HAWTHORNE NATHANIEL

OUR OLD HOME: A SERIES OF ENGLISH SKETCHES

Nathaniel Hawthorne

Our Old Home: A Series of English Sketches

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=25558820
Our Old Home: A Series of English Sketches:

Содержание

Nathaniel Hawthorne
Our Old Home: A Series of English Sketches

To Franklin Pierce,

As a Slight Memorial of a College Friendship, prolonged through Manhood, and retaining all its Vitality in our Autumnal Years,

This Volume is inscribed by NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE.

TO A FRIEND

I have not asked your consent, my dear General, to the foregoing inscription, because it would have been no inconsiderable disappointment to me had you withheld it; for I have long desired to connect your name with some book of mine, in commemoration of an early friendship that has grown old between two individuals of widely dissimilar pursuits and fortunes. I only wish that the offering were a worthier one than this volume of sketches, which certainly are not of a kind likely to prove interesting to a statesman in retirement, inasmuch as they meddle with no matters of policy or government, and have very little to say about the deeper traits of national character. In

their humble way, they belong entirely to aesthetic literature, and can achieve no higher success than to represent to the American reader a few of the external aspects of English scenery and life, especially those that are touched with the antique charm to which our countrymen are more susceptible than are the people among whom it is of native growth.

I once hoped, indeed, that so slight a volume would not be all that I might write. These and other sketches, with which, in a somewhat rougher form than I have given them here, my journal was copiously filled, were intended for the side-scenes and backgrounds and exterior adornment of a work of fiction of which the plan had imperfectly developed itself in my mind, and into which I ambitiously proposed to convey more of various modes of truth than I could have grasped by a direct effort. Of course, I should not mention this abortive project, only that it has been utterly thrown aside and will never now be accomplished. The Present, the Immediate, the Actual, has proved too potent for me. It takes away not only my scanty faculty, but even my desire for imaginative composition, and leaves me sadly content to scatter a thousand peaceful fantasies upon the hurricane that is sweeping us all along with it, possibly, into a Limbo where our nation and its polity may be as literally the fragments of a shattered dream as my unwritten Romance. But I have far better hopes for our dear country; and for my individual share of the catastrophe, I afflict myself little, or not at all, and shall easily find room for the abortive work on a certain ideal shelf, where

are reposited many other shadowy volumes of mine, more in number, and very much superior in quality, to those which I have succeeded in rendering actual.

To return to these poor Sketches; some of my friends have told me that they evince an asperity of sentiment towards the English people which I ought not to feel, and which it is highly inexpedient to express. The charge surprises me, because, if it be true, I have written from a shallower mood than I supposed. I seldom came into personal relations with an Englishman without beginning to like him, and feeling my favorable impression wax stronger with the progress of the acquaintance. I never stood in an English crowd without being conscious of hereditary sympathies. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that an American is continually thrown upon his national antagonism by some acrid quality in the moral atmosphere of England. These people think so loftily of themselves, and so contemptuously of everybody else, that it requires more generosity than I possess to keep always in perfectly good-humor with them. Jotting down the little acrimonies of the moment in my journal, and transferring them thence (when they happened to be tolerably well expressed) to these pages, it is very possible that I may have said things which a profound observer of national character would hesitate to sanction, though never any, I verily believe, that had not more or less of truth. If they be true, there is no reason in the world why they should not be said. Not an Englishman of them all ever spared America for courtesy's sake or kindness; nor,

in my opinion, would it contribute in the least to our mutual advantage and comfort if we were to besmear one another all over with butter and honey. At any rate, we must not judge of an Englishman's susceptibilities by our own, which, likewise, I trust, are of a far less sensitive texture than formerly.

And now farewell, my dear friend; and excuse (if you think it needs any excuse) the freedom with which I thus publicly assert a personal friendship between a private individual and a statesman who has filled what was then the most august position in the world. But I dedicate my book to the Friend, and shall defer a colloquy with the Statesman till some calmer and sunnier hour. Only this let me say, that, with the record of your life in my memory, and with a sense of your character in my deeper consciousness as among the few things that time has left as it found them, I need no assurance that you continue faithful forever to that grand idea of an irrevocable Union, which, as you once told me, was the earliest that your brave father taught you. For other men there may be a choice of paths, – for you, but one; and it rests among my certainties that no man's loyalty is more steadfast, no man's hopes or apprehensions on behalf of our national existence more deeply heartfelt, or more closely intertwined with his possibilities of personal happiness, than those of FRANKLIN PIERCE.

THE WAYSIDE, July 2, 1863.

CONSULAR EXPERIENCES

The Consulate of the United States, in my day, was located in Washington Buildings (a shabby and smoke-stained edifice of four stories high, thus illustriously named in honor of our national establishment), at the lower corner of Brunswick Street, contiguous to the Gorec Arcade, and in the neighborhood of scone of the oldest docks. This was by no means a polite or elegant portion of England's great commercial city, nor were the apartments of the American official so splendid as to indicate the assumption of much consular pomp on his part. A narrow and ill-lighted staircase gave access to an equally narrow and ill-lighted passageway on the first floor, at the extremity of which, surmounting a door-frame, appeared an exceedingly stiff pictorial representation of the Goose and Gridiron, according to the English idea of those ever-to-be-honored symbols. The staircase and passageway were often thronged, of a morning, with a set of beggarly and piratical-looking scoundrels (I do no wrong to our own countrymen in styling them so, for not one in twenty was a genuine American), purporting to belong to our mercantile marine, and chiefly composed of Liverpool Blackballers and the scum of every maritime nation on earth; such being the seamen by whose assistance we then disputed the navigation of the world with England. These specimens of a most unfortunate class of people were shipwrecked crews in quest of

bed, board, and clothing, invalids asking permits for the hospital, bruised and bloody wretches complaining of ill-treatment by their officers, drunkards, desperadoes, vagabonds, and cheats, perplexingly intermingled with an uncertain proportion of reasonably honest men. All of them (save here and there a poor devil of a kidnapped landsman in his shore-going rags) wore red flannel shirts, in which they had sweltered or shivered throughout the voyage, and all required consular assistance in one form or another.

Any respectable visitor, if he could make up his mind to elbow a passage among these sea-monsters, was admitted into an outer office, where he found more of the same species, explaining their respective wants or grievances to the Vice-Consul and clerks, while their shipmates awaited their turn outside the door. Passing through this exterior court, the stranger was ushered into an inner privacy, where sat the Consul himself, ready to give personal attention to such peculiarly difficult and more important cases as might demand the exercise of (what we will courteously suppose to be) his own higher judicial or administrative sagacity.

It was an apartment of very moderate size, painted in imitation of oak, and duskily lighted by two windows looking across a by-street at the rough brick-side of an immense cotton warehouse, a plainer and uglier structure than ever was built in America. On the walls of the room hung a large map of the United States (as they were, twenty years ago, but seem little likely to be, twenty years hence), and a similar one of Great Britain,

with its territory so provokingly compact, that we may expect it to sink sooner than sunder. Farther adornments were some rude engravings of our naval victories in the War of 1812, together with the Tennessee State House, and a Hudson River steamer, and a colored, life-size lithograph of General Taylor, with an honest hideousness of aspect, occupying the place of honor above the mantel-piece. On the top of a bookcase stood a fierce and terrible bust of General Jackson, pilloried in a military collar which rose above his ears, and frowning forth immitigably at any Englishman who might happen to cross the threshold. I am afraid, however, that the truculence of the old General's expression was utterly thrown away on this stolid and obdurate race of men; for, when they occasionally inquired whom this work of art represented, I was mortified to find that the younger ones had never heard of the battle of New Orleans, and that their elders had either forgotten it altogether, or contrived to misremember, and twist it wrong end foremost into something like an English victory. They have caught from the old Romans (whom they resemble in so many other characteristics) this excellent method of keeping the national glory intact by sweeping all defeats and humiliations clean out of their memory. Nevertheless, my patriotism forbade me to take down either the bust, or the pictures, both because it seemed no more than right that an American Consulate (being a little patch of our nationality imbedded into the soil and institutions of England) should fairly represent the American taste in the fine arts, and

because these decorations reminded me so delightfully of an old-fashioned American barber's shop.

One truly English object was a barometer hanging on the wall, generally indicating one or another degree of disagreeable weather, and so seldom pointing to Fair, that I began to consider that portion of its circle as made superfluously. The deep chimney, with its grate of bituminous coal, was English too, as was also the chill temperature that sometimes called for a fire at midsummer, and the foggy or smoky atmosphere which often, between November and March, compelled me to set the gas aflame at noonday. I am not aware of omitting anything important in the above descriptive inventory, unless it be some book-shelves filled with octavo volumes of the American Statutes, and a good many pigeon-holes stuffed with dusty communications from former Secretaries of State, and other official documents of similar value, constituting part of the archives of the Consulate, which I might have done my successor a favor by flinging into the coal-grate. Yes; there was one other article demanding prominent notice: the consular copy of the New Testament, bound in black morocco, and greasy, I fear, with a daily succession of perjured kisses; at least, I can hardly hope that all the ten thousand oaths, administered by me between two breaths, to all sorts of people and on all manner of worldly business, were reckoned by the swearer as if taken at his soul's peril.

Such, in short, was the dusky and stifled chamber in which

I spent wearily a considerable portion of more than four good years of my existence. At first, to be quite frank with the reader, I looked upon it as not altogether fit to be tenanted by the commercial representative of so great and prosperous a country as the United States then were; and I should speedily have transferred my headquarters to airier and loftier apartments, except for the prudent consideration that my government would have left me thus to support its dignity at my own personal expense. Besides, a long line of distinguished predecessors, of whom the latest is now a gallant general under the Union banner, had found the locality good enough for them; it might certainly be tolerated, therefore, by an individual so little ambitious of external magnificence as myself. So I settled quietly down, striking some of my roots into such soil as I could find, adapting myself to circumstances, and with so much success, that, though from first to last I hated the very sight of the little room, I should yet have felt a singular kind of reluctance in changing it for a better.

Hither, in the course of my incumbency, came a great variety of visitors, principally Americans, but including almost every other nationality on earth, especially the distressed and downfallen ones like those of Poland and Hungary. Italian bandits (for so they looked), proscribed conspirators from Old Spain, Spanish-Americans, Cubans who processed to have stood by Lopez and narrowly escaped his fate, scarred French soldiers of the Second Republic, – in a word, all sufferers, or pretended

ones, in the cause of Liberty, all people homeless in the widest sense, those who never had a country or had lost it, those whom their native land had impatiently flung off for planning a better system of things than they were born to, – a multitude of these and, doubtless, an equal number of jail-birds, outwardly of the same feather, sought the American Consulate, in hopes of at least a bit of bread, and, perhaps, to beg a passage to the blessed shores of Freedom. In most cases there was nothing, and in any case distressingly little, to be done for them; neither was I of a proselyting disposition, nor desired to make my Consulate a nucleus for the vagrant discontents of other lands. And yet it was a proud thought, a forcible appeal to the sympathies of an American, that these unfortunates claimed the privileges of citizenship in our Republic on the strength of the very same noble misdemeanors that had rendered them outlaws to their native despotisms. So I gave them what small help I could. Methinks the true patriots and martyr-spirits of the whole world should have been conscious of a pang near the heart, when a deadly blow was aimed at the vitality of a country which they have felt to be their own in the last resort.

As for my countrymen, I grew better acquainted with many of our national characteristics during those four years than in all my preceding life. Whether brought more strikingly out by the contrast with English manners, or that my Yankee friends assumed an extra peculiarity from a sense of defiant patriotism, so it was that their tones, sentiments, and behavior, even their

figures and cast of countenance, all seemed chiselled in sharper angles than ever I had imagined them to be at home. It impressed me with an odd idea of having somehow lost the property of my own person, when I occasionally heard one of them speaking of me as "my Consul"! They often came to the Consulate in parties of half a dozen or more, on no business whatever, but merely to subject their public servant to a rigid examination, and see how he was getting on with his duties. These interviews were rather formidable, being characterized by a certain stiffness which I felt to be sufficiently irksome at the moment, though it looks laughable enough in the retrospect. It is my firm belief that these fellow-citizens, possessing a native tendency to organization, generally halted outside of the door to elect a speaker, chairman, or moderator, and thus approached me with all the formalities of a deputation from the American people. After salutations on both sides, – abrupt, awful, and severe on their part, and deprecatory on mine, – and the national ceremony of shaking hands being duly gone through with, the interview proceeded by a series of calm and well-considered questions or remarks from the spokesman (no other of the guests vouchsafing to utter a word), and diplomatic responses from the Consul, who sometimes found the investigation a little more searching than he liked. I flatter myself, however, that, by much practice, I attained considerable skill in this kind of intercourse, the art of which lies in passing off commonplaces for new and valuable truths, and talking trash and emptiness in such a way that a pretty acute auditor might

mistake it for something solid. If there be any better method of dealing with such junctures, – when talk is to be created out of nothing, and within the scope of several minds at once, so that you cannot apply yourself to your interlocutor's individuality, – I have not learned it.

Sitting, as it were, in the gateway between the Old World and the New, where the steamers and packets landed the greater part of our wandering countrymen, and received them again when their wanderings were done, I saw that no people on earth have such vagabond habits as ourselves. The Continental races never travel at all if they can help it; nor does an Englishman ever think of stirring abroad, unless he has the money to spare, or proposes to himself some definite advantage from the journey; but it seemed to me that nothing was more common than for a young American deliberately to spend all his resources in an aesthetic peregrination about Europe, returning with pockets nearly empty to begin the world in earnest. It happened, indeed, much oftener than was at all agreeable to myself, that their funds held out just long enough to bring them to the door of my Consulate, where they entered as if with an undeniable right to its shelter and protection, and required at my hands to be sent home again. In my first simplicity, – finding them gentlemanly in manners, passably educated, and only tempted a little beyond their means by a laudable desire of improving and refining themselves, or, perhaps for the sake of getting better artistic instruction in music, painting, or sculpture than

our country could supply, – I sometimes took charge of them on my private responsibility, since our government gives itself no trouble about its stray children, except the seafaring class. But, after a few such experiments, discovering that none of these estimable and ingenuous young men, however trustworthy they might appear, ever dreamed of reimbursing the Consul, I deemed it expedient to take another course with them. Applying myself to some friendly shipmaster, I engaged homeward passages on their behalf, with the understanding that they were to make themselves serviceable on shipboard; and I remember several very pathetic appeals from painters and musicians, touching the damage which their artistic fingers were likely to incur from handling the ropes. But my observation of so many heavier troubles left me very little tenderness for their finger-ends. In time I grew to be reasonably hard-hearted, though it never was quite possible to leave a countryman with no shelter save an English poorhouse, when, as he invariably averred, he had only to set foot on his native soil to be possessed of ample funds. It was my ultimate conclusion, however, that American ingenuity may be pretty safely left to itself, and that, one way or another, a Yankee vagabond is certain to turn up at his own threshold, if he has any, without help of a Consul, and perhaps be taught a lesson of foresight that may profit him hereafter.

