

ed amid the throng, how much more happiness was now enjoyed in any one day on that ground, than had been enjoyed in a twelve-month when it was only the resort of kings and nobles, and the scene of most costly masks and banquets. Nothing more than the sight of that happiness was needed to prove the rationality of throwing open such places to diffuse amongst the nation, at once the truest pleasure and the most refining influences."

The other subjects in Mr. Howitt's work are Compton-Winnyates, a curious old house belonging to Lord Northampton; its neighbouring Edgehill, the spot of the first pitched battle between Charles the First and his subjects, with all its really glorious, pious, and immortal memories; Tintagel in Cornwall, with traditions of Arthur and his knights; Stonyhurst with its Jesuits, and Winchester with its colleges and kings; Wotton Hall with Alfieri and Rousseau; and a Sacrament Sunday at Kilmorac, with its graphic band of modern Covenanters. These are treated with various merit; always with proper enthusiasm, charity, and good nature.

We bid a hearty farewell to this most successful effort on the part of Mr. Howitt, to give circulation to healthy, kind, and pleasant thoughts; to increase the public cheerfulness and good humour; and to strengthen the manly interest which every one of every party should take in the memories and glories of England and of Englishmen.

Another Notice from the London Atlas.

One of the most charming volumes we have chanced upon during many years—a book that is likely to be read a century hence with as keen a delight as it is sure to be read now while the interest of its publication is fresh. It was a felicitous thought in William Howitt to undertake so poetical a pilgrimage, for which he is so admirably, and, we had almost said, peculiarly qualified by the character of his mind, the purity of his taste, and his deep love of old traditions and their picturesque and historical associations. The performance of this agreeable and exciting undertaking is in all respects such as might have been anticipated from the author of the *Rural Life in England*. The same lively appreciation of the noblest attributes of national character, the same relish for natural beauty, and the same power of moving the sympathies by truthful images of life, are developed with even greater power in the volume before us than in the *Rural Life*, where the design may be said to have been indicated. The object of the work is thus expressed by the author:—"It has long been my opinion," he observes, "that to visit the most remarkable scenes of old English history and manners, and to record the impressions thence derived in their immediate vividness; to restore, as it were, each place and its inhabitants to freshness, and to present them freed from the dust of ages and the heaviness of antiquarian rubbish piled upon them, would be a labour responded to with emphasis by readers of the present day." The plan is sufficiently comprehensive to fill many more volumes, and we hope that an enterprise which has been so successfully commenced, will be carried out to the full extent of the materials. The rivers, hills, and valleys, the ancient ruins and surviving castles, the fortresses and towns of England are rich in this kind of lore, and from the spirit in which the storied remains included in the present publication are explored, we look forward with no little anxiety to the fulfilment of the promise contained in the preface, that the subject is to be continued hereafter at greater length, and in regular series.

Wherever our author went he appears to have made zealous inquiries after the relics of past ages, to have endeavoured to determine doubtful localities, and to have gleaned as much personal history, and such accounts of fugitive manners and usages, as have been preserved in the oral traditions of the immediate neighbourhoods. He never encumbers us with general historical details, but just gives us such a passing glance of history as may be sufficient to create the exquisite interest in the subjects under consideration. Then the whole is exhibited in such an atmosphere of poetical feeling that, while it presents a vivid succession of sketches of by-gone realities, it possesses all the additional fascinations of a highly imaginative romance.

We will begin with Stratford-on-Avon, which is, probably, one of the most curious portions of the whole. First, of the love for Shakspeare's memory which the inhabitants in common entertain, and the numerous local memorabilia that exist concerning him:—

"Stratford appears now to live on the fame of Shakspeare. You see mementos of the great native poet wherever you turn. There is the Mulberry-tree Inn; the Imperial Shakspeare Hotel; the Sir John Falstaff; the Royal Shakspeare Theatre: the statue of Shakspeare meets your eye in its niche on the front of the Town-hall. Opposite to that, a large sign informs you that there is kept a collection of the relics of Shakspeare, and not far off you arrive at another sign, conspicuously projecting into the street, on which is proclaimed—"IN THIS HOUSE THE IMMORTAL BARD WAS BORN." The people seem all alive to the honour of their town having produced Shakspeare. The tailor will descend from his shopboard, or the cobbler start up from his stall, and volunteer to guide you to the points connected with the history of the great poet. A poor shoemaker, on my asking at his door the nearest way to the church containing Shakspeare's tomb, immediately rose up and began to put on his coat. I said, 'No, my friend, I do not want you to put yourself to that trouble; go on with your work—I only want you to say whether this way be the most direct.' 'Bless you, Sir,' said

the man, taking up his hat, 'I don't want any thing for showing a gentleman the way to Shakspeare's tomb; it is a pleasure to me; I am fond on't; and a walk, now and then, does me good.' The old man bustled along, holding forth with enthusiasm in the praise of Shakspeare, and coming up to the sexton's house, and knocking,—'There,' said he, 'I have saved you ten minutes' walk:—don't forget to look at old Johnny Combe!' and was turning off, highly pleased that he had done something to the honour of Shakspeare, and reluctant to receive even the value of a glass of ale for his services.

