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LONDON AND NEW YORK: MACMILLAN AND CO., LTD.

LIFE AND NATURE AT THE
ENGLISH LAKES

PUBLISHED BY
JAMES MACLEHOSE AND SONS, GLASGOW,
Publishers to the University.

MACMILLAN AND CO., LTD., LONDON.
New York, - - The Macmillan Co.
London, - - - Simpkin, Hamilton and Co.
Cambridge, - - Macmillan and Bowes.
Edinburgh, - - Douglas and Foulis.

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AN OLD-TIME RUSHBEARING IN AMBLESIDE
From a Painting by Allan, 1832

Life and Nature
at the
English Lakes

By the Rev.

H. D. Rawnsley

Honorary Canon of Carlisle

Author of "Literary Associations of the
English Lakes," etc.

Glasgow

James MacLehose and Sons

Publishers to the University

1902

First Edition 1899.
Second Edition (with Illustrations) 1902.

GLASGOW: PRINTED AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS
BY ROBERT MACLEHOSR AND CO.

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1902

TO MY DEAR FRIEND
MRS. TALBOT
WHOSE HEART IS IN THE LAKE COUNTRY
I DEDICATE THESE SKETCHES

1051609

“ Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe!
Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought
That givest to forms and images a breath
And everlasting motion, not in vain
By day or star-light thus from my first dawn
Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
The passions that build up our human soul;
Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,
But with high objects, with enduring things—
With life and nature.”

—*Prelude*, Book I., lines 401-410.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
AN OLD-TIME RUSHBEARING AT AMBLESIDE, - - -	1
PURPLE AND IVORY AT THE LAKES, - - - -	17
AFTER THE RAVENS, IN SKIDDAW FOREST, - -	24
MAY DAY BY GRETA SIDE, - - - - -	43
AT THE GRASMERE SPORTS, - - - - -	73
OVER LOUGHRIGG AFTER THE GRASMERE SPORTS, -	95
THE LAST OF THE SOUTHEYS, - - - - -	106
THE SHEEP-DOG TRIALS AT TROUTBECK, - - -	132
KENDAL AND A NORTH COUNTRY EISTEDDFOD, -	146
THE RAINBOW WONDERS OF WINDERMERE, - -	173
THE TERCENTENARY OF THE ARMADA ON SKIDDAW TOP, - - - - -	178
SKIDDAW'S GIFT OF YOUTH, - - - - -	186

	PAGE
"THE FRATERNAL FOUR OF BORROWDALE," - -	197
ST. LUKE'S SUMMER AT THE LAKES, - - - -	203
A SUNRISE OVER HELVELLYN, - - - - -	212
ON HELVELLYN WITH THE SHEPHERDS, - - - -	219
AT BRIG-END SHEEP-CLIPPING, - - - - -	250
DAFFODIL DAY AT COCKERMOUTH, - - - - -	265

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
AN OLD-TIME RUSHBEARING AT AMBLESIDE, FROM A PAINTING BY ALLAN, 1832, - - -	<i>Frontispiece.</i>
PURPLE AND IVORY AT THE LAKES, - -	<i>to face</i> p. 20
AT THE GRASMERE SPORTS, - - - - -	80
GRASMERE AND LOUGHRIGG, - - - - -	104
THE BORROWDALE YEWS, - - - - -	200
KESWICK AND DERWENTWATER FROM LATRIGG, -	208
ON HELVELLYN WITH THE SHEPHERDS, - - -	240
AT A DALE SHEEP CLIPPING, - - - - -	256

NOTE

The Publishers have to thank Mr. Herbert Bell, Ambleside, for his kind permission to reproduce the first and second illustrations; Mr. Baldry, Grasmere, for the third illustration; Messrs. Green Brothers, Grasmere, for the fourth and fifth illustrations; Mr. A. Pettitt, Keswick, for the sixth and eighth illustrations; and Messrs. Walmsley Brothers, Ambleside, for the seventh illustration.

AN OLD-TIME RUSHBEARING AT AMBLESIDE.

HE certainly looked an old man, but his eye was bright; and the manner he came down from off that coach, as it pulled up in the Ambleside market-place, would have surprised you.

“Bless me,” he said, “how changed everything is! Where is the woollen factory with its gallery for the weavers to pass out and peer over, or go down from by the steps into the street, when the coach pulled up short at the sign of the ‘Old Black Cock’? Is that ‘Queen’s Hotel’ all that remains to us of the ‘Black Cock,’ and the home of the weavers’ industry that used to go on in an upper story above it? And where is the quaint bit of timber and stucco that used to act as roof-tree above the hollow entry beside ‘Old Mickey’s,’ the bread baker—Mickey, the maker of ‘snaps’

that won immortality for their crispness and their flavour? All gone? Where, then, is the ancient Cross-House, beneath whose open portico, on every Thursday at eleven o'clock at the sound of the bell that used to hang on the chimney close by, the yarn spinners brought their yarns to be 'scaled' and priced? Dear me, how one remembers the stone seat, and the great chest where the public scales and weights were kept, and the children—Nicholson, I think they called them—that pushed their noses against the old diamond-paned windows in the little room above. That chimney of Hunter's shop looks the same, but where is the Thursday bell? Where is the cross? You don't mean to say they have done away with the old Market Cross that rose, a solid pillar, out of its double or treble mound of circular steps? Where is Gregson's shop? I mean old Gregson, whose brother rose to be a man of substance, and became the public benefactor of Lancaster—so like these Westmoreland men of large brains and powers to rise. Where are the old weaving sheds at the top of the hill near the cross? The Salutation Inn has a very poor salutation for one who remembers their picturesqueness. Where are the great Scotch firs that shadowed the people

as they passed up the street toward the post office, or lounged in front of the 'White Horse'? All cut down; but the people of Ambleside are sorry for their loss, and have planted a boulevard with sycamores, and still preserve two other sycamores at the entrances of the town, which give to all who enter therein a most joyous welcome, and a sense of quiet rural beauty such as must affect even the most careless.

"But where is the post office, with its little room, wherein one met all the wit and talent of the neighbourhood in olden time—Wordsworth, Hartley Coleridge, Dr. Arnold, Faber, and Owen Lloyd? Lile Owey, as we called him, used to live in the house. I remember his sitting-room well, just over and to the left of the door. Is Mrs. Nicholson alive, the post-mistress? The character of the whole place, the humble giver of all kindness, whom all trusted as a friend. Cornelius, her son—is he dead too?"

"Yes," I replied, "and a very remarkable man he was too. Full of patient love of science and strong commonsense; a man who rose from being a printer's boy to be one of the most trustworthy archæologists. He, too, is dead. You will find the story of his life

told well in a book entitled *A Well-spent Life*, and lately published by Wilson of Kendal."

"Dear, dear me," muttered the old gentleman, "everything is changed."

"No, not quite," I replied. "We have still Nicholsons with us—Miss Nicholson, in her 85th year, and her sister Margaret—who have warm hearts for all the friends of the quaint old post-office days. They still live amongst us, in a retirement well won, after the fifty-seven years they laboured for the public good and in the service of the Royal Mail; and they have memories as clear as crystal of those olden times in which they were the trusted and familiar friends of their customers, at the centre of all local knowledge, the Amble-side post-office."

How the old gentleman's eyes brightened at the thought. "That's good news," he said, as he shook his red bandana clear of a cloud of snuff. "I am glad. I must see Hannah and Margaret at once."

"There is another thing that has changed little or nothing since your time," I suggested.

"What is that?" said the little old gentleman of the bright eyes.

"The Rushbearing; and, if I mistake not,

we shall see it this very day, for to-day is Rushbearing Saturday."

"It used to be on the Saturday nearest, or 'bainest' as we say, to St. Anne's Day—the patron saint of the old chapel on the hill—the last Saturday in July."

"It is so still," I said; "come and see Miss Nicholson."

We found her at home, full of delight at being able to "crack on" with an old friend about old times; and though her eyes filled as she handed a golden brooch, within whose setting were four tiny curls of white and grey hair from the beloved heads of William Wordsworth and his wife, and Benson Harrison and his wife,—the last of the Rydal Dorothys so lately passed to her rest,—there was much of sunshine in her eyes and merriment in her voice, as we recalled one by one the incidents of the past.

"I am so glad you are here to-day. It's Rushbearing time; and though you remember then we carried 'burdens' from the Market Cross to the old chapel, and now we carry them to the new church, we still have our gingerbreads, all round, when the 'burdens' have been placed in the church, and carry them to the sound of music to the church doors."

“How long have you remembered the custom?”

“Lor’ bless ye, sir, time out of mind. Faber—we loved Faber—and dear Owen Lloyd, who lived with us, used to say that probably from the earliest times the people had gone on St. Anne’s Day to take away the rushes from the chapel floor and strew new ones for the year—flooring and tiles were not invented then—and when Lile Owey, as the people called him, wrote his Rushbearing hymn, he said the same. You know folk wanted something warm to their feet, and rushes are as warm as wood and carpet any day. Dear me, how well I remember his writing that hymn in his little room above our shop. We printed it for him, and used to sell it at a penny. It was sung at the tea in Chapel Close on the Monday following the Rushbearing, and always to the tune of the Old Hundred. Hannah, will you seek up a copy?”

The copy was brought, and, for Owen Lloyd’s sake, I transcribe it :

“Our fathers to the House of God,
As yet a building rude,
Bore offerings from the flowery sod
And fragrant rushes strewed.

“ May we, their children, ne'er forget
The pious lesson given,
But honour still, together met,
The Lord of earth and heaven.

“ Sing we the good Creator's praise
Who gives us sun and showers,
To cheer our hearts with fruitful days,
And deck our world with flowers.

“ These of the great Redeemer's grace,
Bright emblems here are seen,
He makes to smile the desert place
With flowers and rushes green.

“ All glory to the Father be,
All glory to the Son,
All glory, Holy Ghost, to Thee,
While endless ages run.” AMEN.

“ In my young days, we met at the village cross, on the Saturday nearest to St. Anne's Day, at six o'clock in the evening. Old Tommy Troughton, the clogger came ; he was a very clever jigger, best dancer hereabout ; you remember the priest's man, Tommy Troughton ; he was a kind of clerk and village constable, and general manager of all parish concerns in one. He it was who marshalled us. Every one who chose came, young and old ; and all who carried 'burdens' received a good big cake of gingerbread, made by old Mickey the baker. You remember him, sir ?

We were responsible, as long as we lived at the post office, for the gingerbread. It cost us a sovereign, and if the ladies had not made up the sovereign by the Rushbearing day, my mother would hand the plate round at the cross, for it was a great day. Folk came for miles to see the procession, and Wordsworth never missed; he and the Rydal party would sit in our little room to see the procession start; and as for Hartley Coleridge and Owen Lloyd and Faber, nothing would do but they must go along with it, for Hartley loved children, and was, you may almost say, a child amongst them."

"But," I interrupted, "what were the burthens" or 'burdens'? for Miss Nicholson had given the true old Westmoreland accent to the word.

"They were in my time," replied the old gentleman, "devices of every imaginable shape made by the carpenters for the great ladies, and by the skilful-handed ones at home during the winter months, covered with coloured papers and coloured flowers. I remember Westall drew a picture of our Ambleside procession, and the bigger and larger the trophy, the more it seemed to be in favour. Yards of tissue paper must have been used."

“Ay, ay,” said Miss Nicholson, “we know about that, for we had to lay in stock of blue and pink and yellow, and Mr. Harrison of Scale How allowed us ten shillings to give away to the poor folks in sheets of tissue each year, and we used to cut it into frills for them for the making of rosettes and flowers.

“But let us go back to the Market Cross. When I was a child, we did as they had done for generations. My mother lived to be eighty-five, and my grandmother used to tell her that her mother carried a ‘burden’ just in the same way to the Market Cross on Rushbearing day. At six o’clock in the evening of the last Saturday in July we all met, a hundred or more, and then an old man played on his fiddle or his pipe, and off we went round the village, up street, and down street, to the same old tune—we only knew one tune in those days, ‘The Hunt’s Up,’ and so up the hill to the old chapel. There we put our ‘burdens’ into the corners of the big square pews, and left them till Sunday afternoon, and came back to the Cross for our gingerbread.”

“When I remember it,” said the old gentleman, “we had a clarionette player to lead us. To be sure, his name was Banks, old George

Banks." "But in early days we just had a bit of a pipe, you know," broke in Miss Nicholson. "We became refined in later days, and then we had a band—the steamer band—and my mother, who collected for the gingerbread, had to collect an additional sovereign for the band."

"But who brought in the refinement?" said I.

"Why, Mr. Ford North of the Oaks to be sure. He did not like the way in which the people went for their 'burdens' to the church on Sunday afternoon. So he said he would give tea in the Chapel Close on the Monday to all who would leave their burdens in the chapel all Sunday."

It was a little confusing, this mixing up the words church and chapel, but Miss Nicholson was accurate. The old Ambleside place of worship was a Chapel of Ease to the Mother Church, St. Oswald's of Grasmere. This would be somewhere about 1830.

"I was a little girl full of fun, and determined to see everything, and I thought there would be a good bit of stir about this innovation, so I went up to chapel on the Sunday. There I found Mr. North on guard, but no one had come to remove their burdens. All intended to have tea. Presently, up came old Mrs. Reynardson and Bella Thompson to claim their

burdens. 'My good women,' said Mr. North, 'I hope you will leave your burdens in the chapel, and bring them to-morrow with the rest, and take tea with us.' 'Naay, naay,' said they, 'we will bodder nin with your tea, we want oor burdens owt, and we're gaen to hev them and aw.'

"But with these two exceptions, the folk left them in the chapel till Monday, and came next day to tea, and that was the origin of the 'Rushbearing do,' as we call it, on Monday. Mr. North gave them the tea each year till he died, and then Mr. Benson Harrison of Green Bank carried it on, and left money to continue it till his wife's death, which took place this year."

"Yes," said the old gentleman, "how well I remember the sight of the tables; they cut holes in the middle of the planks to put the sticks of the burdens through, and other burdens were made with pedestals to place on the table. How beautiful that happy sight was, and what races, and what wrestling, and what 'kiss-in-the-ring' used to take place after. Poor North, I heard Faber preach the funeral sermon on the Sunday following his death, and I remember Faber took as his text, John xi. 11, 12, and spoke of the beauty of a good life lived in country surroundings, where a man's character was realized in a

way that could never be known in the crush of the large towns."

"I have a copy of that sermon by me still," said Miss Nicholson, and presently she returned with it.

The sermon, which spoke of the sudden loss of Ford North, who had died on February 15th, 1843, was entitled *A Warning to Country Neighbourhoods*. With this, from her repository of sacred relics, Miss Nicholson brought, as bearing upon the subject of our conversation, a sermon, also preached by Faber, on the Amble-side Rushbearing.

"You see," continued our informer, "he and Owen Lloyd cared for such customs. Faber liked anything old. I have sometimes thought it was his love of ancientry that took him to Rome, and Owen Lloyd loved anything connected with children or flowers. I think that verse in the hymn—

'Our fathers to the House of God,
As yet a building rude,
Bore offerings from the flowery sod,
And fragrant rushes strewed.'

and—

'Sing we the good Creator's praise,
Who gives us sun and showers,
To cheer our hearts with fruitful days,
And deck our world with flowers.'

had a good deal to do with making us dress our burdens with flowers and rushes instead of paper. At any rate, as I said, what with Mr. North and Faber and Lloyd we got refined. Now, the ladies and gentlemen work at the devices for the burdens, and a deal of making and dressing they take I can assure you."

As she spoke there entered one who had been vicar a generation ago at Ambleside.

"Yes," said he, "and I too did all I could to discourage artificial flowers and paper, and to encourage the use of real flowers, and I only regret one thing, and that is that the ladies make the designs for the bearers, instead of the children making them entirely with their own hands."

"Has any alteration in the custom of Rush-bearing day taken place in the present generation?" I said.

"No," he replied. "The new church, the present Church of St. Mary's, was opened, when was it?"

"14th of January, 1854," interposed Miss Nicholson; "I know that, because Faber preached the opening sermon, and the date is printed on the fly-leaf."

"Well, ever since then," continued the clergy-

man, "the Rushbearing has taken place there, and the children march round the town and to the church,—the band playing,—at five o'clock on Saturday afternoon, and their burdens or rushbearings are ranged along the walls at the far end of the seats. Then a prayer or two is said, the Rushbearing hymn is sung, and sometimes I used to give an address. I believe that is the custom still. The children file out of church, pass the lych gate, and there receive each of them the traditional gingerbread cake. The burdens are left till Monday, when the tea-feast is given, and all who have a burden meet—nay used to meet—in the Green Bank field for fun and jollity."

Just then we heard the bang whang of the drum, and—shade of George Banks forgive the refinement and parade of later and less simple days than thine! the grandest triumphal procession I had seen for long enough, passed down the street with the volunteer band playing furiously.

My old friend clutched his hat, and away we went to watch the end of the triumphal show. Stars, triangles, crowns, crosses, Roman standards, harps, and every kind of cross-breed of these, wrought of rushes, lilies, roses, moss, Canterbury bells, were borne aloft, and in front

a great palm frond from Capernaum, as I heard, waved on high.

The church was entered, and churchwardens and others quickly disposed of the devices—some were placed within the altar rails, some shone in the window recesses, some along the walls. The Rushbearing hymn was sung, a few prayers said, and after a short address, the benediction and a glad *Amen*, away went the Rushbearers out of the church to the lych gate for the accustomed ginger-cake.

Next day we thronged the church to hear the sermons in aid of the parish schools, sermons in which mention was made of an honoured name, the name which will be remembered along with Ford North's, Faber's, and Owen Lloyd's, the name of good Mrs. Harrison, *née* Dorothy Wordsworth of Green Bank. I visited her tomb afterwards, I wish I could have seen it heaped with rushbearings, she so cared for the annual feast, but she was not forgotten.

Upon a very green bank, called Red-bottom Hill, on the following day, in memory of her love for the children and their Rushbearing festival, some four hundred of the Ambleside people, great and small, gathered to keep the Rushbearing feast; there in mid-valley to the strains of the volunteer band, they danced and

wrestled, and see-sawed and swung, and raced and jumped, till the last light faded from Windermere, and the clouds came down to rest while the moon rose upon Red Screes and Scandale head. The folk forgot all about St. Anne, all about the old days of earthen floor and church dedication, but they were happy. My old friend went to see the sport and said, "Ambleside has changed, stick and stone, since I was a boy, but there's a heart in the old place yet. Long live the Rushbearing!"

NOTE.—Since this article was written, Miss Nicholson has passed away, and one of the beautiful sycamores at the northern entrance to the town has fallen, but a sapling has been planted in its place. Those who care to see what Ambleside was like in old times, should not fail to look at the unique series of photographs to be seen at Mr. Herbert Bell's, Photographer, Ambleside.

PURPLE AND IVORY AT THE LAKES.

MARCH had come in like a lion: the blizzard was felt in every dale. Men shook their heads and said that "Th' girt fa' was likely coomed at last," and between the veils of sleet and skirts of hail loomed into sudden brightness the sunlit heads of far-seen snowy hills.

All through the night the winds were loud, but "silence came with the breaking dawn, and a hush with the wakened bird," and as I lay in bed at that most hospitable of Lake-country hostels, 'Rigg's,' at Windermere, I heard such a chorus of thrush and blackbird song as made me feel that it was May.

I had come to see spring colour in Westmoreland, and rising betimes, climbed Orrest Head. Birds to the right of me, birds to the left of me, shouted their hearts out; crocuses flashed in

the Elleray Gardens, and daffodils broke into flame. Yesterday was winter ; to-day

“ It is the first glad day of March,
Each moment lovelier than before,”

and as I passed through the woodland path that gives access to Orrest Head, I almost felt the fragrance of the larch, and the scent of summer in the air.

I had often climbed the hill before, but never, till this sunny morning, had I felt the deeper meaning of those passionate lines of Wordsworth's, which he penned when he first heard of the projected Kendal and Windermere Railway, and, with Orrest Head in his mind, wrote :

“ Plead for thy peace, thou beautiful romance
Of nature.”

For here peace was absolute. A distant cock-crow, the sound of a village forge hammer, was all that broke the calm, and far as the eye could see all was restfulness and peace.

But it was the colour that astonished me. In the near foreground every imaginable shade of purple faded into grey. The birches shimmered in the sunlight as though they had been made of frosted silver ; the ash trees stood up like giant coral-growths, and whilst at my

back the rust-red of the fern was seen to cover the lower fells, the deep dark violet folds of bosky woodland swept to the sapphire waters of what seemed a mighty river, but was indeed none other than Winander with its woody holmes, that curved toward the south and to the sea.

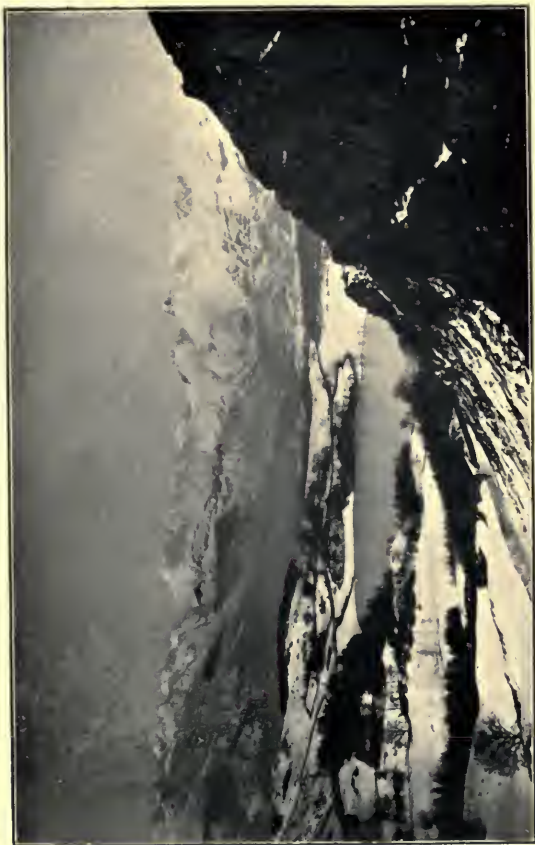
The sky was that peculiar blue one sees over Finland, and it was cloudless; the lake took its colour save where the wind ruffled it momentarily, and then it turned to deeper hyacinthine purple. But the chief glories of the scene were the snow-clad giants that lay around us. In the far south, Ingleborough looked like "Fusiyama," nearer, Farleton Knott and Wharton Crag were winter-white. Nearer still the cones of Froswyke and Ill Bell stood dazzling and spotless, and the white circling range of Fairfield took one's eyes across the northern gap of Dunmail Raise, to the Easdale range, and made one draw one's breath for beauty of contrast between the shimmering silver of the crescent ridge, and the bronzed and burnished beauty of the lower slopes. Grand and grizzled grey the Langdale Lions tossed their manes; whitely gleamed Bowfell; the Crinkle Crag and their neighbour height foamed up beyond to the dusky yellow of Ling

Mell ; but it was not till one's eyes were caught by the magnificence of the winter cloak upon the shoulders of "those great twin brethren couchant in the west"—Wetherlam and Coniston Old Man, that one realized the superb splendour and dignity of this March ermine upon their kingly shoulders, and was able by contrast of the purple skirts of Oxenfell and the Sawrey woodlands that dropt toward the lake, to understand the meaning of that verse Southey wrote in his *Poet's Pilgrimage to Wastdale* :

“ And now I am a Cumbrian mountaineer,
Their wintry garment of unsullied snow
The mountains have put on, the heavens are clear,
And yon dark lake spreads silently below.
Who sees them only in their summer hour
Sees but their beauties half, and knows not half their
power.”

Certainly for glory of colouring, for pomp and majesty, I have never beheld the Lakeland hills more wonderful. The mingling of ivory and purple, of ermine and gold and sapphire in this wondrous panorama from Orrest Head, baffled description.

One had seen the hills in mid-winter, but then it was a mild mid-winter sun that gleamed upon them ; now it seemed the sun shone with mid-summer bravery, and the snowy mantles



PURPLE AND IVORY AT THE LAKES
The Langdale Valley from Loughrigg

were filled with fiery light and radiance, such as one only sees upon the higher Alps in June. But the beauty of these snow-clad hills to-day lay in the exquisite carving of their solid ivory masses, that had been wrought by the hand of the snow-giant in the darkness of the March night. Just enough of the white gift from the north had fallen to emphasize every tiny undulation or hollow on the mountain mass. These hollows were filled with blue shadow; the ranges of Wetherlam and Coniston Old Man were pencilled with lustrous cobalt. It was this same effective modelling of these masses of mountain side, this marvellous giving of detail, that made them seem to come quite close to one. They almost rose up from the Sawrey woods and the purple puce of the Iron Keld ridge, instead of being, as they were in reality, miles away. This nearness added to their bulk and height, and gave them a majesty unexpected.

I stood entranced. The winter beauty over there, with the summer so close at my feet—for the daffodil was bright in the Elleray woods, and the wind-flower was waking into green. Thence descending, I passed along that beautiful road to Ambleside, of which whoso journeys by it in mid-June or August can never know

the full delightsomeness. To-day the lake gleamed through every copse, and mixed its silver with the tasselled alder and the yellowing larches; to-day the walls on this side were clothed in emerald velvet of mossy grace, or on that side the horn-beam hedgerows ran bronzed like beaten copper, and where the sun smote on them, twinkled into ruddy gold. On by Low wood, some of whose famous fir trees, alas! have fallen; on by the haunts of Mrs. Hemans of old time, to the Sitting, or Seat, of Hamil the Viking, and so to the Loughrigg of my heart I trudged contentedly, and when I reached its bossy and beautiful height I felt that it was difficult to say which scene was fairer—the view from Christopher North's old home, or this from the rugged slope of the English Cithæron, which Arnold knew, and Faber the poet so loved, and made famous in song. I gazed upon the Fairfield ridge, with Rydal woods all blue and radiant beneath its winter crown and cloak of ivory, whilst the Lily-tarn at my feet lay like a sapphire, set round with bracken-gold. I watched the white cones of the Ill Bell range stand up a miniature Oberland, against a pale blue sky, and, turning westward saw the Hardknott hill gleam in the Wray-Nose gap, and the Grey Friars, rightly

so called in their sleet-woven cloaks, lean towards white Wetherlam above a landscape of purple-brown ; there as I gazed, the words of Southey and Coleridge and Wordsworth recurred to mind, who put it on record as their solemnest conviction that those who would see Lakeland at its best, must come when it is clad in winter loveliness.

AFTER THE RAVENS, IN SKIDDAW FOREST.

“It has been so open a spring, sir, that if we want sight of the ravens this year we shall have to be after them by the end of the second week in April.”

I was not by nature or inclination a bird-stealer, but was most desirous to become acquainted with wild bird haunts, and knew that for such purpose no more faithful guide could be found than the “fidus Achates” who spoke.

“It will be no use going to Falcon Crag, though there is a pair nesting there. They are so shy that the old birds will not play round you, or feed their young ones while you are by. If you want to come upon a pair that will interest you, you must go through Skiddaw Forest, and try for the ravens in the Dead Crag. There is a pair

of old birds who have nested there the past ten years. I took one of three youngsters last year, and almost ken the old birds by name.

“But it’s a good bit of a stretch—it’s ten mile or mair if we gang round by Lonscale,” my friend continued, breaking into his native dialect. “We must be astir by dawn, and by reets sud be off with the stars.”

“Meet me at the bridge end then,” said I, “on Friday next at six o’clock. If it is not blowing a hurricane, or coming down a cataract, I will be with you.”

The dawn broke. It was not promising. Snow had fallen on all the uplands; Helvellyn was shrouded in whiteness, and Skiddaw Low Man looked more like winter than he had done through February and March. It was the twelfth of April, and the clock struck six as I strode out through the drizzle to keep my appointment with the raven hunter.

In at the Windy-brow farm, and up by the Latrigg path we went. Thrushes sang for all the bitter cold, as if they had no doubts of the weather. The larches were just moving from their winter trance into spring greenness, and the palm flowers were golden as willow buds that waited for the sun might be. A storm of bitter rain marched across the valley

and smote us on the face, but we were undaunted. The wind was in the east, and when the wind is in the east in the Lake District we need have no fear for the weather. It will fair up soon.

We reached Jenkin, and gained the marvellous view of Naddle and St. John's Vale. The deep trough of Helvellyn was filled with surging mist and tortured cloud, but there was a soft shimmer behind all the stormy veil which told us how on far Steel Fell the sun was shining bright. We felt that, contrary to the proverb, something good had come over the Raise, and were glad for this message of fair weather. Now we turned our back upon Latrigg, washed and blanched and bleached as it lay, looking for all the world—this cub of Skiddaw—as if its hide were matted flax. The peewits cried from the sweeping intake, and flickered and tumbled into whiteness through the mist-fret. Our hearts were set on ravens. We were not going to be fooled by a parcel of "pywipes." We now set our faces to climb towards the huts, then diverged, and by a path of emerald softness and smoothness reached a dell whose larch-grown steepness reached to heaven, and down whose sheer ghyll came leaping the purest water

God ever sent from his water-springs for the service of man.

“This is where t’ Keswick fwoak gits watter fra; it’s best in aw the warld; nowt like it, so they say,” my guide muttered, and crossing Whitbeck ghyll, we emerged on to the terrace-walk of Lonscale side.

It certainly did seem a long ladder, but the incline we walked up was so easy, each step we took seemed to bring us into air more refreshing, that we blessed that *longa scala*. The snow was white around us, but the sun was bright above us, and ere we reached the deep gulfy valley that divides Lonscale from Blencathra, we were revelling in “April happiest and best.” Down below us crashed and splashed the Glenderatterra’s beck. What a solemn inland murmur it made! Well was the deep vale called by the Celts of old the Glen of the Falling Waters, for all the way the long continuous waterfall peopled that solitude with ghosts of the sea. We could fancy we were again between Glenthorne and Countisbury, or roaming the cliffs ’twixt Lynton and the Hunter’s Inn, with such sea music all the depth was filled.

It was soon filled with other music, for on Blencathra’s side the shepherds were collecting

their blackfaced mountain sheep to drive them down into the vale for lambing tide. Very gently they brought their charges together. Only old dogs, well trusted not to harry or to race, were the helpers of their shepherd masters at the task, for the ewes were great with young. This was the 12th of April; on the 15th, or, at latest, on the 17th, the sombre-looking, solemn company would be made glad with milk-white, bleating, frisking little ones.

But that valley was rightly vocal. The very stones over which we trod, as we passed along the high terrace-path beneath the dark Lonscale Crag, were melodious. Here, nearly a century ago, a local Keswick genius made the discovery that the Skiddaw slate of which the hillside is built, and from which the path is hewn, had a bell-like ring about it. Hence he took stones of various sizes, and, by careful assortment and chipping, turned the musical stones into an octave's notes, laid them over a sounding board, and, with a wooden hammer, brought forth melody. His handiwork may be seen to-day in the Keswick Museum. Amphion was great: he made the stones move by his song; this modern Amphion was greater: he moved the stones to sing. It was

not without interest that one examined this altered volcanic ash that has given to the world the Rock-band. As we walked on, we found here and there the little graptolites that have added such dignity to the Keswick slate; but graptolites and musical stones were forgotten in the exceeding beauty of sight and sound of a company of stone-chats lately arrived, that played and sang as only stone-chats can sing, when the fierce passion of their springtide wooing is full upon them.

Such flashings into sudden whiteness, such dances along their boulder platforms, such sudden bowing, as it seemed, to one another of those desperate little rivals in the field of love; while all the air so thrilled with their voice, you might have thought that twenty skylarks had shaken their song together, as they neared their 'happy home, the ground,' but that suddenly, in the midst of their swift crescendos, one heard the sharp half sneeze, half nut-cracker grate that told us these were no larks, but mountain "chats" in matrimonial earnest. Yet not without the lark were we as we went upon our way, and the vale broadened into the sunny widths of tawny heather-darkened pasture we call Skiddaw

Forest, for constantly up-sprang the delicate titlark, and went crescent-wise, head and tail up-tilted for some forty yards towards heaven, singing as it went, not forcibly, but sibilantly and sweetly, and then dropping to perch on the stone wall or an upturned peat, pausing to sun its tail which went like a wagtail's, springing upward, to sink again with song.

“Look back,” said my guide; “Tewfit Tarn shines grandly.” And there, like a jewel in the breast of Naddle Fell, the little tarn, that gives each year first pleasure to the skating lads of Keswick, was burning in the morning sunlight. But my eyes went beyond Tewfit to the hollow in the Armbboth Fells beyond Gate Crag and Caw Crag, just to the right of Shoulthwaite Moss, for I knew that the earliest fortress of the wild mountaineers who held this corner of little Britain against all who came, was up at that ghyll's crest; and one could now realize what a long view up this hollow gateway towards the Forest those old warrior chieftains must have had from their high vantage ground. If a beacon was lit on Calva or Caw, there, northward, across the Forest basin, those holders of the Buck Castle fort on the Armbboth Fells could have had view of foray, or robbers from the sea in good

time to gather their sheep from off the fells, and bring their goats to the camp.

