

"How is the air at Rome?" he said to me. "It was bad and unhealthy in ancient times."

"It appears so," I replied, "from history, and from the ancients having taken the precaution to plant and cultivate woods and forests which they called sacred."

"I recollect to have read in Tacitus," said he, "that the troops of Vitellus, on their return from Germany, were very sickly, from having slept on the Vatican."

He rang the bell for the librarian to bring Tacitus. He did not find the passage at once, and I found it for him.

He went on to say that soldiers on change of climate were generally unhealthy the first year, but afterwards well enough.

Speaking of Rome, I mentioned to him the desolation of that capital, and said, "Without your Majesty's powerful protection, that country can never be resuscitated, because it is deprived of every assistance. After the fall and loss of the Popes, all the foreign ministers left there, together with forty cardinals, more than two hundred prelates, and a vast number of canons and other clergy. A great emigration has taken place—the grass is growing in the streets—and for your Majesty's glory I speak freely, and beseech you to repair the want of so much money which formerly flowed from all parts to Rome, and which is now entirely interrupted."

"This money," he replied, "was of little consequence ultimately—the cultivation of cotton would be much better."

"Very little," I replied, "had been attempted at this. Luciano only has tried the experiment. All is wanting at Rome. We only want, however, the protection of your Majesty."

He then smiled, and said, "We will make it the head of Italy, and unite Naples to it. What do you say to this? are you satisfied?"

"The arts," I replied, "would again prosper by a little encouragement. Except the splendid works ordered by your Majesty, nobody patronizes them.—Besides they have become luke-warm in religion; the zeal for which is so necessary to the support of the arts." And here I cited the examples of the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans, where religion alone caused the arts to flourish—the immense sums expended on the Parthenon—the statue of Jove on Olympus—that of Minerva and others—the appropriate images which the conquerors of the games dedicated to their respective divinities, not even excepting courtizans, who offered their own statues as gifts to the gods. The Romans were always consistent in this—they placed the seal of their religion on every thing, to make them august and venerable—their sepulchral and honorary monuments—their statues, theatres, &c. This benign influence of religion also saved the arts themselves, and their monuments, from the barbarians. I also pointed out the chief works of modern art created by religion—the church of St. Mark at Venice—the Dome at Pisa by Orvieto—the Campo Santo at Pisa—and many other works in marble, as well as painting. "All religion," I concluded by saying, "promote the arts, and especially our Roman Catholic more than any other. The Protestants are contented with a simple chapel and cross, and therefore they foster but little the arts."

"Here the Emperor looked at Maria Louisa, and said, "It is true religion has always nourished the arts, though some sects have but little that is elegant and beautiful."

(To be continued.)

*Visits to Remarkable Places; Old Halls, Battle Fields, and Scenes Illustrative of striking Passages in English History and Poetry.*

By WILLIAM HOWITT.

This is a book for all seasons, but for Christmas most of all. Any thing that endears us more than usual to our country and our countrymen, any thing that pleasantly reminds us of the glories of both, any thing that tends to reconcile ordinary differences by calling up scenes or stories which exalt the nature we have all so large a share in, should be especially welcome at Christmas.

Mr. Howitt takes us to Penshurst first, and strolls with us through hall and buttery hatch; through banqueting rooms where grave and grand Sydneys feasted in the old time; through nurseries where Philip and Algernon played; under beeches where Waller and Sacharissa took their surfeit of honeyed and heartless love; or through parks where manly old Ben Jonson walked as an honoured and familiar guest, shouting forth the first inspiration of the good old Christmas lines he afterwards left in his book about good old Penshurst.

Thou hast thy walks for health as well as sport;  
Thy mount to which the Dryads do resort.  
Where Pan and Bacchus their high feasts have made,  
Beneath the broad beech and the chestnut shade,—  
Thou hast thy orchard fruit, thy garden flowers,  
Fresh as the ayre, and new as are the hours,  
The early cherry with the later plum.  
Fit, grape, and quince, each in his time doth come.  
And though thy walls be of the country stone,  
They're reared with no man's ruin, no man's groan.  
There's none that dwell about them wish them down;  
But all come in, the farmer and the clown,  
And no one empty-handed, to salute  
Thy lord and lady though they have no suite,  
Some bring a capon, some a rural cake,  
Some nuts, some apples; some that think they make  
The better cheeses, bring them; or else send  
By their ripe daughters, whom they would commend  
This way to husbands; and whose baskets bear  
An emblem of themselves in plum or pear.

Our next visit with Mr. Howitt is to the battle field of Culloden, that bloody grave of so much honest and manly simplicity, generous and devoted chivalry, misapplied and mistaken zeal. The traditions of the field are pleasantly recorded, its present aspect well described, and such is our guide's enthusiasm that he half compels us to think with him at its close, that there may be something even affecting and delicious in the music of a bagpipe.

