A Sketch of Old England, by a New–England Man

James Kirke Paulding

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James Kirke Paulding

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LETTER I.

Dear Brother,
London. −

I am now comfortably and quietly settled in lodgings, with an elderly lady, who has good blood in her veins; that is to say, if blood be an hereditary commodity, which some people doubt, but which I do not, for there are diseases bodily and mental in most of the old families here that have descended through half−a−score of wealthy generations. She claims descent from Tudors and Plantagenets to boot, and combines the conflicting claims of both York and Lancaster. Though too well bred to boast, she sometimes used to mention these matters, until one day I advised her, in jest, to procure a champion to tilt against young parson Dymoke for the broom at the ensuing coronation. The good old soul took the joke ill, and I was sorry for it. What right had I to ridicule that which, to her, was an innocent source of happiness? I despise the cant of sentiment, but I promise never to do so again.

She has a number of noble relatives among the respectable, old−fashioned nobility, who still possess some of that sturdy, antique morality and honesty, now so scarce among this class throughout all Christendom. Their occasional visits in the dusk of the evening, and the contemplation of her own august descent, seem to constitute her little fund of worldly enjoyment. It is so blameless, that I humour her by often enquiring the names of her visitors; which gives occasion to a variety of family details and claims of kindred, distant enough to be sure, but still sufficient to support the little edifice of vanity, erected in her heart upon the tombs of her ancestors. The old matron is excessively methodical, and particularly neat in her dress— hates Napoleon Buonaparte with a zeal past all human understanding, and has brought to war against him most exclusively several passages of the Old and New Testaments.

Comfort, neatness, and economy distinguish her household, from the cellar to the garret. Nothing is wasted, nothing is wanting. Such, indeed, is her economy, that I verily believe she never throws away a pin for want of a head, or a needle for being without an eye. This economy is neither the offspring of meanness nor avarice, but the rational result of a determination to preserve her independence. Her means are just sufficient, with this rigid economy, to enable her to appear with that sober sort of gentility, which it is her pride and delight ever to exhibit. Were she to relax in any one respect the nice system would lose its balance and fall to the ground. To sum up all, she is so perfectly upright in all her dealings, that, I am satisfied, no prospect of impunity, no certainty of escaping discovery or suspicion, would tempt her to defraud the living or the dead, or receive more than her due. It is amusing to see her uneasiness at incurring the slightest obligation, or being subjected to the smallest debt. I happened to pay the postage of a letter one day for her in her absence, and she was quite unhappy because I could not make change, and release her from the obligation. She and I are great friends after the *cold English fashion*. If I be sick, every attention is scrupulously paid, but paid as if from a sense of propriety, not from the heart. Our occasional conversations are friendly, but formal; rather genealogical I confess, but let that pass—the old lady comes from Wales. Still I cannot help respecting her most sincerely, and I feel more at home in her house than any place where I have sojourned since I left my own home. I have been the more particular in my sketch, because she belongs to a class of females which once gave a character to England, and to English domestic life, of which the country yet feels the benefit, in the enjoyment of a reputation for integrity, founded on the past, rather than the present. It was this homely honesty, this inflexible regard to principle, which made amends for the absence of those easy and sprightly manners, which attach a stranger, who is generally more in want of courtesies than benefits, and consequently forms his estimate of a people from their general deportment, rather than from any particular act of kindness. This class is, however, I regret to say, daily mouldering away amidst the speculating extravagance and splendid pauperism of the times. They cannot keep pace with the more numerous class of the nobility and gentry, because their pride will not stoop to an alliance with vulgar wealth, nor their principles bend to earn the rewards of the government by the sacrifice of their integrity.

Our house is situated in one of the old streets, running into ******, which, though rather narrow, was considered quite genteel until lately, but a corrector of enormities in beards made a lodgment directly over the way, and poked his pole at an angle of some forty degrees, almost into the old lady's window. This awful invasion put to flight two persons of quality, who lodged in the house. "'Tis an ill wind that blows nobody good," and I was

wafted by this breeze into lodgings that suit me exactly. Adieu.

LETTER II.

Dear Brother,
London. −

I invaded London under cover of a great fog, somewhat similar to that recorded on new year's eve in 1730, when, it is stated, that many persons fell into Fleet−ditch, and several prominent noses sustained serious damage by coming in contact with each other. Among the few objects I could see, was a person with a lantern, who, I suppose, like æsop, was looking about for an honest man. You may think, my dear brother, how scarce honest men must be in London. Alighting from the stage, there was a great contest for the privilege of carrying my trunks, like that of the Greeks and Trojans for the body of Patroclus. In conclusion, the *Greek* carried the day, as I found, for a good−natured person apprised me, that if I permitted their attendance, I should probably never see my trunks again. I was not aware of the necessity of this caution, as you know in our own dear honest country, no man hesitates a moment to trust his baggage with the first porter that offers, be he black or white. This is not one of those solitary instances from which no general conclusions can be drawn. It furnishes decisive proof, that at least one class of people of this country is not as honest as the same class in ours.

To escape the hacks I called a hack, and by that means fell "out of the frying−pan into the fire;" that is, if rushing upon a positive evil to escape a probable one, will justify the old proverb. He charged me three times the amount of his fare, and gave me a few bad shillings in change. These bad shillings are, in truth, as common as counterfeit notes in our country, and strangers should be equally aware of them. Well, he drove me to the ****** coffee−house, the name of which, being derived from my own country, attracted the yearnings of my inclination. Here the master of the house very soon satisfied me I had been cheated. But as hackney−coachmen are for the most part rogues in grain, all over the world, new and old, I determined, in my own mind, to let John Bull off that time, and not denounce him on the score of this universal characteristic of a particular species of men.

The master of the house advised me to buy a "Picture of London," which I did, (not the bastard work yelept the *new* Picture, but the genuine standard work) and much consolation did it afford me. Among the first choice passages I fell upon, were the following: "Any man who saunters about London, with pockets on the outside of his coat, or who mixes in crowds without especial care of his pockets, *deserves no pity on account of the losses he may sustain*." Again: "Persons should be very particular as soon as they have called a hackneycoach, to observe the number, before they get into it. This precaution guards against imposition, or unforeseen accidents. There is no other method of punishing coachmen who misbehave, nor chance of recovering property carelessly left in the coach, but by the recollection of the number." Now, brother, I could not come within a thousand of the number of my coach, for I had no idea of being cheated by a hackney−coachman in this honest country.

For the benefit of any of your honest neighbours, who may chance to visit this city, and be cheated before they can get a "Picture of London," I will extract one or two more passages from that valuable work:

"One of the most dangerous classes of swindlers are those pretended porters or clerks, who attend about the doors of inns at the time the coaches are unloading; or who watch the arrival of post−chaises at the doors of the coffee−houses. These fellows, by various artifices, frequently obtain possession of the luggage of a traveller, who has occasion to lament the want of suspicion, in the loss of his clothes and other effects."

"Mock auctions, in which plated goods are sold for silver, and a variety of incredible frauds practised upon the unwary, ought to be cautiously avoided. They may be in general known by a person being placed at the door to invite in the passing stranger."

"Strangers having business at Doctors' Commons, should previously know the address of a proctor, as all the avenues are beset by *inferior clerks or porters*, who watch and accost strangers, whom they take into some office, where they are paid in proportion to the nature of the business, which is conducted not in the most respectable way, and never without extra charges unwarranted by the profession."

"In asking questions, or enquiring the way, it is necessary always to apply at a shop, or a public−house, and never to rely upon the information which may be given by persons in the streets."

Such, brother, are a few of the dangers which beset the traveller, in his adventurous pilgrimage through this wilderness of two−legged beasts of prey.

My experience at Liverpool and elsewhere having taught me somewhat, I began to smell a rat, almost the first moment I entered the coffee−house. The waiters were excessively officious, and so anxious to put themselves in my way, when there was no occasion, that I was quite out of patience. The master of the house too, a most important little busy body, made me bow upon bow: all which being contrary to the very nature of an Englishman, I took it for granted that he meant to cheat me. Accordingly, the first day at dinner, he gave me a bottle of half−guinea wine, of the most pestiferous quality, which he pronounced such as Lord Somebody always called for at his house. The next day he gave me still worse, finding I put up with the first, and charged me still higher, on the score of its being a favourite wine of some noble Earl. The third day it was still worse and still dearer, because his Grace of — always drank it in preference to any other. Thinking it best to get out of the way, before mine host came to the king's favourite wine, which, according to the preceding steps of the climax, must have been execrable, I got a friend to recommend me to another lodging, who accordingly negotiated the terms, and stood security for my character with the excellent lady, with whom I still remain. On leaving the coffee−house, I was beset by the whole clan of domestics, from the headwaiter in broad−cloth to *boots* in dirt. The landlord made me a sort of half bow, and I complimented him on his Grace's favourite wine, and thus we parted, never, never, never, to meet again, as your sentimental letter−writers say.

The physiognomy of London is by no means inviting, especially that part which was laid out, and built, before the nobility and the rich took it into their wise heads to spend their incomes in town, rather than among their tenants in the country. In some of the new and fashionable squares the buildings are sufficiently aristocratic; but with here and there an exception, the houses bear the stamp of something like republicanism or equality. In general, they are quite comfortable in appearance, but nothing more. The greater proportion of fine buildings is the offspring of public spirit, which certainly, at times, has produced as great wonders in England as in any other part of the world. The merchants, the companies of artizans, indeed almost all classes of people, except the nobility, have vied with each other in public works, either of splendor or utility, or generally both combined. The nobility have contented themselves with building palaces for their own private use. It may be said, perhaps, that vanity must have its gratification in some way or other, and that those who cannot build a palace individually, must compound by doing it in company with others; thus making a general rather than an individual property. It may be so, but still the public is a gainer by the latter plan, since we can go into some of these for nothing, whereas the palaces are only shown for money.

One thing that has disgusted me most in this city, is the incredible quantity of wretched and profligate beggars who infest many parts, whose ragged, filthy, and debauched appearance turns pity into absolute disgust. I was, the other day, admiring the magnificence of a new palace in one of the fine squares, with my head full of the splendors of this people, when, all at once, my visions of glory were put to flight by the irruption of a family of most wretched beings of all ages, from the gray−headed parent to the little infant holding by the mother's hand. Their story was that of thousands, nay, hundreds of thousands, in this government−ridden nation: want of employment and want of food. If true, it proved how much they were to be pitied; if false, how yet much more they were to be pitied. If necessity drove them to this wretched mode of life, they might still derive some consolation from within;— if choice, then were they wretched indeed. The splendorso f the palace vanished like those of the wicked enchanters of old, and little else remained on my mind but the impression that its walls were reared upon the miseries of thousands of such as were now begging at the door.