As we looked south to Buck Castle we were able to gaze far on beyond, above the Dunmail Raise right into Westmoreland. Doubtless the news of battle from the south has often sped along the Helvellyn side and up this passage in the hills, and filled the Forest shepherds of old time with dismay. This great natural basin of Skiddaw Forest into which we are going, when the vales were so full of wood that passage was impossible, and danger of surprise from foes was great, must surely in its treelessness have been the feeding-ground for many a herdsman; and though on our walk to-day we shall pass but one hut-circle, we may be sure that these dwellers in the pre-historic villages of Threlkeld Knott and of Bleaberry Fell had brother villagers who peopled this great natural amphitheatre of heathery pasture ground, drove their flocks from Carrick and from Caw, drank at the fountain head of Caldew stream, and went down from hence to the sun-worship festivals at the Druid Circle beyond the Greta.

Skiddaw Forest! What a misnomer it at first appears, for this treeless wilderness, but a forest of old, was the wild home not of tree,

but of wild creatures! The *ferae naturae* gave their name to this mountain wilderness; and as one sees the buzzard swing out from Lonscale Crag, and with his heavy-looking hooked wings circle up till he seems a pin-point in heaven, or watches, as we watched, old Reynard sunning himself upon a ledge in the cliff in which he has made his "beald," or as one hears the raven croak, and the red grouse chuckle, and cry "Come back, come back," across the swarthy stretches of winter-blackened heather, one realizes that it is still an habitation for the wild things of the earth, and that Skiddaw Forest has been rightly named.

And now we are well in the hollow basin of this upland moor. Skiddaw "laal man," as it is called, lifts up to the west into a cone of purest snow; Blencathra fills the south-east sky with hoary grandeur. But between Blencathra and the Carrick Fells to the north-east, an opening is descried, and down the vista is seen the long serpent gleam of "Cauda," the Calder, or Cold Water, of early British nomenclature.

It may well be called Cold Water, that far-off shining stream that slips through the gap in Carrick Fells, and passes by Caldbeck to stately Rose, and on towards Carlisle. The

snows lie thickly here about its cradle even in May, and very early comes the frost to give it icy cool.

Who shall describe the exquisiteness of the colour of this vast carpet of winter's bleaching that lies about us in soft subdued mellow light mile on mile to-day. All shades, from deep iron red to faintest fawn, from chocolate to purple-pink or madder brown, combine in wondrous harmony. The blackness of the heather has ceased. There has come in its place just that rich darkness that tells us there is life in all the seeming deadness, and sap in every point and every twisted bunch of stems. The boulder stones are radiant with mosses ; the very peat bogs and morasses shine to-day with many-coloured counterfeits of life. Yes, this carpet of the winter's and storm-winds' weaving has felt the foot of April, and cannot delay or disavow the spring.

We trudged on in silence towards the only habitation visible in the wilderness. A few stunted larches, a heap of dark peat, a patch of white-wash, and a curl of blue smoke was all we saw, but it gave a strange feeling of comfort and humanity to the scene ; and if at all the thought of a rest for weary limbs, and a drink of warm tea, entered into our calculations, we

were but frail children of thirsty clay, and who could wonder?

On across the morasses, bridged by the shepherds' care, we strode, when, just as we were entering upon the house paddock, up rose with a whirr a strange cream-white bird, and shone in the sun, and whirred away and sank from sight. An owl? No, owls don't whirr upon the wing like that. A grouse? No, grouse don't show white like that. Yet it flew like a grouse, and it chuckled like a grouse. A white grouse it must be. We soon found ourselves in the shepherd's cottage, heartily welcome, as all wanderers in the Skiddaw Forest are if once they gain that door, and, as the kettle hissed, and the peat burnt bright beneath the puffing bellows, we listened to the Northumbrian "burr" of the kindly shepherdess.

"The white grouse, oh you have seen her! That's lucky," said she. "We're proud of the poor thing. She has been about, these two years, and they can't shoot her."

So the good woman rattled on until one felt as if the white grouse was a kind of witch or spirit of the moor, a presiding *genius loci*, and a power for good or ill. The canary in the cage could not contain itself; did not hold with such

laudation as we paid the white grouse witch, and sang louder and more loud, and all the while the lassie by her mother's side knitted and listened with the collie's head in her lap. One wondered at the solitary girl-life there—

“No mates, no comrades Lucy knew,
She dwelt on a wide moor.”

Yet one thing grew beside her, maiden modesty with handmaiden usefulness, and though she would have small chance of giving what in Cumberland is known as “sneck-posset” to an audacious lover in these far-off wilds, doubtless the rough-haired brother near, was lover and brother in one.

We rose and set our faces for “The Dash” and “Dead Crag.” As we passed from the cottage “intak,” our eyes fell upon one of the saddest of sights to those who love the birds, and would have them preserved to be a national possession. There, nailed in the sun, was the daintiest little hobby hawk and the finest raven, side by side! both of them so lately trapped that their plumage was lustrous and beautiful. Oh the black feet of that raven! the marvelous “roughing” of its tarsi! Oh the delicate moon-like whiteness, almost as of silver, when the sun shone through, of the dappled spots

among the tawny softness of the hobby's wing! Both birds, of course, were at their prime of feather-time, and the trap that, with its far-seen poisoned and quite irresistible egg, took these two wild birds captive, spoilt the love-making and the nesting of two families which, whatever harm they did to the grouse, would have gladdened many a pair of wanderers' eyes in Skiddaw Forest.

We walked on, a bit saddened. The egg trick seemed so dastardly. But the sun shone out, and the thousand rivulets gurgled so merrily in their deep, peaty channels, and the lark leapt up and sang so full of heart's content, that we forgot the hobby and his dead companion, nay, well-nigh forgot that we were raven hunters ourselves.

By and by we reached what was evidently the descent into the lowlands towards the north. The stream at one side danced down towards the Dash, and away on our left, the great spur of Skiddaw loomed up dark and terrible for all the springtide's sun.

“You see yon bink, whaur whiteness is?”

I did see a kind of green patch of sand half way up the cliff, that looked as if it were chalk stained. “That's whaur falcons built last year. That's falcon droppings has marked rocks.”

And as he spoke, a kind of sigh was heard in the air, and, like an arrow shot towards the mountain side, as grandly feathered a falcon as I had seen passed overhead. The grey-winged arrow seemed to go straight to its mark, and without apparent slackening of its speed the falcon lit. Its wings scarce closed when, with a cry, it shot forth and up into the air, then sped into space, leaving us fairly rapt with wonder at the speed.

“Falcons is a wonderful thing for pace,” said our friend. “They do say that top-speed is two hundred and fifty miles an hour, four times as fast as an express, you know, sir.” And as he spoke, the falcon stooped into sight, and shooting by us made the live air sing.

We sat down on a crag that gave us full view of the vale beneath, its cattle shining in the sun. The little tarn of Overwater blinking like a silver shield; the ground half woodland, half meadow and moor, rising to the south towards the old meeting-place of early Britain hereabout, for council of war and peace, Caermote of to-day. But we could not indulge dreams of British councils, nor of Roman legions entering, after bloody fray, upon British camp, and signalling their success far over the littoral plain to the Solway side, or

far southward over Bassenthwaite by Castlehead to Borrowdale, or by "Caw" to Dunmail Raise. Our minds were absorbed in the skill of our young mountaineer, who had left us, gone up into the mist, and through the mist was now seen standing large against the sky above the falcon's eyrie and the raven's home.

"If ravens is at home, you'll hear them soon enough," he had said. And we did hear them. We could see only black spots that wheeled up about the raven hunter's head, sailed out of sight, then momentarily returned; but we heard the deep guttural croak filling the air—a spectral winged dog with a bone in his throat, choking violently, could not have made the echoes sound more hoarse. And now our friend was leaping down what looked from our vantage ground a precipice. Now he stopped for foothold, now disappeared into a gully, now came out again. At last we saw him apparently swinging in mid-air from the stem of a holly or ash, then we saw no more of him.

The ravens told us all that was going forward. A black body, half fluttering, half flying, half tumbling, came cawing down the cliff. It was one of the young ravens, without a doubt. Presently another black dot came

along, with a good deal of effort, to judge by the constant flapping of its wings, and fell into the heather down below us. I went towards the spot, and saw what looked like a great red tulip full in flower. It was the gaping rosy mouth, or rather throat, of the raven child. Thought I, I wish when I have relaxed tonsils, I could show my doctor my throat like that, and made a grab. The tulip vanished, and away the big black bairn fluttered, and fell higher up the hill in more heather.

The raven hunter had meanwhile re-ascended Dead Crag, and, coming round, was full of explanations of how he had missed the prize by being just a week too late. The blue open feather should have only just shown on the wing, instead of that the young ravens were fully fledged. "One of them flew right in this direction, I shall still be able to run him down, I expect, if only I can put him up," he continued.

I confess I was in two minds about telling him that I thought I knew the tuft of heather where the raven had last flown to, but the young bird had seemed so strong on the wing that I broke silence and pointed him to the spot.

Meanwhile, through the field-glass, without which natural history observations seem to me

almost impossible when one is observing birds of prey, or birds that frequent open moorland or open water, the ravens were seen no longer up in the heavens, but down at the foot of Dead Crag, cawing, fluttering, wheeling up, then wheeling down ; what was it all about ?

It was soon made plain. The old birds were lending a hand to help their bonnie black bairn up the cliff to the ancestral home. Now they seemed almost to shove the youngster with their bodies, now they flew or perched a foot or so ahead of it, and cawed and called in a most human way.

So bit by bit, the youngster constantly first protesting that he couldn't do the jump, and then apparently bragging that he had done it, we watched the old birds entice the child of their care to the home of its fathers.

“ Where did you say you last saw the bird that flew this way ? ”

“ Up there, ” I said half-heartedly.

Away went the raven hunter, and swifter than it takes to tell it, one of the old ravens seemed to take in the situation, and was wheeling over his head and croaking lustily. Of course the young bird croaked in answer and discovered himself. Now the chase began. The young bird took a good long, half-circling

flight, and went back towards its home, and sank into the vale. Away went the hunter; across the vale, over the Dash stream, was the next flight. Away steamed our friend. Next, the raven flew in the direction whence we came, and we all turned homewards. For more than a mile and a half the chase went on in the direction of Skiddaw Forest. Had the young raven had sense to keep out of the heather, things might have been well with it, but the heather perplexed its flight, the flights grew less and less, and at last we saw the hunter sprawl, pick himself up, run and throw himself full length upon the ground. Then we heard a kind of altercation, angry words in raven language, and after, silence; then a white pocket-handkerchief—and a look of content upon the hunter's face told us that the chase was over.

But the old birds were not going to leave till they had seen the whereabouts of their child. Croak, croak, croak, came falling heavily from mid-air. We gained the shepherd's hut and called for tea. The raven hunter tied up his handkerchief and hung it, bird and all, on a great nail at the outhouse end, "out of the way of the cat," as he said, and we talked a good deal about that raven's education, as the good-wife toasted her scone and brewed the tea.

“ I shall just set it down, you see, as soon as we get home, in our back place, give it a good feed. It will be tame at once. Cats dursn't touch a raven whatever, and in a few days' time you will see that it manishes for itself, comes when mother feeds the hens, and picks up whatever it wants; terrible tame thing is a raven, and most curious bird to see what's inside anything that ever was, sic a deal of fun in 'em too, and sic games with dogs they play. Nip 'em by the tail when they're asleep, and then run off and croak at 'em. Most interesting bird that flies; seem born to play pranks you know, sir.”

I wonder whether the young raven prisoner heard what he said. “ The most interesting bird that flies.” Perhaps he did. All I know is that when we rose from our afternoon repast in the forest shepherd's cottage, we found that some hand or some head had thrust itself out of or into that pocket-handkerchief, the knots or part of them were quite undone, the handkerchief hung helplessly on the wall, and we heard the far distant croaks of triumph and defiance, and felt that the happy raven family at Dead Craggs would once more be united.

The raven had “ manished ” for itself sooner than we or the raven hunter had thought possible.

MAY DAY BY GRETA SIDE.¹

IT was an old-fashioned May Day, there was no doubt of it. The cuckoo said so plainly, for all his stammering; the chiff-chaff up in the budding elm was sure of it; and the thrush, away among the pear-tree blossom, cried "May, May, May; Sweet, Sweet, Sweet," till the very bees about him got tired of his saying the same thing so many times over, and went off murmuring a drowsy May-day tune of their own to the hives.

As for the blackbird, he positively poked his four little squabs out of the nest just to give them a sight of a real old-fashioned May Day on the lawn. For though he was a very old bird and had seen five May Days, he had never in his life known so many oxlips out, so many tulips fully aflame, or smelt so many wall-flowers

¹The quaint old custom of crowning the May Queen was revived in Keswick in 1886.

filling the air with their fragrance ; had never seen so many apple-blossom buds pink to the bursting, or lime-tree buds so nearly in leaf. I doubt if he had ever before had a chance of chasing a yellow orange-tip butterfly as he did for the instruction of his youngsters, before my eyes on this first of May.

And we had strangers in the valley, too, who had come across the sea and had travelled all up from the south coast through the new springing grasses and "lockety gowans" and "lamb lakins," as the bairns in the north called the marigolds and faint sweet cuckoo flowers ; they had timed their arrival to the very dawn, and down in the meadows they craked and craked away their salutations to the fair goddess Maia.

Nor was the corn-crake the only distinguished foreigner who had determined to see our May-day doings ; for the first swallow skimmed across the lake and dashed over the blue-grey cloud of chimney-smoke that rose above the happy breakfasts of the Keswick people, and flashed far up the valley, and returned to take his observations.

There was good reason that the May-day holiday should be general. Well had the common council of the burghers urged by public notice that on May the first, the shopman

“should leap from his counter and till,” and the 'prentice should put on his best coat and turn out at noon to join in the May Queen's festival; for had not the Romans of old time, when they held their posts on Castrigg Fell, and had their look-out on Caermote from Castlet Hill, moved their men as on this day from their winter quarters in the meadow by the Greta side, to their airier hillside station, and led their white heifer with his gilded horns, to the sound of the pan-pipes and song, up to the fellside pastures. Surely no Roman legionary in this Keswick valley forgot to pour out wine to the Mother of Mercury the winged Hermes, in a place where the woodland was each year carpeted with a plant that keeps to-day the name of her son so bright, and fresh, and green. Certes, no lover of our local law and order to-day would willingly forego the pleasure of remembering on this day that the “Majores” or “Maiores,” those early senators of Rome in whose honour the month of May was named, were still had in remembrance. And quite as certainly every Roman soldier of old time had his fling in the games on the first of May upon the green, and bound a chaplet of wild flowers about his helmet, and coaxed the dark-eyed British children to join in the Floralia here in the valley; yes, and bade

the slave-gang, working at the causeway down to Causeway Foot, to take their rest also, and hail sweet Flora, Queen.

For the Roman soldiers swore by Julius Cæsar; and did not Julius Cæsar honour the month of May, and give it back the thirty-first day, which Numa had stolen from it long years before?

But there were other reasons that made it seemly that in the Keswick valley every one should welcome

“ Faire May, the fayrest mayd on ground,
Deckt all with dainties of her season’s pryde,
And throwing flowres out of her lap around ”:

for in the times that are very far off, here on the border of Wales—the Derwent was in those days the river that separated Britain from the Waellas, or strangers—lived the Cymric men who dwelt high up on Bleaberry, or held Buck Castle maybe; and here, on May-day eve of old, they lit their bonfires or “beltein” on Barf, on Skiddaw, Helvellyn, and Catbells, and Blencathra, and sent their hoops of blazing straw rolling down the mountain side to scare the eagle in its eyrie at the Ern (Iron) Crags, and to startle the wild boar in the woods below Grisedale Pike.

What a May-day night they must have had of it, those old bonfire-makers on our Cumberland hill tops. I expect the men of Mona's Island saw our rocky mountain coast blaze as if the stars had been shed from heaven to sojourn in the hills.

But the Cymri vanished, and the Norsemen pushed their shapely prows across from Mona to the mainland. To Derwent-mouth came the creekers, and up into the heart of the Lake country. Ketil and Lathar, Honig, Walla, and Ormr, Olla and Sweyn, having war in their bosoms, with love of fame in their souls, and axes and hammers in their hands, stole swiftly; they hewed down the woods, they occupied the hill tops, they formed their fortified harbours, the "wykes," in Darran and Broadwater, for, after all, what does Keswick to-day mean but Ketil's Wyke, the Wyke of Ketil the Dane? And what does Peel Wyke denote but the fortified water creek or pool whence the Cymri fishermen had been driven in the days of old?

Nor did they forget, these Northern Jarls, how that when Odin died, and Njord had passed to Valhalla, there rose a king, Frey by name—Frey, the last of the Asir, who ruled the rain and the sunshine, and had power over the growth of the ground.

And some were weary "of climbing up the ever-climbing wave," tired of "the glittering one," "the bloody-haired one," as they called the morning and the evening sea; and so, when the daffodils came, and the sorrel was white in the woods, and the blackthorn blossomed at Swinside (Sweyn's sitting), and the primroses yellowed the skirts of the ridge of Lathar, these Norsemen met in the great Doom-ring at the Druid circle on Castrigg Fell, and reddened the altars and lit their sacrifice fire at the time of flowers; and round the fires they sent the drink horn, and drank to the Sun for peace and plenty.

Some, too, were tired of inactivity, and thirsted for victory; then, when April faded into May, drave up to the Doom-ring the bull and the boar, and slaughtered the beasts in honour of him who pledged his eye for a drink from the well of Urd, Odin the mighty, Odin the mythical, and sware at "Sigr-blot," or the Victory sacrifice, that they would keep the next May Day in other lands and among other flowers.

Doubtless that old Druid circle of our day has seen more than one race of men thither go a-Maying.

But as one thinks of Keswick and May Day,

one remembers that specially in this Cumberland vale should May Day be held in honour. For May Day is St. Asa's Day, the day of "the Lord's little boy" Asa—St. Asaph, ever through his love and friendship connected with the patron saint of the Keswick Vale, Kentigern or St. Mungo of holy fame.

When Kentigern was driven from Glasghu or Alclyde, about the year 553, by Morken the Pagan, he got as far as Carlisle, and then heard "that many among the mountains"—so Jocelyn of Furness tells us—"had forsaken the old faith," which doubtless Ninian, from his white church by the Solway tide, had taught them, and had turned again to their idols; and so the Saint turned aside by way of Caldbeck and the dale that still preserves his name, Mungrisdale, and rounding Skiddaw, he descended into the Keswick Valley.

Here, in a thickly wooded place, he hewed down the trees, and set up a cross as a sign of the faith he taught, *in loco nomine crucis novale*, in a place that goes still by the name of the Thwaite or Clearing for the Cross; and here, at the place where, after thirteen centuries, the old church stands in the clearing, he stayed some time, confirming in the faith of Christ the men who dwelt hard by.

But what has all this to do with St. Asaph, or May Day? This, that the same Kentigern journeyed southward into Wales, founded a monastery by the Elwy's stream, a tributary of the Clwyd; and when, after many years, he left Wales to return north as the first Bishop of Strathclyde, of which Cumberland was then part, he bade a long farewell to the "Lord's little boy" Asa, as he called him, and set him in his place over the great monastery at Llanelwy that still bears his name, St. Asaph of our time.

That young "Asa" had once saved St. Kentigern from perishing by cold, that same young "Asa" was affectionately beloved of St. Kentigern. And those who honour the teacher of Christ to the Britons of early time in the Keswick vale, have a warm corner in their hearts for the Abbot and Bishop of Llanelwy, St. Kentigern's successor in the south, whose festival day is kept on May Day.

So there would seem to be some very good reason for keeping a May-day festival here in the British-Romano-Viking town of Strathclyde, seeing the inhabitants of the ancient parish of Crosthwaite, as they keep St. Asaph's Day, honour thereby with kindly remembrance the

friendship and the choice of their own patron saint, the great St. Kentigern.

And truly, the inhabitants, whether they knew how much of history they were repeating in their keeping of their May Day or not, had evidently been in earnest in their wish to feel young again. It seemed as if the spirit of their great Cumbrian poet had been shed upon the little town. Yes, upon

“spirits dried up and closely furled
The freshness of the early world”

had evidently been poured, and the folk were determined, to judge by the posters on the walls, to have “a reet down auld-fashioned” May-day festival in earnest.

As I leaned on the Greta Bridge below Southey's house, I saw that there was to be at one o'clock, a meeting of May-day merrymakers in the market-place; that the May Queen's proclamation would be there read, and that she would head the procession and lead it through the town to the sound of sweet music; that maids of honour would attend her, and that Her gracious Majesty would preside at the trial of skipping in the Fitz Park, and witness a Maypole dance, and afterwards award the prizes to the girl skippers, and

the racers and wrestlers among her faithful boy subjects.

It was not without a kind of natural sigh that I remembered how many Mays agone this day called forth the tall dark-eyed Poet Laureate from his house, Greta Hall, upon the hill close by, to mingle with his children's fun and dance about the Maypole in honour of his darling Edith, Edith May, in her bluebell birthday time.

But sighs were forgotten by the sight of a gaily painted lorry, or waggon, with the Maypole set up behind in a mimic throne therein, going slowly past to be be-garlanded, and set in order for the Queen and her maidens of honour.

That sight of a real Maypole towering above the car made my heart jump. It is true I had joined the May-day^{*} merrymakers in Oxford; of old time had felt the Magdalen tower rock to the sound of bells; had heard the hymn for the rest of Henry VII.'s soul float from the band of white-robed choristers on the tower's summit away out to the pleasant willows of the Cherwell and the elms of Headington Hill. And my heart had throbbed to the motion of William of Waynflete's tower on the May-day mornings, in Oxford undergraduate days.

It is true that I had joined in the riot of the Furry Dance, or Flora Festival, away in the far Cornish village town of Helston; had sung the old Spanish Armada refrain as I brought my bit of green from the Nannslooe Woods to bring home the May withal; and had, there in the land of the golden gorse and silver whitethorn felt a thrill of an olden time, but the Maypole was not there; and here, as the car went by, the Maypole reared itself up in truth, and the ribands fluttered from its green coroneted head, and I felt very much as Washington Irving felt when, on the banks of the Dee at Chester bridge, he saw for the first time a veritable Maypole. "I shall," says he, "never forget the delight I felt on first seeing a Maypole . . . it gave a glow to my feelings, and spread a charm over the country for the rest of the day." I suppose I share the feelings of the writer, who adds, "I value every custom that tends to infuse poetical feeling into the common people, and to sweeten and soften the rudeness of rustic manners without destroying their simplicity."

Not that I found in the course of the day that there was any commonness or rudeness or want of simplicity among the people of the Keswick Vale. Far from it. A better behaved

crowd, or a happier, heartier, more simple-minded three thousand than those who met to do honour to the May Queen in the Fitz Park that afternoon, I never wish to meet.

But it wanted an hour to noon, so I strolled along by the Greta side, into the gardens of the Fitz Park, and with Chaucer singing in my ears—

“There sat I doune among the faire floures,
And saw the birdes trippe out of hir boures ;
There as they rested hem alle the night,
They were so joyful of the daie’s light,
They gan of May for to don honoures.”

Entering the streets of the white-washed town at noon, except for gay buntings across the street, one would have believed it was a city of the dead. The fact was that the people were taking their meal, preparatory to a long afternoon’s pastime. But by and by, first from one alley, and then another, I saw little white-robed girls, whose red and white and blue stockings were matched by red and white and blue sashes and shoulder knots. They were evidently bent on some central rendezvous; they were, I heard, the Maypole dancers.

And the sun shone out upon their rippling heads of hair, and turned them into gold, as

first one and then another passed me with smiling face toward what was called the Parish Room. Then a horn was heard, and a spanking coach-and-four passed by. That was the chariot for the little white Maypole maidens. After, came a milkman's cart, all bright and flower-decked, then a heavy builder's cart laden with tiles and material, but resplendent in paint—blue and red—and with a horse that looked as if it had come out of a Flemish picture, its mane and tail gaily be-ribanded. Then dashed by an open barouche with gay postillion, then another coach. Now the Keswick Market Place was filling fast, and countless men with favours in their buttonholes ran hither and thither, shouting from a programme the places that the various May procession coaches and carriages were to take up.

Presently I heard the skirl of the bagpipes, and in full tartan trim twelve little Cameron Highlanders, who, as I heard, had come from over the Border that morning to play the May Queen round the town, marched out of the hostel near, and I followed. Who could help following to such music?

We soon found that they were marching off to bring Her gracious Majesty into the town that she might lead the procession.

Presently it seemed as if the end of the street was blocked with a great barrier of flowers and happy, innocent child-faces.

That was the triumphal car that I had seen earlier in the morning, but now with its full complement of May-day youth and jollity.

Twelve little children, veritable Maid Marians, were dressed in grass-green sateen, with pretty mob-caps of muslin and grass-green on their tiny heads, and wreaths of wild wood-flowers over their shoulders, stood up behind the mossy barricades of the lorry's rail, and held in their baby hands the red and white and blue streamers of the central Maypole. In front of the Maypole, high lifted on her throne, sat, in exquisite simplicity, and clad in spotless white, a fair child. On her head a wreath of lilies of the Vale and pear blossom; on her frock more wreaths of white spring flowers; and in her hand a white sceptre, whose head was neither of silver nor of gold of man's making, but of pure silver and gold of God's sweet springtide's gift, the arum white with yellow tongue. Down from this giant lily's lucent sceptre-head streamed a streamer of white satin, with which it had been twined to the staff. And there in simple beauty sat the children's Queen; a personification of all things

bright and beautiful, innocent and gay—May Day in very truth incarnate.

Then the goodliest horse that ever bore behind him such a Car of Triumph moved forward, the cherry and rhododendron flowers winking at his ears. The bare-kneed kilted laddies piped a Highland march, and old faces came to upper windows and gazed wistfully, and young faces ran to the doors and tiny tots clapped hands to welcome the May Queen. And so with much sound and martial music Her Majesty entered the market place and took up a central position. "Hats off," cried a parson, who walked beside the car, and a fine burly Cumbrian yeoman farmer, bearded like a Viking chieftain, rose up on the front of the car, and in stentorian tones read the May Queen's proclamation.

It was perhaps a bit comical in its childish language, but it had an honest intent behind it, and its commands were much to the point. We give it *in extenso*:

"To all her loving subjects, both boys and girls, the Queen commands that they shall be kind and good to their little brothers and sisters; also, to all cats and kittens; dogs and puppies; sheep and lambs; ponies, horses and dokeys; goats and kids; cows and calves

and pigs; rabbits, ducks, hens, pigeons, guinea-pigs; white rats and mice; and to squirrels in the woods and frogs in the meadow pools, and dickey birds; and that boys are not to use catapults, or hunt the wrens, and not to rob birds' nests, nor be cruel to nestlings or hunt any living thing, but to learn by heart the notes of birds, and to know how they fly, and what they say and what they eat, and when they come and go.

“And to all, young and old, residents and visitors, that they do not root up wholesale and remove flowers or ferns from hedgerows, fields, woods, lakes, or fellsides; and they do no damage to shrubs or growing crops, to seats or fences, and that they keep to footpaths.

“And to all coachmen, drivers, grooms, and ostlers, that they are to look after their horses well, and not to use too severe bearing reins, and to have frost nails in the shoes when the roads are slippery; and not to hurt them, nor to work them too hard, but to take care of them, and to give them plenty to eat and drink during the next year, under pain of our most severe displeasure.

“Also, it is our Will and Pleasure that a copy of this our Proclamation shall be hung up in every house and schoolroom within our

ancient and loyal city of Keswick, so that all our faithful and loving subjects may read and obey this our commandment that God may love them.

“Given at our Court at Keswick, with the advice of our trusty and well-beloved (here he read the names of the chairman of the Local Board, the names of the two vicars of the place, and of the chairman of the Board of Guardians), this first day of May, in the year of our Lord, One Thousand Eight Hundred and Ninety. KLINA, Queen.”

Scarce had his voice died away, when the verse of the National Anthem was struck up, and at its close three cheers were called for and given heartily for the little Queen Klina, and then the Car of Triumph passed, with the pipers playing a Highland reel, away to the head of the cavalcade, and the procession began.

Out of the town and over the shining Greta they went. The little maidens' frocks of green were well matched by the leafing sycamore, and the tall Maypole brushed into the lowest boughs and sent the wild bees humming. Skiddaw lifted up grey and sunny to a cloudless heaven, and all that host of 'tented giants' Coleridge spoke of, seemed to look on and

laugh, so radiantly smiled the afternoon from their ancient faces.

Back into the town the long procession moved. The little maids of honour on the car, as Chaucer in his *Court of Love* puts it :

“With freshe garlands partly blew and white
And then rejoysen in their grete delight
Eek eche at other threw the floures bright.”

Ay and into the faces of the folk who lined the way too, for thoughtful hands had gathered and tied in little bunches hundreds of

“those floures white and red
Such as men callen daysyes in our tounne.”

These the little laughers plentifully showered as they passed along, and here and there sent fluttering into the crowd the copies of their good Queen's Proclamation. Busy too with this last, had been the bill-stickers, for, go where we would, it met us on all the hoardings, and I expect the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, had it been present, would have felt its work was over and done.

Out now, out of the town in another direction, along the same Greta side, the procession went. Such a gay cavalcade! Outriders in front of the royal car, coaches, char-a-bancs, postillion turn-outs; trade exhibits following, and one

(not least interesting) loaded coach passed, on the box seat of which was a lady holding a spinning wheel dressed with flowers. I heard that she was the lady who had set the spinning wheels going again down Langdale way, and had now come to do the same kind work for the Keswick folk, in connection with the Keswick School of Industrial Art. On the coach sat comely dames, evidently much enjoying the ride; these were her spinsters, and as we passed "St. Kentigern's" Spinning School, we saw more spinning wheels in the window gaily dressed for Flora's festival.

The May-day pageant, thought I, is made doubly interesting by this bit of old world industry that thus bears its part in it. On the procession went. I saw people in sober black sit back from their windows as if they felt the May-day joy was not meant for them, but even these smiled and were not a little comforted; and so up towards Brigham, with Latrigg and its sweet breathed company of larches looking silently on, towards the gleaming distance of golden gorse above the Brundholme woods they moved. Then we turned and met sight of great Walla's Crag in full glory of glistening gold from the budding oak upon its flanks, so back by the church of St. John, and the pipers,

ceased their tune and men took off their hats, for "Earth to earth" was being said above an open grave, and for one at least of the Keswick people the May Queen had been crowned in vain.

The Maypole caught in the budding lime, and sent down showers of pink glumes and delicate shells upon the little fairies in attendance. But on they went; and again the windows were filled with aged faces, and again little tots cried from the doorways. And so, with much pomp and circumstance, into the royal park they call the Fitz, the Queen brought home the May.

What a park it is, that Fitz. That long, level strip of greensward, flanked by the sounding river and the sounding rail. The ivy-covered vicarage above the green hill of Crosthwaite in the distance to the north, the grey old Hall of the Monks of Fountains¹ nearer and in front of the hill, while, circling round from north to east, the horned Skiddaw with its cub—as Latrigg has been called, seemed to keep ever guardian watch about this people's park, and fence it from the world.

Those old Fountains' Monks would surely have rubbed their eyes and laughed right out

¹Since pulled down to make way for the Cottage Hospital.

across the vetches or fitches they were planting; would surely have left their reels and floats in the fish ponds, and have come and mingled with our merry-making, for May Day in their time was the Virgin's Day, and in their time, as still in the south of France to-day, they thought on the Holy Mother of God and her virgin purity, what time the lilies began to blow; yea, and thought of the Mother of the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world, in this the month when "life for the lambs is innocent and gay," and bade the people turn to newness of life as the hedgerows decked themselves with green, and the fields put on their new May dress.

The little girls in some parts of Essex to-day will carry a doll dressed up amid their garlands or May branches, and will sing—

"So dear, so dear as Christ loved us,
And for our sins was slain;
Christ bids us turn from wickedness,
And seek the Lord again,"

without a thought that they are acting a Roman Catholic May mystery play, or knowing how nearly allied unto the gospel teaching of the Latin Church this first of May was once in their English home.

But we forget all about the May Queen in our dream of the Fountains' Abbey Monks in the Fitches Park or Fitz Park, by the side of the Greta.

The Car of Triumph makes stately progress towards the platform where the skippers are to put their skill to proof. Already hundreds of spectators are lounging on the sloping bank beneath the oaken grove that overlooks the place.

The platform has been raised three feet from the ground, and has been securely fenced in, leaving a green lane all about wherein the pipers are to play, and the fiddlers to fiddle, and the judges to judge.

From the middle of this platform, some twenty-four feet square, rises a lofty Maypole with a garland at its top and riband steamers of red, white, and blue, each with a ring at the end for the Maypole dancers to hold them by.

The May Queen takes up her position, and the skippers begin to skip.