To Stratford he takes us next, a more familiar scene, but yet agreeably set before us, and in one or two novel aspects. Thus Mr. Howitt shows us the cottage in which Ann Hathaway was born, in the rustic little village of Shottry, and a very pretty cottage it seems to have been, and a pleasant walk out of Stratford for the enamoured poet. We are sorry to hear that it is likely to come down very soon, and of course the more rejoiced for the same reason that it has found an abiding niche in Mr. Howitt's clever volume.

But beside old associations, vivid pictures of what may possibly have been the poet's early influences, old cottages and old halls, duly described and enlarged upon in the visit to Stratford, Mr. Howitt announces a discovery. He found a youthful Shakspeare! We recollect that some two or three years ago the managers of the English Opera House did precisely the same sort of thing, and we therefore listened at this particular point with a most irreverent caution.

The youthful Shakspeare was a lad belonging to the national school, ten years old, with light hazel eyes, a high head, and altogether a "wonderful resemblance" to the bust in Stratford church. He turned out to be a limb of the seventh descent from Shakspeare's sister Joan. His name was, start not reader, Shakspeare Smith. It is a name which possibly describes the discovery with a painful precision. We never knew any thing of the kind that had not an overwhelming infusion of the Smith into the Shakspeare. However, Mr. Howitt proved the sincerity of his admiration by giving the lad sixpence, and seems to us to have further proved his wise disinclination to an over nice curiosity on the subject, by never asking the master of the school what sort of wit the youth had shown. The only evidence of the latter is observable in this anecdote, wherein, we must confess, we see a vast development of the Smith, and no intimation of the Shakspeare.

"I gave the boy sixpence, telling him I hoped he would make as great a man as his ancestor (the best term I could lay hold of for the relationship, though not the true one), or, at all events, a good man. The boy's eyes sparkled at the sight of the money, and the healthful joyous colour rushed into his cheeks; his fingers continued making acquaintance with so large a piece of money in his pocket, and the sensation created by so great an event in the school was evident. It sounded oddly enough, as I was passing along the street in the evening, to hear some of these same school-boys say to one another, 'That is the gentleman who gave Bill Shakspeare sixpence.'"

"Which of all the host of admirers of Shakspeare," asks Mr. Howitt, in taking leave of this part of his subject, "who has plenty of money, and does not know what to do with it, will think of giving that lad, one of the nearest living representatives of the great poet, a good education, and a fair chance to raise himself in the world?" We leave Shakspearian enthusiasts to answer the question, and truly hope they may answer it in a liberal spirit.

Before leaving Stratford and its neighbourhood we are taken to Charlecote House and Clopton Hall, good old mansions both, the one full of quaint and cheerful memories, the other of impenetrable mysteries and gloom. The Lucys survive, a cordial and hospitable race; the Cloptons have passed and left no sign, except in dark and terrible traditions. Here is one of the latter; told, we should observe, by a fair and lively correspondent of Mr. Howitt, who had visited the place some years ago.

"In one of the bed-rooms (said to be haunted), and which, with its close pent-up atmosphere, and the long shadows of evening creeping on, gave me an 'eirie' feeling, hung a portrait singularly beautiful! a sweet-looking girl with paly gold hair combed from her forehead, and falling in wavy ringlets on her neck, and with eyes that 'looked like violets filled with dew,' for there was the glittering of unshed tears before their deep dark blue—and that was the likeness of Charlotte Clopton, about whom there was so fearful a legend told at Stratford church. In the time of some epidemic, the sweating-sickness, or the plague, this young girl had sickened, and to all appearance died. She was buried with fearful haste in the vaults of Clopton chapel, attached to Stratford church, but the sickness was not stopped. In a few days another of the Cloptons died, and him they bore to the ancestral vault: but as they descended the gloomy stairs, they saw by the torch-light Charlotte Clopton in her grave-clothes leaning against the wall; and when they looked nearer, she was indeed dead. Of course, she had walked ever since."

Other circumstances connected with the family and their gradual decay are told by this lady with equal interest.

"The last of these deserted rooms that I remember, the last, the most deserted, and the saddest, was the Nursery,—a nursery without children, without singing voices, without merry chiming footsteps! A nursery hung round with its once inhabitants, bold, gallant boys, and fair, arch-looking girls, and one or two nurses with round, fat babies in their arms. Who were they all? What was their lot in life? Sunshine or storm? or had they been 'loved by the gods, and died young?' The very echoes knew not. Behind

the house, in a hollow now, wild, damp, and over-grown with elder bushes, was a well called Margaret's Well, for there had a maiden of the house of that name drowned herself.