Another bad feature in the physiognomy of London, is the number and the profligacy of certain ladies, anciently called the *Bishop of `Winchester's Geese*. Their effrontery, their shocking depravity, disgusting indecency, and total destitution of every female characteristic, are horrible. Indeed, brother, every species of vice is displayed here in its naked deformity, and with a broad and vulgar grossness, that renders London a complete contrast to Paris, at least, in outward appearance.

LETTER III.

Dear Brother,
London. −

Almost the first thing that strikes an American, used to the clear skies and glowing sunshine of his own country, is the humidity of the atmosphere, and the frequent absence of the god of day. St. Simon and Jude's day is almost every other day here. It rains or snows about one hundred and fifty days in the year; and of the remainder, between fifty and sixty are cloudy. The result is, that the verdure of the country is excessively luxuriant, although, to my mind, the landscapes rather weep than laugh. The grass and the foliage are so deadly green, that they almost look blue, and resemble the effect of distance, which, you know, communicates a bluish tint to the landscape. But the grass grows and the cattle get fat, and the roast beef of Old England is the better for it, undoubtedly. To me, however, who you know love the sunshine like a terrapin, there is something chilly and ungenial in the English summer, and it offends me hugely to hear a fat, puffing, beer−drinking fellow, bawling out to his neighbour, "A fine day," when the sun looks as if it might verify the theory of one of the old Greeks, that it was nothing more than a great round ball of copper. Whether this melancholy character in the climate, or the practice of drinking beer in such enormous quantities, or both combined, have given that peculiar cast of bluff and gruff stupidity, observable in the common people of England, I cannot say; but certainly, if "a man who drinks beer thinks beer," the question is decided at once.

To describe, or even to name, all the villages and seats which I passed, in going out of London at different times, is a task I shall not undertake, and which indeed can only be done by a person with more time on his hands than he knows what to do with, and more patience than time.

Richmond Hill and village, with Twickenham on the opposite side of the Thames, about ten or twelve miles from London, is all classic ground, and worthy to be so. It is, to my mind, the most charming scenery in the *old* world. What makes it the more agreeable to my eye is, that there is plenty of wood, which is wanting in most of the English landscapes, except about the great forests. What with their smooth lawns and trim edges, the landscapes put one in mind of a well shaven beard. But what gives the charm to these scenes is, that they are connected with the shades of Pope and Thomson. The latter lies buried in Richmond church; and thither I went on a pilgrimage, the least a man can do in gratitude for the many hours his genius has embellished and consecrated to pure and innocent enjoyment.

Until the year 1792, there was no inscription over his grave, which is in the north−easterly corner of the church. The Earl of Buchan, Washington's old correspondent, at that time placed over it, against the wall, a brass plate with this inscription:

"In the earth, beneath this tablet, are the remains of James Thomson, author of the beautiful poems of the Seasons, the Castle of Indolence, &c. &c., who died at Richmond on the 27th day of August, and was buried on the 29th, O. S. 1748. The Earl of Buchan, unwilling so good a man, and so admirable a poet, should be without a memorial, has denoted the place of his interment, for the satisfaction of his admirers, in the year of our Lord 1792."

But such memorials are rather benefits bestowed upon the giver, than the receiver. No one will ever want a memorial of Thomson, whose Seasons will continue while those he has painted shall roll on their course, and men can read and relish nature and truth. But for this memorial, it might, however, have been speedily forgotten that such a man as my Lord of Buchan ever existed.

I afterwards visited a house called Rossdale, where the poet resided, and wrote the Seasons, and where many reliques are still preserved. I was particularly struck with a little, round, old−fashioned table, on which he was accustomed to write, and which excited my reverence infinitely more than Arthur's Round Table, which I afterwards saw at Winchester. There are also two brass hooks, where he always hung his hat and cane, for he was a man of habits, and seldom deviated from them. In the garden was his favourite haunt, a summer−house, overshadowed with luxuriant vines. Solitude and solitary rambling constituted the pleasures of Thomson; and it was doubtless from these habits of walking alone, observing all the latent, and inherent, and even accidental charms of nature, and reflecting upon them as he rambled along, that he was enabled to combine natural and

moral beauties so delightfully in his pictures. I wish he had been buried somewhere in the fields, where the grass and the flowers might have sprung on his grave, and realized the inimitable beauty of the verses of Collins to his memory— "In yonder grave a druid lies, Where slowly winds the stealing wave, The year's best fruit shall duteous rise To deck their Poet's sylvan grave."

Twickenham, where Pope's villa once was, is a village opposite Richmond, to which you pass by a bridge. The house which the poet inhabited is pulled down, but the famous grotto remains, a pretty and fantastic monument of expensive folly. Pope had better have held his tongue about "Timon's villa," and its fripperies; for, to my taste, this grotto is totally unworthy of any reputable nymphs of either wood or water. It is neither splendid by art, nor magnificent, nor solemn by nature, and is, in truth, an excellent place for keeping milk and butter cool. I felt no reverence whatever for it, and heartily wished the grotto, rather than the house, had been destroyed.

Perhaps I am singular; but though I am one of Pope's greatest admirers, and think him in many, very many respects, unequalled, as well as inimitable, his name, somehow or other, does not carry with it those warm and affecting feelings of admiration, as well as regret, which are conjured up by the recollection of many other bards. It is true, he was rich, was cherished by the great, and lived all his days in sunshine. He reaped, during his life, that fame, as well as fortune, the one of which few poets receive till after death, and the other most want while alive. There was nothing in his whole life either romantic or affecting, nothing to call forth sympathy. But these circumstances, of themselves, are not sufficient to account for my want of enthusiasm at visiting the spot where he lived, wrote, and died.

It is for these reasons, probably, combined with the causes before mentioned, that Twickenham and Pope's grotto does not elevate the heart with those affecting, yet lofty emotions, that arise from contemplating the little round table, and the vinecovered summer−house, of the author of *Liberty*, the *Seasons*, and the *Castle of Indolence* . Pope is the poet of those who reason rather than feel; the poet of the understanding, and of men past the age of romantic delusions: Thomson is the poet of youth, nature, and an uncorrupted heart. The one is a man of the world, the other a druid of the woods and melancholy streams, the beautiful and sublime of nature.

I do not know any thing more affecting than a passage in Fielding's *Tom Jones*, which is recalled to my mind by these speculations. He was always poor, and in his latter days a martyr to disease, slow, yet sure in its progress. It was, perhaps, while tasting in advance the immortality he has since attained that he broke out into the following invocation:

"Come, bright love of fame, inspire my glowing breast! Not thee I call, who over swelling tides of blood and tears dost bear the hero on to glory, while sighs of millions waft his swelling sails; but thee, fair, gentle maid, whom Mnesis, happy nymph, first on the banks of Hebrus did produce; thee, whom Mæonia educated, whom Mantua charmed, and who, on that fair hill, which overlooks the proud metropolis of Britain, satest with thy Milton tuning the heroic lyre—fill my ravished fancy with the hope of charming ages yet to come. Foretell me that some tender maid, whose grandmother is yet unborn, hereafter, when, under the fictitious name of Sophia, she reads the real worth that once existed in my Charlotte, shall from her sympathetic breast send forth the heaving sigh! Do thou teach me not only to foresee, but feed on future praise! *Comfort me by a solemn assurance, that when the little parlour, in which I sit at this instant, shall be reduced to a worse−furnished box, I shall be read with honour, by those who never knew or saw me, and whom I shall never see or know*."

The man who could dream, and dream truly too, could not be miserable, even amid the neglect of fortune and the scorn of fools. This secret consciousness is the staff which supports and rewards genius in its weary pilgrimage.

LETTER IV.

Dear Brother,
London. −

In the neighbourhood of Richmond, I was attracted by the appearance of a grand house, which, upon inquiry, I learned was built by a noted brewer of that village. This monument of the inveterate beer−drinking propensity of the nation, is one of the largest private dwellings I have seen in this country. The story went, that it was finally devised to an Oxfordshire baronet, who, not dealing in beer, could not afford to keep up the establishment. He accordingly sold every thing about it but the walls, and here it stands ready for the next portly brewer, who shall be smitten with the desire of building up a name in stone and mortar. The labours and the parsimony of years are very often employed in this manner, by the rich tradesmen of London, whose estates, not being in general entailed, like those of the nobility and gentry, are for the most part divided in such a manner, that not one of the heirs can afford to live in the great house. It is therefore either sold out of the family, or its deserted walls remain as a monument of ostentatious folly.

I also reconnoitred Osterley house, which attracted my notice, not so much for its magnificence, as its history. Every schoolboy has heard of Sir Thomas Gresham, the great merchant, who built the Royal Exchange, and gave such grand entertainments to Queen Elizabeth, who loved nothing better than feasting at the expence of other people. There is an old story, that Elizabeth, being at a great entertainment at Osterley, found fault with the court, as being too large, and gave her opinion, that it would look better divided in two parts. Sir Thomas, like another Aladdin, but by means of an agent more powerful even than the genius of the lamp, that very night caused the alteration to be made, so that next morning the queen, looking out, saw the court divided according to her taste. Her majesty, it is said, was exceedingly gratified with this proof of his gallantry; but passed what was considered rather a sore joke upon Sir Thomas, saying, "That a house was much easier divided than united." Lady Gresham and Sir Thomas, it seems, were at issue on the point of domestic supremacy; and Elizabeth, who hated all married women, was supposed to allude to this matrimonial schism.

In going towards Uxbridge, which is twelve or fifteen miles from this city, on the road to Oxford, there is a fine old place called Harefield, where once resided the famous Countess of Derby, the friend and admirer of that illustrious republican poet, John Milton. It was here that Milton's Arcades were represented, and in this neighbourhood the poet resided some years with his father. It was for the son of this lady he wrote the richest, the most poetical of all human productions, the *Masque of Comus*. Nobility becomes really illustrious when connected by friendship and benefits with the immortality of genius. Milton was an inflexible Republican in his political principles, and sided with the Parliament in its attempts to resist the tyrannical encroachments of Charles the First. In this situation he had an opportunity of saving the life of Sir William Davenant, who was taken up on a charge of being an emissary of Charles the Second, then in exile. On the Restoration Milton was excepted from the general amnesty, but was finally pardoned, as it is said, by the intercession of Sir William Davenant, who thus repaid his former good offices. His politics prevented his being a fashionable poet. His *Paradise Lost* was sold to the bookseller for one−tenth of the sum since paid for a dainty song by Tom Moore, set to music; and the bad taste or servility of the critics suffered it to be forgotten, till Addison at length did ample justice to its beauties. Milton is rather in the back−ground at present, being quite eclipsed by the superior merits of Mr. Croly, Mr. Southey, Lord Byron, and the "Great Unknown." The *Quarterly Review* will certainly, ere long, convict him either of a want of genius, or a lack of religion, if it be only on account of his having been a Republican.

