

XXX. REDBURN GROWS INTOLERABLY FLAT AND STUPID OVER SOME
OUTLANDISH OLD

GUIDE-BOOKS

Among the odd volumes in my father's library, was a collection of old European and English guide-books, which he had bought on his travels, a great many years ago. In my childhood, I went through many courses of studying them, and never tired of gazing at the numerous quaint embellishments and plates, and staring at the strange title-pages, some of which I thought resembled the mustached faces of foreigners. Among others was a Parisian-looking, faded, pink-covered pamphlet, the rouge here and there effaced upon its now thin and attenuated cheeks, entitled, "Voyage Descriptif et Philosophique de L'Ancien et du Nouveau Paris: Miroir Fidele" also a time-darkened, mossy old book, in marbled binding, much resembling verd-antique, entitled, "Itineraire Instructif de Rome, ou Description Generale des Monumens Antiques et Modernes et des Ouvrages les plus Remarquables de Peinteur, de Sculpture, et de Architecture de cette Celebre Ville;" on the russet title-page is a vignette representing a barren rock, partly shaded by a scrub-oak (a forlorn bit of landscape), and under the lee of the rock and the shade of the tree, maternally reclines the houseless foster-mother of Romulus and Remus, giving suck to the illustrious twins; a pair of naked little cherubs sprawling on the ground, with locked arms, eagerly engaged at their absorbing occupation; a large cactus-leaf or diaper hangs from a bough, and the wolf looks a good deal

like one of the no-horn breed of barn-yard cows; the work is published "Avec privilege du Souverain Pontife." There was also a velvet-bound old volume, in brass clasps, entitled, "The Conductor through Holland" with a plate of the Stadt House; also a venerable "Picture of London" abounding in representations of St. Paul's, the Monument, Temple-Bar, Hyde-Park-Corner, the Horse Guards, the Admiralty, Charing-Cross, and Vauxhall Bridge. Also, a bulky book, in a dusty-looking yellow cover, reminding one of the paneled doors of a mail-coach, and bearing an elaborate title-page, full of printer's flourishes, in emulation of the cracks of a four-in-hand whip, entitled, in part, "The Great Roads, both direct and cross, throughout England and Wales, from an actual Admeasurement by order of His Majesty's Postmaster-General: This work describes the Cities, Market and Borough and Corporate Towns, and those at which the Assizes are held, and gives the time of the Mails' arrival and departure from each: Describes the Inns in the Metropolis from which the stages go, and the Inns in the country which supply post-horses and carriages: Describes the Noblemen and Gentlemen's Seats situated near the Road, with Maps of the Environs of London, Bath, Brighton, and Margate." It is dedicated "To the Right Honorable the Earls of Chesterfield and Leicester, by their Lordships' Most Obliged, Obedient, and Obsequious Servant, John Gary, 1798." Also a green pamphlet, with a motto from Virgil, and an intricate coat of arms on the cover, looking like a diagram of the Labyrinth of Crete, entitled, "A Description of York, its Antiquities and Public Buildings, particularly the Cathedral; compiled with great pains from the most authentic records." Also a small scholastic-looking volume, in a classic vellum binding, and with a

frontispiece bringing together at one view the towers and turrets of King's College and the magnificent Cathedral of Ely, though geographically sixteen miles apart, entitled, "The Cambridge Guide: its Colleges, Halls, Libraries, and Museums, with the Ceremonies of the Town and University, and some account of Ely Cathedral." Also a pamphlet, with a japanned sort of cover, stamped with a disorderly higgledy-piggledy group of pagoda-looking structures, claiming to be an accurate representation of the "North or Grand Front of Blenheim," and entitled, "A Description of Blenheim, the Seat of His Grace the Duke of Marlborough; containing a full account of the Paintings, Tapestry, and Furniture: a Picturesque Tour of the Gardens and Parks, and a General Description of the famous China Gallery, 6-c.; with an Essay on Landscape Gardening: and embellished with a View of the Palace, and a New and Elegant Plan of the Great Park." And lastly, and to the purpose, there was a volume called "THE PICTURE OF LIVERPOOL."

It was a curious and remarkable book; and from the many fond associations connected with it, I should like to immortalize it, if I could.

But let me get it down from its shrine, and paint it, if I may, from the life.

As I now linger over the volume, to and fro turning the pages so dear to my boyhood,--the very pages which, years and years ago, my father turned over amid the very scenes that are here described; what a soft, pleasing

sadness steals over me, and how I melt into the past and forgotten!

