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Excerpt

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RETROSPECTIONS.

LIVERPOOL STREET, LONDON.

AT the close of the previous volume I and my readers parted in Liverpool Street, where, from 1840, I resided about fifteen years. This was the most eventful period of my archæological life. My Visitors' Book has embalmed the names of many hundreds, among which are some of the most eminent men in various departments of science, art, and literature, in foreign countries as well as in the United Kingdom. Some became warm and enduring friends; many were genial correspondents. A few yet survive; but it is melancholy, as I look over the long list, to note how scanty is the number of survivors.

Throughout these years my museum of London antiquities became increasingly attractive, and it was yearly announced by the London press as one of the places to be visited. But this celebrity, like worldly riches and power, brought its responsibilities. Seldom a day passed without visitors; and, although they often came at inconvenient hours, they were ever attended to. In the evenings I was seldom alone, and often my rooms were filled. At the same time I had sterner and exacting duties to perform; and it was no small difficulty to discharge conscientiously this continuous round of divided labour. It was effected by sacrifices. I could but seldom accept invitations; and thus I lost the opportunity of making the acquaintance of many whom I should have liked to have known, and whom I now wonder I never knew personally. Now, I am surprised that I could have

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so long refrained from attending the theatres, the opera and concerts, considering my natural bias. This bias was kept in abeyance by circumstances to which reflection told me it was wise to yield.

But health and inclination required occasional change ; and, either alone, or in company with especial friends, I made visits to France and Germany, for antiquarian researches ; and also to various parts in our own country. The results have been partially reported, but will be more fully described in the course of this volume. Visits to my relatives at Knockholt near Greenhithe ; at Southsea, and in the Isle of Wight, were regularly paid. I was in frequent request by Lord Londesborough at Grimston, Scarborough, and Londesborough. Mr. Neville's excavations ; those of Mr. Clayton, Mr. Rolfe, Mr. Bland, and others, together with my own researches in Kent, brought me relaxation of the most agreeable and wholesome kind. The Society of Antiquaries and the Numismatic Society gave me and my friends employment on special evenings. Then I had to pay visits to some who could not come to me, including Captain R. B. Scott and Moncrieff the dramatist, at the Charterhouse, or *Charterhouse*, as the former correctly wrote it.

In Kent I numbered many friends. I could have walked over the county and have found them almost as numerous as the milestones. To the Roaches of Arreton Manor I must have been indebted for introduction to their landlord, Mr. Charles Wykeham Martin, of Leeds Castle, with whom I established a warm and lasting friendship.

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WHEN first I became acquainted with Mr. C. Wykeham Martin, the Leeds Castle estate, left embarrassed by General Martin, was in the hands of trustees. Of course the heir, Mr. C. Wykeham Martin, on the certainty of its speedy extrication, could at once have taken up the high position to which he was destined; and precedent, custom, and the world's opinion would have sanctioned him. But his independent and noble mind suggested a different course. In his spacious and once regal castle he reserved for himself two or three rooms, with few attendants and surroundings, sufficient, and only sufficient, for a private gentleman with limited means. He may have kept a riding horse; but I doubt his having a carriage of any kind, for in one of his earliest invitations he proposed our walking to Leeds Castle from Gravesend. Evidently he had accustomed himself to this primitive mode of transit. Here is a lesson to the thousands who keep up appearances of what is not; living in luxury, really, by falsehood and theft; a lesson, if it were possible they could be taught.

In the time of General Martin, considerable portions of the Leeds Castle estate in the Isle of Wight were sold, illegally, as it appeared in after years, for the trustees of C. Wykeham Martin brought actions-at-law against the purchasers or their heirs, and recovered. Pear Tree, near Godshill, had been purchased by my father, and thus lost by my brother John. In the seventeenth century this formed part of the freehold property of our ancestors, the Smiths of Shide. My brother resolved on laying his case before Mr. C.

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Wykeham Martin himself, and I accompanied him. It was on a very cold day in winter. We took a carriage from Maidstone rather late in the afternoon, arranging to return to Mr. Charles's, at Chillington House, to sleep. Mr. Martin received us with his usual urbanity, and at once said he hoped we should stay the night. When my brother told him the object of his visit, he smiled, and replied: "You will be surprised, Mr. Smith, when I tell you that this is the first account I have heard of what you tell me. Now, all I can do is to speak to the trustees; and rely on it, I will do the best I can for you. As you say you cannot stay the night, you must have something to eat and drink." He rang the bell, and gave orders that whatever could be got ready forthwith should be served. After an excellent dinner, we returned to Chillington House, where my brother was doomed to fast from smoking. I slept in the attic, surrounded by windows which were not impervious to the icy cold and snow; but after calling carpets and rugs to my aid, I slept as soundly as in my own weather-proof room in Liverpool Street. Chillington House was roomy and cold. Fairholt once slept there and suffered. He ended his narrative of the visit with, "I could see the daylight through the bed clothes!" My brother repurchased Pear Tree, I believe, on favourable terms.