The girls have been chosen for their proficiency, ascertained at previous trials from all the schools in the parish. Two ladies are told off to note the skipping of each pair of little feet. And soon a dozen little girls are dancing

up and down in serious and most earnest silence. There is a child who, after skipping one thousand two hundred and three times in "Plain" skipping, is stopped by order of the judges, or she would have been skipping now. Here is a child who wins at what is called "Double-you-under," by skipping fifty times over the rope which is twice whistled overhead, and is whisked twice under her little feet whilst the little feet are in the air. Then another child solemnly counts A, B, C, and lets her feet, with each letter, fall over the rope, and is in attitude of one who, though stationary, steps at quick-step, and constantly allows the rope unimpeded to flash above her head and under her heels. She counts the alphabet through thirty-five times before she fails in her task; whilst a fourth girl crosses her hands each time in front of her body, and skips through the loop that is thus made in her skipping-rope two hundred and twelve times without a miss; and a fifth child throws the rope to each side of her alternately, and alternately skips over it—"Wind-the-Clock," so the skippers call it—for four hundred and forty times before she gives up her task.

Then there is a pause. The skippers give up the platform to the little white-frocked

company of children chosen to dance a real old-fashioned Maypole dance, not for prowess, nor for grace, nor only for a pretty face, but just because they are the good little twelve who have attended school most regularly during the year. And the crowd gathers and grows about the platform, and the fiddlers three strike up a merry polka, and, at the signal from their teacher—a low whistle—away, with laughter in their faces and song on their lips, and a sure sense of time in their feet, go the “Merry little maidens bringing in the May,” each of them holding in her hands the Maypole riband that accords with the colour of her sash. The colours twist themselves in magic way to magic pattern on the Maypole as the children sing and dance around, and as soon as they have, as it were, twisted themselves up together, and twined the ribands from top to bottom, the whistle sounds, and then away they dance in reverse order, and untwine the ribands on the Maypole, to twist upon it another pattern by some new evolution in their dance.

A little song had been written for the occasion, and as they sang it the fiddlers ceased, and when they ceased the fiddlers struck up the melody.

This was the song they sang :

“ Merry little maidens, O !
Round the Maypole now we go,
Glancing hands and twinkling feet
Going through our figures neat.
Merry little maidens,
Merry little maidens,
Merry little maidens,
Bringing in the May.

“ Lizzie, Maggie, Florence, Nell,
Edith, Aldyth, Lettie, Bell,
Polly, Mary, Hannah, Beck,
Dancing round the pole we deck.
Merry little maidens, etc.

“ Hand on hip and hand in air,
One by one or pair by pair,
Four by four or three by three,
Round we go with grace and glee.
Merry little maidens, etc.

“ Now we sing and now we shout,
Dancing in and dancing out ;
While the ribbons overhead
Twist from white to blue and red.
Merry little maidens, etc.

“ Crissed and crossed while round we go,
Patterns as by magic show ;
May-poles never at their best
Were in brighter colours dressed.
Merry little maidens, etc.

“Keswick fathers, come and see
 How we dress the May-pole tree ;
 Keswick mothers, come and gaze,
 Dream again of golden days.
 Merry little maidens,
 Merry little maidens,
 Merry little maidens,
 Bringing in the May.”

It was a very simple ditty ; but it melted some to tears. It was just the force of association of idea that moved men so. How could old men and women at such a touching sight of pure happiness and innocent pleasure on that all golden May-day afternoon, not remember, even with tears, that they too had once life's glad May Day? How could the more thoughtful not look far forward and think of sorrow and pain and age that must inevitably one day touch the hearts of these young happy swift-footed creatures, and make the May Day but a dream to grey heads and knees and feet that then would perforce move but slow. Yes, Wordsworth is right when he speaks of the joy of May being “ Part seen, imagined part,” for there is about May Day, as Chaucer so well knew, a power to make men full of sorrow as it makes them full of joy :

 “Every true gentle herte free
 Againe May now shall have some stering
 Or to joye or elles to some mourning.”

But the fiddlers fiddled, and the dancers went about the Maypole till all their figures had been danced through and the ribands had been criss-crossed to every imaginable tartan pattern, and the last verse of the Keswick May-song had been sung.

Then to the applause of the multitude the little maidens left their ribands to the wind and the platform to the skippers. For Her Majesty must give the prizes, and the skippers must be called for to the edge of the platform, thence be lifted to the ground, thence lifted to the car, there to receive their silver thimble or their needle-case, or case of scissors, or writing-pad, or pen and pencil from the hands of their most sovereign lady the Queen.

Nor was this the least interesting part of the ceremony, for the children clapped and the crowd hurraed, and the little Queen was solemn and sweet, and the skippers were made right glad and the skippers' mothers were made right proud.

The boys' sports were all this while going forward vigorously in a ring hard by. Such honest wrestling, such fierce racing was surely never seen. Men sometimes, as the language of the ring has it, lay down to one another by agreement pre-arranged, but the boys who

wrestled in honour of the May in the Fitz Park, wrestled hard till they were fairly thrown. For was not the Queen of the May to give away the prizes? Was not that an honour for which, till legs gave way, it was worth the tussle?

Hark! there is surely the screele of the pipes again, and sure enough the brave little Cameron pipers have thrown their bannered pipes over their shoulders, drone and chanter are again at work, and the bonnets with the black cock feather are seen moving round the Maypole ring, while the people stare at a Scotch reel, a true Highland fling, executed admirably by four of the laddies. How the kilts swayed, how the green diamonds on their stockings and blue bows of riband at the knee glanced, how their red waistcoats flashed, how their bonnets dipped and danced as the braw quartette went through their figures before the astonished people, and how tumultuously screeled the pipes as they walked around and around the dancers' platform.

Now at last the dance is over, and whilst many move to another part of the field to witness the hurdle-leaping by the horses, others pass off in the direction of the town or railway station. For the May Queen's car is seen to

be rolling from the field, and the spanking coach, with its white-frosted Maypole dancers and the red-postillioned carriage, with some of the skippers sitting in state therein, are making for the Fitz Park Gate. Even Her Majesty must eat, and to-day part of her royal care is to see that the dancers and skippers, all and several, shall partake of the good Queen Mother's bounty, and take tea with her own most queenly self.

"Dar bon, but she's a bonnie laal lass is 't May Queen," says a yeoman, as she passes out of the field. "Eh my! but what! yan nivver cud ha' whoped to hev' seen sec skippin' and sec dancin' as that hooiver—nivver cud," says another. "I tell tha it was wuth coomin' aw't way fra' ower t' Raise to see the Maypole dance let aloan t' May Procession," cries a third. "Eh man! but it has been a grand daay for barns," muttered a fourth. "It's auld times coom agean hooiver," rejoins his friend. "It's finest May Day we shall iver see," puts in another, and so they talk and crack. And as the women take up their talk and speak out cheerily of its praises, the saddest face is lit with a smile. Truly sang the poet,

"Hard is his herte that loveth nought
In May when al this mirth is wrought."

And now the westering sun fills the heaven over Bassenthwaite with gold. Helvellyn lies an unbroken length of half-veiled, half-lustrous light. Skiddaw gleams like "the flashing of a shield." The rooks come cawing over towards the Great Wood merrily. The thrush sings as lustily as he sang in the morn, but he sings now the May-day evening hymn. The games are ended, the Fitz Park is empty, the mist steals up from the river, and the scent from the sycamore fills the air. A great yellow moon rises above Bleaberry. The Maypole stands like a ghost upon its white deserted platform, but the thrush still sings as he once sang on a May Day to Wordsworth in the Newlands Valley ; the stars are not yet out, and

" His voice shall chant in accents clear
Throughout the livelong day,
Till the first silver star appear,
The sovereignty of May."

AT THE GRASMERE SPORTS.

THE Grasmere Sports are to the dalesmen of Westmoreland and Cumberland what the gathering for the Highland games is to men across the Border. Thanks to the steady persistence of the committee to keep intoxicants from the Sports' field, their endeavours to discountenance betting on the events, and to see that "buying and selling" is prevented, the Grasmere wrestling-ring has grown steadily in favour, both with wrestlers and with the public. We remember the time when chairs and forms were brought out of the nearest cottages to the field, for the few ladies and gentlemen to sit on and see the sport. Now we have a high-banked gallery of three tiers for the peasants, round a ring an eighth of a mile in circumference; and carriages and coaches in quadruple rank; behind this, a grand stand, a band stand, and all the rest of it.

Everybody goes to "Girsmer" on Sports' Day, and the fact that everybody has to take some trouble in the going—for Grasmere is eight miles from the nearest railway station—is one of the factors in the success of the games.

The dalesmen, in Sunday best, come bent on sport and not on licence, and very grimly and with obstinate patience does the dark crowd sit through sun and shower from first to last, cracking of nuts and popping of ginger-beer bottles, at times, alone breaking the silence of expectation.

They have come, some of them, twenty miles on foot; they have paid their shilling admission to the field, and they intend to have their shilling's worth undisturbed.

The gentlefolk, with their spanking teams and their gay carriages, have come, it is true, more to see their friends than the games; but they are present, and their presence ensures a kind of feeling that all things must be done decently and in order. If it is the "Lillie Bridge" of the North for some of the athletically-minded males, it is the "Lord's" of the North for their fair companions. And there is that same delightful chance of meeting old friends from the far corners of the earth that makes

the gathering day so enjoyable an expectation, so pleasant a memory.

What a parson's pleasure-ground that Grasmere Sports' field has become! Deans, Canons, Bishops, and Archbishops are seen in the happiest and most unprofessional of moods. There is one parson at least on the Sports' Committee, and round the ring they may be counted by scores. One is not sorry that this is so; the more our spiritual shepherds meet and mingle with such simple country shepherds' sport as Grasmere provides, the healthier and happier the tone of English national amusement, the surer the advent of the day when "joy in wildest commonalty spread" shall be the keynote of the churches in the land.

Not the least attraction to spend a day at the Grasmere Sports' field, is the fact that, go how you will, you must pass through scenery of a most delightful beauty.

We, who were twelve miles off, at the start, in the Keswick Vale, knew how the quiet joy of the drive to and from the Sports lived on, even when the excitement of the games had passed, and knowing this, we set our faces determinedly for Dunmail Raise and Westmoreland, though the glass was against us and

the proverbial "Queen's weather" of Grasmere games seemed doubtful.

Telegrams in the morning papers told us that terrific storms had flashed and crashed across England, South and East, on the previous day ; but the sound of thunder and mighty rain had not been heard within the charmed circle of our Lakeland Hills ; and inauspicious though the leaden sky had seemed, the cloud that is locally known as "The Tubman's Almanack" had not been seen upon the breast of Great End.

The wind, too, was from the north and east. "There will be no rain to-day," said the knowing ones ; and as our coach-load shortly made its way past Shelley's cottage high on "Chestnut Hill," the "cap" was lifted from Skiddaw's double crown, the sun swept up the Crosthwaite Vale, the heather on Lonscale Fell shone out in miracle of purple-red, and "there will be no rain to-day" was the cry from the lips of all.

On we bowled, down the Roman roadway in the Naddle Vale at Causeway Foot, on past the gorge at Shoulthwaite with its glimpse of the crag castle that the earliest settlers of our land held once in entrenched and absolute security. On towards the woody hill of Great How, with

its Wordsworthian jingle of "rosy-cheeked schoolboys" and "councillor's bags" still clinging to its *Man*-less summit.

Over the silver Bure, with that picturesque Bridge-end Farm by it, the weaving sheds of old "home-spun" times adding to its picturesqueness of gable grouping, its white-lined porch, its ample sycamores. Past the glorious Castle Crag Sir Walter Scott's fancy fastened on, as he wrote *The Bridal of Triermain*. On by the Brotto ghyll and the pink stuccoed house beneath the Scotch firs that gave a sad last autumnal reception to Rossetti, and heard the memorable voice of the dying poet mouth out the last proofs of the last collection of sonnets he was giving to the world.

Still forward by the long-backed inn and barn of Thirlspot—to-day sad, for the landlord is lying dead within, and the quaint sign that used to bid people step in and drink good beer, with the doggerel :

"John succeeded his Uncle Peter,
In t' auld man's time it was never better,"

must needs be hung out anew.

Now Armboth Hall, with its legend of the spectral banquet, shone white upon its grassy lawn across the dark waters of Thirlmere.

Thirlmere, soon, alas! to submerge all that grassiness of lawn and indented bay beneath the new level of its water flood.

Here is the Poets' Rock, the rock of Names, walled up now by some kindly hand that reveres the initials of those poets and their friends, who met for high thought in olden time upon this eastern shore of Thorold's Mere or Leathes Water, and gave this

“Loved rock their names to keep,
Long after they were laid to sleep.”

Yonder behind us stands Raven Crag, black as a storm, and here, right in front,

“Ghimmer Crag, its tall twin brother.”

Hideous erections for navy requirements, spoil-heaps and debris of the Manchester Waterworks, haunt us now all the way to Wythburn.

But the sun shines out so fair upon the fields that one day will be lost beneath the lake's new level; so changeless seem the dark pines round the cluster of farm-houses men call to-day “The City,” where the original settlers of the dale *sat* down to people the valley, and subdue it in true Norse-Viking fashion; so unspoilt as yet is the quaint turreted tiny church of Wythburn—“that modest house of prayer,

as lowly as the lowliest dwelling"—that even the Manchester Corporation cannot drive from off Helvellyn or the Armbboth Fells "the freshness of the early morn," which Wordsworth caught and dowered them with, and Arnold has continued to them.

Up the long ascent of Dunmail Raise we pant and puff. Yonder is the cairn piled over the bones of who knows how many a tribal chieftain, fallen in this gateway of the hills. We cross the Rotha, we are in Westmoreland, and while the purple screes of Helm Crag shine out in contrast to the emerald green of the parsley fern that fringes the fallen draperies of purple stone from summit to base, our eyes go, as once the poet Gray's eyes went, to linger with surprise upon the loveliness of the Grasmere Vale that, with its silver jewel on its breast, lies in the bosom of its mountains. What perfection of pastoral scene is here!—the tiny enclosure, the white farm, the hanging woods, and, high o'er Loughrigg, the heather-purpled slopes of Ironkeld, and the blue distance of Gummer's How.

Yon tree-girt hill that rises as if it would command the loyalty of the Vale is Butterlip How. "Buthar the Leaper" was once its lord, mayhap lies buried there, and we are to-day

bound for the Grasmere Sports, and shall see how something of his Northman's blood still runs in the veins of agile leapers and wrestlers in the ring.

We cannot yet see the old white church. It is concealed beneath that "How of the Leaper," and close beside it lies hid the Grasmere wrestling field. Wrestling field sounds modern enough, but the lion and the lamb upon this Helm Crag on our right, looked down upon the Roman legionaries who ran their roadway to the place of our meeting to-day. And Pavement End is the name of the meadow wherein the Grasmere games are to go forward.

What a far past is with us as we descend! Stone Arthur rises on our right. Who knows what Arthur and his knights did battle by this, Rotha's side. Blood-red are the patches on the hill above; the stream, as it works its way among the moraine débris at our right, flows through earth that has been dyed red, sanguine as if it had drunk the blood of the slain. Yet Rotha, whatever thy name may mean, whether red with blood of the slain, or red with iron-dust amongst these hills, to-day thou leapest peacefully from pool to pool, and the strife to which thou ledest us will be without noises of the warrior and garments rolled in blood—the



AT THE GRASMERE SPORTS, LOOKING TOWARDS SILVER HOW

olive branch in silver upon the red leathern wrestling-belt will be striven for by friends.

Here is the "Traveller's Rest," festooned by trails of the rich *Tropeolum speciosum* creeper. A pole-leaper is taking his traveller's rest, his great lance in hand; we shall see him on the field presently. There yonder, white and welcoming, is the "Famous Swan."

"Any room?" cried the coach-driver. "Na, 'aw's filt oop an hour sen," is the rejoinder. And on we pass to the village, and round the curve by the house Clough used to lodge at, toward the church; then round again to the right, and while the mere shines whitely to the left, the Sports' field to our right is suddenly seen, black with its swarm of onlookers.

We wait now, one of a fast-gathering line of coaches and carriages, to pay our tax at the gate, get our carriage ticket, and bustle quickly along to the western side of the ring. Out with the horses, back with the wheels, and we are safe in a coveted place, and none can hinder our view.

What a sight it is, and what a wonderful place for the spectacle this old Roman Pavement End has secured for us! Behind us are the firs and the ferns, and the heather and the screes of Silver How—Height of "Sölvar,"

the Dane ; a rich meadow of many corners, called the "Wray," flat as our hand, reaches to the steep ascent whereby the guides and shepherds will presently assay the mountain race ; and bosomed and hid amongst their hollies and rhododendrons, are the two hospitable little houses that will welcome all friends to rest and quiet and refreshment, between the pauses of the sports.

The eye goes away to the north by the rising ground of Allen Bank. Shade of Wordsworth, here you haunt us all the day ! For you, great yeoman bard, you too were fond of the sports. That stalwart umpire, Adam Walker, the old wrestler in the ring there, remembers as a boy how he watched you "wurkin out your pieces" and "booing out" your verses in Rydal Garden ; and there are aged men looking on at the sports to-day who can tell "how 'Wilson, him o' Elleray,' and 'Wadsworth o' Rydal,' was girt, bless tha barn, at leuking on at t' village games and sek like."

But the eye wanders on past Allen Bank : beyond the crescent wall of Easedale and the frowning slopes of Helm Crag, across to bare Seat Sandal's slope of grey, by Grisedale's hollow filled with mist or rain, to the sun-

tanned ridge of Fairfield: by the dark outstanding craggy mass of Stone Arthur, the deep, gulf-like hollow of Michael's Fold, to the fortress rocks of "the Thunderer," Thunaicar Knott.

So to the lower ground where the leech-gatherer plied his trade, on by the fir-grove of "the Brothers," above the wishing-gate, round by the lake—a perfect mirror of placidity now, to the ferns and terrace-road of Loughrigg, and the shale and larches and garden grounds of solemn Silver How.

You ask why thus describe this amphitheatre? Upon its sides will presently be heard the chime of hounds, and we shall follow, follow, follow the flying pack that bays and hunts its phantom quarry quite round the valley, upon these mountain walls.

The running High-leap is just over. A Keswick man (Sewell) and a Plumblands man (Nicholl) have tied, at the height of 5 feet 8 inches. We are intent on watching the broad leap, which Hogg of Hawick carries off with a leap of 19 feet 2 inches, when we see a little white body rise, as if by magic, in air, and throw himself from a thin pole over a cat-gallows, at what seems to us an amazing height. This is the pole leapers' contest, and

very gracefully, one after another, the men run lance in hand, then rise in air, and when they have risen to a point of rest, seem to climb, Jack-in-beanstalk fashion, up their wands hand over hand, and so cast themselves over the bar and throw their poles from their bodies, to fall with a thud upon the green grass hardly heard amid the deafening cheers. Another tie here too. A Keswick man (Thwaites) and a Liverpool man (Simpson) share the honours of victory at 10 feet 3 inches.

The Heavy-weight wrestling has begun. Round the ring goes the bellman, shouting the names of the various men who have been drawn together, and ending his shout with a peremptory "Come out!" Out they come into the midst of the great green circle with its black fence of 12,000 eyes, for there are 6000 spectators gathered together to witness the sport. What old days ring up through the crier's ringing shout! "Carradus!"—his ancestor was called "Caradoc!"—Norman! Cuthbert! Woodend! Brownrigg! Martindale! these are men with a far past in their family history, by their very names.

Those stalwart men, one with black beaver hat, and the other with wideawake; dark-eyed Tom Longmire one, the other, grey-eyed ruddy

Adam Walker, have been champions in all the north in their time. Great pillars of strength they still seem, as they take up their post of umpire and begin to watch "the play."

And the wrestlers. Here a man in skin-tights, there one fresh from the land and farm, his rough breeches rolled about his knees, set to work; and, "Good lad, go it breeches! fell him, Shepherd! Hod on, laal un! Well done, barn!" breaks from the admiring crowd as some newcomer grasses some older one, and breeches and tights shake hands and pass back to the Committee room—one saddened and the other wondering.

To see the fun you must be a Committee-man, and help at the weighing. Only those under fourteen stone are to wrestle to-day for the Heavy-weight Belt and the Ten Sovereigns. It is a new rule, and it will have curious consequences, as we shall see.

The second and third round is over, the interest deepens, not that the sport increases. It is in those rounds that have gone before that young blood has been doing its work, and doing it well.

Here is the rain. Up go the 6000 umbrellas; still the wrestlers sway and swing and slip hands over head, and "*hod*" as the saying is.

Still the white legs meet and twinkle and mix and flash, and with a roar of applause the victor sends his man to the ground, or holds him tight as death in his embrace, till the face goes pale, and the wind leaves the body, and the exhausted opponent yields.

But the rain is in earnest; the umpires run in for shelter, and all sit round in patience till the sun shall shine. Out goes the sawdust man. That is a good omen, and out, ere the rain be over and gone, come the wrestlers, and the games go on. Luncheon hour has arrived! it is over too quickly, to judge from the débris.

Two o'clock! and behind the grey walls of the meadow men may be seen with queer lurcher-looking hounds, half-beagle, half-fox-hound it would seem, thin as rakes, all of them in wonderful condition; and stealthily you may watch the men take bottles of soup, or syrup, or tea from their pockets, thrust open the hound's mouth, administer the draught—to prevent thirst, as they tell you, and so get the hounds swiftly and without pause for drinking over the becks and runnels that they will cross in the "trail." The hounds are baying fiercely—Lofty, Cracker, and all the rest of the nineteen.

They are in line, straining at their collars like greyhounds. The signal is given and "Awa with tha'!" is the cry that rises from the expectant crowd. Away they tear, and in ten minutes' time they have crossed the valley, and are seen like a white thread amongst the ferns of Fairfield side.

Hark! even at this distance you can hear their music; through a strong glass you can watch the swiftness of their onward rush. The white line now falls like a torrent seen afar off, now is hid, now reappears, and now right round the lake the hounds are in full cry. They have gained Silver How. The green Wray meadow beyond the wall is flooded with anxious men. The owners of the dogs, leash in hand, are the centres of groups of interested surmise.

In limps the runner of the trail; pah! how strong the rabbit-skin drenched with aniseed which he drags behind him smells as it comes between the wind and our nobility!

"Poor man!" a little girl said at our side; "he's safe now, I am so glad. The dogs would have eaten him, you know, if they had caught him!"

He was very nearly caught up too, for hark the chiming of the pack among the larches!

They are coming, Lofty, Cracker, Signal ; then a gap, then Bowler, the rest nowhere. Straight as an arrow Lofty shoots down the steep, over the wall, over the beck, then races home across the green flat, and in another moment is in his master's arms, with twenty pair of hands to pet and caress him, and his name a household name for a year. Cracker seems to know he is hard pressed, quickens up as Signal draws closer, and flashes by, a good second.

Scarce have the hounds all got home from their four-mile race when a movement is seen among the spectators at the western side of the ring. The bank of onlookers breaks up, and through the gap and through the carriages, and over the wall, the twenty-nine competitors for the Guides' Race dash across the Wray, scramble over the beck, and begin their arduous climb. Yonder at the sky-line waves the half-way flag ; friends of the runners stand as signal-men or guides at different points on the steep breast. Away they go, lost in the larches ; out they come, and choosing each the way he best knows, with hands hanging straightly down and straining every muscle, they are seen to walk rather than run, with giant strides, up the rocky slope.

Lancaster is leading, and keeps the lead ; as

he nears the cairn and the flag there is a flash of light. Some friend has thrown a bucket of water over him to give him a refresher, then quick as lightning he slips round the flag, and the descent begins. Watch him through the field-glass; the way in which he throws himself rather than leaps down, his hands often above his head as he steadies himself in the downward plunge, fairly startles one. Now the whole of the living line of white-clothed men has become a torrent, and down, down, down; there is a momentary hiding from sight, and then a cry, "Lancaster! Brave boy! Hod till it!" "Lancaster hes it!" "Lancaster's t' lad!" and over the beck and across the field the winner of last year's Guides' Race rushes towards the crowd. He has run it in fifteen minutes. It is record time, and lustily he is cheered.

It is not the same race that it was of old; but the pace is killing. One cannot scramble up a height of 1000 feet and leap down it, and run a mile race into the bargain, without great pluck. And as we saw the gallant twenty-nine stream home, battered and worn, and sometimes absolutely shoeless, we knew a little of the labour and the distress entailed. Meanwhile the wrestling goes cheerily on.

Notwithstanding another soaking rain-shower, the Mile Race, eight laps round the ring, causes a momentary excitement.

Then the cat-gallows is erected; amateur pole-leaping is the order of the day.

The tall man in dark-red costume is Ray, the champion. He sails to-morrow for America to leap against the New World. How skilfully he plies his mighty wand! "Ten feet six inches!" cries the crier, and the prize is won. But Ray will do more than this to-day; the bar is raised a foot. "Eleven feet six inches!" cries the crier, and in another moment Ray is seen climbing up the well-balanced pole, and with a tremendous twist and throw of his body he clears the bar. The whole field rings with our plaudits, and the champion is lost amid an admiring crowd.

Now a curious episode occurs. The wrestlers who had weighed in for the heavy-weight wrestling under fourteen stone, have eaten their dinners and quenched their thirst. Some have put their trousers on over their tights. Some have donned their waistcoats and are wearing their watches, with the result that they are now above fourteen stone in weight, and claim to wrestle in the *Champion Class* for all over fourteen stone.

Their plea is disallowed. They cannot wrestle as weighing two weights on the one day; but as a noted hand said with a sigh, "It's neteral enuff that yan shud weigh full three pund more than yan scales empty, and it's hard that t' Committee sudn't let laws of Nature hev course and give t' dinner a chance."

The champions meet, they are four in number. Hall, Todd, Lowden, Postlethwaite, these are the giants; but Lowden, the champion, is great in skill as he is large in limb, and a very little trouble lands him at the end of the second round, the winner of his ten guineas. One wonders most, as one watches these great men in the ring, at the ease with which the huge bodies are tossed like corks from the ground, picked up and thrown from the chest, or cross-buttocked, and sometimes tossed clean over-head by the scientific wrestler.

Now sixteen picked men are called out, but ere they come together for "the play," the ownership of the Champion belt for the Heavy-weights is decided. F. Kennedy of Plumpton, a short thickset man, well-known in the North, after a sharp set-to with J. Simpson, has tackled J. Farlowe, a Liverpool man, in the sixth round. The final round is reached, and

obtaining two falls in succession, Kennedy is the winner, and to judge by the greeting he gets, he is a winner well-approved.

The High-leap for Amateurs is going on ; the queer little man who bounds like an india-rubber ball towards the jumping gallows, and after leaping the bar turns almost completely round, is the American high-leaper, Bryd Page by name.

Certainly his powers are extraordinary—and the athletes of Pennsylvania University may justly be proud of their colleague. The bar has been raised to six feet. Page gathers himself into a ball, and over he bounds. Six feet one—a clear jump. Six feet one and a half, and again the bar is cleared, and on to his heap of hay the American high-leaper has alighted, to the astonishment of all who had not read how, only a few days before at Stour-bridge, Page had leapt the highest leap on record, and cleared six feet three inches and a quarter.

“Clear the ring!” cry the Stewards. A Committee-man, with the Champion belt shining over his arm, accompanied by Lord and Lady Muncaster and the Secretary, Mr. Fleming Green, walk out into the open. The champion, Lowden, and the winner, Kennedy,

together with the umpires, stand stock-still in a row. Lang Tom Hodgson, the crier, towers up behind the crowd. The jumpers, Bryd Page and Ray, are seen in the front rank. A photographer is heard to say, "Quiet, quiet, please!" and the Grasmere Sports are put on record by sun and silver salt for the Jubilee year, 1887.

Then comes the presentation of the prizes. Lord Muncaster makes a telling little speech—acknowledges the presence of the American; Lady Muncaster hands the Champion belt and the golden sovereigns to the successful competitors, and the day is over.

No, not yet. The drags may go, leaving the ground horribly bottle-bestrewn; the coaches may tootle their horns, and rumble off by the lake down the valley, or up over Dunmail Raise; but the final fall of the light-weight wrestling has still to be given, and the black-coated dalesmen who give and take the real interest in the Grasmere Sports' Day will sit it out. In the seventh round Bainbridge fells his man twice running, and carries off the belt. We induced some of our friends to stay to the end, nor were those who waited disappointed, for the pick of the heavy-weights, encouraged by the certainty of a reward of ten

shillings if they did their best against the winners, put shoulder to shoulder, thigh to thigh, and "hipes" and "backheels" and "crossbuttocks" and "sneks" were seen to advantage. The sun, that had sulked through the darkish day, shone out in double radiance. Never had evening light more beautifully "steeped in its last splendour valley, lake, and hill," than on this eventful eventide in the Grasmere Vale.

The old church stood out as if it were washed in fire, and as the sunset beyond the Dunmail Raise grew pale, high over Fairfield hung a cloud so luminous that one could have believed a second dawn had broken from underground, and the Grasmere Sports' Day was to begin anew.

OVER LOUGHRIGG AFTER THE GRASMERE SPORTS.

PERISH England, but leave us Loughrigg! That is the kind of feeling with which one stands, as I stood after the Grasmere Sports, high up among the rocky knolls and fern above the lake and the terrace-walk on Loughrigg side, and gazed at the world of gleam and glory, of sunshine and shadow that lay below.

The Grasmere Sports are not as they were: the professional has supplanted the shepherd wrestler; no longer do the simple folk from the daleside farms stand round the little ring while the gentry sit on plain forms fetched from the neighbouring school; no longer does "Jack Carradus" stand up with "Will Ritson," him of Wasdale, to strive for the bit of leather strap, the belt with its plain broad buckle of steel—that is all the prize. Now placarded far and near, one is informed that £230 will be offered

for prizes at the Grasmere Sports, and one might as well be at some London Lillie Bridge, so perfect are the arrangements of turn-stile and grand stand and band stand, and members' enclosure, and all the rest of it. Round the huge ring now is banked three-or-four-tier-high sitting accommodation for some thousands of spectators; behind, three or four rank deep, the coaches and char-a-bancs and carriages are clustered, and it is quite plain to be seen when the field grows thin and the spanking teams, with tootling horn and gay liveries, pass away from the field, that it was luncheon and champagne, not wrestling and the love of a manly old-fashioned Cumberland sport that the gentle folk had chiefly come to see.

But still there is a mighty spell about that ancient Roman and Viking meeting-place! The field still goes by the name of Pavement End; and the legionaries who made the Roman way from Ambleside to Grasmere knew it well. And somehow—year in, year out—the same old faces greet one, and friends from far away welcome one another and move round the ring with nod and smile and words of courtesy.

Yes, Grasmere Sports' Day has won the kind of solemnity that all such days of annual

meeting and greeting, of parting and farewell, must have for men and women who feel that all their life is a great wrestle, and that here whilst others wrestle they may for a moment breathe and look on, perhaps for the last time.

But it is not till one has left the Sports' field and set one's face to climb Red Bank, or to scramble up the ferny slope of Loughrigg, that the real beauty and joy of the Grasmere Sports' Day is possessed.

The black crowd in the field beyond the quiet mere is seen to grow thinner; the last strain of the music-makers is heard; and all along the eastern shore of the lake the tootle of horns and the patter of horses' hoofs and the roll of laden carriages, streaming off toward Ambleside or Windermere and the train, is clearly heard.

Now the sound dies amongst the trees which Wordsworth's brother John used so to delight to wander amongst; now it swells out, as passing "Joanna's Rock" or "Penny Corner" the horses scamper under the woody knolls still called Sarah and Mary Craggs, because of those devoted haunters of their heathery crests, the Poet's wife and sister-in-law. What images crowd upon one as one gazes! By yonder

buttress-wall on the lake did Hartley Coleridge, come from the Nab Cottage, oft-times stand and gaze. There did De Quincey, lost in dream, often shuffle along to his dear Dove Cottage. At yonder house of Allen Bank, so plainly seen from here, Christopher North first met Samuel Taylor Coleridge. High up in Easedale, dimly seen beneath Helm Crag, are the groves of song that are sweet still with the murmurings of Wordsworth's *Prelude*. Beyond, like a drift of snow left in a mountain cleft, the steady Easedale torrent pours itself soundlessly away; thence does our eye lead us back by the western ridge of Sölvar or Silver How, or over the knoll of "Buthar the Nimble," "Buthar the Leaper," to the eastern hill-side by way of the Ladder or Steel-Fell and the dip of Dunmail Raise to Seat Sandal, that "fond lover of the clouds," on by the hill that keeps us in memory of the old Arthurian times, Stone Arthur, and so to Fairfield, with its hints of Norse shepherds' more peaceful days, and on to glorious Nab Scar.

But after all it is of two people one is in most thought as one gazes from this Loughrigg height to-day, for to Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy does the little green terrace-road beneath us seem

of most right to belong. How often did they stand and gaze at the blue back of Lonscale, peering to the north beyond the Dunmail gap? How often think of Michael in that hollow dell on yonder mountain side, building the fold of which his flock had need. How often see in fancy, by yonder Glowworm Rock, the poor old Cumberland beggar, or by yonder road that leads to the Wishing-gate, the woman, "Majestic, tall, and straight," who begged an alms "like one in poor estate."

Ah! yes, and how many a time did the swaying star of his sister Dorothy's lantern guide the Poet's steps along above the lake on Loughrigg's side when other stars were rising above Helvellyn, and beyond the "aerial rock," the "wild goat crag," fair Hesperus had sunk into its rest.