"I tried to obtain any information I could as to the family of Clopton of Clopton. They had been decaying ever since the civil wars; had for a generation or two been unable to live in the old house of their fathers, but had toiled in London, or abroad, for a livelihood; and the last of the old family, a bachelor, eccentric, miserly, old, and of most filthy habits, if report said true, had died at Clopton Hall but a few months before, a sort of boarder in Mr. W——'s family. He was buried in the gorgeous chapel of the Cloptons in Stratford church, where you see the banners waving, and the armour hung over one or two splendid monuments. Mr. W—— had been the old man's solicitor, and completely in his confidence, and to him he left the estate, encumbered and in bad condition. A year or two afterwards, the heir-at-law, a very distant relation living in Ireland, claimed and obtained the estate, on the plea of undue influence, if not of forgery, on Mr. W——'s part; and the last I heard of our kind entertainers on that day, was, that they were outlawed, and living at Brussels."

Of all this, however, Mr. Howitt found little trace on his arrival. The girl with the locks of paly gold had vanished, and Margaret and her well only lived in the memory of some old women who were collecting apples in the orchard. A new lord was in possession, and the grim old place was in course of being fitted up as a spruce modern mansion.

Combe Abbey in Warwickshire, and its memories of the Gunpowder Treason, claim our interest next; and we pass from it, by a long though easy leap, to Flodden Field, and Lindisfarne, and all the living scenes of Marmion. This latter chapter is a specimen of the ultra-romantic school of writing, but it will be much enjoyed, we have no doubt. Mr. Howitt's feelings are almost always just and true, no matter for the vagaries into which a loosened fancy sometimes leads him. The visit to Bolton Priory is another version of the Marmion dream, filled with noble and well-merited praise of the poetry of Wordsworth.

Hampton Court brings us back to earth and things of earth with good and agreeable effect. We thank Mr. Howitt sincerely for the picture he gives of the class and conduct of the visitors who have flocked in crowds to this noble palace since it was thrown open unreservedly to the admission of every one. The average number on a Sunday or a Monday, it appears, is now two thousand five hundred, and the gross amount of the single month of last August was thirty-two thousand!

"Never have I seen, at all times that I have been there, a more orderly or more well-pleased throng of people. I happened accidentally to be there on Whit-Monday, when, besides the railway, upwards of a dozen spring-vans, gaily adorned with ribbons, and blue and red hangings, had brought there their loads of servants and artisans, all with their sweethearts, and in fine spirits for a day's country frolic; and not less than two thousand people were wandering through the house and gardens, yet nothing could be more decorous than their behaviour. Never, indeed, did I behold a scene which was more beautiful in my eyes, or which more sensibly affected me. Here were thousands of those whose fathers would have far preferred the brutal amusement of the bull-baiting or the cock-pit; who would have made holiday at the boxing-ring, or in guzzling beer in the lowest dens of debauch,—here were they, scattered in companies, and in family groups; fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters, old people, and children of all ages, strolling through the airy gardens, admiring the flowers, or resting on the benches, or watching the swimming shoals of gold and silver fish in the basin of the central fountain, and feeding them with crumbs of bun amid shouts of childish delight. Here were these poor people, set free from the fret and fume, the dust and sweat, and mental and bodily wear and tear of their city trades and domestic cares, well dressed, amongst their more wealthy neighbours, clean, and jocund from the sense of freedom and social affection, treading walks laid down only for royal feet, listening to the lapse of waters intended only for the cars of greatness and high-born beauty, though all constructed by the money of their forefathers; and here were they enjoying all these, more than king or cardinal ever could do, beneath a sunny sky, that seemed to smile upon them as if itself rejoiced at the sight of so much happiness. There, too, through the open windows, you saw the heads of passing crowds of men and women wandering through the rooms, intent on the works of Raphael, Titian, Correggio, Lely, Vandyke, Kneller, Rembrandt, Rubens, Ricci, Giulio, Romano, and many another master of the sublime and beautiful; pausing to behold forms of power, and grace, and loveliness, and to mark many a face of man or woman whose names are so bruited in our annals that even the most ignorant must have heard something of them. Here surely was significant indication of a change in the popular mind in the course of one generation, which must furnish an answer to those who ask what has education done for the masses, and most pregnant with matter of buoyant augury for the future. Those who do not see in such a spectacle that the march of intellect and the walking abroad of the schoolmaster are something more than things to furnish a joke or a witticism, are blind indeed to the signs of the times, and to the certainty that the speed of sound knowledge amongst the people will yet make this nation more deserving of the epithet of a nation of princes than ever Rome deserved from the Parthian ambassador. I could not help asking myself, as my eye wander-