



PISCINA, WHEATHAMPSTEAD CHURCH.

as far as any in Europe, noble old mansions, with such gardens as can be seen in no other land in the world! Take, for instance, the beautiful county of Hertfordshire, one of the most unaltered and least built-over, of any in England, yet how little it is known to the ordinary Londoner! so much so that many of my London friends laugh at my enthusiasm for this county and think I am a bit of a monomaniac; yet I have found men who are as much struck by its sylvan beauties as I am myself.

One day I was returning from a little run down to look up a portion of my favourite district and I got into the railway train to return home; I sat by the window and looked out at the lovely valley with a clear, shining brook forcing its way along between its wood-clad banks. A tall, thin gentlemanly-looking man sat opposite to me who was also looking out of window; soon he addressed me in unmistakable American accents.

"You are a lover of nature, sir?"

"Yes," said I, "and I am remarkably fond of the country hereabouts!"

"You are right, sir, nature here is all smiles; her tears are pathetic, and her frowns terrific, but give me her smiles. I have been trotting about all over Europe for the last three years; I have seen your Alps, your Rhine, your Norway, but, sir, we have bigger mountains,

nobler rivers, larger lakes, and vaster plains than you can show in Europe, but" (sweeping his hand across the window) "we ain't got this nohow. These pretty little valleys, these quaint old villages and ancient churches, these ruddy, tree-shaded ancestral homes are not to be found in 'the States,' and they delight me more than anything I have seen on this side, and if I had to fix up a location in Europe, I should like it in this country we are now passing through; it brings to my mind the Pilgrim Fathers and the kind of homes they must have left to set up in the New World."

I asked my friend whether he had met others of his countrymen who held these views?

"Yes," said he, "many Americans like the scenery round London better than any in Europe. Of course it isn't grand or big, but it's first class home-wear."

And I do not think it could be more perfectly described; it is just the kind of scenery that one would like to live amidst; then it is so easily reached. A good walker will find it an excellent field for exercise; almost every place has two or three ways of getting to it without keeping to the high roads, and these field-paths and shady lanes are sequestered and delightful, though there is a slight danger of missing one's way, as guide-posts are not so plentiful as they might be, and to meet anyone is a rare event unless you are near some town or village, so that if you are desirous of saving time it is better to keep to the high road than attempt a "short cut" over the fields. I know no county which is so little enclosed or rather "blocked," and in this respect it is a contrast to Norfolk, where you can't leave the high road without hearing some big fellow roar out at you, "Oi say t'gether, do ye know yer a traspusin boaz?"

In Hertfordshire, however, the roads are so pretty that one scarcely feels inclined to leave them for the pathway, so do not let cyclists be frightened. Moreover, the roads are generally excellently made, and probably there is no grander "run" in England than the high road from Welwyn to Stevenage.

All the approaches to Hertfordshire from the metropolis are pretty, from Pinner Station, London and North Western Railway, and Metropolitan by the old Watford road is delightful, passing Pinner Wood and Hamper Mill. The Rickmansworth road is less interesting but a better track for the cycle, Watford is a pretty old country town, and there are charming walks through Cassiobury Park and along the banks of the Gade to King's Langley. Cycles are not allowed in Cassiobury Park, but there is a good road from Watford. King's Langley is a pretty old town of historic interest, as there was a royal palace here of which there are still scanty remains; one of the daughters of Edward III. was born here, and is buried in the church beneath a handsome monument which has been restored by Her Majesty. Abbots Langley church two miles off has architectural features which will interest the archaeologist, especially the Norman arches of the interior.

If other roads are taken, those through Edgware and Elstree, or through Stanmore, offer fine panoramic views of the county. The first glimpse of Hertfordshire from Stanmore Common is a delightful prospect; from Barnet through Hadley or South Mimms are also attractive. Of course everyone must visit Hatfield, not only on account of the beauty of its site, but also for its historical interest, which is concentrated round the "old palace" where Princess Elizabeth was residing when she was called to the throne. It is sometimes stated that she was imprisoned here, but Clutterbuck, who wrote a careful and excellent history of Hertfordshire, seems to represent Elizabeth's sojourn at Hatfield as a more agreeable episode. Moreover, Elizabeth was exceedingly fond of

hunting and field sports, which she seems to have indulged in to a great extent at Hatfield. The palace was Elizabeth's own house, as it had been given her by Edward VI., and the governor of the Princess here was the charitable and learned Sir Thomas Pope, the founder of Trinity College, Oxford, and for a time Lord Mayor of London. The old palace, of which the entrance court and great hall still exist between the church and Lord Salisbury's splendid mansion, belonged in early times to the monks of Ely, and was rebuilt by Cardinal Morton, Prime Minister to Henry VII., who is described by More in the "Utopia" as "not less venerable for his wisdom and virtues than the high character he bore."

Henry VIII. managed to get hold of Hatfield by one of those "ecclesiastical exchanges" at which he was such a skilful hand. Later on James I. exchanged Hatfield for Theobalds with Robert Cecil, and then it became the property of the Salisbury family. To our present taste Cecil got the best of the bargain, for the beautiful site of Hatfield on its breezy hill and fine distant views is preferable in every way to the flat marshy surroundings of Theobalds. But James I. was too canny to have made a bad exchange, and no doubt the magnificent house which Cecil had erected at Theobalds, with its colonnades, fountains, lakes, and superb gardens, were more to James's taste than the quaint, semi-monastic old palace at Hatfield. Of course then the palace alone existed; the magnificent mansion called Hatfield House was not commenced, as it was entirely Cecil's work, and has had the good fortune to remain unaltered as he left it. It would be absurd here to attempt any description of Hatfield House, as it has so often been described and illustrated that such a task would be superfluous. Close to the old palace stands Hatfield Church, or as it was formerly called, "St. Etheldreda's Church, Bishop's Hatfield;" it is an interesting edifice, chiefly dating from the fourteenth century, with a well-proportioned tower crowned by a lead spire. This spire, I fancy, is not original, and probably replaced the old Hertford "spike" or dwarf spire in the seventeenth century. Attached to the north side of the chancel is the Cecil chapel erected by the second Earl of Salisbury in memory of his father, and containing his monument. The chapel is a fair example of Jacobean Gothic, but the monument is quite Italian in character, and is proved by documents preserved at Hatfield to have been the work of Symon Basyll, the predecessor of Inigo Jones as controller of the King's works.\* I am inclined, however, to think that some of the statues adorning it are of Italian workmanship. There is a curious note alluding to Basyll's estimate for the monument to the effect that if the figures were to be of correct proportions, they would be worth £60 each, and models would be prepared. The figure of justice? is a very fine one. These statues are life-size; the effigy of the Earl measures only 5 feet 2 inches, but it is known that Elizabeth used to call him her "pigmy," her little man, etc., by no means to his satisfaction.

Those who visit Hatfield by cycle had better leave their machine at the railway station or at the Salisbury Arms, as the town is very steep and the streets run up and down in an uncomfortable but exceedingly picturesque manner. Hatfield is a very convenient place to make short excursions from, as the roads are good and the villages not far apart; the inns are comfortable so that the pedestrian, the rider, and the cyclist are well off; I have always found the people obliging and polite and the charges moderate. A good map is quite indispensable, and a pocket compass advisable. There is a good service of railways

\* *English Studies* by the late Rev. J. S. Brewer.