But on we go, for the sunset is beginning to fill the heaven above Sölvar How with glow, and we have an hour and a half's trudge in wonderland before we drop down on Hartley Coleridge's school-day home, Clappersgate, beloved of the Lloyds and De Quincey and Christopher North.

We gain the "Maen"—a heap of stones—and find ourselves in a miniature lakeland.

Faber, the poet, knew this well, and in his poem "Loughrigg" wrote—

"Thou art a world in miniature, a land
Wrought with such curious toil as though in mirth
Nature had thrown thee from her dexterous hand
To be a sportive model of the earth."

The knolls of grey rock and breezy fern rise up from above the quiet pools of liquid gold,—pools that in their season the wild ducks know; and such perplexity of tiny mountain ranges is all around one that it is ten to one that we miss our way. This is the joy of Loughrigg, the sweet uncertainty of striking the track you hope for.

It is sunset time, the golden hours of light strike up from behind the Pikes of Langdale and Bowfell. Pavey Ark is plum-purple, Sergeant Maen misty blue; and soon the ranges of Crinkle Crag, Wetherlam, and Coniston Old Man will almost become breathing things; with such translucency of amethystine fire behind a gauzy film of moisture does the wall of mountain to the west palpitate at sundown.

Now the light showers down upon "Diana's looking-glass," as Wordsworth used to call Loughrigg Tarn, and flames upon the wet walls that strike up from the pastures, fills the

wet ferny slopes at our feet with jewels of diamond lustre, and gives us sight of Esthwaite Water, a flood of silver to the south, and, nearer, of the Brathay pools in the broad quiet valley, like a great amber necklace linking west and east. How the light flashes at Skelwith Bridge, and sparkles in the flooded meadows below. How, swathed in purple heather, from purple black and misty green, Lingmoor gleams for a moment into rose. There are few birds to bear us company, plovers circle overhead, but the stonechats have left us, and jackdaws are silent ; yet have we other companions in our solitude. The shy mountain sheep, hidden from view among the fern, suddenly rustle into life, show their intelligent black faces, and bound away, or snort at us and stamp the ground with the fierceness of their wild life. Fiery-hearted creatures are these little Herdwick sheep, the Spanish blood is strong within their veins, they have not forgotten the fury of the dread Armada, or the fury of the winds that drove them, so tradition has it, to our shore.

Now the miniature mountain world opens to the east, and we have large sight of Fairfield's mighty arms holding in embrace the stately woods and white hall of Rydal. There, by

yonder clump of dark Scotch firs, how often Dr. Arnold stood, for this glade was to him a mimic Cithaeron, his holiday haunt of Foxhow lies just beneath. How often W. E. Forster and Matthew Arnold wandered there. And now to the east the far-away glimpse of mountain road along the Ill Bell and High Street range reminds us that it is time to hurry if we would stand where the Roman sentinel stood and gazed down upon the old camp of Dictis in the meadow at Waterhead, and watch the Brathay and the Rothay join their silver hands, and swirl into the great Winandermere beyond.

And still there is no sign of Ambleside. No, that is another joy of Loughrigg's mountain land. Bossy and rugged, and full of criss-cross paths and unexpected glades, it keeps you to itself and its own wild life and beauty. The very sight of the huddled dwellings of town is abhorrent to it. You are to forget that such a thing as town life exists. You would otherwise not half gain the health and joy and rest that Loughrigg has to give :

“ Ne'er have I felt the might of morning rest,
Its cool, fresh welcome half so strong and free,
As on thy heathy side and windy crest,
Except in early day-breaks out at sea.”

But the poet who wrote this of Loughrigg knew that the absence of men, and all their associations of life and labour, was part of the health and wealth that was his as he strolled on Loughrigg's solitary ground.

But there is, for all this loneliness and absence of sight of busy town and work-a-day world, something that still keeps us human as we roam up these, the daintiest possible paths of sweetest shortest turf, fit for angels and fairies to tread. These lead us tenderly forward :

“green cleft and sinuous path
Cross like great mountain outlets every way ;
And the long outline which the summit hath,
Mimics rude Alp and splintered Himalay.”

We choose our path, and let it lead us up and down, but ever steadily, to the south. We find ourselves stopped to gaze at this or that lichen, which, on wings of gold, came hither from the sea, for it is the salt sea air that lends the lichen its beauty. Or again we are lost in beauty at the clear limpid tarnlet, where the water-lilies' leaves lie moveless, and the quiet grasses grow and shine beneath the flood, and the water-beetles move in and out just to prevent us thinking we are looking upon a pool of polished moss agate.

And now on Wansfell, or, as some will have it, on Woden's Fell, in glorious majesty do float "evening's angelic clouds." I doubt if the old Rydal poet felt his was a more favoured lot than I do mine as I sit here where the Roman soldier may have sat, upon this southern prominence, and see this evening all Windermere flash 'like the flashing of a shield' in the light of eventide reflected from the fleeting glory of those Wansfell clouds.

Ah, I have climbed here when Loughrigg was blood-red with the wet russet of the fern; have stumbled along the Loughrigg height when the green juniper was the only thing that showed its life above the swathes of snow; have hither come when

"butterworts had set

Their sickly stars about the hundred springs,"

and the white powdery stalks of the mealy primrose held up their delicate jewels of pink-garnet set in silver for our gathering: have sat here when "fern was like green dust upon the hill," and the bracken cherubs first unfolded their wings to the chirr of the beetles and the music of insect life awakening to the spring; and I have lain here on the sweet thyme blossom when the "grigs" skipped, and



GRASMERE AND LOUGHRIGG

As seen from a point nearest to the Sports Field

rattled and whirred about me in the summer season, but this evening of the Grasmere Sports' Day, Loughrigg, clad in its full rich mantle of yet untarnished fern, has seemed more wonderful than ever, and as I descend towards the rippling Brathay I register a vow that, if life be spared, I will, when the next year's sports come round, remember that after the games in the Roman field at Pavement End there is the climb and walk to where the Roman sentinel kept watch and ward above his meadowy camp of Dictis at Waterhead.

Perish England, but leave us Loughrigg !
Well indeed wrote Fåber :

“ Many a calm fancy and sweet sounding word,
To thee, dear Loughrigg, do of right belong ;
And though thy name of softness be unheard,
Thou of all mountains art mine under-song.”

THE LAST OF THE SOUTHEYS.

MEMORIES OF GRETA HALL.

“MOUNT HOREB with the glory upon its summit might have been more glorious but not more beautiful than old Skiddaw in his winter pelisse.” So wrote Robert Southey. It is as beautiful to-day; but we cannot enter into its beauty, for we are standing at Greta Hall with tears in our eyes: the last of the Laureate’s children has passed away.

We turned from Skiddaw, glowing into rosier sunset, to gaze upon the dark purple ranges towards the west.

The Greta runs with audible weeping towards the bridge. The great giant’s camp, as Coleridge called it, of tent-like mountains, Grisedale, Swinside, Barrow, Causey, and Catbells—is hushed and darkened, as if some of our sorrow possessed it also.

Sadly the returning rooks clang among the trees, then pass on to rest in the great wood beyond, as if they too had felt that a change had fallen upon the place.

A change *has* fallen upon the place : the last link that bound full forty years of Greta Hall memories with the present has snapped. We, who would talk with his son about the father who, with singular purpose and the noblest self-sacrifice joined with deepest affections for his family, laboured on in the weary mill of letters at this sweet Hall of the Muses, whose days among the dead were passed for forty years in yonder library, who suffered family bereavement more than mortal flesh, unaided by a quiet spirit, could have endured, and passed to his rest as long ago as the 21st of March, 1843, henceforth are unable to hold such converse.

Henceforward we must seek for reminiscences hereabout of Robert Southey, not from his children but from the country folk amongst whom he sojourned. It is true that there still lives one venerable lady in the vale who remembers how she and the Greta Hall children twined a laurel wreath to set upon his brows when the Laureate returned from London in November, 1813, "sworn to reveal all treason

against the King, to discharge the duties of his Poet-Laureateship, and to obey the Lord Chamberlain."

No one else hereabout survives who entered into the sweet simplicities of Greta Hall, where household manners must needs have breathed wholesome laws, seeing that educated women with their own hands performed much household work in love for one another and in devotion for the master and children of the house, and seeing too that, from the naming of the cats to the ordering of the little line of children's clogs in the "mangling room" to "curiously symbolize the various stages of life," there was a halo of romance thrown over all.

But at Greta Hall little or nothing has been changed. Still, as one enters the front door, one realizes how completely the house was adapted by its very building to be the home of a double family.

The wing on the left of the front hall passage was the first half of the house that was erected. There dwelt its architect, old Jackson, the well-known carrier between Whitehaven and Lancaster, employer of "mild Benjamin," "whose much infirmity," seeing he was but "a frail child of thirsty clay," once got the better of him at the Cherry Tree, and though

it won immortality for himself and his stately charge—

“That through the mountains used to go
In pomp of mist or pomp of snow
Majestically, huge and slow”—

lost him his place and robbed the country-side of both waggoner and wain.

In that left-hand wing of the master waggoner's house, the Coleridges were domiciled when their cousins the Southseys came in 1803 to Keswick. One never enters the left-hand room, “Paul,” as it was called, to distinguish it from “Peter,” opposite, without thoughts of little Derwent Coleridge giving his father that wonderful lesson in “Derwentogony”:

“*Father.* Who made you, Derwent?”

“*D.* James Lawson, the carpenter, father.

“*Father.* And what did he make you of?”

“*D.* The stuff he makes wood of: he sawed me off, and I did not like it”—

or else listening in fancy to the prattle of that “blessed vision, happy child,” that was “so exquisitely wild,” whose name still lingers in connection with this room—Hartley Coleridge.

Here Hartley would invent his new line of kings that were to be, create the wondrous animals whose skeletons grew outside their skins, and become afraid of his own creations.

Above his head would little Hartley hear his father's footsteps pacing to and fro ; sometimes, too, perhaps, young Derwent playing tricks with old Mr. Jackson's organ, stowed away in Coleridge's study.

But we are thinking of Robert Southey and his children, and we must leave this left-hand or northern wing of Greta Hall and pass across the passage to the later-built half of the house, and we shall find ghosts in every corner.

Across the passage we enter the room opposite Hartley's, that was known as "Peter," comfortably but plainly furnished. We seem to see upon its walls many pictures—two oil landscapes by a friend, and several water-colours ; in one recess "a frightful portrait," as Sara Coleridge called it, of Mrs. Coleridge, by a young lady. It is breakfast time, eight of the clock. Southey has already had two hours' work down at Davies' lodgings over Dr. Bell's *Letters and Remains* ; he has been lingering out on the terrace to see the morning light on Grisedale Pike from what he used to call the finest vantage ground for a home view in Cumberland. He stoops his bushy head to enter the door ; little Sara Coleridge runs to his arms, arms that have never forgotten his

own little grey-eyed, good-humoured Margaret, whose place the baby niece had seemed to fill when first the poet and his heart-broken wife came to Keswick.

“Uncle,” cries Sara, “it’s Edith’s birthday to-day; we are going to make a May queen of her. I couldn’t sleep all night, the river sounded so loud, and the forge hammer began so early.” And as she of the dark and glittering eye speaks “with voluble discourse and eager mien,” into the room runs quaint Moses, or Job, as they called Hartley, head all awry, top-heavy with thinking, and crammed full of his prophecies about King Thomas III. and the unearthly creatures of his imagination—the Rabzeze Kallaton and others. With Job enters his younger, merry-eyed, robustly-framed brother Derwent, “Stumpy Canary,” in his yellow frock; radiant, affectionate Isabel runs in with Bluff King Hal, as Bertha was nicknamed—Bertha the tender-hearted, “my dark-eyed Bertha, timid as a dove.” Garrulous Kate, “as round as a mushroom button,” comes in next, and with her that “Edithling,” once “so very ugly, with no more beauty than a young dodo,” now grown to be a fair-haired, rosy-cheeked child, with quite enough of the queen of the house about her in her graceful

movements to anticipate that burst of Wordsworth's praise :

“ O lady, worthy of earth's proudest throne,
Nor less by excellence of nature fit
Beside an unambitious hearth to sit
Domestic queen.”

With Edith comes into the room her younger and only brother, Herbert, that light of his father's eyes, Southey's “ only and his studious boy,” now seven years old, very active and bright in manner, but pale of face, with a pallor that gave a depth to the darkness of his Tartar eyes, and delicate in all his bearing; up he runs at once, and leaps into his father's arms. It was of Edith May that Southey had written :

“ A child more welcome by indulgent Heaven
Never to parents' tears and prayers was given” ;

but as one watches the poet's look when Herbert, leaping down again, runs round to give his sister another birthday kiss, one feels that it had been more truly written of this his “ only boy.”

Then Wilsy, dear old Mrs. Wilson, aboriginal inhabitant of the house, now seventy years old—

“ The aged friend, serene with quiet smile,
Who in their pleasure finds her own delight”—

enters, and with her Madame Bianchi and her niece Pulcheria, Wilsy's favourite tabbies. She has come to say that Mrs. Southey will be down directly. Would Aunt Lovell come from her sitting-room next door and make tea, and would Mrs. Coleridge mind stepping upstairs for a moment? There is a whisper at the door about a birthday present; Edith May's cheeks burn. There was something of the father in the child; men remember still how Southey's face used to flush up like a young girl's with emotion, when he was quite an old man.

Now breakfast begins. How sweet a thing it is to watch the tender ways in which Southey almost coaxes his wife to take the morning meal—now pours out a cup of tea for her, now prepares toast daintily for her acceptance—all with such pretty cooing ways as lovers use, for lovers they are now, as on that half-sad, half-joyous day that made them man and wife in mid-November 1795.

Then up the stairs the whole party go to the great library with its noble outlooks. The large window, looking south down upon the green with its wide flower-border, and over the whitewashed houses with their quaint low chimneys to Walla Crag and the town, gives

glimpses of Derwentwater above the houses. Beautiful Walla Crag, as seen through this window, to-day at least, will be robbed of that familiar form for foreground, the back view of a gentleman seated at a library table, as seen in the frontispiece to *The Doctor*. To-day is Edith's birthday, and to-day, on the green below, with much pomp, will the Maypole be set up, and tea-drinking and flowers and frolic will demand the poet's presence. To-day no hand will touch the heaps of vellum-covered tomes on their sides upon the floor, no mouth will blow the dust from a single one of the four thousand volumes of the library that lines the walls. Of course little Job cries out to be shown "his pictures," because it is a "birfday"; but Dapper, the dog, runs barking up the stairs, and Duppa's sketches of Raffaella and Michel Angelo are forgotten at the voice of honest Joseph Glover, the factotum at Greta Hall, who has come to say that the boat will be ready at eleven o'clock for the young ladies to gather "daffys" at Lord's Isle.

There is a rush to the mangling room below stairs; such a tumbling together of lanthorns and clogs and pattens; Mrs. Coleridge in a terrible fidget; Mrs. Southey calm; Robert Southey asking for his clogs, his blue peaked

cap, and his coat with the lappeted cape and the poem in its pocket : and away from Greta Hall the happy family go, leaving Aunt Lovell to superintend the pastry and the cakes for the May-day tea. Back they come laden with spring-tide spoil, Wilsy and Glover and Betty Thompson, the faithful nurse, like Jacks in the Green.

Then dinner at two ; afterwards a romp in the apple room, where the ghost was. A ring at the front door bell announces the arrival of merry, grey-eyed little Mary Calvert, who has come from Windy Brow to join in the birthday happiness and May-day festival.

“ Father’s written a special poem for Edith—something about a tale of Paraguay ! ” shriek the Southey children. “ We had no Spanish lesson this morning—and got such a lot of daffodils ! ”

Mary Calvert has brought bluebells, and a gift from her mother and a pot of cream ; and, after a good kiss all round, the party set to work to wreath the Maypole Glover has prepared, and weave the crown for Edith May.

Then all run up into the buff-curtained library, and very touchingly the poet speaks to the children of this birthday festival. He tells them that he should like them to remember

to-day that they have another little sister Edith—Margaret Edith, Margery in heaven—and that there is a little grave which he hopes they will not forget to make a posy for, in the old Crosthwaite churchyard, there where baby Emma of the dark eyes, five years ago, was buried—“the sweetest child that ever was born,” so Wilsy says, and so says Betty Thompson. Poor Nurse Betty! she chokes audibly. “But now, children, I have got some news for you,” continues the father. “We are all to be happy, not sad, for Edith May’s sake to-day. Mrs. Senhouse sends her compliments, and will you all go over, in honour of Edith, to the Bay for tea to-morrow? And here is a kind letter wishing Edith happy returns from Mr. Spedding, of Armathwaite; and, if we will go, his pleasure-boat, the ‘Spanish Patriot,’ shall meet us all at ‘the lands’ below Great Crosthwaite, and we are to have a primrosing with him in the woods. And here is a letter from Senhora, the Bhow Beghum, for Edith’s very self, with lots of kisses.”

“But the poem, father!” cry the children.

“I want to be thinking about the tale,” chimes in little Job, and breathlessly the youngsters wait to hear the introduction to

Edith's very own poem, "The Tale of Paraguay"—not understanding truly, but pleased as only children can be pleased when something has been written for their own occasion.

Clear-voiced, high, and tremulous—but not sonorously and deep, as Wordsworth would have read it—Robert Southey reads the dedication of his poem; but his voice shakes at the close, when, looking straight into little Edith's face, he reads :

“And I have seen thine eyes suffused with grief
When I have said that with autumnal grey
The touch of eld hath marked thy father's head,
That even the longest day of life is brief,
And mine is falling fast into the yellow leaf.”

For, young as the May-queen is to-day, Southey has taken Edith, as afterwards he took Herbert, to his heart; has made the "Edithling" his companion and his fellow-student, and spoken often of matters that pertain to serious age and the things that shall be beyond.

The children clap their hands. Hartley puts his head on one side and begins asking the questions of a philosopher. Isabel, swift of tongue and temper, rebukes him. Kate sidles up and puts her hand in her father's. Herbert toddles off to Sara of the black eyes, to ask

about the new tartan frock in which he is to be dressed for the Maypole dance, and "Stumpy Canary" votes for the "wreaf" to be put on Edith's head.

Then Mrs. Coleridge bustles Sara off to be dressed. Dear, good, clever Mrs. Coleridge, she was always dressing Sara, and generally a little fidgety. And soon the clogs are heard pattering down from the nursery, and out into "the front" the family go, Edith May, radiant with the daffodil crown, to dance about the glorious Maypole. I think if we had seen the poet that afternoon of the May queen's festival we should have said that he had accurately described himself when, writing to his friend Grosvenor Bedford, he said he did not think "a happier, merrier-hearted man" existed. And yet that little tale of Paraguay, of which the poet had written the preface for Edith's tenth birthday, had—so Southey tells us—as its object to plant the grave with flowers and wreath a chaplet for the angel of death; and here, on the birthday of his darling May-queen, he thinks the poem well in place; he feels the grey hairs are thickening upon him, and thinks of the infant children he has lost. Perhaps, in midst of all the fun and frolic that the villagers, at the Greta Hall gate,

saw going on up at the Hall—there were no solid doors there then, but a simple barred gate between the village street and the garden—the fear of loss for some of that happy flock was upon him.

“O Christ!” wrote Southey to Landor, “what a pang it is to look upon the young shoot and think it will be cut down! and this is the thought that always haunts me.”

Two years later the Maypole would probably be undressed. Herbert of the Tartar eyes, and swift precocious mind, the head and flower of Southey's earthly happiness, had died, at the age of ten, on April 17, 1816. But five years later there was the sound of May-day revelry again, and, standing at the window above the lawn, was dear old Betty with a tender babe in her arms, not yet three months old; and as the bairns go dancing round the Maypole they break hands to wave their kisses to little Charles Cuthbert, their baby brother, who is to be christened the week after next in the old church of St. Kentigern, at Crosthwaite.

We would not have so digressed but that we believe that Southey's heart and soul was wrapped up in that happy May-day party. He was a home man: his felicities were round

the hearth at Greta Hall. Punctual as the quarter boys at St. Dunstan in his afternoon walk, his up-rising, and his down-lying, for the whole of the forty years he resided at Greta Hall, he seems to have shut the world in which he lived and moved within the circle of that grassy, "tree-clad, house-crowned knoll" above the Greta. The garden door that closed after him when he walked abroad seemed always to have shut his heart within it at the same time. What pathos lingers at that garden gate! There came a time when people still alive remember how on a Sunday, as the poet walked from church, he sought in vain to find its familiar entrance, and would stand like a man in a dream, waiting for some kind friend to open it, and guide him to his garden walk.

Of course there are many relics that speak of the Greta Hall days still with us—here, an armchair the poet used in his study; there, the remains of the blue china dinner service of Greta Hall; here again, much prized, the slippers he moved so listlessly about in, during his last sad days in the library. One of the not least remarkable relics is the exquisitely written transcript of the poem "A Vision of Judgment," with all its beauty of rare penmanship and patient correction, given to his

daughter Bertha in the year 1830. Another is the "Madoc" now in the local museum.

But these dead things can tell us little ; it is better to learn of living lips the impression made on the dalesmen by the great scholar, so little known intimately, save to his household, but so widely loved in the vale of Keswick.

All the memories of the dale that can now speak of the Poet Laureate tell of him as "one who was not a man as said much to anybody except he kenned 'em, and then he wad nivver ga by wi'out passin' t' daay."

"Vara kind, ye kna', and weel thowt on, a particler man to look upon, but not a man as ivver cracked on with anybody a deal," is another character of the poet, given by one who often met him.

"Remember Southey?" (pronounced "Soothey" hereabouts.) "Ay, barn, wha cou'd forgit him?" said one of my friends. "Sic a tall, slender man, wi' sic eyes and sic a head of hair—a vara particler man" (meaning, as one ought to explain, a very noticeable man) "was Robert Soothey."

I remember overhearing an American say to the old sexton, Joe, who was showing him the recumbent effigy of the poet in Crosthwaite Church, "Can you tell me, sir, if the poet went

to his grave with such a suit of hair as he is represented as wearing here?" and old Joe's answer was remarkable.

"Nivver a better heead o' hair hereabout. It was the most particler thing to see i' the whoal churchfull. And t'aulder he grew, darker it was gittin'. That likeness is t' best that ivver was; it's his very saame, you may saay, beuk in hand and aw."

From many witnesses one has heard how that "Mr. Soothey," who was a "reg'lar church-gaer, ye kna'," used to sit through the service with his eyes close shut, as if in a deep study. The pews in those days were square boxes, "aw maks o' sizes and aw maks o' colours an' aw." The Southeyian pew, repainted, as he himself chronicles, in 1822, was on the right-hand side of the chancel, and nearest to the body of the church, and Southey was too tall to remain invisible when seated; folks noticed his bushy head, so venerable grey, and the meditative mien with which he entered into the service.

Yet his patience was sorely tried, as he tells us, by the quaint inapplicability of some of the discourses he had to listen to, and he who wrote to Lady Beaumont, "If I were a preacher, redeeming love should be my theme," lived

in an age when "some of the best divines" appeared to Southey to "err in not representing Christianity as the admirable religion it really is—the dispensation of love."

"Was Mr. Southey often seen?" I once asked.

"Ay, ay, moast every daay. He could go out all wedders; and if it was fine he would have a beuk in his hand and be gaan slow, and if it was wet he would step away grandly. The way he would go up Causey or Walla Crag was something serious. There was no pride about Soothey. He moast always wore clogs, and all the bairns wore clogs, and he had a fawn-coloured all-round cwoat and a cap with a neb to it—that was his rig—vara plain, you mind, but vara neat; not a button off nor nowt; but he nivver wore swaller-lappeted cwoats, for o' foaks hed 'em—moastly all-roo'nd lang fawn ones. And at times, latterly, he had broon cwoat with cape to it, over shoulders; but that was at end o' his time, ye kna'."

"But where did he usually walk?"

"Well," continued my informant, "Soothey was partial to Latrigg; vara fond o' t' Terrace Road alang by Applethet to Millbeck. I have heard him saay finest spot in whole dale was t' view above Applethet. Then he was vara

proud o' the Howrahs; he would walk backward and forret there for an hour or mair."

I remembered, as the old man spoke, the contemplative picture Southey draws in the passage of his "Colloquies" that begins, "I was walking alone in Howrah."

"But did he generally go alone or with companions?"

"He wad oft go by hissel. He wanted to be studyin', ye kna. And you wad come along happen and say, 'Good morning, Mr. Soothey,' and he wad nivver raise his head till he had got on past, and then he wad stop and turn round and put up his stick, or raise neb of his cap, as if he was i' dreams and had only just heard ye. But he was a man particler fond of a halliday, and then all the Hall folks must gang along wid him, sarvin' lasses an' aw. I remember time as he christened Muttonpie Bay I was rowing the family, and sic laughing and gaen on as nivver was, and then the pies and things; and efter luncheon Mr. Soothey said nivver was better pie made or eaten i' t' whoal warld, and they would christen spot 'Muttonpie Bay,' and so it was caed ivver efter."

Lovers of our Lakeland worthies, if they land at the spot beyond "the Bay" on the west of Derwentwater, will think of the frolic and the

fun of those old Greta Hall days and wish that their simplicity was back again; will see the tall, slender form of the poet, with his eagle look and his keen, dark brown eyes, a child among his children on that shore, and in the swift movings of his delicate face and expressive mouth, catch something of the light that seemed to need just such occasions to make and keep the poet ever young.

Another informant once spoke of the poet's way of going up the Newlands Beck or to Applethwaite Ghyll for a bathe.

"He was just a girt watter dog, was Mr. Soothey, nowt mair nor less," said the old yeoman. "He was terble fond of bathing thereaway, below t' Emerald Bank."

Fond as the poet was of Catghyll, of the stream at Ashness, or of the miniature cascades of the Causey Pike Beck, he never so entirely entered into the glory of the river god as when he was feeling the refreshing coldness of that beck

" Whose pure and chrysolite waters
Flow o'er a schistose bed "

below the beautiful farmhouse beneath Causey Pike, where his brother, Tom Southey, the retired sea captain, came to reside on Lady Day of 1819.

That farmhouse, "a very sweet place," as Southey called it, "in the vale of Newlands," was the goal of many of Southey's walks, and, as he once wrote to his friend Bedford, doubled the quantum of his daily exercise.

"He was a very good walker, was Mr. Soothey, ye kna'—tall and lish, but had nowt to carry, and cud git ower t' grund weel if he hedn't a beuk in his hand," the same old friend once said; and as he spoke I remembered the way he loved to go round by the Brundholm Woods and across the Greta, and so by the Druid's circle home; how he often clomb Saddleback and Skiddaw, visited Eagle Crag in Borrodale and Honister: how he cared much to visit the quaint little churchyard among the mountains of St. John's Vale, and so again stroll homewards by the haunt of the Druids, or onwards to Dalehead Hall for the poet meetings by Leathes water. I remembered how he described himself as walking hard all day with a single rest upon a stone, and a single apple for his food, and how Sir Henry Taylor, in his notes to "Philip van Arteveld," speaking of him as a man of sixty summers, could still say:

"With him the strong hilarity of youth
Abides, despite grey hairs, a constant guest."

This hilarity was, doubtless, part of the poet's native stock of quiet humour, but it was also the direct consequence of active health, the result of active habits and simplest life. It is not generally known how, latterly, Crosthwaite churchyard was the poet's favourite haunt. He would go by Howrah, and so by Church Lonning, and Doctor Dub, to the churchyard.

One of the older inhabitants of Crosthwaite parish tells me of the way in which, however absorbed the old poet might seem, he would never forget to pat a child on its head as he passed it. His love for children was wonderful. A child's grave was enough to keep him in Cumberland till his bones were laid beside it; for the children's sake he toiled unceasingly, and with them he sorrowed and rejoiced. Southey could not hear the patter of the little clogs along the road without hearing the patter of his own bairns upon the way and giving children wayfarers his benediction.

But the bairns of Greta Hall grew up. The girls got beyond the age of the long fillibeg trousers trimmed with frills at the ankles, still remembered. They passed the time of dear Mrs. Coleridge's fuss about Sara's frock and gentle Mrs. Southey's careful dressing of her daughters for the dancing master's annual party

at the Queen's Head. They passed the time of Mrs. Senhouse's parties at the Bay and the collegians' long vacation ball in the town. Edith the swan-like flew away, and tall Miss Bertha, so like her father the poet, in sweetness of face and in temper, married. Master Cuthbert Southey—Og, King of Bashan, as they called him at Greta Hall—waxed great and got beyond Nurse Betty Thompson's hands or the management of Dan Wilson, the clogger. People hereabout who were lads when Cuthbert was a boy, tell of the quaint tricks played upon him, because they knew of his short sight. Barrows were sometimes set in his path; and Master Southey was sometimes seen to fall over, then pick himself up and put his spectacles on, and look without a complaint at the unseemly obstruction that had brought about his fall. Og, King of Bashan, he was rightly called. But he grew on, shock-headed, tall, with eyes of wonderful grey, high forehead, strong nose, stronger chin than his father, and with a lower lip that quaintly hung, as they say in Cumberland, a little like a motherless foal's.

“The leanest, lankiest, longest lad I ever knew,” so wrote a friend of more than half a century ago.

So long was he that there are doorways in Keswick still shown where Master Southey always bumped his head; so lean and lanky that, when he was preparing to go to College, his father spoke of him and wrote of him not as Og, nor as Cuthbert, nor as Karl, but as "the North Pole." Cuthbert Southey is well remembered as a boy in Keswick, for Cuthbert, because he filled in a measure Herbert's place, was kept with diligence at home. He regretted this himself; he never learned boy's ways, and grew up with a certain shyness that lasted all his days. And yet "fair seed-time had his soul," and almost the last time I talked with him his eyes glowed, though his voice quavered as his father's voice used to quaver, as he told of the perfect lessons of patient cheerfulness, of unselfish industry, of constant tender kindness and high-minded simplicity he learned in those young boyhood days from that noble spirit of the genius of Greta Hall.

"Take him all in all, though I have lived nearly as many years as my father, I have not seen his life for perfect gentlemanhood. The more I have seen of literary men, the more do I marvel at the pure unselfishness and pre-eminent goodness of my father; and I am more glad each year that I bestowed such care as I

could upon his *Life and Correspondence*, because I feel that it, with the *Southey's Letters* my brother-in-law edited, reflects faithfully the essence of his character."

In some such words did Cuthbert speak of the father who begat him—and now Cuthbert cannot speak more. The last of the voices at Greta Hall is silent. The last of the Southey's of Greta Hall days has gone home.

It was a day of storm and gloom, as bitter as that wild March morning in 1843 when Wordsworth and his son-in-law Quillinan stood beside the Laureate father's grave in Crosthwaite churchyard. There was no sudden shining after rain, no robins sang hard by for us, as then they sang. We, the mourners, were gathered at short notice by an open grave beside the rushing Lowther stream. The pastor of Askham had suddenly been called away from his flock, and Death had led him very gently, through the swoon that knows no waking, to the land that is very far off.

The bell tolled sadly in the hollow beside the stream; sadly on that dark December day yeomen friends were seen bearing the body of Cuthbert Southey to the church. Tenderly then a hymn was sung, reverently the prayers were said, and we left the poet's son, whose

youth had known the sound of the Greta, whose manhood had heard the flow of the Parratt stream, to rest unhearing, in a fair spot for any poet's son to sleep in, beside the Lowther, till the river sing no more its requiem, and the dead in Christ arise.

The last of the Southeys of Greta Hall has gone home ; the book of Greta Hall memories is closed for ever. No wonder we grieve as we stand to-night at Greta Hall ; no wonder the Greta seems to share our sorrow. But the western light beyond grey Grisedale grows in glory, and ere its wonder fades from out the heavens, lo ! high o'er Hindscarth gleams the evening star.

THE SHEEP-DOG TRIALS AT TROUTBECK.

IT was a day dropped from heaven for the purpose; a heavy dew lay on the grass of terrace-garden above the Brathay, and the light mist over Elleray and the Furness Fells sailed away into sun and azure sky beneath the steady breath of a light north-west wind.

“T’ wedder ull not brek to-day, ye may depend on’t,” said a yeoman at my side; “sae what, ye mud gang t’ Trootbeck. Ye’ll hev’ as bonny a day on t’ fells ’mang t’ dogs as ivver mortal man cud whope for, I’s’e warrant ye.”

I took my old friend’s advice, and was soon speeding along with a fair wind behind me down the river, gay with its last patches of purple loose-strife and meadow-sweet, past the Roman camp and the solemn sentinel firs at the river’s mouthy, awa to the well-known hostelry that Hartley Coleridge was so fond

of—Low-wood, by the side of Lake Windermere. Arrived there, a friend joined me who knew the shortest cut to Troutbeck Vale and the Windermere reservoir, close to which would be gathered to-day every shepherd who owned a clever shepherd-dog for twenty miles round or more, to try his luck for the various prizes open to the prowess of their four-footed friends.

The day's programme was to include a hound trail, under the rules and regulations of the famous trail at the Grasmere Sports. And since it was held that work and looks should go together, there was also to be a prize for the handsomest of the competing shepherd-dogs; while a prize for collie pups within a limited home-area would, it was thought, encourage the youngsters.

