MONTHS AT THE LAKES

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MCMVI.

Months at the Lakes

By the Rev.

H. D. Rawnsley

Honorary Canon of Carlisle

With Nine Illustrations

Glasgow

James MacLehose and Sons

Publishers to the University

1906

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TO

THE BEST OF BROTHERS

WILLINGHAM FRANKLIN RAWNSLEY

AND TO HIS WIFE

ALICE

TRUE LOVERS OF THE ENGLISH LAKES

AND KEEN OBSERVERS OF

NATURE

PREFATORY NOTE

It has been my custom for the past twenty years to keep a monthly record of the changes in the face and mood of Nature at the English Lakes. These sketches of the 'Months at the Lakes' though written in the past two years, are a series of compound pictures or impressions drawn from such notes.

I have added thereto under each month some account of the more noticeable goings-on among the dale folk, and matters of such local interest for lovers of country life as seemed specially to belong to the seasons.

H. D. R.

Crosthwaite Vicarage,
April, 1906.

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THE Publishers have to thank Mr. Alfred Pettitt, Keswick, for permission to reproduce the first and ninth illustrations; Mr. G. P. Abraham, Keswick, for the second and fifth illustrations; Messrs. Walmsley Brothers, Ambleside, for the third, fourth, and sixth illustrations; Mr. Herbert Bell, Ambleside, for the seventh illustration; and Miss Ramsden, for the eighth illustration.

JANUARY AT THE LAKES

THE Roman did well in putting the first month of the year under the special guardianship of the god of the two faces—Janus. For truly in our Lake Country, as these old Roman legionaries at Ambleside or Keswick must needs have found, the month of January has two distinct moods. It is a month of wind and calm, of winter cold and almost summer mildness. A month that sets the thrushes singing and sometimes sets the hedge sparrow building, and then slays the birds with fierce frost; a month that often comes in with a look of spring and goes out with a grimmer look of winter than has been before seen upon our fells. I have known the willow branches heavy with the silver bosses of the palm buds, coltsfoot peeping, catkin yellow, honeysuckle green, celandines and snowdrops in flower in the orchard; I have seen primroses and aconite yellow in the garden, and then there has come a snow-fall and a biting frost, all the hope of spring has been blasted and a cheerless February has been ushered in with lamentation for frost-bit leaf and shrivelled flower.

As a rule in our Lakeland the snow falls towards the end of the month, and the lengthening day and strengthening sunshine upon the silver heights makes rare atonement for the hint that winter will not yet be unthroned, and may yet rule lake and vale with his rod of steel.

But the glory of January is, after all, the wonder of its pure white light of dawn which passes slowly into saffron, and then, whilst fleecy clouds high up like flocks of giant birds change from white to rose-pink and fly towards the west, fade slowly from saffron to lemon yellow, from yellow to the common light of day.

Owing to the peculiar temperature it will be generally noticed that in January the cloud-pack settles low upon the hills and does not lift to break the clearness of the upper air. To-day, as I watched the daystar rise, the feature of the landscape was the heavy grey hoar-frost and dew that coloured the whole valley, meadow, and grove with monotone of grey, the feature of the sunscape was the exquisite clarity of smokeless air as white as silver above Helvellyn to the zenith. Deep purple and brown run together was the colour of the vast blanket of cloud that lay unmoved above the mountain ranges, and over this the sun came gloriously, filling the air with light and kindling the snowy cones on Skiddaw till they shone like burnished ivory.

Very slowly as it seemed did the mists rise from field or waterflood to veil the lower lawns and

western hills, and all this while the steady cloud-pack above the eastern range was motionless. But suddenly, as if the giant beneath had turned in slumber and would rouse himself, the mighty blanket tossed and heaved and sent itself a thousand ways, and there Helvellyn lay, a great white wall from which the dazzling sun already sent the little angel choirs of golden cloud to follow in the wake of the riven cloud-pack and mount to Heaven.

We too on earth have music. Hark to that thrush in yonder rosy-frosted holly. He feels already that the spring is near. Truly not with the sure "Come quick! come quick! my pretty dear!" with which he calls his loved one in March and April to his side, does he sing. There is a hesitancy about his note, "Chuwee! chuwee!" very different from the jubilant "Chu-Chuwey" of his April call, and there is in his song the sense of loneliness; none answer blithely as he sings. Yet January silence ministers to his effort and only the chirring of a starling on the house-roof, the caw of the passing rook or the cry of the gull by the river, comes in between our hearing and his song.

There are, it is true, other birds that sing, but we must go forth from our garden ground to seek them. Down in the lane among the wind-blown leafage of the oak a tiny creature runs like a mouse and climbs the wall, then suddenly opens wing, and, from a safe hiding-place in the

thorn hedge near, fills the air with tenderest melody; that is the wren, and we are well repaid for any quest of him for this reason, that now the mosses on the walls are radiantly green and gold, gold with the fruit that stands up like a miniature field of corn above its emerald ground.

Yet that January has two moods even the mosses testify. Sometimes there comes a January rime, and lo! when it passes away the beauty of the moss has vanished. Not till next year will the emerald brighten and the ten thousand elves of the moss shake their golden spears with gladness. Yet let the Frost King keep away and then the wanderer at the English Lakes, whether by roadside well or in the sunlit woods, shall have such beauty for his eyes' delight, as makes him feel that even without the snowdrop spring is here.

What of the other singer? He too must be sought. Not in the lane but by the rushing beck. He is the singer *par excellence* of the month of January. You shall find him perched upon a stone heedless of cold water spray, curtseying as he stands, as if he saw the water elf and did obeisance. It is really the dream of his life he sees—he is already a lover. Then suddenly the curtseying little body shoots into the air and becomes to all intents and purposes a silver streak of light, the white star of the stream, then stays in its course and curtseys low and sings. Then there is a splash, he has disappeared from sight, a suicide for love and lover's disappointment.

Nay, only a hungry little vagabond in quest of something that shall lend his heart warmth and his singing fire. Back on his mossy platform shines again the white star of the beck, the 'Bessy Dooker' as they call him hereabout, and hark how the live air throbs and thrills to the sound of his sweet piping. I do not wonder that the poet wrote of him:

"Starry little winger on from stone to stone,
Merry little singer ere the winter's gone,
Thro' the bass and trebles of the streamlet clear
Singing from the pebbles that the spring is near;
Dainty little dipper, piping all day long
To the dancing waters January's song."

It is a grey month this month of January. The copses are grey, the meadows are grey, the hedgerows are grey, the waters are grey and the skies and the hills are grey, and if snow is not on the hills it is a dark month too. One hardly realises how much we have to thank the snow upon 'the tops' for adding brightness to the daylight till suddenly a warm wind brings us a warm rain and the fells are seen in their sombrest *Januarian* dress. Sombrest, for the bracken has had its colour washed out of it and the bents and grasses have been blanched to death paleness, while except for the sunny southern fields there would seem to be no thought of returning green. But it is a month of marvellous slate blues and grey lilac at eventide. Many a time when the sun has sunk beyond the western hills, when only one white star has swum

to sight, there comes upon the hills a colour such as one sees at no other time in the year. They rise to Heaven not as if they were mountain masses so much as if they were thick veils of drapery in mountain shape falling straight from some invisible hand to earth, and stand in clear silhouette against the sky, no longer range beyond range but as if they were all merged into one grey blue lilac wall of delicate lawn.

If down in breezy Lincolnshire during this month one may hear the buzz and humming of the steam threshing machine, may see by the diminishing stack, as Tennyson Turner wrote,

"The endless ladder and the booming wheel,"

here in the Lake Country a sound more rare with its old world associations falls upon the ear. The pat pat, thud thud of the old-fashioned flail echoes from barn to barn. It is a month when one other sound strikes one because of the rainfall, the sound of the becks that hurry to the vale. And few sounds are sweeter when on some moonlit night one passes homeward 'neath the stars. If one wished for solitary walks this is the month for them. Our main roads are, except on market days, deserted. One may walk twenty miles and not meet mankind or wheel-kind. Think of it, oh ye 'scorchers'! What 'record' times could ye not attempt. Without dust and without police-traps, what motor distances could ye not in comfort cover! Happy are we that ye know it not!

But it is a merry month—a month of pleasant social life. The Christmas card parties at the farm are over, but in the villages 'socials,' as they are called, and concerts, and lectures are in fashion, while at such centres of dramatic life as Grasmere, the village play gives work enough and to spare for any leisure moments, and crowns a whole year's expectancy of winter pleasure.

THE GRASMERE DIALECT PLAY.

"All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players,"

but the Grasmere people are blessed with two stages. Not only are they actors in the common drama of everyday life, but each year as January comes round they are determined to shew on the boards and before the footlights of the village hall how for a season they can live in a world of imagination, and how on their village stage they can touch the hearts and open the eyes of the beholders to perceive something of the pathos and humour and tragedy of life that fell-side people in their quiet farms and dale cottages experience.

People had forgotten what enthusiasm for play-acting possessed the peasantry of Westmoreland in the 17th century, when Thomas 'Hoggart' or Hogarth, the uncle of the painter, wrote for them his satirical plays and 'jigs' as he called his rustic songs; when all the neighbourhood gathered to see the acting on the scaffold at the Moss Gap in

Troutbeck, and went in procession, with the playwright riding on the back of a famous Troutbeck bull, to witness his play, 'The Destruction of Troy,' from the grassy slopes of the Bowness open-air theatre. It was therefore a rediscovery made some years ago by the daughter of a former rector of Grasmere, that there was hid under the somewhat silent and moveless exterior of the Norsemen and Norsewomen of the valley, real dramatic capability.

That the children had it in them was seen by their keenness to play the little Christmas play in the Band of Hope from 1878 onwards; it might have been guessed at by the way in which the 'pasch eggers' who came round at Eastertide not only went through their 'pace-egg scene' but joined thereto the old Christmas mummers'-play of St. George and the Dragon.

This love of acting must have been an inheritance from the time of the Crusades, and from the days when under the patronage of good St. Oswald the Church mystery play would from time to time doubtless be enacted in the Church-yard beside the river Rotha. But all that remained to the village of the Easter or Christmas or Saint's Day play had long ago been reduced to the 'Pace-eggers' jingle,' and the Rushbearing procession. Yet the passion for the play remained, and so when in 1893 it was determined to call the villagers together to witness a play in dialect presented by Grasmere village folk for the delectation of their

neighbours, the call was heartily responded to. The rector's daughter was play-wright on this occasion and 'The Dalesman' was the result.

Those who were responsible for the training of the caste were fortunate in having intimate knowledge of each cottage and farm in the vale. They knew who were likely to suit the parts and their selections were justified by results. Fortunate were the players in the friendship and trust they reposed in the teachers. There was no question as to how a part was to be taken if Miss F. thought it should go thus or Miss S. suggested this or that movement or tone or change of voice, the thing was settled there was no need of further appeal. But the best of the business was that none of the players thought they could act at all. "Why, why," they said, "if its nobbut a bit of downreet ald-fashined crack same as owdder me or Betty wad hev over the wesh-tub, or oor Jacky wad hev wid his fadder int coo byre or hay field, why of course we can deu it, but please Miss we mud be allowed to be oorsels." It was here wherein the real excellence of the result was assured. When the curtain went up on the first night the folk that were met to see the play "saw nowt, nobbut oor Jack on about t'farm business saame as they hed seen them aw t'days before. Loavins me," they said, "its not actin' at aw; its just oor Betty and oor Jack to real life."

I do not mean to say that there was no need to teach the players the best way of coming on or

going off the stage, or to coach them well as to their stepping forward to the footlights, and to face their audience, but the naturalness of the whole caste was the thing that struck everybody; And then the language—It was here where the play was so interesting to the far-farers and the 'quality' that came to see, as well as so soul-satisfying to the neighbours. For we at the Lakes are a bi-lingual people and it is only an off-chance or in times of excitement that our ears can hear in its full richness and raciness the real Westmoreland dialect. The dalesman is very shy of talking the vernacular before strangers. We have to blame H.M. Inspector and the schoolmaster as well as the visitors for this. I have heard the most ridiculous stories of mistakes made by the foreigner because of his ignorance of the dialect. Thus a grey-haired savant who was by way of being a philologist once gravely assured me that he had been much interested in hearing how the lads as they came from school always addressed one another in the feminine gender and called to one another as 'sister.' I forget the learned theory he had to account for this, but I remember his look of surprise and disappointment when I said, "Yes, yes, but what they were really saying was not sister, but 'seest'a,' 'dost thou see.'" On another occasion I have heard it told how a doctor at a fell-farm asked a child to put out its tongue, and the child stared vacantly and kept its mouth closed. The doctor appealed to the mother to help, and

she replied shortly, " Barn likely disn't ken what your efther. Oppen gob barn and hing out tha lolly ! " and in a moment the doctor saw as much tongue as he pleased.

But at the Grasmere play one can sit for a couple of hours and hear in its unashamed quaintness and racy humour the real folk-speech of the people. Little enough did the initiators of the movement realise what a real debt they were laying posterity under by their insistence that the plays, by whoever written, should be in the home dialect. Happy too were the Grasmere village caste in having resident amongst their playwrights a compiler who knew the ways of the North and was intimately acquainted with the individuality of the various actors, but happier still, in the way in which the actors themselves so infected the dale with their own enthusiasm that every old ' clothes kist ' or ' press ' was open to them for dresses of the olden time, and every stick or ' property ' needed for the presentation of the play in matters of household furniture, chairs, tables, china, agricultural implements, dogs, sheep and the like were entirely at the disposal of the players.

The prime mover in this dramatic revival—Miss Charlotte Fletcher—left Grasmere in 1893, and for the next few years, the village had need to be content with the children's Christmas play, but in 1900, at the urgent wish of the villagers and actors, ' The Dalesman,' which she had written for them and which had been performed the year

she left the valley, was again presented, and since that date a dialect play has been enacted each year. A local company came to the aid of the actors and built a fine hall with all the necessary stage appliances, and each January has seen the villagers and the people from miles round gathered together for three days of dramatic pleasure. In 1901 'A Daughter of the Dales' was given; in 1902 'The Testing of John Trueman'; in 1903 'From Midsummer to Martinmas'; in 1904 'Hester's Troth'; last year Miss Simpson arranged a play called 'The Luck o' Langthwaite,' and this year the title of her play is 'Pace-egging Time.'

But those who come together to enjoy the Grasmere dialect play have little idea of what work has gone to the production of it. Every night for six weeks past the players have either in part or together rehearsed the acts. Every night lanterns may be seen swinging across the valley to the Wray beneath Silver How, and those who have been privileged to be of the house-party can tell how the house has rung with peals of laughter at the racy criticism of the actors by themselves on one another, or how in the solemn hush the voice of the mentor or stage manager has been heard declaiming this sentence or exhorting to this or that action of arm or body with irresistible persuasiveness. "Eh my word, Miss Nelly gave us a proper putting through to-neet hooivver," said one of the players when he 'landed' home one night last week. "She's most terble particler aboot

that six reel. She knas ivvery step, and we mud dance it reet or not dance it at aw."

"Ay, ay, didsta see how she made Saint George and Turk set to. She will hev the fight done to a sword stroke and then she seems to ken every word of the Pace-egging song. She will not have a word wrang from first to last. Not but what she is varra reasonable when we come to talk over dialect ways. When we telt her that fowks said *don* and not *deck* hereaboot for putting on fine cleas, she gev in varra sensible like, though she seems to kna dialect amoast from top to boddom a gay lock mair than a deal of the younger fowk knas."

Now all this patient rehearsal and careful criticism to which the village actor testified must bear fruit. The play goes smoothly from beginning to end, and one is struck throughout by the absolute truth to Nature, mingled with a native dignity and refinement in the acting which is manifest.

The interest of these village plays lies not only in the excellent acting of the pieces but in the dialect. The writers or compilers have always felt that they might be a medium for the preserving and keeping alive of the quaint old proverbial sayings and the customs and folklore of the dales. Thus in 'A Daughter of the Dales,' the rushbearing and the rushbearing song were introduced. In 'The Luck of Langthwaite' the bridewain song with its memories of old-world wedding customs in the dales was sung, and as

the title of the play for this year, which will be given on January 9, 10, 11, tells us, the old Eastertide mystery play of Pasch-Egging will have a place of honour, and those who come together will not only hear echoes of Trafalgar and the naval stir of a century ago as the 'jolly boys' sing,

"The first that comes in is Lord Nelson you see,
With a bunch of blue ribands tied down to his knee;
The stars on his breast like diamonds do shine,
And we hope you'll remember its Pace-egging time,"

but they will also be recalled to an earlier time, the time of the Crusades, when as the result of a wonderful mixing up of Christmas mumming and Easter pasch-egging, Saint George comes on the scene fresh from the slaughter of the fiery dragon to do battle with the doughty Saracen—

"In steps I bold Turk,
Black Morocco King,
My sword and buckler by my side,
And thro' the woods I ring."

The play itself is woven of simplest materials. The scene in the first act is laid 'In t'house at Fell End,' and the good wife is scolding her step-daughter Ellen Pattinson for being so slow at the wash tub. There is talk of the young farmer Adam Walker, who has just come over from Kirkby to claim his new farm at Hartsop. Mrs. Pattinson is full of schemes for making a match between Adam and her daughter Jane, and while she is still rating her step-daughter Ellen, in walks

Adam. He has come to ask Pattinson to help him with a horse and plow, for the land has been neglected, and he must needs get neighbours together to have a 'boon plewin.'

The fun of this first act is the rehearsal of the Pace-eggers' play, in which the good-natured Ellen acts as prompter and helper, unconscious, but observed by Adam Walker, who has been watching her kind ways with the lads all the time and has lost his heart in the process. In Act II. Scene 1, we are taken to the cottage of Isaac Woodend a hind upon the Pattinson farm. The worthy couple had lost a lass just the same age as Ellen and have taken tenderly to her in consequence. It is April 1st, and as is the fashion in the dales, it is the duty of Isaac to make 'April-Noddies' of all and sundry who come to his door. Geordie Bell and James the Postman are fair game, and a very pretty bit of fooling goes forward, in which a tub supposed to contain a 'wazzel' or a 'fourmart' is the chief engine in the making of April-Noddies.

