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RAMBLE TO HATFIELD AND KNEBWORTH.

The Ramblers had to suffer the whims of an April day when they set out by charabanc on 21st April, but it was a day of great expectations and so weather did not matter, for were we not to see the historic seat of the Cecils and the home of Bulwer Lytton? And if the rain did prevail more than the sunshine yet the roads were lovely with the delicate greens just showing on the branches, blackthorn just coming into bud and clouds of yellow daffodils at intervals along the route. First we visited the historic Hatfield Church, dating from the reign of Henry III and built on the site of a much earlier Christian church which probably occupied the site of some old heathen temple. We were received most kindly by the Rev. Stanhope Lovell, who pointed out the main features of the church. Here in this little country church the children of Henry VIII had worshipped, and here, too, was brought the body of the Earl of Salisbury who never lived in the great house he had reared.

Very interesting things were pointed out to us, and then Mr. Stanhope Lovell, who by the way is librarian to the Marquis of Salisbury, took us on to Hatfield House, pointing out, on the way, the old Palace of Hatfield, which was Queen Elizabeth's nursery. The gardens there, as seen from Hatfield House, have changed very little since her day. On the way we admired the magnificent wrought-iron gates (some of them had at one time acted as guards to St. Paul's Cathedral) and the old doorway, dating from the year 1612.

As we walked round the various apartments our kind guide gave us interesting information about the House of Cecil (still pronounced and originally spelt Sysseil), about William Lord Burghley and his connections with Mary and Elizabeth; to the latter Burghley gave forty years of faithful and loyal service and steered his course successfully between different political factions and between Romanists and Puritans; letters, now at Hatfield, written to his son at the end of a long life tell a story of devotion to his Queen and his country. He is interesting to us as, among other of his charities, he founded a hospital at Stamford. We were given an account of his two sons, and that of his second, Robert Cecil, created Earl Salisbury, was the most fascinating; he was a prime favourite of Queen Elizabeth. We had already had our attention drawn to his monument in Hatfield Church, where it stands near that of the third Marquis of Salisbury, Prime Minister to Queen Victoria. Her "Elf" Queen Elizabeth called him, for he was only some five feet two inches in height with a large head. Another most interesting figure connected with Hatfield House was, of course, the third Marquis of Salisbury, Prime Minister to Queen Victoria. (A progenitor of his received a Marquisate in 1789.) Not only was he a great politician, but he was also one of the most brilliant scientists of his day, and the first installation of electric light at Hatfield House was put up by the hands of the Marquis himself.

We were told of the wonderful collection of manuscripts at Hatfield House. Robert Cecil, the first Earl, had collected with care Lord Burghley's papers, and a considerable number of them are preserved in the archives of Hatfield House. The manuscripts at Hatfield comprise some 3,000 different documents relating to the Crown, Privy Seals, Records, State Papers, treaties, correspondence with political personages, etc. There are papers of Sir Walter Raleigh, the Earl of Essex, Francis Bacon, and many other illustrious personages.

In one long hall we saw a marvellous collection of armour. Some of it came from the Armada, some pieces were worn by Charles I; there are indeed many periods represented in this collection from many countries. By a beautiful elm staircase we passed up to the gallery of the chapel, and there Mr. Stanhope Lovell read to us passages from Pepys, written when he was a visitor at Hatfield. They lifted us, in imagination, right into the times of the famous diarist, and we looked at the chapel with his eyes; it was extraordinary how entrancing the whole atmosphere of the place became as the quaint sentences were beautifully read.

We saw Anne of Denmark's coronation chair and also a beautiful piece of *petit-point* of her reign. Among other things specially interesting were the genealogical tree of Queen Elizabeth (which measures 37 feet, and traces her line back to Adam and Eve); paintings of the wives of Henry VIII, and many wonderful and beautifully bound volumes; some of those shown to us had belonged to William Lord Burghley, father of the first Earl of Salisbury. We were shown also a crusader's water bottle, a cradle in which Charles I was rocked as a baby, a pair of Elizabeth's silk stockings, her garden hat and other things. The paintings were exceedingly interesting. There was a fine one of Peter the Great, one of Charles XII, of France, others of George III, Henry of Navarre, James I, Charles I, Nell Gwyn, and a lovely one of Henrietta Maria. Then we went on to another gallery where we found a galaxy of paintings by later Masters. A lovely picture by Reynolds of that somewhat masterful lady Mary Amelia, wife of the first Marquis of Salisbury, led to several interesting anecdotes, and there were other very beautiful family portraits by Romney, Lawrence and Richmond; that by the latter artist of the third Lord Salisbury is particularly striking. Before setting out for the last stage of our pilgrimage we passed down the famous carved staircase, which, by a collection of circumstantial evidence, is now attributed to Robert Lyning. We feel very grateful to the Marchioness of Salisbury, by whose kind permission we were able to view so many historic treasures.

From Hatfield we went on to Knebworth, where the Countess of Lytton had very kindly arranged that tea be provided for the nurses. Knebworth is mentioned in the Domesday Book under the name of "Chenepeworde." It was held as a Royal Manor by Eudo Dapifer and ultimately reverted to Henry III. Later it passed to a certain Edward Hoo, then to a Duchess of Norfolk; again it reverted to the Crown, and later it was given by Henry IV

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