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A RAMBLE THROUGH STRATFORD-ON-AVON.

"Now you must write up our day in Stratford in the JOURNAL." An elusive task, indeed, that you have set for me, my friends, for, surely, any description of that glorious day of vagabondage among the meadows and roadways of Warwickshire and the cobbled streets of Stratford town must, inevitably, fall far short of your memories of all its pleasure. The glamour of things forgotten, and yet dimly suggested in every bit of old carved oak, every little herb plot or patch of old English flowers, the strange insistent fascination that clings about unfathomed mystery, the impress that a great age has left upon time, all these intermingle hauntingly with the more visible loveliness of Stratford. There lingers this sense of memory and mystery in each oak-gabled house and quiet street, it comes on every breath of fragrance that floats from the gardens where before us "lie sweet beds of flowers," and it will come to you again so hauntingly, in the shadows of the fine Church of the Holy Trinity; it is there, too, in the shimmering of the placidly flowing Avon. "Quite the most thrilling experience I've had yet, this Stratford-on-Avon," said an American nurse, "travelling across the world, I've seen nothing to equal it. It has such a wonderful glamour of its own, and yet, so far as I can see, there is nothing that authentically connects it with the plays." This may or may not be so, but the fact remains that the fascination and mystery of Stratford is undeniable, something outside the domain of the intellect, some odd, embryonic suggestion of faculties of clairvoyance, in time as well as in place, linked, it may be, with certain perceptions and powers which men will develop in later centuries, but which, in the case of a few in the Elizabethan age, were able to transcend the intellect, to join it to a most majestic inspiration, thus to bequeath to us the Shakespearean Drama, the Baconian writings, later, to give the impulse that brought about the translation of the Bible, and other great triumphs of a most wonderful age. But the matter is one for psychological consideration and argument, rather than a holiday number, and, be its solution what it may, a visit to Stratford will prove, even to the most prosaic, a truly delightful oasis in a work-a-day modern existence. The memory of it will linger in the consciousness, to let its fragrance steal sometimes about the problems that jostle the mind, sometimes to gather these harpies far out of sight beneath the vision of a lovely countryside, great masses of crimson roses and soft lawns richly bordered with flowers—flowers that are the grandchildren of those that blossom here and there in the plays, to touch with their exquisite loveliness some dark tragedy, or to add to the joyousness of some play written when the poet was in happier vein.

Everywhere, about the town, houses, oak-beamed and gabled, bear about them the charm that is associated so frequently with the work of the human hand, a charm lost

to us in the machine-made products of modern times. The quiet toilers of old Warwickshire, consciously or otherwise, had a true artistic sense of what would harmonise with their own countryside; they are delightful, these houses of cream and brown, with mullioned windows and thatched roofs, brightened here and there with a bit of yellow Star of Bethlehem, a mist of blue from a tuft of speedwell perhaps, or a cloud of burnished red and flickering silver where wild grasses have caught root and run riot in the thatch.

In the birthplace, the dimness of the light from the latticed window softens the bare walls and seems to bring out the beauty of the simple, old-fashioned house. Every rafter, every piece of old furniture, seems to have upon it the impress of humanity, and is glorified by a mass of association of which the memory has been lost for centuries; and this curious sense of bearing upon it still the touch of vanished hands has suffered nothing from the perpetual stream of visitors who, year in, year out, have streamed through the quaint, shadowy home. This may be due to the fact that few among them are not in sympathy with the atmosphere of the place, few are of the class who prefer more uproarious pleasure, and few come for the mere purpose of whetting an appetite for new sensations. The rooms and their contents dominate all, and indeed, there is an odd feeling that it is the living, modern folk, the sight-seers, who are the ghosts. They pass unknown through the place, unknown, forgotten, they have come and gone for years, each having his own small niche in time, ghosts and shadows, little more, compared with the enduring mystery and glory that lies about the bare Elizabethan home from whence came that mighty pen which coined language when language failed it, made men from the imaginings of a great force behind the mind, and sent them mumming through the centuries, took the chattels and flowers of everyday life to meet the whim of genius, nor feared to muster beings from elemental worlds unknown to man, that they also might play their part in the most majestic pageant in literature.

From the birthroom, and the old yellow folios and prints, we pass into the quiet sunshine of the garden, with its vivid greens, tall golden rod and masses of low-growing plants that richly frame its paths, and mingle their scent with that from the herb garden that lies in an angle of the house.

But Anne Hathaway's cottage surpasses the birthplace in beauty. The principal room, with its fine oak panelling, is full of charm, and shows John Hathaway to have been a yeoman of substance, and of refined taste. His carved oak bedstead, minutely described in his will (which provided against its removal from the house after his death) is worth a journey to Stratford for its own sake, and we admire the fine sheets of homespun linen, embroidered, it is believed, by a sister of Anne Hathaway, and as white as when they lay in the busy fingers that have been dust for centuries now. The garden is lovely beyond description, with its luxuriance of flowers, hedges of roses and creeping

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