The second scene in this act introduces us to the tea and supper and dance at the end of the 'boon-plewing' down at Hartsop Hall, to which Ellen, the Cinderella of the 'hoose at Fell End,' goes donned up in the white muslin frock and buckled shoon of the Woodends' daughter Maggie who died last year. A good deal of racy talk goes on amongst the women folk as they 'mash' the tea and set on the eatables. "T'men will be fair

clemmed," for the wind has been cold and they have had to plow up bank and against the wind, so that they are to have a downright good tea, " goose, two hams, bun-loaves, ginger-loaves, apple pasty, currant pasty, Hawkshead cakes, Kendal whigs and aw maks of preserves, and rum-butter just for luck." But the interest of the scene centres in a six-reel dance, which is interrupted by the arrival home of the Langthwaite village choir, who have just returned with third prize from the Kendal Musical Competition. They are so full of their honours that they do not need much pressing to sing the Pace-egging song which was written for the play and which goes brightly to an old 17th century rant called 'The useful plow.' Fortunately for Adam Walker, Ellen loses a silver buckle from her shoe in the last dance, and this gives him a chance of a visit on the following day to the Fell End farm.

In Act III. we find Love Triumphant. Adam Walker, as shy as the proverbial Northerner and probably feeling that, as the saying goes, " at a funeral you partly know where you are but at a weddin' you never know the end of the business," has nevertheless made up his mind to take his old mother's advice. Mrs. Walker, as she told Margaret Woodend at the Hartsop 'boon-plewin,' was " allus saying to Adam, 'don't get hod o yan o them dressed up things, but gang thy ways up among t'fells and lait a lass ats fit to mak a wife on.' " Here at Fell End House is the girl of his

choice, and after a pretty little bit of by-play in which he manages to have Mrs. Pattinson kept indoors, he disappears into the back yard, where Ellen is mixing the chicken food, and is soon seen with happiness in his face and his arm round the waist of the girl who has accepted him as her lover.

The Pace-Eggers come to claim the eggs that Ellen has coloured and ornamented for them, and while Mrs. Pattinson scolds and dubs it 'sic a waste of good eggs,' old Pattinson calls for a verse of the Pace-egging song, and Adam, the happy lover, gives them an invitation: "I tell ye, lads, if ye'll come as far as Harsop anudder year, we'll see—me and Ellen—at ye get a grand welcome at Pace-eggin Time."

FEBRUARY AT THE LAKES.

FEBRUARY is here, and every snowdrop in the vale has come to meet her. They know, these fair maidens of February, secrets which they seem to keep to themselves. It may be that they would have told their secret long ago to the daffodils, but ere the first daffy has begun to crook his little shrouded spear and turn its grey green into flashing gold, the last snowdrop has forsaken us and fled. The secret that the snowdrop race takes down with it to the grave each year is that, though the buds on the lime trees have as yet hardly begun to swell, there deep below in the ground is marvellous activity. By every rootlet's tiniest mouth, in the great laboratory of growth in which the Spring is chief chemist, is there being sucked out of dark earth such sap as shall flow to leaf and beauty, the result is much warmth and energy and all about the lime tree bole is some raising of temperature, such as snowdrop rootlets love. Glad for that warmth the little ladies of the white and green tinctured hood will push bravely into blossom, and the hearts of all who see the snowdrop multitude are sharers in the gladness, catch

something of new warmth, feel once again the vital feelings of delight to which the return of flower-time always ministers.

The joy of February is not only that it brings us snowdrops round the warm boles of the limes or apple trees and on the sheltered sides of the graves where our loved ones lie, but in middle February the buds of the wych elm are suddenly seen to have swollen into daintiest purple jewelry, and seen in a side light against the deep blue of distant hills, nothing can be fairer than the veil of coral pink mist that seems to be breathed from the wych elms in the vale.

It is true that as yet the lemon tint of Spring has not come upon the older larches, but the young trees on the outskirts of the woods already are changing colour, and there is some indefinable grace given by February to the larch by which in each plantation on the fell side the trees begin to separate themselves into ploomy individuality and to assert that though they are brothers they have each a personal interest in the coming of Spring.

The lambs are not yet in the dales, for our hardy northern herdwick sheep are late mothers. They know that till the snow has left the tops there is no surety for the springing of the grass upon the upland pastures to which they and their yearlings will go, but the children as they come to school, happy with the lambs' tails from the hazel boughs, here and there at the farmsteads will hear this month the bleating of the young of

the southern sheep who have been imported, that so 'early lamb' may find its price in the market.

But if new life is wanting in the pasture and the meadows are not freckled with sheep, we see the burley farmers freckling their fields with the little heaps of milk-white lime, and round about the plowman on the rich brown fallows in mid vale the gulls are mottling the ground.

The greater abundance of the black-headed laugher of the gull tribe on the coast is borne witness to by the increase of these white-winged February visitants, and few are the days when the wanderer in our valleys at this time of the year will not be rejoiced by sight of the tossing of the gull wing into foam and sun against the dark blue hills. Now, too, is love seen to be regent of the air. Not only are the rooks mating as they go afield, but the raven croaks his love and the buzzard mews it high above our head.

There are few more interesting sights than raven courtship. The lovers circle about and about the darling of their heart, and though the tones of endearment are as much like the bark of a dog as anything, they are music to the soul of the bird that could "be happy with either were t'other dear charmer away." Now and again the male suitors will fall to it beak and claw and strive to prove their powers before her eyes. Then they will return and circle round and round again, till at last by some great effort of choice the lady gives

her assent to her lover. Often as not the lovers of many a season pair, and away the happy couple sail to the crag fastness they have chosen or known of yore, and leave the rejected wooer to his loneliness in middle heaven.

But there is love beneath the earth as well as in the heaven above. Now the moles or, as we call them in Cumberland, the 'moudiwarps' bestir themselves, and as is evidenced by their earth castles build themselves homes and lairs for the expected young. Master Squirrel awakes and visits his 'dray' to fall asleep again if sunshine fail the restless sprite among the fallen leaves that the February winds have driven into the hedgerow bottoms. There is one leaf the wind still spares; it is the leaf of the beech and hornbeam hedge, and at a time when the colour of the fern is fading from the fell sides we in the Lake Country who care for colour owe large debts to the hands that here and there have fenced their garden grounds or their orchards, or fringed their roadsides with the glorious February sheen of beech.

I said just now that the fern had faded from the fells. How it comes about I know not, but in February this fading of the bracken, and some change in the bleached grasses, some hint of life returning to our lower valley slopes produces the curious effect of coral pink upon our mountain sides which we see at no other time of the year. Very purple, too, are the shales of volcanic ash throughout the month, for February with us at the

Lakes is, as it is described, 'February Fill-dyke,' and alternate rain and sun is our portion.

It is here where February is so rare and beautiful. There is no month wherein such variations, not only of days but of portions of days, are so interesting. One can never tell on a February morning, dull and grey and misty, whether at noon bright sun and cloudless blue will not be our fortune and delight. In February the whole morning and mid-noon will at times be clouded with a doubt, but at three o'clock all clouds will pass away, and there will be known such serenity of grey-blue heaven and such glorious passing of the sun to golden rest that one might well believe we were back in September once again, or but for leafless wood and hedgerow, think summer time had come.

It is not only that the hours in their passing go through magic transformation, but days and weeks are Protæan in their change. Thus one day we wake to the sound of the thrush, and he sings us back to our fireside and our rest; we walk through twilit fields that echo to his voice, and feel that when the stars are bright among the tree tops and the owl is hooting, the balm of spring is in the air. Then the wind changes, and we waken to a dumb dawn, to find hills whence winter had all but vanished, milk-white right down to the intaks, with all the lower slopes made ruddy and full of colour by contrast with the winter snow, and all the woods before so tenderly purple and grey, black

as night. The shepherds are not sorry, and the farmers are well content with the change. A fair February means promise that will be unfulfilled. They have never forgotten how the Britons of old time handed down a saying to the Welshmen of to-day,

> "That they would rather see their dam on her bier
> Than a fair Februeer."

They know how the Scotch across the Border still say,

> "A' the months o' the year
> Curse a fair Februeer";

and they by long and bitter experience have learned that if February is mild, March too often pays back her over-confidence with nipping frost and cold.

But there are other reasons for welcoming white winter on our fells. It is with lengthening light and nearer sunshine a wonder to behold the added beauty that the snowtime brings. Added to the greater brilliance of sunlight on the dazzling heights there is the clear consciousness that the white-robed loveliness will be here but a short time; we gaze upon it as we gaze upon a friend who has turned to say farewell. Come to-day, it may be gone to-morrow, and our eyes are ever caught upward to the hills with a sense that the vision is but momently vouchsafed to us who know to-morrow morning we shall hear the thrushes singing once again, and find the fells are grey green to the sky.

These gardens of ours are not yet golden with the crocus flame, but the bees are humming in the sun about the sweet-scented daphne and the scentless Christmas roses, and while the garden ground is being carefully turned to darker brownness by the spade, the vivid colour of the winter greens shine like emerald. The old Sol Monat or Sun Month, as February used to be called, had an earlier name, 'Sprout-kale,' and it is not till we visit our kitchen gardens in this month that we see the sweet reasonableness of the name.

The gardener has his companion in these February days. The robin, the special bird of St. Kentigern, the patron saint of the Crosthwaite valley, is never so happy as when the spadesman is at work, and hardly has the robin ceased to sing, than a clear, thin voice of great strength and tone is heard ringing from the garden hedge—that is the wren's. Now is the time to watch his antics as he runs mouse-like among the leaves and scales the wall, hunting for the flies that settle in the crevices. Warm-blooded, energetic little fellow, more mouse than bird, he loves February, for February brings the moss, and the moss flower brings the flies, and February winds blow the leaves into the hedge bottoms, and the leaves provide fine larder for his unceasing appetite. We could ill spare the robin and the wren in the Lake Country in this month, and yet two other birds there are that help to keep us in cheer. You heard that warning, quavering, sibilant sound in the

larches above your head. It is the voice of a school of long-tailed titmice. Miracle of beauty made in tiniest mould, the titmouse fears no cold, bides with us through the bitterest weather, and gives a note of happy life to all our silent woods.

There at the window, hanging head downwards on the swinging cocoa-nut shell, is another of our bird companions that make us glad in February, the blue tit with his pretty gymnast ways. Presently the sharp saw-grating voice of the larger tit is heard in the bush hard by, and the blue tit knows that for him cocoa-nut time is ended. That bush is a lilac bush already breaking into leaf, and much does the tit family affect it, for they know by the budding, Spring is somewhere near.

Now in the morning, though the thrushes sing not for the cold, one voice is heard upon the chimney top. It is the starling's. Talkative little ventriloquist, February's changefulness affects him not at all. In storm or in sunshine, heat or cold, he has his lesson to rehearse, and very bravely will he go through all the notes he has learned in the quiet winter days afield or on the moor, that when the nesting time has come he may arouse the darling of his heart, and teach his younglings clear articulation, the art of mimicry and the parts of speech.

WHITE CANDLEMAS.

Better not prophesy till you know. Wednesday might have been the beginning of Spring, but about midnight the stars were overcast, and when we woke on Thursday morning, there was a good six inches of snow upon the ground. There was not a breath of air — the snow fell not in flakes, but like fine silver-dust from Heaven. It was a kind of magnified Scotch mist, turned into ice crystals as it descended, and the result was more lovely than can well be described.

Every leaf of every tree carried its burden, every bunch of holly berries kept its white gift from cloud-land, and all the trees of the wood, because they had not clapped their hands, but had in absolute silence and wonder waited for the snowy boon, stood up in glory of great whiteness from end to end of the vale. The birches seemed to have some strange new fruit clusters of milk-white bloom upon them, the lime trees were like fountains of snow, and the Lombardy poplars like towers of marble.

I went forth into the garden, and found how various was the way in which the shrubs and trees bore themselves under the weight of their white burden. The leafless bush that seemed to catch and hold the most was the lilac, and her long stems were curved and bent to the earth. The evergreen that seemed most to catch and keep

WHITE CANDLEMAS AT CROSTHWAITE.

the snowfall was the Portugal laurel and the rhododendron. These shrubs had lost all their identity, and had become just mounds of snow. As for the holly it was noticeable that it had by its spines broken up the snow-clusters, and so was not overloaded, and the larch was almost bare of crystal covering. But the yew tree and the cedar were lost beneath the heavy superincumbent mass. Going forth afield, it was evident that for catching and keeping a snowfall there is nothing like a quickset hedge of thorn. The thorn hedgerows seemed to be waves of solid foam; on the other hand, the russet leaves of the beech and of the hornbeam seemed to give the snow no hand-grasp, and the red gleam of these hedgerow patches of colour was marvellous to see. Of the hedgerow trees, it seemed as if the hazel was most able to vie with the lilac bush of the garden in giving foothold to the heaven-sent ice crystals. Not a single catkin but had its own particular snowball; every twig-fork its heap. One thing that struck one much was the evident power of the spruce fir to allow the snow masses as they accumulate to slide off and so do no breakage. I had never realised the nice adaptation of this tree to its Alpine winter life before. The elm trees stood in great beauty of silver powder, but I could not find in their branches any large snow clusters as I had seen them in the birch or on the lime, but great wonder was added to the elm by the fact that its bark seemed to be able to catch and hold the

powdered particles, and so each tree from ground to topmost branch was clad in fairy whiteness. Now and again, with a heavy, sad-hearted caw, a black wing would dash out of the snowy tabernacle above our head, and then the ice particles would come rustling about our ears with a kind of silver whispering that almost seemed a song. Except for this and the occasional chuckle of a starling, the whole valley was hushed and silent. The sheep crowded round their foddering trough, but made no complaint; the horses pushed their noses through the snow and cropped the grass contentedly; there was no sign of any fear amongst them, for this new sudden transformation scene, but the birds were evidently alarmed. They hid in the ice caves of their hedgerow or bush shelters, and refused to come to be fed.

Meanwhile the air went thunder black, and more snow came rustling through the air, and when the darkness passed the whole horizon seemed a livid sickly-yellow hue, and Skiddaw caught the lurid gleam and looked angry and sad, while far below us, black as a cobra's hood when the beast is about to spring, Derwentwater appeared to have caught a look of venom from the sky and to fill the landscape with hate.

As I passed homeward from Latrigg through the waning light, the fairness of the early afternoon had faded, and the trees stood up like spectres, bones of the dead and the cold ghosts of the frost land and the ice, to wait for the sorrow of a winter

night. About midnight a soft wind blew for a short time, and the air as I listened was full of sighing and soft sadness, and when I rose to find the red-flush of the dawn glorious upon Grisedale and the first purple-blue shadow upon Skiddaw's robe of royal ivory washed with gold, I found the trees stood up, each bough and leaf-twig black as ebony against the white circle of the hills, and, only in the lime trees, what seemed to be a flock of doves resting in the gladness of the morning sun.

Those doves flew silently away as the sun arose. They were but birds of snow. But a frost has set in, and though the snow birds have left the limes, it is impossible to say when the laurels will again be seen, or the yew trees lose their Candlemas dress. What a thing it is that we should have all this world of winter beauty at our doors and so few in the great black cities far away should be able to see the splendour of our hills!

MARCH AT THE LAKES.

'MARCH Many-weathers'—that was one of the old names for this month, and it is true to its title. Nay, it is because of this very changeableness of the month which comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb that gives it so much interest in our Lake Country. The meres and tarns to-day lie like sapphires among the hills, to-morrow they will be as white as a dead man's face. The fells to-day are purple or amethyst, to-morrow they will look wan and colourless as a chalk wold whence the herbage was faded. To-morrow we shall find all the 'tops' white as midwinter, to-day they are sun-bright and almost summer-hearted.

But the glory of March is not that it is many-hued and many-mooded on earth, but that its heavens are one with its earth in Protæan change and swiftness of expression. It is the moving of the heavens through all the gamut of appeal to the many changing temper of man which seems to constitute its chiefest charm. It is not that the changes from clear sky to storm are frequent, that suddenly a veil of sleet will be flung upon the hills to their entire hiding, and that as swiftly the whole

world will be revealed in burnished splendour, but the clouds themselves in March seem to take on a new beauty of sun-bright whiteness and dazzle in deeps of blue, and after forming themselves into flying squadrons or sailing galleons all through the day, will suddenly towards sunset drop for rest upon the hills, and leave a boundless horizon of untroubled saffron and gold that fades into green at the zenith with such a sense of rest and peace as only after trouble heals the soul.

At no time better than at evenfall does the Lake Country in March put on such mystic change. The clear, full light of sunset flooding hill and vale suddenly seem to leave the land. The hills that just now glowed and gleamed become pale and blanched and cold, as if there never could come to these fells the cheerfulness of spring. Then in about twenty minutes or half-an-hour's time all the old glory returns, and mountain breasts burn as with fire. Beneath the witchery of the after-glow it seems almost as if a sunrise from the west had begun to shed its wonder on the hills and the impatient stars must hide for another day. The birds that had ceased from their first passionate requiem break out to music once again, and ere the witchery of the new and unexpected dawn has faded, the moon in all its splendour is casting long shadows upon the grass.

As in the day time so at night, the changes of cloudland are swift and marvellous in March. The sun sinks, the saffron fades, the planets swim into

sight alone and beautiful, the white stars shine among the yet unbudded branches of the garden limes, and belted Orion looks out from near the zenith. There is not a speck in the sky as the moon comes up behind Helvellyn and the thrushes sing their last song. But ere an hour has passed, great silver masses of shining cloud come over the hills, the stars sail in and out the moving pack of aery whiteness, and you may almost hear the sound of their going as floe shocks with floe in that deep sea of blue.

