

Goodrich Samuel Griswold

**Peter Parley's Visit to London,
During the Coronation of Queen
Victoria**



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CHAPTER I. PARLEY ARRIVES IN LONDON

"Well, my little friends, here is your old acquaintance, Peter Parley, come to tell some more of his amusing Tales. You wonder, I dare say, what could tempt such a frail old man as I am to leave home, and come so far. You shall hear.

"A Coronation, you must know, is a sight not to be seen every day in the United States, where we have neither King nor Queen, so thinks I to myself, I hear a great deal about the grandeur of the spectacle which is to be exhibited at the crowning of Queen Victoria, and though I have seen many grand sights in my day, I have never seen a Coronation, so I shall just get into one of these new steam ships which take one across the Atlantic Ocean so quickly, and have a look at the affair. I shall, besides, have an opportunity of seeing the kind London friends who treated me so handsomely when I was last in England, and then I shall have such lots of new stories for my young friends. I must – I shall go!

"Peter Parley is not a man to spend much time in idling after having formed a resolution, so the very next day, having bid my old housekeeper good bye, I was on my way to New York.

"As soon as I arrived at New York, I made enquiries about the steam ships, and, finding that the 'Great Western' was to sail very soon, I secured my passage in her, and then went to visit my friends in that city, for I always like to fulfil the old adage, and finish my work before I begin to play.

"Every body was surprised at my undertaking, and some kind folks wanted to persuade me to stay at home, thinking to frighten me by telling me about the length of the voyage, &c. They did not know Peter Parley. One wag, who wished to be very witty, asked me why I did not wait and take my passage in the new American ship, the 'Horse-Alligator,' which was to sail on the 25th of June, and arrive in London the day before! I could not help laughing at the idea, but I told him that steam was quick enough for me.

"I have already told you about my voyages across the Atlantic, so I need do no more now than make just one passing remark on the splendour of the fitting-up, and the admirable arrangements of the 'Great Western.' We passed a great many vessels as we came along, especially when we were not far distant from the American and English shores. They had no chance with us. Sometimes we discovered them far a-head, like mere specks on the ocean. In an hour or two we came up with them, and, in as much more time, left them far behind. The steady and untiring whirl of the steamer's paddles carried every thing before it.

"We reached Bristol in thirteen days, and, as I had nothing to detain me there, I hurried on to London, and arrived in the middle of the grand preparations.

"Every body was as busy as a bee. – Nothing was talked of but the Coronation. 'Oh! Mr. Parley, have you come to see the Coronation too?' was my first salute from every lip. My kind old friend, Major Meadows, insisted on my taking up my quarters in his house, and promised that I should see every thing that was to be seen, and hear every thing that was to be heard. This was just what I wanted to be at, so I fixed myself with him at once."

CHAPTER II.

PARLEY GOES TO SEE THE NEW CROWN

"After paying a few visits, and renewing old friendships, I set myself, in good earnest, to see what was to be seen.

"The most attractive object, connected with the Coronation, exhibiting at the time, was the new crown made for the occasion. I accordingly made the best of my way into the city, to the shop of Messrs. Rundell and Bridge, her Majesty's goldsmiths, on Ludgate Hill, who, with the greatest liberality, had thrown open their rooms that the public might have an opportunity of inspecting the crown.

"So great was the crowd, all anxious to have a peep, that it was some time before I could press forward to the door of the shop. Carriages were so busy taking up and setting down company, that the street was quite blocked up. At length, however, by dint of perseverance, Peter Parley managed to squeeze in.

"After traversing the shop, all round which are ranged articles of the most massive and costly description, we were ushered into an interior apartment, in which, in glass cases, were deposited the precious curiosities.

"In the centre, the admired of all beholders, was the Royal Crown. It is beautifully designed, and formed in the most costly and elegant manner, and so covered with precious stones, as almost to dazzle the eyes of old Peter Parley. It is composed of hoops of silver, enclosing a cap of deep purple velvet. The hoops are completely covered and concealed by precious stones, the whole surmounted by a ball covered with small diamonds, and having a Maltese cross of brilliants on the top of it. The body of the crown is wreathed with fleurs-de-lis and Maltese crosses; the one in the front being ornamented with a very large heart-shaped ruby, once, I was informed, a principal ornament in the crown of Edward the Black Prince, and which he is said to have worn at the battle of Cressy. Peter Parley cannot remember all the details, for besides these, there are many other precious stones in the crown. The rim is surrounded with ermine, and it certainly struck me as being one of the finest things I had ever seen.

"Close beside the crown were the coronets of the Royal Dukes and Duchesses, but though they also were made of costly materials, the attractions of the crown were so great as to throw the others quite into the back ground. I had hardly time to turn my eyes toward the case containing the Orb and Sword of state, before I was hurried away by the pressure of the crowd behind, which kept pouring in in undiminished numbers.

