

**NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS WRITTEN
DURING A RAMBLE OF SEVEN WEEKS, AND
EXTENDING OVER A DISTANCE OF NEAR
1600 MILES, INTO YORKSHIRE, LANCASHIRE,
AND CHESHIRE, THE ISLE OF MAN; AND IN
IRELAND FROM DUBLIN TO COLERAINE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649658619

Notes and Observations Written During a Ramble of Seven Weeks, and Extending over a Distance of near 1600 Miles, into Yorkshire, Lancashire, and Cheshire, the Isle of Man; And in Ireland from Dublin to Coleraine by E. W. Gray

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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E. W. GRAY

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WRITTEN DURING

A RAMBLE OF SEVEN WEEKS,

AND EXTENDING OVER A
DISTANCE OF NEAR 1600 MILES,

INTO CERTAIN PARTS OF
YORKSHIRE, LANCASHIRE, AND CHESHIRE,
THE ISLE OF MAN; AND IN IRELAND
FROM DUBLIN TO COLERAINE.

BY E. W. GRAY,

J.P. NEWBURY; A MEMBER OF THE TOWN COUNCIL; AND FOR
FOURTEEN YEARS VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE NEWBURY UNION.

*Gough Add's Gen. Top.
8274.*

NEWBURY:

W. HALL, SPEENHAMLAND

1865.



P R E F A C E.

THE following narration was not written with the most distant view for publication. It was penned for the sole purpose of affording amusement to a beloved sister during my absence from Newbury. At her death the manuscript fell into my hands, and there it remained unnoticed until a short time since, when curiosity alone prompted me to read it again. Having so done, I thought by the publication that some of the details might afford amusement to a certain class of readers. With this impression I placed it in the possession of a young person, for whom I feel much interest. I did so, with the view that he should consult his friends, and obtain their opinion as to its being worthy to go before the public. If they assented to such a proposition, then it became my wish that he should accept the manuscript as a testimony of my good wishes for his welfare in future life. His friends have advised him to accept the offer; and now, as it appears publicly, I have only to hope for its kind approval by a discerning and generous public. I have no other interest in the affair than the earnest wish that the speculation will turn out advantageously, for the sake of the young man who, by his friends, has undertaken the publication. This is my wish, and I trust, in being aware of my purpose, that critics will spare their arrows, and disarm their shafts, for I am conscious that blunders and mistakes will be found in the "Notes and Observations." These, however, I further trust will be pardoned. The only excuse I have to make for thus appearing before the public is the one I have offered, and if this is accepted then I am *satisfied and gratified*—*satisfied* in knowing that my excuse is received, and *gratified* in the hope that my endeavours to serve my young friend will not have been made in vain.

E. W. GRAY.

Newbury, 25th October, 1854.

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

ON THURSDAY, JUNE 8TH, 1843, I left Newbury by the coach from Southampton to Oxford, and I reached the latter place about 7 P.M. In passing from Newbury to Oxford, the road leads through the pleasant and beautiful village of Donnington: here are noticeable the almshouses founded in the reign of Richard II., by Sir Richard Adderbury for twelve old men. The Priory, late the property of the Cowslade family, but now of John Hughes, Esq.; the Castle House, and above it, the fine ruin of the castle. This castle was founded in the year 1260; and, since that period, it became celebrated as the residence of the father of English poetry—the poet Chaucer; but more celebrated, perhaps, as one of the sad scenes in English history of the civil war between Charles I. and his Parliament. In September, 1643, and in October, 1644, the two battles of Newbury were fought, and *both*, according to Clarendon, ended in favour of Charles, who had in each instance the advantage of having possession of Newbury.

To the historian, to the antiquarian, and to all who may feel an interest in making inquiries therein, there may be found, in and around this delightful village, abundant matter to gratify their most sanguine appetite. There stands the castle ruin, nearly in the same state as Charles left it, after its relief and his retirement to Wallingford. At Shaw, there stands the venerable and fine old mansion of Shaw House, now the residence of Henry Richard Eyre, Esq., but, in 1643 and 1644, the temporary residence of Charles. These, and many other objects, remain nearly as they were upwards of 200 years ago; and

afford ample materials to engage the interest, the curiosity, and the strictest attention of the most particular antiquarian, or the knowledge-seeking historian.

Going onwards, the road leaves Langley Hall, formerly a seat of Sir Walter James, Bart., on the right hand. The hall is now untenanted, but is the property of John Wasey, Esq.,* who resides at another seat, nearer Newbury, called Prior's Court.

Progressing, the town of East Ilsley is soon reached. This is a place full of public-houses; but these, during the year, are required to the full extent in which they exist: for, in consequence of the numberless fairs and markets held here, they are necessary; so extensive is the sale of sheep, carried on in these fairs and markets. Some thousands of sheep change hands during the year; the buyers and sellers coming from great distances, and the sheep-downs in the neighbourhood are very extensive, and the verdure of them is equal to their beauty. Formerly, the Duke of Cumberland, brother to George III., had stables at Katesgore in this parish; and stables still exist here for training running horses; the advantage of the beautiful downs forming a desirable course for such a purpose.

Proceeding, the borough and county town of Berkshire is reached. Abingdon is a town of great antiquity, and, in bygone days, a royal residence existed here; and so old is the town, that antiquarians state that before the establishment of Christianity in England, the Britons had a place of religious worship here. It is situate in a delightful valley; and, being well watered by the Ock and the Thames, it has every facility to make it a town of the first importance in the county in which it is situate. The ruins of the once magnificent abbey are met with; as also are certain remains of the monastery; the site of it being near the fine old church of St. Helen's. There is another church, that of St. Nicholas, near which stands the County Hall of the county of Berks, which is much admired for the beauty of its architecture. Still proceeding, Radley Hall, the fine seat of the late Admiral Sir George Bowyer, is left on the right hand; and from thence

* Now (1864) dead.