"The Royal Shakspeare Club annually celebrate the birth of Shakspeare on the 23d of April, and even Washington Irving is held in great honour, for having recorded in his *Sketch-Book* his visit to his tomb. At one of the inns they show you Washington Irving's room and his bed. In the Red Horse, at which I stayed, my room was adorned with his sole portrait, and all the keepers of Stratford Albums take good care to point out to you the signature of Washington Irving, the American, who spoke so highly of Shakspeare."

While tens of thousands of strangers have visited the house where Shakspeare was born, Mr. Howitt justly observes that few have ever thought of looking at the cottage where Ann Hathaway was born, in the rustic village of Shottery. He has, with exquisite feeling, supplied this deficiency in the annals of the poet's locality, and, being a firm believer in the true-heartedness and domestic tenderness of Shakspeare (and it would go hard with us to dispute a point of belief to which Shakspeare's passionate poetry so strongly inclines us) he went to visit the village, crossing the very fields which Shakspeare must have so often travelled in the days of his wooing, and touched by the sentiments which such associations were naturally calculated to produce. Of Shottery and its memorable cottage, we have the following interesting sketch:—

"The village is a real rustic village indeed, consisting of a few farm-houses, and of half-timbered cottages of the most primitive construction, standing apart, one from the other, in their old gardens and orchards. Nothing can exceed the simplicity and quiet of this rustic hamlet. It is the *beau ideal* of Goldsmith's Auburn. The village public-house is the "Shakspeare Tavern," a mere cottage, like the rest. No modern innovations, no improvements, seem to have come hither to disturb the image of the past times. The cottages stand apart from each other, in their gardens and orchard-crofts, and are just what the poets delight to describe. The country around is pleasant, though not very striking. Its great charm is its perfect rurality. Ann Hathaway's cottage stands at the farther end of this scattered and secluded hamlet, at the feet of pleasant uplands, and from its rustic casements you catch glimpses of the fine breezy ranges of the Ilmington and Meon hills, some miles southward; and of Stratford church spire eastward peeping over its trees.

"The cottage is a long tenement of the most primitive character; of timber framing, filled up with brick and plaster-work. Its doors are grey with age, and have the old-fashioned wooden latches, with a bit of wood nailed on the outside of the door to take hold of while you pull the string; just such a latch as, no doubt, was on the door of Little Red-Riding Hood's grandmother, when the wolf said to the little girl, 'pull the string, and you'll get in.'

"The antiquity of the house is testified by the heads of the wooden pins which fasten the framing, standing up some inches from the walls, according to the rude fashion of the age, never having been cut off. The end of the cottage comes to the village road; and the side which looks into the orchard is covered with vines and roses, and rosemary. The orchard is a spot all knowes and hollows, where you might imagine the poet, when he came here a-wooing, or in the after-days of his renown, when he came hither to see his wife's friends, and to indulge in day-dreams of the past, as he represents the King of Denmark,

—'Sleeping within mine orchard,
My custom always of the afternoon'—

lying on the mossy turf, and enjoying the pleasant sunshine, and the flickering shadows of the old apple-trees. The orchard extends up the slope a good way; then you come to the cottage-garden, and then to another orchard. You walk up a little narrow path between hedges of box, and amongst long grass. All the homely herbs and flowers which grow about the real old English cottage, and which Shakspeare delighted to introduce into his poetry—the rosemary, calendine, honeysuckle, marigold, mint, thyme, rue, sage, etc. meeting your eye as you proceed."

And so our poet-annalist goes on rambling into a delightful dream about Shakspeare's inspiration, and his knowledge of nature, and a hundred other equally delicious and suggestive topics. But we must take another snatch of description about the cottage:—

"There was an old arbour of box, the trees of which had grown high and wild, having a whole wilderness of periwinkle at their feet; and upon the wooden end of a shed forming one side of this arbour grew a honeysuckle, which seems as though it might have grown in the very days of Shakspeare, for it had all the character of a very old tree; little of it shewing any life, and its bark hanging from its stem in filaments of more than a foot long, like the tatters and beard of an ancient beggar. At the door looking into this orchard is a sort of raised platform up three or four steps with a seat upon it, so that the cottagers might sit and enjoy at once the breeze and the prospect of the orchard and fields beyond. There is a passage right through the house, with a very old high-backed

bench of oak in it, said to have been there in Shakspeare's time, and old enough to have been there long before. The whole of the interior is equally simple and rustic. I have been more particular in speaking of this place, because perhaps at the very moment I write these remarks this interesting dwelling may be destroyed, and all that I have been describing have given way to the ravages of modern change."