Nor is the changefulness of March only in mid-heaven, nor is it only in mid-heaven that snowy mountains rise and fall above the horizon of the hills. For in March we have often, after days of calm, tempests that leave the high fells wrapped in snow. There is not a touch of winter in the vales, the sun is bright and warm, and one passes along beneath the range of near hills with absolute oblivion of winter time; suddenly, when one has crossed a vale and can see the full height of the fell, lo! the whole ridge is white, and one realises what it was that fed the torrent and filled the vale with sound. I have noted this often as one journeyed along under Helvellyn when the celandine was out and the yellow hammer was in song, and have found on crossing the vale that all the while, if one had but known it, the Snow King was seated on his throne in upper air with no intention of abdication for many a day to come.

These sudden snow showers in March do more

than paint our upper fells with whiteness; they hush the birds at morn and eventide. March melody is very precious to ears that have long waited for it. At half-past five in the morning, the dusky garden ground is filled with it. At eight o'clock the deepening twilight and star-time are glad because of it. The blackbirds have fought their battles, the thrushes have made their choice, and love is enough, but love must find a voice, and morning hymn and evening hymn are one uninterrupted call to passionate praise.

As one listens on the high fells in March for sounds of coming spring one hears the happy barking of the raven and the cry of the grey-winged curlew who has found his mate. Those children of the moorland, the peewits, flash and flicker and twinkle into whiteness, and far overhead the buzzard mews to his wife in the high crag and looks forward to the time, so soon to come, when the herdwick mothers will drop their lambs hereabout. Though any day after the middle of March the white-faced lambs, or 'Border Leicesters,' as they are called, may be seen by the farmyard folds, it is not till after the 25th of March that shepherds expect the mothers of their mountain flock to bring their little ones to the birth. At such a time there are deaths amongst the yeanlings, and this means an abundance of meat for the buzzard and the raven, who keep their eyes wide open over the lonely vale and mountain farms.

One of the joys of March lies in its quick changefulness; a bitter spell of passing storm and wind and cloud being often succeeded by almost fairy calm and fine. The sudden change to soft temperature makes one feel that summer time has come. There is an inexpressible delight in this sudden feeling of warm air upon one's face, and if but a single daisy greets one's eye or a single tuft of green in the hedge is found, one seems to be so sure of the returning sun that one must laugh and sing. Wordsworth felt this thrill of pleasure when he wrote that exquisite poem which began :

"It is the first mild day of March,
Each minute sweeter than before,
The robin sings from the tall larch
That stands beside our door.

"There is a blessing in the air,
Which seems a sense of joy to yield
To the bare trees and mountains bare
And grass in the green field."

With a merry eye the poet had seen the slight, soft change which March works upon the valley meadows. Though green with the return of verdure they hardly are, yet in contrast to the grey grasses of the upper slopes they appear green, and whenever a runlet is seen or a spring has its fountain head, there is a distinct moving towards the springtide emerald of April.

But what is the predominant colouring of March ?

If January is grey and February is brown, March is purple and gold. For never are the contrasts of greys and green so sure to bring the purples of the woodland into prominence. Dim purple of oak, dark purple of alder, rich purple of birch and sweet gale, all these are emphasised by the greys of the stems of the oaks and the greens of the mosses in the wood and the background of grey green fellside, while always the silver grey of the naked ash tree branches rise up in mid woodland with such effect as almost to make one think that the wild cherry is just blossoming, and the white 'pussies,' as they are called, of the willow seem to be budding almond trees in the purple thickets. Then again far off the hills are purple blue, so purple blue that the great billows of cloud that are laid upon them seem almost to become by reflection purple blue themselves. As to the gold, the bracken has been so washed into the fellside as to seem gold engrain. The vast stretches of what last month were rain-blanched miles of mountain grass and rushes upon the higher moors or fell tops, take on in March a golden stain, which in the level sun of morn and evening burn like amber, while in the plantations the larches become squirrel colour,—lucent pyramids of feathery gold that soon will go through a chameleon change and become of tenderest green. Purple and gold then may be truly called the favourite colour of March. The east wind seems to be undecided which is best. For the fallows

purple at the morn are by midday changed to tawny yellow, and the ploughman is well pleased—a peck of dust in March is like a peck of dust in May, the surety of a good time coming.

But there are two birds and one flower which have quite made up their minds that purple March was specially meant to show their beauty off to full perfection, and we welcome them both to the English Lakeland as harbingers of spring—the yellow wagtail and the yellow bunting, and the golden daffodil. The coltsfoot is scarcely yet in beauty on the railway embankment that faces the south, but there is hardly an orchard where the daffodil has not bent his spear and turned his hint of warfare to a loving-cup of gold, and though not yet the willows have changed their silver buds to honey-scented flower of radiant sun, the celandine is bright in the hedgerows, and the children's hearts are once more glad because of it, and not a hazel copse in the dale but has hung out its yellow catkins for their hungry hands. March is a month much after the children's mind. It is in March the girls are seen to bring their skipping ropes to school, and marbles and peggies and whipping tops once more reappear.

APRIL AT THE LAKES.

THE visitor to the English Lakes in April goes away astonished. He had expected warm days and weeping skies—he finds clear weather more akin to March, and understands why our Saxon forefathers called the month Oster Month, or East-Wind Month. Keen, dry, easterly winds, alternating, it is true, with spells of south and west that bring their gift of rainbows to the dale, are his portion. Now and again the north wind whitens the hills from sky to valley, and one would suppose that winter had come again.

But these sudden snow storms are short-lived. Come to-day and gone to-morrow they impress us with the brilliance of the snow slope beneath a larger sun, and the deep contrasts made by the snow and the browner patches of heather which have just begun to feel the first tingling of the Spring are very wonderful. These heather patches in March were sooty black against the snow—in April they shine like deepest violet.

There is also a strange witchery about the chameleon-like changes of colour after an April

snow-shower which enchants one. The snow falls, and suddenly all but the brilliant islands of emerald, which are the larch plantations coming into leaf, is dazzling whiteness; an hour hence and the whole mountain side of Skiddaw or Helvellyn seems to be moving through its snow veil in grey and black-brown patches that look as if some mighty geographer was at work painting in a map of some new continent. Another hour or two and winter has flown away, and except for the iron-grey grizzle on the mountain's head, you would believe that Spring had come to stay.

This alternation of snow time and springtide is well matched by the swift changes of April shower and March-like drought. One day the fallows as they are turned up beneath the plough change swiftly into blanched greyness, the next day they seem deep purple brown beneath the driving rain. Now veils of sleet are seen let down like curtains out of heaven, and now again from a clear sky falls a sudden rain shower, and rainbows spring from hill to hill. In no month is there seen such diversity of distance, such change of expression upon the mountain sides.

But it is not to the blue hills and the great white bastions of cloud that overtop them that we look for changes and colouring. In April the woodlands fill our hearts with wonder and our eyes with praise. There seems to be a spirit in the wood that is determined to differentiate, to weave into the general effect of the woody background,

weft and warp of various colouring. This spirit works in all shades of purple and grey, and the richness of this woody curtain is enhanced by the fact that so many of the trees put on a glossy shine, from the grey silver hazel shoot to the bronze purple of the birch. An April shower comes, and doubly resplendent do they appear while the large raindrops in the windless birch hang as jewels and flash like diamonds from every bud. Is there anything more beautiful than a birch tree with its fountain of living water-spray after a shower in mid-April?

One of the purplest of the trees by our beck sides in April is the alder, the rosiest by the road-side is the aspen or black poplar, with its deep red catkin tassels glistening in the sun or carpeting the road beneath. Glorious as was the purple in March of the wych elm against the blue fellside, more gloriously shines the flowering poplar against the blue-grey distance in April.

In April the woodlands show the marvellous contrast of silver and gold, such as is seen at no other time in the year. It is true the green of the dog's mercury on the ground, and of the larch in mid-air, contrasts with the russet of the fern or the as yet unfallen leaves upon the oaken under-wood, but what strikes one most is the flashing into silver of the wild cherry as opposed to the glorious golden beauty of the palm flowers in mid-copse. We dwellers in the dales who have our copses hung on the hillsides, have a better chance than most

people to see the beauty and the changes of April in the woodland, and I have often thought that a lover of colour might be well content to make a tour through lakeland in this month only for the delight of the harmonies and contrasts of the awakening tree-life on hill and in dale.

One tree there is that adds much to the tender blue of distance in the valley in April; that is the ash. A peculiar whiteness and gloss takes hold of this stubborn tree no springtide tames—whiteness almost of death, as if it hated life or mocked the resurrection of Nature all about. There, after April rain, the ash tree stands like a huge growth of white coral in its sea of bluest air and golden sun, and naked and unashamed, it seems to say, like the skeleton at the feast, "rejoice in your life ye fields and flowers and freshening woods, but as I am, so shall you all one day be—bare bones and bitter leaflessness."

But even the ash in warm April will push its black buds into purple beads, and though it will not become a feathered thing till May, it will yet shower upon the passing wind a gift of golden pollen ere April passes.

The tree of the month is the larch. It is a sombre thing of yellow sandy brown in the last days of March, and in the first week of April glows a lemon yellow, in the second week the lemon fades and the first grey green is seen upon the larchen multitude. A near view shows the ruby jewelry is already beginning to lose its rosiest hue. A

visit to the copse will find in sheltered place a youngling standing in full emerald green, but the heart of the woodland is still cold, and the larch tree refuses to be hurried; then sudden, the east wind ceases and a warm rain falls, and lo! in a single night the hill slopes, peopled just now by 'khaki' hosts, have hid their dusky yellow phalanx underneath the bright green banners of the Spring.

As for flowers at the lakes in April, the 'ribes' scents the garden ground, the tulips burn in every bed, and the periwinkle untwirls its bud to wheel of starry violet. But the flower of the lane and copse is the primrose, and the flower of the orchard and the stream is the daffodil. March brought the daisy, and the coltsfoot and celandine for the children's gathering, but April brings the golden daffodil, and he who has not set eyes upon a fellside orchard gay with daffodils or has not wandered down by Duddon side at Broughton-in-Furness, where Faber wandered, or in the Isel meadow beside the Derwent, or passed along the side of the Kent in meadows that old Kentmere Gilpin knew, or walked down Winster, or driven through the villages either side the estuary of Kent and Bela, can hardly know what joyous heralding of Spring the trumpets of the daffodil can make. No longer, it is true, do the April breezes set the golden multitude a-dancing by the side of Ullswater, as Dorothy and William Wordsworth saw them, but I generally find a pilgrimage to the Glencoin meadows beside the

mere its own reward. Still among the pebbles by the shore, grow, but in ever dwindling numbers, the children of the flowers the poet saw; and those of us who remember the history of the writing of that imperishable poem, may still feel "the flashing on the inward eye, which is the bliss of solitude," of these April daffodils.

The flowers are not our only friends in April, for each week of the month brings back some well-loved visitant from oversea, and we realise Wordsworth's joy in the arbour at Town End, who wrote:

> "Beneath these fruit-tree boughs that shed
> Their snow-white blossoms on my head,
> With brightest sunshine round me spread
> Of spring's unclouded weather,
> In this sequestered nook how sweet
> To sit upon my orchard-seat!
> And birds and flowers once more to greet,
> My last year's friends together."

It is true that he must have had a very early Spring in mind. Sometimes the apple blossom is out in the latter days of April, but in most years we do not look for this miracle of scent and beauty till mid-May and its ending.

Any day after April 3, may the swallow from his Egyptian waste be found at the mouth of the rivers on our western shore, and though it is nearer the 13th of the month that we meet him on the Greta side, we generally find the martins have come before him. Then, ere we have watched him a day or two, the delicate and impassioned note of

that little enthusiast the chiff-chaff or warbler is heard in the birch tree, and the red-start may, if the Spring be an early one, be seen a day or two after. The cuckoo is generally a wandering voice among the fells in the last week of April, and at times, though much depends upon the growth of the grass, the corncrake is heard before the cuckoo has found a mate. In April curlews call across the moorland, the buzzard wheels and mews above his nest, and the raven is kept hard at work feeding his insatiable brood; but for these the fells are silent, for the ewes, great with young, are in the near intak, and the gelt yearlings have not yet been turned out to give the intake a chance of sweetening itself for the herdwick mothers and their May-tide lambs. The silence of the vales is, however, broken by one visitor's cry, who is *par excellence* the bird of April. I know not why, unless it be that the cuckoo loves an echo and delights to hear his own voice, but I have noted how persistently he chooses the tops of the dales, their inmost recesses, for his habitat. One cannot towards the end of April pass up from the high end of a valley to the fells without hearing the cuckoo. Long before he will be welcomed by the children in the plain, there, in the resonant valley-end, will shepherds hear him. So persistently does he haunt the far end of Borrodale and shout himself hoarse at Seathwaite that the word 'Borrodal gouk' has become a proverb, and stories are told of a determination on the part of the dalesmen

to build up a wall to keep the cuckoo a possession of the vale.

Wordsworth was fortunate to dwell where the cuckoo found an echo, and many a time has one noted how, between Loughrigg Fell and Nab Scar, the cuckoo loves still, as of old, to stammer out his call.

At the end of April, in the far recesses of the hill in some deep ghyll where as yet no leaf has come to ash or rowan, another voice may break the silence and cheer the solitude, this is the mountain ouzel; a shy singer but a sweet one is he, and one may feel rewarded for a long April wandering by sound of his clear flute.

A long April wandering! The April twilight is the loveliest gift the month brings to our lake-land hills. Not truly to be compared to the never-darkened skies of May, but very wondrous are these golden evenings of an April day. All through the day alternate sun and shower has possessed the vale. Curtains of hail or heavy rain have hidden or revealed the purple blues and golden greens of the mountain distance. Then all the storms of the day drift from sight. Like black dragons, dark clouds that had coiled up in the west writhe out of ken, and golden galleons float over the hills into serene spaces of silver sky. The hills are deathly grey, and the woods dead brown, save for the islands of larch green and budding birch, but the song of the birds is ceaseless. You feel as you listen that they are in a world—the world

of love and praise—where no night comes. Suddenly Helvellyn kindles into rosy pink, and Skiddaw goes a golden bronze, and when the light fails, such golden sky burns between Wythop and the Dodd, or gleams in the west beyond the Wrynose pass, that the men in Westmoreland and Cumberland feel as a shepherd once put it to me, "that dayleet's ower lang for a hard darrock," and we feel the April skies are almost merciless to the weary horse and husbandman. But it is this same lengthened evening that invites the wanderer to our dales, and they who love colour-changes and would feel the gladness of bird-song and the first quickening of the valley meadows and hedgerows should come—though nights are chill and at times a snow-fall whitens all the tops—to the English Lakes in daffodil days, before the woodlands have shut the sunshine from their mellow carpets, or the sycamore has shaken his rosy glumes upon the rooftree of the fellside farm.

One other charm has April for the wanderer. Then the becks are full. Then each runnel 'pours forth its song in gushes,' and quickens us with an exhilarating sense of youth and power. We realise what Wordsworth meant when he wrote:

> "It was an April morning fresh and fair,
> The rivulet, delighting in its strength,
> Ran with a young man's speed."

As for the lakes, they are no longer as they were in March, a steady sapphire blue. Pearly grey they lie along the bronze green bases of the

hills, and here and there the white clouds poised upon the mountains' shoulders, send back a gleam of ivory from their depths. Now leaden-coloured, they are lashed into whiteness by a passing squall, now in quiet calm reflect through golden mist the new-born rainbow. At times, though this is rare, we find in April calm the rainbow floating in the mere, and realise that the pollen of some water plant has heard the call of Spring, and sends its gift of dust to float up and break the perfect mirror into wonderful irridescence.

But few are the folk who in April take oar or sail. The 'grannan' fly is not yet born, the 'green drake' waits for the last days of May, and though the char-fishers on Windermere, pull wearily their nets ashore and give us glimpses of their treasure trove of pearl and silver mingled with gold and rose, and the salmon may be seen leaping lazily in the rivers, the trout fisher is content to look at his rod and examine his flies, and bid his friend come north next month to ply the gentle craft, for the rivers are cold and the trout in the lake are content with bottom feed.

As for the farm, the hedge-clipper is at work, and the plough and harrow go steadily afield, but though wheat is sown and potatoes are planted, the shepherd will not feel his season's full care has come, or the sheepmaster his luck or his loss, till in the end of April when the homefield will be vocal with new voices and the first freckling of the vale with herdwick lambs will begin.

All said and done, the joy of the month is the anticipation of the month that follows. "April showers bring May flowers"; we have the sorrel and the primrose and the daffodil; we long to see the bluebell and grey northern violet. Our rhododendrons and our lilac bushes and our laburnums stand and wait for the sovereign word of May to give us of their treasure, and not a tree in the garden but will look for the time when the glume shall fall and the leaves unfold their wings,

> "When the swallow shall flash and the swift shall call,
> And May will come over the mountain wall."

The village children are the best signs that May-tide is close by. Peggies are whipped with fierce enthusiasm in the road, marbles are played on the school path, and every little lass who goes along the village street carries her skipping rope on her arm—"Why what we're practising for the May Day," they cry, and the rope sings and the feet patter on the ground, impatient for the coming of the queen month of all the year.

PACE-EGGING AT EASTER-TIDE.

Eastertide in the Lake Country brings the children round to our doors to beg for pace-eggs or pasch eggs against Easter Day.