Bagley Wood is soon met with. Here a magnificent view of Oxford, sleeping on the rivers Cherwell and Isis, is met with; and well does this view obtain its name of "magnificent." It is the finest view of its kind in England; for, what with the beauty of towers and spires, rising out, as it were, from a vast extent of water and pleasant meadows, and bounded by distant hills, it forms a splendid whole. It should be seen to be appreciated.

Walked in and about the city, after refreshing myself with a cup of tea. Went to the Maidenhead Inn, situate opposite the gate of Lincoln College, which lies close to the north side of All Saint's Church in the High-street. I found good accommodation here; and, contrary to all the other inns at which I have been accustomed to go to at Oxford, I also found a clean bed and room, and charges extremely moderate; in proof of which, let me note that I had tea, supper, a glass of brandy-and-water, a bed and breakfast with meat and eggs, for which I was charged 5s. 3d. Attended a boat-race; fifteen boats, manned by the young men of so many different colleges, started; good competition took place between them; and Victory declared herself, I understood, in favour of the men of Oriel, who were much pressed by the next boat, containing the men of University College, and then those of Queen's, the rest following in succession. Boat exercise, if not followed up too closely, or too laboriously, is excellent; because it tends to expand the chest, and gives vigour to the body. The successful crew were received by long and loud cheers by a vast concourse of people, who had assembled on a very cold evening to witness the race. Thinking that the New Clarendon printing-office was a superb building from the impression it had made on my mind when looking at a print of it on the Oxford Almanack, I went in search of it; for, in my other visits to Oxford, I could never find it; although I thought it might be a conspicuous object among the beautiful buildings existing there; at last, I reached it in a back-street, near St. Giles's, and I must say that I was much disappointed with its exterior appearance. It was low and heavy, instead of high and commanding, and plain and cumbersome, instead of rich and light. Probably, it might be my want of taste, in saying, I was not in the

least pleased by seeing it. It is possible disappointment may have made me express this opinion on first beholding the building, after having seen it in print, where I thought it grand and beautiful. But no matter, so it was. Others, however, may have a very different opinion of its merits as a piece of architecture. This impression was not on my mind when taking a view of the Martyrs' Testimonial. Here was a very chaste and beautiful erection, elaborately carved in stone, with the three statues of Cranmer, Latimer, and Ridley in white marble. The inscription was not finished, but was in the course of execution, a tarpaulin being placed over it.* The testimonial is something like the ancient market-cross at Winchester, but is not, I think, well placed. It is near St. Mary Magdalen Church, and stands out of sight until you come at once upon it on leaving that church to the south of the pillar. The best view is obtained on the entrance to Oxford by St. Giles's Church. There, it is seen pretty well, yet the trees before St. John's College, and the avenue leading in part towards St. Mary Magdalen Church, obscures it from a full view. It is a beautiful pillar, and it does not disgrace the other buildings at Oxford, but forms an additional ornament to that beauty of public buildings.

Great progress is now making with another building, called by the name of Taylor's Public Rooms or Picture Gallery. This is close by the Martyrs' Testimonial, and it appears to be very extensive. Judging from the architecture, as it appears among the scaffolding, it will be very chaste and magnificent. Mr. Michael Angelo Taylor, I understand, left a large sum of money to the authorities at Oxford to erect this building, to which he consigned his pictures also. When finished, these pictures are to be placed in this building; for which purpose £100,000 is assigned, or it has been left to accumulate to that prodigious amount.†

All Souls' College is also under repair. It is undergoing the process of having a new casement of stone, placed over the crumbling, black, ragged stone, which so disfigures the exterior of these beautiful buildings, the two

* It is now (1854) finished.

† It is now (1854) finished.

churches of St. Mary and All Saints. The part finished looks exceedingly well.

It rained nearly the whole of the night; and the Port meadow, in which the races are held, was entirely under water to a foot in depth. This was also the case in the lowlands between Newbury and Oxford.

Friday morning, the 9th of June, left Oxford for Birmingham at 7 A.M., and reached that place about half past two o'clock, P.M. *Black Will*, the celebrated coachman, who for so many years was the driver of a coach from Oxford to London, and the idol of very many Oxonians, took the reins upon this occasion; and well indeed did he deserve them; for experience in that line appeared to have given him a full title to the honours of the whip, because he drove with skill and ease to himself; and the horses, knowing him so well that scarcely had he any necessity to use his whip during the whole distance, his voice being quite sufficient to put the animals into quick or slow motion. All the lowlands from Oxford to Birmingham the rain had put under water. If any advantage arose from a sight of this description, it was the circumstance of seeing all the rivers and brooks full to the very brim, and which gave a better appearance than seeing them empty, or half full of dirty water and mud. Rain also kept the hedges clean; and their beautiful verdure formed a high contrast to their appearance when covered with dust and dirt. The rain came down in violent showers, but we, that is, the coach, very fortunately escaped a drenching; because it so happened that we were, in every instance, either a little in advance or a little behind the showers as they passed over the road by which we travelled.

The country looked beautiful, and the corn, excepting in some poor lands near Oxford, was looking well; but here the oats and barley looked very bad and perishing. The crops of grass, in general, were good; and the trees full of luxuriance and beauty.

Passed Colonel Sheldon's late property; * it is now the property of Sir George Phillips. The house, in the castle style of building, stands very pleasantly on an eminence,

* Colonel Sheldon, who was M.P. for Wilton, resided for a few years in Newbury, and one of his daughters was buried in the church of Newbury.