"I am glad you have come," said my friend, "for this Troutbeck Shepherd-dog Trail is *sui generis*; I do not mean that they are not held in other parts of the country, but I know no place where the conditions for success are so perfect." The ground is magnificently situated; you are so high-lifted that you look right across to the sea at Morecambe and the Yorkshire hills. Let alone the panorama of the Lakeland giants from Scafell to Blackcombe, you have Windermere stretched at your feet, the whole

Troutbeck Valley is laid along beneath you, and you see better than elsewhere that strange series of mountain cones from Froswick, past Ill Bell, to the High Street End, which the Roman charioteer knew so well in the olden time, but which to-day have ceased to ring to hoof of horse or clatter of wheel, and left the pedestrian or the mountain climber to his sole enjoyment thereon.

“Indeed, part of the secret,” continued my friend, “of the success of this Troutbeck Dog Trial lies just here, that it is held in so remote and out of the way a nook of Westmoreland, that only those who are really interested in the cleverness of our Fellside collies, and who will put themselves to some inconvenience to get to the ground, will be found assembled to-day.”

“And who started the idea?” I asked.

“I cannot tell; some years ago, Mr. Bridson of Belle Isle used to invite his friends to see the sport on the island on the day after Grasmere Sports, but the dogs were so flustered by the gay company that they had no chance of working at their best; and the shepherds used to say they ‘cuddn’t talk to t’ dogs same as they mud understand wi’ so many fine laadies aboot’; and so the place of the ‘dog trials’ was moved to the Fellside breast, and far better it is every

way. Mr. Dunlop, who takes a keen interest in these dog trials, allows the use of his allotment on Applethwaite Fell, and as this is separated from the spectators by a little valley across which none of the public can pass, the dogs are able to do their work well within sight of the onlookers without any chance of being disturbed."

"And what is the test of their cleverness to which these shepherd-dogs have to submit?"

"You will soon see," said my friend; "but, roughly speaking, each dog has to drive three mountain sheep for a distance of about three-quarters of a mile over the broken ground of a steepish fell side, round certain flags, and between others, and so into a pen or fold within a certain time; the time-limit to-day will, I think, be fifteen minutes. Of course, the dog in that time covers much more than a mile of ground. The shepherd stands in one place to give his directions to the dog by whistle or word or movement of his arm, and only leaves his position when the dog has brought the sheep down to the pen. The dog's master is allowed to help the dog to do the actual 'penning' of course, otherwise the collie is unassisted."

We went on, my friend and I, up the steep Briery Brow Road, where Charlotte Brontë

got her first view of Lakeland, till we reached a spot whence the lake of "Winander" was laid out in full length beneath us, stretching out beyond Bowness towards the "Warriors' Hill" or "Gummar's How" of Viking fame. It seemed rather like a great river—the Thames at Richmond magnified—than an inland lake. So thickly did the islands dot its surface near the ferry that one could believe that a great natural bridge of wood and lawn was laid from shore to shore, and one wondered how the fair white sails could move and flash between the dark green groves that barred the waterway.

Onward we pushed, and were about to enter the village of Troutbeck, when my friend said—"We shall save a mile by a short cut down this lane." And down the hollow way we dropped through the farmyard of a quaint old Westmoreland house, "Town Foot," which, for all I know, may have been standing there in the days when Hogarth's ancestors were Troutbeck farmer folk.

Thence across the road and into the meadows and over the Beck as clear as crystal, that gives its name to the dale. And right pleasant it was to lean and listen to its merry voice and watch the dimpling shadows of its purling

water and the play of the troutlets as they poised or shot from pool to pool.

But we were bent on other sport to-day; and so up grass slopes of vivid emerald green we passed, and passing a second road found a rough poster plastered on a rough mountain wall "This way to the Dog Trial," and that way we went.

Oh, the breezy air as we clomb the hill and left the meadow lands for the rough heathery intake! How the sea shone in the distance! How the great mountain giants at the head of the valley stood about that huge grave in Middle Vale of their mighty brother which the Troutbeck dalesmen call the "Tongue!"

Talking of giants, the valley beneath us has bred giants of human mould. One who jested with bluff King Hal was sprung from hence; and that great-boned man who has just passed us in his gig—the champion wrestler of former years—he, too, could well pass muster among the sons of Anak. And he came of a long-lived as well as a big-boned race, too; for his mother lived to be over a hundred years old, as the tombstone in yonder churchyard tells.

But we forget all about the men, in the beauty of their mountain home. All along, beneath Wansfell, the happy dwellings of the

dalesman, shaded by ash and sycamore, lie stretched in peaceful calm upon the grassy mountain-side, while, above them, the ridges of their hill-range, sacred to Woden, shine out purple with heather to the full August sun.

Now our eyes are caught back to the clusters of dale's folk that surround two little tents in the hollow at our feet; and we see a man chalk on a black board the word "Special," and the number 8. We learn from a programme-card, which we get from a lad who is carrying them for sale, that this means: That the next dog trial will be made by Watch, black, white and tan, aged two years, belonging to William Allan, of Mill Riggs, who is No. 8 upon the list. Now looking across to the enclosure on the hillside opposite, we see a man emerge from a small tent, drop a flag, and at the same moment we see another man open a small pen 100 yards away and loose three sheep, while "Watch" springs up the fellside towards them and to the sound of a shrill sharp whistle, lies down—almost as if shot dead—and waits till his master shouts his next word of command.

Then began the most interesting sight it had been my lot to see for many a long day. There stood the solitary dark figure of the shepherd, and far away, up the Fellside's breast, the

mountain sheep went scampering ; they separated and flew left and right, but the clever dog collected them at once. "Ga away hint," shouted the shepherd, and the dog dashed back behind them ; "Ga awa' by!" and he sprang on in front. Then the shepherd whistled a chirrupy kind of sustained whistle, and the dog drove the sheep leisurely onward straight ahead. The whistle became more shrill and fierce, and the dog pressed the sheep more fiercely forward ; the whistle was suddenly sharp and shrill and short, and instantly the dog fell to the ground and waited for further instructions. Sometimes the wind which was blowing freshly in the wrong direction quite forbade the voice of the shepherd or his whistle's note to reach his listening and obedient servant. And it made one glow with pleasure to realize the intelligence of the four-footed friend of man, as one noted how at once the dog scampered off to a rising knoll to get sight of his master, and to watch for the lifting of his hand or the movement of his feet. For the shepherd just walked two or three paces in one direction and at once the collie knew his wishes, and went off up the hill in a similar direction, or the shepherd waved with his hands in another direction and the collie flew

in answer to the point of the compass indicated. The sheep were thus swiftly but certainly driven round a distant flag upon the Fellside and brought down at a fine scamper over heather and rock, towards the lower ground. Now they would stand stock-still, for "Watch" had gone off for a drink at a beck; now they would walk leisurely forward. Ah, but they have missed the flag post, and have come just a yard this side of it! The shepherd sees, gives his pantomimic signs and pipes his shrill command; the dog heads them in a moment and takes them back and round the flag and sends them scurrying homeward. The interest of the spectator increases, for "Watch" has got five minutes to spare yet, and he must bring them along the level and drive the sheep to the pen, but this time he has got to bring them through a couple of flags, set only 12 yards apart. On the sheep come at a rattle, but the shepherd knows that, if they are hurried, it is ten chances to one they will take fright at the flags and swerve; so he sends a shout to his dog, and for the nonce the collie is as good as dead. The sheep come on unattended, and, as it were, walk naturally along the sheep track that gives guidance to the double flags. Then when they are evidently halting between two opinions, as

to whether they shall come on through, or turn aside, a long fierce whistle is heard, and "Watch" springs out of the ground, as it were, gives the woolly travellers just the necessary shove forward, and so brings them safe between the flags and on to the little pen upon the mountain side.

The crowd break out into applause, but "Watch" neither heeds nor cares, for now his real work begins. He has to play a game of hide-and-seek with these three mountain sheep, who are lovers of their hillside liberty, and are as determined as "Herdwicks" can be, that they will not enter their prison walls of hurdle to-day. He is to be helped in this game by his master, who comes running down to meet the sheep and begins to "how" them to the fold.

There they stand stock-still, before the door of the pen. "Watch" lies low on the far side, and the shepherd slowly moves, hat in hand, on the near side. Another three feet forward and the day is won. Another two feet! Ah, but the sheep seem to know their game is a waiting one; the fifteen minutes will soon be up, and with a spring they dash past the pen door and are off to the Fell. At that moment up springs "Watch" as if by magic, full in front of their noses, and back they come driven round and

round the pen, till for sheer exhaustion they stand panting where they stood before, and again "Watch" retires and falls from sight into the heather near by. But this time he has changed his position, and lies in wait just in the opposite direction; again the sheep break and again they are confronted. The hydra-headed watch-dog is too much for the silly noddles of the poor perplexed "Herdwicks," and what with the dog in front and the master behind, and escape only possible by entry through the open door, they at length make virtue of necessity, and, on the last stroke of the fifteen minutes allowed, the sheep are safely penned, and the whole hillside of interested spectators breaks into a roar of praise and acclamation.

"Weel done, 'Watch,' dar bon, but he is a clivver one. He'll beat Pink and Bob this year, I'se thinken'." "Ay, ay," says another, "but sheep were ower good natured"; and so the critics take their pipes, and wait till the flag falls again, and another collie tries his luck upon Applethwaite Fell above the Troutbeck Valley.

There is a pause for lunch. The shepherds and their dogs have been on the stretch since nine o'clock; and there is a "gay deal" of ginger ale popped off, and cups of tea and

slices of ham and bread are vigorously consumed at the refreshment tent beneath us. The spectators unfold their sandwich papers or take their cigarettes.

Suddenly a cry is raised, "Huntsman's back," and a man smelling very strongly of paraffin and aniseed passes by with the drag-clout carefully lifted from the ground. He reports that the trail is laid, and soon in the heather below a band of men is seen in line holding their foxhounds that are full of voice and impatient to be off.

"Go!" cries the starter. The collars are slipped, and away the pack dash at such a speed that, having topped the walls and cleared the reservoir, they over-run the scent, and only one hound is seen to be running true. As "Welcome" swings to the left and across the valley and up on to the Applethwaite Fell breast she goes like the wind. But the other hounds pick her up, Bowler, Rattler, Melody, and the rest, and like a moving bracelet of light, the hounds pass on and away to the north, and all their music dies.

The crowd of excited owners is also for the most part silent. "Yon's 'Welcome.'" "I'll bet thee an owd hat that dog's 'Bowler' noo!" "White dog ull do it, noo than see's ta!" such

ejaculations alone disturb the quiet. Presently the crowd moves as one man away from its vantage ground to another, for the dogs are seen right across the valley, flashing by this copse, over that wall, into this intake, and down that pasture. Then the crowd, moved by one impulse, forsake their view-point and crowd back to their old vantage ground. Presently from the larch-tree copse beyond the reservoir to the south comes the cry of a hound, and over the far-away copse wall, a white thing leaps into life.

“White dog hes it noo.” And down it comes, the easy winner of the trail. Wait a moment. White dog is after all only dog-natured, and knows nothing and cares less that some hundred human fools have staked their money upon the issue of the race. A pool of water shines to the right, and, consumed with thirst, the winning hound makes straight for a good drink, then trots leisurely forward into the “winning field.” Yes, but that will not do. The dog that will win must run true to the trail; and the paraffin and aniseed man came over that wall at a known place, and after him the dog must also come who will be victor of the field. And with a shout the victor appears, with others close at his heels.

Straight as an arrow for the wall he comes, tops it, stands for a moment in doubt, and is just going to lose the prize when, as the broad forepaws of his friend behind appear above the wall, he lollops down into the winning meadow and carries off the palm.

Of course there is grief amongst the learned ; but my sympathy is misplaced.

“Sorry that winning hound went off to drink, on the post,” I say soliloquizingly.

“Naay, naay, thoo mud saave thesel aw that ; why, I’s e won a croon by it, barn,” announced a Coniston miner by my side.

Then we all lie down in the heather and watch again the real work of the day, to which this hound trail was but interlude—the patient shepherds and their clever friends, the collie dogs of Westmoreland.

KENDAL AND A NORTH COUNTRY EISTEDDFOD, 1895.

“OXENHOLME! Change here for Kendal and Windermere!” How many a pair of ears, bound for the land beyond the Border, hears that porter’s cry! “Dear me!” cries the reader of Sir Walter Scott. “Kendal! Yes, yes, Flodden Field to be sure. The Kendal men in their milk-white coats and Kendal green did brave work in the day of battle.” And there is the castle mound that little Catherine Parr knew so well in the olden time, she who, as Pennant quaintly put it, “had the good fortune to descend to the grave with her head.” It was in these fields she walked, and thought much upon her prayers, and fingered her beads. On yonder hill her father and Dame Maud doubtless discussed whether the King would take Catherine with so small a marriage dower as £650, and, in later days,

may have wondered whether it were not a sweeter thing in life to be laird of the simple burghers of Kendal town than courtier of a tyrant king.

“Oxenholme! Change here for Kendal!” But we do not change, and slowly the engine breasts the long incline that shall take us up under Howgill Fells, up through the Roman camp of Borrow Bridge, up through the gateway of the hills to Tebay Junction, and so by the Druid stones to the wild moorland of Shap and the cheerful silence of the fells; cheerful to-day, for the curlew is calling and the cuckoo has come to his own again.

As we mount the incline, we look out on the left of the carriage, and see beyond the castle mound and under its grey-green hill, a stony cluster of quiet roof-trees breathing household smoke, and bathing themselves in blue mist of their own making. Here and there a mill chimney pricks through the haze, a church tower or two is seen, and coiling and shining through the fields we catch the glitter of one of three streams that meet at the castle mound to flow together to the sea—a stream that doubtless bade the Roman stay at his camp at “Congangium,” that afterwards kept the

Vikings and the "Law-sayer" at Castle-How Hill, and at a later time brought the Flemings from over the sea, to carry on their cloth-weaving and dyeing to such perfection as won an immortality for the whiteness of their surcoat stuff, and the greenness of their doublets and their hose.

I have sometimes thought it was the exceeding excellence of that soft water from the Kent dale, that old Gilpin, the apostle of the North, used to drink pure at its fountainhead, which induced the great Baron of Kendal, Gylbert de Reinford, to oblige the burghers to sell on the Saturday market day all ale at 1d. a pint dearer than was done at Appleby or in the neighbouring towns, in accordance with a grant from Richard I. Be that as it may, the dyeing-house and the fulling-house he set up by the banks of the Kent for the use of himself and his tenants in the thirteenth century, maintained their reputation, and Kendal cottons, at the beginning of this century, were as much sought after as Kendal green three hundred years ago.

The sun after eleven o'clock in the morning never shines in the right quarter to allow us to see Kendal in its true beauty from the railway train. Besides, our hearts are on the

hills, our eyes are naturally caught away to Grey Friars, Wetherlam, to Bowfell and the Langdale Pikes; and we have little idea, as we hurry on, of the exceeding beauty of this vale of the grey town of the Kent, that inspired Romney the painter, comforted Gough the blind naturalist, gave food and opportunities of study to John Dalton the chemist, and delighted the souls of Wordsworth and Christopher North, in the days when, in earnest talk together, the latter would walk himself out of his slippers to his stocking feet, and realize at the "King's Arms" that he must needs borrow shoe-leather to get himself back to Elleray withal.

But if the traveller, having changed at Oxenholme for Kendal, will cross the Town bridge, and go by the bleaching green, gay with its long strips of vermilion stuff and blue cloth hanging on the tenter-hooks, away by the rosy sallow-beds to the parish church, he shall understand, notwithstanding the dinted helmet of "Robin the Devil" that hangs overhead in the Bellingham Chapel, with its hints of church brawl and times of blood and reprisal, that Kendal is a place of peace and quiet—a town of old-world ways and work, which neither the new canal to

Lancaster, which was opened in 1819, nor the railway Wordsworth protested against in 1844, have availed to disturb. One does not wonder that for studious minds, "in populous cities pent," the Kent-dale has had such attractions as are witnessed to by the epitaph of a former vicar of Kendal, one Randolph Trevor, who died in 1627, which runs quaintly as follows :

"London bredd me, Westminster fedd me,
Cambridge spedde me, my sister wedd me,
Study taught me, Kendal caught me."

Truly, as one wanders along the Main Street, with its picturesque alms-houses, its queer peeps of back alleys and steps that lead upward to the hill terraces above, its pillared house fronts, its covered pavements, its curious signs of the brushmaker or the woolstapler, one may expect the "Cuckoo" or the "Rocket" to come scampering up, and to hear the latest news from the South that the Lancaster and Whitehaven coaches have brought to the "North Countree."

But if one really wished to gain a vision, never to be forgotten, of "the valley of perpetual rest," one must climb up the slopes of Scout Scar to the west, on a bright April

day, and feel what Wordsworth meant when he wrote :

“ In front

The sea lay laughing at a distance ; near
 The solid mountain shone, bright as the cloud,
 Grain-tinctured, drenched in empyrean light,
 And in the meadows and the lower grounds
 Were all the sweetness of a common dawn,
 Dews, vapours, and the melody of birds.”

Glorious as the view from the heights above Kendal, of Morecambe's "molten sands," and the solid shining mountains of the Lake District is, it is not from this vantage spot that one gains the secret of the charm of the Kendal Vale. One must walk back into the quaint town, pass along its single street to the north, up "Correction" hill, as it is called, and out by the Windermere Road in the direction of Burneside. Then it is one realizes that this sweet valley is filled from end to end with perpetual grass ; the plough hardly breaks the living carpet of that Kendal green which is still its chief pride. To these meadows and these lower grounds the shepherd may come, and the maid with her milking-pail may cry to her charges, but the labourers going forth into the fields must seldom see all the beauty of a common dawn here. No matter where the sun be shining, the peculiarity of the valley

formation, which seems to have been at one time or other covered with vast moraine heaps, breaks the light and gives a sense of undulating softness to the scene. Here and there the silver outcrop of limestone rock adds to the sense of being close to the fells and their wildness; except for this a feeling of home security and pastoral content is the dominant one; it is a land of rivers and brooks. The sound of sweet waters is always in the air. "If," as Wordsworth once wrote, "it is benignantly ordained that green fields, clear blue skies, running streams of pure water, rich groves and woods and orchards, and all the ordinary varieties of rural nature should find an easy way to the affections of all men, then the Kendal valley, with its pleasant woody places and its happy farms, its pastoral pleasures, its babbling brooks, and its encircling wall of mountains 'drenched in empyrean light,' is a place where most surely eyes will be lifted to the hills in love, and hearts become haunted by a passion for the fields."

But most of all will the wanderer in these ways of pleasantness feel the spell of the Kendal valley in the time of the singing of the birds.

Then when, towards the end of April, the

warbler's note is ringing in the birch tree, and the redstart's treble is heard in the hedge; then, ere the cuckoo, just returned, begins to call, and the first glossy swallow skims the Kent, let him look back at the amethystine colour upon the slopes of the Howgill fells; let him marvel at the purple of the High Street range, and, while the lambs are about his feet in the meadow, let him hear the shepherd say, "Ay, ay, cuckoo's likely coomed, but as lang as snaw's on Hee Street, theer's nea tellin' but what he may hev' to gang back agean."

But the birds are in full song; the blackbird who will never finish his song for very carelessness of delight, is flooding the copse with his full alto; and the sweet soprano thrush is trilling through the eight changes of her tune, as if she felt her life, as well as the love of her mate, depended on it.

Along the Kent stream let us go, up to the daffodil farm in the Vale; and as we go we shall meet two or three women with huge baskets filled with the "daffies," and if we ask them what they are for, we shall be told, "They're for t' 'Singin'' Competition to-morrer, ivvery barn as sings is t' hev a bunch on 'im for a posy. Them's t' orders, a suppose."

What is the Singing Competition?

It is an annual "Festgesang" to which the choirs of all the country round will come to compete in choral glee, madrigal, part-singing, solo-singing, singing at sight, and musical instrument playing. It is the Eisteddfod of Westmoreland, of which the presiding genius is Miss Wakefield. To her and her indefatigable energy is it owed that music is slowly but surely becoming the possession of all the farm-houses and village schools far and near. To her is due the praise for having brought back the "Fair Handmaid of God, and near allied unto Divinity" into the heart of Westmoreland.

Miss Wakefield can never have dreamt that the movement, which began in a little quartette competition held in connection with a village industrial exhibition at Sedgwick in 1885, would have grown up and become an annual gathering, to which pressmen from our leading journals come to hear and report; an annual meeting of all lovers of music from far and near; a real red-letter day to which the choirs look forward, and for which the singers, young and old, work all through the winter; an annual performance which calls forth original music from our younger com-

posers, witness Mr. Arthur Somervell's cantata, "The Power of Sound," Miss Wakefield's songs, and Mr. Leonard Selby's glees; a centre for musical education, to which, in the past decade, poor and rich alike owe at once their stimulus, their encouragement, and their new joy in life; an annual prize-giving at which already, though this is a feature of least account, not less than £400 has been given away, and over which members of our greatest English families have felt proud to preside.

What was the object of the foundress of this inspiring work?

In her own words it "appeared to her that there could be no easier or more enjoyable form of recreation for the dwellers under a climate which made outdoor amusements only possible for about three months in each year; unlike other artistic work, members might join together in music and prove its worth." In Miss Wakefield's mind it was not only that, being under a rain-belt, men and women should have harmony at their own firesides, and sing as birds often do, 'Safe from all storm in shelter of the wood,' but it was needful that men and women should meet together for social pleasure. Music fulfilled its most attractive and beneficent mission when the

masses of people enjoyed it as a recreation and a solace. People enjoyed most what they took part in, and it was because choral music might include any number that its social side was so immensely valuable.

Here in Westmoreland was a people as passionately attached to their own homesteads as the Swiss peasantry are :

“ Those hills and dales, what could they else,
Had laid strong hold on their affections ; were to them
A pleasurable feeling of blind love,
The pleasure that there is in life itself.”

Surely behind this love must lie imagination, to which music held the key. Surely the old days of the fiddler, who played his Christmas tune from house to house, in the past century, showed that music had once been part and parcel of the happiness of the home circle. And for time and a sense of tune, the passion for dancing, which, up to a few years since, bade every mother in the dales send her “barns to t’ dancin’ master,” even though the village schools should be closed, was proof positive that the children of Vikings have never forgotten the days of the song and the sword, which had become days of silence and the plough.

But as for actual singing performance, the government inspector of music could show that, so far as the elementary school went, music was a minus quantity in Westmoreland as compared with Lancashire or Yorkshire.

Miss Wakefield would do her best to stimulate local effort. The professional musician is notoriously a difficult person to deal with, and there are wheels within wheels when a man gets his bread in a district by teaching music, which make it well nigh impossible for him or for her to be counted on as helper in a public cause, so Miss Wakefield wisely looked elsewhere, gathered round her the amateur and non-professional talent that, as luck would have it, was scattered with fair free largesse through the county, and pressed into service the ladies who were training the village choirs, the schoolmasters who were interested in music in their elementary schools, with the result that at the first Festival in 1886 six choirs were together for competition, and an annual Eisteddfod was inaugurated.

It is an open secret that the movement was encouraged by the efforts which were contemporaneously made by the Duke of Westminster, assisted by that prince of choirmasters, Mr. Henry Leslie, at Eaton. It was known that

away at Brantwood was living one, whose friendship was dear to the enthusiast who had undertaken for Westmoreland what the Duke was undertaking for Cheshire. Mr. Ruskin had written, "A well-disposed group of notes in music will sometimes make you weep, sometimes laugh. You can express the depth of all affections by these dispositions of sound; you can give courage to the soldier, language to the lover, consolation to the mourner, more joy to the joyful, more humility to the devout." And the spirit of the prophet of Brantwood doubtless helped the work of an art that might so inspire and elevate with joy, and add reverence and devotion to the life of the simple villagers, and turn the peasant into a patriot.

But the Festival had other aims than these. Good music must supplant bad if it were ever to become a real power in the land, and if nothing more came of it than the fact that a single village choir added each year to its repertory a glee, a madrigal, part-song, or chorus by some recognized master, or that a single soloist learned a standard song whose music and whose words should both be true, then there would be a lift, not only in musical expression, but in musical selection also.

Besides all this, it was thought that any real

latent talent would have a chance of coming to the front ; our mute, inglorious Mendelssohns might be known, and, at any rate, it would be slowly but surely recognized that music is a liberal education, a thing to give many hours of many a winter's day to ; that musical singing did not only mean making a noise at the back of the throat, but the use of a most refined vocal instrument that could be trained not only to utter sweet sound, but utter it with clear intonation, clear enunciation, delicate expression, and fervent passion.

Last, but not least, the motto, "Union is Strength," was on the banner of this great enterprise. Teachers, conductors, singers, or players might learn to lay aside their class distinctions and local jealousies, and join together for the art's sake, whole and sole. Scattered villages and isolated village choirs might be able to acquit themselves creditably enough in a glee, a part-song, or chorus, but the crown of their rejoicing would be found in some united performance of a masterpiece, cantata or oratorio, which would give the singers a chance of hearing the music of our great masters.

One thing Miss Wakefield insisted upon, was that this work should begin and end in earnestness. The annual Festival was not to

be looked upon as a mere holiday, but as a contest of strength perfected through long practice. The music chosen was often of a high and difficult standard, but it was a *study* and not a play that was intended. Nor were the performers free to sing by ear. Sight-reading was a *sine qua non*. Why should not the golden days of great Elizabeth return to us? What was to prevent the Westmoreland farmhouse having its quartette party to sing catch or roundelay at night, when work was over and the winter evening was long. So the rule was made that no choir should enter for any of the Festival Competitions who would not also enter collectively for the contest of reading at sight.

The task imposed was no light one, but it has borne fruit. In 1886 six choirs entered; the next year the radius was extended to villages and towns of less than 6000 people. In 1896 sixteen choirs competed, the junior choirs when combined numbered 300, and the adult choirs 400, while the whole number of competitors for voice and instrument numbered more than 1000.

In the ten years' work it is believed that 10,220 singers and players have come under instruction in this small area of twenty-four miles radius, round the country-house of Sedgwick, which has been the centre and focus of

this educational effort. No wonder if the village parsons and chapel ministers, and the fathers and mothers of the dales, bring large thanks to this "Fair and glorious gift of God," as rough old Martin Luther called music; and praise that good angel of song,

"whose magic wand
Ten years past has ruled so well
Over wiser Westmoreland,
Happier village, farm and fell."

If a single family can, by its effort and enthusiasm, awaken such song and quicken such love for melody within a fourteen mile radius of their home, the days of a musical and "merrie" England may yet return.

As I walked through the Kendal vale to the musical tournament, I kept repeating that verse :

"Now is April; song of birds,
Bleat of lamb, and voice of herds
Mingle with the jubilant rhyme
Of the river from the hills,
And the 'warbler's' throat keeps time
To the dance of daffodils."

For the air was filled to overflowing with the voice of the spring Wordsworth's stately line has realized :

"Dews, vapours, and the melody of birds."

But Wordsworth had never dreamed of such addition to the choral symphony he knew, as it was my lot to listen to this April morning in St. George's Hall, Kendal. The hall gallery was packed with listeners. The ground floor of the hall was filled with junior choirs, come together in enthusiastic rivalry. This was the children's day, all their own, and their faces showed that they felt the great hall was theirs, and that we elder folk were there on sufferance. The platform had been made beautiful with daffodils and lilies; the motto, "Music is a fair gift of God," ran across the crimson drapery, and midmost shone a great lyre wrought of daffodils; whilst any child that was to compete had not only its distinguishing rosette, but a bunch of "daffies" on its breast.

"In Westmoreland we have neither sweet violet nor nightingale," as Southey would say, but this morning shall prove at least sweet children's voices and daffodils go far to make up our deficiency.

The judges—Mr. M'Naught, the Sub-Inspector for the Educational Department; Mr. Arthur Somervell, the composer; and Mr. Leonard Selby, himself an accomplished organist and writer of songs—sat at the end of the hall on a raised dais.

A bell was touched ; Mr. M'Naught rose, and explained how certain marks would be given for tone, blend, enunciation, expression, and the like, and the work began. One after another the 13 choirs, numbering from 16 to 21 voices, and of children from ages of 8 to 16, filed up on to the platform, had their final word given to them by their conductor, and at the touch of a bell, and to the sound of the piano, began their work, with faces full of serious, earnest, and unaffected pleasure. The elders ticked off the marks they awarded, and seemed really much more excited about the probable result than the little singers themselves.

It was a touching nurse's song : one of the series of Blake's "Songs of Innocence," and the writer of the pathetic music to it was one of the judges, so he presumably knew best how it should go.

The appeal of the nurse to the children to "come home for the sun has gone down, and the dews of night arise," is met by the counter-appeal

"No, no, let us play for it is yet day,
And we cannot go to sleep,
Besides, in the sky the little birds fly,
And the hills are all covered with sheep."

And as the children sang back to mind that old unwearable delight in the long days and that artless reasoning which bade the nurse remember they had a common life with bird and lamb, there were not a few who sighed to remember the days beyond recall.

“Well, well, go and play till the light fades away,
And then go home to bed.”

So ran the song. “Ay, ay,” said a grey old yeoman at my side. “It’s just what’s best for aw on us, we shall hev’ to ga to bed seun or later, betther a light heart than a heavy one any day.”

There was about the singing of the song and the singers of it, just that strange mixture of sadness and gladness which touches all hearts to their depths. I was not surprised to read afterwards in a local print that someone who had been present wrote of the children that

“They sang back to being a dawn that was dead,
When joy was too long for the longest day,
When the little ones never would go to bed
While the birds were still singing and lambs were at
play.
And glad were sad hearts, though the tears ran down,
As the children sang on in the Kendal town.”

It was a noticeable feature of the competition that the children themselves seemed always to

be the best critics. They applauded the choir that excelled in tone or in expression and enunciation. They easily seemed to be able to select the winning choir.

A competition for boys' choirs under sixteen followed; next, three-part sight-reading, for which but one entry had been made. Then a very interesting part of the programme was reached. Sight-reading for boys or girls under 16; some astonishingly good and accurate knowledge and steady work was seen here. A boy and a girl were bracketed, and further tests were given, but it would almost have seemed that they could read music as others read prose, as they quavered and dwelt, and quickened and suspended notes, and went from tone to semitone, from sharp to flat.

Now came the giving of judgment. Mr. M'Naught, in a few pithy sentences, commented on each performance, criticising with care but excellent wisdom the performance of each choir, and in the happiest possible way making all who had done their best realize that he knew it, and that if he blamed he was cruel only to be kind, and that if he praised it was with a real wish to inspire to further effort. The children were silent as mice, and the cheeks of many flushed, "for now," said he, "I

will tell you what you all most want to know—the marks that have been awarded. The following is the result”—and his voice was drowned by the cheers of the children.

The morning's work was concluded by a solo competition. The subject song was Smart's graceful air, "The birds were telling one another," and a little fellow, who is leading soloist in a public school, gained the prize. I think if I had been the little lass at his father's village school, I should have been inclined to bar him, but music admits of no invidious classification, and the poorest child in Westmoreland pronounces his aspirates as well as the Prince of Wales, and is as proud of his parentage as the biggest squire in the county. So all ended well.

There was an hour's interval, and then the competitors laid aside all rivalry, and joined in the friendly giving of an enjoyable concert. The programme that was put into my hand was compiled with care. At its heading ran quotations from Luther and from Schumann, which gave the keynote to the whole undertaking. "I will recommend music to every one, and to young people in particular; and admonish them that they let this precious, useful, glad-some gift of God be to them dear and sacred."

“He who learns his trade early becomes a master in good time.”

At its foot ran Horace Walpole's saying, “Had I children, my utmost endeavours should be to make them musicians . . . my aim would be to make them happy, I think it the most probable method.”

Then the conductor stepped into his place, “Stand, children, to be photographed.” They stood and were photographed, daffies and all. “Thank you.” The pianist touched the piano, and the 300 voices broke out into the happy opening chorus of Roecker's “Silver Pansy.”

“Hooray, hooray, hooray,
No school for us to-day.”

The cantata came to an end long before the elders wished it, and it was at last the children's turn to be listeners. The Countess Valda Gleichen sung some *Wanderlieder* by Clayton Johns; Miss Wakefield then gave Arthur Somervell's setting of Blake's “Songs of Innocence”; the full choir joined in rendering the songs that they had competed in during the forenoon. A lady played a violin solo by the same Westmoreland composer who had set Blake's songs to music, and Miss Wakefield and the Countess Valda Gleichen

joined in giving a selection from Humperdinck's fairy opera "Hansel and Gretel," which was vastly enjoyed. Finally, the whole choir rose and sang, almost as one voice, the touching nurse's song by Blake, which begins,

"When the voices of the children are heard on the green,
And laughing is heard on the hill,
My heart is at rest within my breast,
And everything else is still."

