

IN OLDEN WINCHESTER.

SIGHTS IN THE QUIANT AND CURIOUS CATHEDRAL TOWN.

The Rambling Houses and Ancient Mansions—A Place Where Christianity Came Long Ago—The Cathedral and Its Many Impressive Features.

WINCHESTER, England, Aug. 8.—Perhaps the best place, for a time, to muse upon the ancient city of Winchester, and its heroic surroundings, is the summit of St. Giles hill, which, within the borough bounds, rises high above the roofs of the city, almost within a stone's throw of the east window of its mighty cathedral.

If you were standing on this hill of St. Giles on an autumn morning, the hum of the city below would recall a quaint old scene of 400 or 500 years ago, for the spot was the site of one of the most wonderful fairs in all the world of that antique time. It was famous St. Giles' fair. The whole plateau of the hill was covered by a second town, shut in by a high wooden palisade. By royal edict all trade was not only stopped in Winchester itself, but in all other towns within a radius of seven leagues.

This was very long ago, but the wise old annalists count this antiquity as nothing. One can go with them, if not in all faith, still with pleasant curiosity, a long way back of this once famous English fair. They will tell you that Winchester is perhaps the oldest city in Britain. They point to St. Catharine's Hill, over there just at the southern edge of the city, still plainly disclosing the fortified camp of Vespasian, who conquered the place from Belgæ, whence its Roman name, Venta Belgarum.

Far, far beyond these they have seen with clear historic eyes. They will tell you in all seriousness that Winchester was founded 892 years before the Christian era. That would be 139 years before the founding of Rome, or a matter of 2,784 years ago! A king of ancient Britain, Sudor Rous Hudibras, is said to have been the royal founder; and it was his son, Bladud, who built and enriched with the indistinguishable fires of Minerva the fine old Somersetshire city of Bath.

Julius Cæsar visited the city, B. C. 54, and the Emperor Vespasian a few years later occupied it and built walls, vestiges of which remain. For the next 500 years Winchester was celebrated for its magnificent embroideries for the imperial court, examples of which remain. Egbert the first king of all England was crowned here, and established a sort of empire with subkings under him, out of which came the English monarchical and nobility systems of today.

The first English guild of merchants was established here in 856. The wise laws of Alfred were made here, the first great survey of the kingdom was completed here, and in the scriptorium of the very cathedral you will now find in Winchester, in 895, was done that wonderful specimen of Winchester illumination known as the Golden Book of Edgar. The first standard measures ever possessed by England were ordered and made here under edict of King Edgar, and you will find these identical measures in the Winchester Museum at the Guildhall.

Over there in that turret structure which now crowns above the western gate of High street, or rather in the great hall of its oldest portion, lived William the Conqueror and all the Angevin Kings. From it Rufus set forth on August day in 1,000 on that famous hunting expedition to New Forest from which his body was brought back in peasant Purkiss' cart to be buried within the cathedral where it now lies. The great tower fell upon the spot in 1,107, and that was the judgment, so the times said, for burying the royal ruffian within consecrated ground.

Henry I. of Scotland and Matilda were married here. Cour de Lion was royally received here after his sore captivity. Henry III. was born in the castle and all the Edwards held court here. Henry V. received the French ambassador here and in Winchester Henry VI. planned Eaton college after Wakeham's school which, still one of the most interesting of British colleges, stands here today just as it then stood against the southern edge of velvet Cathedral close. Here Mary received Philip and their unfortunate nuptials were concluded; while the great structure now standing beside the castle and used as the Royal Barracks, was built by Charles II, though he never lived to see it completed, as a sumptuous residence for himself and "pretty Nell" Gwynne.

And so on and on the grim old story runs. But by and by the dark masses of verdure, the square Norman tower and the ridge of the mighty nave rises above the banks of leafy limes and the peninsula formed by the vagrant Itchen covered with sword and flowers, tempts you down by winding paths from St. Giles Hill, and you are soon standing beside the ancient city Cross. It was built over 500 years ago, in the reign of Henry VI., just before his murder by Gloster, and has, beside its fine old grouping of saints in the upper niches, the carved figures of William of Wykeham, the famous founder of Winchester school, of Florence de Lunn, Winchester's first mayor, 708 years ago, the martyr St. Lawrence and King Alfred the Great.