Dear book! I will sell my Shakespeare, and even sacrifice my old quarto Hogarth, before I will part with you. Yes, I will go to the hammer myself, ere I send you to be knocked down in the auctioneer's shambles. I will, my beloved,--old family relic that you are;--till you drop leaf from leaf, and letter from letter, you shall have a snug shelf somewhere, though I have no bench for myself.

In size, it is what the booksellers call an 18mo; it is bound in green morocco, which from my earliest recollection has been spotted and tarnished with time; the corners are marked with triangular patches of red, like little cocked hats; and some unknown Goth has inflicted an incurable wound upon the back. There is no lettering outside; so that he who lounges past my humble shelves, seldom dreams of opening the anonymous little book in green. There it stands; day after day, week after week, year after year; and no one but myself regards it. But I make up for all neglects, with my own abounding love for it.

But let us open the volume.

What are these scrawls in the fly-leaves? what incorrigible pupil of a writing-master has been here? what crayon sketcher of wild animals and falling air-castles? Ah, no!--these are all part and parcel of the precious book, which go to make up the sum of its treasure to me.

Some of the scrawls are my own; and as poets do with their juvenile sonnets, I might write under this horse, "Drawn at the age of three years," and under this autograph, "Executed at the age of eight."

Others are the handiwork of my brothers, and sisters, and cousins; and the hands that sketched some of them are now moldered away.

But what does this anchor here? this ship? and this sea-ditty of Dibdin's? The book must have fallen into the hands of some tarry captain of a forecastle. No: that anchor, ship, and Dibdin's ditty are mine; this hand drew them; and on this very voyage to Liverpool. But not so fast; I did not mean to tell that yet.

Full in the midst of these pencil scrawlings, completely surrounded indeed, stands in indelible, though faded ink, and in my father's hand-writing, the following:--

"WALTER REDBURN.

"Riddough's Royal Hotel, Liverpool, March 20th, 1808."

Turning over that leaf, I come upon some half-effaced miscellaneous memoranda in pencil, characteristic of a methodical mind, and therefore indubitably my father's, which he must have made at various times during his stay in Liverpool. These are full of a strange, subdued, old, midsummer interest to me: and though, from the numerous effacements, it

is much like cross-reading to make them out; yet, I must here copy a few at random:--

£ s. d

Guide-Book	3	6
Dinner at the Star and Garter		10
Trip to Preston (distance 31 m.)	2	6 3
Gratuities	4	
Hack	4	6
Thompson's Seasons		5
Library	1	
Boat on the river		6
Port wine and cigar		4

And on the opposite page, I can just decipher the following:

Dine with Mr. Roscoe on Monday.

Call upon Mr. Morille same day.

Leave card at Colonel Digby's on Tuesday.

Theatre Friday night--Richard III. and new farce.

Present letter at Miss L----'s on Tuesday.

Call on Sampson & Wilt, Friday.

Get my draft on London cashed.

Write home by the Princess.

Letter bag at Sampson and Wilt's.

Turning over the next leaf, I unfold a map, which in the midst of the British Arms, in one corner displays in sturdy text, that this is "A Plan of the Town of Liverpool." But there seems little plan in the confined and crooked looking marks for the streets, and the docks irregularly scattered along the bank of the Mersey, which flows along, a peaceful stream of shaded line engraving.

On the northeast corner of the map, lies a level Sahara of yellowish white: a desert, which still bears marks of my zeal in endeavoring to populate it with all manner of uncouth monsters in crayons. The space designated by that spot is now, doubtless, completely built up in Liverpool.

Traced with a pen, I discover a number of dotted lines, radiating in all directions from the foot of Lord-street, where stands marked "Riddough's Hotel," the house my father stopped at.

These marks delineate his various excursions in the town; and I follow the lines on, through street and lane; and across broad squares; and penetrate with them into the narrowest courts.

By these marks, I perceive that my father forgot not his religion in a foreign land; but attended St. John's Church near the Hay-market, and other places of public worship: I see that he visited the News Room in Duke-street, the Lyceum in Bold-street, and the Theater Royal; and that

he called to pay his respects to the eminent Mr. Roscoe, the historian, poet, and banker.