Among these stray Americans, I met with no other case so remarkable as that of an old man, who was in the habit of visiting me once in a few months, and soberly affirmed that

he had been wandering about England more than a quarter of a century (precisely twenty-seven years, I think), and all the while doing his utmost to get home again. Herman Melville, in his excellent novel or biography of "Israel Potter," has an idea somewhat similar to this. The individual now in question was a mild and patient, but very ragged and pitiable old fellow, shabby beyond description, lean and hungry-looking, but with a large and somewhat red nose. He made no complaint of his ill-fortune, but only repeated in a quiet voice, with a pathos of which he was himself evidently unconscious, "I want to get home to Ninety-second Street, Philadelphia." He described himself as a printer by trade, and said that he had come over when he was a younger man, in the hope of bettering himself, and for the sake of seeing the Old Country, but had never since been rich enough to pay his homeward passage. His manner and accent did not quite convince me that he was an American, and I told him so; but he steadfastly affirmed, "Sir, I was born and have lived in Ninety-second Street, Philadelphia," and then went on to describe some public edifices and other local objects with which he used to be familiar, adding, with a simplicity that touched me very closely, "Sir, I had rather be there than here!" Though I still manifested a lingering doubt, he took no offence, replying with the same mild depression as at first, and insisting again and again on Ninety-second Street. Up to the time when I saw him, he still got a little occasional job-work at his trade, but subsisted mainly on such charity as he met with in his wanderings, shifting

from place to place continually, and asking assistance to convey him to his native land. Possibly he was an impostor, one of the multitudinous shapes of English vagabondism, and told his falsehood with such powerful simplicity, because, by many repetitions, he had convinced himself of its truth. But if, as I believe, the tale was fact, how very strange and sad was this old man's fate! Homeless on a foreign shore, looking always towards his country, coming again and again to the point whence so many were setting sail for it, – so many who would soon tread in Ninety-second Street, – losing, in this long series of years, some of the distinctive characteristics of an American, and at last dying and surrendering his clay to be a portion of the soil whence he could not escape in his lifetime.

He appeared to see that he had moved me, but did not attempt to press his advantage with any new argument, or any varied form of entreaty. He had but scanty and scattered thoughts in his gray head, and in the intervals of those, like the refrain of an old ballad, came in the monotonous burden of his appeal, "If I could only find myself in Ninety-second Street, Philadelphia!" But even his desire of getting home had ceased to be an ardent one (if, indeed, it had not always partaken of the dreamy sluggishness of his character), although it remained his only locomotive impulse, and perhaps the sole principle of life that kept his blood from actual torpor.

The poor old fellow's story seemed to me almost as worthy of being chanted in immortal song as that of Odysseus or

Evangeline. I took his case into deep consideration, but dared not incur the moral responsibility of sending him across the sea, at his age, after so many years of exile, when the very tradition of him had passed away, to find his friends dead, or forgetful, or irretrievably vanished, and the whole country become more truly a foreign land to him than England was now, – and even Ninety-second Street, in the weedlike decay and growth of our localities, made over anew and grown unrecognizable by his old eyes. That street, so patiently longed for, had transferred itself to the New Jerusalem, and he must seek it there, contenting his slow heart, meanwhile, with the smoke-begrimed thoroughfares of English towns, or the green country lanes and by-paths with which his wanderings had made him familiar; for doubtless he had a beaten track and was the "long-remembered beggar" now, with food and a roughly hospitable greeting ready for him at many a farm-house door, and his choice of lodging under a score of haystacks. In America, nothing awaited him but that worst form of disappointment which comes under the guise of a long-cherished and late-accomplished purpose, and then a year or two of dry and barren sojourn in an almshouse, and death among strangers at last, where he had imagined a circle of familiar faces. So I contented myself with giving him alms, which he thankfully accepted, and went away with bent shoulders and an aspect of gentle forlornness; returning upon his orbit, however, after a few months, to tell the same sad and quiet story of his abode in England for more than twenty-seven years, in all which time he

had been endeavoring, and still endeavored as patiently as ever, to find his way home to Ninety-second Street, Philadelphia.

I recollect another case, of a more ridiculous order, but still with a foolish kind of pathos entangled in it, which impresses me now more forcibly than it did at the moment. One day, a queer, stupid, good-natured, fat-faced individual came into my private room, dressed in a sky-blue, cut-away coat and mixed trousers, both garments worn and shabby, and rather too small for his overgrown bulk. After a little preliminary talk, he turned out to be a country shopkeeper (from Connecticut, I think), who had left a flourishing business, and come over to England purposely and solely to have an interview with the Queen. Some years before he had named his two children, one for her Majesty and the other for Prince Albert, and had transmitted photographs of the little people, as well as of his wife and himself, to the illustrious godmother. The Queen had gratefully acknowledged the favor in a letter under the hand of her private secretary. Now, the shopkeeper, like a great many other Americans, had long cherished a fantastic notion that he was one of the rightful heirs of a rich English estate; and on the strength of her Majesty's letter and the hopes of royal patronage which it inspired, he had shut up his little country-store and come over to claim his inheritance. On the voyage, a German fellow-passenger had relieved him of his money on pretence of getting it favorably exchanged, and had disappeared immediately on the ship's arrival; so that the poor fellow was compelled to pawn all his clothes, except the

remarkably shabby ones in which I beheld him, and in which (as he himself hinted, with a melancholy, yet good-natured smile) he did not look altogether fit to see the Queen. I agreed with him that the bobtailed coat and mixed trousers constituted a very odd-looking court-dress, and suggested that it was doubtless his present purpose to get back to Connecticut as fast as possible. But no! The resolve to see the Queen was as strong in him as ever; and it was marvellous the pertinacity with which he clung to it amid raggedness and starvation, and the earnestness of his supplication that I would supply him with funds for a suitable appearance at Windsor Castle.

I never had so satisfactory a perception of a complete booby before in my life; and it caused me to feel kindly towards him, and yet impatient and exasperated on behalf of common-sense, which could not possibly tolerate that such an unimaginable donkey should exist. I laid his absurdity before him in the very plainest terms, but without either exciting his anger or shaking his resolution. "O my dear man," quoth he, with good-natured, placid, simple, and tearful stubbornness, "if you could but enter into my feelings and see the matter from beginning to end as I see it!" To confess the truth, I have since felt that I was hard-hearted to the poor simpleton, and that there was more weight in his remonstrance than I chose to be sensible of, at the time; for, like many men who have been in the habit of making playthings or tools of their imagination and sensibility, I was too rigidly tenacious of what was reasonable in the affairs of real life. And

even absurdity has its rights, when, as in this case, it has absorbed a human being's entire nature and purposes. I ought to have transmitted him to Mr. Buchanan, in London, who, being a good-natured old gentleman, and anxious, just then, to gratify the universal Yankee nation, might, for the joke's sake, have got him admittance to the Queen, who had fairly laid herself open to his visit, and has received hundreds of our countrymen on infinitely slighter grounds. But I was inexorable, being turned to flint by the insufferable proximity of a fool, and refused to interfere with his business in any way except to procure him a passage home. I can see his face of mild, ridiculous despair, at this moment, and appreciate, better than I could then, how awfully cruel he must have felt my obduracy to be. For years and years, the idea of an interview with Queen Victoria had haunted his poor foolish mind; and now, when he really stood on English ground, and the palace-door was hanging ajar for him, he was expected to turn brick, a penniless and bamboozled simpleton, merely because an iron-hearted consul refused to lend him thirty shillings (so low had his demand ultimately sunk) to buy a second-class ticket on the rail for London!

He visited the Consulate several times afterwards, subsisting on a pittance that I allowed him in the hope of gradually starving him back to Connecticut, assailing me with the old petition at every opportunity, looking shabbier at every visit, but still thoroughly good-tempered, mildly stubborn, and smiling through his tears, not without a perception of the ludicrousness of his own

position. Finally, he disappeared altogether, and whither he had wandered, and whether he ever saw the Queen, or wasted quite away in the endeavor, I never knew; but I remember unfolding the "Times," about that period, with a daily dread of reading an account of a ragged Yankee's attempt to steal into Buckingham Palace, and how he smiled tearfully at his captors and besought them to introduce him to her Majesty. I submit to Mr. Secretary Seward that he ought to make diplomatic remonstrances to the British Ministry, and require them to take such order that the Queen shall not any longer bewilder the wits of our poor compatriots by responding to their epistles and thanking them for their photographs.

One circumstance in the foregoing incident – I mean the unhappy storekeeper's notion of establishing his claim to an English estate – was common to a great many other applications, personal or by letter, with which I was favored by my countrymen. The cause of this peculiar insanity lies deep in the Anglo-American heart. After all these bloody wars and vindictive animosities, we have still an unspeakable yearning towards England. When our forefathers left the old home, they pulled up many of their roots, but trailed along with them others, which were never snapt asunder by the tug of such a lengthening distance, nor have been torn out of the original soil by the violence of subsequent struggles, nor severed by the edge of the sword. Even so late as these days, they remain entangled with our heart-strings, and might often have influenced our national cause

like the tiller-ropes of a ship, if the rough gripe of England had been capable of managing so sensitive a kind of machinery. It has required nothing less than the boorishness, the stolidity, the self-sufficiency, the contemptuous jealousy, the half-sagacity, invariably blind of one eye and often distorted of the other, that characterize this strange people, to compel us to be a great nation in our own right, instead of continuing virtually, if not in name, a province of their small island. What pains did they take to shake us off, and have ever since taken to keep us wide apart from them! It might seem their folly, but was really their fate, or, rather, the Providence of God, who has doubtless a work for us to do, in which the massive materiality of the English character would have been too ponderous a dead-weight upon our progress. And, besides, if England had been wise enough to twine our new vigor round about her ancient strength, her power would have been too firmly established ever to yield, in its due season, to the otherwise immutable law of imperial vicissitude. The earth might then have beheld the intolerable spectacle of a sovereignty and institutions, imperfect, but indestructible.

Nationally, there has ceased to be any peril of so inauspicious and yet outwardly attractive an amalgamation. But as an individual, the American is often conscious of the deep-rooted sympathies that belong more fitly to times gone by, and feels a blind pathetic tendency to wander back again, which makes itself evident in such wild dreams as I have alluded to above, about English inheritances. A mere coincidence of names (the Yankee

one, perhaps, having been assumed by legislative permission), a supposititious pedigree, a silver mug on which an anciently engraved coat-of-arms has been half scrubbed out, a seal with an uncertain crest, an old yellow letter or document in faded ink, the more scantily legible the better, – rubbish of this kind, found in a neglected drawer, has been potent enough to turn the brain of many an honest Republican, especially if assisted by an advertisement for lost heirs, cut out of a British newspaper. There is no estimating or believing, till we come into a position to know it, what foolery lurks latent in the breasts of very sensible people. Remembering such sober extravagances, I should not be at all surprised to find that I am myself guilty of some unsuspected absurdity, that may appear to me the most substantial trait in my character.

I might fill many pages with instances of this diseased American appetite for English soil. A respectable-looking woman, well advanced in life, of sour aspect, exceedingly homely, but decidedly New-Englandish in figure and manners, came to my office with a great bundle of documents, at the very first glimpse of which I apprehended something terrible. Nor was I mistaken. The bundle contained evidences of her indubitable claim to the site on which Castle Street, the Town Hall, the Exchange, and all the principal business part of Liverpool have long been situated; and with considerable peremptoriness, the good lady signified her expectation that I should take charge of her suit, and prosecute it to judgment; not, however, on the

equitable condition of receiving half the value of the property recovered (which, in case of complete success, would have made both of us ten or twenty fold millionaires), but without recompense or reimbursement of legal expenses, solely as an incident of my official duty. Another time came two ladies, bearing a letter of emphatic introduction from his Excellency the Governor of their native State, who testified in most satisfactory terms to their social respectability. They were claimants of a great estate in Cheshire, and announced themselves as blood-relatives of Queen Victoria, – a point, however, which they deemed it expedient to keep in the background until their territorial rights should be established, apprehending that the Lord High Chancellor might otherwise be less likely to come to a fair decision in respect to them, from a probable disinclination to admit new members into the royal kin. Upon my honor, I imagine that they had an eye to the possibility of the eventual succession of one or both of them to the crown of Great Britain through superiority of title over the Brunswick line; although, being maiden ladies, like their predecessor Elizabeth, they could hardly have hoped to establish a lasting dynasty upon the throne. It proves, I trust, a certain disinterestedness on my part, that, encountering them thus in the dawn of their fortunes, I forbore to put in a plea for a future dukedom.

Another visitor of the same class was a gentleman of refined manners, handsome figure, and remarkably intellectual aspect. Like many men of an adventurous cast, he had so quiet a

deportment, and such an apparent disinclination to general sociability, that you would have fancied him moving always along some peaceful and secluded walk of life. Yet, literally from his first hour, he had been tossed upon the surges of a most varied and tumultuous existence, having been born at sea, of American parentage, but on board of a Spanish vessel, and spending many of the subsequent years in voyages, travels, and outlandish incidents and vicissitudes, which, methought, had hardly been paralleled since the days of Gulliver or De Foe. When his dignified reserve was overcome, he had the faculty of narrating these adventures with wonderful eloquence, working up his descriptive sketches with such intuitive perception of the picturesque points that the whole was thrown forward with a positively illusive effect, like matters of your own visual experience. In fact, they were so admirably done that I could never more than half believe them, because the genuine affairs of life are not apt to transact themselves so artistically. Many of his scenes were laid in the East, and among those seldom-visited archipelagoes of the Indian Ocean, so that there was an Oriental fragrance breathing through his talk and an odor of the Spice Islands still lingering in his garments. He had much to say of the delightful qualities of the Malay pirates, who, indeed, carry on a predatory warfare against the ships of all civilized nations, and cut every Christian throat among their prisoners; but (except for deeds of that character, which are the rule and habit of their life, and matter of religion and conscience with them) they are a

gentle-natured people, of primitive innocence and integrity.

But his best story was about a race of men (if men they were) who seemed so fully to realize Swift's wicked fable of the Yahoos, that my friend was much exercised with psychological speculations whether or no they had any souls. They dwelt in the wilds of Ceylon, like other savage beasts, hairy, and spotted with tufts of fur, filthy, shameless, weaponless (though warlike in their individual bent), tool-less, houseless, language-less, except for a few guttural sounds, hideously dissonant, whereby they held some rudest kind of communication among themselves. They lacked both memory and foresight, and were wholly destitute of government, social institutions, or law or rulership of any description, except the immediate tyranny of the strongest; radically untamable, moreover, save that the people of the country managed to subject a few of the less ferocious and stupid ones to outdoor servitude among their other cattle. They were beastly in almost all their attributes, and that to such a degree that the observer, losing sight of any link betwixt them and manhood, could generally witness their brutalities without greater horror than at those of some disagreeable quadruped in a menagerie. And yet, at times, comparing what were the lowest general traits in his own race with what was highest in these abominable monsters, he found a ghastly similitude that half compelled him to recognize them as human brethren.

After these Gulliverian researches, my agreeable acquaintance had fallen under the ban of the Dutch government,

and had suffered (this, at least, being matter of fact) nearly two years' imprisonment, with confiscation of a large amount of property, for which Mr. Belmont, our minister at the Hague, had just made a peremptory demand of reimbursement and damages. Meanwhile, since arriving in England on his way to the United States, he had been providentially led to inquire into the circumstances of his birth on shipboard, and had discovered that not himself alone, but another baby, had come into the world during the same voyage of the prolific vessel, and that there were almost irrefragable reasons for believing that these two children had been assigned to the wrong mothers. Many reminiscences of his early days confirmed him in the idea that his nominal parents were aware of the exchange. The family to which he felt authorized to attribute his lineage was that of a nobleman, in the picture-gallery of whose country-seat (whence, if I mistake not, our adventurous friend had just returned) he had discovered a portrait bearing a striking resemblance to himself. As soon as he should have reported the outrageous action of the Dutch government to President Pierce and the Secretary of State, and recovered the confiscated property, he purposed to return to England and establish his claim to the nobleman's title and estate.