You are now in the centre of Winchester in High street. All about are hall-timbered houses, projecting story over story into the market place; and you wonder how long before from sheer age they will tumble, red roofs first, over into the clean, cool space below. Quaint shops are pinched in between staid old mansions. Bandboxes of inns sport stained old mansions, are pinched in between the gray facades with gilt and color. Worn steps, scrubbed mercilessly and washed with white lead into tiny vestibules gay with gleaming brass knockers and rare old colored glass.

Just there, to the right, is a wynd or close, grayer, more a medley of gables, overhanging roofs and protruding windows than the narrow street where you are standing. It is mossy old Minister street. You saunter into its shadows. At its southern end is an inviting vista of foliage and light. You will find more gray heads here than in any other equal distance in England. Gray old men and gray old wo-

men silently sit musing over gray old wares in their gray old shops.

It is all so startlingly suggestive of age and decay, that you hasten on. Suddenly one side of the shadowy passageway stops short, and there before you is one of the sweetest sights in England. It is the great cathedral close, surrounded by ivy-hung 14th century houses, its area threaded and silvered by the vagrant Itchen stream, masses of limes rising here and there above.

Antiquity shrouds the beginning of Christianity at Winchester. The cathedral existed under Vortigern and Uther Peniel and in nearly every particular as you will find it today. This cathedral has stood since 980 or upwards of one thousand years; while the earlier cathedral church on the site of the present structure was founded and endowed 1358 years ago. Winchester having been royal Winchester hundreds of years before London was more than a marshy fishing village, the colossal exterior and royal interior as well as the vast number and architectural splendor of its royal and ecclesiastical sepulchres and monuments are at once accounted for.

On entering the cathedral and taking a position under the great west window, you find nave, choir and vault simply a majestic study in mellowed and subdued gray. The tremendous proportions of the columns—they are twelve feet in diameter, the distance between them or the intercolumniation being only about two diameters of the columns—are so great that there is not a break in their line on either side, save midway along the southern tier where stands Bishop Wykeham's noble chantry and tomb, though the entire length of nave and choir, the greatest of any cathedral in England.

The nave columns and vault and the choir seem to focus in one far, high, tremulous film of light in the upper visible portion of the east window, above the marble altar screen. The space is so vast the proportions so perfect, the old Norman work so splendid in its massive simplicity, even when modified by transition and early English work, the admission of light so equal, that even the dark oaken choir screen sinks into place and depth of color only in lower fitting shadow, even serving to strengthen the effect of the marvelous altar white bathed in the east window's mellowed rose.

Clearly the distinguishing features of Winchester cathedral are structural vastness, massiveness, simplicity and repose. Strongest marked in features of detail are over ornamentation of the Lady Chapel, particularly in the windows; the bold and airy flying buttresses that stretch over the side aisles, supporting the upper walls; the rich open battlement surmounting these walls; the unusual chamber or tribune erected for minstrels in ancient times over the western extremity of the north aisle; the shortness, vastness and solidity of the great tower; and the location of the latter immediately over the choir, instead of over the space approaching it, as in most other cathedrals.

The cathedral is the richest in chantries and chapels of any I have ever seen. Their great number and marvelous richness of ornamentation are accentuated from the massiveness and simplicity of their structural surroundings. Historically no sacred edifice in England can boast such wealth of treasure, if it may be so regarded, in the mortuary remains of ancient kings and prelates. The tomb of William Rufus, is in the centre of the choir. Upon the top of the huge sanctuary screens are six mortuary chests. In one lie the bones of King Egbert and Kenulph. A third holds the bones of Rufus, Canute, Queen Emma, who trod the nine heated ploughshares unscathed, and of bishops Wina and Alwyn. A fourth is a "promiscuous" collection of what was left of the remains of kings, princes and prelates after the sacrilegious barbarism of the year 1642. In a fifth repose King Edmund and in the sixth lies Edred, "who admirably hosted the country of the Britons." Hosts more there are of later greatness and glory. But amid all these splendid chantries, cenotaphs and tombs there is just one spot in Winchester cathedral where I love to sit and muse and dream. That is in Prior Silktede's chapel. There the southern sunlight, filtering through the tiny colored panes of the ancient windows, seems to leave a glow and blessing upon the slab that covers the grave of gentle Isaac Walton.

EDGAR L. WAKEMAN.

A Queer Character.