"As I moved towards the door behind the shop, which was set apart for visitors retiring, I passed a table on which was displayed a service of massive gold utensils, to be used in the consecration service.

"When I reached the street, I found it still densely crowded. I wanted to go to St. Paul's, which stands close by, but was afraid to venture into such a crowd, so I directed my steps to Westminster Abbey, making my way with some difficulty down Ludgate Hill and along Fleet Street, and passing beneath Temple Bar, which marks the boundary of the City."

CHAPTER III.

PARLEY VISITS WESTMINSTER ABBEY AND HYDE-PARK. PREPARATIONS FOR THE FAIR

"As I approached the venerable pile I found all in bustle and confusion. Every where carpenters were busily engaged fitting up galleries for the accommodation of spectators of the procession on the day of the coronation. Ranges of such erections lined the whole course of the street through which the procession was to pass, up to the very door of the Abbey; even the church-yard was lined with them. These I was told were the speculations of tradesmen, who let the sittings according to the value of the situation, at prices varying from half-a-sovereign up to a couple of guineas. For some very choice places even five guineas was asked.

"Peter Parley could not help smiling at the fine names which had been given to some of these erections; such as the 'Royal Victoria Gallery,' the 'Royal Kent Gallery,' &c., &c.

"By order of the Earl Marshal no visitors were permitted to enter the Abbey; but as good luck would have it, just as I happened to be passing the western grand entrance I met a gentleman connected with the Board of Works, whom I had seen at Major Meadows's the day before, and who most obligingly offered to introduce me.

"I gladly availed myself of his invitation, and was much struck with the grandeur and extent of the preparations.

"At the western entrance to the Abbey a suite of apartments for robing-rooms for her Majesty and the members of the Royal Family had been erected. So completely did this structure harmonize externally with the rest of the antique building, that I should not have observed that it was a temporary erection had it not been pointed out to me. The chamber set apart for her Majesty was fitted up in the most gorgeous manner – the walls beautifully ornamented, and the furniture, all of the richest and most magnificent description. Though less costly the apartments for the Royal Family were equally chaste.

"The interior of the Abbey presented a scene at once animated and beautiful. Workmen were busily engaged in various parts finishing the preparations. I will have occasion to tell you about the interior of the Abbey by and by, so I may as well say nothing about it at present.

"Peter Parley now proceeded to Hyde-Park to see the preparations for the grand fair which was to be held in that noble pleasure-ground on this joyous occasion.

"Already many booths displayed themselves on the plain, and many more were in the act of being erected. Richardson, who Peter Parley understood is one of the most famous of the show-folks, had erected a large and handsome theatre, which even thus early seemed to have considerable attractions for the multitude who had gathered round it in great numbers.

"Peter Parley having seen all that was worth seeing in the fair was beginning to feel tired, and was directing his steps homeward, when all of a sudden his attention was attracted to a particular part of the Park to which people seemed to be hastening from all quarters. Peter Parley hurried to the spot and was most agreeably surprised to find that it was Queen Victoria, accompanied by her suite, taking her accustomed airing in her carriage."

CHAPTER IV. PARLEY SEES THE QUEEN, AND RELATES SOME ANECDOTES OF HER MAJESTY

"What a dear sweet lady!' were the first words of Peter Parley when the Royal cavalcade had passed.

"She is a dear sweet lady, Mr. Parley, and, what is more, she is as good as she is sweet,' said my friend, Major Meadows, who, afraid lest I should overwalk myself in my zeal for sight-seeing, had followed me from Westminster Abbey and luckily fallen in with me in the park, and he went on to relate many very interesting anecdotes of the young Queen, which Peter Parley took good care to remember because he knew they would gratify his young friends."

"Her Majesty is doatingly fond of children, Mr. Parley,' said he, 'and that you know is always the sign of a good heart. Nothing can be finer than the traits of character exhibited in a little anecdote which Lady M – told me a day or two ago.

"Not long since, her Majesty commanded Lady Barham, one of the ladies in waiting, to bring her family of lovely children to the new palace. They were greatly admired and fondly caressed by the Queen; when a beautiful little boy about three years of age artlessly said —

"I do not see the Queen; I want to see the Queen;' upon which her Majesty, smiling, said —

"I am the Queen, love;' and taking her little guest into her arms repeatedly kissed the astonished child.

"This little anecdote warmed old Peter Parley's heart towards the young Queen; nor did any of the stories which Major Meadows told me tend to lessen my regard for her. Peter Parley was pleased to hear that she has a proper sense of the importance of the station to which she has been called by Divine Providence.

"On the day on which she was proclaimed Queen of Great Britain she arrived in company with her royal mother at St. James's Palace for the purpose of taking part in the important ceremony. As they drove towards the palace the party received the most affectionate demonstrations of loyalty and attachment, the people following the carriages with a continuous cry of 'Long live the Queen' – 'God bless our youthful Queen, long may she live,' &c. Yet, exciting and exhilarating as were these acclamations, her Majesty's countenance exhibited marks only of anxiety and grief.