And our hearts were at rest, for it was impossible to believe that voices on Westmoreland Greens would not in future be the voices of happier children, and of holier men and women, and we came away from St. George's Hall, at the close of the "Children's Day," with the kind of feeling we had been at some solemn and sweet act of worship in a great cathedral, for, as Carlyle puts it, "The meaning of song goes deep. A kind of inarticulate unfathomable speech, which leads us to the edge of the Infinite, and lets us for a moment gaze into that."

The following two days of the Westmoreland Eisteddfod went much as usual; a lift in expression all round, more feeling, more tenderness, more truth to tone and time were characteristics of the performances.

I confess to having been delighted to hear the delicacy and finish with which some of the choirs gave us Calcott's "Go, Lovely Rose"; the subtle undulations of the undertones given by choir after choir in their rendering of John Wilbye's madrigal, "Adieu, sweet Amaryllis"; and I was amazed at the boldness of attack with which the choirs acquitted themselves in reading at sight.

In the evening of each day, a concert was given. The climax being reached by the performance of a cantata specially composed for the Festival, by Mr. Arthur Somervell, who, as a native of the county, remembered it was honoured by being, if not the birthplace, at least the home of William Wordsworth, and had, accordingly, chosen a selection from his "Power of Sound" to set to music.

If any poem ever needed a musician's help, that surely is one. Throughout the work are lines which need a full orchestra to soften or subdue into melody. But the musician had been equal to the task, and there were passages of almost dramatic representation of the varieties of sound that fill the world "with untried powers."

The chorus—

“Break forth into thanksgiving
Ye banded instruments of winds and chords,”

and the soprana recitative, “A Voice to Light gave Being,” proved that the composer knew that in “sweet music was such art” that it could be self-contained; could work to a climax; gather as a stream gathers behind some natural dam, and pour forth in fullest glory from its own restraint.

The applause was enthusiastic, and, ere it had died away, the Duke of Westminster, than whom none of our English nobles have done more for the cause of country music, stepped forward to distribute the prizes.

He had, he said, no other qualification for the post he then occupied than his great desire to see the spread and extension of good high-class music; that it should be brought within the means of, and in the hearing of the humblest and poorest of the land. He had long felt that music should not be the possession of the rich alone; and he had, by the help of Mr. Henry Leslie, done what he could during the last ten years to help forward musical instruction in his own neighbourhood. He had no doubt that music was increasing

in the esteem, regard, and affection of the people. They in Westmoreland were fortunate in having Miss Wakefield at their head. They could not all have her enthusiasm and devotion to guide such a movement as he witnessed here, but all classes might join in attaining the end that Westmoreland had attained, and that others in other parts of England aspired to. And he concluded his address by reading a sonnet, which put on record something of what is locally felt for the foundress of our northern Eisteddfod.

“Lady, to-day the ten years crown of song,
 The ivory sceptre swayed with time and truth
 Through ten short years above our country youth,
 Proclaim what triumphs unto you belong.
 For you have shown how soon the simple throng,
 With ear untutored, and with voice uncouth,
 May feel a spell to banish care and ruth,
 And lift, on wings of sound, the heart from wrong.

“And since the fierce, ungovernable strife,
 That bids man nigh forget he is akin
 To His harmonious will Who made us one
 Goes forward with its folly and its sin,
 To-day we honour your empasioned life,
 Which taught the holiness of unison.”

The second part of the concert went forward till the hall echoed to the sound of “God

Save the Queen," and the loyal Kendalians and the far Fellside folk, with their trophies and shields, their banner and prizes, passed out into the April night, to work and will as friends in the cause of music, till the next year bring them as rivals once again in daffodil days.

As I walked back from the contest through that April night, sweet with fragrance of the fresh-leafed birches, Lyra came up over the hills to the north-west, and shone clear and bright in the face of the starry Dragon—an omen for the future of that music which, begun on earth, will find fulfilment in heaven, and shall best enable us to meet the dragon, and charm to harmlessness the seed of the serpent.

THE RAINBOW WONDERS OF WINDERMERE.

“ABOUT the first week in October,” writes Wordsworth in his *Guide to the Lakes*, “the rich green which prevailed through the whole summer is usually passed away, the brilliant and various colours of the fern are then in harmony with the autumnal woods; bright yellow or lemon colour at the base of the mountains, melting gradually through orange to a dark russet-brown towards the summits, where the plant, being more exposed to the weather, is in a more advanced state of decay.”

Wordsworth was a faithful observer of the changes of the varying year at the English Lakes, but he would have been obliged to confess that there is no rule without an exception, and that this year the exception holds good. It is true that a Spanish chestnut here and there, or a wild cherry upon an

upland slope, have changed colour, but to-day is the fourth of October, and there is hardly a speck of amber in the woods. "A greener autumn can hardly be imagined; yet for all the mellow mistfulness of to-day the wind is going eastward, and if the heavens are clear to-night, and Cassiopeia is bright at the Zenith, we may have all the larches yellow, and all the brackens gleaming gold to-morrow morn." So ran my diary for October the 4th.

But the heavens were not clear; the mists gathered in a fleecy cloud-bed upon the bosom of the lake, and gradually floated upward till all that we could see from our cottage on the Furness Fell were the purple tops of the Fairfield range, and the summit of Woden's Fell—the Wansfell or Wonsfell of our modern day.

"The morning rose in memorable pomp," the flush of dawn fell upon the steady cloud-pack of mist in the valley, and in a moment, as it seemed, the quiet sea of vapour was stirred into life; there were writhings innumerable, and the whole mass of soft restfulness became convulsed with passionate movement. Then from beneath the ascending vapour, the sun reflected in the water, gleamed upward like the flashing of a shield, and we went down through the roses and the dahlias and the giant lilies still untouched by

frost, through the woodland still un-umbered by the touch of October, down, through the bracken slopes as green as June, towards the lake shore of Windermere. Half an hour ago it had seemed as if there would never be sun any more, so densely obscured was the great day star by the white mists that steamed upward. Now we were rejoicing in sunshine that seemed as bright as August noon, by a lake that shone as fair and blue almost as an Italian water-flood. There was no ripple on the mere, and when we pushed out into middle lake, so marvellous were the reflections of fell and wood, so transparent the depths, that one could hardly tell whether we were upon water or suspended in middle air.

Suddenly my companion cried, "Look at the rainbows! look at the rainbows!" Gazing south towards "Belle Isle," one saw the whole water iris-hued, as if all the rainbows that had ever sprung from earth to heaven had melted into the bosom of the lake, and filled the sunny depth with liquid iridescence.

Slowly we rode towards them, and the rainbows stayed for us till our boat pushed into the lucent flood, and then as we moved forward, on either side our wake, the rainbows curved and quivered, and sprang like horns of multi-coloured

light to right and left, and, lengthening out, shone far astern. On we went, wondering at the glory and the glow. Our boat's motion seemed momentarily to kill the marvellous prismatic flood, but it was only for a moment that the rainbows faded, and again, beyond the ripple and the washing of our oars, there sprang into being new rainbow-tinctured beauty of liquid purple shot with green, and orange, and rose, and behind us as well as before us, the lake mirror lay like one mighty opal, one flood of lucent pearl and fire.

Beyond the rainbow lustres far away, the lake seemed to have been silvered over with frost; one could have staked one's life, unless one's eyes were playing one false, that the ice-king had been at work, and the thin ice mirrors he had made were powdered with the hoary rime. But as one neared it, the phantom ice-floe faded, and nothing but liquid rainbows for the keel to cleave and fashion again to wondrous loveliness, and the finest dust like floating meal remained, where before we might have supposed was a fair field for the skater's joy and curler's game.

It was rainbows, rainbows all the way! and what was the cause of this October glory of rainbow flood? It was nothing in the world

but a smooth lake surface and the fine dust of the pollen of a humble water-plant—some say the pollen of the American water-weed *Vallisneria*, others aver it is the gold dust of the water-lobelia, which, floating upward through the tranquil water on a calm October day, lies on the surface of the polished lake-mirror with power to change the face of the water into such a refracting and diffracting medium as to splinter all the sun into iridescence, and unravel the beam of white light into the colours of the prism.

It would seem that the water must be of certain temperature to encourage the plant to send forth its prism-makers to the surface. It is certain that no breath in Heaven must stir if the lake-mirror is to work its magic charm. Only on rare days, such as was October the 5th, could Windermere be clad in rainbow hue. One may live by the shore of the lake for another fifteen years before one may be fortunate enough to witness again the glorious phenomenon of yesterday, or be privileged to push one's shallop through a league of liquid iris, or sail through miles of rainbow.¹

¹ The same phenomenon has been observed on quiet Autumn days on Derwentwater.

THE TERCENTENARY OF THE ARMADA ON SKIDDAW TOP.

VERY anxiously, I suspect, had all who had taken part in the bonfire preparations for "Armada night" on Skiddaw Top scanned their barometers. An inch and a half of rain was not the best possible precursor of a good beacon-fire. But the clouds lifted on Wednesday at noon, the glass crept up, and when the morning broke of July 19th, which three hundred years before had filled the Plymouth shipmen with anxiety for the fray, and bade the beacon-builders make ready for the night all England over, the enthusiastic promoters of the Armada Bonfire on Skiddaw were in good spirits for their undertaking. "If the wind nobbut keeps where she is, it will be grand for Carlisle chaps to-neet, and Skiddaw 'low' will be seen far eneuf." "Peats is gaily wet; but if t' sun holds out, they'll be good for

kindlin' at sundown,"—so ran the talk of the guides at the hotel-door. At noon, with a stout pony and a trusty attendant, and much victual—for I did not intend to come down from Skiddaw till early on the following morning—I started. I passed up Spooney Green Lane, and found some half-dozen bonfire-builders already on the track. What a mountain path it was!—small wonder the Keswickians fought hard for such access to Skiddaw and Latrigg. Either side of the way, the elder flowers and wild dog-roses were lavishly sweet and luxuriantly abundant. Then we entered a soft, larch-scented avenue; and upward to "Jenkin," and the "Gale" we climbed. Lustrously shone Bassenthwaite, gaily laughed Derwentwater, and the whole of the Crosthwaite valley smiled with springing corn and golden patches of rich turnip flower and mustard.

The "gale" was won, and at the "huts," as they are called, I paused. Up after me climbed the bonfire-builders, now reinforced by some of the sturdiest dalesmen I had seen,—giants in limb and merry in tongue. They sat for a moment at the "hut," and drank health to good Queen Bess, and Howard and Drake, in glasses of some new-fangled

non-intoxicant; rather different stuff from the liquor Drake and Hawkins quaffed as they played at bowls upon the Plymouth Hoe. Thus refreshed, upward towards the "High Maen" they went. Each had a bundle of rockets slung round his neck. Each carried some bonfire implement that would this night be needed. I soon distanced them, and over the long, tufted sward I went, on through the gate by the fence near where the peats had been cut, and whence they had been "sledded" to the top. Thence, gazing down into the green basin of the forest, and over towards Carrock Fell, I had my first sight of the shimmering Solway and the lilac hills of Scotland beyond. I could not but stop for a moment to look at the wonderful view of the Keswick Valley as obtained from the path that climbs up at the back of the "Laal Maen." I had had no idea of the beauty of the shape of Derwentwater till then. And now over the loose stones along the grassless ridge we went, my pony, my guide, and I, till the summit of Skiddaw was gained, and the scene of the beacon-fire that was to be. About forty loads of peat, half-stacked, half-loose, lay against the summit "shelter." Presently the Bonfire Committee made their

appearance, and in a trice jackets were off, and with a will all the damper peats were exposed to sun and wind, and the dry ones were carefully selected for the night's fire. The builders then set to work. They removed the débris of the Jubilee beacon fire; they next built up a most scientific basement of stones, with a flagged cross-entrance to a central chimney for draught; and on this basement, eighteen feet in diameter, they began to lay the foundation of their Armada beacon-fire. They had a skilled master-mason as their head with them, and they arranged eight other chimney-flues, which were carefully built up throughout the whole mass, and kept open as carefully for air and draught. Cross-inlets were also provided to the central flue. So the work went on. Peats flew fast and thick, and fun and merriment were showered as fast.

It was not till the heap had grown under five hours' hardish work to a great brown, fortress-looking mass, twenty feet high, that all the dry stuff that could be laid hands on in the shape of broken barrels was piled on, and a cask of paraffin broached and carefully used, as, layer after layer, the last dry peats were added to crown all. Nay, not to crown

all ; for a pole was driven down into the mass, a paraffin cask and a tar-barrel with the head out put on top, and then the builders climbed down from their work, and rested from their goodly labours.

The man who stood the highest that ever man stood on Skiddaw Top, I suppose, was he who climbed up on to the barrels and waved his hat and called for three cheers for the Queen. And, in our island home of taciturn reserve, it would have done the heart of the average citizen good to have heard the echoes back to his call from lusty throats, and to have seen the stalwart yeomen and dexterous master-mechanic, the pencil-maker and the man of law, the village clerk and the country parson—or parsons, for there were two or three of the neighbouring parsons working with a will at the bonfire-heap—join hands, and fairly dance round the mighty pyre :

“Sun sank upon the dusky hills, and on the purple sea,
Such night on Skiddaw ne'er has been since that great Jubilee.”

For now the people began to come swarming up from the plains beneath, and from tower and town and hamlet, till in truth the night “was busy as the day.” And it was worth while to have witnessed that sunset. A light veil of

cloud was over the sea to the west, and the sun shone upon the veil, and made it as though it had been a tissue of fleecy gold. Then suddenly the ruddy golden ball disappeared, but still its light fell in patches upon the waving, heaving, filmy carpet of lilac vapour above the silent sea. And there, dark against the sky, stood the great, dusky-brown stack,—motionless, and dull, and meaningless. At 9.30 p.m., the master-architect called upon the stalwart son of the fire-god to broach the second barrel of paraffin and besprinkle the top of the pile. A great wind arose, and the air was heard to sing through the flues.

The parson, who seemed to be directing operations, was now called on to give an account of that 19th July in 1588, and this he did; and as his words died away a cheer broke the temporary silence. Then a detachment was told off to go to the point of Skiddaw, in view of Keswick town; and at ten p.m. sharp, red light seemed to break from underground at that far point, and in a moment the rosy glow was seen to irradiate the crowd by the beacon on the summit, and make the place a very mountain height of phantasy or demon glory, as dreamed of in some wizard's tale. Rockets whizzed up to heaven, and fell in stars

and golden rain. Another moment, and a lady was seen to touch the summit of the pyre with a long wand of fire—a peat, saturated with paraffin, at the end of a long pole. And in a second the whole mass, with a roar, leapt into flame, and flung a banner of glorious golden light far off to the westward over the vale, in the direction of Bassenthwaite and the Wythop Woods—a flame with at least three hundred square feet of fire in it, as I heard. Then “Rule, Britannia!” and cheers for Drake and Frobisher, Hawkins and Raleigh and Howard, were heard, and the Bonfire Committee must needs have been glad. “The red glare of Skiddaw” had indeed “roused the burghers of Carlisle.”

Rockets went upward from either point. At about 10.45, silence was called for, and Macaulay’s “Ballad of the Armada” was given by the schoolmaster of the neighbouring hamlet of Brigham. Three cheers were called for and given. The chairman of the Bonfire Committee was lifted, and carried enthusiastically round the beacon-fire on the shoulders of his fire-making comrades. At 11, red lights were again displayed, and bouquets of Rockets sailed up and broke in beauty. The National Anthem was sung, and, leaving the Armada

Beacon to burn to its heart's content for another two days or more, the crowd gradually began to disperse, and "down the hill, down the hill," the hundreds of spectators went with shout and song, or with silence and in thought of the Spanish Armada, and that eventful beacon-night three hundred years ago.

SKIDDAW'S GIFT OF YOUTH.

PUNCTUALLY at 2.10 the Manchester train ran into the Keswick station, and after a cheery crack with mine host, of broad-shouldered North-country build and breezy personality, I determined on a climb up Skiddaw. He would show me the way, for he was himself just off to the golf links by "Spooney Green," and thence the road goes straight up through the larch groves of Latrigg to the "Gale," whence, again, the ascent could be made without mistake, even by a poor city-bred and business-bewildered creature such as I was. What a day of sunlight and sweet promise of approaching springtide it was! The rooks were busy building away at Greta Bank, lambs were gambolling in the near farm meadow, or, because the wind was chill, were couching, some by the sides, some on the woolly backs of their fleecy dams. Thrushes carolled their sweet invitation to the nearing

April-tide, "Come quick! come quick! come quick!" Chaffinches, with their new silver epaulettes on shoulder and their bright steel helmets on their heads, strutted and cried to one another, bragging, as it seemed to me, of their wealth, for they kept calling "Chink! chink! chink!" and, high over all, ravens circled leisurely in the air, and barked a kind of good-natured welcome to me. Up between the hedgerows that were just beginning to show their tufts of bramble leaf and wild dog-rose I went. Willows glowed rich gold against the red-brown amber of the larch woods, and bees, as they gathered the pollen from the palm, made the whole tree to sing. We passed a cottage with "Sticks for hire." I went in, and issued with such a staff as the nobles of Pharaoh's Court would have been proud to handle in those old Egyptian days, when to possess such a walking-stick was proof of power. Up the narrow rugged path, cut into almost impossible furrows by recent rain-spouts, up over the soft carpet of larch spines red as a fox's back I went. The whole air seemed alive with floating gossamer and the rays of splintered sunlight, and every tree was sibilant with the whisperings of the long-tailed titmice and gay with the rosy plumelets of the young fruitage.

We turned a little to the left when we emerged from the larch grove, and such a sight broke upon our view as made us wish all Manchester could have been there to see.

“It was a bright and beauteous world,
A banner suddenly unfurled
Between us and the sun,”

that lay beneath us. The Crosthwaite Valley in all its variegated patchwork of industry and tilth was revealed. From vale to vale, from lake to lake, happy restfulness breathed from every acre. Cocks crew and answered one another with voices so distinct as to make one feel in dreamland. And one was obliged to dream. There in that lake lay St. Herbert's Island, dark upon the burnished mirror, and one went back in mind to the friendship that man of God felt for Cuthbert the saint in the times when every springtide the two men who so dearly loved one another thought of their journey and their meeting for holy converse away in the ancient border city of “Cair Luel” to the north. That would have been in the seventh century, but one could go back to an earlier time. One could see, in imagination, how, on the mound in mid-plain where now stands the grey tower of Crosthwaite Church,

the smoke wreaths rose, while with his sturdy dalesman's help St. Kentigern burned the undergrowth for the clearing, or thwaite, that there he might in open space set up the cross as sign of the faith he taught in the year of our Lord 553.

And the dream changed. Three centuries passed, and where the river Derwent gleams in the meadows one could hear the shouting of the conquerors, for the Viking chieftains, Ketel and Sweyn and Ormr and Hundhr, had come to possess the land. "There at my feet was Ormrthwaite," the clearing in the forest, of Ormr the Dane. Just above it, upon the slope of Skiddaw, lay the high camp of Hundhr; across the valley "Sweyn's Seat," or Swinside, rose in the sunlight, and the wyke, or haven, in which Ketel, the son of Ormr, ran his boats ashore, which gave its name to the town of Ketel's Wyke, or Keswick, as it is pronounced to-day, was clear to be seen beyond the Greta and the little town that Southey made so famous. Then the dream changed again. Slow and solemnly from the valley might be seen the procession bearing up to the head of the mountain spur above, the last remains of some old Norse chieftain to his high-mounded burial. Rightly enough did men of those early

times speak of this as the Ridge of the Dead Men, the "Hlad Rigg," or Latrigg of modern times, seeing that not once or twice, but seventy times, the sad procession came to carry to their last long sleeping the chiefs who had made the valley woodland their own, and even in death would oversee their farms and care for the flocks afield.

What a view it was! From Scafell right round by Hindscarth and Grasmoor to the westernmost Wythop the mountains shone like ivory against a sapphire sky. The heather patches against the snow on Skiddaw gleamed puce-purple, and here about me as I climbed was emerald dust, scattered on field and hedge-row by a prodigal spring. Coltsfoot gleamed in the hedges, celandines shone on the banks, daisies pied the turf, and on, with content beyond all words, I climbed, filled with the feeling of hope and cheer such as they only feel who let the joy of a perfect spring day, "the last glad day of March," sink deep into their souls.

Forward now up the long path aslope beneath the burial ground of the Vikings, till the dream of the day of "Ingolf" and "Thorolf" the Dane, who led their men hither in the ninth century and "hewed the forests down, and sowed the lea," is dispossessed by another

vision of an earlier people. Here we are at the "Gale," and passing through the gateway on to the pathless fellside pasture, studded with the far-famed breed of "Herdwick" sheep, whose breed Hawell, the local sheepmaster, by his care and his knowledge, has made famous, we find ourselves right in the middle of a square camp whose ramparts time has almost washed away, a camp, whence in the third and fourth century the Roman legionary flashed his spear-message, his heliograph news, to Caermote, or the "Guardhouses" in the Threlkeld plain, or to the soldiers at Legburthwaite. What a prospect full of history is this we gaze upon to the south and east! There beneath us in the Druids' Circle the votaries of the sun held worship, where in after times the Norsemen sang their songs to Odin or gave their judgment within the "doom-ring" against the accused. There, further south, the Vikings made their laws and set their "log" or "lug" mark on their institutes, in the clearing of the woodland upon their high-mounded burial ground, which now men hereabout call the "Great How," and which fills the valley interspace between Helvellyn and the Armbboth Fells beyond the Naddle Vale. As a Manchester man I owe that hill a grudge; it prevents me from sight of the

water-flood that gives us men of the thirsty city coolness and refreshment, for back of that hill lies Thirlmere. On the right of Naddle rises Bleaberry Fell, with the old prehistoric village remains below the crest, and the crag castle we call Buck Castle is away there in the rent of the hill at the right of Raven Crag. On the left of the Naddle Fell lies the brown length of great Helvellyn, like a dead giant to-day beneath a covering shroud of dazzling white. But one little cairn upon the ridge of this grim Helvellyn specially interests me. The shepherd at my side tells me "It moastly what gits Watch Crag"; and I expect the reason is that there century after century the dalesmen clomb to see what danger threatened, what foemen were abroad. The mind wanders out east over the Threlkeld vale and plain, troubled not a little by the hideous belching of a huge smoke-cloud from the quarry engine-house. There is the most ancient habitation in this whole countryside, for at the back of that quarry, far-famed for the durability of its "stone sets"—we know their worth in many of our Lancashire towns—lie the remains of the bee-hive homes, the dwellings called "pict" houses, wherein dwelt the aborigines of this countryside in the far-off age of stone.

We forget all that past in the glory and wondrous beauty of the present. Away beyond Mell Fell in the Penrith direction a delicate lilac veil of mist is built up to heaven, and above it and through it are seen the snows upon the Yorkshire hills. One might be standing at Weissenstein on the Jura, and gazing at the giant peaks of the Oberland upon their lilac, unsubstantial, misty wall of sun and vapour ; for just so do the Alps shine out in middle heaven, just so are they veiled at the base by lilac splendour at morn and eventide. And as our eyes travel back by the haunted hill, for so "Blencathra" may mean, they light upon the cottages and glistening farms, "the huts where poor men lie," which one time sheltered the boy who "ages after he was laid in earth" bore the name of "the good Lord Clifford." His daily teachers had been woods and hills ; our teachers in this last short hour have been the like, and we have been willing pupils. Now we turn to our left and pass out of the "Intake," or enclosure, and go up by the Runic cross which loving hands have raised to the memory of two noted Skiddaw shepherds, up towards the huts : and we have companions at our side climbing with us, for in our imagination Charles and Mary Lamb, Keats, Wordsworth, Coleridge,

Southey are going up Skiddaw also. These all felt the cool invigorating air that fans our faces; these drank the cool, refreshing water from the ghyll hard by that refreshes us. Up to the first hut, which we are told is 1,520 feet above sea-level, we climb, and we sit in the sunshine and are thankful. Passing on, our feet are soon across the snow-line, our hands are filled with the delicious, cold, crisp ice crystals, and while the raven calls, and the buzzard wheels, and the whaup or curlew cries, and here and there a grouse stutters at us its indignation as it skims across our path, we gain the lesser Dodd, or "Laal Man," and thank God for the splendour of this glad March day, and the wonder of the great surprise of panoramic beauty there unfolded. For, talk as men may, the view from the "Laal Dodd" is finer, far and away, than the prospect from the summit of Skiddaw, the Skiddaw High Man.

Keswick is shrunk into a grey patch of smoke-clouded roofs. Derwentwater has dwindled to a good-sized sheet of ornamental water, but the giants of the Lakeland are to blame. From Scafell to the far-off ranges of the Buttermere mountains, from Catchedecam to Wanthwaite Crag, from Causey Pike to Wythop, these splendid mountain monarchs, with their grey

blanched heads, sit in their accustomed seats of quietude and solemn calm ; and while the sun sinks down behind a pearly mackerel sky, they move not, knowing that for them no sun shall set ; their glory is an everlasting glory, and, though their heads are winter-white, their great-hearted springtide ever is renewed. Just at my feet lay Appleshwaite—the little bosom in the hills that so nearly gave shelter to Wordsworth at the beginning of the century. Gathering its music from the slope on which I sit, the ghyll that passes the door of the cottage which was, in after years, reared by the poet in memory of Sir George Beaumont's gift, in that "sunny dale" beneath, still "pours forth streams more sweet than Castaly." But I am in thought of another fountain on another hill. Away there to the north-west, beyond the Wythop Woods, on the pleasant slope of the hill above Cocker-mouth, the masons are to-day busy, as I hear, erecting a fountain to the memory of William and Dorothy Wordsworth ; and it is to be opened with becoming ceremony on April 7, the Poet's birthday, in symbol of the fountain of his song, that has murmured on a hundred years, and will flow for centuries, as now it flows. For his music, like these his native mountains, grows not old. So musing, I turned, and went down

from Skiddaw, a younger man by ten years for that one vision of the mountain kings; and if anyone finds a pack of care, labelled "The City Worries of a Manchester Man," upon the Shoulders of Skiddaw "Laal Man," he can let it stay there—Skiddaw's shoulders are strong enough to bear it, ay, and all the sorrows of my teeming town.

“THE FRATERNAL FOUR OF
BORROWDALE.”

AFTER THE GALE OF DECEMBER 11, 1883.

WHEN the voice of a great poet has been called out by some fair scene to enrich a nation's literature, men cherish the motive of the song, and visit the spot; some from pardonable curiosity, other some in hopes of a touch of the gift of thought that once—no matter how long ago—was suggested by the *genius loci* to the poet. And if the natural surroundings of the scene remain much as they were on that birthday of song in the poet's heart, we more eagerly press on in hopes of even the dimmest-like inspiration, towards the remembered spot.

This is, in part, the peculiar claim of these out-of-the-way and unchanged places of the earth that poets have loved, and men have not despoiled or vulgarized. This is the joy and

attractiveness of much of our English Lake poets' haunts and homes of melody.

So, for us to-day, as when Coleridge mused, or Southey walked abroad, or Wordsworth wandered out into the sun, still the hills in rusty fern slope upward to the snow. Thus did the blue-grey tresses of the ashen shales float downward to the soft green of the winter valleys. Here, with like shadow, did the buzzard hang, and sail with the sunlight glinting through his wings; there were the clouds in silent magnificence brightening to the sunset; that rock looked none other the day the poet saw it transformed into a living thing; these yew trees darkened the mossy stones at their feet, and deep shadow lay upon the russet spiny carpet underneath, thus and in no other-wise at all.

“ Thus were the waters flowing,
Thus were the farm-yard sentinels a-crowing,”

when fancy woke the dream whose music is our heritage to-day, when this common face of nature “spoke memorable things” to the poet in the vale or on the mountain.

But if this be true, we cannot lightly let any of the landmarks of song, or motives of inspiration, pass from our sight without a distinct

feeling of loss. And some such feeling of loss to all the world that shall ever read Wordsworth will be experienced when the reader, who knows the valley of Borrowdale well from Seathwaite Farm under the Sty Head Pass to Seat-Olla, hears that never again will he see that dark-hued company of yew trees—the "Fraternal Four of Borrowdale"—standing in lonely beauty on the flanks of Great Gavil, among the holly and ash-dotted pastures above the baby Derwent stream.

Last week the gale that ravished England did the Lake country much harm; but one could spare many larch plantations, and, with a sigh, could even hear how Watendlath had lost its pines, and of the fall of the giant Scotch firs opposite the little Scawfell Inn at Rosthwaite in the Borrowdale Valley, but none could spare those ancient yews, the great

"fraternal four of Borrowdale,
Joined in one solemn and capacious grove;
Huge trunks!—and each particular trunk a growth
Of intertwined fibres serpentine,
Up-coiling, and inveterately convolved"—

For beneath their pillared shade, since Wordsworth wrote his poem, which, as Stopford Brooke has said, "has something of the grandeur of Greek tragedy," that yew-tree

grove has suggested to many a wanderer up Borrowdale, and to many a visitant to this natural temple, "An ideal grove, in which the ghostly masters of mankind meet and sleep, and offer worship to the Destiny that abides above them, while the mountain flood, as if from another world, makes music to which they dimly listen."

But living things though these yew-trees were,

"Produced too slowly ever to decay,
Of form and aspect too magnificent
To be destroyed,"

they have proved that the whirlwind falls on worlds of prose and poetry alike; and these Borrowdale yews, of which Professor Knight in his volume—*The English Lake District, as interpreted in the Poems of Wordsworth*—predicted that they might yet live for hundreds of years, have been ruthlessly destroyed.

One has been uprooted bodily, and all leaders and branches of the others have been wrenched from the main trunk, and the three still standing trunks are bare poles and broken wreckage. Until one visited the spot, one could have no conception of the wholesale destruction the hurricane of December 11, 1883, had wrought.



THE BORROWDALE YEW

Until one looked on the huge rosy-hearted arms and branches, one could not guess at the tremendous force with which the tornado had fallen upon that "sable roof of boughs." For tornado or whirlwind it must needs have been. The yews grew under the hill; the gale raged from the westward. It would have been impossible to believe the yew-trees could have been touched by it, for the barrier hill on which they grew, and under whose shelter they have seen centuries of storm, goes straight upwards betwixt them and the west.

Nor could one understand the possibility of the gale touching them, though standing amid the wreckage one saw that across the valley a larch plantation had been entirely levelled, and evidently by a wind that was coming from the east, and directly for the yew-trees.

On inquiry at Seathwaite Farm we found that all the slates blown from the roof on the west side had been whirled up and clean over the roof. And one can only surmise that the winds rushing from the west and north-west and meeting the bastion of Glaramara and the Sty Head slopes were hurled round in the cul-de-sac of the valley, and moved with churning motion back from east to the west over the Seathwaite Farm, and so in straight line across

the beck and up the slope to the yew-tree cluster.

With what a wrenching, and with what violence those trees were in a moment shattered, only those can guess who witness the ruins of the pillared shade upon the grassless floor of red-brown leaves.

Never again can trembling Hope meet there at noontide with Time the shadow! But the ghostly shapes of Fear and Silence, with Death the Skeleton, can still celebrate united worship, and much more now than ever, since the winds will pass the tree-stumps, bare of leafage. The reader of Wordsworth's poem on the Borrowdale Yews, sadly and

"in mute repose
(May) lie, and listen to the mountain flood
Murmuring from Glaramara's inmost caves."

But a sense that something has passed from off the earth will possess all feeling hearts who learn that the "Fraternal Four of Borrowdale" have fallen victims to the merciless winds, and that pilgrims to the Seathwaite valley can never again behold that solemn and capacious grove as the poet Wordsworth knew it, when he peopled it with his imagination

ST. LUKE'S SUMMER AT THE LAKES.

I RECEIVED a letter from a friend in the Lake District that ran as follows :—“Why is it that the lovers of English scenery so little realize that there are certain seasons when the earth goes through her changes with more than usual glory? Why, for example, do we find the hotels and lodging-houses at the English Lakes empty just at the time when mountain and vale and every common thing appear appavelled in celestial delight? As a lover of the hills and of the woods, and a reader of Wordsworth, there are two fortnights in the year above all others precious for those who, with an eye for colour and light, will gather in the harvest of a quiet eye among our fell-side solitudes—one is the last week in April and first week in May, the other the last fortnight in October.” I could trust my friend, and so on St. Luke's Day of

this year I set myself free from Manchester noise and smother, and found myself at two o'clock of an all-golden afternoon gliding down the hollow woody vale of Greta into the Keswick paradise of autumn calm.

Truly there is a witchery over hill and dale at this season. Very softly, as the sun comes rolling over Helvellyn, the vapours swim up from Derwentwater, and the white smoky clouds rise out of the trench of the St. John's Vale and disperse themselves in sunny air. The little town of Keswick breathes up almost straight to heaven its quiet fireside story of the morning meal. Then the fires seem to die down, the mist of the vale and the smoke of the village pass quite away, and are forgotten; and over all the landscape, from Blencathra and Skiddaw to the height of Grassmoor and Whiteside, stands for the rest of the day a steady sky of softest, delicatest grey. Towards the afternoon the sky of pale blue becomes flecked with the fleeciest and curliest of cloud-tresses. The raven circles up and barks like a spectral-winged dog from the far heights of heaven. The buzzard wheels and cries in sheer delight for the sunshine and the calm, and as he whirrs down towards Falcon Crag the sun strikes through his wings and turns

him into molten gold. Towards five o'clock the hills, that all day seemed a little dwarfed, grow visibly as the mist comes down again. Skiddaw, that at the noon seemed almost pink-grey, as if the dead heather had begun to blossom again, assumes a deep plum-purple hue. Grisedale and Glaramara, Causey Pike and Barrow, vie with one another in their miraculous up-growing; far down west the haze above Bassenthwaite takes an iron-rusty stain, and the whole afternoon seems quietly to wait through the next hour, till at 6 or 6.15 the sun has collected some of his straying angels of swift light-errantry back into his golden ball of might, and rolled into view from out the back of Hindscarth, hangs over the Newlands Hause, and the evening transformation scene begins.

