

was something to see, feel and hear, full of home comfort and home society. There was a place for hearing or reading stories. There was a chance for young childhood's fancies. With a little imagination, one could see a world of life and beauty. There was the purring, chirping, merry blaze, curling around all the burning sticks, and flashing, and dashing up the chimney in all forms and colors, sometimes darting out a tongue towards the children reading by its light on low benches in the corner; and always full of frolic and mirthful music. Then there was a perpetual popping of spark musketry, with once in a while a sharp crack, and a red rocket of a live coal thrown out several feet into the room, and a scampering to seize it with the tongs. There was a hissing, bubbling and boiling of the sap at the ends of the burning billets of maple and hickory, making a kind of treble to the melody. And underneath was everything a child could imagine. In the red coals, powdered with white ashes, you could see the faces of giants, ships, castles, meeting-houses, trees, beasts, birds;—in fact, anything you wished to see; and all these pictures were changing every minute, and new forms appearing to attract and please the eye and exercise the imagination. Who knows how many of our American poets had the first sparks of their genius kindled into a glow by the coal-scenery and blazing, singing tongues of the old hearth-fires of New England! For one, I never could believe that Longfellow wrote his "*Excelsior*," or the "*Psalms of Life*," by an "*air-tight*," or over the "*register*" of an invisible cellar-furnace. And, indeed, I am confident that nearly all his best pieces were produced by a wood-fire on the hearth for I have myself had the pleasure of sitting down with him for a cozy hour before it quite lately; and one of ample size it is, in length, depth and draught, and the same that Washington wrote his dispatches and took his tea by for awhile in the Revolutionary war.

But the old houses of England are not so interesting merely because they furnish models for those first built in New England; but because they are the very houses in which the Pilgrim Forefathers were born. It is for this, that I love to visit them, and talk to you about them. Probably all the first dwelling houses in New England have long ago disappeared. They were built of wood generally, and only for a few years comparatively, or until others more commodious and elegant could be erected. Thus, we cannot go even to Plymouth, and point out the house framed by one of the men who came over in the Mayflower. This first link in the chain of their life's history in America is lost; but we find it bright and strong in Old England. Perhaps three-fourths of the houses in which the men of the Mayflower were born are standing yet in town, village and hamlet in the Mother Country. I have entered some of these myself, or some equally ancient. There is old Boston, for instance, with its great, grand church tower three hundred feet high or more, and perhaps five hundred years old. In the porch, or entrance, you see a huge tablet hung against the wall, bearing the names of all the rectors or ministers who have been settled over the church from the beginning. About the middle of the third column, I think you will find the name of *John Cotton*, who afterwards went to America, and was the first minister in our Boston, which was called by that name as a token of respect for the town from which he came. And yet he was one of the *modern* ministers of Boston in England, comparatively. The house in which he lived and wrote his sermons in that town is standing yet. Nor was he the first who inhabited it. Probably ministers, who preached in that old church before he was born, lived and died in

that very building, which is still called "The Rectory."

Take it all in all, there is no old house in England that I have visited with more pleasure, than the little, humble cottage in which *John Bunyan* was born. I am sure that all the children who can read these lines have read that famous book, *Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress*; and I think they would have been as much interested as I was in visiting the lowly birth-place of that remarkable man. It is one of the humblest of English cottages, and now inhabited by a poor farm-laborer, who does not probably earn more than fifty cents a day. It stands in a little hamlet, a mile or two from the town of Bedford, and is frequently visited by persons who revere the memory of the writer of that most wonderful of uninspired books. It was with thoughts I could think nowhere else, that I sat down on a wooden stool in the chimney corner and looked about upon every brick and rude beam of that low-jointed cottage. There was only one room below, and its floor was brick and stone, with a great fire-place, large enough to hold a small family. The beams overhead were crooked, and evidently fitted to their place by some peasant's axe. Into these, wooden pegs were driven, which still were strong enough to hold herbs, hats, sickles, bacon, &c. There was the rude door with its wooden latch and leather string, leading to the low sleeping loft under the roof. How many thoughts of the great and good man's childhood came into my mind, as my eye passed slowly from one of these simple objects to another! What kind of boy was he at ten years of age? Was his hair black or brown? Did he wear a smock frock and a round-topped hat, as peasant boys do now in England? Which corner of the large fire-place was his favorite resort? Did he eat his oat meal porridge with a wooden spoon? Which of those worm-eaten pegs held his cap? where did he put his hob-nail shoes on winter nights? What kind of stories did he read by fire-light? What figures and imagery did he see in the curling flames, and the red coals? What outlines of "Doubting Castles," "Wicket Gates," "Vanity-Fairs," and other places of the sort, which he afterwards put in his *Pilgrim's Progress*?—These, and a thousand other thoughts, came rushing into my mind as I sat on that old foot-worn hearth-stone, which was laid down many a year before the Pilgrim Fathers of New England first planted their feet on Plymouth Rock.

It would fill many a large book, if one should attempt to write a brief description of all the dwelling-houses still standing in England, which were built long before the Mayflower sailed for America. Some of these were the birth-places of the most distinguished men that the Mother Country ever produced. You have heard over and over again of the house of the great poet Shakespeare, at Stratford-on-Avon. The Americans seem to visit it with great veneration; and almost every day one or more of them may be found meditating in the room he occupied, or standing in pensive silence over his grave.—That house was old when the first log hut of a white man was built in New England. In the city of Litchfield, I have seen the house in which Dr. Johnson was born, the great man of dictionary fame; and that is nearly as old as Shakespeare's. In the town of Huntingdon, stands yet the school-house in which Oliver Cromwell learned his A. B. C. when his feet would hardly reach the floor as he sat upon the wooden bench. London abounds in old houses, rendered famous in a similar way. There is a small hotel or inn standing, in good repair, in Fenchurch Street, called "The King's Head," with an inscription in large letters over the door, stating that Queen Elizabeth dined