I had accepted his Oriental fantasies (which, indeed, to do him justice, have been recorded by scientific societies among the genuine phenomena of natural history), not as matters of indubitable credence, but as allowable specimens of an imaginative traveller's vivid coloring and rich embroidery on

the coarse texture and dull neutral tints of truth. The English romance was among the latest communications that he intrusted to my private ear; and as soon as I heard the first chapter, – so wonderfully akin to what I might have wrought out of my own head, not unpractised in such figments, – I began to repent having made myself responsible for the future nobleman's passage homeward in the next Collins steamer. Nevertheless, should his English rent-roll fall a little behindhand, his Dutch claim for a hundred thousand dollars was certainly in the hands of our government, and might at least be valuable to the extent of thirty pounds, which I had engaged to pay on his behalf. But I have reason to fear that his Dutch riches turned out to be Dutch gilt, or fairy gold, and his English country-seat a mere castle in the air, – which I exceedingly regret, for he was a delightful companion and a very gentlemanly man.

A Consul, in his position of universal responsibility, the general adviser and helper, sometimes finds himself compelled to assume the guardianship of personages who, in their own sphere, are supposed capable of superintending the highest interests of whole communities. An elderly Irishman, a naturalized citizen, once put the desire and expectation of all our penniless vagabonds into a very suitable phrase, by pathetically entreating me to be a "father to him"; and, simple as I sit scribbling here, I have acted a father's part, not only by scores of such unthrifty old children as himself, but by a progeny of far loftier pretensions. It may be well for persons who are conscious

of any radical weakness in their character, any besetting sin, any unlawful propensity, any unhallowed impulse, which (while surrounded with the manifold restraints that protect a man from that treacherous and lifelong enemy, his lower self, in the circle of society where he is at home) they may have succeeded in keeping under the lock and key of strictest propriety, – it may be well for them, before seeking the perilous freedom of a distant land, released from the watchful eyes of neighborhoods and coteries, lightened of that wearisome burden, an immaculate name, and blissfully obscure after years of local prominence, – it may be well for such individuals to know that when they set foot on a foreign shore, the long-imprisoned Evil, scenting a wild license in the unaccustomed atmosphere, is apt to grow riotous in its iron cage. It rattles the rusty barriers with gigantic turbulence, and if there be an infirm joint anywhere in the framework, it breaks madly forth, compressing the mischief of a lifetime into a little space.

A parcel of letters had been accumulating at the Consulate for two or three weeks, directed to a certain Doctor of Divinity, who had left America by a sailing-packet and was still upon the sea. In due time, the vessel arrived, and the reverend Doctor paid me a visit. He was a fine-looking middle-aged gentleman, a perfect model of clerical propriety, scholar-like, yet with the air of a man of the world rather than a student, though overspread with the graceful sanctity of a popular metropolitan divine, a part of whose duty it might be to exemplify the natural accordance

between Christianity and good-breeding. He seemed a little excited, as an American is apt to be on first arriving in England, but conversed with intelligence as well as animation, making himself so agreeable that his visit stood out in considerable relief from the monotony of my daily commonplace. As I learned from authentic sources, he was somewhat distinguished in his own region for fervor and eloquence in the pulpit, but was now compelled to relinquish it temporarily for the purpose of renovating his impaired health by an extensive tour in Europe. Promising to dine with me, he took up his bundle of letters and went away.

The Doctor, however, failed to make his appearance at dinner-time, or to apologize the next day for his absence; and in the course of a day or two more, I forgot all about him, concluding that he must have set forth on his Continental travels, the plan of which he had sketched out at our interview. But, by and by, I received a call from the master of the vessel in which he had arrived. He was in some alarm about his passenger, whose luggage remained on shipboard, but of whom nothing had been heard or seen since the moment of his departure from the Consulate. We conferred together, the captain and I, about the expediency of setting the police on the traces (if any were to be found) of our vanished friend; but it struck me that the good captain was singularly reticent, and that there was something a little mysterious in a few points that he hinted at rather than expressed; so that, scrutinizing the affair carefully, I surmised

that the intimacy of life on shipboard might have taught him more about the reverend gentleman than, for some reason or other, he deemed it prudent to reveal. At home, in our native country, I would have looked to the Doctor's personal safety and left his reputation to take care of itself, knowing that the good fame of a thousand saintly clergymen would amply dazzle out any lamentable spot on a single brother's character. But in scornful and invidious England, on the idea that the credit of the sacred office was measurably intrusted to my discretion, I could not endure, for the sake of American Doctors of Divinity generally, that this particular Doctor should cut an ignoble figure in the police reports of the English newspapers, except at the last necessity. The clerical body, I flatter myself, will acknowledge that I acted on their own principle. Besides, it was now too late; the mischief and violence, if any had been impending, were not of a kind which it requires the better part of a week to perpetrate; and to sum up the entire matter, I felt certain, from a good deal of somewhat similar experience, that, if the missing Doctor still breathed this vital air, he would turn up at the Consulate as soon as his money should be stolen or spent.

Precisely a week after this reverend person's disappearance, there came to my office a tall, middle-aged gentleman in a blue military surtout, braided at the seams, but out at elbows, and as shabby as if the wearer had been bivouacking in it throughout a Crimean campaign. It was buttoned up to the very chin, except where three or four of the buttons were lost; nor was there

any glimpse of a white shirt-collar illuminating the rusty black cravat. A grisly mustache was just beginning to roughen the stranger's upper lip. He looked disreputable to the last degree, but still had a ruined air of good society glimmering about him, like a few specks of polish on a sword-blade that has lain corroding in a mud-puddle. I took him to be some American marine officer, of dissipated habits, or perhaps a cashiered British major, stumbling into the wrong quarters through the unrectified bewilderment of last night's debauch. He greeted me, however, with polite familiarity, as though we had been previously acquainted; whereupon I drew coldly back (as sensible people naturally do, whether from strangers or former friends, when too evidently at odds with fortune) and requested to know who my visitor might be, and what was his business at the Consulate. "Am I then so changed?" he exclaimed with a vast depth of tragic intonation; and after a little blind and bewildered talk, behold! the truth flashed upon me. It was the Doctor of Divinity! If I had meditated a scene or a coup de theatre, I could not have contrived a more effectual one than by this simple and genuine difficulty of recognition. The poor Divine must have felt that he had lost his personal identity through the misadventures of one little week. And, to say the truth, he did look as if, like Job, on account of his especial sanctity, he had been delivered over to the direst temptations of Satan, and proving weaker than the man of Uz, the Arch Enemy had been empowered to drag him through Tophet, transforming him, in the process, from the

most decorous of metropolitan clergymen into the rowdiest and dirtiest of disbanded officers. I never fathomed the mystery of his military costume, but conjectured that a lurking sense of fitness had induced him to exchange his clerical garments for this habit of a sinner; nor can I tell precisely into what pitfall, not more of vice than terrible calamity, he had precipitated himself, – being more than satisfied to know that the outcasts of society can sink no lower than this poor, desecrated wretch had sunk.

The opportunity, I presume, does not often happen to a layman, of administering moral and religious reproof to a Doctor of Divinity; but finding the occasion thrust upon me, and the hereditary Puritan waxing strong in my breast, I deemed it a matter of conscience not to let it pass entirely unimproved. The truth is, I was unspeakably shocked and disgusted. Not, however, that I was then to learn that clergymen are made of the same flesh and blood as other people, and perhaps lack one small safeguard which the rest of us possess, because they are aware of their own peccability, and therefore cannot look up to the clerical class for the proof of the possibility of a pure life on earth, with such reverential confidence as we are prone to do. But I remembered the innocent faith of my boyhood, and the good old silver-headed clergyman, who seemed to me as much a saint then on earth as he is now in heaven, and partly for whose sake, through all these darkening years, I retain a devout, though not intact nor unwavering respect for the entire fraternity. What a hideous wrong, therefore, had the backslider inflicted on his brethren,

and still more on me, who much needed whatever fragments of broken reverence (broken, not as concerned religion, but its earthly institutions and professors) it might yet be possible to patch into a sacred image! Should all pulpits and communion-tables have thenceforth a stain upon them, and the guilty one go unrebuked for it? So I spoke to the unhappy man as I never thought myself warranted in speaking to any other mortal, hitting him hard, doing my utmost to find out his vulnerable part, and prick him into the depths of it. And not without more effect than I had dreamed of, or desired!

No doubt, the novelty of the Doctor's reversed position, thus standing up to receive such a fulmination as the clergy have heretofore arrogated the exclusive right of inflicting, might give additional weight and sting to the words which I found utterance for. But there was another reason (which, had I in the least suspected it, would have closed my lips at once) for his feeling morbidly sensitive to the cruel rebuke that I administered. The unfortunate man had come to me, laboring under one of the consequences of his riotous outbreak, in the shape of delirium tremens; he bore a hell within the compass of his own breast, all the torments of which blazed up with tenfold inveteracy when I thus took upon myself the Devil's office of stirring up the red-hot embers. His emotions, as well as the external movement and expression of them by voice, countenance, and gesture, were terribly exaggerated by the tremendous vibration of nerves resulting from the disease. It was the deepest tragedy I ever

witnessed. I know sufficiently, from that one experience, how a condemned soul would manifest its agonies; and for the future, if I have anything to do with sinners, I mean to operate upon them through sympathy, and not rebuke. What had I to do with rebuking him? The disease, long latent in his heart, had shown itself in a frightful eruption on the surface of his life. That was all! Is it a thing to scold the sufferer for?

To conclude this wretched story, the poor Doctor of Divinity, having been robbed of all his money in this little airing beyond the limits of propriety, was easily persuaded to give up the intended tour and return to his bereaved flock, who, very probably, were thereafter conscious of an increased unction in his soul-stirring eloquence, without suspecting the awful depths into which their pastor had dived in quest of it. His voice is now silent. I leave it to members of his own profession to decide whether it was better for him thus to sin outright, and so to be let into the miserable secret what manner of man he was, or to have gone through life outwardly unspotted, making the first discovery of his latent evil at the judgment-seat. It has occurred to me that his dire calamity, as both he and I regarded it, might have been the only method by which precisely such a man as himself, and so situated, could be redeemed. He has learned, ere now, how that matter stood.

For a man, with a natural tendency to meddle with other people's business, there could not possibly be a more congenial sphere than the Liverpool Consulate. For myself, I had

never been in the habit of feeling that I could sufficiently comprehend any particular conjunction of circumstances with human character, to justify me in thrusting in my awkward agency among the intricate and unintelligible machinery of Providence. I have always hated to give advice, especially when there is a prospect of its being taken. It is only one-eyed people who love to advise, or have any spontaneous promptitude of action. When a man opens both his eyes, he generally sees about as many reasons for acting in any one way as in any other, and quite as many for acting in neither; and is therefore likely to leave his friends to regulate their own conduct, and also to remain quiet as regards his especial affairs till necessity shall prick him onward. Nevertheless, the world and individuals flourish upon a constant succession of blunders. The secret of English practical success lies in their characteristic faculty of shutting one eye, whereby they get so distinct and decided a view of what immediately concerns them that they go stumbling towards it over a hundred insurmountable obstacles, and achieve a magnificent triumph without ever being aware of half its difficulties. If General McClellan could but have shut his left eye, the right one would long ago have guided us into Richmond. Meanwhile, I have strayed far away from the Consulate, where, as I was about to say, I was compelled, in spite of my disinclination, to impart both advice and assistance in multifarious affairs that did not personally concern me, and presume that I effected about as little mischief as other men

in similar contingencies. The duties of the office carried me to prisons, police-courts, hospitals, lunatic asylums, coroner's inquests, death-beds, funerals, and brought me in contact with insane people, criminals, ruined speculators, wild adventurers, diplomatists, brother-consuls, and all manner of simpletons and unfortunates, in greater number and variety than I had ever dreamed of as pertaining to America; in addition to whom there was an equivalent multitude of English rogues, dexterously counterfeiting the genuine Yankee article. It required great discrimination not to be taken in by these last-mentioned scoundrels; for they knew how to imitate our national traits, had been at great pains to instruct themselves as regarded American localities, and were not readily to be caught by a cross-examination as to the topographical features, public institutions, or prominent inhabitants of the places where they pretended to belong. The best shibboleth I ever hit upon lay in the pronunciation of the word "been," which the English invariably make to rhyme with "green," and we Northerners, at least (in accordance, I think, with the custom of Shakespeare's time), universally pronounce "bin."

All the matters that I have been treating of, however, were merely incidental, and quite distinct from the real business of the office. A great part of the wear and tear of mind and temper resulted from the bad relations between the seamen and officers of American ships. Scarcely a morning passed, but that some sailor came to show the marks of his ill-usage on shipboard.

Often, it was a whole crew of them, each with his broken head or livid bruise, and all testifying with one voice to a constant series of savage outrages during the voyage; or, it might be, they laid an accusation of actual murder, perpetrated by the first or second officers with many blows of steel-knuckles, a rope's end, or a marline-spike, or by the captain, in the twinkling of an eye, with a shot of his pistol. Taking the seamen's view of the case, you would suppose that the gibbet was hungry for the murderers. Listening to the captain's defence, you would seem to discover that he and his officers were the humanest of mortals, but were driven to a wholesome severity by the mutinous conduct of the crew, who, moreover, had themselves slain their comrade in the drunken riot and confusion of the first day or two after they were shipped. Looked at judicially, there appeared to be no right side to the matter, nor any right side possible in so thoroughly vicious a system as that of the American mercantile marine. The Consul could do little, except to take depositions, hold forth the greasy Testament to be profaned anew with perjured kisses, and, in a few instances of murder or manslaughter, carry the case before an English magistrate, who generally decided that the evidence was too contradictory to authorize the transmission of the accused for trial in America. The newspapers all over England contained paragraphs, inveighing against the cruelties of American shipmasters. The British Parliament took up the matter (for nobody is so humane as John Bull, when his benevolent propensities are to be gratified by finding fault with

his neighbor), and caused Lord John Russell to remonstrate with our government on the outrages for which it was responsible before the world, and which it failed to prevent or punish. The American Secretary of State, old General Cass, responded, with perfectly astounding ignorance of the subject, to the effect that the statements of outrages had probably been exaggerated, that the present laws of the United States were quite adequate to deal with them, and that the interference of the British Minister was uncalled for.

The truth is, that the state of affairs was really very horrible, and could be met by no laws at that time (or I presume now) in existence. I once thought of writing a pamphlet on the subject, but quitted the Consulate before finding time to effect my purpose; and all that phase of my life immediately assumed so dreamlike a consistency that I despaired of making it seem solid or tangible to the public. And now it looks distant and dim, like troubles of a century ago. The origin of the evil lay in the character of the seamen, scarcely any of whom were American, but the offscourings and refuse of all the seaports of the world, such stuff as piracy is made of, together with a considerable intermixture of returning emigrants, and a sprinkling of absolutely kidnapped American citizens. Even with such material, the ships were very inadequately manned. The shipmaster found himself upon the deep, with a vast responsibility of property and human life upon his hands, and no means of salvation except by compelling his inefficient and

demoralized crew to heavier exertions than could reasonably be required of the same number of able seamen. By law he had been intrusted with no discretion of judicious punishment, he therefore habitually left the whole matter of discipline to his irresponsible mates, men often of scarcely a superior quality to the crew. Hence ensued a great mass of petty outrages, unjustifiable assaults, shameful indignities, and nameless cruelty, demoralizing alike to the perpetrators and the sufferers; these enormities fell into the ocean between the two countries, and could be punished in neither. Many miserable stories come back upon my memory as I write; wrongs that were immense, but for which nobody could be held responsible, and which, indeed, the closer you looked into them, the more they lost the aspect of wilful misdoing and assumed that of an inevitable calamity. It was the fault of a system, the misfortune of an individual. Be that as it may, however, there will be no possibility of dealing effectually with these troubles as long as we deem it inconsistent with our national dignity or interests to allow the English courts, under such restrictions as may seem fit, a jurisdiction over offences perpetrated on board our vessels in mid-ocean.