I dined at Uxbridge; and as no experienced English traveller ever omits making honourable or dishonourable mention of the inns, I must inform you, for your particular satisfaction, that those of Uxbridge, although specially noted by Camden, are none of the best.

Pursuing my route towards Oxford, I again got upon classic ground, about *Stoke Pogeis*, in the neighbourhood of which the poet Gray resided with his mother. He was a frequent visitor to the noble family there, and wrote his "Long Story" at the request of the ladies. To me it appears the very worst thing he ever did write; a very dull and doggrel ditty, with only one line in it worth preserving. Gray was ashamed of it, and tried to destroy all the copies; but the industry of editors, and the cupidity of booksellers, unhappily preserved it for posterity to wonder at. The

Muses used to keep a little court at different times hereabouts. Milton lived not far off at Horton; Waller at Beaconsfield; and Pope occasionally in Windsor Forest. Edmund Burke also once occupied Waller's mansion at Beaconsfield; and if being under the dominion of imagination constitutes a poet, may certainly be classed with the trio. In the neighbourhood of Beaconsfield they shew an old hollow tree, in which, it is affirmed, Waller wrote many of his poems. I do not believe much of the story, yet still it is pleasant to see old hollow trees derive an interest from these associations, that the residence of monarchs cannot confer upon the most splendid palaces. In deviating, just as the roads occasionally offered inducement, I had a view of a fine old palace, once the property of the Hampdens, a name so well known in our country for inflexible patriotism, that it is often adopted with that of Russell and Sydney, by those who advocate the rights of the people. The family of Hampden was of great antiquity, of the genuine old Saxon blood, without any mixture of Norman. The gentry who came over with William the Conqueror were mere upstarts of the day before yesterday, compared with the Hampdens. But I was not thinking of their antiquity. As I contemplated the venerable pile, I was recalling to mind that noble Englishman, who was the first to put himself in the breach between an arbitrary king and an abused people; of the man who dared to appeal to the laws of his country against the oppression of his sovereign to judges who betrayed their trust, and sacrificed their conscience at the shrine of a time−serving interest. Eight out of twelve decided against Hampden; but though he lost his cause with the judges he gained it with the people, and the decision became one of the principal grounds of the revolution that followed. Of such a man it is of little moment who were his ancestors; the blood that flowed in his veins was noble of itself without tracing it to a noble ancestry.—But the name and the race are now no more, or, beyond doubt, we should see some of them at this moment foremost in the ranks, resisting the torrent of corruption, venality and boundless extravagance of this government. The great John Hampden is acknowledged, even by Hume, the apologist of the Stuarts, to have been a man of the purest patriotism; and such was the spotlessness of his character, that not one of the apologists of kingly pretension has ventured to impeach his motives or attack his memory. He was a near kinsman of Cromwell, and fell in action early in the commencement of the war between the people and the king. His grandson became involved in the South Sea scheme, and died by his own hands; he was succeeded by his brother, who dying without issue, the estates fell to a Trevor, who now bears the title of Viscount Hampden. To the disgrace of his country, I believe Hampden's life has never been written—at least, I have not been able to procure it at any of the booksellers!— It is said he was one of those who took passage with Cromwell for New−England, and were stopped by an order of council. I cannot but regret that he did not reach our country, for perhaps he might have left there a posterity worthy the soil of freedom. Hampden was always a friend to our New England—may we never lose the recollection of his virtues or his friendship!

It is traditionary of the Hampdens, that they owned vast possessions in the time of Edward the Third, a considerable portion of which was forfeited by the heir of the family, (in consequence of some provocation not exactly known,) for giving the Black Prince a box on the ear. There is extant a couplet, which has reference to that circumstance. "Tring, Wing, and Ivengo did go, For striking the Black Prince a blow."

You see, brother, the Hampdens were, from the first, gifted with the spirit of freemen. It is a pity the race is extinct; for never did England more require such men as Hampden and Sydney. She has yet a Russell in the person of Lord John, one of the most respectable and patriotic noblemen in the kingdom.

Leaving this old nest of the eagles, I returned into the Oxford road, and pursued my way towards that famous city of the Muses, that is to say, the Prize Muses; for the Sacred Nine of Oxford never sing now, except when tempted by a medal. Palaces and fine seats were sprinkled thickly by the road−side; but as they contained little else but a collection of pictures to attract the stranger, I passed them by. Few things, in this world of trouble, are more intolerable than a visit to one of these *show−places*, where one is not only obliged to pay for opening every door, but, what is still worse, to listen to the eternal gabble of a cicerone by rote, who will by no means permit a man to consult his own taste in the selection of objects of admiration. The only way to silence one of those is to give him a shilling when he expects half a guinea. He will never speak more, depend upon it.

The sunset, I remember, was exceedingly unpropitious to my entrance into Oxford, for it set in a profound English mist. I had been forewarned and fore−armed of the beauties of the place, and that I should enter it by one of the finest and longest streets in the world. It certainly was long enough, for I thought never to have got to the end of it; but its beauties were too modest to meet the ardent gaze of a stranger, and retired quietly behind the fog.

I was ready to be pleased with every thing; and never, I believe, were the noble fanes of Oxford admired by a

more enthusiastic votary. Learning was, for once in her life, lodged in palaces, some of which were so lofty and majestic, that I actually mistook them for poor−houses, which are beyond all comparison the most sumptuous edifices in this country. I cannot describe them, nor recollect half that I saw in this Gothic heaven. I had introductions to some of the jolly *fellows;* but they were of very little use to me, owing to a most untoward matter, which I shall proceed to disclose, which disturbed the prize muses, and occupied the exclusive attention of every member of the university, from the vice−chancellor, in his white band, to the students in their black caps. To explain it properly, I must furnish you with a few preliminaries, concerning the peculiar constitution and privileges of the university, without which it would be difficult to comprehend the nature of the case.

The University of Oxford is governed by its own peculiar laws, which are administered, or ought to be, by a great officer, called the chancellor; but as almost every great office is executed here by a deputy or sub−deputy, the chancellor nominates to the university two persons, one to be chosen high steward, the other vice−chancellor. The high steward assists the proctors, if required, in the performance of their duties, and hears and decides all capital cases, arising within the jurisdiction of the university, when required by the chancellor. The vice−chancellor is, in almost every other respect, the deputy of the chancellor; he receives the rents due to the university, licenses taverns, &c. and, to use the words of an old author, "he takes care that sermons, lectures, disputations, and other exercises be performed; that heretics, panders, bawds, *Winchester geese*, &c. be expelled the university, and the converse of the students; that the proctors and other officers do their duty; that courts be duly called and law−suits determined, without delay; in a word, that whatever is for the honour or the profit of the university, or may conduce to the advantage of good literature, may be carefully obtained." The vice−chancellor, at his entrance into office, chooses two provice−chancellors out of the heads of colleges, to one of whom he deputes his power during his absence. The high steward is chosen for life, but the vice−chancellor is nominated annually, and is always a person in holy orders as well as the head of a college. Now for the affair which so effectually disturbed the repose, not to say the profound sleep, of this temple of the Muses.

It seems a ferocious tailor, not having the fear of the vice−chancellor before his eyes, had brought a suit against a student of *Brazen−nose*, in the court of King's Bench, when the statute prescribed that he should bring it before the vice−chancellor. The vice−chancellor, indignant at this contempt of his authority, hereupon summoned the tailor before him, and addressed him, as is affirmed, in something like the following, when he found that the souls of nine stout heroes were domiciled in the body of this ninth part of a man: "Avaunt and quit my sight! Thy shears are edgeless: thou hast no thread and needle In those paws, that thou dost stitch withal. Approach thee like an Edinburgh Reviewer, French sans−culotte, or damned democrat, The Carbonari, half−starv'd radical, Or Cato Street conspirator! Nay, come like nonconformists in a row, And swear that church and tithes shall be no more; Moot points of logic with a cambric needle; Or, cross−legg'd, like a rascal papist, sit, With thimble on thy pate instead of helmet, And dare me to the shopboard with thy shears, But never dare me to the king's bench court— Skip, stitch−louse, skip, I say!"

"Ay, ay," cried this unparalleled tailor; "ay, ay, Mr. Vice, you may talk Latin as much as you please; but, in plain English, I must have my money, and, what's more, I will. I have had enough of dunning; and as for bringing a suit in your courts here, I recovered one not long ago, and was almost ruined by it." The vice−chancellor, it is affirmed, did not swear: but it was the general opinion he would have done it, had he not been a clergyman.

The recreant tailor brought the curse of Ernulphus upon him; he was cursed in all the moods and tenses; in Latin and English; and would have been cursed in Greek and Hebrew, had any of the present professors been sufficiently versed in those tongues. He was formally excommunicated; his shop windows hermetically sealed, and himself prohibited from labouring in his vocation for the fiery students of Brazen−nose; his business was doomed to destruction here, and his soul hereafter. Still the thrice, and nine times valiant tailor, refused to take a single back−stitch or herring−bone, either to the right or to the left; he continued to demur to the jurisdiction of the vice−chancellor, and to stand by the King's Bench, which, next to the shopboard, he looked upon to be the purest seat of justice in the kingdom. "I defy the d—l and all his imps!" said the tailor, snapping his fingers; which saying was held to be a reflection upon the vice−chancellor and the scholars.

In this state the matter remained all the time I staid at Oxford, which was nearly a week. The tailor was the greatest man of the age; another Caliph Omar, enemy to learning and orthodoxy. His name was in every body's mouth, and the Muses, all nine of them, sung in praise of this ninth part of a man. The Senior Wrangler was deputed to argue with him, but the tailor got him betwixt the sharp shears of his logic, and almost cut him in two.

A *Terræ Filius* was next sent; but, though his speech was bitterly satirical, the tailor remained as immovable as the sun himself. At prayers, and lectures, the students could think of nothing but the tailor; the jolly fellows could not sleep quietly upon the "Pennyless Bench" over their ale, for thinking of the tailor; the sempstresses, who are very pretty at Oxford, marked nothing on their linen, but tailor; the little boys at catechism, answered nothing but "the tailor" to all questions; and several children, born about this time, cried for their nurses' thimbles before they were a day old. Never, in fact, since the days of the furious contests between the students of the "north and south," recorded by Anthony Wood, was the seat of the prize Muses in such a consternation. I left the place before the matter was settled, with a determination that if the tailor were ever restored to the use of his weapons, and I ever had an opportunity, he should make me a full suit of the cloth called Thunder and Lightning, which cannot but equal armour of proof, considering his indomitable and valorous propensities.

