A TRIP TO ENGLAND

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A Trip to England by Goldwin Smith

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BY

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IT seems useful in visiting a country to have not only a guide to places and routes, but a framework for observations and recollections. Otherwise the effect produced on the retina of the mind is apt to be like that produced by a whirl of successive sights on the retina of the eye. This is particularly the case when the objects of interest are of so many different kinds as they are in England. To furnish such a framework is the limited aim of this paper, which is an expansion of a lecture delivered to friends.

The voyage to England is now easy enough, barring that curious little malady which still defies medical science to trace its cause and is so capricious in its range, often taking the strong and leaving the weak. There is nothing to be said about the voyage. Only, as we career over those wild waters in a vast floating hotel at the

rate of five hundred miles a day, let us pay a tribute to the brave hearts which first crossed them in mere boats without charts or science of navigation. In the marvellous strides which of late years humanity has taken, nothing is more marvellous or more momentous than the unification of the world by the extinction of distance. Already we have made one harvest: we are fast making one mind and one heart for the world.

As an old country, England perhaps is naturally regarded first from the historical point of view, and especially by us of whose history she is the scene, whose monuments and the graves of whose ancestors she holds. It is an advantage which Canadians have over Americans that they have not broken with their history and cast off the influences, at once exalting and sobering, which the record of a long and grand foretime exerts upon the mind of a community. An American has no history before the Revolution, which took place at the end of the last century. In his parlance, "Revolutionary" denotes that which is most ancient: it is to the American the equivalent for "Norman." He says that the "Revolutionary" so and so was his ances-

tor, as an English nobleman would say that his ancestors came in with the Conquest.

Looking at the subject historically, we have the England of the ancient Britons, Roman England, Saxon England, the England of the Middle Ages, the England of the Tudors, the England of the Stuarts, the England of Anne and the Georges, all represented by their monuments. Of the primitive habits of the Britons we have monuments in hut-circles of British villages still to be seen on Exmoor, where the wild stag finds a shelter, and on wolds and downs, near Whitby or Marlborough, where the traces of the primeval world have not yet been effaced by the plough. Of their wild tribal wars we have monuments in the numerous earthworks, once forts or places of refuge for the tribe, which crown many a hill and of which perhaps the largest and most striking is the triple rampart of "Maiden Castle" on a hill near Dorchester. Of their dark and bloody superstition and of the blind submissiveness to priestly power still characteristic of the race, we have a monument in Abury, with its avenues of huge stones and the great circu-

lar earthwork from which, if the antiquaries are right, a dense ring of awe-struck worshippers gazed, perhaps by night, on the mystic forms of the priests moving among the sacrificial fires; and another in Stonehenge, which seems almost certainly to have been a temple, and which though it may somewhat disappoint in size will not disappoint in weirdness, if you see it, as it should be seen, on a dark evening when it stands amidst a number of other primeval relics on the lonely expanse of Salisbury Plain. Of the taste and skill in decoration wherewith the Celtic race was more largely gifted than with any faculty or quality which helps to form the solid basis of civilization, we have proofs in the golden torques and other ornaments, found in barrows, of which the Celtic museum at Dublin displays a glittering array. Sepulchral barrows also abound, and are memorials at once of loyal reverence for chieftainship and of the early craving for posthumous fame. The interest of Celtic monuments and antiquities belongs not merely to the past. They are the records of a race which still lives, with much of its original character, both political and religious, in those parts of the two islands where the Celt

found refuge in natural fastnesses from the sword of the Saxon conqueror — in the hill country of Devonshire and Cornwall, in the Welsh mountains and the Highlands of Scotland, but above all in Ireland, where the weaker race was sheltered by the sea. The history of England from one point of view may be regarded as a long effort to impart the political sentiments and institutions of the Anglo-Saxon to the remnants of the Celtic population. In Cornwall and Devonshire and in the Highlands of Scotland this, thanks to the co-operation of Protestantism with Constitutionalism, has been in large measure achieved: in Wales the work is less complete, the Welsh in the more mountainous districts retaining with the language much of the original character of their race. The Irish question, which is mainly one of race, is in all its perplexity still before us.

Of the Roman Empire, Britain was the remotest Western Province, the last won and the first lost, the one which imbibed least of the Roman civilization. The monuments of Roman occupation are proportionate in scale, and will not bear comparison with Verona, Arles, or Treves; yet they wear the majestic impress of the Empire, which