Little piping trebles are heard, and going to the door, one sees four boys and a girl, who, by the way, is really a boy clad in his sister's old frock,

and who goes by the name of ' Miser Brown Bags ' or Molly Brown Bags. They have come to sing a song whose origin is lost in the far times of the Easter Mystery Plays. The song is set to one tune all through the county, but varies in its words from parish to parish. They are, without knowing it, the keepers of history. A hundred years ago Nelson fell at Trafalgar, and fell mortally wounded because he insisted on going into action with his decorations on his left breast, and thus became the victim of the marksman in the tops of the ' Redoubtable.' As one listens to the youngsters who have come pace-egging, the whole scene rises before one, and with it the glow of a nation's hero-worship takes possession of the heart, for one of the lads, who has turned his breeches inside out by way of disguise, has a bit of blue riband at the knee, and after an introductory verse in chorus,

"Here's two or three jolly-boys all in one mind,
We have come a pace-egging and hope you'll prove kind;
For your eggs and strong beer we'll come no more here,
We'll come no more here until the next year.
(*Chorus*) Pom da riddle dom da ra, pom da ra,
Pom da riddle di dom da,"

the urchin steps forward and sings,

"The first that steps in is Lord Nelson you see,
With a bunch of blue ribands tied down to his knee,
The stars on his breast like diamonds do shine,
And we hope you'll remember it's pace-egging time.
Pom da riddle dom da ra," etc.

And the song of the sea continues:

"The next that steps in is a jolly Jack Tar;
He's been with Lord Nelson all through the last war,
And now he's come home old England to view,
And's come a Pace-egging with us jolly crew.
Pom da riddle dom da ra," etc.

Then the boy-girl sings:

"The next that steps in is old Miser Brown Bags,
For the sake of her money she goes in old rags,
She has gold and has silver all laid up in store,
And she's come a Pace-egging with hopes to get more.
Pom da riddle dom da ra," etc.

It has been suggested that this old Miser Brown Bags is a memory of an Easter mystery play, in which Judas, who kept the bag, was represented, but one does not understand the change of sex.

Next we are recalled to a time that is gradually passing away, when the habitual drunkard was held in higher esteem than he is to-day, but one cannot help thinking that even when the song was written it was necessary to more or less rehabilitate him, for it is pretty certain that the original character, whom Tosspot now personates, was the hump-backed Jew—for before the jolly-boys go their rounds they stuff a bag with hay to put it under the coat and give him a hump:

"The next that steps in is old Tosspot you see,
He's a gallant old hero in every degree,
He's a hump on his back, and wears a pig-tail,
And all his delight is in drinking mulled ale.
Pom da riddle dom da ra," etc.

The last actor is old Tinkler. His jacket is generally inside out—his face is often blacked. He sometimes wears an old box hat and probably has a very ancient pedigree, for it is thought, just as old Tosspot may represent the Jew executioner or one of the rough soldiers who gamed and diced at the foot of the Cross—so the Tinkler in the old mystery play represented the artificer of the Cross who nailed the Cross together, and whose hammer was used for the nailing of the Saviour to the Cross, and whose pincers were used at the taking down of the Lord's dead body. The Tinkler sings:

"The last that steps in is old Tinkler you see,
With hammer and pincers in every degree,
With his hammer and pincers he makes such a rattle,
If you don't come out soon he won't solder your kettle.
Pom da riddle dom da ra," etc.

At last in unison the pace-eggers make their appeal in the closing verse thus:

"Now ladies and gentlemen that sit by the fire,
Put your hands in your pockets that's all we desire,
Put your hands in your pockets and pull out your purse
And give us a trifle, you won't be much worse."

In some of the dales they add the words:

"If you can't give a penny a halfpenny will do,
If you can't give a halfpenny then God bless you."

But the song is over, and the pennies and the eggs are given, and back to their homes the youngsters go for the preparing of the eggs for Easter Day. The mothers tie up the eggs in onion scales, and get a good yellow dye thus, as the eggs

are boiling hard, or down to the pencil mills they may go for a little log-wood, as in the old dyeing days, they went for a little cochineal to the wool works; bits of riband of various hues are also used for the colouring, and as far as pasch eggs go, it is a mercy that cheap ribands are not in what we call fast colours. So the eggs are boiled hard, and are resplendent for use on Easter Monday—red, blue, and yellow, purple and black, and those who boil them and those who will play with them have long ago forgotten that in the old mystery play days the very colour of the eggs was probably significant, that the red egg or the purple egg stood for the King upon whose shoulders the royal robe had been cast in scorn, that the blue egg represented the traditional colour of the Virgin's robe, that the yellow egg represented the Jew, and the black egg the demon spite that nailed Christ to the cross.

On Easter Monday in the Keswick valley the children used always to go with their parents to the top of Latrigg—indeed, some still go there—to 'trundle the eggs,' as it was called. The eggs all vary in thickness and thinness of shell, and the trundling of the eggs against one another soon proved which was 'the cock,' as it was called. Then those who were fortunate at the end of the contest in possessing the cock eggs, took them in hand and tested the valour of their eggs in a hand-to-hand encounter until the winner who remained unbroken was declared.

But it must not be supposed that Latrigg top is the only tourney ground for pace-eggers. One will find evidence of pace-egg encounters in many parts of the Crosthwaite parish by Easter Tuesday. Nor is the rhyme above given the only one that is sung by the pace-eggers in the district, for at Grasmere, and in the countryside round Ulverston, a Turkish knight and a certain Molly Masket are introduced in these words:

"The next to come in is a bold Turkish knight,
From far distant country, quite ready to fight,
He'll meet with St. George and fight with him here,
And show him a hero who knows nothing of fear.
Fol di riddle-di-fol de ra.

"The last to come in is Molly Masket you see,
She's a jolly old lass as ever you see,
She's a purse for her brass, a basket for eggs,
If you'll give her a trifle it's all that she begs."

I cannot help thinking that the bold Turkish knight and St. George have nothing to do with the pace-egging mystery play proper, but are part and parcel of a Christmas mystery play of St. George and the Dragon, which has somehow or other got worked in to the Eastertide rant. This Eastertide mummers' song, which is well known at Grasmere, must have a very ancient history, it is probably an echo of the crusades:

"In steps I St. George,
A noble champion bold,
With my right hand and glittering sword
I've won three crowns of gold.

'Twas I who fought the fiery dragon,
And brought him down to slaughter,
And by this means I won my Queen,
The King of Egypt's daughter.

In steps I bold Turk,
Black Morocco King,
My sword and buckler by my side,
And through the woods I ring.
I'm brave, and that's what makes us good,
I'll stab thee in thy vital gorge,
And through thy dearest body, George,
I'll draw thy precious blood."

There is a great fight, and Molly Masket's son, the Turk, is slain. A doctor, old Jacky Brown, who has travelled from

" Italy, Spitaly, France and Spain,
Three times round Germany and back again,"

and who can cure

" Ipsy, pipsy, palsy and gout,
The plague within and the plague without,"

and who has a ' lile bottle ' in his inside, left-side, right-side waistcoat pocket, which his grandam gave him before he left Spain, revives the dead Turk, and the Turk rises to have another round with King George. But this has nothing to do with pace-egging, and though old Tosspot is introduced as bringing the doctor in, one feels that the two plays are quite distinct. It is plain that whatever was the form of the pace-eggers' song originally, it has been much modified by national events, and one would have liked to have

known who the pace-eggers were impersonating, before Nelson and his jolly-boys, the jack tars, won for us the sovereignty of the sea, a hundred years ago, and came round in children's guise to ask for those emblems of the Resurrection, the pasch-eggs, against Easter Monday.

One of the oldest inhabitants of Grasmere tells me that he remembers, in the 'thirties' of last century, the Pace-eggers were generally full-grown men. That it was the custom always to go up to Rydal Mount for eggs on Easter Sunday, as Mr. Wordsworth was "straängely taäken up wid t' pace-eggin'." He remembers also how all the Easter Sunday afternoon one could hear the beating up of the egg-flip to make mulled Pace-egg ale, which was the usual Easter drink at Grasmere. I learned from another Grasmere body that Pace-egg ale was made thus: A half-pint of ale was taken from a jug and an egg beaten up in it, sugar and cloves added, and the whole stirred and poured into the rest of the ale, which had been heated—but not to boiling point. "Eh, dear," my old friend said, "I can hear the spoons tapping and tapping away now right through the village on Easter day."

MAY AT THE LAKES.

"Season of Fancy and of Hope,
Permit not for one hour
A blossom from thy crown to drop,
Nor add to it a flower!
Keep lovely May, as if by touch
Of self-restraining art,
This modest charm of not too much,
Part seen, imagined part."

THAT is the charm of May at the English Lakes. When away at Oxford and the South the trees are in full sail, and one feels one has enough and to spare of Maytide luxury, when the wild crab branches into full blossom, the lilac bushes are purple and white, and the double cherry a cloud of bloom—here in the English Lakes, the first week or two of May is but a preparation for full garniture, and even in the last week oak and ash in the woodland are leafless enough to make us feel May's sweetness will tarry till mid-June. All through the month we are seeing what May will be, rather than what she is.

Let us go forth in the first week of May. The gold dust has passed from the palm flower and the

daffodil is dead, but the golden celandine glitters on the bank, and in marshy places the Mary-bud shines, though the golden stretches of dandelion, such as we may see in the meadows to the South or in the Swiss orchards, have not yet come to us. It is true the daffodil is dead, but the skies at eventide are filled with colour that keeps the daffodil in mind, and the joy of Maytime at the lakes is the long, lingering twilight of the West.

Tulips are still gay in the garden, auriculas paint the beds. Rhododendron bushes of wonderful scarlet and rose and pink shine out far and near. I was once standing in mid-May upon the fell by Blind Tarn, and a shaft of sun struck on a rhododendron bush in the garden of Lancrigg, the light of it seemed as though coloured fire was springing in a fountain from the ground. Anyone who has passed by Barrow House in May knows how the sudden sight of these rhododendrons almost startles with its rich surprise. But the flowers that seem most to fill with colour the gardens of rich and poor alike in May are the forget-me-nots and the yellow wallflowers, while a golden 'composite' gives an abundance of light, and the white pheasant-eye narcissus fills the air with fragrance.

I have just returned from one of the sweetest woodland walks in the neighbourhood of Keswick. Crossing the valley that shone like an emerald, one heard the voice of the corn-crake calling to his mate, one noted how lilac pale the hills to the westward shone. There is not yet any large

amount of grass upon the mountains, but the heather patches that in March and April were sooty black, as if almost they had been fired, have taken on a wonderful change of colour. Indeed, so ruddy are the heather tips that at eventide beneath a level sun, one may almost believe that August and honey-time is here.

We pass through Portinscale, and win the Fawe Park woodland path, for we are bound for Brandelhow. The larches are in their faint first green dress of gladness, and fill the air with their delicious scent. But the joy of the woodland is that tender purple pencilled flower, the wood sorrel. Look at its heart-shaped leaves, to-day they are crumpled up like the wings of a moth fresh from a chrysalis; they will, if the sun shine, spread out and be fit for any 'wearing of the green.' At a distance one might believe they were white violets, but one remembered how Southey had said, "In Cumberland we miss the sweet violet and the nightingale," and we know that is true in the Derwent valley; no sweet wild violets nor cowslips greet the May. The alder is noticeably leafless in the Moss coppice, the ash shines like white branching coral, as it did in the April rains, but the buds that were black in the front of March and purple in the front of April, are to-day fair and full of feather, and though at the end of May they will not have pushed themselves to leaf, one knows that already the deeps of the earth have felt the message of Spring.

Suddenly, away above the birches upon Swinside that glisten with green and gold, one hears a familiar sound. The cuckoo has come again! Heard in the North at Gilsland this year as early as April 5th, and seen at Rydal on April 29th, we have not realised his presence in this vale till to-day, May 8th, and his voice, with the same magic that it had for us in our childhood, makes us stop to listen and feel that Spring is here. One has heard that stammering voice in Sinaitic vales, and on the slopes of Lebanon, but there it seemed to be talking a strange tongue, and to have no particular message; here it has but one word for us—Winter is over and gone, and as he calls, the words of the quaint old Rhyme that bluff King Hal is said to have put to music rings up to mind—

> "Bloweth mead,
> And springeth seed,
> And loudly sings cuckoo."

The bluebells are only green-purple, the primroses like patches of sunlight in the half dusk of the thicket. It is the birch that seems to "lead the revels of the May," not yet has she hung out her catkin, but every leaf of her shines as if of glass, and she seems to stand like a fountain of green glittering water spray in the sunshine on the fell breast, the High Seat of Sweyn the Viking.

As one passes over the Fawe Park hill, one is struck by the beauty of the tender and delicate

green that swathes the ground. The bleaberry, whose rosy stain one remembers so well last autumn, is to-day a wonder of vivid light, and already about its coral cups the bees are murmuring. We pass now through a copse much thinned by woodman's axe, and far above the oak-trees one sees the faint gleam of Spring upon Cat-bels. Looking back when we have passed through the gate beyond Fawe wood, and are about to enter the wood, what strikes one is the darkness of the Scotch firs against the delicate light green of beech and birch. Away at Shoulthwaite Moss, or under 'Mary' and 'Sarah Crags,' near Rydal water, the same beautiful contrast may be seen, though there it is the green of the larch that is foil to the blue darkness of the spruces and scotchmen.

Once through the copse, we find that the feature of the great meadow that leads us to the base of Cat-bels and Hawes End is to-day the brilliancy of the thorns. There is as yet no sign of flower, but the peculiar shade of their full leaf contrasts with all other greens on earth or in wood, and specially beautiful do these seem on looking back as they rise against the lilac purple of Skiddaw or the gold of the oaks between us and the lake.

Entering Brandelhow and gazing up at Cat-bels, emerald with the fresh green of the bleaberry leaf, one is struck by the coral pink of the dead bracken through which the new bracken is pushing its shepherd crooks and angel wings. This particular

beauty of bracken slopes can only be seen for a few days in May, and nowhere better than on the slopes of Stone Arthur under Fairfield, as one looks across from the western side of the Grasmere Vale. Enter the wood of Brandelhow; the bird cherry is coming into flower, and the wild cherry stands white as silver. Go up to a hill called *Mons sylvae,* and gaze down upon the woodland between our vantage ground and Cat-bels, and say if there is anywhere to be seen more exquisite mixing of multifold colours through all the shades of gold and green than here. While the raven croaks above you, and the far-off buzzard mews and the cuckoo calls, and the cushat purrs, you can on this radiant day find born for you in forest mesh of bud and breaking leaf a sense of expectancy—of joy and sympathy with all the children of the light and day.

The gift of May is a gift of Autumn colouring with summer gladness beyond. It is 'summer,' not winter, 'now is coming in' that 'cheerly shouts cuckoo,' and that these oaks are painted by the hand of life and not by the hand of death makes all the difference. As May goes forward and the beech leaf sheds its down and the birch leaf loses something of its first fine glossiness, and the larch its first sweet tenderness, there is still in the woodland fresh surprise of new life in the delicate leafage, almost as of the wings of a living creature, upon the wands of the hazel. Still, still, the ash delays, and still the alder is surly brown, but

thanks to the warmth of the as yet unovershadowed woods, the wild hyacinth shakes its blue bells free, and in such patches as may be found near Fiddler's farm, between Rydal and Ambleside, or down by Duddon's side the flowering mist of purple blue lies heavy on the ground.

The blackthorn foam fades from the hedgerows, but in sunny sheltered places the fragrance of the hawthorn already scents the air, and every pearl has become a starry cup for the bees, while as if the garden entered into rivalry with the wild woodland, though sweet as honey is the breath of the bird cherry, the breath of the Portugal laurel is sweeter.

The daisies are filling the meadows to see the May-tide pass. The stitchwort calls to the school children in the lane. Young thrushes and blackbirds, while their elders croak at them, tumble about in fine fluster of impotence and impatience combined, in the laurel bushes, and away on the Cumberland coast the Black-headed gulls and Sandwich terns are scurrying from nest to tussock and from tussock to shore. But the hen wife is busy with her brood, and the shepherd is bethinking him of his young family also that are soon to go to the fells. The lambs are gathered to have their ears bitted or tritted or spoon-marked, as the shepherd's book demands. " A pop ont' nar hook or a bugle on far side " is put upon them with the raddle stick or the black stick, according to the ' smit ' of the flock they belong to, and soon

we shall hear the valley filled at dawn with bleatings innumerable, and with a pillar of cloud, and that cloud a cloud of dust to go before him, the shepherd will take his charges to the mountain of his hope, and leave them on their native heaf till shearing-time.

But he will not do this till the snow wreaths have faded from Scafell and Skiddaw and Helvellyn, and though the pear flowers are white on the garden wall, and the apple buds are rosy to their blooming, and the sycamore tassels are loud with bee-music, though the lime trees are in leaf and the poplar towers have changed from gold to green, the shepherd will not start for the fells till he knows that summer is sure.

IN LILY LAND.

There is a little bit of 'Lancashire beyond the sands' which is still in its own seclusion an almost undiscovered land of pastoral peace. One gets a glimpse of it as one passes to and from Carnforth. It lies between Warton Crag on the east, Arnside Knott on the west, Whitbarrow and Beetham Scar on the north. The Vikings knew it of old, and have left their mark in place names and field names. Thus, for example, the tiny strips of meadow upon the hill slope are still called 'dales,' and the 'thwaites' and 'scars' and 'forths' and 'knotts' and 'tarns' bespeak the Norse occupation. The Conqueror knew it, and his Doomsday

Book, though it has no Westmoreland chapter, still tells of the later Norman rule of Norman barons hereabout. Before Viking and Norman days it is possible Agricola and his soldiers may have passed through it, though it is true no trace of Roman road on its way to ' Congangium ' is found to-day, and the legionaries may have crossed the sands before they entered the vale of the Kent. Certain, however, it is that the Scottish raiders ' kenned it weel.' The three pele towers that were built, so tradition has it, by the three sisters of the great family of Thweng, the Kendal Baron, in the thirteenth century, Dhallam, Hazelslack or 'Hesluck,' and Arnside, prove incontestably that the visits of men from across the Solway, riding down by the western seaboard or crossing the lake-land hill passes from the north were not unexpected; and that as far south as North-West Lancashire the ' hot-trod ' was a thing to be reckoned with even in the Middle Ages. There are diaries still extant and letters from loyal but distressed country squires hereabout in the olden time, who complain to the King that they are unable to send their court rolls to be examined, inasmuch as when the Scots burned the roof above their heads the said rolls and charters perished in the flames.