In such a life as this, the American shipmaster develops himself into a man of iron energies, dauntless courage, and inexhaustible resource, at the expense, it must be acknowledged, of some of the higher and gentler traits which might do him excellent service in maintaining his authority. The class has deteriorated of late years on account of the narrower field of

selection, owing chiefly to the diminution of that excellent body of respectably educated New England seamen, from the flower of whom the officers used to be recruited. Yet I found them, in many cases, very agreeable and intelligent companions, with less nonsense about them than landsmen usually have, eschewers of fine-spun theories, delighting in square and tangible ideas, but occasionally infested with prejudices that stuck to their brains like barnacles to a ship's bottom. I never could flatter myself that I was a general favorite with them. One or two, perhaps, even now, would scarcely meet me on amicable terms. Endowed universally with a great pertinacity of will, they especially disliked the interference of a consul with their management on shipboard; notwithstanding which I thrust in my very limited authority at every available opening, and did the utmost that lay in my power, though with lamentably small effect, towards enforcing a better kind of discipline. They thought, no doubt (and on plausible grounds enough, but scarcely appreciating just that one little grain of hard New England sense, oddly thrown in among the flimsier composition of the Consul's character), that he, a landsman, a bookman, and, as people said of him, a fanciful recluse, could not possibly understand anything of the difficulties or the necessities of a shipmaster's position. But their cold regards were rather acceptable than otherwise, for it is exceedingly awkward to assume a judicial austerity in the morning towards a man with whom you have been hobnobbing over night.

With the technical details of the business of that great Consulate (for great it then was, though now, I fear, wofully fallen off, and perhaps never to be revived in anything like its former extent), I did not much interfere. They could safely be left to the treatment of two as faithful, upright, and competent subordinates, both Englishmen, as ever a man was fortunate enough to meet with, in a line of life altogether new and strange to him. I had come over with instructions to supply both their places with Americans, but, possessing a happy faculty of knowing my own interest and the public's, I quietly kept hold of them, being little inclined to open the consular doors to a spy of the State Department or an intriguer for my own office. The venerable Vice-Consul, Mr. Pearce, had witnessed the successive arrivals of a score of newly appointed Consuls, shadowy and short-lived dignitaries, and carried his reminiscences back to the epoch of Consul Maury, who was appointed by Washington, and has acquired almost the grandeur of a mythical personage in the annals of the Consulate. The principal clerk, Mr. Wilding, who has since succeeded to the Vice-Consulship, was a man of English integrity, – not that the English are more honest than ourselves, but only there is a certain sturdy reliableness common among them, which we do not quite so invariably manifest in just these subordinate positions, – of English integrity, combined with American acuteness of intellect, quick-wittedness, and diversity of talent. It seemed an immense pity that he should wear out his life at a desk, without a step in advance from year's end

to year's end, when, had it been his luck to be born on our side of the water, his bright faculties and clear probity would have insured him eminent success in whatever path he night adopt. Meanwhile, it would have been a sore mischance to me, had any better fortune on his part deprived me of Mr. Wilding's services.

A fair amount of common-sense, some acquaintance with the United States Statutes, an insight into character, a tact of management, a general knowledge of the world, and a reasonable but not too inveterately decided preference for his own will and judgment over those of interested people, – these natural attributes and moderate acquirements will enable a consul to perform many of his duties respectably, but not to dispense with a great variety of other qualifications, only attainable by long experience. Yet, I think, few consuls are so well accomplished. An appointment of whatever grade, in the diplomatic or consular service of America, is too often what the English call a "job"; that is to say, it is made on private and personal grounds, without a paramount eye to the public good or the gentleman's especial fitness for the position. It is not too much to say (of course allowing for a brilliant exception here and there), that an American never is thoroughly qualified for a foreign post, nor has time to make himself so, before the revolution of the political wheel discards him from his office. Our country wrongs itself by permitting such a system of unsuitable appointments, and, still more, of removals for no cause, just when the incumbent might be beginning to ripen into usefulness. Mere ignorance of official

detail is of comparatively small moment; though it is considered indispensable, I presume, that a man in any private capacity shall be thoroughly acquainted with the machinery and operation of his business, and shall not necessarily lose his position on having attained such knowledge. But there are so many more important things to be thought of, in the qualifications of a foreign resident, that his technical dexterity or clumsiness is hardly worth mentioning.

One great part of a consul's duty, for example, should consist in building up for himself a recognized position in the society where he resides, so that his local influence might be felt in behalf of his own country, and, so far as they are compatible (as they generally are to the utmost extent), for the interests of both nations. The foreign city should know that it has a permanent inhabitant and a hearty well-wisher in him. There are many conjunctures (and one of them is now upon us) where a long-established, honored, and trusted American citizen, holding a public position under our government in such a town as Liverpool, might go far towards swaying and directing the sympathies of the inhabitants. He might throw his own weight into the balance against mischief makers; he might have set his foot on the first little spark of malignant purpose, which the next wind may blow into a national war. But we wilfully give up all advantages of this kind. The position is totally beyond the attainment of an American; there to-day, bristling all over with the porcupine quills of our Republic, and gone to-morrow, just

as he is becoming sensible of the broader and more generous patriotism which might almost amalgamate with that of England, without losing an atom of its native force and flavor. In the changes that appear to await us, and some of which, at least, can hardly fail to be for good, let us hope for a reform in this matter.

For myself, as the gentle reader would spare me the trouble of saying, I was not at all the kind of man to grow into such an ideal Consul as I have here suggested. I never in my life desired to be burdened with public influence. I disliked my office from the first, and never came into any good accordance with it. Its dignity, so far as it had any, was an encumbrance; the attentions it drew upon me (such as invitations to Mayor's banquets and public celebrations of all kinds, where, to my horror, I found myself expected to stand up and speak) were – as I may say without incivility or ingratitude, because there is nothing personal in that sort of hospitality – a bore. The official business was irksome, and often painful. There was nothing pleasant about the whole affair, except the emoluments; and even those, never too bountifully reaped, were diminished by more than half in the second or third year of my incumbency. All this being true, I was quite prepared, in advance of the inauguration of Mr. Buchanan, to send in my resignation. When my successor arrived, I drew the long, delightful breath which first made me thoroughly sensible what an unnatural life I had been leading, and compelled me to admire myself for having battled with it so sturdily. The newcomer proved to be a very genial and agreeable

gentleman, an F. F. V., and, as he pleasantly acknowledged, a Southern Fire Eater, – an announcement to which I responded, with similar good-humor and self-complacency, by parading my descent from an ancient line of Massachusetts Puritans. Since our brief acquaintanceship, my fire-eating friend has had ample opportunities to banquet on his favorite diet, hot and hot, in the Confederate service. For myself, as soon as I was out of office, the retrospect began to look unreal. I could scarcely believe that it was I, – that figure whom they called a Consul, – but a sort of Double Ganger, who had been permitted to assume my aspect, under which he went through his shadowy duties with a tolerable show of efficiency, while my real self had lain, as regarded my proper mode of being and acting, in a state of suspended animation.

The same sense of illusion still pursues me. There is some mistake in this matter. I have been writing about another man's consular experiences, with which, through some mysterious medium of transmitted ideas, I find myself intimately acquainted, but in which I cannot possibly have had a personal interest. Is it not a dream altogether? The figure of that poor Doctor of Divinity looks wonderfully lifelike; so do those of the Oriental adventurer with the visionary coronet above his brow, and the moonstruck visitor of the Queen, and the poor old wanderer, seeking his native country through English highways and by-ways for almost thirty years; and so would a hundred others that I might summon up with similar distinctness. But

were they more than shadows? Surely, I think not. Nor are these present pages a bit of intrusive autobiography. Let not the reader wrong me by supposing it. I never should have written with half such unreserve, had it been a portion of this life congenial with my nature, which I am living now, instead of a series of incidents and characters entirely apart from my own concerns, and on which the qualities personally proper to me could have had no bearing. Almost the only real incidents, as I see them now, were the visits of a young English friend, a scholar and a literary amateur, between whom and myself there sprung up an affectionate, and, I trust, not transitory regard. He used to come and sit or stand by my fireside, talking vivaciously and eloquently with me about literature and life, his own national characteristics and mine, with such kindly endurance of the many rough republicanisms wherewith I assailed him, and such frank and amiable assertion of all sorts of English prejudices and mistakes, that I understood his countrymen infinitely the better for him, and was almost prepared to love the intensest Englishman of them all, for his sake. It would gratify my cherished remembrance of this dear friend, if I could manage, without offending him, or letting the public know it, to introduce his name upon my page. Bright was the illumination of my dusky little apartment, as often as he made his appearance there!

The English sketches which I have been offering to the public comprise a few of the more external and therefore more readily manageable things that I took note of, in many escapes from

the imprisonment of my consular servitude. Liverpool, though not very delightful as a place of residence, is a most convenient and admirable point to get away from. London is only five hours off by the fast train. Chester, the most curious town in England, with its encompassing wall, its ancient rows, and its venerable cathedral, is close at hand. North Wales, with all its hills and ponds, its noble sea-scenery, its multitude of gray castles and strange old villages, may be glanced at in a summer day or two. The lakes and mountains of Cumberland and Westmoreland may be reached before dinner-time. The haunted and legendary Isle of Man, a little kingdom by itself, lies within the scope of an afternoon's voyage. Edinburgh or Glasgow are attainable over night, and Loch Lomond betimes in the morning. Visiting these famous localities, and a great many others, I hope that I do not compromise my American patriotism by acknowledging that I was often conscious of a fervent hereditary attachment to the native soil of our forefathers, and felt it to be our own Old Home.

LEAMINGTON SPA

In the course of several visits and stays of considerable length we acquired a homelike feeling towards Leamington, and came back thither again and again, chiefly because we had been there before. Wandering and wayside people, such as we had long since become, retain a few of the instincts that belong to a more settled way of life, and often prefer familiar and commonplace objects (for the very reason that they are so) to the dreary strangeness of scenes that might be thought much better worth the seeing. There is a small nest of a place in Leamington – at No. 10, Lansdowne Circus – upon which, to this day, my reminiscences are apt to settle as one of the coziest nooks in England or in the world; not that it had any special charm of its own, but only that we stayed long enough to know it well, and even to grow a little tired of it. In my opinion, the very tediousness of home and friends makes a part of what we love them for; if it be not mixed in sufficiently with the other elements of life, there may be mad enjoyment, but no happiness.

The modest abode to which I have alluded forms one of a circular range of pretty, moderate-sized, two-story houses, all built on nearly the same plan, and each provided with its little grass-plot, its flowers, its tufts of box trimmed into globes and other fantastic shapes, and its verdant hedges shutting the house in from the common drive and dividing it from its equally cosey

neighbors. Coming out of the door, and taking a turn round the circle of sister-dwellings, it is difficult to find your way back by any distinguishing individuality of your own habitation. In the centre of the Circus is a space fenced in with iron railing, a small play-place and sylvan retreat for the children of the precinct, permeated by brief paths through the fresh English grass, and shadowed by various shrubbery; amid which, if you like, you may fancy yourself in a deep seclusion, though probably the mark of eye-shot from the windows of all the surrounding houses. But, in truth, with regard to the rest of the town and the world at large, all abode here is a genuine seclusion; for the ordinary stream of life does not run through this little, quiet pool, and few or none of the inhabitants seem to be troubled with any business or outside activities. I used to set them down as half-pay officers, dowagers of narrow income, elderly maiden ladies, and other people of respectability, but small account, such as hang on the world's skirts rather than actually belong to it. The quiet of the place was seldom disturbed, except by the grocer and butcher, who came to receive orders, or by the cabs, hackney-coaches, and Bath-chairs, in which the ladies took an infrequent airing, or the livery-steed which the retired captain sometimes bestrode for a morning ride, or by the red-coated postman who went his rounds twice a day to deliver letters, and again in the evening, ringing a hand-bell, to take letters for the mail. In merely mentioning these slight interruptions of its sluggish stillness, I seem to myself to disturb too much the atmosphere of quiet that brooded over

the spot; whereas its impression upon me was, that the world had never found the way hither, or had forgotten it, and that the fortunate inhabitants were the only ones who possessed the spell-word of admittance. Nothing could have suited me better, at the time; for I had been holding a position of public servitude, which imposed upon me (among a great many lighter duties) the ponderous necessity of being universally civil and sociable.

Nevertheless, if a man were seeking the bustle of society, he might find it more readily in Leamington than in most other English towns. It is a permanent watering-place, a sort of institution to which I do not know any close parallel in American life: for such places as Saratoga bloom only for the summer-season, and offer a thousand dissimilitudes even then; while Leamington seems to be always in flower, and serves as a home to the homeless all the year round. Its original nucleus, the plausible excuse for the town's coming into prosperous existence, lies in the fiction of a chalybeate well, which, indeed, is so far a reality that out of its magical depths have gushed streets, groves, gardens, mansions, shops, and churches, and spread themselves along the banks of the little river Leam. This miracle accomplished, the beneficent fountain has retired beneath a pump-room, and appears to have given up all pretensions to the remedial virtues formerly attributed to it. I know not whether its waters are ever tasted nowadays; but not the less does Leamington – in pleasant Warwickshire, at the very midmost point of England, in a good hunting neighborhood, and

surrounded by country-seats and castles – continue to be a resort of transient visitors, and the more permanent abode of a class of genteel, unoccupied, well-to-do, but not very wealthy people, such as are hardly known among ourselves. Persons who have no country-houses, and whose fortunes are inadequate to a London expenditure, find here, I suppose, a sort of town and country life in one.

In its present aspect the town is of no great age. In contrast with the antiquity of many places in its neighborhood, it has a bright, new face, and seems almost to smile even amid the sombreness of an English autumn. Nevertheless, it is hundreds upon hundreds of years old, if we reckon up that sleepy lapse of time during which it existed as a small village of thatched houses, clustered round a priory; and it would still have been precisely such a rural village, but for a certain Dr. Jephson, who lived within the memory of man, and who found out the magic well, and foresaw what fairy wealth might be made to flow from it. A public garden has been laid out along the margin of the Leam, and called the Jephson Garden, in honor of him who created the prosperity of his native spot. A little way within the garden-gate there is a circular temple of Grecian architecture, beneath the dome of which stands a marble statue of the good Doctor, very well executed, and representing him with a face of fussy activity and benevolence: just the kind of man, if luck favored him, to build up the fortunes of those about him, or, quite as probably, to blight his whole neighborhood by some disastrous speculation.