Notwithstanding, however, the confusion which I have described, I gained sufficient opportunity to put my nose into some of the old rusty remains of antiquity, which abound in this place. Among these, the Bodleian Library, the Ashmolean Museum, and the Arundel and Pomfret Marbles, are particularly curious and interesting. In the libraries are many notices of the early events which occurred in different ages, which throw vast light upon the state of manners, and mark the gradual changes produced by time and circumstances. As such, they are highly worthy of notice, and if I had possessed sufficient time or patience, I would have made copious extracts from them. As it was, I could only copy a few of such as I considered might contribute to the future instruction or amusement of my friends. I will select some of these, pretty much as they occur in my memorandum−book. They are principally taken from Anthony Wood, whose work is a sort of storehouse of Oxford antiquities. The nature of his book may be gathered from Wood's complaint of one John Shirley, *Terræ Filius* of Trinity College, in 1673, who said, "That the society of Merton would not let me live in the college, for fear I should pluck it down to search after antiquities; that I was so great a lover of antiquities, that I loved to live in an old cockle−loft, rather than in a spacious chamber; that I was *vir caducus;* that I intended to put into my book pictures of mother Louse and mother George, two old wives; that I would not let it be printed, because I would not have it new and common." This is the character of Anthony's book, given by a wag, with some little exaggeration, of course.

The state of learning at Oxford, in the thirteenth century, may be gathered from the following: "In the year 1284, John Peckham, Archbishop of Canterbury, came to Oxford, to visit Osney Abbey; which being finished, he called together the masters of the University, who appearing before him, he made a grave speech; then told them of divers erroneous opinions, which they, not becoming their wisdom, did entertain; and that neither by reason, nor upon any scholastical ground, but for the cause of commotion, did *impudently* affirm and defend, against the instructions and lessons of the ancient philosophers, and other wise men." Among their grammatical errors, it seems they held "*Ego currit*," and "*Ego legit*," to be good Latin.

As late as the beginning of the sixteenth century, the study of Greek was entirely unknown at Oxford; and, with the exception of Thomas Linacre, and one or two others, who were trying to introduce it into the University, the members treated the study of Greek with contempt. King James the First, with his Queen, in 1605, visited Oxford, and was entertained there with speeches, sermons, comedies, mysteries, and tragedies, for some days. Several regulations were made for their reception, among which, the most remarkable, are the following:

"The University College, All Soules, and Magdalen College, do sett up verses at his Majesty's departure, upon such places where they may be seen as he passeth by."

"Doctor Parry to preach a Latin sermon three quarters of an hour long." It is stated afterwards, that his Majesty "yawned mightilye," on this occasion; indeed, he seems to have been "mightilye" tired of the whole visit, if we may credit the chronicler, who gives the following account of his behaviour at a comedy:—

"The Comedy," quoth he, "began at between nine and ten, and ended at one; the name of it was *Alba*, whereof I never knew the reason; it was a pastoral, much like one I had seen in King's College, Cambridge." "There were many rusticall songes and dances, which made it very tedious, insomuch that if the chancellors of both University had not entreated his Majesty earnestly, he would have been gone before half the comedy had been ended."

Neither did His Majesty, it seems, relish their tragedy better than their comedy. The same writer, who, you may depend upon it, was a *Cantab*, proceeds to record—"The next morning and afternoon we passed in hearing sermons and disputations. The same day after supper, about nine of the clock, they began to act the tragedy of *Ajax Flagellifer*, wherein the stage varied three times; they had all goodly antique apparel, for all that, it was not acted so well by many degrees as I have seen it in Cambridge. The King was very weary before he came thither,

and much more wearied by it, and spoke many words of dislike."

A comedy called *Vertumnus* was next day represented, and though allowed by our *Cantab* to be much better performed than the others, "yet the King was so overwearied, that after a while he distasted it and fell asleep; when he awakened, he would have him gone, saying, I marvel what they think me to be, with such other like speeches, shewing his dislike thereof; yet did he tarry till they had ended it, which was after one o'clock." The only thing that pleased his Majesty, was a "discreet and learned speech by Dr. Warner, dissuading men from tobacco, by good reasons and apt similes, backed by twenty syllogisms, which so delighted the great opponent of tobacco, that he said to the nobles about him, "God keep this fellow in a right course, he would prove a dangerous heretic; he is the best disputer I ever heard."

The poverty of the students at Oxford, in the middle of the sixteenth century, was such, that many of them were obliged to get a license from the chancellor to beg, and it appears that it was at that time common for them to go "a−begging with bags and wallets, and sing *Salve Regina* at rich men's dores." "The students were about this time (1559) so poor and beggarly, that many of them were forced to obtain licence under the commissary's hand to require alms of well−disposed people; and indeed the want of exhibitions and charity of religious people, was so much, that their usual saying now was,

"*Sunt mutoe musoe, nostraque fama fames*."

The following clerical anecdotes may amuse you, at the same time that they illustrate the style of preaching, as well as the charity of the priests of those times:—

"Richard Tavener, Esq., did several times preach at Oxford, and when he was high sheriff of the county, came into St. Mary's church, out of pure charity, with a gold chain about his neck, and a sword, it is said, by his side." One of his sermons began as follows:—

"Arriving at the mount of St. Mary's, in the strong stage (the stone pulpit) where I now stand, I have brought you some fyne bisketts baked in the oven of charitye, carefully conserved for the chickens of the church, the sparrows of the spirit, and the sweet swallows of salvation." Mr. Sheriff Tavener must have been another Friar Gerund.

Two itinerant priests coming, says Anthony Wood, towards night, to a cell of Benedictines near Oxford, where, on a supposition of their being mimes or minstrels, they gained admittance. But the cellarer, sacristan, and others of the brethren, hoping to have been entertained by their buffoonery, and finding them to be nothing more than two poor priests, who had nothing but spiritual consolation to offer in return for their hospitality, disappointed of their mirth, they beat them soundly and turned them out of the monastery.

The same author gives a character of Sir Walter Raleigh, who was of Oriel College, which I copied for two reasons. Raleigh ought ever to be remembered and honoured in our country, as one of the first who employed his influence and his fortune in laying the foundation of our western empire. "His eminent worth," says Wood, speaking of Raleigh, "both in domestic polity, foreign expeditions and discoveries, arts and literature, both practive and contemplative, was such, that they seemed at once to conquer both example and imitation. *Those that knew him well, esteemed him to be a person born to that only which he went about, so dexterous was he in all or most of his undertakings, in court, in camp, by sea, by land, with sword, with pen*."

There is something, I think, singularly and oddly affecting in the following notices of the early Protestant martyrs, which I got out of Strype's Memorials, an old book in the Bodleian:

"I cannot here omit," he says, "old Father Latimer's habit at his appearing before the commissioners, which was also his habit while he remained prisoner at Oxford. He held his hat in his hand; he had a kerchief on his head, and upon it a nightcap or two, and a great cap such as townsmen used, with two broad flaps to button under his chin: an old thread−bare freez−gown of Bristow, girded to his body with a penny leather girdle, at which hanged, by a long string of leather, his testament and his spectacles, without case, hanging about his neck upon his breast." What would our modern English bishops, with their twenty, thirty, aye, fifty thousands a year, say to this costume of one of the noblest of their tribe? I mean those consistent ones, who, it has been aptly said,— "All over luxury, they at vice declaim, Chide at ill lives, and at good livings aim; On down they sleep, on downy carpets tread, Their ancestors, th' Apostles, wanted bread! At home they lie, with pride, spleen, plenty stor'd, And hire some poor dull rogue to serve the Lord."

"In October," continues Strype, "Ridley and Latimer were brought forth to their burning; and passing by Cranmer's prison, Ridley looked up to have seen him, and to have taken his last farewell. But he was not then at

the window, being engaged in a dispute with a Spanish friar. But he looked after them, and devoutly falling on his knees, prayed to God to strengthen their faith and patience in that their last but painful passage."

I will conclude this letter with some curious particulars relating to the first introduction of newspapers into England, which took place little more than two hundred years ago.

I am indebted to honest Anthony Wood for the succeeding list, and the particulars collected with so much industry. The first paper mentioned by him is, "*Mercurius Rusticus*, or the Countrie's Complaint." It first appeared, he says, the 22d of August, 1642, in a single quarto sheet, and extended to only nineteen or twenty numbers. I believe Wood is mistaken here with regard to this being the first. Cleveland, in giving an account of the London periodicals and diurnals, states, that "the original desiner of this kind was Dutch *Gallo Belgicus*, the *Protoplast*, and the modern Mercuries but *Hans en Kelders*." I have somewhere read, that the *Mercurius−Gallo−Belgicus* is mentioned in Carew's Survey of Cornwall, first published in 1602, and by Donne in some verses of the date of 1611. If the *Mercurius Rusticus* was the first of these diurnals, there is probably some error in the date as set down by Wood.

There was a second part of *Mercurius Rusticus*, giving an account of some outrages committed on the cathedrals in various parts of England. These were all collected in a volume, four or five years after their first publication; but I believe no copy is extant at this time. It would be an invaluable accession to the treasures of his Grace of ******, or my Lord *******. These papers were written by one Bruno Ryves, a Dorsetshire man, first one of the clerks in New College, then chaplain to Magdalen, and then "a most noted and florid preacher" at Stanwell, in the County of Middlesex. He afterwards became rector of St. Martin's, London, and chaplain to Charles the First. When the Presbyterians got the upper hand, they turned him out of his rectory, and he fared ill enough, until the Restoration, when he enjoyed several rich benefices, was "sworn scribe" to the order of the garter, and died in 1677.

Mercurius Aulicus, the next paper of this kind, was begun at Oxford, where the court then was, in 1642, and continued to be published once a week, till the latter part of 1645, when it ceased to appear with any degree of regularity. Wood says, it had a great deal of wit and buffoonery; and that Nedham, the writer of *Mercurius Britannicus*, was no more to be compared with *Aulicus*, than a dwarf to a giant. *Mercurius Aulicus*, according to Nedham, was the work of several hands, such as George Digby, Secretary Nicholas, and Birkenhead, the scribe. He also says, that each college was assessed both for a weekly contribution of money and wit. But Wood says, that notwithstanding what this liar affirms, all Oxford knew, that John Birkenhead began, and continued them, only that in his absence his place was supplied by Peter Heylin.

