

Preface to Symmes' "Old World Footprints"

Szerző: Howard Phillips Lovecraft-Frank Belknap Long • Év: 1928

There is always a certain feebleness and artificiality in the scorn of those who deride the European tourist's "beaten paths". We consider it obligatory rather than trite to know the cardinal splendours of our own country, yet it is an undeniable fact that from memories revolving for centuries around the familiar vistas of the older world a still greater proportion of our massed imaginative heritage is drawn.

Pictures and descriptions will not suffice to merge us vividly with these essential sources. There are subtle sense-impressions outside the visual and intellectual spheres which no written or pictorial record can reproduce. To come into genuine communion with the past we must feel it and hear it and smell it, and see its infinite gradations as all the conditions of changing nature, or light and shade and atmosphere, play delicately over its monuments.

There is no substitute for actual travel, and that is why a tale of even the most uneventful voyage always has inherent within it the art-material of actual emotional experience.

In the following pages we have the unaffected record of a sensitive mind's first contact with the familiar objects of the old world. Simplicity and intelligent selectiveness combine to build up a colourful picture, and more than once we feel the breath of actuality sweeping over us—the fragrance of English meadows, the primal, mystic suggestion of the Alps, and the elfin glamour of the Mediterranean world.

The scenes are familiar, and the style is artless and without pomp or pretence; but the account is delightful because of these very things. It brings old memories back into the every-day, and enhances in us a feeling of casual, taken-for-granted closeness to historic backgrounds which it is the prime function of travel-diaries to promote.

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