This anecdote will give a notion of Mr. Wykeham Martin's prompt hospitality. It was ever so. When the Rev. Dr. Bruce was staying with me here (at Temple Place), we visited Leeds Castle. If I remember correctly, we walked there across the country. I am certain we walked back. It was about noon when we arrived; Mr. Martin came to us in the entrance hall with smiles and welcome. "You have had a long walk," he said, "and must want something beyond rest, and it is your lunch time. Now, having been at a ball in Maidstone, we have but this moment left the breakfast table. I suggest that you go to it at once,

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and make your lunch ; I believe there is everything you require, but if not, ring. I will give you half an hour or three quarters. By that time I shall be free from some workmen I have to superintend, and will rejoin you, and shew Dr. Bruce the castle." What an extra charm there is in hospitality when it is given at the proper time ; that is to say, on occasions such as this !

On my first visit to Leeds Castle, Mr. Martin said to the *custos* at the gate-house, " This is my friend, Mr. Roach Smith : look at him ; do you think you will know him again ? Remember that he always has entrance and welcome here, whether I am at home or away." And that order was never forgotten ; up to his last illness C. Wykeham Martin ever welcomed me, and my friends also ; and I believe, had I needed it, he would have given me some appointment in the castle, to be near him. Often have my antiquarian friends, either with me or from my passport, been shewn over this interesting castle, and regaled afterwards ; often, through many years, have I been pressed to bring them.

My friends the Blacketts, when they resided at Stockbury, were visited by Dr. Justus Halbertsma, of Deventer (author of the *Lexicon Frisicum*). The learned Frisian was extremely interested in the antiquities of our country, especially the Anglo-Saxon ; our customs, manners, and social life. His hosts were very desirous of his seeing Leeds Castle, and applied to me. An invitation was directly given to inspect the castle, and afterwards to dine. Dr. Halbertsma was much pleased ; nothing escaped him, and he even made inquiry about beer and brewing. Mr. Martin asked him if he would like to taste some of many years' standing, and of great strength ; in fact, the " strong beer " of past times. It was just what Dr. Halbertsma would like to see and taste. The butler was ordered to bring a jug full. I and the doctor were on our guard, and simply sipped it. Others, despite

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our warning, were not so cautious, and in the course of the evening felt the effects of this beverage, once common enough, but now rarely to be met with. Of the party was Mr. Halbertsma, junior, the same, I imagine (Tiallingius), who edited his father's very important Lexicon, imperfect as it was, in 1873. Were it completed, it would be a treasure for the students of our English language; and even in its present state it is most valuable.

I accompanied from Temple Place the eminent gardener, Mr. Thomas Rivers, to Leeds Castle, by invitation, to inspect a peach border, in which the trees were in a most flourishing condition in respect to foliage and wood; but they did not produce fruit. It was autumn, and this year my peach trees at Temple Place bore abundantly. Mr. Rivers's practised eye enabled him, in a moment, to name the different kinds. Tasting an Early Anne, he remarked: "Now this is a peach we consider quite second rate, but here it is in perfection, and very delicious. It is ever the case; fruits in high perfection, though of inferior kinds, will often beat the better sorts not so well matured." His knowledge of trees in general was as profound as his pomological learning. When walking with Mr. J. G. Waller to the Pont du Gard, I gathered some berries of a stunted tree growing upon barren, high ground, and laden with black clusters of fruit. The tree to us was a novelty, and so it was when I had reared it in my garden; but the richer soil caused it to grow full ten feet high, and it never produced a berry. Mr. Rivers, in a moment, detected it in the shrubbery, and naming it, observed that he had not seen one for a long time. With him there were "books in the running brooks; sermons in stones"; and his visits to me, and mine to him at Sawbridgeworth, were full of delight and information.

We walked from Maidstone, reaching Leeds Castle early in the afternoon. After lunch we were introduced to the peach border. It was of considerable length,

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and full eight feet wide, stocked with trees of vigorous growth; but totally without fruit. "I should imagine," said Mr. Rivers, smiling, "that this peach border must be a nice little annuity for some Maidstone gardener. I should like you, sir, to see Roach Smith's peach trees. I am not sure they have any borders at all; the roots of the trees are under gravel walks. Your trees are fed by rich earth, which promotes this exuberant growth of wood, and causes barrenness in fruit." He then gave directions that the ground should be laid open; that clay should be laid upon the roots, after root pruning, and that a gravel path should be made within a foot from the wall.

With the greatest good humour, at a meeting of the Society of Antiquaries, Mr. Wykeham Martin bore my explanation, so different from his own, of the large iron nails found in graves in Bourne Park, near Canterbury. He had imagined, with others, that these nails indicated that the inmates of the graves had been crucified. But I at once shewed, from numerous discoveries, that they were used for the purpose for which nails are intended and commonly applied. Mr. Gladstone was present, and, seated opposite to me, testified by a smile and a nod his approval of my remarks.¹ Unbounded tolerance was one of Mr. Wykeham Martin's characteristics. A Churchman, he was kind and generous to all sects; never inquiring about creed when demands upon his purse were made for charitable or benevolent purposes. A Liberal in politics, he never dictated to his Conservative tenants, or intimated a wish how they should vote. My cousins, the Roaches, always voted against him. At an election at Newport, he and John Roach were walking together in the High Street, when my cousin suddenly exclaimed: "Sir, it will never do for us to be seen walking together on this occasion; people will think you have converted me to your side. Remember, you have

¹ They are printed in full in the third volume of the *Collectanea Antiqua*.