A most eccentric person died a few days ago in Berlin, at the age of 73. He began his 18th birthday, and kept up to his 70th year, a book which showed that during 52 years he had noted the smoking of 628,713 cigars of which he had received 43,692 as presents, while for the remaining 585,021 he had paid £2,086 12s. 3d., which shows that his tastes were at any rate not unduly extravagant. During the same period he had had 85 pairs of trousers made, costing altogether £92 3s. 3d.; 74 coats and waistcoats for £158 3s. 2d.; 62 pairs of boots for £66 2s. 2d.; wore out 298 shirts and "frocks" and 326 collars, costing altogether £57 3s. 4d. In tram fares he spent £85 13s. 2d. In 15 years, according to his bookkeeping, he had drunk 28,786 glasses of Bavarian beer, of which, however, 21,261 were only small ones. For this beer and 36,081 glasses of cognac and other spirits he spent £1,070. He gave "tips" amounting to £261. His bookkeeping stopped when he completed his 70th year, and at the end of this quaint volume are the words, "Omnia tentavi, multa perpexi, nihil perieci."

The Cholera and Superstition.

"If it is true, as reported, that Asiatic cholera has made its way into Mexico, then God pity the poor people of that country," said S. W. Trueheart of New Orleans. "Smallpox flourishes there as it does nowhere else on the earth. It is particularly severe among the ignorant masses, and they have a religious superstition that an outbreak of the loathsome disease is a visitation of God's displeasure. For this reason they make little effort to relieve the horrible sufferings of the victim, and none whatever to relieve him of the disease. I have seen mothers holding little babes in their arms who were covered from head to foot with the terrible sores and scabs of small pox, and when asked why they don't do something for the poor children, reply with the most sublime faith in their religious tenets, that God had cursed them, and there was no use to try to cure the disease."

AUTHORS WHO BEGAN EARLY.

Compositions that Paved the Way for Great Works in the Future.

Publishers are shy of accepting a "first work," and critics are prone to resent the appearance of a new man. Disraeli said in *Coningsby* that "almost everything that is great has been done by youth," but genius is so erratic that it is hard to make any rule of general application. Swedenborg, Rogers, Renan, Captain Marryat, and many others could be named as men who were comparatively stricken in years before they commenced writing, or, at all events, before they meditated publication. On the other hand, we find a long list of authors whose juvenile efforts are both striking and original, though it seems that the too early flowering of genius is often more fatal than immaturity, and is followed by speedy decay.

Dickens tells us that his first attempts at authorship were "certain tragedies achieved at the mature age of eight or ten, and represented with great applause to overflowing nurseries." *The Sketches by Box*, begun when he was not out of his teens, gave him the entrée to public life.

Lord Macaulay, it will be remembered by readers of his biography, began a "great family epic" when he was nine or ten years old; and he was already then the author of an epitome of Universal History, and of what Sir George Trevelyan calls "a vast pile of blank verse," entitled *Fingal, a poem in twelve books*—"two of which," continues his biographer, "are in complete and connected shape, while the rest of the story is lost amidst a labyrinth of many hundred scattered lines, so transcribed as to suggest a conjecture that the boy's demand for foolscap had outrun the paternal generosity."

Lord Byron's first book was a certain quarto, entitled *Fugitive Pieces*, printed in 1806, and burned by the youthful author (all but a copy or two) in the same year. Byron was then eighteen years old, and by the time he was nineteen he had plucked up sufficient courage to publish *Hours of Idleness*, which the *Edinburgh Review* so mercilessly criticised.

Miss Braddon did not write her first novel for publication, *Three Times Dead*, until she was twenty, and though it was illustrated with twenty-six woodcuts, it did not succeed.

Tom Moore wrote verses to a Dublin magazine when he was fourteen, and when he was twenty published the *Odes of Anacreon*, by which he made a name.

Shelley wrote a number of wild romances in his youth, the first of which, *Zastrozzi*, was published when he was seventeen. He received \$200 for it, and Mr. Rossetti, his lenient biographer, says it obtained a certain degree of success, although it can "only excite alternate hilarity at its absurdities, and astonishment at the condition of mind which could induce a publisher to accept it."