Reverentially folding this map, I pass a plate of the Town Hall, and come upon the Title Page, which, in the middle, is ornamented with a piece of landscape, representing a loosely clad lady in sandals, pensively seated upon a bleak rock on the sea shore, supporting her head with one hand, and with the other, exhibiting to the stranger an oval sort of salver, bearing the figure of a strange bird, with this motto elastically stretched for a border--"Deus nobis haec otia fecit."

The bird forms part of the city arms, and is an imaginary representation of a now extinct fowl, called the "Liver," said to have inhabited a "pool," which antiquarians assert once covered a good part of the ground where Liverpool now stands; and from that bird, and this pool, Liverpool derives its name.

At a distance from the pensive lady in sandals, is a ship under full sail; and on the beach is the figure of a small man, vainly essaying to roll over a huge bale of goods.

Equally divided at the top and bottom of this design, is the following title complete; but I fear the printer will not be able to give a facsimile:--

The Picture

of Liverpool:
or, Stranger's Guide
and Gentleman's Pocket Companion

FOR THE TOWN.

Embellished

With Engravings

By the Most Accomplished and Eminent Artists.

Liverpool:

Printed in Swift's Court,

And sold by Woodward and Alderson, 56 Castle St. 1803.

A brief and reverential preface, as if the writer were all the time bowing, informs the reader of the flattering reception accorded to previous editions of the work; and quotes "testimonies of respect which had lately appeared in various quarters--the British Critic, Review, and the seventh volume of the Beauties of England and Wales"--and concludes by expressing the hope, that this new, revised, and illustrated edition might "render it less unworthy of the public notice, and less unworthy also of the subject it is intended to illustrate."

A very nice, dapper, and respectful little preface, the time and place of writing which is solemnly recorded at the end--Hope Place, 1st Sept. 1803.

But how much fuller my satisfaction, as I fondly linger over this circumstantial paragraph, if the writer had recorded the precise hour of

the day, and by what timepiece; and if he had but mentioned his age, occupation, and name.

But all is now lost; I know not who he was; and this estimable author must needs share the oblivious fate of all literary incognitos.

He must have possessed the grandest and most elevated ideas of true fame, since he scorned to be perpetuated by a solitary initial. Could I find him out now, sleeping neglected in some churchyard, I would buy him a headstone, and record upon it naught but his title-page, deeming that his noblest epitaph.

After the preface, the book opens with an extract from a prologue written by the excellent Dr. Aiken, the brother of Mrs. Barbauld, upon the opening of the Theater Royal, Liverpool, in 1772:--

"Where Mersey's stream, long winding o'er the plain, Pours his full tribute to the circling main, A band of fishers chose their humble seat; Contented labor blessed the fair retreat, Inured to hardship, patient, bold, and rude, They braved the billows for precarious food: Their straggling huts were ranged along the shore, Their nets and little boats their only store."

Indeed, throughout, the work abounds with quaint poetical quotations, and old-fashioned classical allusions to the Aeneid and Falconer's Shipwreck.

And the anonymous author must have been not only a scholar and a gentleman, but a man of gentle disinterestedness, combined with true city patriotism; for in his "Survey of the Town" are nine thickly printed pages of a neglected poem by a neglected Liverpool poet.

By way of apologizing for what might seem an obtrusion upon the public of so long an episode, he courteously and feelingly introduces it by saying, that "the poem has now for several years been scarce, and is at present but little known; and hence a very small portion of it will no doubt be highly acceptable to the cultivated reader; especially as this noble epic is written with great felicity of expression and the sweetest delicacy of feeling."

Once, but once only, an uncharitable thought crossed my mind, that the author of the Guide-Book might have been the author of the epic. But that was years ago; and I have never since permitted so uncharitable a reflection to insinuate itself into my mind.

This epic, from the specimen before me, is composed in the old stately style, and rolls along commanding as a coach and four. It sings of Liverpool and the Mersey; its docks, and ships, and warehouses, and bales, and anchors; and after descanting upon the abject times, when "his noble waves, inglorious, Mersey rolled," the poet breaks forth like all Parnassus with:--

"Now o'er the wondering world her name resounds, From northern climes to
India's distant bounds--Where'er his shores the broad Atlantic waves;
Where'er the Baltic rolls his wintry waves; Where'er the honored flood
extends his tide, That clasps Sicilia like a favored bride. Greenland
for her its bulky whale resigns, And temperate Gallia rears her generous
vines: 'Midst warm Iberia citron orchards blow, And the ripe fruitage
bends the laboring bough; In every clime her prosperous fleets are
known, She makes the wealth of every clime her own."