The Jephson Garden is very beautiful, like most other English pleasure-grounds; for, aided by their moist climate and not too fervid sun, the landscape-gardeners excel in converting flat or tame surfaces into attractive scenery, chiefly through the skilful arrangement of trees and shrubbery. An Englishman aims at this effect even in the little patches under the windows of a suburban villa, and achieves it on a larger scale in a tract of many acres. The Garden is shadowed with trees of a fine growth, standing alone, or in dusky groves and dense entanglements, pervaded by woodland paths; and emerging from these pleasant glooms, we come upon a breadth of sunshine, where the greensward – so vividly green that it has a kind of lustre in it – is spotted with beds of gemlike flowers. Rustic chairs and benches are scattered about, some of them ponderously fashioned out of the stumps of obtruncated trees, and others more artfully made with intertwining branches, or perhaps an imitation of such frail handiwork in iron. In a central part of the Garden is an archery-ground, where laughing maidens practise at the butts, generally missing their ostensible mark, but, by the mere grace of their action, sending an unseen shaft into some young man's heart. There is space, moreover, within these precincts, for an artificial lake, with a little green island in the midst of it; both lake and island being the haunt of swans, whose aspect and movement in the water are most beautiful and stately, – most infirm, disjointed, and decrepit, when, unadvisedly, they see fit to emerge, and try to walk upon dry land. In the latter case,

they look like a breed of uncommonly ill-contrived geese; and I record the matter here for the sake of the moral, – that we should never pass judgment on the merits of any person or thing, unless we behold them in the sphere and circumstances to which they are specially adapted. In still another part of the Garden there is a labyrinthine maze, formed of an intricacy of hedge-bordered walks, involving himself in which, a man might wander for hours inextricably within a circuit of only a few yards. It seemed to me a sad emblem of the mental and moral perplexities in which we sometimes go astray, petty in scope, yet large enough to entangle a lifetime, and bewilder us with a weary movement, but no genuine progress.

The Leam, – the "high complectioned Leam," as Drayton calls it, – after drowsing across the principal street of the town beneath a handsome bridge, skirts along the margin of the Garden without any perceptible flow. Heretofore I had fancied the Concord the laziest river in the world, but now assign that amiable distinction to the little English stream. Its water is by no means transparent, but has a greenish, goose-puddly hue, which, however, accords well with the other coloring and characteristics of the scene, and is disagreeable neither to sight nor smell. Certainly, this river is a perfect feature of that gentle picturesqueness in which England is so rich, sleeping, as it does, beneath a margin of willows that droop into its bosom, and other trees, of deeper verdure than our own country can boast, inclining lovingly over it. On the Garden-side it is bordered

by a shadowy, secluded grove, with winding paths among its boskiness, affording many a peep at the river's imperceptible lapse and tranquil gleam; and on the opposite shore stands the priory-church, with its churchyard full of shrubbery and tombstones.

The business portion of the town clusters about the banks of the Leam, and is naturally densest around the well to which the modern settlement owes its existence. Here are the commercial inns, the post-office, the furniture-dealers, the iron-mongers, and all the heavy and homely establishments that connect themselves even with the airiest modes of human life; while upward from the river, by a long and gentle ascent, rises the principal street, which is very bright and cheerful in its physiognomy, and adorned with shop-fronts almost as splendid as those of London, though on a diminutive scale. There are likewise side-streets and cross-streets, many of which are bordered with the beautiful Warwickshire elm, a most unusual kind of adornment for an English town; and spacious avenues, wide enough to afford room for stately groves, with foot-paths running beneath the lofty shade, and rooks cawing and chattering so high in the tree-tops that their voices get musical before reaching the earth. The houses are mostly built in blocks and ranges, in which every separate tenement is a repetition of its fellow, though the architecture of the different ranges is sufficiently various. Some of them are almost palatial in size and sumptuousness of arrangement. Then, on the outskirts of the town, there are

detached villas, enclosed within that separate domain of high stone fence and embowered shrubbery which an Englishman so loves to build and plant around his abode, presenting to the public only an iron gate, with a gravelled carriage-drive winding away towards the half-hidden mansion. Whether in street or suburb, Leamington may fairly be called beautiful, and, at some points, magnificent; but by and by you become doubtfully suspicious of a somewhat unreal finery: it is pretentious, though not glaringly so; it has been built with malice aforethought, as a place of gentility and enjoyment. Moreover, splendid as the houses look, and comfortable as they often are, there is a nameless something about them, betokening that they have not grown out of human hearts, but are the creations of a skilfully applied human intellect: no man has reared any one of them, whether stately or humble, to be his lifelong residence, wherein to bring up his children, who are to inherit it as a home. They are nicely contrived lodging-houses, one and all, – the best as well as the shabbiest of them, – and therefore inevitably lack some nameless property that a home should have. This was the case with our own little snuggery in Lansdowne Circus, as with all the rest; it had not grown out of anybody's individual need, but was built to let or sell, and was therefore like a ready-made garment, – a tolerable fit, but only tolerable.

All these blocks, ranges, and detached villas are adorned with the finest and most aristocratic manes that I have found anywhere in England, except, perhaps, in Bath, which is the great

metropolis of that second-class gentility with which watering-places are chiefly populated. Lansdowne Crescent, Lansdowne Circus, Lansdowne Terrace, Regent Street, Warwick Street, Clarendon Street, the Upper and Lower Parade: such are a few of the designations. Parade, indeed, is a well-chosen name for the principal street, along which the population of the idle town draws itself out for daily review and display. I only wish that my descriptive powers would enable me to throw off a picture of the scene at a sunny noontide, individualizing each character with a touch the great people alighting from their carriages at the principal shop-doors; the elderly ladies and infirm Indian officers drawn along in Bath-chairs; the comely, rather than pretty, English girls, with their deep, healthy bloom, which an American taste is apt to deem fitter for a milkmaid than for a lady; the mustached gentlemen with frogged surtouts and a military air; the nursemaids and chubby children, but no chubbier than our own, and scampering on slenderer legs; the sturdy figure of John Bull in all varieties and of all ages, but ever with the stamp of authenticity somewhere about him.

To say the truth, I have been holding the pen over my paper, purposing to write a descriptive paragraph or two about the throng on the principal Parade of Leamington, so arranging it as to present a sketch of the British out-of-door aspect on a morning walk of gentility; but I find no personages quite sufficiently distinct and individual in my memory to supply the materials of such a panorama.

Oddly enough, the only figure that comes fairly forth to my mind's eye is that of a dowager, one of hundreds whom I used to marvel at, all over England, but who have scarcely a representative among our own ladies of autumnal life, so thin, careworn, and frail, as age usually makes the latter.

I have heard a good deal of the tenacity with which English ladies retain their personal beauty to a late period of life; but (not to suggest that an American eye needs use and cultivation before it can quite appreciate the charm of English beauty at any age) it strikes me that an English lady of fifty is apt to become a creature less refined and delicate, so far as her physique goes, than anything that we Western people class under the name of woman. She has an awful ponderosity of frame, not pulpy, like the looser development of our few fat women, but massive with solid beef and streaky tallow; so that (though struggling manfully against the idea) you inevitably think of her as made up of steaks and sirloins. When she walks, her advance is elephantine. When she sits down, it is on a great round space of her Maker's footstool, where she looks as if nothing could ever move her. She imposes awe and respect by the muchness of her personality, to such a degree that you probably credit her with far greater moral and intellectual force than she can fairly claim. Her visage is usually grim and stern, seldom positively forbidding, yet calmly terrible, not merely by its breadth and weight of feature, but because it seems to express so much well-founded self-reliance, such acquaintance with the world, its toils, troubles,

and dangers, and such sturdy capacity for trampling down a foe. Without anything positively salient, or actively offensive, or, indeed, unjustly formidable to her neighbors, she has the effect of a seventy-four gun-ship in time of peace; for, while you assure yourself that there is no real danger, you cannot help thinking how tremendous would be her onset, if pugnaciously inclined, and how futile the effort to inflict any counter-injury. She certainly looks tenfold – nay, a hundred-fold – better able to take care of herself than our slender-framed and haggard womankind; but I have not found reason to suppose that the English dowager of fifty has actually greater courage, fortitude, and strength of character than our women of similar age, or even a tougher physical endurance than they. Morally, she is strong, I suspect, only in society, and in the common routine of social affairs, and would be found powerless and timid in any exceptional strait that might call for energy outside of the conventionalities amid which she has grown up.

You can meet this figure in the street, and live, and even smile at the recollection. But conceive of her in a ball-room, with the bare, brawny arms that she invariably displays there, and all the other corresponding development, such as is beautiful in the maiden blossom, but a spectacle to howl at in such an over-blown cabbage-rose as this.

Yet, somewhere in this enormous bulk there must be hidden the modest, slender, violet-nature of a girl, whom an alien mass of earthliness has unkindly overgrown; for an English

maiden in her teens, though very seldom so pretty as our own damsels, possesses, to say the truth, a certain charm of half-blossom, and delicately folded leaves, and tender womanhood shielded by maidenly reserves, with which, somehow or other, our American girls often fail to adorn themselves during an appreciable moment. It is a pity that the English violet should grow into such an outrageously developed peony as I have attempted to describe. I wonder whether a middle-aged husband ought to be considered as legally married to all the accretions that have overgrown the slenderness of his bride, since he led her to the altar, and which make her so much more than he ever bargained for! Is it not a sounder view of the case, that the matrimonial bond cannot be held to include the three fourths of the wife that had no existence when the ceremony was performed? And as a matter of conscience and good morals, ought not an English married pair to insist upon the celebration of a silver-wedding at the end of twenty-five years, in order to legalize and mutually appropriate that corporeal growth of which both parties have individually come into possession since they were pronounced one flesh?

The chief enjoyment of my several visits to Leamington lay in rural walks about the neighborhood, and in jaunts to places of note and interest, which are particularly abundant in that region. The high-roads are made pleasant to the traveller by a border of trees, and often afford him the hospitality of a wayside bench beneath a comfortable shade. But a fresher delight is to be

found in the foot-paths, which go wandering away from stile to stile, along hedges, and across broad fields, and through wooded parks, leading you to little hamlets of thatched cottages, ancient, solitary farm-houses, picturesque old mills, streamlets, pools, and all those quiet, secret, unexpected, yet strangely familiar features of English scenery that Tennyson shows us in his idyls and eclogues. These by-paths admit the wayfarer into the very heart of rural life, and yet do not burden him with a sense of intrusiveness. He has a right to go whithersoever they lead him; for, with all their shaded privacy, they are as much the property of the public as the dusty high-road itself, and even by an older tenure. Their antiquity probably exceeds that of the Roman ways; the footsteps of the aboriginal Britons first wore away the grass, and the natural flow of intercourse between village and village has kept the track bare ever since. An American farmer would plough across any such path, and obliterate it with his hills of potatoes and Indian corn; but here it is protected by law, and still more by the sacredness that inevitably springs up, in this soil, along the well-defined footprints of centuries. Old associations are sure to be fragrant herbs in English nostrils; we pull them up as weeds.

I remember such a path, the access to which is from Lovers' Grove, a range of tall old oaks and elms on a high hill-top, whence there is a view of Warwick Castle, and a wide extent of landscape, beautiful, though bedimmed with English mist. This particular foot-path, however, is not a remarkably good specimen

of its kind, since it leads into no hollows and seclusions, and soon terminates in a high-road. It connects Leamington by a short cut with the small neighboring village of Lillington, a place which impresses an American observer with its many points of contrast to the rural aspects of his own country. The village consists chiefly of one row of contiguous dwellings, separated only by party-walls, but ill-matched among themselves, being of different heights, and apparently of various ages, though all are of an antiquity which we should call venerable. Some of the windows are leaden-framed lattices, opening on hinges. These houses are mostly built of gray stone; but others, in the same range, are of brick, and one or two are in a very old fashion, – Elizabethan, or still older, – having a ponderous framework of oak, painted black, and filled in with plastered stone or bricks. Judging by the patches of repair, the oak seems to be the more durable part of the structure. Some of the roofs are covered with earthen tiles; others (more decayed and poverty-stricken) with thatch, out of which sprouts a luxurious vegetation of grass, house-leeks, and yellow flowers. What especially strikes an American is the lack of that insulated space, the intervening gardens, grass-plots, orchards, broad-spreading shade-trees, which occur between our own village-houses. These English dwellings have no such separate surroundings; they all grow together, like the cells of a honeycomb.

Beyond the first row of houses, and hidden from it by a turn of the road, there was another row (or block, as we should call it) of

small old cottages, stuck one against another, with their thatched roofs forming a single contiguity. These, I presume, were the habitations of the poorest order of rustic laborers; and the narrow precincts of each cottage, as well as the close neighborhood of the whole, gave the impression of a stifled, unhealthy atmosphere among the occupants. It seemed impossible that there should be a cleanly reserve, a proper self-respect among individuals, or a wholesome unfamiliarity between families where human life was crowded and massed into such intimate communities as these. Nevertheless, not to look beyond the outside, I never saw a prettier rural scene than was presented by this range of contiguous huts. For in front of the whole row was a luxuriant and well-trimmed hawthorn hedge, and belonging to each cottage was a little square of garden-ground, separated from its neighbors by a line of the same verdant fence. The gardens were chockfull, not of esculent vegetables, but of flowers, familiar ones, but very bright-colored, and shrubs of box, some of which were trimmed into artistic shapes; and I remember, before one door, a representation of Warwick Castle, made of oyster-shells. The cottagers evidently loved the little nests in which they dwelt, and did their best to make them beautiful, and succeeded more than tolerably well, – so kindly did nature help their humble efforts with its verdure, flowers, moss, lichens, and the green things that grew out of the thatch. Through some of the open doorways we saw plump children rolling about on the stone floors, and their mothers, by no means very pretty, but as happy-looking

as mothers generally are; and while we gazed at these domestic matters, an old woman rushed wildly out of one of the gates, upholding a shovel, on which she clanged and clattered with a key. At first we fancied that she intended an onslaught against ourselves, but soon discovered that a more dangerous enemy was abroad; for the old lady's bees had swarmed, and the air was full of them, whizzing by our heads like bullets.

Not far from these two rows of houses and cottages, a green lane, overshadowed with trees, turned aside from the main road, and tended towards a square, gray tower, the battlements of which were just high enough to be visible above the foliage. Wending our way thitherward, we found the very picture and ideal of a country church and churchyard. The tower seemed to be of Norman architecture, low, massive, and crowned with battlements. The body of the church was of very modest dimensions, and the eaves so low that I could touch them with my walking-stick. We looked into the windows and beheld the dim and quiet interior, a narrow space, but venerable with the consecration of many centuries, and keeping its sanctity as entire and inviolate as that of a vast cathedral. The nave was divided from the side aisles of the church by pointed arches resting on very sturdy pillars: it was good to see how solemnly they held themselves to their age-long task of supporting that lowly roof. There was a small organ, suited in size to the vaulted hollow, which it weekly filled with religious sound. On the opposite wall of the church, between two windows, was a mural tablet

of white marble, with an inscription in black letters, – the only such memorial that I could discern, although many dead people doubtless lay beneath the floor, and had paved it with their ancient tombstones, as is customary in old English churches. There were no modern painted windows, flaring with raw colors, nor other gorgeous adornments, such as the present taste for mediaeval restoration often patches upon the decorous simplicity of the gray village-church. It is probably the worshipping-place of no more distinguished a congregation than the farmers and peasantry who inhabit the houses and cottages which I have just described. Had the lord of the manor been one of the parishioners, there would have been an eminent pew near the chancel, walled high about, curtained, and softly cushioned, warmed by a fireplace of its own, and distinguished by hereditary tablets and escutcheons on the enclosed stone pillar.

A well-trodden path led across the churchyard, and the gate being on the latch, we entered, and walked round among the graves and monuments. The latter were chiefly head-stones, none of which were very old, so far as was discoverable by the dates; some, indeed, in so ancient a cemetery, were disagreeably new, with inscriptions glittering like sunshine in gold letters. The ground must have been dug over and over again, innumerable times, until the soil is made up of what was once human clay, out of which have sprung successive crops of gravestones, that flourish their allotted time, and disappear, like the weeds and flowers in their briefer period. The English climate is very

unfavorable to the endurance of memorials in the open air. Twenty years of it suffice to give as much antiquity of aspect, whether to tombstone or edifice, as a hundred years of our own drier atmosphere, – so soon do the drizzly rains and constant moisture corrode the surface of marble or freestone. Sculptured edges loose their sharpness in a year or two; yellow lichens overspread a beloved name, and obliterate it while it is yet fresh upon some survivor's heart. Time gnaws an English gravestone with wonderful appetite; and when the inscription is quite illegible, the sexton takes the useless slab away, and perhaps makes a hearthstone of it, and digs up the unripe bones which it ineffectually tried to memorialize, and gives the bed to another sleeper. In the Charter Street burial-ground at Salem, and in the old graveyard on the hill at Ipswich, I have seen more ancient gravestones, with legible inscriptions on them, than in any English churchyard.