But in later and historic times the ' boys ' from over the Border hither came. In 1715 and 1745 they marched down the old pack-horse road on the way to the South and to Lancaster, and some of the neighbouring gentry went to the Tower and

only escaped by the grace of God and a heavy fine, to enter again into possession of the pleasant meadowlands and ample deer parks, because they were tempted to go along with them. On that latter occasion 'Bonnie Prince Charlie' lay at a hall near by, and went on his disastrous way with sight of the blue-grey hills and glimmering sea and lustrous sands to cheer him, but to bid him know that peace was better than war, and that there is "a tide in the affairs of men" which only when "taken at the flood leads on to fortune."

This little-known corner of the busy county of Lancashire offers rest which, thanks to its up-hill and down-dale roads, and the absence of main trunk roads, is as yet undisturbed by the motor car. The peasants who dwell by the road side can still open their little casement windows, whose mullions speak the age of great Elizabeth, and tend their tulips in their untarnished beauty, and the farmers' cattle can still crop the grasses by the hedge side without the fear of dying from dust in the stomach. It is a land where the wych elm and beech and sycamore flourish, and where the Scotch fir and yew tree find a native habitat. A land of wonderful oak and hazel copses within whose depths may still be seen the mounded circles of the charcoal burner, and in whose glades the 'bloomaries' known by the monks of old are found, though now only in name. Land of fire and furnace of human making, here never fell the ashes of the volcanoes that upreared the lakeland hills.

AFTER MAY SHOWERS.

These bluffs and headlands, now inland and unwashed by tide, except the tides of corn and grass that flood the earth in spring with emerald, were built by the shells of some warm water sea. Then fell the Arctic winters on the land, and in how many glacial epochs none can tell, the ice floes moving southward ran their ploughs upon the shoulder of the hills, scooped out valley, ground out cliff, and dropped the mighty granite boulders brought from Skiddaw and the far North upon the naked marble hills—hills now veiled with green, save where, loosened by centuries of frost and rain, the old cliff ramparts crumble and renew their milk-white youth. Milk-white, too, are the marble dusty roads that lie like ribands across the vale or climb like silver serpents up the hill, and very lilac grey are the limestone bluffs that as yet withstand the storm, and rise terrace upon terrace, here green-gold with young oak scrub, or black with yew tree fringe and wind-blown fir, and there gold as gold can be with gorse and flowering broom to the grey-blue sky.

But at times the sun strikes upon these inland bluffs, and turns them into dazzling silver; and I have sometimes thought that when Fox, the Quaker, standing on the Yorkshire moors, thought he saw a vision of white angels upon the hills of Westmoreland, calling him to come over and preach the everlasting Gospel of the Free Spirit to the Swarthmoor yeomen, what he really and indeed saw was none other than the sun on Farlton Knott

and Whitbarrow Scar, that seemed, as I have seen them midway on the steep, to be girdled round with angel hosts of silver cherubim. Seen near by, mighty are the broken bones of the limestone outcrop that lie in bleached wreckage on the 'thrang' crags split by the frosts and yew tree roots and pitted and pock-marked by rains of innumerable years. Vivid are the mosses that crawl along the sun-bleached walls in February, and crimson are the Herb-Roberts that people the walls in May, and very purple the columbines that take these shiny roadside walls for background in July. It is a world of flower life. Nowhere else in the neighbourhood of the English Lakes are snowdrops so plentiful. Nowhere else are daffodils so gay, and as soon as these have passed from orchard and wood, behold the miracle of April's ending, the damson blossom's silver round each farm.

But May is the month for this paradise. Then as one passes unchallenged down the woodland path that leads from scar to scar, a blue mist swims to meet one through the sunny hazel wood, and now upon a bank where the primroses were lately so gay, now in a hollow round some silent tarn which sends back to us the splintered glory of the noontide sun, one sees and breathes the wild wood hyacinth in its multitudinous splendour of Maytide carpetry.

One climbs the scar; a hyacinthine sea is sweeping shoreward, filling the estuary with a violet and grey flood. One gazes landward, hills of hyacinth-

blue are seen fold behind fold and range beyond range away to the north and west and east, and here at our feet are the bluebells of old England bringing sea and hill glory of colour close to us and making us feel that " earth has not anything to show more fair," and that surely the feet of angels move in hyacinthine fields.

Yet this is not the only gift of flowers in this little-known corner of the Garden of Eden, for which we bless the May. There is hardly a woodland that has not at this season of the year, beside the purple orchis and the bluebell, that strange quaint double tway-blade kind of plant that holds the single drop of heart's blood at its core, the Herb-Paris. And where the Herb-Paris grows, grows also the Lily of the Vale.

I had often heard of the lily woods of Leighton and Arnside, but it was not till this year of grace 1905 that the dream of a visit to their wonder and their joy was realised. Thanks to a kindly friend who was able to gain access for me to the Grisedale Wood, and to the permission from the agent of the proprietor of Arnside Park, granted on a small payment which goes to a charity, I found myself one day after passing through a meadowy land filled with the first scent of the hawthorn and loud with song of birds, in the last week of May, driving up the white road east of the Arnside Knott. Above me ran a fair oak-clad hill patched here and there with dark Scotch fir and dwarfed and wind-blown yew. The fairy green of the

young beech had not died away, and the oaks were still in leaf of gold. It was good to exchange the unsightly new lodging-houses we had just left, for this as yet untroubled hillside woodland. It was true that quarrymen were at work hauling pink-grey limestone blocks from their bed, giving us unhappy thought of more gimcrack lodging-houses to be, but below us lay the strength and calm of the old fortress pele whose oak beams and roof timber went, so tradition has it, to roof Knowsley Hall, which still stands in stout defiance of all storms and testifies to the day when Dame Thweng, of the Kendal barony, quarried the Knott to build a lodging-house that should outlast time.

We were soon driving up a lane to a quiet farm, whose beauty lay in its old-fashioned porch, whereover the golden laburnum was just beginning to drop its rain of fire.

"Oh, it's keeper's cottage you'll likely be wantin'," said the bright-eyed body at the door. "You'll ga into t'field and across by gate yonder, and Mr. L. will seun sarve ye wid tickets for Lily Wood, I'se warrrant ye."

We did as she bade; we paid our King's shilling, inscribed our names upon the card, which begged us to pluck moderately and not to root up the lilies, and so over the wind-blown slopes of the scar we went towards the wood. Below us gleamed to the southward a vast world of amethystine sand, mottled here and there with

seagull parliaments, and flickering here and there with the sea-birds' wings. Pools of quiet bluebell colour reflected the Maytide sky in the far distance, and rivers that seemed to have lost their way wandered aimlessly through the vast plain that waited for the coming of the tide from the far Morecambe Bay. One river alone seemed to know her own mind—that was the Kent. She was pouring her silvery water with a fine swirling rush along close under the scar, and was evidently determined to eat away the samphire and grass plot between us and the south-eastern headland. Then flung back by the limestone bluff, she turned herself to the south, and passed out into the waste of glamour and glory that stretched illimitably as it seemed to the blue-grey hills of Lancaster on the one side and the smoke cloud of Furness beyond dark Humphrey Head on the other.

One little patch of red roof at our feet told us of the holiday home for the poorest children of the Leeds alley and court, and the little red dots and dashes by the shore showed us some of the red-capped sea urchins who had for a week's holiday exchanged the slums of Armley for the shores of Arnside. Gladder in heart for their gladness, we crested the hill, and a very remarkable view broke upon us. The estuary of the Ken stretched up in tawny watchfulness right into the blue hills beyond Levens and the shining Whitbarrow Scar. Meathop, like a fortress island of green and grey, stood up out of the sea of emerald

—Meathop, the fortress home of health for the poor consumptive. A great millepede lay across the estuary mouth, and with a puff of smoke and the roar of thunder a train from Carnforth passed over towards Grange. Grange winked at us through sultry haze from its green woodland retreat—Grange, once a riverside pleasaunce, Grange, still pleasant for all who love sea air and iodine, but Grange no longer blessed by the wayward Kent. That strange river changes its mind and its course twice each century. One hundred years ago it flowed by Arnside Knott, as it does to-day. Fifty years ago it deserted Arnside, and turned its attention to Grange. To-day, inconstant wooer, after having served Grange and helped for a time the far-off steamers and their holiday folk to land at the Grange landing, it has incontinently determined now to do the Arnside people a good turn, and will in its merry knavery induce the speculative and progressive pierbuilder to believe that the only place where Morecambe steampackets should come for shrimps and tea is Arnside haven.

But the chief beauty of the prospect from above the Arnside Park wood was the wonder of flying gleam and purple shadow upon the hills out west. Far beyond Cartmell fells the eye ranged on to Walney Scar and Coniston Old Man, and following the rampart of the hills northward to the east, saw clearly Wetherlam, Crinkle Crags, Bowfell, Scafell, the Pikes, and an indistinguishable mass

of lilac blue and deep cobalt where Helvellyn melted into High Street and High Street faded into the Pennine range.

We were soon in the Park itself, lily-scent filling the air and lily leaves 'for ever'; but not till one rummaged through the leafage did one find the tender stalk with its silver bells, and many more seemed to be in bud than in full flower. It was not to be wondered at, for the past fortnight, as the keeper assured me, people had been picking hard from morn to night, "and the warst o' t' job is, they're so greedy. Our Maister 'ull likely close t'wood next year, for though he is glad folk should come and gether, he can't abide all this basket wark."

"I see we are bidden pluck in moderation."

"Ay, ay, but when you see a party of lasses coming in, each with two girt baskets on theer arm, or as I fund last week, a man with a girt sack full upo' his back, theer's nea modration at all aboot it, ye knaw. But you're likely a foreigner," he said, "and theer's yan spot still ungethered if you'll be content wi' buds, and they're the best far and away, for they come out i' watter and lasts fer days and days, when tudder is blown and oaver."

I had lost my friend—lily gatherers cannot possibly keep together—but guided by the keeper, I was soon at the place. Impenetrable as the thicket had seemed, one did just as the keeper had done, crouched and turned one's back to briar

and oak scrub, and pushed oneself bravely unblinded and untorn to the lily sanctuary. Through the twilight came shafts of sun, through the openings of the golden leafage shone the far-off sands in patches of opal and light. A thrush sang his heart out as I kneeled on that scented green tufted carpet, and plucked my hands full to my heart's content. Then on through a mazy wilderness where each lily bed called one, with its shining white pearls, now to this side, now to that, till tired with the actual act of gathering, one straightened one's back and leaned against a Scotch fir and looked out, over a clearing enamelled with the gold rock-rose, to the creeks that were filling with blue water and to the far-away white line of the incoming tide.

Thence by well-made paths walled up to Heaven with hazel bowers, we went towards the outlet of the Park wood that leads to New Barn Farm. A watcher asked to see my ticket as I passed, and told me much of the ways of the wild lily gatherers and their ideas of what gathering 'in moderation' meant. "It's not my business, you know, sir, but I've often thowt that it is cruel to pick them the way they do. Never no thought of anybody coming after them, and folks as pays a shilling has as much right to see the flowers to-day as they hed as paid to see 'em a week ago. The agent used to put on sixpence, now he has to put on a shilling, and it's my belief that he'll have to end in making it half-a-crown, and all because

them as comes is so terble greedy they don't know, poor things, when they have got eneuf."

I showed him, somewhat shamefacedly, my bunch. "Is that moderation?" said I.

"Lor, sir, you hevn't picked nowheres near moderation, as we count moderation in lilies at Arnside, you know."

And I went home relieved. Past New Barn Farm with its kindly hostess, and its pleasant cup of tea for the tired lily-picker, away over the hard sands and the seaweed of the promontory, with marvellous distant vision of cobalt hills mingling with the golden opal of the far-shining sands, and cries of stint and knot and plover at my side.

The cuckoo called from the hill, and the curlew called from the sky, and the seagull called from the deep. But there were other deeps and other heavens that held their winged messengers of joy, and I doubt if a heart ever heard clearer the call to praise than the heart of the man with his handful of lilies, who trudged that day homeward from the lily woodland by the western sea.

JUNE AT THE LAKES.

Leafy June—that is the title for June in the Midlands, but Bilberry June and Bracken June is the name by which we may call it at the Lakes. It is true that there is one tree that comes pre-eminently into beauty of leafage in this month, that is the stubborn ash. She flutters into feathers of fine golden green in the first week, and is full-fledged by middle June, but as for the other trees, larch and birch and beech and sycamore, they have not only put on their full-leaved finery before, but they have become monotonous in hue, and though it is true they make up for this want of interest to the eye by becoming vocal and filled with the sound of wings of flies and gnats, filled with "the murmur of innumerable bees," except for the blossom of the lime the time of tree-flowering seems past.

But there is one flowering shrub that brightens our homes, and fills the more favoured garden slopes with beauty in June. This is the rhododendron, and while the laburnum pales and the lilac fades, the rhododendron with its miniature

mountains of colour maintains its gift of joy in exuberant blossom till Junetide hears the call of fair July. As to the fields, they shine now purple with cranesbill, now silver white with oxeye daisies or pink with sorrel flowers. The flower of June *par excellence* in our Lake Country meadows is this daisy. In the Keswick vale the oxeye was hardly known till the navvies made their rampart across the vale for the iron road, and brought, in the 'tips' they made, the long-buried seeds of the oxeye daisy, whose gold-eyed children have ever since possessed our fields. Not beloved of cattle-rearer nor hay provider, one cannot help being thankful to these sturdy flowers for the glory as of moonlight that they lend our scarcely darkened meadows in the long twilights of June. All through the day they follow the sun, and when at last he sinks from sight beyond the gateway in the hills to the west, they stand to see the last sight of him and remain with their faces to the north, as if they felt sure that he would come again whence he had gone.

Towards the end of June, the foxglove "carries her purple sceptre thro' the woods," and if by chance a copse has been cleared in the late autumn, a patch of marvellous colour calls us from far away to wander off and watch the bees in their gorgeous belfry towers. But the miracle and marvel of June, that which makes it worth while for people to journey from far to our country in the last fortnight of the month, is the way in which

suddenly, as if there were some mutual understanding between them, the elder whitens the lane and loads the air with its perfume, and the wild rose with glory beyond glory of gracious loveliness embroiders the roadside hedges. With infinite variety of colour, the sixteen or seventeen different brothers and sisters of the dog-rose dance into being, and now pale pink, now rosy carmine, now pure white, they open their shell-like petals to the day, and close them with the falling of the dew. When we remember how much longer these hours of beauty are beneath our northern sun than the rose in Devonshire or the South can know, we are not surprised to find their family so exuberant, for the bees and insects that fertilise them, work incessantly while it is day, and leave no flowers unvisited. It was 'Fors' that brought John Ruskin to his lakeland sanctuary, it was not 'Fors' that made him choose the wild rose for the badge of his St. George's Guild; for never could he pass along a rose-laden Coniston lane, in June, without pausing time after time for wonder and for worship.

If our eyes during the latter part of this month of June are held captive to the valley flowers, at least in the earlier weeks they seek the heights. For we are suddenly aware that a vivid emerald dust has powdered the fell tops. The shales shine darkest purple by reason of the contrast, and the stranger passing through the country looks up and cries, how vivid the mountain fern is on

the height. But the stranger is wrong. The "sweet mountain-fern," it is true, is tufting the lower shales with green or green and grey, and the bracken, where it has shot up to its three feet height of stalk, has filled the southern sunny places of its beloved haunts with a miniature forest of amber tree stem and brown-hued branch; but that green vivid thing upon the heights is the changeling bilberry. I say changeling because last month it covered all the hill tops with coralline, and the young rosy leaf has in this month of June let all its coral pass into its thousand vitreous flower-cups, and bidden its leafage shine with such vivid emerald as makes us perforce lift up our eyes to the hills and feel that summer is sure.

During this month we may know this on the mountain tops by other signs, for the lonely places of the hills are vocal now with the flocks once more. The shepherd knows that a lamb suckled on its native 'heaf' or pasturage will never forget it, and though it be taken by force from the hills, if it have only been mothered there for fourteen days, it will drink in such homing instinct with its mother's milk, as will guide it back over hill and dale to the pasturage of its infancy. So then as soon as the little black-faced darlings of the dale have lambed and their young are strong enough for the journey, away from the intak meadow they go to the heaf that is to be their own peculiar home. Very interesting it is to watch the shepherds take them to the fell. They do not open a

gate and let them scatter where they will, rather, after careful 'smit and bit,' that is body-marking and ear-marking of them, they take them to the furthest part of the pasture they are to range, furthest that is from the farm in the valley, and there leave them. Instinctively the flock know now its utmost limit, and will begin to feed backwards toward the dale. I have heard of collies so clever as to be able to carry a whole flock by themselves from the farm to the heaf, but the shepherd generally accompanies the fell-going multitude. It is true at times that neighbours will take their flocks together on a given day, and when they reach the high fell will separate, one company going to the left and the other to the right. It is then that the collie becomes a right hand man. He knows either by sight or smell every member of his master's woolly charge, and he will dash in and divide the flock. If one chance lingerer gets a little mixed, loses its head and joins the wrong company, the dog swift as an arrow will discover the poor confused one, and drive it back to its proper companions.

Meanwhile the preparation for sheep-clipping, which will commence in the first week of July, is made at the farm. Sheep-washing has gone out of fashion, or we should find the sheep in the beck-pools in the latter week of June. It is no use clipping a sheep after washing, till what the farmers call 'Nater' has come back into the wool; and it takes about ten days for the grease or

sebacious matter to be evenly distributed again after the washing process. But shears are sharpened, invitations sent to the shearers to come to the clipping, and since every good hand with the shears will be requisitioned from each farm, far and near, the calendar of clipping engagements has to be made. Farms, it is true, by long use have their recognised date; and there is a brotherly arrangement by which the clipping-places are so mapped out as to make it possible for the shearers to pass on without fatigue from farm to farm.