Birkenhead was the son of a saddler in Cheshire, and became amanuensis to Archbishop Laud, who got him elected a fellow of All Souls. When the king retired to Oxford, on account of the troubles, Birkenhead began the *Mercurius Aulicus*, which so pleased the King, that he got him appointed reader or professor of Moral Philosophy. Being turned out by the parliamentary ascendency, he went to London, where he was several times imprisoned, and lived by his wits, in helping young gentlemen out at dead lifts, in making poems, songs, and amorous epistles, to their respective mistresses, &c. On the Restoration times mended with him. He became successively Doctor of Civil Law, member of parliament, knight, a Master of Requests and of the Faculties, and member of the Royal Society. He died in 1679.

Mercurius Britannicus, Mercurius Pragmaticus, and *Mercurius Politicus*, were all written by Marchmont Nedham, a native of Oxfordshire, who was educated at All Souls college, and afterwards went to London, where he officiated as a schoolmaster or usher at Merchant Tailors. He belonged subsequently to Gray's Inn, where he obtained a comfortable subsistence, until the commencement of the parliamentary war, when, soon siding, says the author, with the rout and scum of the people, he made them weekly sport by railing at all that was noble and intelligent, in his paper called *Mercurius Britannicus;* wherein his aim was to sacrifice some noble lord, or even the king himself, to the beast with many heads. This prodigy of editorial consistency, however, was either bribed or persecuted into loyalty, since he afterwards was introduced to King Charles, kneeled down, and begged his forgiveness, and had the honour to kiss his majesty's hand. He then attacked his old friends, the Presbyterians, in *Mercurius Pragmaticus*, for which he was caught, imprisoned in Newgate, and escaped with his ears, through the interposition of Lenthall, the Speaker, and Bradshaw, President of the High Court, which brought Charles to the block. These obtained his pardon, I suppose, on condition of his once more changing sides. Accordingly, he commenced a new journal, under the title of *Mercurius Politicus*, in which he treated the cavaliers with as much

severity as he had formerly done the Presbyterians. His writings had great influence on the popular feelings; for he was a good scholar, a poet, and a great wag, witty, humorous, and conceited. The royal party pitied him while he continued on their side, but afterwards, he was so much hated by them, that, according to our author, there were many, even in his time, who could not endure to hear Nedham's name mentioned. He died in 1678.

The *Mercurius Britannicus* was published once a week, on Monday, from 1643 to 1647, when the *Mercurius Pragmaticus*, for King Charles, was commenced and ended shortly afterwards, by Nedham again changing sides, and joining his old friends, the Presbyterians, or people. The next series, the *Mercurius Politicus*, it is said, contained many essays against monarchy, and in support of a free state; so much so, that the author was more than once stopped by the interference of the Council of State. Their last order suppressed the paper for the future, in consequence of which, Muddiman and Dury began the publication of a semi−weekly paper, called the *Parliamentary Intelligencer*. To this succeeded the *Mercurius Publicus*, which was continued by Dury till 1663, when Roger L'Estrange took charge of it, and changed the title successively to the *Public Intelligencer* and *The News*. These continued till 1665, when L'Estrange gave them up, in consequence of the publication of other and cheaper semi−weekly papers. These were the *Oxford Gazette*, by Henry Muddiman, afterwards called the *London Gazette*, when the court removed to London, and placed under the superintendence of Williamson, under−secretary of state, who employed Charles Perrot, A. M. to do the business under him, till the year 1671. From that time to the period of Wood's writing, they were, he says, constantly written by the under secretaries of state, and so continued.

As the progress of intelligence, and the reception of more free principles prepared the minds of the people to become interested in the affairs of government, newspapers and periodical journals continued to multiply, until it became impossible to keep an account of their successive appearance. Magazines, reviews, and political, and scientific, and literary, and philosophical journals, multiplied apace, until the present time, when our daily opinions can scarcely be said to depend upon any other basis, than the varying interests and temporary supremacy of some one or other of these periodical or diurnal oracles. It is well for us, indeed, that those fundamental rules, those moral axioms, on which the relative duties of man to man, and man to society rest, are beyond the reach of the caprices of fashion, or the schemes of politicians; else we should be in danger of having no stationary land−marks, no God Terminus in morals, to designate either our rights or our duties.

I must not forget to tell you, that there is no place in all Christendom, where they say their prayers so fast as at Oxford.

LETTER V.

Dear Brother,
London. −

In my last, I believe I forgot to inform you of a curious fact recorded, concerning Oxford, in the very tedious, particular, and prosing accounts of those various "Progresses" made by Queen Elizabeth, at various times, through different parts of England, by which she reaped such harvests of popularity, and, what pleased her quite as well, lived at free quarters. There is certainly something servile in the nature of civilized man. An Indian will turn his back on any thing which might be supposed to challenge his admiration among civilized people, because he considers it a sort of acknowledgment of his inferiority, to wonder. Only, however, let a great personage come among a refined people, and they will follow, and shout at his heels, and wonder, and be delighted beyond measure, whenever he smiles, bows, or exhibits any of those ordinary condescensions which gentlemen usually pay to their inferiors. The good folks will pardon a hundred acts of oppression in consideration of a bow and a smile.

But to my story. It is recorded that Queen Elizabeth, sometime in 1556, visited Oxford, where she was royally feasted for a whole week. "The day after," says the writer of the Progress, "she took her leave, and was conducted by the heads as far as Shotover Hill, when the Earl of Leicester gave her notice, that they had accompanied her to the limits of their jurisdiction. From hence, casting her eyes back upon Oxford with all possible marks of tenderness and affection, she bade them farewell. The *Queen's countenance* had such an effect upon the diligence of this learned body, that within a few years after, it produced more shining instances of real worth, than had ever been sent abroad, at the same time, in any age whatsoever." This is one of the most marvellous effects of the Queen's countenance I remember; it shows how complaisant even genius and learning are, in countries where the people are brought up with a proper notion of the "divine right of kings." A mere visit to Oxford awakened all the Muses, and inspired not only learning, but "worth," in this ancient seminary of loyalty. Oxford, with all its beauties, is one of the dullest places I ever visited; and had not the tailor given it some additional interest, I should have been heartily tired with the sameness of every thing I saw. In leaving it, I had a view of the village of Cummor, which has lately become noted as the scene of part of the romance of *Kenilworth*. I did not visit it; the scenes described by the "Great Unknown" are not yet classical, and I do not think they ever will be.

From hence to Worcester, nothing particular occurred, and I shall reserve, till a future opportunity, my observations on what I saw, at the different places where I stopped occasionally, and spent from one to three days, in making inquiries on particular subjects. There were as usual several fine seats, and one in particular at Ditchley, where I was told were some valuable pictures; but knowing the price one must pay in money and patience for these treats, I avoided all such places. In general I may observe, that the country was not so pretty as in some other parts I have seen, and that occasionally it presented scenes of barrenness. Two spots, however, seem worthy of some little commemoration. One is the ancient town of Evesham; the other, the famous Malvern Hill, where every picturesque tourist makes a point of being enraptured. I'll not be out of fashion.

Evesham is derived, by the monkish antiquaries, from one Eaves, swineherd to the Bishop of Worcester. As bishops in those days were nearly all of them saints, which I am sorry to say is not the case at present, I presume their swineherds were men of some consequence, by their giving names to towns. This part of England, between Oxford and Worcester, seems to have been the paradise of monks. At Abingdon they had a rich and stately monastery, whose revenue, in an age when money was probably twenty times more valuable than at present, amounted to about two thousand sterling a year. At Evesham they were lords of twenty−two towns and manors. No wonder such a church abounded in saints! The principal reason for detaining you a little at Evesham is connected, however, with a different matter. It was here that the famous Simon Mountford, Earl of Leicester, the champion of the English Barons, and the great assertor of Magna Charta, after having been virtually lord of England and its paltry king, fought his last fight, was defeated and slain. Like many other assertors of popular and aristocratic rights, in monarchies, his character has come down to us covered with imputations of ingratitude, perfidy, and ambition. But we should be cautious how we receive the relations of characters and events from the pens of historians, who wrote while the descendants of the king, whom Mountford opposed, occupied the throne

of England. If historians can ever be said to be impartial, it is only when the events they record, and the characters they discuss, are so distant or obscure, that they are just as likely to err through ignorance, as their predecessors were through prejudice. There is something, at all events, about the renown of this Simon Mountford, which made an impression on me early in life; and as he took the popular side, at least the only popular side there was at that time, I do not for my part, exactly see, why he is not as good a martyr as Charles the First.

Not far from hence, I passed the site of another fat rookery of monks, who in ancient times revelled in the spoils of a score of manors and towns. The name of this place is Pershore, and from hence to Worcester is one of the pleasantest rides in the whole country. This last is one of the most lively, agreeable, not to say beautiful, cities I have ever seen out of our own country. Though one of the most ancient in England, it displays nothing, or almost nothing, of that gloomy aspect of decay, which may be observed in every other old city I have visited; where the houses look old, the people look old, and the very air we breathe seems to come out of old cellars and mildewed cloisters. I never get among these reliques of past changes, without my imagination soon becoming tinged with gloom and superstition; there is certainly something in the very style of a Gothic building that is calculated to nourish such impressions, and a ghost, a miracle, or a murder, is like a fish out of water, unless connected with this species of architecture; it was the cause, as well as the effect, of the superstitious character of those times in which it flourished.

But there is little of this about this charming city, where the girls trip along as if they were going a maying, and the men actually look as if they had something to do: it lies close by the side of the Severn, which being the largest river in England, is, of course, entitled to be described in the superlative. Accordingly, the poets, call it the "majestic," the "magnificent," "the Father of Rivers," &c., while tourists never mention it without some epithet indicative of prodigious magnitude. This prodigious river is crossed here by a bridge of five ar hes; it rises in Plinlimmon, in Montgomeryshire, and falls into the Bristol Channel, after an "*endless course of one hundred and thirty miles!*"

As I shall have occasion, in the course of my tours, to remark the frequent recurrence of this species of the bathos, in describing scenes of nature, permit me to make a few observations once for all. Every man, in speaking of whatever is great in his estimation, refers to some standard of comparison, formed from the result of his own individual experience. The greatest he has seen, is, to his imagination, the greatest in the world. Hence, the English tourist calls his rivers, his mountains, and his lakes, the greatest, the highest, and the most beautiful, because he knows of no other. When one of the picturesque tourists comes to the mighty Severn, he is in raptures; when he beholds the lake of *Bala*, the largest in Wales, he calls it "this immense body of water," although, as I am an authentic traveller, it is but four miles long and one broad! But, "body o'me," when he mounts to the summit of Snowdoun, which is of the "prodigious height" of three thousand six hundred feet, he is unalterably convinced that he can overlook the tops of the Andes, and that the whole world lies directly under his nose. The painters of the picturesque also practise this species of imposition upon foreigners, especially us Americans, by heightening, as it is called, the effect of their pieces; that is to say, by making the waterfalls higher, the rocks more rugged, and the hills more perpendicular. When I came to view the originals of those coloured landscapes, which abound to such a degree in our parlours and print−shops at home, I did not know them. It is inconceivable, brother, how they are exaggerated in every feature of beauty and sublimity.