And yet this same ungenial climate, hostile as it generally is to the long remembrance of departed people, has sometimes a lovely way of dealing with the records on certain monuments that lie horizontally in the open air. The rain falls into the deep incisions of the letters, and has scarcely time to be dried away before another shower sprinkles the flat stone again, and replenishes those little reservoirs. The unseen, mysterious seeds of mosses find their way into the lettered furrows, and are made to germinate by the continual moisture and watery sunshine of the English sky; and by and by, in a year, or two years, or many

years, behold the complete inscription —

Here Lieth the body,

and all the rest of the tender falsehood – beautifully embossed in raised letters of living green, a bas-relief of velvet moss on the marble slab! It becomes more legible, under the skyey influences, after the world has forgotten the deceased, than when it was fresh from the stone-cutter's hands. It outlives the grief of friends. I first saw an example of this in Bebbington churchyard, in Cheshire, and thought that Nature must needs have had a special tenderness for the person (no noted man, however, in the world's history) so long ago laid beneath that stone, since she took such wonderful pains to "keep his memory green." Perhaps the proverbial phrase just quoted may have had its origin in the natural phenomenon here described.

While we rested ourselves on a horizontal monument, which was elevated just high enough to be a convenient seat, I observed that one of the gravestones lay very close to the church, – so close that the droppings of the eaves would fall upon it. It seemed as if the inmate of that grave had desired to creep under the church-wall. On closer inspection, we found an almost illegible epitaph on the stone, and with difficulty made out this forlorn verse: —

"Poorly lived,
And poorly died,
Poorly buried,

And no one cried."

It would be hard to compress the story of a cold and luckless life, death, and burial into fewer words, or more impressive ones; at least, we found them impressive, perhaps because we had to re-create the inscription by scraping away the lichens from the faintly traced letters. The grave was on the shady and damp side of the church, endwise towards it, the head-stone being within about three feet of the foundation-wall; so that, unless the poor man was a dwarf, he must have been doubled up to fit him into his final resting-place. No wonder that his epitaph murmured against so poor a burial as this! His name, as well as I could make it out, was Treeo, – John Treeo, I think, – and he died in 1810, at the age of seventy-four. The gravestone is so overgrown with grass and weeds, so covered with unsightly lichens, and so crumbly with time and foul weather, that it is questionable whether anybody will ever be at the trouble of deciphering it again. But there is a quaint and sad kind of enjoyment in defeating (to such slight degree as my pen may do it) the probabilities of oblivion for poor John Treeo, and asking a little sympathy for him, half a century after his death, and making him better and more widely known, at least, than any other slumberer in Lillington churchyard: he having been, as appearances go, the outcast of them all.

You find similar old churches and villages in all the neighboring country, at the distance of every two or three miles;

and I describe them, not as being rare, but because they are so common and characteristic. The village of Whitnash, within twenty minutes' walk of Leamington, looks as secluded, as rural, and as little disturbed by the fashions of to-day, as if Dr. Jephson had never developed all those Parades and Crescents out of his magic well. I used to wonder whether the inhabitants had ever yet heard of railways, or, at their slow rate of progress, had even reached the epoch of stage-coaches. As you approach the village, while it is yet unseen, you observe a tall, overshadowing canopy of elm-tree tops, beneath which you almost hesitate to follow the public road, on account of the remoteness that seems to exist between the precincts of this old-world community and the thronged modern street out of which you have so recently emerged. Venturing onward, however, you soon find yourself in the heart of Whitnash, and see an irregular ring of ancient rustic dwellings surrounding the village-green, on one side of which stands the church, with its square Norman tower and battlements, while close adjoining is the vicarage, made picturesque by peaks and gables. At first glimpse, none of the houses appear to be less than two or three centuries old, and they are of the ancient, wooden-framed fashion, with thatched roofs, which give them the air of birds' nests, thereby assimilating them closely to the simplicity of nature.

The church-tower is mossy and much gnawed by time; it has narrow loopholes up and down its front and sides, and an arched window over the low portal, set with small panes of

glass, cracked, dim, and irregular, through which a bygone age is peeping out into the daylight. Some of those old, grotesque faces, called gargoyles, are seen on the projections of the architecture. The churchyard is very small, and is encompassed by a gray stone fence that looks as ancient as the church itself. In front of the tower, on the village-green, is a yew-tree of incalculable age, with a vast circumference of trunk, but a very scanty head of foliage; though its boughs still keep some of the vitality which perhaps was in its early prime when the Saxon invaders founded Whitnash. A thousand years is no extraordinary antiquity in the lifetime of a yew. We were pleasantly startled, however, by discovering an exuberance of more youthful life than we had thought possible in so old a tree; for the faces of two children laughed at us out of an opening in the trunk, which had become hollow with long decay. On one side of the yew stood a framework of worm-eaten timber, the use and meaning of which puzzled me exceedingly, till I made it out to be the village-stocks; a public institution that, in its day, had doubtless hampered many a pair of shank-bones, now crumbling in the adjacent churchyard. It is not to be supposed, however, that this old-fashioned mode of punishment is still in vogue among the good people of Whitnash. The vicar of the parish has antiquarian propensities, and had probably dragged the stocks out of some dusty hiding-place, and set them up on their former site as a curiosity.

I disquiet myself in vain with the effort to hit upon some characteristic feature, or assemblage of features, that shall

convey to the reader the influence of hoar antiquity lingering into the present daylight, as I so often felt it in these old English scenes. It is only an American who can feel it; and even he begins to find himself growing insensible to its effect, after a long residence in England. But while you are still new in the old country, it thrills you with strange emotion to think that this little church of Whitnash, humble as it seems, stood for ages under the Catholic faith, and has not materially changed since Wickcliffe's days, and that it looked as gray as now in Bloody Mary's time, and that Cromwell's troopers broke off the stone noses of those same gargoyles that are now grinning in your face. So, too, with the immemorial yew-tree: you see its great roots grasping hold of the earth like gigantic claws, clinging so sturdily that no effort of time can wrench them away; and there being life in the old tree, you feel all the more as if a contemporary witness were telling you of the things that have been. It has lived among men, and been a familiar object to them, and seen them brought to be christened and married and buried in the neighboring church and churchyard, through so many centuries, that it knows all about our race, so far as fifty generations of the Whitnash people can supply such knowledge.

And, after all, what a weary life it must have been for the old tree! Tedious beyond imagination! Such, I think, is the final impression on the mind of an American visitor, when his delight at finding something permanent begins to yield to his Western love of change, and he becomes sensible of the heavy air of a spot

where the forefathers and foremothers have grown up together, intermarried, and died, through a long succession of lives, without any intermixture of new elements, till family features and character are all run in the same inevitable mould. Life is there fossilized in its greenest leaf. The man who died yesterday or ever so long ago walks the village-street to day, and chooses the same wife that he married a hundred years since, and must be buried again to-morrow under the same kindred dust that has already covered him half a score of times. The stone threshold of his cottage is worn away with his hobnailed footsteps, shuffling over it from the reign of the first Plantagenet to that of Victoria. Better than this is the lot of our restless countrymen, whose modern instinct bids them tend always towards "fresh woods and pastures new." Rather than such monotony of sluggish ages, loitering on a village-green, toiling in hereditary fields, listening to the parson's drone lengthened through centuries in the gray Norman church, let us welcome whatever change may come, – change of place, social customs, political institutions, modes of worship, – trusting, that, if all present things shall vanish, they will but make room for better systems, and for a higher type of man to clothe his life in them, and to fling them off in turn.

Nevertheless, while an American willingly accepts growth and change as the law of his own national and private existence, he has a singular tenderness for the stone-incrusted institutions of the mother-country. The reason may be (though I should prefer a more generous explanation) that he recognizes the tendency of

these hardened forms to stiffen her joints and fetter her ankles, in the race and rivalry of improvement. I hated to see so much as a twig of ivy wrenched away from an old wall in England. Yet change is at work, even in such a village as Whitnash. At a subsequent visit, looking more critically at the irregular circle of dwellings that surround the yew-tree and confront the church, I perceived that some of the houses must have been built within no long time, although the thatch, the quaint gables, and the old oaken framework of the others diffused an air of antiquity over the whole assemblage. The church itself was undergoing repair and restoration, which is but another name for change. Masons were making patchwork on the front of the tower, and were sawing a slab of stone and piling up bricks to strengthen the side-wall, or possibly to enlarge the ancient edifice by an additional aisle. Moreover, they had dug an immense pit in the churchyard, long and broad, and fifteen feet deep, two thirds of which profundity were discolored by human decay, and mixed up with crumbly bones. What this excavation was intended for I could nowise imagine, unless it were the very pit in which Longfellow bids the "Dead Past bury its Dead," and Whitnash, of all places in the world, were going to avail itself of our poet's suggestion. If so, it must needs be confessed that many picturesque and delightful things would be thrown into the hole, and covered out of sight forever.

The article which I am writing has taken its own course, and occupied itself almost wholly with country churches; whereas I

had purposed to attempt a description of some of the many old towns – Warwick, Coventry, Kenilworth, Stratford-on-Avon – which lie within an easy scope of Leamington. And still another church presents itself to my remembrance. It is that of Hatton, on which I stumbled in the course of a forenoon's ramble, and paused a little while to look at it for the sake of old Dr. Parr, who was once its vicar. Hatton, so far as I could discover, has no public-house, no shop, no contiguity of roofs (as in most English villages, however small), but is merely an ancient neighborhood of farm-houses, spacious, and standing wide apart, each within its own precincts, and offering a most comfortable aspect of orchards, harvest-fields, barns, stacks, and all manner of rural plenty. It seemed to be a community of old settlers, among whom everything had been going on prosperously since an epoch beyond the memory of man; and they kept a certain privacy among themselves, and dwelt on a cross-road, at the entrance of which was a barred gate, hospitably open, but still impressing me with a sense of scarcely warrantable intrusion. After all, in some shady nook of those gentle Warwickshire slopes there may have been a denser and more populous settlement, styled Hatton, which I never reached.

Emerging from the by-road, and entering upon one that crossed it at right angles and led to Warwick, I espied the church of Dr. Parr. Like the others which I have described, it had a low stone tower, square, and battlemented at its summit: for all these little churches seem to have been built on the same model,

and nearly at the same measurement, and have even a greater family-likeness than the cathedrals. As I approached, the bell of the tower (a remarkably deep-toned bell, considering how small it was) flung its voice abroad, and told me that it was noon. The church stands among its graves, a little removed from the wayside, quite apart from any collection of houses, and with no signs of vicarage; it is a good deal shadowed by trees, and not wholly destitute of ivy. The body of the edifice, unfortunately (and it is an outrage which the English church-wardens are fond of perpetrating), has been newly covered with a yellowish plaster or wash, so as quite to destroy the aspect of antiquity, except upon the tower, which wears the dark gray hue of many centuries. The chancel-window is painted with a representation of Christ upon the Cross, and all the other windows are full of painted or stained glass, but none of it ancient, nor (if it be fair to judge from without of what ought to be seen within) possessing any of the tender glory that should be the inheritance of this branch of Art, revived from mediaeval times. I stepped over the graves, and peeped in at two or three of the windows, and saw the snug interior of the church glimmering through the many-colored panes, like a show of commonplace objects under the fantastic influence of a dream: for the floor was covered with modern pews, very like what we may see in a New England meeting-house, though, I think, a little more favorable than those would be to the quiet slumbers of the Hatton farmers and their families. Those who slept under Dr. Parr's preaching now

prolong their nap, I suppose, in the churchyard round about, and can scarcely have drawn much spiritual benefit from any truths that he contrived to tell them in their lifetime. It struck me as a rare example (even where examples are numerous) of a man utterly misplaced, that this enormous scholar, great in the classic tongues, and inevitably converting his own simplest vernacular into a learned language, should have been set up in this homely pulpit, and ordained to preach salvation to a rustic audience, to whom it is difficult to imagine how he could ever have spoken one available word.

Almost always, in visiting such scenes as I have been attempting to describe, I had a singular sense of having been there before. The ivy-grown English churches (even that of Bebbington, the first that I beheld) were quite as familiar to me, when fresh from home, as the old wooden meeting-house in Salem, which used, on wintry Sabbaths, to be the frozen purgatory of my childhood. This was a bewildering, yet very delightful emotion fluttering about me like a faint summer wind, and filling my imagination with a thousand half-remembrances, which looked as vivid as sunshine, at a side-glance, but faded quite away whenever I attempted to grasp and define them. Of course, the explanation of the mystery was, that history, poetry, and fiction, books of travel, and the talk of tourists, had given me pretty accurate preconceptions of the common objects of English scenery, and these, being long ago vivified by a youthful fancy, had insensibly taken their places among the images of things

actually seen. Yet the illusion was often so powerful, that I almost doubted whether such airy remembrances might not be a sort of innate idea, the print of a recollection in some ancestral mind, transmitted, with fainter and fainter impress through several descents, to my own. I felt, indeed, like the stalwart progenitor in person, returning to the hereditary haunts after more than two hundred years, and finding the church, the hall, the farm-house, the cottage, hardly changed during his long absence, – the same shady by-paths and hedge-lanes, the same veiled sky, and green lustre of the lawns and fields, – while his own affinities for these things, a little obscured by disuse, were reviving at every step.

An American is not very apt to love the English people, as a whole, on whatever length of acquaintance. I fancy that they would value our regard, and even reciprocate it in their ungracious way, if we could give it to them in spite of all rebuffs; but they are beset by a curious and inevitable infelicity, which compels them, as it were, to keep up what they seem to consider a wholesome bitterness of feeling between themselves and all other nationalities, especially that of America. They will never confess it; nevertheless, it is as essential a tonic to them as their bitter ale. Therefore, – and possibly, too, from a similar narrowness in his own character, – an American seldom feels quite as if he were at home among the English people. If he do so, he has ceased to be an American. But it requires no long residence to make him love their island, and appreciate it as thoroughly as they themselves do. For my part, I used to wish that we could annex it, transferring

their thirty millions of inhabitants to some convenient wilderness in the great West, and putting half or a quarter as many of ourselves into their places. The change would be beneficial to both parties. We, in our dry atmosphere, are getting too nervous, haggard, dyspeptic, extenuated, unsubstantial, theoretic, and need to be made grosser. John Bull, on the other hand, has grown bulbous, long-bodied, short-legged, heavy-witted, material, and, in a word, too intensely English. In a few more centuries he will be the earthliest creature that ever the earth saw. Heretofore Providence has obviated such a result by timely intermixtures of alien races with the old English stock; so that each successive conquest of England has proved a victory by the revivification and improvement of its native manhood. Cannot America and England hit upon some scheme to secure even greater advantages to both nations?

ABOUT WARWICK

Between bright, new Leamington, the growth of the present century, and rusty Warwick, founded by King Cymbeline in the twilight ages, a thousand years before the mediaeval darkness, there are two roads, either of which may be measured by a sober-paced pedestrian in less than half an hour.

