

CHEAP LAND IN LONDON

A "BLOCK" WORTH MILLIONS.

ROMANCE OF DUCAL HOUSE.

The history of a few grass fields on which a good slice of fashionable London now stands, and the almost fabulous enrichment which accrued to the Duke of Westminster's family in consequence, is narrated with much picturesque detail in "Mary Davies and the Manor of Ebury," Mr. Charles T. Gatty's new book.

This romance of the Grosvenor patrimony reads remarkably like the history of the famous Block of Melbourne, which was offered for sale recently. It will be remembered that the land now known as the Block was originally purchased for £84 and is now worth many hundreds of thousands of pounds.

The Manor of Ebury is the formal title of this ancient grange or farm, remarks a reviewer in the "Daily Mail," which we know better as embracing mainly Belgravia and Mayfair and much of Pimlico. It stretches south from Oxford-street to the Thames. On the west and east it is bounded by two of London's buried rivers, the Westbourne and the Tybourne.

Part of the site of Buckingham Palace and nearly all its grounds were also included in the "few fields of pasture" which Mary Davies brought to Sir Thomas Grosvenor. They were married when she was "13" at St. Clement Danes, in the Strand, in 1677. At that time the bridegroom, with the family's great estate at Eaton and elsewhere, was reputed twice as wealthy as Mary with her "Manor of Ebury." But London as we know it had yet to grow.

Milkmaid Legend.

Mr. Gatty demolishes the agreeable legend that Mary was a milkmaid, the daughter of an alderman-dairykeeper, and tended the paternal cows in the peaceful pastures we call Grosvenor-square. The truth is not so picturesque. Her father, as Pepys describes him, was "Davis, the little fellow, my schoolfellow, the bookseller." The estate came into the market when Henry VIII. seized it from the Abbot of Westminster at the Dissolution. And it

Westminster at the Dissolution. And it came to the Davies family from their forbear, "old Awdley," a notorious usurer and hard dealer in spendthrifts' estates, who bought the freehold for £9,400 in 1626.

Often, and very agreeably, Mr. Gatty allows his narrative to ramble into fascinating bypaths of Jacobean England, and his exploration of old family records suggests comparisons between the social life of London in the seventeenth century, and this which are spiced with entertainment and interest.

Mary herself, apart from her unique dowry, does not appear to have been a particularly attractive person. But she survived Sir Thomas and contracted a second marriage, which she subsequently denied had taken place. As the foundress of the Grosvenor millions, the bookseller's daughter is commemorated in the street called Davies, which runs from Oxford-street to Berkeley-square.

Mr. Gatty forbears to remark that the Grosvenor Estates in London alone now bring in to the Duke of Westminster a rental of more than £350,000 a year.

MEMORIALS OF THE BAYSWATER SOLDIERS' MEMORIAL

Bayswater Fallen Soldiers' Memorial.—A meeting of the members of the Bayswater Fallen Soldiers' Memorial Committee was recently held, when it was learned from the hon. architect (Mr. Ochiltree) that the contractors (Messrs. Wales and Gillies) would have the work completed about the middle of February. It was then decided to invite His Excellency the Governor to unveil the memorial, and also Major-General Sir Talbot Hobbs to join in the ceremony. Both have accepted, and His Excellency has agreed to perform the unveiling on Sunday afternoon, February 26, at 3 o'clock. The memorial will be erected in front of the Town Hall, Bayswater. The musical portion is in the hands of Mr. Batey, who will provide both an orchestra and choir for the occasion. The Maylands Salvation Army Band will also assist with band items.