

**A WEEK  
AT WELWYN**

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A Week at Welwyn by W. Chambers

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**W. CHAMBERS**

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By W. CHAMBERS, LL.D.

LONDON:

W. & R. CHAMBERS

1873.

OF THE  
PUBLIC  
LIBRARY

TO  
KIND FRIENDS IN HERTS,  
THESE  
RECOLLECTIONS OF A PLEASANT VISIT  
TO THE COUNTY  
ARE RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED  
BY THE AUTHOR.

GLENORMISTON, *June 20, 1873.*

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## A WEEK AT WELWYN.

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### CHAPTER I.

WELWYN.—DR YOUNG.—THE STORY OF NARCISSA.

EARLY in May, when woods and hedgerows had just burst into leaf, and fields pied with daisies were at the greenest, it was our fortune to pay a visit of a week to a pleasant part of that pleasantest of counties, Hertfordshire. In these days, it is a thing easily effected, for the journey by rail from London to Welwyn, to the neighbourhood of which we were specially bound, is a matter of something less than an hour. In being whisked forward by the train, we soon leave behind the suburban villas of the metropolis, which have not as yet been able to straggle successfully beyond the old posting-town of Barnet.

Here the city population may be said to stop, and we are fairly in the country. In short, we have reached Herts. Wherever the eye turns, it is greeted with the sight of prettily wooded low hills, bosky dells, and capacious parks studded with clumps of oaks and beeches, evidently as ancient as the old seats and manor-houses, which, peeping out amidst the trees, impart a delightfully English character to this sylvan piece of country.

Welwyn—a word which, by the way, is locally pronounced Wellin—is a village of modest pretensions. With a fair claim to antiquity, built of brick, and with probably a thousand to twelve hundred inhabitants, it is situated in a hollow so shrouded in trees as not to be visible till we suddenly come upon it. Through the hollow meanders the small river Mimram, a pleasant trouting stream forming a tributary of the Lea, celebrated by old Izaak Walton in his gossiping piscatory rambles. In the village there are, as usual, a variety of old houses and cottages—not many new ones—the whole set down in a free-and-easy sort of irregularity, with here and there slips of garden and flower-plots.

In searching about, we found that the place has a basket-maker of considerable ingenuity, whose wares, of a pretty and fanciful kind, are purchased as *souvenirs* by strangers. The

tendency in Welwyn, as in many other quarters, is to outgrow its original character. According to all accounts, although no actual overcrowding prevails, there is want of house accommodation. This, we hope, may be supplied without invading the rural simplicity, which reminds us of Goldsmith's

Sweet Auburn, loveliest village of the plain.

Recently, to keep pace with modern notions and requirements, Welwyn has been cared for as respects drainage, much to the benefit of the inhabitants, and to the benefit also of the little pellucid stream which flows past their dwellings.

At a central point in the village, at the corner of two streets, there stands a large brick edifice, the *White Hart*, or principal inn, a house of some note in days of yore. Situated on the line of the Great North Road, it used to be visited by dozens of stage-coaches daily, and we can fancy that the Boniface who presided over its management must in a small way have lorded it over the less affluent villagers. Though still, as is averred, a good 'house' for the traveller, the *White Hart*, in the altered state of affairs, has something of a subdued look, and reminds us, a little painfully, of the ruthless overturn of old usages by the railway system.

Like all English villages of an antique pattern, Welwyn has a parish church, around which there