Far be it from me to flout these people for not having larger rivers, higher mountains, finer waterfalls, and broader lakes. They cannot help it. All I wish is to put you on your guard against the superlative style in which they speak of things, to which, in our country, we should apply some diminutive epithet. Our standard of greatness is different from theirs. Our Mississippi and Missouri are alone called "mighty streams," because they course their thousands of miles, and roll a tribute to the sea greater than that of all the rivers of Britain combined. Our Lake Superior, with its hundred rivers, is alone named in the language of the superlative degree, because you could empty all the lakes of Britain into its bosom, as a drop in the bucket, without raising its surface the breadth of a hair. Some of our *hills* too, as the *white hills* of New Hampshire, are twice as high as the "mighty Snowdoun," yet they are only called hills. This habit of speaking in the superlative has also crept into their modes of estimating their exploits, the beauties of their landscapes, the excellence of their literature, and above all, the talents of their great men. In just the same degree that they exaggerate the dimensions of natural objects to the imagination, by their inflated epithets, do they exaggerate the talents and qualifications of their great men.

At present, I must not forget this "boundless" city of Worcester, and its "magnificent" river. It is spread, as I

before stated, along the Severn, which is really a pretty little river, or rather, as we should call it at home, a creek. They go so far as to say, that Worcester owes its foundation to *Constantine Chlorus*. It was burnt by Hardicanute the Dane; set fire to by Roger de Montgomery; afterwards burnt by accident; again burnt in the wars of king Stephen and Maud; in the time of Henry the Second it again underwent the same fate. From out of all these burnings Worcester rose a gay, a beautiful city; the seat of the graces in this part of England, and the town residence in winter, of many of the country gentry of these parts, who prefer it to the noise, smoke, and corruption of London. It is just large enough for all the real purposes of social enjoyment, containing, I should imagine, between fifteen and eighteen thousand persons. From these is formed one of the most agreeable, polite, and intelligent circles to be found any where; equal in polish, and superior in real politeness to the London *Beau Monde*, which is, in fact, a fantastic assemblage of coxcombs and coquettes, with now and then a fashionable poet or chemist to give it a literary or scientific air.

From Worcester I proceeded towards Hereford, it being my intention to visit some of the picturesque scenery of the Wye, and thence take the mighty Snowdoun by the hair of his head. The road was one of the roughest I had yet travelled, but the country on either side abounded in fruit trees and flowers. The man who drove my vehicle assured me I might gather a rose, without being transported to Botany Bay, that paradise of English rogues. I ventured to pluck a beautiful one over the fence, and would you believe it, brother, was neither shot by a spring gun, caught in a man−trap, nor prosecuted afterwards for trespass! This I record as the first miracle which has happened to me in this country. I confess, however, a stout, square, roughfaced damsel did start out upon me, and bawl out something, which luckily I could not understand; for I do assure you, that notwithstanding the vulgar opinion on our side of the water, the English is not the national tongue of this country. In the various counties, particularly Somerset, Yorkshire, Cumberland, and elsewhere, I give you my honour, not one in a hundred can speak the English language. Were not my servant a sort of booby, who speaks all the languages of this island, except the English, I should be quite at a loss to understand or be understood. I am often reminded by such little incidents as this of the rose, of the difference between this country and our liberal and plentiful land, in which a country gentleman or common farmer would be disgraced as a miser or a brute, who should refuse to a stranger or his neighbours his flowers or his fruit. Of the latter, indeed, no one scruples to pluck what he likes from the road side, without ever asking. Soon I came to the foot of Malvern Hill, where I halted at a neat inn at its foot, with the determined purpose of going to the uttermost top, where, as I have read in all the picturesque tours, was to be seen one of the finest prospects in England.

In my opinion, brother, the very first excellence of this fine view is, that the ascent to it is not fatiguing. Fatigue destroys the very essence and being of delight. I have often, in my own country, climbed a rugged precipice to see a fine prospect, and when I got to the top, felt as if I could lie down and die, I was so tired. But the ascent of Malvern Hill is all an easy slope, covered with velvet grass. Were it more laborious, however, it would pay well, for it is indeed a noble throne for the very king of the picturesque. The evening was a little hazy, and the atmosphere presented that soft sleepiness of hue, on which the soul, at least mine, reposes with such measureless luxury. The fields just beneath, were some of them in the sun, some in the shade, and their different tints were like the first and second of two well−tuned instruments, producing variety and harmony. Farther off, landscape faded by imperceptible gradations into less of the bright green, and more of the sky blue. The white houses were sprinkled among villages and lawns, and woody groves, whose foliage was all in soft fleeces. Among these, through the vale of Evesham, I saw two little rivers, like white ribands, waving and meandering along; and in the distance the Welsh mountains, whose outlines could hardly be distinguished from the blue sky. On inquiring the names of these streams, I was made to comprehend by my guide, that one of them, the smallest, was the Avon. The very name of this river conjured up visions and recollections of Shakspeare, to whom it is for ever consecrated, and mingled what was alone wanting in my impressions, the charm of moral association, with all that is beautiful to the eye.

The next day I proceeded on towards Hereford, through an exuberant hop country, rich also in every other production of English husbandry, as well as in pastoral beauty and fine houses, to a tolerably miserable town, the name of which I think is Ledbury, for it is so equivocally written in my memorandum book, that I will not swear to it. The next day I arrived at a place noted in days of yore.

LETTER VI.

Dear Brother,
London. −

Hereford looks dull and is dull. There is no deception in the place; for, in approaching, it presents a heavy, flat appearance, very different from Worcester. There is little to be gleaned here, except old tales about Griffin the Welshman, Algar the Englishman, Leofgar the Bishop, and William FitzOsborne, with remains of English and Roman antiquities; all which is to be found in every book of travels, and all which you are as well acquainted with as myself.

The picturesque tourists come hither for the purpose of viewing the scenery and ancient remains of the river Wye, which abounds in some of the finest landscapes to be seen in this country, and they all make a point of repeating over the same things. Among the public buildings here, the Cathedral is the principal; and of all parts of a cathedral, the most interesting to me are the old tombs to be found in most of them. Here is to be seen a number of these, most of them erected in memory of bishops and ecclesiastics. Among them, however, is one representing a figure in close armour, with the hands raised in prayer, the usual fashion of the more ancient tombs. The figure had a wooden leg, whence I concluded he was some great soldier, who had lost it in the wars; but it turned out that the leg of the figure, and not that of the living knight, had been accidentally broken off, and replaced by an artist of this place. Observing a garter, the badge of the order of knights of the garter, remaining upon the leg, the artist carved another on the wooden one, exactly like it, so that this is, beyond doubt, the best gartered knight in all England.

Hereford, although its name is quite familiar to our American ears, is but an insignificant place, containing not more than seven thousand inhabitants. As an ancient frontier town between England and Wales, it has, however, derived historical consequence, from having been overrun, plundered, taken and retaken, by Welsh and English marauding princes and border−barons. Its castle was once reputed of great strength, but there is scarcely a vestige of it remaining, although its adjacent walks along the river, being kept in good order, form a most agreeable promenade. Hereford is one of the most orthodox places in England; so much so, that when I was there, the library association in that town actually talked of making an *Auto de Fe* of Hume, Gibbon, and some other writers, who have marvellously disturbed the fat dignitaries of the church! I am not jesting, upon my word, and from this and other indications, begin to have serious doubts, whether the nineteenth century will not turn out in the end almost as enlightened as the ninth.

The first objects which, in going out of town, attracted my notice, were a dozen or two of beggars, who form a considerable feature of the picturesque in many of the English landscapes, I assure you. Having distanced these, I proceeded towards a noble old place, called *Holme Lacy*, belonging to the Duke of Norfolk, for the purpose of reconnoitring a scene, once a favourite resort of Pope. The situation is just fit for a poet: quiet, soft, and secluded, in the midst of rural beauties. It was once the property of the ancient family of Scudamore, and the last viscount was an intimate friend of the poet, who wrote a great deal in these shades. By the aid of that key which unlocks the flinty hearts of every serving−man and serving−maid in this kingdom, I was permitted to enter the grounds, and ramble about almost at pleasure. I always feel like a pilgrim visiting the shrine of a tutelary saint, in such scenes, hallowed by such associations—there is something so blameless, so pure, so spiritual, in the fame of literary genius, more especially poetical inspiration. The harp of the true poet, when tuned to virtuous feeling, is like the harp of the angels, accompanied by the song of the cherubim and seraphim.

From hence, I pursued my devious course to Ross, and crossed a steep hill, where the bold scenery of this region began to make its appearance; some distance beyond, I passed Harewood, an old seat. In the adjoining forest, is the scene of the bloody tragedy of Elfrida, which I refrain from harping upon, because we have been lately so stultified with history, vamped up in romance and poetry, that no more is necessary at present. I think, however, it would be no bad subject for the "Great Unknown." Next came we to the ruins of an old castle, which I visited for no other reason, than because it was once the property of Arthur Grey, renowned for his Irish wars, but still more as the friend and benefactor of Spenser, who accompanied him to Ireland, as his secretary, and received from him a grant of three thousand acres of land there. Spenser has expressed his gratitude in a sonnet prefixed to

the Fairy Queen. Very little of this castle now remains. It has passed from the Greys; but long after a stone or a vestige is to be seen, the spot will be remembered and known, as connected with the benefactor of this charming poet.

Leaving Wilton Castle on the right, I proceeded some distance, three or four miles perhaps, without being particularly struck with any features in the landscape. Some fishermen, catching trout in little wicker−basket boats, attracted my notice, however. When I came to Goodrich Castle, I was so struck with its venerable aspect, covered half over with green moss, that I determined once for all to invade this strong hold, and give you one single description, which is to satisfy you for the rest of your life. It is placed on a fine eminence, overlooking the river, and is surrounded by a deep trench, some fifty feet wide, as I should judge, cut out of the solid rock. The first apartment, inside the gate, is a small room to the left, with an ornamental window, and large stone chalice for holding the holy water. From hence it has been sagely concluded, that this was the chapel, of which I have not the least doubt. A mass of ruins directly opposite, with an octageon column rising out of them, indicates the ancient baronial hall, where they no doubt held mortal carousals in the time of William Marshall, Gilbert Talbot, and Harry Grey, successively possessors of the castle. A large square tower remains, flaunting amidst its decay, in moss and clambering vines, that almost make it look gay. This is said to have been built by an Irish Macbeth, a prisoner, who worked out his freedom, and that of his son, by building this enormous keep. Inside of this are mildewed, damp, and dreary walls, festooned with cobwebs, in which I observed certain old spiders that came over with William the Conqueror.