I was fortunate in finding my friend on the platform as my train drew up at Keswick. "Take me," said I, "the finest walk in the neighbourhood that is compassable easily in three hours or three hours and a half; not Latrigg, for I have heard of certain fencings-in of the public path to the summit, and for me at any rate that kind of thing is utterly destructive of the pleasure of the scene. If I am to enjoy a mountain prospect, I must not

feel a prisoner." My friend nodded assent. "Come round, then," said he, "by Walla Crag—crag of the Danish chieftain, Walla—high up above the old Roman camp at Castlerigg. It was Robert Southey's favourite walk, and this afternoon will astonish you. I'll warrant that you will confess your eyes have never lighted on a fairer view than from yonder larch-crested woody precipice that bands 'one side of our whole vale with beauty rare.'"

Off we trudged into the fields east of Castlehead, thence to a farm—Springs Farm by name—and so over a stile into a wood. I dare say it was a bit of old-day recollections, but as I went up the soft turf glade or woodland walk, bordered by its marvellous array of bracken fern in every hue of gold and yellow softening into green, as the scent of the rich autumnal foliage that shimmered into bronze and red came up to me, and the rooks went off with the acorns in their beaks, and a squirrel leapt across the path, and the robin whistled and the wren twittered, and the voice of the stream on my left sang clear, I forgot full thirty years of my life, and left a load of thirty years of care behind me, as I left Springs Wood and made upward by Brackenbeck toward Rake Foot. The golden birch showered into the

dark-brown pools at my feet, but my eyes were caught away from shining birch, and burnished beech, and rosy-hued cherry tree, and deep-hued Scottish fir, away towards the majesty of variegated woodland that swept down in unbroken grandeur of loveliness from Walla Crag towards Derwentwater. Thence up we went by the farm, and so along a wall on to a moor that lay speckled like a carpet patched with moss and heather and yellow grasses, and stretched away to Bleaberry Fell and the tawny heights of long Helvellyn. What a good name the old Celts gave that lion-hued hill—The Yellow Moor. “Did you ever see Blencathra finer?” said my friend; and as I gazed across the rolling fields of grey and gossamer away by the Druid circle, dimly seen, away to the far-off Threlkeld “huts where poor men lie,” that gave such welcome to young Clifford, the shepherd lord, in days of yore, I confessed that I had seen no such wondrous colour on the Round flank, no such depth of shade in the dark ravines of the weird hill, that for its shadow dances in days of old was called Blencathra, the Hill of Devils. At length the stile over the wall was gained that gave access to Walla Crag. In through the golden larches we went, the long-tailed tits “whispering” away prettily above

us; then of a sudden we seemed to feel the whole crag spring upward beneath our feet, so swift was the surprise of that far hollow woodland at our feet, the white lake, and the lilac hills beyond it to the west.

What a miracle of splendour lay revealed! With every shade of hue from emerald to ruby, the pomp of foliage swept down towards Derwentwater. Fine gauzy mist concealed Bassenthwaite, but now and again, like a ghost, its sun-illumined flood seemed to throb through the mist, and the white tower of Crosthwaite Church and the windows of the various houses on the knolls in mid-vale took the light and flashed and flickered at one another through the haze. Greta, beyond the grey quiet clustered town, coiled silver-like. The spire of St. John's Church stood out pale upon its mound against the purple smoke-rack of the village at its feet. And beyond the vale, where Derwent slipped through the quiet meadows, the slopes of Barf and Grisedale loomed large against a clear sky of delicate lemon-yellow tinged with green. As for old Skiddaw, he was lustrous against the west, and already reddening for sunset time. But the wood at my feet detained me—its quiet unsuspected quadrangles for the pheasants, its little keeper's lodge on its green square of wood-



• KESWICK AND DERWENTWATER FROM LATRIGG

The white line shows the Brandlehow Park Estate recently acquired by the National Trust for the Nation

walled paradise. The clumps of trees by Friars Crag and Cockshott and Castlet seemed to have gone off to gaze back at the brotherhood of leafy splendour on Walla Crag, and the islands on the lake, in their painted beauty of woodland grove, looked as if the trees had taken boat and gone further off to get a fuller view. It was miraculous, that downward gaze upon this myriad-tinted crowd of autumn trees. And when my friend told me that arrangements were pending by which the right of way to such a magnificent point of view would be settled on honourable terms between the lord of the manor and the local Footpath Association, I blessed both with a fervent blessing and gazed again. Then, after feasting eyes upon the crag of a thousand hues close by, we ventured back and out of the wood, and, skirting the precipice, gained a grand peep into furthest Borrowdale, thence down by a difficult way, fit only for shepherds and their nimble charges, we went by the side of Cat Ghyll. We dropped down, or slid down, outside the wood to a ferny rest beside the ghyll so loved by Southey of old. We crossed the ghyll where the water flows over a kind of natural pavement of moss agate, and we set a hundred orange sails afloat upon a silent pool by a single shake of a rowan branch

that overhung it, and, following their downward course, found ourselves beneath Falcon Crag, with as fair a prospect as ever man set eyes upon, over the lower range of the wood to our right, over the fern and fellside pasture towards Barrow and Borrowdale on our left. And now, by the hue of the water in the lake below, there were "goings on" in the heavens. Sunset time had come.

Fountains of fire seemed to play up from behind the hill called "Robinson," over Newlands Vale. The fleecy clouds at the zenith turned to gold, then to crimson, and then to a kind of fiery coral. Causey and Grisedale glowed like incandescent amethyst, as though they were not solid earth but mountain masses of red-hot purple vapour. Skiddaw burnt rose-red as Monte Rosa or the range of Moab, in the afterglow, and yet beneath the fiery streamers at the zenith the sky was all pure, cloudless hyaline, deep green that faded off upward to delicate amber, but grew deeper in hue of emerald as it touched the outlines of the hills. Ah, how that queer crowd of winter visitors the cormorants on the lake cried, how the heron called for joy with his sharp nasal twang as he sailed through the sunset, and how the wren broke into quavering song as the light

from the sky above and from lake below grew into roseate gold and flashed the "great wood" and the Falcon Crag to splendour. We dropped down through the fiery flood of sunset-lighted fern, knee-high, towards the white Borrowdale road, and so home to Keswick. Pheasants called, a hedgehog cried, and the sound of the ceaseless brook in the great wood murmured on through the twilight. The first star was swimming in a sea of amber-green as we reached our journey's end and completed our three and a half hours' round. But that walk from Keswick by Walla Crag and Cat Ghyll, and so home by the Borrowdale road, had made a new man of me, and I went back on the morrow to the daily round of work and the noise of men "in populous cities pent," soul refreshed, and with visions of an English afternoon in autumn glory such as only St. Luke's summer at the Lakes can give.

Yes, my friend is right; the last fortnight in October is certainly one of the fortnights in the year when the English Lakeland may be seen in fullest beauty; but then, alas! the holidays for most of us are over and gone.

A SUNRISE OVER HELVELLYN.

I HAD heard no hooters at six o'clock,—those horns of might that call so drearily to labour in the dark of a December morning,—and slept on in the marvellous quiet of the little hamlet that the Vikings knew by the ford of the “Tribal Thing” or Parliament, which guide-books speak of as Portinscale to-day, till the chink, chink, chink of the merry blacksmith told me that it was time to begin to think of enjoying my Christmas holiday.

As I lay in bed I could see the waning moon hang like a scimitar above Catbels, and watched it dip from pane to pane and realized what a hurry this old planet of ours was in to move toward the dawn.

A sudden flush in mid-air made me leap from bed and gaze at such a sight as a Manchester man may seldom know. The grey lake glistened to the south so still, so hoary, that for

the moment one felt it had been frozen from end to end, and the frost fairies had been powdering the surface with their rime. Beyond the lake stood, purple-dark, the troubled sea of the Borrowdale mountains, filling all the distance with such solemn gloom that they seemed to say, "No morning joy will be ours again for evermore."

Never before had I realized what Gray, the poet, meant by speaking of Borrowdale as "the abode of Chaos and old Night." "For us, for us," cried the Gowder Craggs and the Grange bastions; "For us," echoed the far range of Glaramara and Scafell, "the dawn can never come."

But my eyes were suddenly lifted, for a new light came upon the solemn mere, and gazing upward I beheld what seemed to be a band of innumerable angels that streamed from Helvellyn's ridge towards the zenith, each figure separate, yet all one mighty host of linked life, and slow ascending movement. Rose-red were their wings; and the flush of the million ministers of morn filled the whole heaven.

To my practical friend, the meteorologist, whom I met at breakfast, they were just so much cirro-stratus and no more. The old

shepherd in the bar had at any rate believed that they were messengers of meaning to men, for he muttered out :

“ Evening grey and morning red
Sends the shepherd wet to bed.”

And he added, “ I’se not so varra seuer but what we’ll happen be wet as a sick peat lang eneuf befware bed-time an’ aw.”

But for me as I gazed, this mighty wreath of roseate cloud was neither more nor less than a host of triumphant angels bringing with lucent majesty and gladness of great joy another morning to Cumbrian hills. Upward and ever upward streamed this vast processional of light. And Catbels flushed ; and the grey face of Derwentwater grew less pale. Then a robin whistled from a hollow in the garden, and suddenly the air was filled with sound, as leaving their roosting place on Lord’s Island, the jet-winged rookery clanged toward the north and sought the fallows of Under-Skiddaw, and the fat pastures in the Crosthwaite Vale.

But still Helvellyn lay purple-grey. Bleaberry Fell above the crags of Walla changed not from its dusky purple ; the King had not yet come to claim his throne. As I watched I saw suddenly a great volume of what seemed

new-born cloud wreath boiling and surging along the face of the Wanthwaite Crag and stream out like a banner towards Latrigg. Never ending, never diminishing, did this huge body of vapour roll along out of the trough of St. John's Vale. One might have supposed that, with the earthquake of the week before, some extinct volcano had leapt into life, and that the breath of Earth's central fire, which of old piled up our mountain masses, was suddenly revived. What must have happened was that somewhere above the rim of the world the sun had already appeared, had filled the air with message of his coming, and all the hoar-frost of the upper slopes had risen from its rest to meet and greet him on his way.

But still we saw no sun, only the Great Maen of Skiddaw and the topmost ridge of Blencathra faintly flushed; only from time to time rosy golden shapes, like men clad in armour, who waved huge banners as they moved, stood on the utmost ridge a moment, then disappeared behind the mountain wall. At last above the undulating ridge of Stybarrow Dodd, a great red bar of light was laid, and over it the cloud angels ascending and descending from the zenith grew more lovely, more glorious, as they hovered in expectancy. Then the bar was

lifted and with a clear saffron light between them another bar was laid beneath.

Strange builders were at work above Helvellyn, rearing with giant beams of molten gold some vast pavilion for the coming King. And the builders builded, and the golden glory grew, till sending upward a great fountain of light as if to search the heavens and see that nothing common or unclean was hidden there, and nothing that loved darkness better than light was there concealed, the god who brings back life and labour and loveliness to mortal men rose up and passed in pomp upon his way. I know not why, but it seemed as if slow rising into view he paused a-tip-toe upon Helvellyn as if he fain would linger there, as if, with the heart of a man, this mighty god would not willingly pass from a scene so fair, as if for him the awakening valleys and lakes, and the sea that in the distance was roused from sleep, had such strong charm, that he, even he the awakener, must pause and wonder at the sight. Then the great sun seemed to spring upward and like a giant began to run his course.

The cone of Skiddaw which, before he came, had kindled into blush-rose, now shone golden; and across the valley the shadow of Causey Pike lay blue on Grisedale's breast. Nothing

struck one more, as one gazed round upon the hills, than the expression of life which seemed so swiftly to have been given to what before was all inanimate. Then one noted how a fine gauzy veil seemed suddenly to have been woven from about the middle of the height of Falcon Crag to the shoulder of Catbels; light as gossamer and as translucent, it hung over the lake, and at the same moment the cloud of comfortable household smoke above Keswick became lustrous as it went up to meet the gift of dawn, and swam and eddied in curls of tenderest vapour around the Castle Hill. The cloud angels at the zenith had gone again back into heaven; the sky was silver washed with gold, and golden grey the moon's sharp sickle sank toward the hills, but still the hoar-frost lay upon the fields in middle vale, and very black and dark the leafless trees stood stark and bare against the hoary ground. Horrible thoughts of that nightmare of the East were born at the sight,—Death, the skeleton, and a cold insensate world, and the Turkish sword in middle air,—but the Daystar from on high waxed and the dread crescent waned, and when I looked out west I saw the cloud masses that came upward from the sea were taking wondrous shapes of sail and moving galleons filled

with fire, and I thought that perhaps in those far Anatolian fields to-day the weary people looking for the dawn, had seen in heaven, out west, as fair a sight, and thought the Christian navies yet would sail and the sunshine of a great deliverance bring for them and all the world, the longed-for golden day.

ON HELVELLYN WITH THE SHEPHERDS.

IT was a "dark morning," as we say in Cumberland, that first Monday after the twentieth of July, that had been fixed in the Shepherds' Calendar for the day of "give and take" on the Helvellyn range.

But, nothing daunted, we took our seats on the coach, clomb the great hill, and, leaving the white water of Bassenthwaite and the purple wall of Barf beyond the Crosthwaite valley to their gloom, set our faces towards the grey-green ridges of the mighty Helvellyn, and hoped that the day would mend.

What a shepherd the sun is in July! How he drives his fleecy flock up the heights! We had hardly passed through the Naddle valley, scented with the elder flowers, still gay with its rain-drenched wild roses, ere the whole long wavy back of "the yellow moorland"—for so

men say "Helvellyn" means—stood free of cloud; and, far beyond the gleaming bastion of the Castle Rock and the tiny wart upon the sky-line of the Watch Crag, we could see the dim zigzag of the miners' path that leads from Stanah to the shepherds' place of assembly.

And what is the Shepherds' Assembly? And why assemble up there so near the clouds? Cannot these sons of the mountain descend to the commonplace levels of our valley life for their "moot," their "thing," their parliament?

Are not shepherds' legs capable of feeling at all the tug up hill to such a gathering-place? Are their hearts made of different stuff to ours? Or do the gods live there, do Terminus and the lords of the boundaries have there their habitation?

St. Blasius help us! We know that you, the shepherd saint, are in the secret, for your name is upon the hillside in Patterdale, and even in this vale you have left upon a fell that fronts Helvellyn memorial of your tutelary power.

But St. Blasius keeps a discreet silence, and we must just go to the shepherds themselves to learn the history of their meeting, and the why and the wherefore of their place of mountain assembly.

"Stanah lonnin' end!" cried the coachman;

and, leaving the coach, we were soon sitting in the old-fashioned kitchen of one of the oldest-fashioned farmhouses in that part of the country, for old-fashioned was stamped on all its surroundings. The wormwood we had noted was sweet at the door, the beck we heard thundering by to the watering-dub. The old-fashioned cheese-press, with its great stone and its primitive lever, stood in the shadow of the peat-house; the bedroom staircase was built out in a circular stone-hooded building that abutted on the house, and the stair was just rough flagging from the mountain quarry. Upon the walls hung the bright, shining iron oven-spade; the oaken aumbry and meal-ark were seen in the wall, and the rafters were close enough to the head of our stalwart host to make one tremble, as he passed in and out of his cosy room getting ready for his mountain ascent.

He had "partly what" known of our coming, so had sent on a man with the "woollen 'uns" that he had gathered on the fell in the early morn, and himself waited to be our escort. So "haver-bread" was brought, and "a gay fine lock" of milk, and as we ate and drank we learnt something of the mystery of the shepherds' meeting.

“ Well, you ken varra weel that oor sheep are aw ‘heaf-gaen’ sheep. And now and agean a dog gets loose and hounds ‘em, or a galloway gits amang ‘em from Threlkeld common, and t’ sheep gits a bit scared, and yan on ‘em mebbe doesn’t coom back to its heaf, but strays until anudder’s heaf—gits lost, ya kna—and sea, at sarten times in t’ year, shepherds meets at sarten plaaces, and each brings back ony sheep that disn’t beleng him, and taks back ony that dis. It’s fair giv’ and tak’, yan may saay, and best on it is thoo’s nowt to pay neather, nobbut if yan doesn’t attend t’ meeting, and than their’s hauf-a-croon agean you, and weel sarved and aw. And that gaes towarts lunch and what not. Dar bon! But we must be off, or they’ll likely be fining me and aw, for not being at t’ meeting.”

We rose—our mouths still white with the milk, and dusty from the haver bread—passed through the “intake” and over the bridge by the sheep-washing pool, and on to the miners’ path; thence by the foaming “Stane Ea” or Stanah Ghyll we went, wondering what multitudes of miners, as they passed up to the Sticks Pass to go to the Glenridding mines, had worn the zigzag “trod” so deep.

“ It was nut miners at aw; it was the sleds

that browt the peats doon hereaway that wore that trod," said our friend. "Eh my! but what a number of years must folk here about hev bin content wi' peat for coal. Richardson—ye've hard tell o' Richardson o' St. John's—he hes a bit about it i' his poem, 'A Crack about Auld Times'—

'She sed, for eldin, peats they hed,
Browt meastly doon fra' t' hee fell tops.'

Eh my! but it was no easy matther gitting in store of eldin i' them daays."

"But," said a lady at my side, "what do you mean by 'heaf-gaen' sheep?" And the courteous dalesman, a gentleman every inch of him, at once dropped the rich Cumbrian accent, as if condescending to the gentler, less fellside-accustomed sex, and spoke as follows :

"You knows the fells on which our flocks are pastured have no walls upon them to separate pasture from pasture: Helvellyn is just one long common, as you may call it, from end to end. The farms in the dales have, by an old kind of prescriptive right, dating from some general agreement centuries ago, so many sheep attached to them. When we let a farm we say it is let with so many sheep, or so much stinted pasture. For all Helvellyn is

divided into pastures which are stinted in the number of sheep allowed to graze on them. My stints carry 250 sheep; Bridge-end stints allow of 600; Thirlspot stints carry 250; Dalehead 400 head, and so on. The flocks, by mutual consent, are never allowed to exceed this number, or they would press one on another, and stray off to find pasture beyond their own proper boundary. Indeed, as it is now, if a flock of fellside sheep grows weak and becomes less than its full value, we find that the stronger flocks on either side encroach at once upon its pasture. These separate pastures, though they have no walls to divide them, are very clearly marked out by usage and tradition in our minds, and are called 'heafs'; we all know our separate 'heafs,' and we train our flocks to know them too."

"But what does 'heaf' mean?" The yeoman was puzzled. How should he know that? The word "heaf" had probably come down to him through centuries of use from the old Danish "hof," which meant a courtyard or garth, or the Anglo-Saxon "hofs," and that probably signified a place of shelter or domicile—in short, a home. But he, without knowing Danish or Anglo-Saxon, at least had an instinctive knowledge of what the word "heaf" ought

to mean, for he continued : “ You see, mountain sheep are very like human beings, they know there’s no place like home ; and if once a lamb has been suckled upon a particular pasture it will never of its own accord leave it : and we call that place its ‘ heaf.’ We had a young gentleman not long since staying with us who said that he thought that our ‘ heafing ’ our sheep was very like the ‘ hiving ’ of bees, and he suspected that the words meant the same thing. I don’t know whether he was right or wrong, but this I do know, that one of our neighbour’s lamb’s mother died after it had been on the high fell there, away right at the back of Helvellyn, and it was brought down to the homestead at eight weeks old, and kept down there all the year in the valley, and never offered to leave ; but it was missed in the spring, about the time that sheep take to go to the high fells, and was found, as sure as I am here, three miles away back on its own heaf.” What a memory, thought I, of home ; what truth is in the saying that in youth impressions are made for life ! Here was a lamb that probably had not been more than six weeks upon the pasture where it was heafed or homed—for the mothers do not generally leave the intakes for the fells till the

lambs are a fortnight old—and all through the long year the lamb's eyes had been, as it were, lifted to the hills, and how the dawn rose and the sunset fell above the Mosedale moorland and the heights of Helvellyn had never been quite forgotten by the little motherless thing.

“This love of home-going or heaf-ganging among the mountain sheep is as remarkable as is wonderful their knowledge of the just boundaries of their heafs or pasture homes.

“The saying is, ‘Whar a lamb sucks, there it will be,’” added our yeomen friend; “and if, at the time when we drive our flocks back to the fells, we just opened our fold-gates and let them go, they would find their way back to their separate heafs, I'll warrant them, without a mistake. I have known one of our thrunters, or three-winter-old ewes, sold to a man at Cockermouth for ‘butching’; he sold it to a Lorton man, and what—you'll hardly believe it!—the ewe came right over the Whinlatter Pass, down through Braithwaite, and then she must have waited till dusk, and come through the streets of Keswick and up over Castrigg, and so, by the very path we are climbing, to join the flock on the ‘heaf’ above our heads.”

As our friend spoke we rested by an old sheepfold at the top of the steep ascent and gazed back wonderingly over the Naddle vale and hills, away to Bassenthwaite and the great littoral plain that swept towards the Solway white as silver. The Armbboth fells that Arnold knew, the Thirlmere lake that Faber sang of, and by which Rossetti mused, gleamed dark and purple beneath the sea of heavy mist that swam or hovered about it. A raven cried and dogs barked.

“Yes,” rejoined a shepherd, who was resting on his way up to the meeting at the fold, “I’ve kenned some of them Scotchmen travelling all the way back from oor fells to theer oan beyont t’ border. And one Willie White, him as was ‘shep’ at Greta Hall years sen, had a tip from Mardale, and lost him, and next thing he heard tell of him was, that t’ tip was seen swimming t’ Ullswater lake, ebben anenst Gowbarrow Park—he was ganging to his oan ‘heaf,’ bainest way, was tip. And it’s a varra sensible thing and aw, is it, that sheep should know their oan heafs, we could nivver ken whar sheep was at if they didn’t. Why, bless ye, oor sheep ken their pastures to within a hundred yards, and if yan from a neighbour flock cooms in amang them, they’re nut owre satisfyt wi’ it, I can tell

ye. I'se not agoing to saay that, if it's a lamb or a young hogg, they'll mell of it, but if it's a full-grawn 'un they'll seun show that its room is a gay deal more weel-liket than its coompany ; sheep is varra sensible things."

"But, then," I said, "surely these sheep can't detect one another's particular marks, the punch-marks in the ears, the horn-burns?"

"Noa, noa, but they ken varra weel t' feace on 'em, just as a man knaws the feace of his friend ; and they sniff a deal round a straanger, they seun knaw what flock he's been amang by t' smell on 'em. But there are two things that plague us shepherds a deal in keeping our flocks to their 'heafs'—dogs and galloways. Let a dog come hounding a 'heaf' one day in three months, and the sheep seem always to have the fear of that dog on 'em, and they seem to be flayte and restless, shy of their heaf ; and, if one of those mountain ponies that they breed in Threlkeld pastures or the moors out Greystoke way come on to these Helvellyn pastures, they fairly scare t' life out o' sheep, and flocks get mixed all t' way along Helvellyn to t' Raise. You see, the ponies like the sweet grass and follow it, and lambs like it and follow it, but whar the ponies coom sheep will not stay."

“Then,” said I, “it looks to me very much as if the tourists who cross the fells might do you damage.” “Eh, dear, that would they, if they bring a dog that is not well to heel with them, but it’s not a varra deal o’ dogs as cooms into t’ country ; ya see, dogs knaws nowt about Wadswuth and the like, and folks that climbs fells for luv of him cooms wi’out dogs for the meast part. If one of our dogs takes to houndin’ fells we put him down; and it’s shepherd meetings as keeps flocks reight efther aw.”

I asked how.

“Why, you see,” broke in the yeoman, “after all, our fellside shepherd system is one of goodwill and good neighbourhood, and our meetings help that way.

“There is no rule which can oblige me to heaf or home my flock on any particular pasture ; as a commoner or tenant of the lord I can claim equal rights of pasturage on all the common of Helvellyn, subject to the lord of the manor and his court’s ruling. If some one else who was a commoner chose to settle or heaf his sheep on my heaf I could not prevent him, but custom and good-fellowship prevent him. And so my sheep are left in undisturbed possession of their home, which they have had for generations of years.

“Of course it’s a bit tempting at times to get a nibble off a neighbour’s heaf, but then goodwill prevents one giving way to temptation, and there is such strong feeling of honour and trust among the shepherds, that they would never take occasion, even in the absence of all strict law to prevent them, to trespass with their sheep on any neighbour’s home.”

It takes a good man to make a good shepherd!

“Ah, sir, I don’t a bit wonder that we read of shepherds being trusted in the Bible. I tell you, the shepherd’s life on our high fells is a life of trust from cradle to grave. I have read of one they called Michael, whom Mr. Wordsworth wrote about, building his fold, just such another as this one here, there away in Green-head Ghyll. I don’t wonder he wrote about him. I think a good shepherd is as grand a charactered man as you will find all the country through.” And as he said this, my friend’s eyes fairly flashed. “I don’t mean to say,” he added, “that there are not black sheep among them. There was one who lived in the dale below here stole sheep; there is another went wrong Caldbeck way last year, and one I read of in the papers only a week or two since, a sheep-stealer, Kendal way;

but as a set of men I will say this, that the high fell shepherd has to be a gentleman before he can be a shepherd; conscientious and honourable, and kind and neighbourly. We could never grow wool another year on Helvellyn if it were not so."

"But, then," said I, "what are these shepherd meetings, and how do they minister to this feeling of good neighbourhood?"

"You shall see presently," my friend replied. "That man ahead of us, carrying a lamb on his shoulders, will find it a heavy load before he has reached the place of meeting, for Stybarrow Pass is 2,500 feet above the sea, and we meet on Stybarrow Dodd, above the top of the pass; but I'll be bound he'll carry it the whole way up, and all for love. He has found it straying on his heaf among his flock, and he will take it to restore it to its rightful owner. You know, we miss some sheep at all gathering times, or times when we bring them off the fells, whether for washing in June, for clipping in July, for dipping and sauving in October. At such times we miss some that have strayed, and find others that do not belong to us, and so we Helvellyn flock-masters agree to meet three times a year—once here, on the first Monday after the

20th July, on Stybarrow Dodd, above the Sticks Pass, and we bring to that meeting the stray sheep that we have found, mostly woolled ones, and give and take. I daresay as many as 100 or 150 sheep will be returned to their native heafs to-day. We all meet again on the first Monday in October in Mosedale Ghyll, by the side of the road that leads from Wallthwaite to Dockray, and give and take to one another any strayed ones again. That meeting is mostly for lambs.

“ And once again we come together to what we call ‘ Shepherds’ Feast,’ and have a hunt—hare-hunt or fox-hunt, as t’ case may be—and dine together, and arrange matters, and again bring any strayed sheep we may have found upon our heafs. That feast takes place at Thirlspot one year to accommodate the shepherds on the west side of Helvellyn, and at Dockray, in Matterdale, the other year, for the convenience of the men who live on the east side. The feast is fixed for the first Thursday after old Martinmas, towards the latter part of November.”

“ But how do you ensure the attendance at the meetings ?” I asked.

“ We have a fine of 2s. 6d. for all who do not attend, and then there is a collection of 6d. a

head for luncheon upon the fell, and we pay 3s. 6d. each for our dinner at the time of the feast. At times we find a 'woolled one' on the fell after a shepherds' meeting, then we just shear it, scale the fleece, and allow the owner a price, or tell him he can have it if he calls. After this meeting to-day, the shepherds will never go on to the fells without their shears slung round their necks, for the purpose of saving their neighbours trouble and loss." I saw, as he spoke, that my friend had his shears, with their points carefully tied together with a piece of washleather and twine, and hung round his neck by a knotted braid. A crook he had not—our northern shepherds have no need of them—but he carried a staff in his hand to steady himself from crag to crag, and the shears shone at his side.

"And how does a shepherd," said the lady who was on her way to her first shepherds' meeting, "know a sheep that has strayed from another pasturage or 'heaf,' if you say that these sheep wander for miles away, and there must be on Helvellyn many flocks?"

"Ay, that there are. There are thirteen or fourteen flocks on this side the range, let alone all the Matterdale side and on beyond the Raise. But 'the shepherd kens his oan,' as

the saying is. Ay, ay, dar bon! but I have mothered seventy or eighty lambs at smitting time mysel'; for I remember well one time I was shepherding for Gasgarth, and his missus said to me, 'Jem, mother that un,' and I went reight intill middle o' t' flock and browt out t' mother on it, and so for eighty or mair without yance mekkin' a mistak'; it's just habit and eyes as does it; there's a different leuk about t' feaces of a lock of sheep as there is about t' feaces of men-boddies."

"But," interrupted the lady, "you have to know not only your own flock's faces, but the faces of strangers, if you will return them to their rightful owners."

"To be sure; but theer's shepherds' beuks, and we study them and ken aw t' marks as ivver war made; it's shepherds' beuk as does that job for us. Eh my! but day's darkening in; it 'ull be a bad day for the meeting, I fear." And as he spoke, the great sea of cloud that had laid heavily along above the uppermost ridges sank down and, darkening the whole hillside to purple, cast a kind of silver lurid thunder-light upon the valley far below us. We entered the mist, and heard voices calling and dogs barking.

"There's a lad coming up to his first shep-

herds' meeting from Dale-head. He'll be lost in this mist; we had better wait here. I told him to keep to the Ghyll till he reached the Brund; that's his dog, by his voice, I'll warrant him. West ho!" cried the shepherd; "he'll ken who it is that's shouting when he hears my dog's name—thar's only yan 'West' upon Helvellyn—West ho!" Far down from the mist world beneath us came a shrill answering whistle, and by-and-by out of the mist, like giants, ran two dogs, to the sound of "Git awa' back" from the young master below. Our collies immediately joined them; the shepherd-lad whistled, and away they went to give him escort towards us. "It's very strange, dogs seldom lose themselves in the mist," said the yeoman. "I remember hearing Edward Hawell say he was once mist-bound upon Calva, and he would not follow his dog when he told it to 'Git away yam'; and consequence was, dog landed at yam (home), but Hawell landed at Caldbeck, six miles in another direction.

"Dogs go so much by scent, I suppose, and they can track back footmarks, and can so run back on a track, no matter how blinding the mist is; but a mist does nobody harm if you will look which way the wind blows when you

enter it, and take the first runner you come upon for guide, for a water-runner will always lead you to the bottom."

Just then the dogs came up towards us, to see if we were standing where they had last seen us, and disappeared into the mist to bring their master on; and on he came, and with him the man who carried the lunch to the shepherds' meeting, and before him a ewe with a lamb at her side.

"Whose ewe is't?" "It hes upper-hauved nar, far stuffed, and under-fauld bitted, but I cannot mak out smit, rains hes reytherly wshed it." And, saying this, he relapsed into silence, and we plodded on and upward through the blinding mist. The ewe was fairly tired out, but the shepherd gave it a knee from time to time, and with this assistance it managed to get along; but that "upper-hauved nar, far stuffed, under-fauld bitted" was a puzzler.

"You see, shepherds' beuk hes all sic-like marks in it. Every shepherd's flock hes some variety in ear-marking and in smitting. If we cut off the top of the ear, we say its ear is clipped or stuffed ('stoved,' 'stubbed'); if we slit it, we say it is tritted or ritted; if we rake a piece out of it, we say it is bitted; and sometimes we take two or three bits out of the ear,

and we call it key-bitted. Sometimes we take a piece out in shape of a spoon, and we call it spoon-shanked. Again, we cut one-half of a top of the ear clean away, and we call it under or upper halving. Sometimes we snip a bit out of the upper or under fold of the ear, and we say it is under-folded or upper-folded. Again, we sometimes take a little piece out of the middle of the ear, and we say it has been ear-punched. Then in addition to these ear-marks, which are very durable, we have burning of marks upon horned sheep—horn-burn—and, in addition, we take ruddle and tar, and smit or smite the sheep with peculiar marks on the fleece, sometimes with a bugle-horn, or triangle, or square, or streak, or pop; and, finally, most flocks have the letters of the original flock-master put upon them with black tar and grease—the latter process at shearing-time in summer, the former process at dipping or ‘sauving’ time in the late autumn.”

“But,” put in my companion, “what about the ‘Shepherds’ Book’?”

“Why, it is just here where we are helped by knowledge of the book; for in this book there are drawn pictures of sheep belonging to every flock-master, and the ear-marks and smits and letters are carefully noted upon the

picture ; the description is given below each sheep's portrait. And no shepherd on these west fells of Cumberland, or the east fells, and right away in Yorkshire and over the border, but can tell, if he knows his 'Shepherds' Book,' whose the sheep is that he comes across, on fell or at market."

