Down Along The Dee.

Paper read before the first graduate meeting of the Society of '87.

THERE is one town in England which all tourists visit. Not London, which is not merely a city, but a howling wilderness of houses, a desert of bricks and slates, or in fact anything but a town; nor Liverpool, which tourists go to because they have to, and leave as soon as they possibly can, and so can hardly be said to visit; but a place not far from Liverpool, and associated in the average mind with sidewalks on the elevated railroad principle, Cheshire cheese, and old Roman camps. Not that these are the only attractions, but the proximity of the town to Liverpool unfortunately makes it likely to be either first or last on the list of attractions of a European tour. In the former case, the travelers have not yet been shaken down by the friction of journeying into that state of philosophic resignation and enduring receptiveness necessary to ignore those annoyances of travel which are not mentioned in books, and enjoy despite them. In the latter, all the unforeseen and accumulated delays of the journey combine to force the unhappy sight-seer to “take in” remaining attractions with a boomerang motion and velocity not conducive to the appreciation of anything but the joys of home, and their remoteness. The true way is: Leave a broad margin of time— even a week— at the end of your prospectus; then when you return to Liverpool, gather up the boxes of mementoes and other truck shipped from various parts of the Continent, pack your trunks, and have all heavy baggage sent therewith on your steamer. Then, with nothing but your “grip” and umbrella, retire to that restful old town for a brief breathing spell which will enable you to saunter calmly aboard, the morning of sailing, with the air of a man at peace with all the world, and old Neptune in particular; while your unhappy friend who came on, from Heaven knows where, last night, rushes wildly around after missing valises and steamer-chairs, and gets himself in fine trim for an early rally on the leeward rail.

It was my fortune to belong to a party which followed the first mode of procedure. With us, the agonies of packing and re-packing were now over. All weighty articles, and with them all weighty cares, were off our hands, and four months of rapid travel and frenzied sight-seeing had amply prepared us to enjoy three days of peace and quietness. Less than an hour’s ride from dirty, bustling Liverpool, part of it through immense chemical works, whose odor recalled the Freshman laboratory, and we were in the oldest, quaintest, and most be-written town of England.

Chester is rather a fraud, after all. You walk around the wall, drop in at the Cathedral and a couple of other churches, stare at the elevated sidewalks, and wonder what on earth they were put up there for, look at the very few old gabled houses with wooden carvings remaining, and then you may consider the town exhausted, and go boating on the Dee; — boating being such an all-sufficient diversion of our English cousins, that it is almost impossible there to find a ditch big enough to drown a cat in without a boat containing a maiden pulling and youth ballasting the stern on it. However, if you have antiquarian tendencies, you may hunt up what is left of the Roman forum, or bath. We saw a sign up, “Roman Bath, 3 d.”; and as we had been paying anywhere from twenty cents to forty for baths, we thought that was dirt cheap, and went in. It was a very small pastry-shop; and when the woman saw us, she kicked a barrel or did something which brought up a young man. He lit a candle, and led us down a flight or two of ladder-like stairs, and into a regular cellar, with stone walls, no window, dirt floor, and a rectangular hole about the size of an ordinary bathtub in it, nearly full of suspicious-looking water. He told us it was always full, being fed by a spring, and stirred it up with a pole to illustrate how spring-like and clear it was. Then he opened a door in the stone wall at about the height of one’s head, and showed a little, low, oven-like place, full of short stone pillars about as thick as a man’s arm. He pointed out some small holes in the roof of the place, and said that this was where they used to build the fire,