At the iron works, known by the name of Bishop's Wood, the scenery waxed more and more beautiful. At Bicknor I began to comprehend that there was some little reason for the raptures of picturesque tourists, when speaking of the river Wye. Rocks of the boldest magnitude, dressed out in verdure, at every little projection or crevice, and hanging over the water, give a character of grandeur to the scenery, while the narrowness of the stream itself contributes to the sublime, by giving a comparative altitude to the precipices. You tell me you lately sailed up the Hudson River in the State of New York, and observed, how the effect of one magnificent feature of sublimity is diminished by the grandeur and immensity of another. The Palisades, as they are called, are much higher, and in every way more noble than the cliffs of the Wye; but the wideness of the Hudson takes from them more than half their effect, while the narrow channel of the Wye adds to those I am speaking of in the same or a greater proportion. This remark may be extended to almost all our scenery; the very vastness of the constituents of our landscapes diminishes the effect, not only of the different parts, but of the whole combined. I was more particularly struck with the truth of this, in viewing parts of Wales, where, owing to the proximity of objects, the narrowness of glens, and the disposition of rocks, the highest effect of sublimity was produced by objects comparatively diminutive.

Among the wonders of this region are Tintern Abbey, Chepstowe Castle, and Piercefield, the latter, one of the most famous *show−places* in England. The abbey, to my mind, is more remarkable for the exquisite beauty and finish of its remaining parts, than for its situation, which is low, and does not command a view of the river, except from above. It is also surrounded by cottages, inhabited by workmen belonging to neighbouring iron works, the din of whose hammers disturbs, of an evening, the repose of the scene. But the inside is indescribably fine, and cannot be done justice to by any other medium than that of actual inspection. All I shall say is, that as a mere ruin, it exceeds any thing I have seen since, or ever saw before. Its history is not particularly interesting. It was, according to the fashion of the age, endowed by various benefactions in the elder times, from pious or profligate noblemen, who made their peace with heaven by enriching the church: and when the fashion changed, it was suppressed and deprived of its revenues, which were shared again among the nobility, from whose munificence or fears they were first obtained. It is now, if I recollect right, the property of the Duke of Beaufort, who takes pains to prevent its further decay.

The scenery in the neighbourhood of Chepstowe Castle is equal to any on the Wye. A bridge, which, whether handsome or not, is always a good object in a landscape, crosses near it, below which, on the opposite side, is a range of cliffs rising directly out of the water, on whose sides the ivy and the moss luxuriate, and over whose top the verdure nods. But I must try and elevate myself to the proper degree of picturesque sublimity, and talk a little like a traveller on this momentous occasion. Advancing then towards the battlements (I beg pardon, massive battlements), and sky−aspiring turrets of this adamantine work of ages, I was struck dumb by the view of a grand entrance, personifying the repulsive gloom, feodal reserve, and frantic ferocity of the times, in which its

everlasting walls, which are now almost decayed, were reared. The very knocker was warlike, being nothing more than a cannon ball suspended by a vast chain, with which I ordered my man to "knock me here at the gate." He did so, and the very walls, not only of the castle, but the river on which it stands, trembled at the sound. The warder of the castle did not make his appearance, nor did any whylome eftsoons peep over the wall, with his cross−bow levelled, and demand our business; but an exceedingly decrepid, wrinkled, and withal, ugly old woman, did, after some unreasonable delay, open the gate for our admittance, upon receiving a piece of that, which melts stone walls and stony hearts in this country. The professor of English tongues looked rather shy; for he came from a shire where the witches grew, and privately assured me, that this old woman had all the marks about her.

Having already described one castle, I hold myself exonerated from describing any more; for, after all, no words can give any idea, except a false one, of visible objects, for which our senses have acquired no standard. I will only mention, that here, in a large round tower of the ancient citadel, Henry Martin, one of King Charles's judges, was confined thirty years, and here he died. There is probably no set of men, whose memory has been treated with more injustice, or who suffered more unrelenting persecution, than these high−souled republicans. On the accession of Charles the Second, they were hunted through England, Switzerland, and all parts of Europe—nay, in our new world, where three of them, Whalley, Dixwell, and Goffe, found a refuge, and remained secreted for half the life of man. There is, perhaps, no instance on record, of a secret intrusted to so many persons, so dangerous to keep, and for the disclosure of which there were so many temptations of danger and interest, being kept so long and with such inflexible faith. Yet not one betrayed them. They were in New Haven when the king's officers were searching every house; nay, they were in the very house they searched; yet such was the cool discretion and inflexible faith of the people, that they escaped discovery. They lived many years at Hadley, died there, and two of them were buried in the Church−yard at New Haven, without its being known to a single person who ever betrayed the secret, till it was no longer of consequence to the safety of any human being. The truth is, that the sentiment of the people of New England sanctioned their condemnation of the king, and the hearts of the colonists were with those bold, inflexible patriots, who dared to punish a tyrant for making war against his people. I have often, when at Yale, seen the graves of Dixwell and Whalley, each designated by a stone, which humble as it is, is calculated to retain their initials, and the time of their decease, for ages. It is a hard, red, primitive stone, very thick, and pointed at the top, in such a way as to form nearly the two sides of a triangle. They lie close together, at the west end of the old Presbyterian Church, where I hope they will remain for ever undisturbed. They were the judges of kings; and, although they escaped a violent death, their latter life was one long series of exile, danger, seclusion, and oblivion. Henry Martin was another of these, and was spared only for perpetual imprisonment. Mr. Southey wrote some exceedingly blank verse on the occasion upon the walls of Chepstowe.

Piercefield owes its celebrated improvements to Valentine Morris, of St. Vincents, in the West Indies, who wrecked his fortune upon these rocks, and, as usual, was obliged to sell what had cost him a vast sum, the fruits of which he never enjoyed. A Mr. Smith purchased it, but got tired, as every man does, of such expensive playthings, and sold it to Colonel Wood, who, covered with the spoils of India, also spent vast sums upon these rocks for other people to enjoy, which was very good of him. He got tired too, and sold it to a Mr. Wells, who I believe still holds out, but will not probably do so very long. There are, it seems, certain days in which only the *show−place* is opened, and the day I applied for admittance happened not to be one of these.

My next excursion was to the city of Gloucester, situated on the "noble Severn," which, notwithstanding its dignity, is here only navigable for smaller vessels. It is one of the principal cities of this part of England. I found an air of business here, very different from Hereford, and in fact it is a place of considerable trade in pins, &c. by means of the river, which is divided into two channels here. But the great wonder of the place, and that which most attracted my attention, is the cathedral, which is one of the finest in this country. Is lofty tower, and transparent pinnacles, ornamented with beautiful fret−work—the majestic roof, and Gothic ornaments of the choir, with the old Saxon pillars, and arches supporting the aisle—in short, the singular, yet not unharmonious combination of different ages of architecture, all contributed to engage my wonder. It was begun, as antiquaries have decided, about the latter end of the tenth century, and not completed, as it now stands, till more than four hundred years afterwards. It therefore exhibits a curious, as well as complete exemplification of the variations and progress of churcharchitecture in England. It would fill a book to describe all the various portions of this building, and even then, without drawings, the impression would be altogether indistinct. There are several very ancient

tombs; among others, that of Edward the Second, which is very singular as well as striking. His effigies exhibit him with cropped hair and beard, whence we may conclude, this was the fashion of the time.

This, and many other vast edifices of a similar kind, form one among the many boasts of the people of this country. They certainly add both dignity and splendour to the cities where they are situated; and the stranger, while contemplating them with awe and admiration, is apt to forget what an expense of human labour was here applied to purposes of church vanity; what vast sums of money were taken from the poor people, to rear those ostentatious monuments of the power and pride of churchmen. They were built in ages when probably one−third of the wealth of the kingdom flowed into the treasury of the church; when kings trembled at the frown of a mitred minion of the pope; and the people were the beasts of burden that laboured for them all. When we reflect that the labours of millions, the wealth of kingdoms, were thus invested in a dead capital, that yields nothing to the state, and how many hundred thousand people are, at this moment, suffering for the common necessaries of life, it is difficult to resist the impression, that it would add to the happiness of mankind, if the incalculable sums lavished on these temples of human vanity, could be made to return to the children of those whose fathers paid the price. Nothing could be lost on the score of religion, since these immense structures are not in the least calculated for sermons, which cannot be heard through their interminable aisles.

LETTER VII.

Dear Brother,
London. −

At Gloucester I received some information which induced me to alter my original design of penetrating into Wales from that quarter, and determined me to proceed to Shrewsbury, thence into North Wales. I was told I might in this way have an opportunity of seeing one of the finest parts of the country. As it was of little consequence to me which way I entered into Wales, I accordingly proceeded towards Shrewsbury, by the vale of Evesham, and another beautiful vale extending to the foot of Coteswold Hills. Crossing another hill, which separates the two valleys, I had a noble prospect of the cities of Gloucester and Worcester, with almost countless villas and villages, in the midst of a rich assemblage of natural beauty. At the foot of this hill is the ancient Evesham, which lies on the river Avon, out of which I drank to the memory of Shakespeare. But what was rather extraordinary, I found very little inspiration therefrom.

Somewhere about two centuries ago, Coteswold Hill was famed for certain annual sports, called Dover's Olympics, of which Anthony Wood gives the following account:

"These games were began and continued at a certain time in the year, for forty years, by one Robert Dover, an attorney of Benton−on−the−Health, in Warwickshire, son of John Dover of Norfolk; who being full of activity, and of a generous, free, and public spirit, did, with leave of James the First, select a place on Coteswold Hills, in Gloucestershire, whereon these games should be acted. Endimion Porter, Esq. a native of that county, and a servant of that King, a person also of a most generous spirit, did, to encourage Dover, give him some of the King's old clothes, with a hat, and feather, and ruff, purposely to grace him, and consequently the solemnity. Dover was constantly there in person, well mounted and accoutred, and was the chief director and manager of those games, frequented by the nobility and gentry, (some of whom came sixty miles to see them) *even till the rascally rebellion was begun by the Presbyterians; which gave a stop to their proceedings, and spoiled all that was generous or ingenious elsewhere*." These games were celebrated in verses by Ben Jonson, Drayton, Randolph, Marmyon, Heywood, and many other wits of the day. Their poems, it is said, were collected and published, with a picture of Dover on horseback, superintending the games: the book, I believe, is not extant.