One of these avenues flows out of the midst of the smart parades and crescents of the former town, – along by hedges and beneath the shadow of great elms, past stuccoed Elizabethan villas and wayside alehouses, and through a hamlet of modern aspect, – and runs straight into the principal thoroughfare of Warwick. The battlemented turrets of the castle, embowered half-way up in foliage, and the tall, slender tower of St. Mary's Church, rising from among clustered roofs, have been visible almost from the commencement of the walk. Near the entrance of the town stands St. John's School-House, a picturesque old edifice of stone, with four peaked gables in a row, alternately plain and ornamented, and wide, projecting windows, and a spacious and venerable porch, all overgrown with moss and ivy, and shut in from the world by a high stone fence, not less mossy than the gabled front. There is an iron gate, through the rusty open-work of which you see a grassy lawn, and almost expect to meet the shy, curious eyes of the little boys of past generations, peeping forth from their infantile antiquity into the

strangeness of our present life. I find a peculiar charm in these long-established English schools, where the school-boy of to-day sits side by side, as it were, with his great-grandsire, on the same old benches, and often, I believe, thumbs a later, but unimproved edition of the same old grammar or arithmetic. The newfangled notions of a Yankee school-committee would madden many a pedagogue, and shake down the roof of many a time-honored seat of learning, in the mother-country.

At this point, however, we will turn back, in order to follow up the other road from Leamington, which was the one that I loved best to take. It pursues a straight and level course, bordered by wide gravel-walks and overhung by the frequent elm, with here a cottage and there a villa, on one side a wooded plantation, and on the other a rich field of grass or grain, until, turning at right angles, it brings you to an arched bridge over the Avon. Its parapet is a balustrade carved out of freestone, into the soft substance of which a multitude of persons have engraved their names or initials, many of them now illegible, while others, more deeply cut, are illuminated with fresh green moss. These tokens indicate a famous spot; and casting our eyes along the smooth gleam and shadow of the quiet stream, through a vista of willows that droop on either side into the water, we behold the gray magnificence of Warwick Castle, uplifting itself among stately trees, and rearing its turrets high above their loftiest branches. We can scarcely think the scene real, so completely do those machicolated towers, the long line of battlements,

the massive buttresses, the high-windowed walls, shape out our indistinct ideas of the antique time. It might rather seem as if the sleepy river (being Shakespeare's Avon, and often, no doubt, the mirror of his gorgeous visions) were dreaming now of a lordly residence that stood here many centuries ago; and this fantasy is strengthened, when you observe that the image in the tranquil water has all the distinctness of the actual structure. Either might be the reflection of the other. Wherever Time has gnawed one of the stones, you see the mark of his tooth just as plainly in the sunken reflection. Each is so perfect, that the upper vision seems a castle in the air, and the lower one an old stronghold of feudalism, miraculously kept from decay in an enchanted river.

A ruinous and ivy-grown bridge, that projects from the bank a little on the hither side of the castle, has the effect of making the scene appear more entirely apart from the every-day world, for it ends abruptly in the middle of the stream, – so that, if a cavalcade of the knights and ladies of romance should issue from the old walls, they could never tread on earthly ground, any more than we, approaching from the side of modern realism, can overleap the gulf between our domain and theirs. Yet, if we seek to disenchant ourselves, it may readily be done. Crossing the bridge on which we stand, and passing a little farther on, we come to the entrance of the castle, abutting on the highway, and hospitably open at certain hours to all curious pilgrims who choose to disburse half a crown or so toward the support of the earl's domestics. The sight of that long series of historic

rooms, full of such splendors and rarities as a great English family necessarily gathers about itself, in its hereditary abode, and in the lapse of ages, is well worth the money, or ten times as much, if indeed the value of the spectacle could be reckoned in money's-worth. But after the attendant has hurried you from end to end of the edifice, repeating a guide-book by rote, and exorcising each successive hall of its poetic glamour and witchcraft by the mere tone in which he talks about it, you will make the doleful discovery that Warwick Castle has ceased to be a dream. It is better, methinks, to linger on the bridge, gazing at Caesar's Tower and Guy's Tower in the dim English sunshine above, and in the placid Avon below, and still keep them as thoughts in your own mind, than climb to their summits, or touch even a stone of their actual substance. They will have all the more reality for you, as stalwart relics of immemorial time, if you are reverent enough to leave them in the intangible sanctity of a poetic vision.

From the bridge over the Avon, the road passes in front of the castle-gate, and soon enters the principal street of Warwick, a little beyond St. John's School-House, already described. Chester itself, most antique of English towns, can hardly show quainter architectural shapes than many of the buildings that border this street. They are mostly of the timber-and-plaster kind, with bowed and decrepit ridge-poles, and a whole chronology of various patchwork in their walls; their low-browed doorways open upon a sunken floor; their projecting stories peep, as it were, over one another's shoulders, and rise into a multiplicity

of peaked gables; they have curious windows, breaking out irregularly all over the house, some even in the roof, set in their own little peaks, opening lattice-wise, and furnished with twenty small panes of lozenge-shaped glass. The architecture of these edifices (a visible oaken framework, showing the whole skeleton of the house, – as if a man's bones should be arranged on his outside, and his flesh seen through the interstices) is often imitated by modern builders, and with sufficiently picturesque effect. The objection is, that such houses, like all imitations of bygone styles, have an air of affectation; they do not seem to be built in earnest; they are no better than playthings, or overgrown baby-houses, in which nobody should be expected to encounter the serious realities of either birth or death. Besides, originating nothing, we leave no fashions for another age to copy, when we ourselves shall have grown antique.

Old as it looks, all this portion of Warwick has overbrimmed, as it were, from the original settlement, being outside of the ancient wall. The street soon runs under an arched gateway, with a church or some other venerable structure above it, and admits us into the heart of the town. At one of my first visits, I witnessed a military display. A regiment of Warwickshire militia, probably commanded by the Earl, was going through its drill in the market-place; and on the collar of one of the officers was embroidered the Bear and Ragged Staff, which has been the cognizance of the Warwick earldom from time immemorial. The soldiers were sturdy young men, with the simple, stolid, yet kindly faces of

English rustics, looking exceedingly well in a body, but slouching into a yeoman-like carriage and appearance the moment they were dismissed from drill. Squads of them were distributed everywhere about the streets, and sentinels were posted at various points; and I saw a sergeant, with a great key in his hand (big enough to have been the key of the castle's main entrance when the gate was thickest and heaviest), apparently setting a guard. Thus, centuries after feudal times are past, we find warriors still gathering under the old castle-walls, and commanded by a feudal lord, just as in the days of the King-Maker, who, no doubt, often mustered his retainers in the same market-place where I beheld this modern regiment.

The interior of the town wears a less old-fashioned aspect than the suburbs through which we approach it; and the High Street has shops with modern plate-glass, and buildings with stuccoed fronts, exhibiting as few projections to hang a thought or sentiment upon as if an architect of to-day had planned them. And, indeed, so far as their surface goes, they are perhaps new enough to stand unabashed in an American street; but behind these renovated faces, with their monotonous lack of expression, there is probably the substance of the same old town that wore a Gothic exterior in the Middle Ages. The street is an emblem of England itself. What seems new in it is chiefly a skilful and fortunate adaptation of what such a people as ourselves would destroy. The new things are based and supported on sturdy old things, and derive a massive strength from their deep

and immemorial foundations, though with such limitations and impediments as only an Englishman could endure. But he likes to feel the weight of all the past upon his back; and, moreover, the antiquity that overburdens him has taken root in his being, and has grown to be rather a hump than a pack, so that there is no getting rid of it without tearing his whole structure to pieces. In my judgment, as he appears to be sufficiently comfortable under the mouldy accretion, he had better stumble on with it as long as he can. He presents a spectacle which is by no means without its charm for a disinterested and unencumbered observer.

When the old edifice, or the antiquated custom or institution, appears in its pristine form, without any attempt at intermarrying it with modern fashions, an American cannot but admire the picturesque effect produced by the sudden cropping up of an apparently dead-and-buried state of society into the actual present, of which he is himself a part. We need not go far in Warwick without encountering an instance of the kind. Proceeding westward through the town, we find ourselves confronted by a huge mass of natural rock, hewn into something like architectural shape, and penetrated by a vaulted passage, which may well have been one of King Cymbeline's original gateways; and on the top of the rock, over the archway, sits a small old church, communicating with an ancient edifice, or assemblage of edifices, that look down from a similar elevation on the side of the street. A range of trees half hides the latter establishment from the sun. It presents a curious and venerable

specimen of the timber-and-plaster style of building, in which some of the finest old houses in England are constructed; the front projects into porticos and vestibules, and rises into many gables, some in a row, and others crowning semi-detached portions of the structure; the windows mostly open on hinges, but show a delightful irregularity of shape and position; a multiplicity of chimneys break through the roof at their own will, or, at least, without any settled purpose of the architect. The whole affair looks very old, – so old indeed that the front bulges forth, as if the timber framework were a little weary, at last, of standing erect so long; but the state of repair is so perfect, and there is such an indescribable aspect of continuous vitality within the system of this aged house, that you feel confident that there may be safe shelter yet, and perhaps for centuries to come, under its time-honored roof. And on a bench, sluggishly enjoying the sunshine, and looking into the street of Warwick as from a life apart, a few old men are generally to be seen, wrapped in long cloaks, on which you may detect the glistening of a silver badge representing the Bear and Ragged Staff. These decorated worthies are some of the twelve brethren of Leicester's Hospital, – a community which subsists to-day under the identical modes that were established for it in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and of course retains many features of a social life that has vanished almost everywhere else.

The edifice itself dates from a much older period than the charitable institution of which it is now the home. It was the

seat of a religious fraternity far back in the Middle Ages, and continued so till Henry VIII. turned all the priesthood of England out of doors, and put the most unscrupulous of his favorites into their vacant abodes. In many instances, the old monks had chosen the sites of their domiciles so well, and built them on such a broad system of beauty and convenience, that their lay-occupants found it easy to convert them into stately and comfortable homes; and as such they still exist, with something of the antique reverence lingering about them. The structure now before us seems to have been first granted to Sir Nicholas Lestrange, who perhaps intended, like other men, to establish his household gods in the niches whence he had thrown down the images of saints, and to lay his hearth where an altar had stood. But there was probably a natural reluctance in those days (when Catholicism, so lately repudiated, must needs have retained an influence over all but the most obdurate characters) to bring one's hopes of domestic prosperity and a fortunate lineage into direct hostility with the awful claims of the ancient religion. At all events, there is still a superstitious idea, betwixt a fantasy and a belief, that the possession of former Church-property has drawn a curse along with it, not only among the posterity of those to whom it was originally granted, but wherever it has subsequently been transferred, even if honestly bought and paid for. There are families, now inhabiting some of the beautiful old abbeys, who appear to indulge a species of pride in recording the strange deaths and ugly shapes of misfortune that have occurred among

their predecessors, and may be supposed likely to dog their own pathway down the ages of futurity. Whether Sir Nicholas Lestrange, in the beef-eating days of Old Harry and Elizabeth, was a nervous man, and subject to apprehensions of this kind, I cannot tell; but it is certain that he speedily rid himself of the spoils of the Church, and that, within twenty years afterwards, the edifice became the property of the famous Dudley, Earl of Leicester, brother of the Earl of Warwick. He devoted the ancient religious precinct to a charitable use, endowing it with an ample revenue, and making it the perpetual home of twelve poor, honest, and war-broken soldiers, mostly his own retainers, and natives either of Warwickshire or Gloucestershire. These veterans, or others wonderfully like them, still occupy their monkish dormitories and haunt the time-darkened corridors and galleries of the hospital, leading a life of old-fashioned comfort, wearing the old-fashioned cloaks, and burnishing the identical silver badges which the Earl of Leicester gave to the original twelve. He is said to have been a bad man in his day; but he has succeeded in prolonging one good deed into what was to him a distant future.

On the projecting story, over the arched entrance, there is the date, 1571, and several coats-of-arms, either the Earl's or those of his kindred, and immediately above the doorway a stone sculpture of the Bear and Ragged Staff.

Passing through the arch, we find ourselves in a quadrangle, or enclosed court, such as always formed the central part of a

great family residence in Queen Elizabeth's time, and earlier. There can hardly be a more perfect specimen of such an establishment than Leicester's Hospital. The quadrangle is a sort of sky-roofed hall, to which there is convenient access from all parts of the house. The four inner fronts, with their high, steep roofs and sharp gables, look into it from antique windows, and through open corridors and galleries along the sides; and there seems to be a richer display of architectural devices and ornaments, quainter carvings in oak, and more fantastic shapes of the timber framework, than on the side toward the street. On the wall opposite the arched entrance are the following inscriptions, comprising such moral rules, I presume, as were deemed most essential for the daily observance of the community: "Honor all Men" – "Fear God" – "Honor the King" – "Love the Brotherhood"; and again, as if this latter injunction needed emphasis and repetition among a household of aged people soured with the hard fortune of their previous lives, – "Be kindly affectioned one to another." One sentence, over a door communicating with the Master's side of the house, is addressed to that dignitary, – "He that ruleth over men must be just." All these are charactered in old English letters, and form part of the elaborate ornamentation of the house. Everywhere – on the walls, over windows and doors, and at all points where there is room to place them – appear escutcheons of arms, cognizances, and crests, emblazoned in their proper colors, and illuminating the ancient quadrangle with their splendor. One of these devices is

a large image of a porcupine on an heraldic wreath, being the crest of the Lords de Lisle. But especially is the cognizance of the Bear and Ragged Staff repeated over and over, and over again and again, in a great variety of attitudes, at full-length, and half-length, in paint and in oaken sculpture, in bas-relief and rounded image. The founder of the hospital was certainly disposed to reckon his own beneficence as among the hereditary glories of his race; and had he lived and died a half-century earlier, he would have kept up an old Catholic custom by enjoining the twelve bedesmen to pray for the welfare of his soul.

At my first visit, some of the brethren were seated on the bench outside of the edifice, looking down into the street; but they did not vouchsafe me a word, and seemed so estranged from modern life, so enveloped in antique customs and old-fashioned cloaks, that to converse with them would have been like shouting across the gulf between our age and Queen Elizabeth's. So I passed into the quadrangle, and found it quite solitary, except that a plain and neat old woman happened to be crossing it, with an aspect of business and carefulness that bespoke her a woman of this world, and not merely a shadow of the past. Asking her if I could come in, she answered very readily and civilly that I might, and said that I was free to look about me, hinting a hope, however, that I would not open the private doors of the brotherhood, as some visitors were in the habit of doing. Under her guidance, I went into what was formerly the great hall of the establishment, where King James I. had once been feasted by an

Earl of Warwick, as is commemorated by an inscription on the cobwebbed and dingy wall. It is a very spacious and barn-like apartment, with a brick floor, and a vaulted roof, the rafters of which are oaken beams, wonderfully carved, but hardly visible in the duskiness that broods aloft. The hall may have made a splendid appearance, when it was decorated with rich tapestry, and illuminated with chandeliers, cressets, and torches glistening upon silver dishes, where King James sat at supper among his brilliantly dressed nobles; but it has come to base uses in these latter days, – being improved, in Yankee phrase, as a brewery and wash-room, and as a cellar for the brethren's separate allotments of coal.

