

MY HOLIDAY WALKING TOUR, AND HOW I MANAGED IT.



BERTRAM, a sturdy young fellow of seventeen, had but yesterday afternoon got home for the long vacation. He had well earned his holidays, as the three handsome prize volumes that lay open upon the drawing-room table, that stood in the bay-window, sufficiently testified. "Dulce Domum" had been sung, and *dulce domum* had been happily reached. The cricket-field and the fives-court, the cloisters and the lobbies, &c., that but a few days before rang again with the merry voices and the sharp whistle of the boys, were all now nearly as silent as a churchyard—inexpressibly, sadly silent—and only the occasional footstep of a school servant across the court, or the mellow chime of the quarter from the grey old tower of the chapel, sufficed to show that there was anything of life left there at all.

"Father," said Bertram to me, as he strolled out into the would-be garden of our pretty London suburb home, "where shall we go for our fortnight's trip these holidays? You know I generally like to have most of my time at home, but still a little outing will do neither of us any harm; for I had rather a heavy grind of it last term, and you told me yourself last night that, come what would, you meant to give Lincoln's Inn the cut direct next Wednesday, for you were quite knocked up."

I melted like wax at this appeal of my son, and thus gave vent to my opinions after a moment's silent reflection:—"I have often wondered, dear boy, why so many of us think it necessary to travel first of all two or three hundred miles by rail, before actually setting out upon our holiday rambles. Of course—to those who confine themselves to their own country—the English lakes, North Wales, and Scotland are all very lovely and most enjoyable; but then real English travelling of this sort is very expensive. At a given time of the year you get into a regular beaten tourists' track; it is 'the season' *par excellence*, and the hotels, flies, guides, &c., are all in alliance to be down upon you. It is their harvest-time, and you must pay 'through the nose' for everything. Yet, meantime, here are what are known as the home counties—Kent and Surrey, for example—rich in the picturesque beauty of their almost unrivalled scenery, but, with perhaps the exception of the south coast watering-places, comparatively unknown. What say you then, Bertram, to a walking tour nearer home?"

"Father! the very thing!" replied the boy, with a caper; his eyes dancing with pleasure at the thought of what was to him quite a novelty, while his very attitude was suggestive of an immediate start, for he had caught up his cap, which lay on the grass, as if that were the only essential preparation for their trip.

"Not quite so fast," said I, with a smile; "but we will nevertheless, if you please, set out on Wednesday. Get that garden-chair now, and let us have a chat about it." Bertram, however, scorned the garden-chair, but instantly flung himself on the grass by my side in eager attention.

"Oh, father! where shall we go?"

"That, young Impatience, we will settle presently; but suppose we first arrange *how* we shall go about it."

"*How?*" said Bertram, with a laugh; "why, I should imagine on our legs, if we are to call it a walking tour."

"Doubtless, my boy, but I am naturally referring to the preparations that we ought to make. A friend of mine the other day, who has been a great walking tourist, gave me a few general hints on this head, which I dare say you might like to hear. Naturally, the first and most indispensable thing for a walking tour is to be well shod. No matter how hot the weather may be, avoid cotton socks; good worsted or stout merino ones are the best; and let your boots, too, be strong, thick, and well made."

"I should have thought heavy-soled boots would have been rather tiring, papa," broke in Bertram.

"On the contrary, old fellow, a thin pair would be fatal to the trip. I recollect once walking home in the country, though no very great distance, from an evening party, in a pair of dress-boots that had perhaps seen their best days, and being quite foot-sore the next morning in consequence; nor, I dare say, have you forgotten that when Weston, the American pedestrian, was going his nocturnal rounds at the Agricultural Hall, one of his early opponents competed with him in a thin pair of shoes, which in a very few hours were filled with blood. Indeed, I would sooner walk in a pair of clump soles. Anything, too, in the way of a polished leather boot is most objectionable. Strong spring-sides, also, are preferable to laces, which latter are often liable to come undone, or to cut the foot when tied tightly again with frequent impatience. Neither socks nor boots should be new; the socks should first of all have paid at least two or three visits to the laundress, and the boots have been worn a good fortnight previously, so that the foot should have become thoroughly accustomed to both, as the slightest tightness or undue pressure on any part of either foot would involve the next train ignominiously home. Nor must the feet ever be washed in warm water. It is impossible to be too concise and particular on this head, as the condition of heel and toe will involve the success or the failure of your enterprise. Next, a good and fairly long flannel-shirt is almost indispensable—yes, flannel in the dog-days, Bertram, although you look so astonished. Flannel has saved more lives than brandy. The cloth clothes, too—a uniform tourist's suit, if you will—must fit easily and comfortably; and the hat—a wide-awake is the best (on no account go in the 'tall Sunday' one)—should

well shade the head all round. Then again, the weight of our knapsack, or small hand-bag, should be cut down as much as possible. One change of clothes, but of the very lightest description, is perhaps indispensable. Thick boots are heavy things to carry; a small parcel, therefore, might be made up with advantage at home, and forwarded so as to meet you at some hotel on any pre-arranged point of your journey, from which you could then send off things that you might be glad to discard. Waterproof things often *prove* not waterproof, and are generally uncomfortable and always unhealthy, so avoid them; but a light umbrella, a stout hooked walking-stick, a good knife, and a piece of hooing—the sailor's *sine qua non*—are always useful."