We now advanced into Warwickshire, famous for its valiant champion, Guy, and a thousand times more famous for its Shakespeare, to whom the world is indebted for more pleasant hours than all the bloody triumphs of a thousand heroes have ever bestowed upon mankind. What a charming reflection it is, to think that genius has the power of giving delight, when the organization of mind and matter which produced it is dissolved for ever! Soon we saw the spire of Stratford church, and then the town itself, with its pretty little river. Nobody would ever have heard either of the town or the river, beyond their neighbourhood, were it not for the name of Shakespeare, who has conferred a never−dying fame upon both. Stratford is now a place of pilgrimage, like the grave of Washington, at Mount Vernon. They are worthy to be mentioned together, for one is the birth−place of the first of poets; the other, the tomb of the first of men. Our countryman, Irving, has lately given so pleasing an account of this place, and all the localities connected with the life of the poet, that I will not attempt any thing of the kind, for it would only be repeating what another has said much better.

From hence to Warwick, where every body knows there is one of the finest castles, or *show−places*, in this country. It is remarkable for some pretended reliques of the champion *Guy*, who, judging from his porridge pot, was a great hero, at least in trencher feats. You have no doubt seen views of this castle, as it is in all the picturesque works; and if you have not, it is impossible to convey any likeness in words. What amused me most was, the honest country people I occasionally conversed with, who repeated, with an air of most credulous gravity, all the enormous tales recorded of this renowned trencher−man, Sir Guy, whose legendary feats in valorous fight, and valorous eating, are all authenticated by a statue, at *Guy's Cliff* , in the neighbourhood, of most gigantic proportions.

From Warwick I passed the castle of Kenilworth, which has lately been dug out of its ruins by the indefatigable pen of the "Great Unknown." It is a fine ruin, overgrown with ivy: the comparatively modern additions of the Earl of Leicester are gone to decay, while the more ancient still subsist in tolerable preservation.

Rout, and revel, and beer−drinking, bearbaiting, and other royal sports, are here succeeded by silence, decay, and desolation. These castles formed the links of that vast feudal chain which bound the people of the middle ages. They are fast disappearing from the land, and let them go: they swallowed up the cottages, and held the cottagers in bondage.

Passing some fine seats I now came in sight of Coventry, famous for Peeping Tom and ribbon weaving. It is an old city; and all the old cities I have ever seen, except Oxford, that have not been burned down two or three times at least, are, to my mind, very ugly. The streets of Coventry are narrow, inconvenient, and dirty; the houses gloomy, and the people bear the indelible marks of a manufacturing town. Soon after leaving this place, which is regularly anathematized by all picturesque tourists, the country became flat, and apparently volcanic; for all around I could see the columns of black, malignant, manufacturing smoke, curling to the skies, or flattening and spreading over the landscape.

Approaching Birmingham, I breathed the very essence of coal−smoke, which lowered over the pretty, smart, new country−boxes of the manufacturers. I had passed through this town before, on my way to London, but as I was in haste to deliver my —, made no stay here. On this occasion, however, I spent several days in viewing the manufactories, and making inquiries as to the effects of the system upon the morals, manners, and health of the people engaged in them. The general result of all my experience, observation, and inquiry I shall perhaps give you in a letter particularly devoted to the subject, which is just now of peculiar interest in our country. I found every thing at a stand here; the manufacturers dispirited; the workmen ragged, starving, and disaffected; the whole town complaining. Nothing, in fact, can present a more miserable spectacle, than a place arrested in a course of almost unparalleled prosperity, by those unaccountable mutations which turn the tide of commerce into new channels, and, while they throw thousands out of employment and bread, produce premature decay, and modern ruins. The most common appearance here, is that of beggary; the rarest, a clean face and hands.

Skirting the borders of Worcestershire, Staffordshire, and Shropshire, the country was beautiful, and some of the views highly picturesque as well as extensive. In many parts of Staffordshire especially, the appearance of innumerable furnaces gave the country at night a most singular aspect. It seemed that Mr. Hutton's subterranean fire was bursting forth in every direction, and that the whole interior of the earth was teeming with combustible matter. I had a view of the Leasowes and Hagley, two beautiful spots; the one connected with the genius, taste, and prodigality of Shenstone; the other, with the name of Lyttelton. The latter place has been fruitful in distinguished characters. Their beauties are familiar to the imagination of most general readers in our country, and so I pass them by. I visited Colebrooke Dale, which is in the way to Shrewsbury, and where Vulcan and the Cyclops resort. Every thing is iron here; there is an iron bridge; the seats are iron; and the men who sit on them are either iron or steel, I could not tell which. The eternal clink of hammers, the roaring of the forges, and the columns of thick black smoke, render this place particularly detestable to ears and eyes of common sensibility. If ever they catch me there again, I'll give them full leave, as Shakspeare says, "to hammer me into a twigger bottle."

From Colebrooke Dale, winding along the "Noble Severn," which may be about as wide as our Thames at Norwich, in Connecticut, I was highly pleased with the pretty scenery of the little basin through which the river passes. In getting to the city, however, it was necessary to mount an eminence, from whence I had a clear view of the mountains of North Wales. On the other hand, was a fine hill, called the Wrekin, rising pretty abruptly out of a great plain and richly clothed with verdure. I afterwards climbed to the top, in an excursion from Shrewsbury, and was gratified with a view that paid me for the labour, which is more than I can say of many others. I arrived at that city about five in the afternoon, crossing a second time by a grand bridge over the Severn, which almost flows round the whole hill on which Shrewsbury is built.

I had two particular objects in view, which induced me to spend three or four days at Shrewsbury: one was to see the prison, which is conducted and governed according to the system proposed by Mr. Howard, and combines with it a house of correction; the other was, to inspect the House of Industry, which is considered one of the most luxurious receptacles of idleness and beggary in this country. Having made the necessary arrangements, I accordingly first visited the prison. The area within the walls contains about two acres of ground; you enter by the porter's lodge, over the gate of which is a bust of Mr. Howard, that benevolent man and inflexible father! The ground floor on the left is occupied by the turnkey's rooms, above which are his bed−chambers; that on the right is occupied by the lazaretto, where is a hot and cold bath, an oven to fumigate clothes, which are taken from the prisoners, and a prison uniform put on them. Other rooms up stairs are appropriated to the performance of the last

offices for criminals by the clergy, previously to execution on the flat roof above. The debtors, male and female, female felons, capital male felons, petty male felons, women of ill fame, and vagrants, male and female disorderly servants, and apprentices, male vagrants and deserters, are each accommodated with a spacious court, day rooms, and sleeping rooms, so that it is quite a luxury to be here. In addition to these, there are two courts for male and female refractory prisoners, together with a detached infirmary, with separate courts, dayrooms, and sleeping−rooms: in short, my dear brother, beyond all doubt, a large proportion of the prisoners here are better lodged, better fed, and better clothed, than they were at home. In fact, nine out of ten, of the people of England, do not spend as much as it costs to maintain a pauper here.

All this is pretty enough in theory, and looks very like humanity; but I dare only shake my head at it, and say nothing. If people will divert the laws from their original intention, and make that, in effect, a reward, which was intended, and ought to be, a punishment; if they will build palaces for felons and paupers to revel in at the expense of honest industry, why nothing is to be said against humanity, which, under pretence of tenderness to the worthless and unprincipled, pardons the wretch who is only liberated to commit new crimes, or feeds and lodges him in infinite comfort at the expense of the society he has offended. Experience, not argument, must cure these indiscreet gambols of philanthropists. It will not be long before they discover, that they are only heaping coals of fire upon the heads of thousands, in the remote hope of reclaiming one, and offering premiums to vice and immorality. If Mrs. Fry will bribe women of ill fame to reformation, by supporting them comfortably, while thousands of wives and mothers, who never wallowed in scenes of corruption, but have worked their fingers to the bone, to keep themselves and their children from want, are pining in hopeless and obscure wretchedness; let her do it, I say again. Instead of offering premiums to virtue, she is proposing temptations to vice, since it seems women must first become infamous in society, in order to entitle themselves to her notice and bounty. No wonder, my dear brother, that vice should thrive, poverty multiply, and prodigality and idleness increase here, under this new system of patronage. But the voice of warning is the voice of one crying in the wilderness; or, if it be heard, it is only heard for the purpose of bringing the charge of inhumanity against him who uttered the warning. It is not difficult to predict the result of all these injudicious measures.

From the prison I was carried to what I supposed to be a palace, beautifully situated on a lofty bank, and overlooking one of the finest prospects imaginable. Concluding there was some mistake, I begged to be conducted to the poor house. My guide, with an air of great self−complacency, assured me this was the poor house, and that it cost, first and last, above twenty thousand pounds sterling. It is a superb building, affording such luxurious lodgings and excellent accommodations, that I was not surprised people preferred living there in idleness and luxury, to working hard at home, and faring indifferently. In looking over the books, and seeing the vast quantities of provisions, the number of fat beeves slaughtered for the entertainment of these sumptuous beggars, I no longer wondered that beggary was grown so respectable a trade. It is quite natural that the people of England should be degraded into paupers, when they are thus actually seduced into idleness, by the tempting prospect of good living and good lodging, instead of being deterred by the certainty of want, and all its train of ills. Is this humanity, is this charity? thought I. Is it thus, that the happiness of human beings is brought about, by tempting them from labour and economy by the prospect of indulgence and plenty, at the expense of others? Is it thus that children are prepared to encounter the labours to which their birth renders them liable, by being pampered in this splendid eating−house? I put some of these questions to those about me, and never got a civil word afterwards. These people share in the good things, and grow rich on charities. It is a fine thing, brother, to manage the concerns of the poor in this country. I wish some one would have the honest hardihood to speak of these institutions as they deserve; risk the reputation of a rs the sf the eiy? nt, an and ecriatioiscre receptacles of idleeservatwhose fpense o timesheard askthe very iscrerrieltrance, guidne r disorifferениable,rance,oty, at the ery go I wast I ser tysociein ofwouldyoriffee add there n wilp toity, I wishurhooddieinmd cannoterminable aisles.

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LETTER VII.

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LETTER VII.

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LETTER VII.

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LETTER VII.

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LETTER VII.

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LETTER VII.

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LETTER VII.

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LETTER VII.

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LETTER VII.

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LETTER VII.

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LETTER VII.

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