With the following history of the relics of Shakspeare, we must reluctantly dismiss Stratford, begging the reader, however, to satisfy his curiosity as soon as he can about the remainder of this visit:—

"Opposite to this Town-hall is a house occupied by a Mr. Reason, who has a sign in front of it, announcing that there is kept a collection of articles which were in the house where the poet was born, and remained there till Mary Homby, the mother of the present Mrs. Reason, was obliged to leave it, on account of the proprietor raising the rent so much in consequence of the numerous visits to it. She at first gave ten, then twenty, then forty pounds a year for it; but the tide of visitors increasing, the demand of the landlord still rose with it, till either the man outvalued the income, or the patience of Mary Homby gave way. She gave notice to quit the house, and another person immediately took it. A violent feud arose between the out-going and the in-coming exhibitor. Mary Homby, of course, stripped the house of every article that had been shewn as Shakspeare's. But she did not stop there. She deliberately, or perhaps, as will appear probable, rather hastily, took a brush and a pail of whitewash, and washed over all the millions of inscribed names of adoring visitors on the walls! At one fell sweep, out went the illustrious signatures of kings, queens, princes, princesses, ambassadors, ambassadors, lords, ladies, knights, poets, philosophers, statesmen, tragedians, comedians, bishops, lord chancellors, lord chief justices, privy counsellors, senators, and famous orators; all the sweet tribe of duchesses, countesses, baronesses, honourables and dishonourables,—out went they altogether, with as little remorse as if death himself had been wielding the besom of destruction, instead of Mary Homby her white-wash brush!

"Mary Homby, having executed this sublime extinction of so many dignities, marched out with a lofty sense of the vacuum she left behind, carrying away with her the Albums into the bargain. The new tenant on entering was struck with a speechless consternation! In the 'immortal bard's' own words, all the precious relics had

Vanished like the baseless fabric of a vision,
And left not a wreck behind.

Nothing at all but four bare walls! What was to be done? It was still Shakspeare's birth-place—but it was a very naked one indeed,—all the imposing relics were gone, and a rival shop was set up with them! She looked upon herself as swindled. She had a higher rent to pay, with a diminished stock and a formidable rival, and she accordingly raised a loud clamour in the ears of the landlord. The landlord began to bluster with Mary Homby, and claimed the goods as heirlooms,—as part and parcel of the property; but the lawyers told him a different story. He then claimed the Albums, and commenced proceedings to recover them, but with no better success. Money was then offered for them, but money could not buy them; so it was absolutely necessary to commence a-new with blank walls and blank books. It was a melancholy coming down. Where was the chair called Shakspeare's chair, which had stood in a niche in the room, and the arms of which alone had been sold for twenty-three guineas? Where were those two fine old high-backed chairs which were said to be given to Shakspeare by the Earl of Southampton, with the Earl's coronet and supporters (animals having an odd look, between lions and men, with big heads) upon them? Where was the little chair of the same kind, called Hamnet's chair—the son of Shakspeare, who died when twelve years old? Where was that precious old lantern made of the glass of the house where Shakspeare died? The bust, taken and coloured accurately from the bust in the church? The portrait of a boy, with a curious high-laced cap on his head, and an embroidered doublet, called John Hathaway, the brother of Ann Hathaway? The painting said to be done by Shakspeare's nephew, William Shakspeare Hart, representing Shakspeare in the character of *Petruchio*? The cup, and the knotted walking-stick made from the crab-tree under which he slept in Bidford Fields? Where the various pieces of carving from his bed-stead? That old basket-hilted sword which looked as though it had lain buried for a century or two on the field of Edge-hill or Worcester, but which was, in fact, no such thing, but the veritable sword with which Shakspeare performed in *Hamlet*, and which the Prince Regent had wanted so much to buy in 1815, saying—"he knew the family very well that gave it to Shakspeare?" Where was that? Ay, and still more, where was that grand old piece of carving which used to be over the mantel-piece, coloured and gilt, and representing David fighting with Goliath between the adverse armies; and over their heads, on a flying label or garter, an inscription, said, and sufficiently testified by the splendour of the verse, to be written by 'the immortal bard' himself? The iron box that held the poet's will; Shakspeare's bench; pieces of his mulberry-tree; the box given to him by the Prince of Castile; a piece of the very match-lock with which he shot the deer; the portraits of Sir John Bernard and his lady Elizabeth, the grand-daughter of Shakspeare; the portrait of Charlotte Clopton in her trance; the pedigree and the will—where were they all? Carried off by the indignant and vindictive Mary Homby.

"But the ravages of this modern Goth and Vandal could not be entirely repaired—they might, however, be in some degree mitigated. Mary Homby had omitted the size, and by gentle and continued friction of the brush, the millions of pencilled names once more appeared in all their original clearness! The relics were at once pronounced—humbug;—new Albums were opened, and the Shakspeare show-room was restored to its ancient value. In fact, this house, which was some years ago purchased of Joan Shakspeare's descendants, the Harts, with other property, for £250, is now said to be worth £2,000.