I did not know then, as I do know now, how recent an institution, comparatively speaking, this Shepherds' Book, or Guide, was. Joseph Walker—peace to his ashes in the little churchyard of Martindale!—was the author and publisher of the first *Shepherds' Guide* in 1817. Long may it be ere his famous sheep-shearing song be forgotten ; and, as long as stars shine for shepherd-lords and laddies, may we remember that the first great shepherds' meeting took place at the sign of the "Star," on Martindale Hause, at Joseph Walker's invitation.

As for the western fells, William Mounsey, the last of the kings of Patterdale, and William Kirkpatrick, of Howtown, seem to have enlarged *Walker's Sheep Book* in 1819. In 1839 they published at Penrith an enlarged edition ; in 1849 another guide of the west fells appeared. The east and south fells amalgamated ; and in 1873 the *Shepherds'*

Guide for the east and south fells appeared, with the sheep-marks of 1,566 flocks of Yorkshire, Northumberland, Durham, part of Cumberland, part of Westmoreland, and still the western fells maintain their own book of sheep-marks.

Joseph Walker would, if he could leave his rest in the quiet dale of St. Martin, be perhaps a little annoyed to find that on the Sunday his injunction, "That all stray sheep shall be proclaimed at the church," had been set aside; but he would be gladdened to know how his simple plan to make it easy for each man to have his own restored to him has succeeded, and how he, as father of the *Shepherds' Guide*, is held in honour.

"T' dogs ken t' way," said my friend, as we staggered on through the mist. "T' fauld is not far off, but I reckon that the shepherds will be very near starved to death waiting for us; it's well we carry the lunch."

Then the cloud-rack lifted, and we saw a long low wall; dogs leaped up on to the coping of it and barked; shepherds' heads appeared one by one above the grey stone barrier and gave us good-day. The shepherds' ponies near neighed at us, and we were soon sitting with the Helvellyn shepherds, true sons of the mist.

and the mountain, learning the various incidents of the day's "hounding" of the fells for "the getherin'," as it is called.

What a bit of old-world story it was, this getherin'! Here were sons of the Viking, with their dogs as clever and true as ever that good dog Vigi of King Olaf was, that we read of in the *Heimskringla*, and the Icelandic saga of Trygveson.

Here were the very children of the North Sea rovers—Jacksons, Harrisons, Dicksons, Wilsons, Wilkinsons, Donaldsons, Allinsons, Dawsons, Hawkriggs, Brownriggs, Salkelds, Hinds—high-seated on their misty, cloud-encircled hill, here in the gloom of the gods; and peace, not war, was their message; good-luck, not ill-luck, was their mutual feeling; they reddened no altars with blood, though the ruddle-pot lay at their side, but they told stories in the cloudy and dark day of perilous ascents in the cold times of snow, and of wrestling with the wind, and of hardy adventure after the sheep that were lost; and, sadly enough, they spoke of a comrade who had gone some years ago from their mountain shepherds' meeting suddenly, into the land that was very far off. We felt it was a land that was very nigh to us all, as one of the party told how the



ON HELVELLYN WITH THE SHEPHERDS

shepherd had tried to turn a "woolled sheep" back into the fold, flung himself on it, got his hands tangled in the wool, and then how the sheep had leapt with a bound and dragged him so near to the crag's slope that he fell head-foremost and was picked up a dying man.

"Theer was a man here as maade a bit o' poetry about it a lock o' years efter," said an old shepherd, as he knocked the ashes out of his pipe. "Here, Jossy, thou can mind verses, and mun gev' it oot." And Jossy put his head back, and, colouring a bit, gave us the simple verses that had chronicled the falling of the cloud that came down on that Stybarrow meeting on the day the comrade of the shepherds died at his post :

"Well met are the shepherds from Wythburn and Naddle,
 From Matterdale, Patterdale, far, far away ;
 Well met are the sheep who, in spite of the raddle,
 And ear-bit and flank-smit, have wandered astray.

"Here's luck to the shepherd of misty Helvellyn,
 And joy to the shepherd-lad, trusty and brave ;
 And life to them all, for there's none can be telling
 How soon each may rest in a fell-shepherd's grave.

"For death is our guest at this Stybarrow meeting,
 Our friend was flung o'er from the crag at our side ;
 We remember his laugh and the sun of his greeting,
 We think of the cloud that came down when he died.

“Oh, swift was the end of our comrade’s life’s story,
In care of his charge did he come by his fall ;
For duty he died, and by duty found glory,
And follows on now to the Head Shepherd’s call.”

There was something very touching in the silence that fell upon the group of weather-worn men, resting there with their backs to the wall, waiting for the late arrival of this or that “shep,” with his contribution of strayed sheep from the fold. But the death of the shepherd led us to speak of that other death upon Helvellyn in 1805, when young Gough met his end on Striding Edge crags, and lay withering away to a skeleton for three months, with none but the birds of the air to hover over him, and the faithful terrier to keep both bird of the air and fox of the hillside from cruel work upon the body of his master.

“Eh, but t’ dog was a fair skeleton hissel’ when he was found, and like eneuf poor thing, for it hed hed nowt but a rabbit or two or a bit of carrion-sheep from one of the ghyll bottoms, you kna, t’ whoal time,” said one. “T’ dog was a laal yellow sort of a tarrier,” put in another. “I’ve heard my father say that the poor thing had got so skeered by being in sic a lonesome spot that it wouldn’t let onyone come nigh it, and they was forced to set hounds on

to catch it. Dogs didn't hurt it, poor thing! Dar bon! but it's wonderful things is dogs; so faithful and true! Yan they ca'd Sir Walter Scott put t' dog in a poetry book, and Wadswuth wrote a bit on it an aw."

I remembered the poem that began—

"I climbed the dark brow of the mighty Helvellyn,"

and thinking of the three months' vigil of that faithful little dog in that savage place by the Red Tarn, I repeated half aloud:

"How nourish'd here through such long time
He knows who gave that love sublime,
And gave that strength of feeling, great
Above all human estimate."

"Ah, dogs can feel a'most as much as a man," muttered a shepherd. "If I speak rough to Vic theer, t' dog's wasted for a whoal day, it seems to mourn sea." Ay, indeed, from the day 1,000 years ago, when King Olaf fell fighting his long ship, and Einar went to the king's favourite dog and said: "Vigi, we have lost our master," and, as we read, "then the dog hearing this, sprang to his feet and yelled aloud as if he had received a sting in his heart," and refusing to take food "was seen, as it were, to shed tears and moaned till he died," even to this day there is a chord of

common human feeling between dog and man, which the owners of the modern Vics experience to be as strong as Einar and those who knew the good dog *Vigi* of old had found.

But the collie-dog, or dog for the coaly-faced mountain sheep—for this is the definition given by one of the latest writers upon the collie-dog, Mr Rawdon Lee—has lost the fighting and tutelary or life-protecting instinct of old times. Men do not cry to their dogs as Olaf did of old in the Icelandic saga, “Pin that man for me”; nor, like the shepherds in Virgil, do they value their dogs of the Molossian breed for their fierceness against wolves and robbers. And though still in Thibet and the Pyrenees the sheep-dog is the guardian against wild beast and rogues, it is clear that the collie-dog of our Cumberland hills, for all his jealousy of other collies, has been bred for peace and patience, swift legs and swifter wit.

A dog that shows signs of worrying is “put down” at once. A dog that bites or snaps at sheep has a ring with a hook put in his nose, and he snaps at a woolled one at his peril, for the hook catches in the fleeces, and away goes the sheep and gives such a pull to the dog’s nose as the dog will think of for many a day.

But there is a pride about these collies. They remember insults. Suddenly all our talk was stopped by a general running together of the dogs, a kind of football bully among collies, and if one could have understood dog-Billingsgate I fancy one would not have been edified.

“Oh, it’s that dog o’ Ritson’s,” said a shepherd. “He got a sair pinch at this meeting last year, and a thowt he’d giv’ ’t back to Watson’s yan this time, and, by gocks! he hes an aw; seest tha Watson’s dog goas upo’ three! He’ll not pinch him agaen, a’ll be bound.”

It certainly was most interesting to watch the way in which Ritson’s dog, having satisfied his dignity by returning the last year’s pinch, went off and lay down in quiet contemplative pride.

But what a singular-looking set of dogs they were! There were, as it seemed, two distinct breeds: the slape-haired and the rough-haired; and of the former there were again two distinct kinds, the long-coated, bushy-collared, bushy-tailed, bushy-faced creature that we are familiar with by Briton Rivière’s beautiful picture of “Rus in Urbe,” and another type of dog with ears almost of the prick, short-cut kind, and with a sort of lurcher look, of the queerest possible colour, brindled grey with

white or wall-eyes, or simply black and tan, or white and tan with dark eyes—dogs with foxy faces, and evidently built for speed, not high from the ground either, but long-bodied and lithe. These last were from the famous Dale-bottom breed; but it was clear that many farmers had their own strain and colour, and had, as I learned, kept up the strains for long generations.

My friend's yellow collies were in the sixth generation, and since many collies work twelve years, their strain dated back for seventy years.

As one looked at the heads of the dogs one felt that there was a look of the Esquimaux dog about them, but the brush of the Esquimaux dog was absent. One thing struck one at once, and this was their marvellous understanding of the minds of their masters.

“T’ dogs can dea all but talk, ya kna. Theer’s yan o’ Cartmel’s theer, he’s as auld-fashined a fellow as ivver was. At milking-time yan has nowt to dea but say t’ naame of close, and dog ’ull be up and oot o’ door and away to t’ field, an’ he’ll be gethering coos and bringing ’em oop to t’ yaat by time the lad is there to open it; and if t’ yaat’s nobbut oppen, he’ll bring ’em reight oop t’ road and intil t’ byre. Ay, a’ve knawed a dog o’ Flemming’s that could

drive a whoal flock fra Keswick to Amelset by hissel', and stood at all t' road ends and kep 'em reight and nivver neabody along of him."

Thought I, Vigi, old fellow—famed in story—it is told how Olaf the king first was attached to you, because you were able at a word to single out from the mixed multitude of captured oxen, all those that belonged to the poor man who was suppliant for his kine unto the king. I am not sure but that the Vigis of our modern day have not as much wisdom and claim to royal honour, for truly these collies upon Stybarrow Dodd do seem to know the words that fall in casual talk from their master's lips.

The crack went on, and with the crack went round the loving cup in true Viking fashion. I must confess that there was an entire lack of bread and cheese, and perhaps more liquor than was needed to keep the pulses actively going; but, with a single exception, and he not a shepherd but a hired carrier, there was no excess visible, and it was observable that when the cup went round the shepherds often only just wetted their lips and passed it on. Presently the hat went round for the sixpence contributed

to their mountain lunch. Then two shepherds were summoned to take charge of the wayward sheep that had been scattered on the hills, and drive them, one down the western, the other down the eastern slope of Helvellyn, to the fell farmsteads. And then the careful drafting of the flock in the pen into their two companies was effected. Each sheep had its lug-mark questioned, its smit, its letter, its horn-burn looked to, and the double fold was then opened, and away, to the sound of three cheers for the shepherds—three cheers for the Queen—went through the mist and cloud upon the heights, to the bright afternoon in the valleys, the thirty or forty men and their thirty or forty dogs, and the mountain assembly was dissolved till next year, the first Monday after the 20th of July.

We followed our courteous yeoman friend, who took as much care of us as if we had been his own kin. The dogs knew that they were to take us straight for home, and down the slope unfalteringly we went, after these clever little guides. They ran ahead, but always returned from the mist, and went ahead again, till the dark cloud-rack in a moment seemed to fly above our heads, and

with a great cry of surprise we looked into the sunlit happy depths of distant valleys.

Down towards the meadows, full of hay-makers, down to the rippling river, down to the deep dark silver mere of Thorold the Dane,—our Thirlmere, did we pass, and so by the old peat track and the sheep pool in the ghyll, till the farm by the “Stony water” hard by the Castle Rock was reached. There, sitting in one of the poet Southey’s own armchairs, in a cosy farm parlour, we partook with the hospitable yeoman and his good wife of the cheeriest of meals, and thought of the quiet patience and honour of a shepherd’s life, of the power of the Cumberland hills to make trustful and generous, to educate and to refine, and deemed ourselves not a little privileged to have been admitted among the shepherd sons of Helvellyn, to that mist-wreathed mountain assembly.

AT BRIG-END SHEEP-CLIPPING.

IT was a rememberable sight, that sheep-washing on Thirlmere's side—a sight that will never more be seen there, as long as Manchester drinks the water of the mere of Thorolf the Dane.

With barking and much noise, the sheep dogs drove from the high fells the brave company of bleating ewes and lambs, and the farm lasses met the shepherds as they strode through the fern, and boys and girls all helped to get the noisy multitude of Herdwick mountain sheep into the funnel-shaped pen inside the wall. Then into the close-crammed company the lads went, picked out the struggling lambs, and tilted them over the pen side, to await their dripping lake-bathed mothers.

What a picture it all was!—Raven Crag lifting up solemnly and silently into the sunny air, and down by the lake's glistening marge

the whole farm company gathered with their loud-voiced charges. As we listened to the bleating and the baaing and the barking, it seemed as if the fell-side voices of miles of pasture were mingling in protest against the bathe, but what suspicion of harm could there be, when the shepherd's daughter sat on the boulder close by, cooing to and caressing two of the tiny lambkins clasped under her arms, while the collie lay at her feet or licked her face?

Then what good-natured fun and frolic it all seemed! The shepherd stood waist-deep in the lake water, the sheep were lifted one by one and thrown towards him. Seizing the fore-legs and keeping the heads above water, he soused and swayed the body of each Herdwick in turn, gave it a friendly push towards the shore with a "Theer git heàm to the barn," and the sheep, heading for the land, crept out upon the grass, shook its head and ears violently, and waited till its child should own its much altered and less lovely if cleanlier form.

I said, what fun and frolic reigned! The lad who threw the ewes into the pool would wait till the shepherd's back was turned, then splash, splash right atop of him would come the sheep. I thought one or two of the

Herdwicks looked as if they enjoyed the joke, but when the shepherd "clicked" the lad by the heel and dragged him in with the last ewe in his arms, and letting the sheep go, took the lad by the head and treated him to a downright good sheep-washing, I fancied the whole flock shook their sides with laughter, as much as to say, "Serve him right!"

Then all the lads and farm lasses sat down and waited, and over the fell-tops came another bleating multitude, while the lately washed ones went back with their lambs in silent thankfulness, through the fern, and were lost to sight.

But not for ever were they lost. I was brought face to face with them again in less than a fortnight; for "Th' Deall Clippin'" was a week "forrarder" than was usual, owing to the sun and the "mawk," or blue-bottle fly, and it was my fortune to receive an invitation to attend "Brig-End Clippin'!" so thither on the appointed Friday I went.

What a day it was! The sun had burnt Latrigg into rusty ochre brown. Helvellyn was as yellow as its name, "the yellow moorland," could ever have meant to those who first called it so, in that dry summer hundreds of years ago. The Vale of Keswick

was filled with sultry mist, as we climbed up the long Chestnut Hill, and peeped at the tiny garden, where Shelley loved to sit and muse o'er flood and fell. The wild roses had not yet lost their beauty, and the air was fragrant with clover, and full-breathed of those "swaying censers prodigal," the large white elder-flowers. Naddle valley was still green from the aftermath of the meadows. The gold and silver of the daisies and hawkweed was fading before the mower at the moor. It was an early haytime in good truth.

"Ay, ay," said the coachman in white hat and red coat, "and an early clipping time too.—John, whor ista gaen?"

"Brig-end Clipping," replied the tall, leish old man, plodding on through the dust.

"Git up," said the coachman, and right glad I was he accepted the invitation, for I soon found I was in right good company. My friend had attended Brig-end Clipping for "forty year or mair." He kenned the "auld ways" of "clippin' daays weel," and he told me much of ancient usage as we drove merrily on to Smeathwaite Brig-end.

The "Deall Clippin'" had been instituted as an annual "do" for the second week in July, time out of mind.

“Fornsett clipping on Monday; Smeathwaite, Tuesday; Thirlspot, Wednesday; Stanah, Thursday; Brig-end, Friday, and Kessick market daay o’ Setterday.” This had been the shepherd’s calendar for the “Deall” in the second week in July, from a time whereof the memory of man runneth not to the contrary, and when one considers that the men who handled the shears had collected from 300 to 500 sheep from the fells each day, sorted them out, sheared them, marked them, and sent them back to the fells, one feels that Keswick market day, as a bye day, and a good “rust,” or rest day on Sunday, must have been welcome enough.

“And who does the clipping?” I asked.

“Nebbers,” said my friend. “Times is alterin’ sadly. Chaps comes fra Scotland now and teks a flock by contract, but ‘nea good’ comes of it. Fellows clips away here a bit and theer a bit; it’s nowt to them, they git t’ brass and away wi’ them, but theer’s nowt like nebbors for shearin’ sheep, mind ye. They tak time to job, theer’s no paay—but theer’s meat, and it’s aw i’ a friendly waay togither.”

There was something very touching in the way my old friend of the dark and glittering eye, spoke of the days of good fellowship in

sheep-shearing times, days which were now giving way to hard contract.

“Not,” continued he, “but what i’ the auld daays a deal o’ t’ ‘woo’ was eaten up, I dar say. ’T was oft mair of a time for a down-reet jollification than owt else, but than farmin’ fowk works hard, and a bit o’ plesser yance over does neabody harm.”

We rattled down to what appeared imminent death at the dangerous little Smeathwaite Bridge, but the horses knew to an inch how to negotiate it; our driver was an old hand, and the coach took the opposite hill at a hand-gallop in fine style. It stopped at the brow, and we dismounted and joined others who, with shears in hand, were bound for the Brig-end Clipping.

Our host smiled and just nodded with his head towards this or that clipping-stool, as his friends and helpers came up, and without another word they took their seats astraddle of the quaint four-legged racks, on which their friends the Herdwicks were to be laid, and the clipping began.

There was not quite the same idyllic beauty about the farm scene as that I was accustomed to in Yewdale, where under those stern crags, that always seem to remind one of Mount Sinai

in miniature, one used to see the whole drama of the shearing time enacted beneath the magnificent canopy of the "burnished sycamore." But the place was very lovely. The white-washed comfortable farm, with its friendly porch, was hard by the hill that Wordsworth had immortalized in his poem about "The Man on the top of the Howe," and one remembered how this Howe, or Heogh, or High place had been the famous tribal-gathering ground in old Viking shepherd days. For we were at Legburthwaite, which means the clearing of the Burgh or Beorg, where the Leg or Log-Sayer had stood of old, to proclaim the word of the law. As I thought on these things, I heard a shepherd from his shearing stool close by cry :

"John, what's te lug-mark?"

And John answered, "Cropped nar, upper-and-under-haulved far."

"Hes te gotten yan o' mine?"

"Ay that hev a," replied the cheery clipper, "by lug-mark on 'im," which being interpreted meant that one of John Hawkrigg's sheep had strayed and got mixed up with Bristow's of Bridge-end, whose sheep were "cropped nar," or cropped on the near ear, but differed from Hawkrigg's in having only the upper part of



AT A DALE SHEEP-CLIPPING

the far ear halved, while Hawkrigg's sheep had their far side or right ear halved both on the upper and under part.

But these ear-marks were spoken of as "lug-marks," and little did they, who were clipping that day under the hill of the log-sayer at Legburthwaite, realize that the word lug is only another way of spelling the word log or law, and the ear-mark was the mark of the law which gave a lawful ownership of the sheep in question. "What's te lug-mark?" though the speaker did not know it, was really only a Viking or Norse way of saying, "What is thy law-mark?" I had heard it said that it was believed that the markings or smitings on the sheep's backs were relics of an early Himyaritic alphabet, but I had gone through the *Shepherd's Guide*, and had failed to find that there was, at any rate upon our western fells, enough to bear one out in doing more than entertain this suggestion, but of the antiquity of the language attached to the lug-marking there could be no doubt. Then as I chatted about this ear-marking, one of the shearers pointed to an ear that had been cropped and said, "Ye see that stuffed ear," and I learned that an ear that was stuffed or stoved meant only an ear that had a bit

clipped off it. The word "stuffed" had delightful ancience about it. But we stopped our ear-marking crack to gaze at the beauty of the pastoral scene.

Down below us through the meadows sparkled that ancient river, the river Bure. No longer now the child of the falling cloud, full to overflowing to-day and shallow to-morrow, but now through all the year the same steady changeless water-stream, for Manchester has dammed the lake from which it used to freely run, and allows it in return so many gallons of water a day. Close beside us was the good old-fashioned barn with overhanging roof, picturesque and full of happy memories. On the broad balcony beneath its ample eaves, in olden time the women span and the men carded the wool; and many a yard of harden-sark and good homespun and blue bedgown stuff has been prepared for wearing at Brig-end farm, in shadow of that overhanging roof-tree.

Very little was said; one heard the click, click of the shears, and sometimes the sigh of a pocket whetstone as the shearer sharpened his weapons; but occasionally it seemed as if all the dogs of the dale had gone mad; such barking! such fun! for some sheep, after being let free from the shearing-bench and feeling his

unwonted lightness of body, had gone off on a scamper, and must needs be brought back to the pen to wait for sauving or salving and straking or marking.

The gravity of the whole business struck one. It was solemn work of a very solemn order. At least, so the men astride of the clipping benches seemed to feel. I daresay they were right to be solemn, for I know that a "Herdwick" can kick and struggle with much spirit, till he is mastered. The shears are sharp and very near the surface, and no man cares to wound his neighbour's sheep. But in addition these men were friends from a "lang time sen," and one clipping bench was filled to-day by a new man; "T' auld un hed gone down. It was aw in course o' natur," said my friend, "so you cannot complain, but it natterly teks heart o' yan for aw that, to see ald nebbors and good nebbors neah mair at clippin' time; and it meks one think to onesel' that it's mebbe last time fer some on us an' aw."

But if there was a kind of dignified solemnity in the air as far as the clippers went, there was plenty of sparkle and life amongst the youngsters. It seemed to be their privilege to catch the sheep as they were called for

and hug them to the shearers' benches. They would hear the cry, "Bring us anudder—a good un this time, my lad!" and the boy dashed into the flock, and, while the dogs barked with excitement, seized and dragged them willy nilly to their fate.

At eleven o'clock a girl came from the farm saying, "Oor master bids you coom to lunch," and in a moment the benches were deserted, and the men were busy washing their hands in the tin basins by the garden wall, and others went round "backside o' the house, and cleaned up in the back kitchen."

We sat down, no one spoke nor stirred finger, till the master of the feast, with a kindly smile, said: "Now my lads, reach till," and we "reached till," and took good oaten cake or haver-bread, and cheese with milk or ale or coffee to wash it down, as men minded.

It was astonishing to note how little was eaten, and in twenty minutes we were all out of the house and hard at the clipping again. So the work went forward till dinner was served, and so the work went forward till tea came round; and the men took this at their clipping stools, for there was a deal yet to be done if the flock was to be finished off before night-time.

There was something for all to do; the little

girls, home from school, were soon busy carrying the fleeces which were folded and tied up inside-out in a very clever way by a single turn of the wrist, to the barn ; while the keenest amongst them took their share at catching and bringing the woolled ones to be shorn.

I was specially interested in the ear-marking and smitting or smiting of the body-marks, as it is called. It was imperative that this should be done with great care. Many a law-suit might be saved in future, and much ill-feeling prevented, if the ear-cutting was so clear and clean that it could never be mistaken. The lug-marker to-day had, it is true, an easier job than when the Fornsett clipping went forward, for there he had to crop the far ear and then cut a little square piece out of the under side of it, or, as the shepherds say, to under-key-bit the far side or left-hand ear. All that was necessary to-day at Brig-end was to crop the near or right-hand ear, and to upper-halve the far or left-hand ear.

No, this was not all. For a big cauldron of pitch was simmering hard by, and a smaller vessel of red ochre or vermilion and grease was close beside it.

The sheep who had had his ears cropped and upper halved was led, not without struggle,

to the cauldron with the wood fire smouldering under it, and was smitten with an iron brand dipped in the hot tar full upon the far side, and rose up with the letters I. C. upon his frightened flank in plain letters so indelible that not all the rains of Helvellyn or Armbboth would ever wash them away till the next shearing time came round.

But not yet was the shy mountain sheep sufficiently marked as belonging to Brig-end; another man with a stick in the ruddle-pot close by seized the creature, trembling and afraid as it seemed of coming doom, and with a "judgmental" eye planted its round mark on the near side loin. Then was the Herdwick fully marked and free, and any one who had Gate's *Shepherd's Guide* in hand and met anywhere upon our western fells a sheep described therein as "cropped near, upper-halved far, pop on near hook, I. C. on far side," would infallibly know that it belonged to Bristow of Brig-end, and would as infallibly return it to the owner.

The light began to go for all that long after-glow of Cumberland clipping-nights, and still the shears clicked away, till the girl came with a summons to supper, and the work of the day was over.

“A reet doon good supper it was, an’ aw,” said one of the shearers afterwards, and he spoke but the honest truth. It was the women-bodies’ turn to show what they could do to crown the clipping with success, and they certainly managed to make all the hungry shearers feel that a farm supper-table would be a very poor thing if it were not for the womenkind.

There was a bit o’ fiddling after supper, and a deal o’ good shepherds’ crack, and the following famous Herdwick shepherd’s song was sung by John Birkett to an old-fashioned country-side tune. It was a song all seemed to know, and had been sung time out of mind at all the clippings under Helvellyn. How they made the rafters ring with the chorus!

THE SHEEP-SHEARING SONG.

“Now our sheep-shearing’s over, surround the gay board,
 With our hearts full of pleasure and glee!
 And while we partake of this plentiful hoard,
 Who so blithe and so happy as we?
 From that staple, the wool, all our consequence springs,
 The woolsack is next to the throne,
 It a freedom secures both to peasants and kings
 Which in no other country is known.

Chorus—It guards us awake, it protects us asleep,
 Night and day then thank heaven that gave us the
 sheep. (Repeat.)

" When bleak piercing winter comes on with a frown,
 Frost and snow clogging hedge, ditch, and stile,
 Annoying alike both the squire and the clown,
 Wrapt in wool we look round us and smile.
 Could we sing of its praises from evening till morn,
 'Twould our gratitude only increase,
 From the dying old man to the infant new born,
 We are all kept alive by its fleece.

Chorus—The hour with the truth a fair pace it can keep,
 When in warmest expressions we speak of the
 sheep. (Repeat.)

" No words are sufficient, whate'er can be said,
 To speak out its uses aloud ;
 It never forsakes us—nay, after we're dead
 It furnishes even our shroud.
 Nay, more ! for the sheep while it ranges our fields,
 Our wants and our comfort supplies,
 Faithful still to the last, to the butcher it yields,
 For our nourishment daily it dies.

Chorus—Thus living or dead we its benefits reap,
 Then, ye sheep-shearers, sing your true friends
 the poor sheep." (Repeat.)

It is said that this song was written by Dibdin in the early part of the nineteenth century ; but the fourth line in the last verse points to its being long anterior to Dibdin's time. And the tune which he wrote to the words is certainly not the tune which is sung in our dales.

DAFFODIL DAY AT COCKERMOUTH.

APRIL 7TH, 1898.

BEING on a holiday bent, and hearing that there was to be a Wordsworth Commemoration in the Public Park at Cockermonth, I took train thither on Easter Tuesday, through as fair April weather as ever was vouchsafed to happy tourist. The larches were already beginning to veil the lower slopes of Skiddaw with delicate misty green, the sweet-gale, or bog-myrtle, at Braithwaite shone rosy red. In the woods through which we steamed, by the side of Bassenthwaite, the "palm" flowers of the willow showed golden against the purple birches; lambs whitened the meadows, and one almost expected to hear the cuckoo's "wandering voice."

As the train slid into the station at Cockermonth, we noticed a crowd had already gathered

about the Wordsworth Fountain above us, in the park, and the children with bunches of golden daffodils wound in and out of the dusky assemblage.

Local magnates were on the platform. They had come to meet Dr. Hornby, Provost of Eton, and other visitors, and escort them to where the school children, drawn up in procession, with a brass band glittering at its head, waited their arrival; for these gentlemen were to take part in the proceedings of the day.

By happy chance, I fell into talk with one of the teachers of the Board School, and learned of the meaning of this daffodil festival.

Two years ago, when the fountain, in memory of the birth and childhood of William Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy, was given to the public, one of the features of the occasion was the placing of daffodils by the assembled children in the great granite basin beneath the bronze figure of the kneeling child. This year a few friends had offered prizes to each class in the Cockermouth schools for the best recitation of any short poem of Wordsworth's the master or mistress should select. The Board School teachers had fallen in with a plan, approved by the governors of the school and the Harris Park Committee, to march

the children, with the successful competitors, bearing daffodils in their hands, to the sound of much music, up to the fountain in the Harris Park, that there they might receive their prizes, sing a song in honour of the poet, especially written for the occasion, and listen to such words of encouragement as should be addressed to them.

It seemed to me a very happy idea, for these children would not only thus have been encouraged to learn by heart some poem of their great Cumbrian bard, but would be certain to have their imagination stirred by the pleasing excitement of daffodil gathering and the enthusiasm of a simple public function in which they would be chief actors.

I noticed as I went down the street, which was lined with spectators waiting for the procession, that many were wearing the Wordsworth flower in their buttonholes, and I begged a flower for the occasion. Even those who were no poets felt they "could not but be gay, in such a jocund company." Then the band struck up, and the lads of the Industrial Home, splintering the sunshine into stars and arrows by the movement of their flashing instruments, led the way, and the procession of daffodil children,

with the speakers and the local magnates at their head, passed up the steep hill to sound of a merry march, over the railway bridge, and on to the Harris Park, then, wheeling to the left, came down to the fountain.

The children filed up, and placed their golden bunches with care at the base of the figure till the granite basin was entirely filled, and never fairer sight can have been seen than this fountain-cup of golden daffodils shining against the deep hyacinthine-purple of far-off Skiddaw. As one gazed upon that happy throng, and one's eye wandered away to the grey roof in the town below, beside the flashing river, where Wordsworth and his sister spent their childhood, one could not but be glad that the children of the poet's native town were doing them such simple and befitting honour.

It is given to few town's-folk to have as fair a recreation ground as the one in which we were gathered. From Pardshaw Crag, blue in the west, to Moothay Hill, lilac-grey in the east, the hills seemed to stand round about us, and to rejoice together in sunny cloudlessness. Down below us lay a smokeless town, dominated by the solemn quietude of the ancient castle walls, which had played no small

part in firing the imagination of the boy-poet. The Derwent flamed and flickered into sight from the woodlands at the castle-base, then slid behind the houses, on towards that happy terrace-garden where William and Dorothy together chased butterflies, and sought the sparrow's nest in days of old.

The Provost of Eton was called upon to deliver his address. It was given in his cheeriest manner, and was full of sound sense as to the worth of committing to memory, when young, fine passages from the great poets. Then the special song was called for by the Chairman, and the children's voices, a little quavering and fearful at first, sang sweetly, to Mendelssohn's music, "Oh! Hills and Vales of Pleasure," the song which a local poet had written for the occasion.

THE SONG OF THE FOUNTAIN.

"Oh Spirit of the Fountain!
 Be with us here to-day;
 The bard of lake and mountain,
 He loved these blossoms gay.
 And while the air is ringing
 With memories from of old,
 Our tender hands are bringing
 Bright daffodils of gold.

“ Below us runs the river,
That filled his youth with song ;
The hills shine blue as ever,
That bade his heart be strong.
The crumbling castle ledges
With wild flowers still are dressed,
And, where the privet hedge is,
The sparrow builds her nest.

“ But better far, wise poet,
Thy honour with us stays,
Thy soul of grace we know it,
Thy spirit still we praise ;
And here, while song to heaven
Deep thankfulness outpours,
These daffodils are given—
We claim great Wordsworth ours.”

The children were then called up by name, and received the prizes they had won. After a speech, in which was shown the joy and the help in after-life that noble stores of music and thought might prove to well-trained memories, in which was urged the need of calling forth, in our day of hard prose and hard work, sentiment and imagination by such celebrations as these, a gentleman, who was evidently an enthusiastic student of the poet, Mr. Gem of Torpenhow, addressed the meeting.

I could not help wishing that every town blessed with the memory of a great man would

follow suit. The hope of our country lies, surely, in that spirit of reverence for the good and the great who have made us what we are, which alone can keep us humble, and spur us to rivalry. It is to children's hearts we must appeal with any desire to foster healthy hero-worship. And as I listened to one of the speakers at the Wordsworth Fountain reciting that fine sonnet,

“The world is too much with us, late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers,
Little we have in nature that is ours,”

my mind wandered away to the Klondike gold fields, and back to the great heap of blossoming gold there in the fountain basin. I could not but hope that the spirit which Wordsworth taught us, of love for a simpler life, should be reborn into the heart of this century, and I felt assured that Daffodil Day in the Cockermouth Park would, in a humble way, help to bring in that happier time.

1902





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