

◎ AT HOME AND ABROAD,

OR

THINGS AND THOUGHTS

IN

America and Europe.

BY

(Sarah)

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PART II.

THINGS AND THOUGHTS IN EUROPE.

LETTER II.

Chester. — Its Museum. — Travelling Companions. — A Bengalese. — Westmoreland. — Ambleside. — Cobden and Bright. — A Scotch Lady. — Wordsworth. — His Flowers. — Miss Martineau.

Ambleside, Westmoreland, 27th August, 1846.

I FORGOT to mention, in writing of Chester, an object which gave me pleasure. I mentioned that the wall which enclosed the old town was two miles in circumference; far beyond this stretches the modern part of Chester, and the old gateways now overarch the middle of long streets. This wall is now a walk for the inhabitants, commanding a wide prospect, and three persons could walk abreast on its smooth flags. We passed one of its old picturesque towers, from whose top Charles the First, poor, weak, unhappy king, looked down and saw his troops defeated by the Parliamentary army on the adjacent plain. A little farther on, one of these picturesque towers is turned to the use of a Museum, whose stock, though scanty, I examined with singular pleasure, for it had been made up by truly filial contributions from all who had derived benefit from Chester, from the Marquis of Westminster — whose magnificent abode, Eton Hall, lies not far off — down to the merchant's clerk, who had furnished it in his leisure hours with a geological chart, the soldier and sailor, who sent back shells, insects, and petrifications from their distant wanderings, and a boy of thirteen, who had made, in wood, a model of its cathedral, and even furnished it with a bell to ring out the evening chimes. Many women had been busy in filling these magazines for the instruction and the pleasure of their fellow-townsmen. Lady —, the wife of the captain of the garrison, grateful for the gratuitous admission of the soldiers once a month, — a privilege of which

the keeper of the Museum (a woman also, who took an intelligent pleasure in her task) assured me that they were eager to avail themselves, — had given a fine collection of butterflies, and a ship. An untiring diligence had been shown in adding whatever might stimulate or gratify imperfectly educated minds. I like to see women perceive that there are other ways of doing good besides making clothes for the poor or teaching Sunday-school; these are well, if well directed, but there are many other ways, some as sure and surer, and which benefit the giver no less than the receiver.

I was waked from sleep at the Chester Inn by a loud dispute between the chambermaid and an unhappy elderly gentleman, who insisted that he had engaged the room in which I was, had returned to sleep in it, and consequently must do so. To her assurances that the lady was long since in possession, he was deaf; but the lock, fortunately for me, proved a stronger defence. With all a chambermaid's morality, the maiden boasted to me, "He said he had engaged 44, and would not believe me when I assured him it was 46; indeed, how could he? I did not believe myself." To my assurance that, if I had known the room was his, I should not have wished for it, but preferred taking a worse, I found her a polite but incredulous listener.

Passing from Liverpool to Lancaster by railroad, that convenient but most unprofitable and stupid way of travelling, we there took the canal-boat to Kendal, and passed pleasantly through a country of that soft, that refined and cultivated loveliness, which, however much we have heard of it, finds the American eye — accustomed to so much wildness, so much rudeness, such a corrosive action of man upon nature — wholly unprepared. I feel all the time as if in a sweet dream, and dread to be presently awakened by some rude jar or glare; but none comes, and here in Westmoreland — but wait a moment, before we speak of that.

In the canal-boat we found two well-bred English gentlemen, and two well-informed German gentlemen, with whom we had some agreeable talk. With one of the former was a beautiful youth, about eighteen, whom I supposed, at the first glance, to be

a type of that pure East-Indian race whose beauty I had never seen represented before except in pictures ; and he made a picture, from which I could scarcely take my eyes a moment, and from it could as ill endure to part. He was dressed in a broadcloth robe richly embroidered, leaving his throat and the upper part of his neck bare, except that he wore a heavy gold chain. A rich shawl was thrown gracefully around him ; the sleeves of his robe were loose, with white sleeves below. He wore a black satin cap. The whole effect of this dress was very fine yet simple, setting off to the utmost advantage the distinguished beauty of his features, in which there was a mingling of national pride, voluptuous sweetness in that unconscious state of reverie when it affects us as it does in the flower, and intelligence in its newly awakened purity. As he turned his head, his profile was like one I used to have of Love asleep, while Psyche leans over him with the lamp ; but his front face, with the full, summery look of the eye, was unlike that. He was a Bengalese, living in England for his education, as several others are at present. He spoke English well, and conversed on several subjects, literary and political, with grace, fluency, and delicacy of thought.