It also contains a delicately-curtained allusion to Mr. Roscoe:--

"And here R*s*o*, with genius all his own, New tracks explores,
and all before unknown?"

Indeed, both the anonymous author of the Guide-Book, and the gifted
bard of the Mersey, seem to have nourished the wannest appreciation
of the fact, that to their beloved town Roscoe imparted a reputation
which gracefully embellished its notoriety as a mere place of commerce.
He is called the modern Guicciardini of the modern Florence, and his
histories, translations, and Italian Lives, are spoken of with classical
admiration.

The first chapter begins in a methodical, business-like way, by
informing the impatient reader of the precise latitude and longitude of
Liverpool; so that, at the outset, there may be no misunderstanding on
that head. It then goes on to give an account of the history and

antiquities of the town, beginning with a record in the Doomsday-Book of William the Conqueror.

Here, it must be sincerely confessed, however, that notwithstanding his numerous other merits, my favorite author betrays a want of the uttermost antiquarian and penetrating spirit, which would have scorned to stop in its researches at the reign of the Norman monarch, but would have pushed on resolutely through the dark ages, up to Moses, the man of Uz, and Adam; and finally established the fact beyond a doubt, that the soil of Liverpool was created with the creation.

But, perhaps, one of the most curious passages in the chapter of antiquarian research, is the pious author's moralizing reflections upon an interesting fact he records: to wit, that in a.d. 1571, the inhabitants sent a memorial to Queen Elizabeth, praying relief under a subsidy, wherein they style themselves "her majesty's poor decayed town of Liverpool."

As I now fix my gaze upon this faded and dilapidated old guide-book, bearing every token of the ravages of near half a century, and read how this piece of antiquity enlarges like a modern upon previous antiquities, I am forcibly reminded that the world is indeed growing old. And when I turn to the second chapter, "On the increase of the town, and number of inhabitants," and then skim over page after page throughout the volume, all filled with allusions to the immense grandeur of a place, which, since then, has more than quadrupled in population,

opulence, and splendor, and whose present inhabitants must look back upon the period here spoken of with a swelling feeling of immeasurable superiority and pride, I am filled with a comical sadness at the vanity of all human exaltation. For the cope-stone of to-day is the corner-stone of tomorrow; and as St. Peter's church was built in great part of the ruins of old Rome, so in all our erections, however imposing, we but form quarries and supply ignoble materials for the grander domes of posterity.

And even as this old guide-book boasts of the, to us, insignificant Liverpool of fifty years ago, the New York guidebooks are now vaunting of the magnitude of a town, whose future inhabitants, multitudinous as the pebbles on the beach, and girdled in with high walls and towers, flanking endless avenues of opulence and taste, will regard all our Broadways and Bowerys as but the paltry nucleus to their Nineveh. From far up the Hudson, beyond Harlem River, where the young saplings are now growing, that will overarch their lordly mansions with broad boughs, centuries old; they may send forth explorers to penetrate into the then obscure and smoky alleys of the Fifth Avenue and Fourteenth-street; and going still farther south, may exhume the present Doric Custom-house, and quote it as a proof that their high and mighty metropolis enjoyed a Hellenic antiquity.

As I am extremely loth to omit giving a specimen of the dignified style of this "Picture of Liverpool," so different from the brief, pert, and unclerkly hand-books to Niagara and Buffalo of the present day, I shall

now insert the chapter of antiquarian researches; especially as it is entertaining in itself, and affords much valuable, and perhaps rare information, which the reader may need, concerning the famous town, to which I made my first voyage. And I think that with regard to a matter, concerning which I myself am wholly ignorant, it is far better to quote my old friend verbatim, than to mince his substantial baron-of-beef of information into a flimsy ragout of my own; and so, pass it off as original. Yes, I will render unto my honored guide-book its due.

But how can the printer's art so dim and mellow down the pages into a soft sunset yellow; and to the reader's eye, shed over the type all the pleasant associations which the original carries to me!

No! by my father's sacred memory, and all sacred privacies of fond family reminiscences, I will not! I will not quote thee, old Morocco, before the cold face of the marble-hearted world; for your antiquities would only be skipped and dishonored by shallow-minded readers; and for me, I should be charged with swelling out my volume by plagiarizing from a guide-book-the most vulgar and ignominious of thefts!