

# BOSTON POST.

SATURDAY MORNING, AUG. 18, 1877.

## FOREIGN SKETCHES,

II.

The Black Country—Leamington—Warwick Castle—Kenilworth.

To get from Chester to Leamington we had to pass through the "Black Country," as it is called, and I always supposed Mr Ruskin's anger and hatred against this coal and iron age of ours to be due to the exaggerations of his intense temperament until I had really seen its horrors, for I can truthfully call them nothing else. It is quite inconceivable that this fair and lovely earth can be transformed into what so nearly resembles our idea of the infernal regions. A succession of towns and villages perfectly black with smoke and grime, the sun invisible, the face of nature obscure, no green fields or any trees, and on every hand these chimneys belching forth actual fire with the thick smoke.—*Awful!* For human beings to be obliged to spend their entire lives in such surroundings is heart-rending. Negro slavery was nothing to it, and it is no wonder that the men brutalize themselves with fierce drinking, compel their wives to labor at their own severe trades, and kick them to death with their hob-nailed shoes, for a place that so nearly resembles Gehenna *must* develop something akin to fiends. One would think that all the science and invention in England would be brought passionately to bear upon this one question of how to burn the smoke from these chimneys, for certainly there can be no problem before Englishmen more instantly pressing and pleading for solution than this.

The fashionable watering-place of Leamington is a new town for England, not being above fifty years old. It is splendidly paved, and as clean as possible, and there are plenty of trees and grass all about, which gives it a pleasant look to American eyes; for generally there are neither, in English and continental towns, except in the parks and squares devoted to them. Leamington is the paradise of respectable

spinsters with moderate incomes, who are in about four thousand majority of the population. Every house in the streets has a name on the wall or on the gate, as "The Lodge," "The Grove," "Mills Villa," even where there is only a scrap of a yard, and perhaps none at all. The hotels and lodging houses are excellent, and it is a delightful place wherein to while away the weeks or months, as the case may be. But to the tourist, the attractions of Leamington are the striking objects of interest in its vicinity—Warwick Castle, Stratford-on-Avon, Kenilworth, Combe Abbey, and others. So, on the morning after our arrival, we drove at once to Warwick Castle, about two miles from Leamington, and which you first see mirroring itself in the river in a haughty and motionless indifference which seems to say to the smart new neighbor near it, "My shadow, even, is worth more than your substance."

We entered a towered gateway and found ourselves in a defile cut into the solid rock, whose walls of stone rose up above us many feet, and were entirely draped with long strings of ivy which dangled down from over the top. It wound about, this defile, and was perfectly enchanting—so cool and shaded and romantic. At the second turn or so in it we came upon the castle, a magnificently stately pile of mediæval architecture in gray stone, with battlemented towers at each end and a gateway in the middle. The moat is now all full of beautiful shrubs and trees pressing up against the castle walls, which offended my companion's sense of the suitable very much. He thought it ought to have been left as bald and grim as in the days when it was a real fortress. We went under the gate and found ourselves in the castle court—an immense quadrangle enclosed on three sides with tall towers and high walls surmounted by great roofs—and were let in at the entrance by a major-domo who looked so alarmingly like a gentleman that I did not see how we *could* offer him a fee.

In 1872, a great fire had destroyed the celebrated "baronial hall" of the castle and thirty-one other rooms which were not yet restored, though in process of being so. Therefore we did not see many rooms, but those that were shown us were quite enough.—"*My gracious! my gracious!*"—when I realized what an art-