It was thus accoutred that Bertram and I stood on our door-step on the following Wednesday morning, after a substantial breakfast—for it is an utter mistake to attempt much when fasting—ready for flight. We had agreed to take it easily, rather than otherwise, and not to do more than some fifteen miles a day, or thereabouts, at first starting. Our object was threefold—health, pleasure, and edification. We had no intention of getting over the ground as fast as we could, and merely for the sake of it. But yesterday I heard of three young walking tourists in the Isle of Wight, who a few years ago recorded with evident pride, in the visitors' book at one of the hotels there, that they had gone round—"done" is the correct word—the island in some incredibly short time. Some wag, who followed them, wrote under their names, "What Goths, to have gone over such beautiful scenery so hurriedly!"

We somewhat transgressed our fifteen miles' limit the first day, on the evening of which we found ourselves at Sevenoaks. Let those who have not been there, and who feel inclined to despise what in their simplicity they might call our cockneyfied tour, go there as soon as they can, and judge of its beauty for themselves. The noble view of the Weald of Kent, that we had upon reaching the summit of the high ground adjoining Knole Park, brought us to a stand. Here, however, let us at once say that it is evidently impossible for us to enter into any very detailed description of all the objects of interest that we passed. We can but touch upon them.

Those of us who know and love our England well, know too how rich she is in them. Our tastes, indeed, are sufficiently varied, but there is plenty to gratify each and all of the most fastidious. If scenery and the works of nature—let us say at once, the works of God—have the greatest attractions for us, for the rugged, the wild, the mountainous, we must go to the north, to Scotland or Wales; but for the richly-wooded, undulating landscape, or the wild flowers, we must go to Kent—"the garden of England," as it has been well called. Lovers of sport, again, need not, with few exceptions, go beyond the confines of their own county to gratify their desire to their heart's content. But

what shall we say when we come to art, to architecture, to cathedrals, and old parish churches? Those whose tastes lie in this direction must, indeed, find old England a very mine of inexhaustible delights. Probably the number of walking tourists over the flats of Norfolk, Suffolk, and Lincolnshire is but very few. Doubtless it would be greater were it more generally known that the village churches of the eastern counties might almost be called miniature cathedrals. For the ruins of our stately abbeys, grand even in the desolation of their decay, we must go to Yorkshire; yet there is no single county that cannot boast of some ivy-crowned priory big with historical reminiscence. Antiquarian associations of this character bring us, in passing, to speak of the noble estates, mansions, and castles of the great, one of which Bertram and his father were now exploring. There are, however, many houses of the kind whose general external effect is more striking than that of Knole. Yet, as we wandered among the giant oaks in the park, we could almost picture to ourselves the bearded Cranmer, the bloated Henry, or the ruffled Elizabeth passing under the venerable gateway.

But we were off again the next day, determined to be eccentric in our route. We felt perfectly able to gratify our tastes and our curiosity without visiting places which can boast of that greatest of all nuisances to a resident—"the season." Towns and watering-places, indeed, of this description we were particularly careful to avoid.

Winding our way once more along the ridge of the hills, partly with the purpose of enjoying the noble view they commanded, we dipped at length into the valley, taking in Penshurst and Hever on our way. Those to whom this part of the country is at all well known will at once see that our object was to get among the Surrey hills *via* Reigate and Dorking. Once again we came to anchor, at the house of a jovial uncle, whose port was unimpeachable. Let us make a pun of it. Thunder had overtaken us, and we were thus most agreeably reminded of the proverb, "Any *port* in a storm." Finally, for we were induced to extend the length of our trip, we rambled as far as Guildford, Godalming, and Haslemere. If anything, there is perhaps a more metropolitan ring about the word "Surrey" than there is about "Kent;" but I am not at all sure, after all, whether the sublime and picturesque scenery to be had here does not excel that which we enjoyed at our first halting-place. I have not yet forgotten when I first stood almost knee-deep in a perfect sea of purple heather, under a cloudless sky, and gazed upon the rich woodland, hill and valley, in the neighbourhood of the new Charterhouse. In my enthusiasm I compared it with some views in Scotland. Inexorable time at length summoned us to return to the graver duties of life, but it will be long before we shall forget the pleasure and satisfaction that we derived from our walking tour in the home counties.