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changed ; we are what we always were." Mr. Wykeham Martin had changed or modified his political opinions.

As a landlord, Mr. Martin was an example of thoughtfulness and liberality, and his provident care was felt by the labourers as well as the tenants. All over his estates the comforts of the former were especially considered ; they were not only well housed, but they had privileges such as, unhappily, are not always accorded to the hard-working sons of the soil. I have elsewhere¹ given an illustrative anecdote, which I repeat, to give Mr. Wykeham Martin his share in the story, for the tenants could not have done so much and so well without the support of the landlord ; and I give it with fuller particulars. My brother Richard was driving Mr. Cobbett, the celebrated political writer, from Landguard, where he was staying, to Newport, to lecture. As they passed through the village of Arreton, Cobbett was struck with the neat and cheerful labourers' cottages, with flowers in front, fruit trees and vegetables behind, and with appendages which bespeak additional substantial comforts. Probably he may also have noticed the allotment grounds. Cobbett expressed delight and admiration, and asked to whom they belonged. "To my relatives, the Roaches," replied my brother ; adding, "But, Mr. Cobbett, they are all Tories." "Don't tell me, Smith, about their being Tories," he replied energetically, "they are damned good men." Cobbett had a habit of thus emphasising ; he meant that they were supremely good ; and so we hope the recording angel understood the word.

The Queen and Prince Leopold, when staying at Osborne, occasionally visited Arreton Manor House ; and Her Majesty and other members of the Royal Family, have, now and then, called since the death of the Prince. The Queen was pleased with the place

¹ *Scarcity of Home-grown Fruits, with Remedial Suggestions*, p. 14.

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and its surroundings, the church and churchyard included. It must have been a change and relief to be free of the forms and etiquette of the Court; and, beyond the pretty agricultural scenery, to see something of human nature unrestrained and truthful.

My cousin was scrupulously particular in keeping secret, as much as possible, the visits of Royalty, fearing, no doubt, he might incur the charge of a breach of confidence. It was, in him, right and honourable; but the Queen herself does not see the necessity of shrouding herself in any way from the public. In deference to this feeling of the family I am prohibited from telling an anecdote of the Queen's chivalric sense of propriety and honour, and kind-heartedness. When the second edition of my *Rural Life of Shakespeare* was printed, I sent, through my cousin, a copy to Prince Leopold, at Osborne. He wrote to me that the Prince had replied in such warm and flattering terms that he dared not show the letter to any one; but that I should see it when I came to Arreton! My curiosity was never gratified, for I forgot to ask for it; but I felt with the poet that

“ If Fortune frown, why then I scorn to woo her ;
But if she smile, I will be civil to her.”

My visits to Mr. C. Wykeham Martin introduced me to many of his friends and relatives, among whom are his brothers-in-law, Archdeacon Trollope, now Suffragan Bishop of Nottingham, and Mr. Anthony Trollope; Sir John Lubbock; and Mr. Philip Wykeham Martin, M.P. for Rochester, who did not survive his father many years. He inherited his father's urbanity and other good qualities. Major Cornwallis Martin is the only surviving brother of C. Wykeham Martin. A son, Fairfax, died when a lad; a daughter, Miss Maria Wykeham Martin, happily survives. On September 13, 1869, he wrote, “ It is one of the penalties I, in common with yourself, have had to pay for the exten-

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sion of life. I have only one brother left out of ten ; but also I have lost two sons out of four, which is more out of the course of nature.”

Most of my numerous visits to Leeds Castle were supplemented by a call on Mr. Alfred Pryer, of Hollingbourne, from whom I ever received attentions in various ways ; and, on the road, I introduced myself to Mrs. Sarah Blakett, from Newcastle-upon-Tyne, a lady intelligent and refined, with whom, and with whose family at Stockbury and Wouldham, I and my sister frequently interchanged visits.

The last time I was at Leeds Castle was just before the death of Mr. Wykeham Martin, when he was in London. I took with me not only visitors to myself and sister, but also Captain and Mrs. Hemsley and friends. We drove across the country, taking our provisions ; but before we left in the evening, and while the carriages were being prepared, the housekeeper had provided tea and coffee on the lawn. I was not surprised at this welcome supplement to a very charming day, well knowing how a hospitable master, when absent, ever sheds a benign influence upon all around him, who know his wishes and act without express command. More than once in my pedestrian rambles have I been invited indoors and entertained by the domestics in their master's absence.

The widow of Mr. Philip Wykeham Martin now resides at the Castle, and courteously allows it to be inspected.