Thames. The word Isis is prob­ably an academic rendering of Ouse or Isca, a common British river name, but there is no reason to suppose that it ever had much vogue except in poetry or in the immediate neighbour­hood of Oxford.

The flow of the Thames varies greatly, according to the season of the year. The average gaugings at Teddington for the summer months of the years 1883 to 1900 were in July 413,000,000 gallons a day, in August 395,000,000 gallons, and in September 375,000,000 gallons. The normal natural flow in ordinary summer weather is about 350,000,000 gallons a day, and of this, after the companies have taken 130,000,000, only 220,000,000 gallons are left to pass over Teddington Weir. After a long period of dry weather the natural flow has been known to fall considerably below 200,000,000 gallons, whilst, on the other hand, in the rainy winter season, the flow in 1894 rose for a short time to as high a figure as 20,000,000,000 gallons, and the ordinary flow in winter months may be put down as 3,000,000,000 gallons. The importance of. storage reservoirs is manifest under such conditions of flow, especially bearing in mind the growth of population in the London district and of its increasing needs. The water-supply of London is considered under that heading; it may be noted here that the Thames forms the chief source of supply for the metropolis, but apart from this the corpora­tion of Oxford and two companies in the Staines district have powers to draw water from the river, though not in any large quantities.

Throughout the whole of the Thames watershed, and especially in the 3800 sq. m. above the intakes of the water companies (at Hampton or in the vicinity), the Thames Conservancy has enforced the requirements of parliament that no sewage or other pollution shall be allowed to pass into the Thames, into its tributary streams, or even into any water communicating with them. There is a large staff of inspectors constantly visiting the various parts of the watershed, and in spite of many difficulties arising from vested interests, the work of purification is attaining completion, with a correspondingly great improvement in the quality of the river water. So recently as 1890 the state of the river below London was such as to be dangerous to the public health. The metro­politan sewage was discharged untreated into the river, and the heavier solids deposited over the river-bed, while the lighter parts flowed backwards and forwards on the tide. The London County Council, directly after its establishment, took means to remedy this evil (see London).

The Thames is. navigable for rowing-boats as far upwards as Cricklade, except in dry seasons, and for barges at all times as far as Lechlade, 18 m. below Thames Head. At Inglesham, three- quarters of a mile above Lechlade, the Thames and Severn canal has its junction with the Thames. This canal is the link between the two great rivers from which it takes its name, or, in other words, between the east and west of England. It surmounts the watershed by means of Sapperton tunnel, 2 m. long, opened in 1789, and joins the Stroudwater canal, which completes the con­nexion, at Wallbridge near Stroud. It was long abandoned, but owing to the exertions of a joint committee of the counties and other interests concerned in 1895, powers were obtained from parliament for its restoration, and the works needful for its re­opening were carried out. Concurrently with the repair of the canal, the navigation works on the Thames were remodelled at a large cost, and barges drawing 3 ft. 6 in. can now, even in the summer season, navigate from London to Inglesham. Although the Thames, as one of the "great rivers of England,” was always a. navigable river, that is to say, one over which the public had the right of navigation, it was not until the last quarter of the 18th century that any systematic regulation of its flow in the upper reaches was attempted. Complaints of the obstructions in it are not uncommon, and John Taylor, the Water Poet (1580-1653), in a poem commemorating a voyage from Oxford to London, bewails the difficulties he found on the passage. No substantial measures to remedy this state of things were adopted till 1771, when an act of parliament was passed authorizing the construction of pound locks on the Thames above Maindenhead Bridge. In pursuance of the powers thus granted, the Thames Commissioners of that day caused locks to be built at various points above Maidenhead, and between 1810 and 1815 the Corporation of London carried out river works on the same lines as far down the river as Teddington. The works as subsequently maintained by the Thames Conservancy ensure an efficient head of water during the drier seasons of the year, and facilitate the escape of winter floods. The number of locks is 47, including four navigation weirs above Oxford. The uppermost lock is St John's, below Lechlade; the lowest is Rich­mond, but this is a half-tide lock, keeping the water above at a level corresponding to half that of flood tide. Under ordinary conditions the sluices are raised to admit boats to pass from the half flood to half ebb, so that the river remains tidal up to Ted­dington, the next lock.