"They arrived at St. James's Palace a little before ten o'clock. When the old bell of the palace-clock announced that hour, the band struck up the National Anthem, the Park and Tower guns fired a double royal salute, and the young and trembling Queen, led by the Marquis of Lansdowne, President of the Council, appeared at an open window looking into the great court of the Palace. At the fervent and enthusiastic shout of the people who had come to witness the ceremony, her Majesty burst into tears, and, in spite of all her efforts to restrain them, they continued to flow down her pale cheeks all the time she remained at the window. Her emotions did not, however, prevent her from returning her acknowledgments for the devotedness of her people.

"Some of the most interesting anecdotes which Peter Parley heard, however, related to an earlier period of the Queen's life, when she was Princess Victoria.

"Here is an anecdote which I heard at a Missionary Meeting, Mr. Parley,' said Major Meadows, 'and I assure you it told with great effect.'"

"A poor but truly pious widow, placed in charge of a lighthouse on the south coast of the Mersey, had resolved to devote the receipts of one day in the year, during the visiting season, to the Missionary cause. On one of these days, a lady in widow's weeds and a little girl in deep mourning came to see the lighthouse; sympathy in misfortune led to conversation, and before the unknown visitor took her departure they had most probably mingled their tears together. The lady left behind

her a sovereign. The unusually large gratuity immediately caused a conflict in the breast of the poor woman, as to whether she was absolutely bound to appropriate the whole of it to the Missionary-box or not. At length she compromised, by putting in half-a-crown. But conscience would not let her rest: she went to bed, but could not sleep; she arose, took back the half-crown, put in the sovereign, went to bed and slept comfortably. A few days afterwards, to her great surprise, she received a double letter, franked, and on opening it, was no less astonished than delighted to find twenty pounds from the widow lady, and five pounds from the little girl in deep mourning. And who were that lady and that little girl, do you think? No other than her Royal Highness the Duchess of Kent and our present rightful and youthful sovereign."

"During one of the summer seasons of the Princess's childhood the Duchess of Kent resided in the neighbourhood of Malvern, and almost daily walked on the Downs. One day the Princess and her beautiful little dog Pero, of which she was uncommonly fond, happening considerably to outstrip the Duchess and governess, she overtook a little peasant girl about her own age. With the thoughtless hilarity of youth she made up to her, and without ceremony, said to her —

"My dog is very tired, will you carry him for me if you please?"

"The good-natured girl, quite unconscious of the rank of the applicant, immediately complied, and tripped along by the side of the Princess for some time in unceremonious conversation. At length she said,

"I am tired now, and cannot carry your dog any farther."

"Tired!" cried her Royal Highness, "Impossible! Think what a little way you have carried him!"

"Quite far enough," was the homely reply; "besides, I am going to my aunt's, and if your dog must be carried, why cannot you carry him yourself?"

"So saying, she placed Pero on the grass, and he again joyfully frisked beside his royal mistress.

"Going to your aunt's," rejoined the Princess, unheeding Pero's gambols; "pray who is your aunt?"

"Mrs. Johnson, the miller's wife."

"And where does she live?"

"In that pretty little white house which you see just at the bottom of the hill, there," said the unconscious girl, pointing it out among the trees; and the two companions stood still that the Princess might make sure that she was right, thus giving the Duchess and her companion time to come up.

"Oh, I should like to see her!" exclaimed the light-hearted Princess; "I will go with you, come let us run down the hill together."

"No, no, my Princess," cried the governess, coming up and taking her Royal Highness's hand, "you have conversed long enough with that little girl, and now the Duchess wishes you to walk with her."

"The awful words 'Princess' and 'Duchess' quite confounded the little peasant girl; blushing and almost overcome, she earnestly begged pardon for the liberties she had taken, but her fears were instantly allayed by the Duchess, who, after thanking her for her trouble in carrying Pero, recompensed her by giving her half-a-crown.

"Delighted, the little girl curtsied her thanks, and running on briskly to her aunt's, she related all that had passed, dwelling particularly on the apprehension she had felt when she discovered that it was the Princess whom she had desired to carry her dog herself. The half-crown was afterwards framed and hung up in the miller's homely parlour, as a memento of this pleasing little adventure."

"This is but a childish story, but Peter Parley loves to hear stories of good children, and he knows that his little friends love to hear them too."

CHAPTER V. PARLEY CONTINUES HIS ANECDOTES OF THE QUEEN

"There was one anecdote of the Queen from which Peter Parley derived much pleasure, because it showed that, notwithstanding her high station, she is not unmindful of Him by whom 'Kings reign, and Princes decree justice.'

"A noble lord, one of her Majesty's ministers of state, not particularly remarkable for his observance of holy ordinances, recently arrived at Windsor Castle late one Saturday night.

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