One is sometimes asked what is the individuality of June as regards the colour of the hills. There is in June an absence of that blend of peacock green and blue which was noticeable in May. But a peculiar mixture of slate and hyacinth blue is perceivable in the distances. Hot June days, even if there is no wind from east and south, breed haze, and when the smoke-makers of Lancashire and Yorkshire add their veils of dimness also, a great deal of colour goes out of the fellsides during the day, and one must rise betimes if one would see the hills in their rare beauty. Then marvellous purple shadows are seen to lie upon softest greens right up to the sky line, and whilst the valleys swim in silver mist, the upper fells are clear, as if drawn in a silhouette upon a canvas of opal heaven.

We have our thunderstorms in June, and often these clouds lend enchantment, but taking the months through, there is not such change of

expression upon our mountain slopes as one knew in April and in May. These thunderstorms are curiously local. I have known it rain a deluge in Keswick, while not a drop has fallen upon the Vicarage hill. I have seen a thunderstorm break almost with force of a waterspout at Applethwaite in Underskiddaw, and not felt a sprinkle of rain in the Vicarage garden. But one phenomenon in summer heat is noticeable. It is the way in which a storm will brew and brew in the distance. Borrowdale will go black, Derwent into inky blue, and in an hour's time the whole storm cloud be seen to have been lifted right up into the higher heavens and the sun shine out in a clear sky, as if no trouble of rain or wind had ever threatened us at all. This dissipation of storm that seemed imminent is very noticeable in June.

But to return for a moment to the general colouring of June. It may be said that, putting aside the vivid emerald of the bilberry on the heights, and the lesser vivid green of the bracken at the base of the hills, the general hue of our fellside covering is a green with a slight wash of coral-pink in it. A peculiar lilac grey is seen to be an undertone of the new green that clothes the lower slopes, the grey green of a new mown field of hay that has felt one day of summer sun. The valley meadows as yet uncut and filled with their flowering grasses, seen from the height, are of the same lilac grey. It will not be till July has come in that the vales will change this lilac grey-

GOING TO THE HEAF.

green for the vivid aftermath, and the painter June seems to use the uncut valley meadow colouring for the painting of the mountain slopes, with the result that marvellous harmony of tone prevails.

The joy of June is still the thrush's song, but he who would hear the earliest pipe of half-awakened birds must be up betimes. By three o'clock in the morning the Junetide chorus of the thrush and blackbird and chaffinch is heard, and not till eight o'clock in the eventide will vespers begin. From eight to half-past nine or ten in our long-lighted evenings will the birds in woody places make sweet music, and when the last thrush has ceased her praise about the garden walks, the swift's shrill scream will be heard in heaven, the corn-crake in the near meadow will begin his tale, and the cry of the gulls who at this time haunt the valley and quarter the fields in quest of the night moths, or the chirr of the night jar will break the twilit silence. There is nothing quite so satisfying to the weary man as to sit then on his garden seat or at his cottage porch and watch the golden glory in the mountain gap to the north fade from saffron into lemon yellow, from lemon yellow into molten silver, while the bees still murmur in the sycamore, and the ash-tree stands in feather of darkest purple against the lucent sky. A dog barks at a distant farm; the mowers with the first moonlight on their scythes, pass up the lane; the scent of the hay and of the elder blossom mingle in the quiet balmy air; the beck begins to be musical and

murmurous from the meadow near, and the first star shines above the western hill. If only the corncrake would cease and the swift be silent, now would peace absolute be ours, and we should feel what Matthew Arnold felt when he wrote that poem so true to Junetide at the Lakes:

"The evening comes, the fields are still,
The tinkle of the thirsty rill,
Unheard all day, ascends again;
Deserted is the half-moon plain,
Silent the swaths! the ringing wain,
The mower's cry, the dog's alarms,
All housed within the sleeping farms!
The business of the day is done,
The last-left haymaker is gone.
And from the thyme upon the height,
And from the elder-blossom white
And pale dog-roses in the hedge,
And from the mint-plant in the sedge,
In puffs of balm the night-air blows
The perfume which the day foregoes.
And on the pure horizon far,
See, pulsing with the first-born star,
The liquid sky above the hill!
The evening comes, the fields are still."

A SUNRISE FROM HELVELLYN.

June is specially the month for climbing the hills to see the dawn, for it is the month when the mountains can hardly be said ever to be entirely 'darkened with night.' I have seen faint but distinct rose-colour in the sky at eleven o'clock in

the evening, and it is in such twilight that one can best climb Scafell, or Skiddaw or Helvellyn.

On the whole one gives the palm to Helvellyn for beauty of the morning. The cliff buttresses of the mountain look eastward, and there is always along the great eastern wall of High Street marvellous 'goings on' of uprising cloud vapours at sunrise; while the reaches of Ullswater carry the eye up its steel-grey mirror into blue distant lands of mystery, long before above the far-off Crossfell range, God makes Himself "an awful rose of dawn."

It is true we miss the beauty of the mist-wreathed littoral plain as seen from Skiddaw, or the gleaming sea as viewed from Scafell, but we have compensation for these from Helvellyn by sight of the wondrous lighting up of two or three distances of the mountain ranges, and one can be sooner back for rest after the night's excursion from Helvellyn if one starts from Wythburn than if one starts from Rosthwaite for Scafell or from Keswick for Skiddaw.

The ideal ascent of Helvellyn, however, is from Grasmere by Tongue Ghyll and Grisedale Tarn. We ought perhaps rather to speak of ascents in the plural, for by this route there are three. One's first ascent after gaining the intake above Tongue Ghyll is to the top of the Tongue. Thence we descend rapidly to what must once have been a tarn. The second ascent is from this dead old tarn level up a steep breast to the ridge above the

Grisedale tarn; descending to the tarn, coasting its southern shore to its eastern end, one turns back and begins the third ascent up the shoulder of Dolly-Waggon, and it is not till one has zigzagged up to its summit that one can say that one has ascended Helvellyn.

But in this very variety of up-hill and down-dale lies the interest of the climb. People sometimes vary the descent by coming down to Wythburn, but for those who start from Grasmere it is not advisable; feet tired and tender from the roughness of the mountain path are not made happy by the hard road over the Raise, and the less of the King's highway that we have to pass along before our bath and bed and rest in the early morning the better.

It was mid-June. The sun had filled the air with heat mist from noon till sunset, but at sunset the mountain ridges stood out clear and almost of bluebell-blue against the yellow west. The last carriage had rolled on its way, and I stepped out from the little cottage under Loughrigg, whose rhododendrons were still full of colour—such light was in the heavens—into absolute quiet. Not a corncrake cried, not an owl hooted; but the silence had given heart to the Rotha, and her voice, unheard by day, filled the valley meadows—dewy wet beneath their wisps of vapour—with gentle sound. On Pelter Bridge, so soul-compelling was the river's voice, I must needs pause and listen, and I found myself halting, forty minutes later, on the

bridge near Grasmere Church, and wondering at the magic minstrelsy of the midnight stream.

Rydal was asleep, contentedly asleep, in the moonlight that made the house fronts shine like marble, and the road appear white as milk. The ripple of Rydal-mere, as it splintered into light among the reeds, whispered as if in dream, and here and there a trout leapt and turned the dark water into circles of silver, while right in the heart of the black shadow of Loughrigg the yellow moon shone like a mighty fire beneath the flood. How often, thought I, have Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy seen that same moonlight and heard the same voices of the mere! How often have De Quincey and Hartley Coleridge in old Nab Cottage days been bewitched by this same Junetide vision of lakeland glory!

Up by the Glow-worm Rock I passed—glow-worms, for some unaccountable reason, are seldom found thereabout now—and noted the gleam of light that flashed back moon to moon. I leaned at the Wishing Gate, and marvelled to think that here, on this mid-June evening, within twenty minutes of midnight, Hope, if she stood here, could rule a land for ever green, a land that throughout the night would not lose to the wanderer's eye the sense of summer green on leaf and field. Here, if ever, as we gazed, was found "Peace to embosom and content," and one remembered how, in the long years past, the attraction of this place at midnight, as well as midnoon, had charmed

that " never-resting pilgrim of the sea," and made him take oath with himself that he would, after one more journey across great waters, come home to the bosom of these hills and hold communion with his brother the poet. A light wind stirred the larch grove hard by Brother John's grove, as we call it, and I heard the sighing of a pain that has never ceased, to think of how, one hundred years ago, the brave Captain of the " Earl of Abergavenny " perished at his post, off the Shambles, and left all Grasmere to lament him. Such sadness at heart did not sigh in the tree tops only, for as I passed into the shadow of the larches and went along by Dove Cottage, white between its yews, I almost heard the human wailing of those whose hearts were nigh broken to hear how Brother John had perished. Lights seemed to burn in the little windows of the living room downstairs, and the voice of Southey the comforter, come over from Keswick to try to console the Dove Cottage household, was clear in the pause of silence.

I joined my friends in Grasmere, and left the sleeping village to its dreams and its content. One felt almost like a guilty thing as in silence one sped upon the way. The White Swan shone in the moonlight, and one could not but remember how others had left that hospitable hostelry,—Scott, Davy, Wordsworth,—to climb 'the high brow of the mighty Helvellyn,' but not on such a balmy moonlight night as this. The only poet whose moonlit rambles on these heights I know

of was Samuel Taylor Coleridge—his spirit is still upon Helvellyn.

We struck into the Tongue Ghyll path, passed the house of the painter who gave London this year a sight of the picturesque 'Rushbearing,' and heard the stream below us, so beloved of Edward Thring, the great schoolmaster, calling from its rocky bed to tell us of the quiet upland places of its birth; we passed also in the glimmering dusk a broken cottage home, whence all the agony of life and labour had long fled, but where, even in its wreckage, one guest stayed, the memory of simple shepherd folk who saw the earliest dawn and latest sunlight from their aery home. The intake gate was reached, and we passed through the sheep-fold and struck off a little to the left to stumble up the grassy slope of the Tongue. All through the long climb one was helped by the silver sky above the Tongue's utmost height, for we felt we were going toward the dawn. Backwards as we gazed, a blue-grey silver mist had begun to level the hill ranges and to dim the silver shining of Grasmere, but clear still beneath the woods the white houses peeped, and comfortable homes of sleeping men gave note of quiet and restfulness as we went. Not a sheep called, not a bird's voice was heard, only the whisper of feet in the grass and the sound of the streamlet far below. The Tongue was crested, and the moon, which now burned like an oval lamp of golden light, stood on the ridge of the hills to the north

of the Langdale Pikes, stood as loath to sink behind the verge and leave a scene so fair.

Downwards now over a rough path to a valley where the cool wind ceased and all was utter breathlessness. The mountains closed us in, our world, just now so large, was narrowed, and we began to feel the first suggestion of fatigue. But we had compensations. The moon had set, and the gathering darkness of the fells, purple against the white dawn, made such solemn contrast that one could not help thinking of the death hour and knew what courage could come to those who walked through the valley of the shadow, if but their eyes were blessed with the light beyond. Now began the ascent perilous. There is no stonier shepherd's path in the lake district than this rocky stair up which we went to gain the ridge that shuts into its own sanctuary of retirement the beautiful Grisedale tarn beloved of Faber the poet.

The crest was won, and all the beauty of the tarn was forgotten in the sudden gleam of a gold morning sky away out north-east beyond the bastion of St. Sunday's Crag. The night was still upon the tarn, and upon all the hollow trench in which far Patterdale woods and further Ullswater were seen; the night was still upon the distant Pennine Range, but there, as if the day had never died, in a field of lustrous bronze and gold, into which, as by some enameller's wizard work, great ouches of steel had been set, there hung against a

world of silver the banner of another day, the herald ensign of a new dawn!

Yet our eyes seemed to leave all that glory of light to find their fullest wonder in the blue of the waiting earth beneath the golden oriflamme. That that dark blue distance should ever change to grey or green, that, indeed, seemed to be a thing impossible, and one was struck by the localisation of light. The heavens were just as silver dim, the near mountains just as solid purple grey, as if no light shone in heaven, and the mere was just as darkling as if no daystar should ever revisit it.

Down by the long slope to the east of the tarn we went, and felt the breath from the gates of the sun blow fiercely, and heard its trumpets on the steep. Faber in his poem says:

> "In yon pale hollow would I dwell,
> Where waveless Grisedale meekly lies,
> And these three clefts of grassy fell
> Let in the blueness of the skies."

But now, at two o'clock of the mid-June morn, there was no hint of blue in the sky, and the sound of Grisedale beneath the fresh north-east wind was as the sound of a breaking sea.

We rounded the tarn—that tarn which the sailor John had looked on last of all the upland waters of his native land, and that "last thought of parting friends" of the poet Wordsworth and his brother haunted us with sadness as we turned our faces for the mountain climb up the sloping shoulder of the Dolly-Waggon Pike. But Dolly-

Waggon Pike is meant for joy and not for sorrow, and as we zigzag up its wind-swept height, though all the hills are still wrapped in night, ten thousand angel voices seem to call to us and bid us take heart of grace. From every boulder comes the sweet impassioned song of the 'Twite'—whose choir invisible passionately forthtells the dawn and all its hope.

Out west, the hills that when we began to ascend from Grasmere were levelled by the mist, are now clear of cloudy film, and assert themselves in bold individuality. First and foremost the Great Gable stands up huge—the Pillar mountain behind him, but, away to the south-west, Bowfell and Crinkle Crags melt into Greyfriars and Wetherlam—a wall of slaty blue—and Coniston Old Man shows clear against the glimmer of the sea.

Now furious blows the wind; the grasses rustle and rise and fall beneath the blast. We turn our backs upon it, and are almost blown along towards the gate in the iron wire fence that seems so out of place on such a height. One mutters to oneself that the age of Neolithic man and his stone wall cunning is better far than this degenerate age of iron and barbed wire, and passing through it, we gain welcome shelter from the wind, and so coast along below the ridge of the bluff, till on a sudden we find ourselves at the precipice edge, and hear the wind singing in the crags and thundering at the black walls of the Dolly-Waggon bastion that face the east. Down far below us, like a grey

silver thread, a stream, fed by a thousand springs, flows to Patterdale, then wanders out of sight, and the deep trough of Grisedale is laced from side to side with tributary streams that flow to join the main beck and pass to Ullswater. But the great charm of the view lies in that long uneven crescent of light between Place Fell and distant Gowbarrow, which, piercing the distant grey and blue of encircling hills and woods and meadows, lies bare of bosom to the morn. So still, so beautiful, it lies, that we, in the fortress tower of the winds forget the 'business of the elements,' and feel the peace of Ulph's-water possess our hearts.

And now black clouds that hung in a mellow sea of amber fire, changed from blackest grey, from grey to violet, from violet to rose, and the white fleeces of the cloud flocks in heaven were smitten into gold as they wandered to the west. The bastions, jetty black below our feet, went gold green. Such miracle of power had that far-off giant of life as to change the grey grass into verdure, and the iron blackness and mist into golden beauty; but the lake changed not. Motionless, impassive, it gave no response to the morning's call, and out west for the next thirty minutes it seemed as if the mountains cared not for the day.

But as we gazed backward, the grass imperceptibly had changed colour at our feet, and the great buttress of Seat Sandal glimmered and glowed as with a hidden flame; while over the

purple hollows and the grey-blue wilderness of Armboth and High Whitestones we saw how, through the gap of Grisedale, the peaks that lay with vision and touch of the as yet unlifted sun, gleamed into russet gold, and kindled to the dawn. The light of saffron was now on the further hills, the light of lemon-yellow faintly flickered to the zenith, and right across the saffron sky, above the Pennine Range—so blue, so grey, there was laid bar upon bar of rosy fiery cloud, as if some giant had been forging in a vast forge, or drawing from some red-hot furnace, the pillars of a vast pavilion or mighty throne against the coming of a king.

Then as we watched, making all the landscape darker for his advent, we saw above Crossfell a ruby jewel burn,—a jewel first in lozenge shape that grew to semicircle, and at last, almost as it seemed with a bound, leapt up a perfect disk above the hills. So making the winds his chariot and coming forth from his pavilion as a giant to run his course, the great sun came, and all the far-off hills and vales were glad because of him. Suddenly, as if at the word of his command, a thousand angels in bright-bannered beauty sped as couriers from before his face. Now first we heard the bleating of the mountain sheep, now first we saw the bleaberry flash into emerald green, and while the raven swung out from the crag and barked above us, the stone-chat cracked his stones together and bobbed from grey to white.

It is a very different matter going down a mountainside in clear light and ascending it in semi-darkness, and in less than an hour we found ourselves at the intake gate above Tongue Ghyll; in another thirty minutes we had entered the village, where, though the sun was bright on roof and field, the villagers still slept, and only here and there a blue puff of wood smoke from a distant fellside farm, told that the mountain shepherd was awake. Two sunrises were ours to-day.

We had seen the sun rise like a rosy jewel on the Crossfell Range, and as we swung to the garden gate at Grasmere that morning, we saw him once more rise in glowing might above the larch trees of Buthar's Crag, the eastern rampart of the vale.

JULY AT THE LAKES.

THE wild-rose month is ending, and the song of birds is over. The gifts and gains of July can never quite make up for its losses to life's joy. Suddenly, as if by some prearrangement, on a certain day in the last week of June the morning hymn was not heard, and though one thrush still had heart to lead the winged choir at eventide, she obtained no following, and the garden requiem ceased. Still in the meadows the crake was heard, and still in the lane the yellow-hammer piped to heart's content. The jay's voice scolded in the coppice, the wood pigeon mourned in the wood; but for the rest, the melody of birds was hushed, and we mortals were the poorer.

There is always at the beginning of the month an unwonted silence on the fells, for from the first week to the third week the flocks will be being brought down to the valley farm and home-'intakes' for clipping, and though the absence from the fells may not exceed three or four days at most, the wanderer may chance to roam a whole mountainside deserted, and passing from one fell

to another may find the shearing time follow him. And yet both for absence of flowers, bird song, and sheep life, July has its compensations.