Passing from Kendal to Ambleside, we found a charming abode furnished us by the care of a friend in one of the stone cottages of this region, almost the only one *not* ivy-wreathed, but commanding a beautiful view of the mountains, and truly an English home in its neatness, quiet, and delicate, noiseless attention to the wants of all within its walls. Here we have passed eight happy days, varied by many drives, boating excursions on Grasmere and Winandermere, and the society of several agreeable persons. As the Lake district at this season draws together all kinds of people, and a great variety beside come from all quarters to inhabit the charming dwellings that adorn its hill-sides and shores, I met and saw a good deal of the representatives of various classes, at once. I found here two landed proprietors from other parts of England, both "travelled English," one owning a property in Greece, where he frequently resides, both warmly engaged in Reform measures, anti-

Corn-Law, anti-Capital-Punishment, — one of them an earnest student of Emerson's Essays. Both of them had wives, who kept pace with their projects and their thoughts, active and intelligent women, true ladies, skilful in drawing and music; all the better wives for the development of every power. One of them told me, with a glow of pride, that it was not long since her husband had been "cut" by all his neighbors among the gentry for the part he took against the Corn Laws; but, she added, he was now a favorite with them all. Verily, faith will remove mountains, if only you do join with it any fair portion of the dove and serpent attributes.

I found here, too, a wealthy manufacturer, who had written many valuable pamphlets on popular subjects. He said: "Now that the progress of public opinion was beginning to make the Church and the Army narrower fields for the younger sons of 'noble' families, they sometimes wish to enter into trade; but, beside the aversion which had been instilled into them for many centuries, they had rarely patience and energy for the apprenticeship requisite to give the needed knowledge of the world and habits of labor." Of Cobden he said: "He is inferior in acquirements to very many of his class, as he is self-educated and had everything to learn after he was grown up; but in clear insight there is none like him." A man of very little education, whom I met a day or two after in the stage-coach, observed to me: "Bright is far the more eloquent of the two, but Cobden is more felt, just *because* his speeches are so plain, so merely matter-of-fact and to the point."

We became acquainted also with Dr. Gregory, Professor of Chemistry at Edinburgh, a very enlightened and benevolent man, who in many ways both instructed and benefited us. He is the friend of Liebig, and one of his chief representatives here.

We also met a fine specimen of the noble, intelligent Scotch-woman, such as Walter Scott and Burns knew how to prize. Seventy-six years have passed over her head, only to prove in her the truth of my theory, that we need never grow old. She was "brought up" in the animated and intellectual circle of

Edinburgh, in youth an apt disciple, in her prime a bright ornament of that society. She had been an only child, a cherished wife, an adored mother, unspoiled by love in any of these relations, because that love was founded on knowledge. In childhood she had warmly sympathized in the spirit that animated the American Revolution, and Washington had been her hero; later, the interest of her husband in every struggle for freedom had cherished her own; she had known in the course of her long life many eminent men, knew minutely the history of efforts in that direction, and sympathized now in the triumph of the people over the Corn Laws, as she had in the American victories, with as much ardor as when a girl, though with a wiser mind. Her eye was full of light, her manner and gesture of dignity; her voice rich, sonorous, and finely modulated; her tide of talk marked by candor, justice, and showing in every sentence her ripe experience and her noble, genial nature. Dear to memory will be the sight of her in the beautiful seclusion of her home among the mountains, a picturesque, flower-wreathed dwelling, where affection, tranquillity, and wisdom were the gods of the hearth, to whom was offered no vain oblation. Grant us more such women, Time! Grant to men the power to reverence, to seek for such!

