

ACADIA ATHENÆUM.

TROS TYRIUSQUE MIHI NULLO DISCRIMINE AGETUR

VOL. 2.

WOLFEVILLE, N. S., MAY, 1876.

No. 9.

Correspondence.

Messrs Editors,

A copy of the last No. of your excellent *Athenæum*, and a friendly letter from the chief of your staff, remind me of a promise made some months ago. I have been spending a few days of our Easter vacation in a pedestrian tour through some of the neighbouring counties, and in the hope that the varied scenes which delighted our company may not lose all their interest by this description, I place some rambling jottings at your disposal. And first your readers must know our party. Well, we had an experienced tourist of Scotch descent, who took charge of the expedition; next, a bank official, who was born within the sound of Bow Church bells, and may therefore be honourably dubbed a leader cockney, and lastly, two Canadian students. We leave the city on the morning of Good-Friday, when the great heart of the universe has ceased its mighty rapid beatings, and lies quiet and peaceful as on that day in sevu, when the music of a thousand bells wafts peace and joy to care-worn souls. Indeed we pass by many who were congregating to celebrate the great event, at which the earth tore with horrid rent her beauteous garb, at which the sun veiled his brilliant countenance. These good people are sincere, they do well; but let them not censure us for refusing to follow them. Ours this day, is the way of pleasure—we tread it with no more compunctions of conscience than they tread the aisles of venerable cathedrals, and join in soul-ravishing music.

A ride of 13 miles brings us to Ewell, the starting-point of our walk. Thence our way lies through Epsom, once famous for its salts, it has become a dwarfish sickly village. On through the county of Sussex we cross the Downs, where in summer Englishmen gather to the great Derby races. Men on horseback gallop at full speed in a wide race-course which encircles some forty acres of land—and that yonder towering stand is erected for H. R. H. The Prince of Wales, and under that canopy young noblemen lose or win their fortunes in a day.

Next, we are brought face to face with the charms of English scenery, and some of the most general outlines may well be introduced here. Next then the excellent roads, smooth and level as a floor. They are the outgrowth of centuries, and had their origin in the whims and fancies of stragglers and rovers. No surveyor marked them off with nice measurements, no commissioner superintended their construction. Passages were needed through certain lands in certain directions, and passages were made where now run these narrow winding crooked, though well built roads. On both sides grow beautiful well-cultivated hedges, giving these roads the appearance of those private carriage-ways which lead up to the mansions of some of your gentry. Wherever two or more roads meet, finger-posts direct the stranger on his way, and in the main road mile-stones tell him of his progress. Sauntering along one of these lonely lanes we catch at every turn a new sight of the beautiful country. Meadows already richly green, separated by hedges from the fields of winter grain stretch away in the distance. Nor are they swept of all shelter as I have seen them in Canada, but here and there single trees or clumps of trees spread their refreshing shade over the weary cattle and sheep.

Everywhere is the country well watered, so that streams, natural and artificial, course through every farm. And the English have an exquisite sensibility to the subtle touches of nature. What she has denied them they have cultivated to such perfection that there is no incongruity in the additions which art has made. Covershaped trees may delight the gay throng who roll through the streets of Paris to Versailles, but English gentlemen have a taste for the imitable grace and negligence of nature.

Hence, there are few more beautiful sights than the grounds of a cultivated English land-owner. His residence stands on an eminence at a little distance from the road, whence it is approached by a commanding avenue. At the outer gate, beside the road, is the porter's lodge generally, a small, neat, stone cottage. Passing by this, you walk up the avenue, through a delightful park, which scattered trees of ancient growth darkened with

their shade, and falling cascades enliven with their music. The house is surrounded by a wall, against which the woodbine has been trained, or by a neat fence of wood or wire over which the hedge has grown. Within you see artistic flower beds amid entwining shrubbery and wide-branching trees, where in the heat of a summer day one may enjoy the kindly shade and the ambrosial sweetness of a paradise on earth. The house itself is generally of stone or brick, without any of the extravagances of bad taste, or bad art, only the modest ivy spreads over its porch and turns about its angles.

These, reader, are a few of the striking features of an English gentleman's home. A complete picture cannot be filled up for those exquisite touches which charm the delicate observer by their beauty and their naturalness can be reproduced only by the grandest efforts of a master artist.

But it is not to be supposed that the Queen of Beauty has exhausted her charms on these country seats of the nobles and the wealthy. The middle class and the peasantry are not wanting in this same susceptibility of nature's beauties. This unusual elevation of character is doubtless mainly due to the example and influence of the cultivated gentry who show a true nobility of soul in their genial intercourse with the inferior orders, which contrasts strongly with the contemptible airs of reserve and artificial dignity assumed by the apish Croesus of many a village here and elsewhere. The peasant, therefore, is as anxious about the embellishment of his little tenement as the Lord of the Manor about his mansion. The holly grows beside the house reaching to the thatched roof. The whole cottage is completely covered with ivy. What space can be spared from the vegetable garden is devoted to flowers, while the small yet rich grass plot before the door adds a new beauty to the little peasant home, the whole is enclosed by a thick hedge within which the woodbine rears itself on the rude trellises of the planter's make.

Through such scenes as these onward we go till night finds us in the village of Guilford, after a walk of twenty-six miles. Now, reader, while I pause to let our