Who that has seen the foxglove's glory in the first week of July can ever forget it, and who in the middle of the month, wandering on bye-lanes sweet with the elder-flower in June, or hedgerows so lately filled with wild roses, does not feel the honey-suckle riot makes atonement for his loss, and that the meadow-sweet has a message for his heart. At the end of the month the harebell begins to show its delicate cluster by the roadside; all through the month in some parts of the Lakes the saxifrage crowns the walls with gold, and the yellow ragwort carries on the gleam, whilst the lakes and tarns set the wild lilies floating, and the little purple-white lobelia shows its tender flag above the water.

But the flower *par excellence* on the hills is the cross-leaved bell-heather. Suddenly the flanks of Skiddaw or any of the southern fronts of the hills are seen to flush into rose-red, and the village children, who go with their bilberry cans to the heights, can scarce be content to stay in these happy hunting grounds of black fruitage and emerald leaf, but must needs wander away to fill their arms with the glorious purple heath. All through the month the wonder grows, and ere its beauty has died away, the heather proper, or as we call it hereabout, the ling, will have purpled the uplands, and we shall have forgotten the

wonder of the July flush in the marvel of this multitudinous fell-flower and the miracle of August's colouring.

Yes; July has its compensations. It is true that the laurel flower loses its plumy sweetness early in the month, but another feathery blossom may be seen wherever the Spanish chestnut grows. It is true the wild roses of June have vanished, but July for our garden-grounds is the month of roses. Gorgeous and beautiful are the humblest homes with the roses of July. The Red Rambler is almost a weed for prodigal excess and luxury of growth, and that other red rambler, the 'Tropæolum Speciosum,' may be found in abundance upon any northern cottage wall where moist earth abounds. It is true that the rhododendrons have passed away, but the phloxes and the lilies, the campanulas and poppies, the nasturtiums and the picotees make amends, and "dull must be he of soul who can pass by" any Cumberland cottage garden by the wayside, or who in the long honey-scented eventide, while the bees are still filling the air with sound, can fail to stand and dream of paradise as he sees the white Madonna lilies lighting the dusk, while all the terrace wall behind is rosy red with wealth of bloom that darkens with the darkening eve.

But if the oxeye daisies have faded into comparative insignificance in the meadows as yet unmown, or, as we say in the north, unshorn, and if the coral-pink of the red sorrel is passing away,

one charm remains for us, the tender dove colour of the flowering grasses that grow in fulness of beauty with every day. As to the birds, though song is silent, eye music takes the place of the ear's delight, and the garden lawns and the fell-side lanes are filled with the entrancing melodies of young life in its first ecstasy of flight and movement. What can be prettier than to watch the wren lead out her company of tiny children, what more fascinating than to see the care which the flycatcher takes of her grey-speckled brood. There is such fearlessness in their first young days of innocent life. The brown-freckled robin, the tender-legged thrush are so confiding, dare to come so close, bring with them such a sense of Eden and the days of primal harmlessness, that one is grieved of heart to think not "what man has made of man," but what he has made of the birds and beasts about him. In these July days of young bird flight one is able to enter into close communion with these fledglings, and almost forgets the absence of song in the new joy and interest of observation. Yet if we are fond of the young bird life of July, there is one gulf that grows wider by reason of July between us and the so-called lower animals. One never so hates the cat, belled or unbelled, as in this month of young bird confidences.

As for the sheep upon the fells, they, too, in this month, though for a time they vanish to the vale, must thank July for coolness and for change

of colour. It is the month when the flock-masters bring their 'herdwicks' from the 'heaf' for clipping.

In the North we shear grass, but clip the sheep, and those who would see our fellside farm-folk at their best and cheeriest, should be present at a dale-clipping. It is not only that they will see throughout the day a continuous series of most picturesque grouping of men and dogs and sheep beneath the shade of the sycamore by the farm, but they will be initiated into all the secrets of the shepherd's book, with the lug-marks, smit-marks, and pop-marks by which one flock is known from another, and they will realise, as perhaps cannot be realised in any other survival of patriarchal custom, the neighbourliness and good brotherhood of our mountain sheep-masters. For no one ever yet hired a man to clip his sheep. Though he bring a thousand or more to the clipping-stool, the whole work will be the work of friends, who come from far over hill and dale to lend a hand at clipping-time.

July, though it rob the fells for a few days of the bleating of the sheep, sends back to the fellsides an added gift of life and movement. For where before by reason of the reek and smoke of Lancashire and Yorkshire the sheep in their grimy coats were scarcely seen, now bright shining with milk-white fleeces the flocks dapple the fells and flash into light and shadow among the bracken-streams.

I use that word streams advisedly. In July,

when all the mountains put on green apparel, when even the heather loses all its sombre deadness and ere the coming of the bloom in August seems about to be green-natured once again, the bracken now in its full growth, may be seen as it were in torrents of dark verdure flowing from the purple screes and sweeping to the vale. The July gift of darkness to the bracken frond brings with it a certain glossiness also, and the effect of sunshine at a certain angle upon these glossy brackens is to turn them to a metallic lustre, so that the bracken streams appear at times to be veritable torrents of silver.

The artist who comes to paint a lakeland landscape in July feels out of heart at the beginning of the month. There is such sameness of colouring. All the fine gradations and varieties of leafage that May and June delighted in have passed away. It is true that the Scotch fir and the spruce have put forth their tufted shoots and appear multicoloured. It is true that the ash tree still stands in lighter green than the sycamore or the larch in the background, but the fellside up to the skyline is monotonous in colouring, for the vivid bilberry has become dead green also, and the monotone of mountain-tint infects the vale. But let the artist wait till the middle of July before he puts his easel by in disappointment, for the artist has a friend who, with only a shining piece of iron in hand, can, as if by magic, give back variety of colour to the lower fell and valley.

Painter and mower in one, the haymaker of the lakes can in a single day turn green to grey, and in another day can paint the landscape vivid green by giving to delighted eyes the emerald of the aftermath. Before July is out, the dead green of the upper fells is made to stand in strong contrast to the vivid verdure of the new mown valley. Wordsworth speaks of "spots of stationary sunshine," indeed one can only think of those gleaming fields from which the hay has been taken as washed with emerald that is gold with perpetual sun; and nothing can exceed the magical effects of these gleaming visions of translucent greenness seen through rifts of purple mist or hung on far-off mountain walls of deepest blue.

The hay-harvest is the principal harvest of the Lake Country, and just as the sheep-clipping of July adds to the kindly fellowship between farm and farm by reason of the demand for mutual help, so the hay-making, with its call for hands from the neighbouring farms to help at the hay in broken weather cements that friendship and keeps all neighbours kin.

It seems a pity that the girl-folk who work in the hay do not wear the short sleeve or the sun-bonnet that one sees in Switzerland. We lose a good deal of the picturesqueness of the hay-field in consequence, but the men still wear the trousers turned up at the knee above the grey-blue stocking, which gives colour, and I doubt if anywhere in England one can see such stalwart mowing done

as here. Compare the scythe of the Lake Country farmer with that of the Swiss peasant. With nearly four times its length of blade, this great sweeping scimitar of the north, as the mower mows down the field, leaves behind it an open lane, in which a waggoner and his horses might pass. In one thing only are the Swiss and the Cumbrian mountaineer alike. They both 'scale the hay,' as we call it, that is scatter it for drying by means of their hands. People from the South seem always astonished at the use by our haymakers of the little wooden rake—here, too, they and the Swiss people are at one; the idea of forking over a field seems unknown to our Northern peasants. In the Midlands and South the use prevails of putting the grass into large haycocks, which seem like miniature ricks—in our Lake Country this is never done, but no matter how threatening the weather is, they put it into small haycocks, and the reason is not far to seek; they know that the rain-storm, however heavy, will soon be past, and they therefore arrange matters so that they may 'brek' the hay, as they call it, and 'scale' it again at a minute's notice.

If one is asked what is the peculiar beauty of July, one replies the effects of sunlight on the fells at eventide. There is then, owing to the green richness from base to sky-line, a sense of prodigal life and fertility which 'neath the westering sun loses its heaviness of tone, and the white flocks sparkle on the mountain's breast, and the deep

lilac shadows grow and move. Out of the golden west the clanging rookery passes overhead, the black-headed gull laughs in the silence as it ranges the fellside or meadow for the evening moth and winged creatures of the dusk, and a solitary lamb bleats from the crag; all else is hushed and still. Then colour goes out of the soft green drapery of the mountain sides,—the vast curtain hung from middle heaven, and one feels the July gloaming has come. Suddenly the tapestry of the hills is filled with light, the shadows reappear, the grey shales burn into gold and purple red, and a new heaven and a new earth seems given unto men. The faint mist-wreath upon Helvellyn flushes into pink, and far away at the zenith, like a flight of flamingoes, tiny cloudlets sail with rosy wings. The loveliest half-hour of the long day in July is the half-hour of afterglow; and happy the man who finds himself upon our lakeland fells with prospect to the north and west when evening falls.

But let not the wanderer think that dawn has less of wonder, less of soul. To walk and see the long lake shine like a mirror while all the woods and hills stand clear reflected, to feel the fragrance of the hay, as the dew rises, filling the air, to watch the fresh-fledged martins try their wings in the last week of bright July, to rove before the village is awake the ferny heights of such a fell as Loughrigg Fell, or to wander along the white road by the lake side before it is plagued with dust of motor or loud with tootling horn, all this is the

gift of a July dawn—and blessed are they who receive it thankfully.

There is magic and a sense of second youth about these July mornings, and though the month has lost its crown of flowers and its chorus of song, there are few hearts that pass by dale and hill in middle month at early morn who do not feel, as they gaze across the emerald meadows whence the hay has been shorn—a hint of fairy-land, and the witchery of some Orphic power that here " has made a second Spring."

A LAKE COUNTRY SHEEP-CLIPPING.

As one descends into the Wythburn valley from the Dunmail Raise, and passes from out the shadow of the elm and sycamore beside the stone which keeps alive the memory of the horse " whose only fault was dying," one's eye travels along the slope of Helvellyn to the far blue buttress-end of Lonscale Crag beyond wan Thirlmere and the valley of St. John, and coming back on the western side of the valley, it pauses for a moment by Raven Crag; thence led on by the sky-line to a kind of Raven Crag in miniature, one notes beyond the green slopes of Steel Fell how the top of Rough Crag seems peopled with watchmen. These are the stone ' men,' as they are called, that shepherds have piled up on the outlying crags above the West-Head Farm.

These ' maen ' or ' men ' take us back to a very far-off time—a time when there was war at the gate of the hills, a time when it could never be known how soon the next heaping of stones on the battle-cairn there in the Raise ' Gap,' as it is locally called, would take place. And as in mediæval Border fastnesses, dummy spearmen stood upon the ramparts, so doubtless in the British times of tribal warfare the shepherds hereabout would build their stone ' men ' in semblance of those who kept watch and ward for the foemen who were bound for the pass.

But to-day this Thirlmere valley is a vale of peace, and we are on an errand of peace to a chieftain shepherd of the dale, who, though by his name and the blue eye of him, is from Viking stock, comes from forelders who have long ago let the war die out of their blood, and except when called to the Marches for Border defence, have never taken bow or spear in hand since the day when Saxon Edmund and Malcolm of Scotland clashed at the mountain gate hard by, and all the men of the ' city ' or ' sitting ' near, obeyed the call to arms.

We can reach West-Head by turning off at the left at the bottom of the pass, and following the new Manchester road till we see a white farm on our left, we can turn up the fell-track by a young Scotch-fir plantation, and so gain the home ' intake ' and the farm. But the best way to reach our destination is to go on by the coach to the Nag's

Head at Wythburn, and then passing into the meadow just at the north end of the inn, we strike across the vale for the farm on the fellside right in front of us. There is no missing the farm. Its long grey barn, its yellow-washed triple-porched house front, which is a continuation of the barn, its terraced wall, its sycamore that shelters the farm-yard are unmistakeable. And what a delightful field-path it is that leads athwart the valley, and crossing the Wythburn beck and the new road, winds up to the hospitable house by the little sign-post that tells us that there is rest and refreshment there for the lake-wanderer.

I do not know any part of the Thirlmere vale wherefrom such a view of Thirlmere's beauty, backed by the blue hills to the north, can be obtained, as from the meadow through which the beck sings merrily on its way to the mere. The wild rose is in the hedge, the loosestrife and the meadowsweet "with undulating censer prodigal," people the bank; oxeye daisies and deep red salad-burnet shine beside us. A 'bessy dooker,' or water ouzel, shoots beneath the little bridge, and the troutlets pass like shadows through sunny crystal in the pool.

But we must away up the hill, noting how Helvellyn, with its flowing mantle of fern and shale, grows in magnificence, how Caw rises up like a pyramid of cobalt to the north, and Lonscale lies in bluebell-beauty against a silver sky.

The home intake is reached, and we are soon

sitting beside a porch bowered with white roses, having a "downreet good crack wi t'maister," as he is called, the stalwart king-shepherd of the western fell. Next Monday, the second Monday in July, will be by use immemorial the West-Head Farm Clipping, and as the 'fly' has not been troublesome this year, the day holds. There have been years when, because of the 'mauk,' they have had to forestall the date, and clip the flocks by instalments. I say flocks because, as old Thompson tells me, there is on the 4000 acres of fell that run back from Rough Head to beyond the Langdale pikes, which he holds of the Manchester Corporation, two flocks, each keeping separate heafs, the West-Head flock proper and the Stenken flock, which can be known apart by the 'smit' and 'ear-mark.'

"What are your marks?" I asked; and the shepherd-lord in good honest Cumbrian speech answered: "Westheed is 'Pop eben on top of showder, and t'lug mark is upper-key-bitted nar, stuffed far.' Stenken is 'Smit on nar rubs, pop on taal-heed, and t'lug marks is under-key-bitted nar, rit at far.'" Which being interpreted, meant that the West Head flock had a red dot on the top of the shoulder, and from the upper lobe of the near ear, a piece cut out or 'bitted,' while the far ear was cropped. But the Stenken flock had a streak-mark on the near ribs, and a round dot where the tail joined the body; while for ear-mark the under-lobe of the near ear had a piece cut out of it or

'bitted,' while the far ear was split down from the point or 'ritted.'

That word lug-mark, how it took one back to primæval times when the Viking 'Log-Sayer' or Law-Sayer stood on the hill of the clearing at Lug or Leg-Beorg-Thwaite—Legburthwaite of to-day—and spoke the logs or laws in the ears of all the gathered tribesmen, or to times older still, when the Roman slave who made the road to Pavement End or Causeway Foot was branded in the ear so that his lawful master might have some sign in the flesh of his human chattel.

"How many sheep have you?" I asked.

"About 1300," was the reply.

"And do you get them clipped in one day?"

"Ay, best part of 'em. Fwoakes is varra nebborly hereaboot, and we moastly-what hev' as many as twenty shears gaen at once," my friend replied, in his honest Doric.

"How many can they clip in a day?"

"Well, a good hand shud manish fifty by reights."

"And when do they begin, at daylight?" I said.

"Naay, naay, they dra oop aboot ten, and clip while light lasts. I've known supper as laate as half-past nine."

"And when do you collect the sheep for clipping, and when is the washing done?"

"There's no washing now," he replied, going back to the less interesting 'English as she is

spoke.' "Manchester Corporation have forbidden it. It would not do very well to give Manchester water a taste of our Herdwick fleeces, so we content ourselves with dipping at latter end of April or far end of May, all but rams and lambs, and we in general dip them at clipping time."

"And what about laatin' the sheep for clipping?" I said, using, as I thought, a good old Cumberland expression for collecting the flock.

"Aw, getherin' you mean," said the blue-eyed shepherd lord. "Aw, we moastly what gang off to t'fells to gether t'sheep efter dinner o' Sunday. Six men and half a score of dogs, and brings them into t'home intake for t'night. Clipping takes place in yon yard by sheep-house garth, and wool gets stored up there in the byre-loft as soon as it's 'fleeced.' We caw tying up wool into t'bundles fleecing it hereabout."

"What is the price of wool this year?" I said, "for I know it's gone up."

"Ay, ay, it's gone up a gay bit," he said. "I've been bid eleven and sixpence a staen. There's seventeen pounds to the staen in wool, you know, but I'se keeping on. I've selt it at eighteen and sixpence a staen in my time, and year before last it was down to three shilling. But yan nivver knaws," he added.

"Fadder, where's whistle?" said a bright-eyed woman, whom I knew to be the daughter-in-law. "Dinner's ready, and men must cum in."

He handed her the whistle, and in a moment I heard the pleasant call of the piping to farm hands to midday meal shrill out and fill the silent vale, and with the shepherd-lord's last words in my ears, " But you'll likely be coming to see t'clipping next Monday," I turned my back on the pleasant farm, upon its terrace high-lifted over the sunny fields, coral pink and ripe to hay-harvest, and down to the beck and away to the Nag's Head to catch the coach I went.

Next Monday I left the Keswick valley betimes, and after an eight miles' walk through late roses, by a moss scented with the sweet-gale, and under fell-slopes fragrant with the bracken, through woods no longer vocal with song, but filled with twitterings and the flash of young wings, I passed on by the sinuous western road above Thorold's mere, which mirrored all the slopes of Helvellyn in his still waterflood, and leaving the pine cluster of the ancient settlement of the Vikings behind me, and crossing the beck that comes from Harrop Tarn, I was soon at the gateway leading from the main road to West-Head.

Already the shepherds were stirring about in the home ' intake,' and the sound of Herdwick voices and the barking of dogs told me that sheep-clipping day had come. I knew breakfast and welcome was awaiting me at the farm, but I also knew how ' throng,' as we say in the North, all the women-bodies would be with preparation for the midday meal and supper, so away I went across

the valley to the Nag's Head for breakfast and for rest. Thence returning I made my way with two of the twenty clippers, and sat down on the bench in the sun upon the terrace to wait the arrival of the rest. This from Busk in Great Langdale, that from 'Wa' end' Little Langdale, this from Watendlath, that from Stonethwaite in Borrowdale, this from Thirlspot, and that from Brig end at Legburthwaite.