Our visit to Mr. Wordsworth was very pleasant. He also is seventy-six, but his is a florid, fair old age. He walked with us to all his haunts about the house. Its situation is beautiful, and the "Rydalian Laurels" are magnificent. Still I saw abodes among the hills that I should have preferred for Wordsworth, more wild and still, more romantic; the fresh and lovely Rydal Mount seems merely the retirement of a gentleman, rather than the haunt of a poet. He showed his benignity of disposition in several little things, especially in his attentions to a young boy we had with us. This boy had left the Circus, exhibiting its feats of horsemanship in Ambleside "for that day only," at his own desire to see Wordsworth, and I feared he would be disappointed, as I know I should have been at his age, if, when called to see a poet, I had found no Apollo, flaming with youthful glory, laurel-crowned and lyre in hand, but, instead, a reverend old man

clothed in black, and walking with cautious step along the level garden-path; however, he was not disappointed, but seemed in timid reverence to recognize the spirit that had dictated "Laodamia" and "Dion,"—and Wordsworth, in his turn, seemed to feel and prize a congenial nature in this child.

Taking us into the house, he showed us the picture of his sister, repeating with much expression some lines of hers, and those so famous of his about her, beginning, "Five years," &c.; also his own picture, by Inman, of whom he spoke with esteem.

Mr. Wordsworth is fond of the hollyhock, a partiality scarcely deserved by the flower, but which marks the simplicity of his tastes. He had made a long avenue of them of all colors, from the crimson-brown to rose, straw-color, and white, and pleased himself with having made proselytes to a liking for them among his neighbors.

I never have seen such magnificent fuchsias as at Ambleside, and there was one to be seen in every cottage-yard. They are no longer here under the shelter of the green-house, as with us, and as they used to be in England. The plant, from its grace and finished elegance, being a great favorite of mine, I should like to see it as frequently and of as luxuriant a growth at home, and asked their mode of culture, which I here mark down, for the benefit of all who may be interested. Make a bed of bog-earth and sand, put down slips of the fuchsia, and give them a great deal of water,—this is all they need. People have them out here in winter, but perhaps they would not bear the cold of our Januaries.

Mr. Wordsworth spoke with more liberality than we expected of the recent measures about the Corn Laws, saying that "the principle was certainly right, though as to whether existing interests had been as carefully attended to as was just, he was not prepared to say." His neighbors were pleased to hear of his speaking thus mildly, and hailed it as a sign that he was opening his mind to more light on these subjects. They lament that his habits of seclusion keep him much ignorant of the real wants of England and the world. Living in this region, which is cultivated

by small proprietors, where there is little poverty, vice, or misery, he hears not the voice which cries so loudly from other parts of England, and will not be stilled by sweet poetic suasion or philosophy, for it is the cry of men in the jaws of destruction.

It was pleasant to find the reverence inspired by this great and pure mind warmest nearest home. Our landlady, in heaping praises upon him, added, constantly, "And Mrs. Wordsworth, too." "Do the people here," said I, "value Mr. Wordsworth most because he is a celebrated writer?" "Truly, madam," said she, "I think it is because he is so kind a neighbor."

"True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home."

Dr. Arnold, too, — who lived, as his family still live, here, — diffused the same ennobling and animating spirit among those who knew him in private, as through the sphere of his public labors.

Miss Martineau has here a charming residence; it has been finished only a few months, but all about it is in unexpectedly fair order, and promises much beauty after a year or two of growth. Here we found her restored to full health and activity, looking, indeed, far better than she did when in the United States. It was pleasant to see her in this home, presented to her by the gratitude of England for her course of energetic and benevolent effort, and adorned by tributes of affection and esteem from many quarters. From the testimony of those who were with her in and since her illness, her recovery would seem to be of as magical quickness and sure progress as has been represented. At the house of Miss Martineau I saw Milman, the author, I must not say poet, — a specimen of the polished, scholarly man of the world.

We passed one most delightful day in a visit to Langdale, — the scene of "The Excursion," — and to Dungeon-Ghyll Force. I am finishing my letter at Carlisle on my way to Scotland, and will give a slight sketch of that excursion, and one which occupied another day, from Keswick to Buttermere and Crummock Water, in my next.