The old lady here left me to myself, and I returned into the quadrangle. It was very quiet, very handsome, in its own obsolete style, and must be an exceedingly comfortable place for the old people to lounge in, when the inclement winds render it inexpedient to walk abroad. There are shrubs against the wall, on one side; and on another is a cloistered walk, adorned with stags' heads and antlers, and running beneath a covered gallery, up to which ascends a balustraded staircase. In the portion of the edifice opposite the entrance-arch are the apartments of the Master; and looking into the window (as the old woman, at no request of mine, had specially informed me that I might), I saw a low, but vastly comfortable parlor, very handsomely furnished, and altogether a luxurious place. It had a fireplace with an immense arch, the antique breadth of which extended almost

from wall to wall of the room, though now fitted up in such a way, that the modern coal-grate looked very diminutive in the midst. Gazing into this pleasant interior, it seemed to me, that, among these venerable surroundings, availing himself of whatever was good in former things, and eking out their imperfection with the results of modern ingenuity, the Master might lead a not unenviable life. On the cloistered side of the quadrangle, where the dark oak panels made the enclosed space dusky, I beheld a curtained window reddened by a great blaze from within, and heard the bubbling and squeaking of something – doubtless very nice and succulent – that was being cooked at the kitchen-fire. I think, indeed, that a whiff or two of the savory fragrance reached my nostrils; at all events, the impression grew upon me that Leicester's Hospital is one of the jolliest old domiciles in England.

I was about to depart, when another old woman, very plainly dressed, but fat, comfortable, and with a cheerful twinkle in her eyes, came in through the arch, and looked curiously at me. This repeated apparition of the gentle sex (though by no means under its loveliest guise) had still an agreeable effect in modifying my ideas of an institution which I had supposed to be of a stern and monastic character. She asked whether I wished to see the hospital, and said that the porter, whose office it was to attend to visitors, was dead, and would be buried that very day, so that the whole establishment could not conveniently be shown me. She kindly invited me, however, to visit the apartment occupied

by her husband and herself; so I followed her up the antique staircase, along the gallery, and into a small, oak-panelled parlor, where sat an old man in a long blue garment, who arose and saluted me with much courtesy. He seemed a very quiet person, and yet had a look of travel and adventure, and gray experience, such as I could have fancied in a palmer of ancient times, who might likewise have worn a similar costume. The little room was carpeted and neatly furnished; a portrait of its occupant was hanging on the wall; and on a table were two swords crossed, – one, probably, his own battle-weapon, and the other, which I drew half out of the scabbard, had an inscription on the blade, purporting that it had been taken from the field of Waterloo. My kind old hostess was anxious to exhibit all the particulars of their housekeeping, and led me into the bedroom, which was in the nicest order, with a snow-white quilt upon the bed; and in a little intervening room was a washing and bathing apparatus; a convenience (judging from the personal aspect and atmosphere of such parties) seldom to be met with in the humbler ranks of British life.

The old soldier and his wife both seemed glad of somebody to talk with; but the good woman availed herself of the privilege far more copiously than the veteran himself, insomuch that he felt it expedient to give her an occasional nudge with his elbow in her well-padded ribs. "Don't you be so talkative!" quoth he; and, indeed, he could hardly find space for a word, and quite as little after his admonition as before. Her nimble tongue ran over

the whole system of life in the hospital. The brethren, she said, had a yearly stipend (the amount of which she did not mention), and such decent lodgings as I saw, and some other advantages, free; and, instead of being pestered with a great many rules, and made to dine together at a great table, they could manage their little household matters as they liked, buying their own dinners and having them cooked in the general kitchen, and eating them snugly in their own parlors. "And," added she, rightly deeming this the crowning privilege, "with the Master's permission, they can have their wives to take care of them; and no harm comes of it; and what more can an old man desire?" It was evident enough that the good dame found herself in what she considered very rich clover, and, moreover, had plenty of small occupations to keep her from getting rusty and dull; but the veteran impressed me as deriving far less enjoyment from the monotonous ease, without fear of change or hope of improvement, that had followed upon thirty years of peril and vicissitude. I fancied, too, that, while pleased with the novelty of a stranger's visit, he was still a little shy of becoming a spectacle for the stranger's curiosity; for, if he chose to be morbid about the matter, the establishment was but an almshouse, in spite of its old-fashioned magnificence, and his fine blue cloak only a pauper's garment, with a silver badge on it that perhaps galled his shoulder. In truth, the badge and the peculiar garb, though quite in accordance with the manners of the Earl of Leicester's age, are repugnant to modern prejudices, and might fitly and humanely be abolished.

A year or two afterwards I paid another visit to the hospital, and found a new porter established in office, and already capable of talking like a guide-book about the history, antiquities, and present condition of the charity. He informed me that the twelve brethren are selected from among old soldiers of good character, whose other resources must not exceed an income of five pounds; thus excluding all commissioned officers, whose half-pay would of course be more than that amount. They receive from the hospital an annuity of eighty pounds each, besides their apartments, a garment of fine blue cloth, an annual abundance of ale, and a privilege at the kitchen-fire; so that, considering the class from which they are taken, they may well reckon themselves among the fortunate of the earth. Furthermore, they are invested with political rights, acquiring a vote for member of Parliament in virtue either of their income or brotherhood. On the other hand, as regards their personal freedom or conduct, they are subject to a supervision which the Master of the hospital might render extremely annoying, were he so inclined; but the military restraint under which they have spent the active portion of their lives makes it easier for them to endure the domestic discipline here imposed upon their age. The porter bore his testimony (whatever were its value) to their being as contented and happy as such a set of old people could possibly be, and affirmed that they spent much time in burnishing their silver badges, and were as proud of them as a nobleman of his star. These badges, by the by, except one that was stolen and replaced in Queen Anne's time,

are the very same that decorated the original twelve brethren.

I have seldom met with a better guide than my friend the porter. He appeared to take a genuine interest in the peculiarities of the establishment, and yet had an existence apart from them, so that he could the better estimate what those peculiarities were. To be sure, his knowledge and observation were confined to external things, but, so far, had a sufficiently extensive scope. He led me up the staircase and exhibited portions of the timber framework of the edifice that are reckoned to be eight or nine hundred years old, and are still neither worm-eaten nor decayed; and traced out what had been a great hall in the days of the Catholic fraternity, though its area is now filled up with the apartments of the twelve brethren; and pointed to ornaments of sculptured oak, done in an ancient religious style of art, but hardly visible amid the vaulted dimness of the roof. Thence we went to the chapel – the Gothic church which I noted several pages back – surmounting the gateway that stretches half across the street. Here the brethren attend daily prayer, and have each a prayer-book of the finest paper, with a fair, large type for their old eyes. The interior of the chapel is very plain, with a picture of no merit for an altar-piece, and a single old pane of painted glass in the great eastern window, representing, – no saint, nor angel, as is customary in such cases, – but that grim sinner, the Earl of Leicester. Nevertheless, amid so many tangible proofs of his human sympathy, one comes to doubt whether the Earl could have been such a hardened reprobate, after all.

We ascended the tower of the chapel, and looked down between its battlements into the street, a hundred feet below us; while clambering half-way up were foxglove-flowers, weeds, small shrubs, and tufts of grass, that had rooted themselves into the roughnesses of the stone foundation. Far around us lay a rich and lovely English landscape, with many a church-spire and noble country-seat, and several objects of high historic interest. Edge Hill, where the Puritans defeated Charles I., is in sight on the edge of the horizon, and much nearer stands the house where Cromwell lodged on the night before the battle. Right under our eyes, and half enveloping the town with its high-shouldering wall, so that all the closely compacted streets seemed but a precinct of the estate, was the Earl of Warwick's delightful park, a wide extent of sunny lawns, interspersed with broad contiguities of forest-shade. Some of the cedars of Lebanon were there, – a growth of trees in which the Warwick family take an hereditary pride. The two highest towers of the castle heave themselves up out of a mass of foliage, and look down in a lordly manner upon the plebeian roofs of the town, a part of which are slate-covered (these are the modern houses), and a part are coated with old red tiles, denoting the more ancient edifices. A hundred and sixty or seventy years ago, a great fire destroyed a considerable portion of the town, and doubtless annihilated many structures of a remote antiquity; at least, there was a possibility of very old houses in the long past of Warwick, which King Cymbeline is said to have founded in the year ONE of the Christian era!

And this historic fact or poetic fiction, whichever it may be, brings to mind a more indestructible reality than anything else that has occurred within the present field of our vision; though this includes the scene of Guy of Warwick's legendary exploits, and some of those of the Round Table, to say nothing of the Battle of Edge Hill. For perhaps it was in the landscape now under our eyes that Posthumus wandered with the King's daughter, the sweet, chaste, faithful, and courageous Imogen, the tenderest and womanliest woman that Shakespeare ever made immortal in the world. The silver Avon, which we see flowing so quietly by the gray castle, may have held their images in its bosom.

The day, though it began brightly, had long been overcast, and the clouds now spat down a few spiteful drops upon us, besides that the east-wind was very chill; so we descended the winding tower-stair, and went next into the garden, one side of which is shut in by almost the only remaining portion of the old city-wall. A part of the garden-ground is devoted to grass and shrubbery, and permeated by gravel-walks, in the centre of one of which is a beautiful stone vase of Egyptian sculpture, that formerly stood on the top of a Nilometer, or graduated pillar for measuring the rise and fall of the river Nile. On the pedestal is a Latin inscription by Dr. Parr, who (his vicarage of Hatton being so close at hand) was probably often the Master's guest, and smoked his interminable pipe along these garden-walks. Of the vegetable-garden, which lies adjacent, the lion's share is appropriated to the Master, and

twelve small, separate patches to the individual brethren, who cultivate them at their own judgment and by their own labor; and their beans and cauliflowers have a better flavor, I doubt not, than if they had received them directly from the dead hand of the Earl of Leicester, like the rest of their food. In the farther part of the garden is an arbor for the old men's pleasure and convenience, and I should like well to sit down among them there, and find out what is really the bitter and the sweet of such a sort of life. As for the old gentlemen themselves, they put me queerly in mind of the Salem Custom-House, and the venerable personages whom I found so quietly at anchor there.

The Master's residence, forming one entire side of the quadrangle, fronts on the garden, and wears an aspect at once stately and homely. It can hardly have undergone any perceptible change within three centuries; but the garden, into which its old windows look, has probably put off a great many eccentricities and quaintnesses, in the way of cunningly clipped shrubbery, since the gardener of Queen Elizabeth's reign threw down his rusty shears and took his departure. The present Master's name is Harris; he is a descendant of the founder's family, a gentleman of independent fortune, and a clergyman of the Established Church, as the regulations of the hospital require him to be. I know not what are his official emoluments; but, according to an English precedent, an ancient charitable fund is certain to be held directly for the behoof of those who administer it, and perhaps incidentally, in a moderate way, for the nominal

beneficiaries; and, in the case before us, the twelve brethren being so comfortably provided for, the Master is likely to be at least as comfortable as all the twelve together. Yet I ought not, even in a distant land, to fling an idle gibe against a gentleman of whom I really know nothing, except that the people under his charge bear all possible tokens of being tended and cared for as sedulously as if each of them sat by a warm fireside of his own, with a daughter bustling round the hearth to make ready his porridge and his titbits. It is delightful to think of the good life which a suitable man, in the Master's position, has an opportunity to lead, – linked to time-honored customs, welded in with an ancient system, never dreaming of radical change, and bringing all the mellowness and richness of the past down into these railway-days, which do not compel him or his community to move a whit quicker than of yore. Everybody can appreciate the advantages of going ahead; it might be well, sometimes, to think whether there is not a word or two to be said in favor of standing still or going to sleep.

From the garden we went into the kitchen, where the fire was burning hospitably, and diffused a genial warmth far and wide, together with the fragrance of some old English roast-beef, which, I think, must at that moment have been done nearly to a turn. The kitchen is a lofty, spacious, and noble room, partitioned off round the fireplace, by a sort of semicircular oaken screen, or rather, an arrangement of heavy and high-backed settles, with an ever-open entrance between them, on either side of which is

the omnipresent image of the Bear and Ragged Staff, three feet high, and excellently carved in oak, now black with time and unctuous kitchen-smoke. The ponderous mantel-piece, likewise of carved oak, towers high towards the dusky ceiling, and extends its mighty breadth to take in a vast area of hearth, the arch of the fireplace being positively so immense that I could compare it to nothing but the city gateway. Above its cavernous opening were crossed two ancient halberds, the weapons, possibly, of soldiers who had fought under Leicester in the Low Countries; and elsewhere on the walls were displayed several muskets, which some of the present inmates of the hospital may have levelled against the French. Another ornament of the mantel-piece was a square of silken needlework or embroidery, faded nearly white, but dimly representing that wearisome Bear and Ragged Staff, which we should hardly look twice at, only that it was wrought by the fair fingers of poor Amy Robsart, and beautifully framed in oak from Kenilworth Castle, at the expense of a Mr. Conner, a countryman of our own. Certainly, no Englishman would be capable of this little bit of enthusiasm. Finally, the kitchen-firelight glistens on a splendid display of copper flagons, all of generous capacity, and one of them about as big as a half-barrel; the smaller vessels contain the customary allowance of ale, and the larger one is filled with that foaming liquor on four festive occasions of the year, and emptied amain by the jolly brotherhood. I should be glad to see them do it; but it would be an exploit fitter for Queen Elizabeth's age than these degenerate

times.

The kitchen is the social hall of the twelve brethren. In the daytime, they bring their little messes to be cooked here, and eat them in their own parlors; but after a certain hour, the great hearth is cleared and swept, and the old men assemble round its blaze, each with his tankard and his pipe, and hold high converse through the evening. If the Master be a fit man for his office, methinks he will sometimes sit down sociably among them; for there is an elbow-chair by the fireside which it would not demean his dignity to fill, since it was occupied by King James at the great festival of nearly three centuries ago. A sip of the ale and a whiff of the tobacco-pipe would put him in friendly relations with his venerable household; and then we can fancy him instructing them by pithy apothegms and religious texts which were first uttered here by some Catholic priest and have impregnated the atmosphere ever since. If a joke goes round, it shall be of an elder coinage than Joe Miller's, as old as Lord Bacon's collection, or as the jest-book that Master Slender asked for when he lacked small-talk for sweet Anne Page. No news shall be spoken of later than the drifting ashore, on the northern coast, of some stern-post or figure-head, a barnacled fragment of one of the great galleons of the Spanish Armada. What a tremor would pass through the antique group, if a damp newspaper should suddenly be spread to dry before the fire! They would feel as if either that printed sheet or they themselves must be an unreality. What a mysterious awe, if the shriek of the railway-train, as it reaches the Warwick

station, should ever so faintly invade their ears! Movement of any kind seems inconsistent with the stability of such an institution. Nevertheless, I trust that the ages will carry it along with them; because it is such a pleasant kind of dream for an American to find his way thither, and behold a piece of the sixteenth century set into our prosaic times, and then to depart, and think of its arched doorway as a spell-guarded entrance which will never be accessible or visible to him any more.

Not far from the market-place of Warwick stands the great church of St. Mary's: a vast edifice, indeed, and almost worthy to be a cathedral. People who pretend to skill in such matters say that it is in a poor style of architecture, though designed (or, at least, extensively restored) by Sir Christopher Wren; but I thought it very striking, with its wide, high, and elaborate windows, its tall towers, its immense length, and (for it was long before I outgrew this Americanism, the love of an old thing merely for the sake of its age) the tinge of gray antiquity over the whole. Once, while I stood gazing up at the tower, the clock struck twelve with a very deep intonation, and immediately some chivies began to play, and kept up their resounding music for five minutes, as measured by the hand upon the dial. It was a very delightful harmony, as airy as the notes of birds, and seemed, a not unbecoming freak of half-sportive fancy in the huge, ancient, and solemn church; although I have seen an old-fashioned parlor-clock that did precisely the same thing, in its small way.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.