The canals in use communicating with the Thames, in addition to the Thames and Severn canal, are the Oxford canal, giving com­munication from that city with the north, the Kennet and Avon canal from Reading to the Bristol Avon, the Grand Junction at Brentford, the Regent's canal at Limehouse, and the Grand Surrey canal at Rotherhithe.. A short canal connects Gravesend with Higham. Navigation is also carried on by the Medway to Ton­bridge, on the lower parts of the Darent and Cray, from Dartíord and Crayford, and on the Wey up to Guildford and Godaiming. The Woking, Aldershot and Basingstoke canal joins the Wey, but is little used. The Wilts and Berks canal, joining the Thames at Abingdon, is disused. By means of the Grand Junction and Oxford canals especially, constant communication is maintained between the Thames and the great industrial centres of England. The trade on the upper Thames is steady, though not extensive. The vast trade on the estuary, which lies within the bounds of the port of London, is considered under London.

The utility of the river is great in the opportunities for exercise and recreation which it affords to the public, especially to Londoners. The scene on any part of the river from Oxford down on public holidays, and on Saturdays and Sundays during the summer, would be sufficient to show how it contributes to the public enjoyment. It is only since about 1870 that this popularity has grown up. Ten years earlier even rowing-boats were few excepting at Oxford, at Henley in regatta time, and at Putney on the tideway. Steam launches did not exist on the river before 1866 or 1867, and house­boats only in the form of college barges at Oxford. But by 1900 there were 541 launches, 162 house-boats, and 11,284 rowing-boats. Each boat is registered, a small tax being charged; while there are fixed prices for the passage of locks. During the season regattas take place at many of the towns and larger villages. Of these Henley Royal Regatta is pre-eminent by the number and import­ance of the entries, and by its comparative antiquity. The regattas at Molesey, Kingston, Reading, Marlow and Oxford, as well as many others, attract numerous competitors and spectators. The Oxford and Cambridge boat-race from Putney to Mortlake on the tideway, the summer eights and the “ torpids ” at Oxford Univer­sity, and the school races at Eton and Radley should also be mentioned.

A statute of 1393 was granted to the citizens of London to remove weirs on the Thames, and empowered the Lord Mayor to enforce its provisions. For the next four centuries he acted through water-bailiffs, till in 1771 a committee of the Corporation of London took over the work. In 1857 the Thames Conservancy Board was established. Its powers were increased and its constitution varied in 1864, 1866 (till which year the jurisdiction of the river above Staines was under a large body of commissioners), and 1894, but the creation of the Port of London Authority (see London) limited its jurisdiction.

Fish are abundant, especially coarse fish such as pike, perch, roach, dace and barbel. Of trout there are many fine specimens, especially at the weirs. Salmon are known to have existed at Maidenhead so recently as 1812, but they disappeared soon after that date. An association was formed under the presi­dency of Mr W. H. Grenfell, M..P., with the object of reintro­ducing this fish into the river, and in April 1901 and on subsequent occasions a number of young salmon were placed at Teddington by way of experiment. The right of the public to take fish has been frequently in dispute, but a committee of. the. House of Commons, which took much evidence on the question in the year 1884, came to the conclusion that "it is impossible to recognize anything like a general public right to take fish as now existing. ” They added "that the public at large have only to know that their rights are imaginary to induce them also to be content with the extant system under which permission is very freely granted by owners of fisheries to the public for angling on the. more fre­quented parts of the Thames. ” These conclusions are interesting in face of the fact that the question has arisen from time to time since 1884.

The fisheries are under the regulation of. by-laws made by the Thames Conservancy, which apply to the riparian owners as well