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مَنْ يَسْتَعِزَّ بِاللَّهِ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا

وَيَجْعَلْ لَهُ رِزْقًا وَسِعًا

مِمَّا يَلْتَمِسُ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَدَى اللَّهِ حَافِظُونَ

وَمَنْ يَسْتَعِزَّ بِاللَّهِ فَإِنَّ أَجَلَ اللَّهِ لَآتٍ

وَمَا يَسْتَعِزَّ بِاللَّهِ إِلاَّ أَنْ يَكُونَ

فِي ذَنْبٍ عَظِيمٍ وَأُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَعِزُّونَ بِاللَّهِ

لَهُ خِزْيَانٌ كَثِيرٌ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ تُرِيدُنَا أَنتَ نَصْرَةَ اللَّهِ

فِي حَرْبٍ كَثِيرٍ أَنتَ نَصْرَةَ اللَّهِ

## Million Daffodils

I am always looking for new parks or features to visit across London. Sometimes investigations will turn up an overlooked item that was missed on other visits. The aerial view of the online map can reveal lots of possibilities. A few days ago I found something of especial interest at this time of year, whilst perusing images of some of the parks, and I knew I just had to go to the place as soon as possible. The location was Hampton Court Palace on the River Thames at East Molesey to the West of London. The target of my interest was The Wilderness, a woodland garden on the north side of the palace and formal gardens. It was apparently full of a million daffodils, and so I did not want to miss this spectacular display.

It would have been wonderful if the day had been sunny with blue sky and fluffy clouds, but that did not happen. It was grey and overcast, and the early dawn rain had cleared away, leaving a thick mist over the countryside. As we travelled by train through central London, the tallest buildings had their heads in the low clouds, but fortunately it was not a cold or breezy day, just quite comfortable as long as one had the right clothes on. It was still hat and gloves weather, despite the date on the calendar. This is normal for Britain, and it is unreasonable to expect warm weather in April.

We had walked round The Wilderness before, during summer, a large grassy area full of trees, paths and seats, all very pleasant on a sunny day for strolling, sitting on a bench and enjoying the greenery. I had not the slightest idea that a million daffodil bulbs were sleeping underground, and had I known that, I would have been here in spring many years ago to see the display. As we entered through the gate, we were immediately surrounded by a multitude of daffodils, of all types and colourings. They were not hiding in some far off corner. As our eyes roamed into the

distance, the display merged into yellow and creamy white stripes. The trees were only just breaking into leaf, so there was full light on them and I was relieved to see that the recent rain had not beaten them down.

It was probably an advantage that it was not sunny, as that meant fewer people visiting, which makes it easier to get good photos without having to wait for groups to pass by or go out of sight behind the evergreens. Everything was fresh and thriving, and there were no patches of blind daffodils anywhere, which means that they are well fed and are left to die down naturally without being cut back before their time. We found a seat on the far side to have our sandwiches, surrounded by the blooms and accompanied by a variety of birdsong, mainly blue tits, great tits, robins and blackbirds, singing their ownership of various areas. A magpie suddenly landed on a branch close behind us, with a loud caw that sounded more like a bark, but he did not stay to get the morsel that was thrown his way. Many of the trees have bird boxes, and I was glad to see that they are quite deep, which is important to prevent squirrels and magpies from raiding them. Further along the path, a jay was having a bath in a large puddle, flashing the streak of bright blue on his wings, and then he suddenly flew up into the tree to continue preening.

## Million Daffodils

On the side by the perimeter wall is the Laburnum Walk, a long tunnel of arches covered in tied-in branches, with leaves and buds just beginning to emerge and that will be a glorious sight when it is in full bloom. Finally we came past the 300 year old Maze, made of impenetrable hedging and full of excited children, with their squeals and shouts echoing around. These were very happy sounds of well-behaved children having a great time, and all the daffodils were nodding in agreement. It was difficult to tear ourselves away from the magnificence and it would have been no hardship to sit around looking at it for the entire day. Fortunately the camera was full of lovely photos and panning videos, and so I will have it all forever to relive and to share with you here as illustrations. (742 words)