The mention of Mr. Rossetti's name reminds us that his talented sister, Christina, the author of *Goblin Market*, commenced to write poems at a very early age; and when she was sixteen her grandfather printed, at his private press, a collection of her verses. But this record was beaten by the precocious Mrs. Hemans, who, before she was fifteen, published "a large quarto," dedicated to the Prince Regent, and entitled *Blossoms of Spring*. The book was unkindly received, and the adverse reviews affected the little poetess's health. She was only fourteen when she wrote the important poem on "England and Spain." Such facts as these have been surpassed quite recently.

A volume of poems on religious and somewhat abstruse subjects lately reached this country from America, and a prefatory note explained that they were the composition of a young lady of twelve.

This almost equals Mrs. Browning, who at the age of eight was writing verses, reading Homer in the original, and could be seen daily in the garden with a book in one hand and a doll in the other. At the age of eleven she wrote an epic about the Greeks, entitled "The Battle of Marathon," and this stupendous work of the baby author was printed by her proud and indulgent father.

The precocious feats of Keats and Chatterton, "the marvelous boy who perished ere his prime," are too well known to need more than passing reference; the wonder is not so much that they wrote at so early an age, but that their work was such as to command attention. The two immortals were but boys when their lives ended.

Pope wrote his "imitations of the English poets" when a youth, and at the age of nine he had expressed his feelings in verse which is still read. He "lisp'd in numbers, for the numbers came."

Dr. Johnson records that Pope wrote his "Ode to Solitude" before he was twelve, but declares that it does not equal Abraham Cowley's performances at the same age. Indeed, this is the case, for a volume of Cowley's poems was printed in his thirteenth year, and it contained, among other poetical compositions, "The Tragical History of Pyramus and Thisbe," written when he was ten years old, and "Constantia and Philetus," written two years later.

While he was yet at school he wrote the pastoral comedy called "Love's Riddle," and he was only a young student at college when he composed the greater part of "David's"—a work, says Dr. Johnson, "of which the materials could not have been collected without the study of many years but by a mind of the greatest vigor and activity."

Milton at fifteen versified some of the Psalms, and by eighteen had composed some of his elegies, proving that "he had then read the Roman authors with very nice discernment." Dryden was a school-boy when he wrote his poem on the death of Lord Hastings, but this was his only youthful work of note.

James Thompson, the author of "The Seasons," wrote a considerable amount of poetry while he was a boy at school, but his biographer records that the lad was so little pleased with his compositions that on every new year's day he threw into the fire all the productions of the foregoing year. He did not publish until he was twenty-six.

Isaac Watts himself declared that he was a maker of verses from fifteen to twenty, his attention being first devoted to Latin poetry. George Granville, one of the seventeenth century poets, now almost ignored, before the age of twelve, wrote a poem on the Duchess of York, which he publicly recited when she visited Cambridge University.

Sir Walter Scott's first lines were a translation from Virgil, and saw the light

when the poet was eleven. Coming to later times we find that Dante Gabriel Rossetti published a volume of poems when he had just entered his teens. *The Poems by Two Brothers*, published in 1829, by Alfred and Charles Tennyson, were the first-fruits of two great geniuses, who, however, afterwards only unwillingly acknowledged them.

Sara Coleridge, the daughter of the Lake Poet, at a "surprisingly early age," as her biographer records, "translated a *History of the Abipones*, a feat requiring an equal mastery of Latin and English." The ill-fated "L. E. L." composed good verses while a girl, and published them at the age of eighteen. Jane Austen, in a letter, advised a niece with literary aspirations not to write until she had turned sixteen, adding, "It would have been better for myself if I had read more and written less before reaching that mature age." When she was quite a girl she had written several novels, and it is a remarkable fact that *Pride and Prejudice* was begun before she was twenty-one years old.

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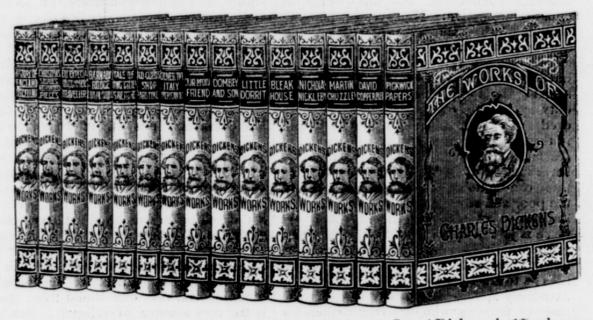
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