One by one they came up, wasted no words, just nodded to the shepherd-lord with a peculiar sideways nod that means familiarity, and passed on to the shadow of the sycamore tree in the farmgarth, and selecting the shepherd's stool, placed it so that the sun was behind them. Some of them turned their trousers up to the knee, and stripped to their shirts; others put on white linen jackets and overalls, then taking a little hone from their pockets and giving their shears a final sharpening up, they bestrid their sheep-stools, and the day's work began. 'Ruddy,' they shouted, and the gate that gave entrance to a great pen at the back of the house opened, and young lads brought in their fleecy charges, and lifting them like featherweights, and turning them on their backs as they did it, flung them with head towards the shearer on to the long stool.

The shearer tucks the head of the Herdwick under his left arm, and at once begins the process of 'oppening' his sheep 'oot.' Then very dexterously he clips all along under the belly and

round the neck, and, at a nod or a word, a young lad seizes the legs of the sheep that had before tossed aimlessly about in the air, and ties them securely. Then the sheep is turned on its side, and the shearing begins in earnest. Right along the flank to the middle line of back go the shears with a click and a sigh, and the left hand turns the wool over as the right hand clips. The fleece as it falls over goes from grey to ivory and gold, and when the middle line of the back is reached, the shearers turn the sheep on to its shorn side and repeat the process.

What strikes one is the silence that is over all. There is no bleating in the pen behind the farm of the sheep that wait their turn. The prisoner upon the shearing-bench is silent—yea, as a sheep before its shearer is dumb—what an observer the old Hebrew prophet was! The men are as silent as the sheep.

The shearer says 'nowt,' and the dogs, tired out with yesterday's exertions, sleep in the sun.

"Pop here," says the clipper, and a lad runs to the cauldron that is sending up its pungent fragrance from midst of the blue curls from the wood-smoke fire beneath, and bringing a stick of the red-hot marking mixture, strikes a 'pop eben on top o' showder,' and at the same time unties the bands from the prisoner's legs. The shearer gives a slight push with his hand to the recumbent body of the shorn one, and light as air the white uncoated sheep leaps from the stool and away

to the gate of the pen at the other end of the garth it goes to join its companions. Sometimes the word "Saulve here," is uttered, and one sees a strong hand rub in some puissant ointment upon a sore place where the flies have been busy; but the 'mauk' has not been very troublesome this year, and the majority of the sheep get off with the "pop eben on top o' showder," or "smit on nar rubs and pop on tail-heed."

Meanwhile two of the knowing shepherds have been told off in the fold by the sheep-house to dip rams and lambs. Put into a sloping pen, with rails on either side, there is only one chance of escape for them, and that is the deep well of strongly-smelling dipping-stuff at the low end. They take their bath silently enough, for the shepherd holds their mouths tightly closed lest they get a draught of poison in the process, but once free of their deadly bath there is giving of tongue, which does not cease when they go away to shake and dry themselves in the sun. If it is hard for a lamb to find its mother who has been newly shorn; it is harder for a mother to find its lamb newly dipped, and a great deal of question and answer in sheep language goes forward.

But we must go back to the shearers. No sooner is the fleece off the back of the patient silent ones than a girl steps forward, takes it, holds it in mid-air, folds it very carefully, turning in first one side then another, and begins to roll it up from the tail end, then with a deft movement of hands

A SHEEP-CLIPPING AT THE LAKES.

she ' fleeces it,' that is, takes the part of the fleece at the neck end, twists it round the body of the ball that has been wrapped together, and makes a bundle of it. She carries it along the terrace to the corner beneath the byre loft, and when the great heap has nearly reached the byre loft height, a lad goes up the ' stee ' and another stands at the bottom, and a grand game of catch who catch can goes on, till the grey wool mountain has melted away, and the fleece is stored for the market in security.

Meanwhile the women-bodies have been stirring about getting ready the dinner for all the willing helpers, and soap and basins and towels have made their appearance as by magic on the low wall of the terrace in front of the house. It is a quarter to two, a whistle sounds, shears are dropped one by one as the shearing of the patient under operation is complete, and the stalwart clippers wash hands and faces at the well and pass up the stone steps that lead to the upper room—the farm loft—to find the shepherd-lord standing with carving-knife in hand behind a great piece of boiled beef, which, with pease-pudding smoking hot, is the ' pièce de resistance ' of the meal.

What strikes one again is the silence of the feast. Now and then a man will say something about an old friend who is missed for the " furst time for a gay lock o' years " at the clipping stool, will talk of the weight of the wool or condition of the sheep, or will speak of the absence of fly, but

for the rest, the meal is eaten in silence, and the men, when they have finished up with a little bit of 'haver bread' and cheese, pass back to the sunshine out of the dim lit banqueting hall, to find white clay pipes and saucers of tobacco have replaced the wash-hand basins and the towels. A little rest in the sunshine, a whiff of tobacco all round, and away the fine-featured men go, back to the brotherly task of help, and with the slight intermission for tea and pasties, or tea and bread, which comes to them about six o'clock, they work on unweariedly till the sun has sunk beyond the hills, and it takes a keen eye to see the "pop eben on t' showder" at twenty paces.

Then the word 'supper is ruddy' is passed round, and away to the barn-loft they go, to find the rafters have been covered with red calico and sprigs of green have been stuck here and there, and candles and lanterns are ready lit, and a grand tea of cake and jam and bread and pastry, with a bit of cold meat,—for the clipping has been carried on late,—awaits them.

Supper is cleared away, and the girls from the neighbouring farms make their appearance. No clipping ever ended without a shepherd's dance, and heel and toe is the order of the day. The fiddle strikes up, and gaily the fiddle or concertina twangs a tune. Square-eights, polkas, quadrilles shake the floor, and wake up from their rest the old barn spiders and send them scurrying. How hot the air is, how the dust rises! But the spirits

of the dancers rise also, and the men are in too good training to mind the heat. A song! a song! and first one and then another, while the dancers pause, sings a song. What poor things the modern songs seem beside these ancient shepherd ditties! but the blue dawn is here, and, before they separate, the special song associated with the shepherds' clipping at West-Head must be given. All crowd in to take part in this, for it is a song and a scene in one. The head shepherd, the son of the house, is seated on a shearing-stool and given a glass of beer to hold. Then in a moment he is lifted shoulder-high, and the verses of the song are shouted out at so great a pace one cannot hear the words. The shepherd on the shearing-stool has no easy task. He has to try to empty the glass of beer whilst he is being carried round shoulder-high, before the song has been sung through. If he fails he must drink another.

They lift the shepherd, they break into chorus, such a chorus as may be heard far away across the vale, and as will float up Helvellyn's side and send the raven from the crag and "the fox to his lair in the morning":

"The shepherd's health it shall go round,
It shall go round, it shall go round,
The shepherd's health it shall go round,
Heigho, heigho, heigho!

"He that will this toast deny,
Before his face I justify,

Is fit for no good company,
Heigho, heigho, heigho!

"Hold the canny cup under your chin,
Open your mouth, let the liquor run in,
The more you drink the fuller your skin,
Let it go merrily down!"

But it is not the first time the shepherd has ridden the shepherd's stool, and though the singers race through the chorus and shake him 'no laal,' as they say, he has finished his glass and has no wager to pay, and again the words are shouted, and again the tune, as old as the words, is sung ere he is allowed to find his feet.

Then with cheers for the King, and health to the host, and good wishes that all friends may be spared to meet next clipping-time, away through the cool dawn and the dewy meadows go the shearers and the dancers, and the West-Head clipping is over.

AUGUST AT THE LAKES.

AUGUST is as changeful as April in its moods and mind. We never look upon it in the Lake Country as a month that can be depended upon for fair weather. And since the bulk of our visitors come to the English Lakes in August, the weather at the Lakes has won a bad name which a longer residence would have proved was not deserved. August is a month when, if it is fine during the day, it very often rains hard all night, and this is a gain to the lover of landscape as well as the bicyclist or the motor-maniac. But August has also an unfortunate way of beginning with fair promise at dawn and breaking her promises about two o'clock in the afternoon. How often does the unknowing visitor go to the hotel door and rub his hands with delight, take his seat in the coach and set forth with a belief that his way will be all sunshine to the end. He has not seen the fair white fleecy clouds roll up over the southern hills, but by noon the sun ceases to shine, the wind blows the dust along the roads, and by two o'clock a fine drizzle sets in that becomes a

downpour, and all the comfort he will get from the coach driver is the promise that " it'll likely git oot by t' evening, and it ull be a grand neet." The coachey is probably right. By about six the western heavens are filled with light, the great wreath of cumulus out west disparts, blue sky appears at the zenith, and such a gorgeous outshining is seen upon the hills as makes one believe that a new heaven and a new earth have been given to man, and all the dolorous sadness of the afternoon is forgotten in the glory and joy of the eventide.

August is a month of surprises. One day the clouds are leaden and lowering and the hills are wrapped in storm. The next day they stand clear and brilliant, with purple shadows filling all the coves and folds, and with rosy sunlight upon the heathery flanks, while great golden clouds lift up above the cobalt blue edges of the distant hills, and white galleons come sailing into seas of sapphire air and melt in the far-off blue.

As to colour, whilst the first week of August continues the green of July, and the aftermath of the mower still fills the vale and patches the fellsides with emerald, it is clear by the second week that a change is come upon the hills, and the universal sameness of tone that disappointed the artist in early July has given way before the magic colour of the month. There on the higher fells one might believe the scythe had been at work among the brackens. It is not till one has climbed

thither that one finds that this first misty gold is due to the change in the bilberry or blaeberry leafage.

But the colourist *par excellence* is not the bilberry, but the heather flower. Happy is he who sees the sunlight upon the slopes of Lonscale Fell, or who climbs in August by way of the path up to Raven Crag to the ancient British fort at Shoulthwaite Ghyll, or who passes over the heathery moorland between Coniston and Skelwith or betwixt Eskdale and Wastwater. It is not only that whilst the golden pollen floats up and fills the air with honey scent, he hears the "murmur of innumerable bees," but there is about the wealth of bloom such infinite variety of hue, now pale pink, now deepest rose, now coraline, now purple, that his eyes, if he is not colour blind, feast themselves with restful delight of change and wonder, and then, ah! who can describe it, the joy of the lying full length on the royalest and softest of purple broidered couches, to gaze out to blue hill slopes and green valley and shining roads and silver waterfloods. To have had an hour of heather-joy in a land where there is no fear of the anger of the gamekeeper or the danger of the sportsman's gun, and where the only living thing beside yourself is the Herdwick sheep, and the only track the little black line he and his brothers and sisters have made through the flowery tangle shoulder high from knoll to knoll, this warms the memory, this does good that lasts beyond the day.

There is not much flower life at the English Lakes besides the heather in the month of August. The harebells are passing, the honeysuckle fades, but bright are those golden gipsies the ragworts, and glorious are the vermilion berries of the mountain ash. Yet in the vale, the roadsides have in this month a beauty all their own. The Botticelli beauty, as I dare to call it, of the branching sprays of willow and ash and hazel, all the young succulent growth of the new wood that has been the summer gift to the untameable hedgerows. Fierce wild life that will not be controlled and laughs the hedges to scorn. How it delights in the August sun, how it dances in the August wind, how it makes one stop and draw breath to see so much of grace and beauty of leaf revealed on a single wand against blue sky.

But August has one flower for the rambler on the fells, a flower beloved by Faber the poet, a flower that we who live in the Lake Country gather with a kind of unnameable sadness, for we know that with it has come the ending of the flower time of the year—it is the Grass of Parnassus.

As for our gardens, the roses are passing, but the scent and beauty of phloxes fill them with a sense of Autumn, the balmy breath of the carnations and lilac lavender is shed abroad, and the colour of the hollyhock and the nasturtium makes us glad. We owe much to the nasturtium tribe. Who that has seen the 'tropaeolum speciosum' clinging to the northern side of a lakeland cottage

AN AUGUST DAY BY THE TARN-SIDE.

can ever forget it, and go where you will, that poor man's friend, the yellow and saffron and vermilion flower suggests exuberant spirits and vagrant jollity. There is one field flower that seems to keep a second springtime in its blood; this is the oxeye daisy, and in the mushroom days of August one may see the green fields suddenly pied again with it, but so sparsely that one is at a distance tempted to think of the narcissus fields of Switzerland. It is not till one comes upon a fresh green meadow thus dotted with these daisies that one realises the rare beauty of the flower.

But if the flowers have for the most part vanished, we have in August the first kindling of the Virginia Creeper into rosy fire, and many of the oak copses are gay with the second leafage of gold and red that flutters into colour and almost suggests that a new blossom time has come to the woodland.

As for the bird life, the birds of August are the martins and swallows, the young broods are on the wing, and the gladness of such dancing and fairy flickering about the sycamores as swallow flight and martins' wings can bestow is ours richly to enjoy. The wren's voice and the robin's may be heard; the flycatcher still sings about its second nest, but the joy of the bird world about our homes would have ceased but for the cheery starling. He, kind little maker of gladness, perched on the chimney top or on the cottage roof-ridge, runs through his ventriloquist tricks each dawn, and

conjures back for those who will listen scenes he has witnessed during the year. We hear the distant cockcrow at the farm, then the old man breaking stones at the roadside comes before us, a cart goes creaking by, a mower grinds his scythe at the stithy grindstone, the hammer clinks at the forge, and suddenly our hearts are caught away from homely village life, and we feel ourselves transported to far moorlands, and hear the curlew call. It is not till the silence of August has fallen upon us that the starling's continuation of good spirits and genial content with life can be fully known—our appreciation of it waxes with the waning year. It is true that the clamour of the rookery, as it passes through the sunny haze of August morning to its feeding ground, or comes sailing back through the clear sky evening light to its rest, is still one of the voices of the vale that helps our hearts, but as far as the rooks are concerned afield, it would seem that in August "long barren silence squares with their desire," and it is not till the mast falls and the acorn harvest is ripe that we have them filling the air with their talkativeness.

Away on the fells, in the crags and crannies, the sound of the falcon's brood crying from their nest may now be rarely heard; the ravens bark and the buzzards mew high in air, and on occasions the grouse whirr from our feet. But it is to the flocks that are back again on the heaf, and are gradually losing all their silver whiteness as they pass through the smoke-grimed bents, that we owe

the voices that give our fells perpetual cheer in August. Once towards the ending of the month the shepherds go to bring back the flocks to the farm that they may draft out from them the male lambs, and the farmyards are thronged with the black-faced multitude, but for this single visit, the valleys are deserted of sheep, and since the hay cart, except in the highest valleys, has ceased to go afield, there is little life astir. Here a man will be seen trimming his hedges, there opening a sough. But not till the last week of the month will the corn patch or oat patch be ready for the scythe, and the sheep-clipping and 'hay-harvest,' as it is called, once over, the farmer's busy time in the fields has come to an end; he must now just turn to his calves and his beasts and get them ready for the local cattle show in September. It is this comparative rest from farm labour that makes it possible for the farms to welcome holiday folk in August. The fashion of 'tekking in parties' has rapidly grown of late, and where a few years ago if one asked the farmer's wife if she would let her rooms, she would have answered: "Nay, nay, I'll not can be boddered wi' sec like," to-day there is hardly a farm in the dales that will not open its doors to the far-comer. The woman-body at a lakeland farm is 't'maister,' and rightly—there are not a shrewder or more capable race of farm wives in Britain—and she has come to look upon the farm guest as her particular perquisite. This opening of the farm door to the stranger is full

of good. It enables people who have been in "prisoning cities pent" to understand the joy in continual change of labour and the need of resourcefulness, which is the portion of those who prefer to wrestle with wind and storm, and work with the sun and rain in the out-of-way quiet places of the earth. It enables the children of the city to come face to face with the sheep and cattle and dog-life and hen-life of the farm, and to take back with them the beginning of that love for country sight and sound which will haunt them all their days. It is an untold blessing this farm welcome to the stranger in his holiday month, and the good is reciprocated. Friendships are made which last for life between the elder visitors and the farm host and hostess; echoes of the larger world are by talk and book and newspaper imported; new interests are left as a legacy when the guests depart, and some of the pleasantest correspondence I have been privileged to see are the letters at Christmas or New Year, or on some family anniversary, such as a birthday or a wedding, between the far-comers and the dalesmen in their fellside homes.

August for the Lakeland visitor has many interests other than the beauty of hill and lake shore. In August, generally the first Saturday in August, the quaint old Rushbearing ceremony is held in the Grasmere vale in honour of St. Oswald. On the third Thursday of August Grasmere sports and wrestling take place. On the day following

these, the sheep-dog trials at Troutbeck, on the breast of Applethwaite Fell, and a hound trail, will call the countryside together, and on the last Saturday in August the wrestling-ring is pitched at Pooley Bridge.

These gatherings are worth going to, not only for the sake of the prowess of the wrestlers or the skill of the pole-leaper, or the endurance of the guide in the fell race, but for sight of the country-folk who are spectators of the games. The cheery kindliness, the chaff in honest dialect, the quiet, gentlemanly behaviour, the fine faces of the men always impress the visitors, and I know no gathering, unless it be a famous ram-fair, at which may be seen collected together in such numbers the men of the stuff that Wordsworth's Michael was made of, the bronze-faced mountain shepherds of the North.

As for the peculiar beauty of the month, it cannot be said that August evenings can compare with the twilights of June or July, but there is a tenderness about the August dawn which appeals to one in a peculiar way. It speaks to us with a kind of September tone. One goes forth into its bright beauty with a sense that it is all too good to last,—the sense of coming change that one cannot help feeling when one sees the first yellow leaf upon the lawn beneath the lime-tree shade. And this same sense of approaching change, which gives an added interest and pathos to the month, is accentuated by the colour of the bents or the long

grasses on the upper fells. Not observable till the sun is near to setting, we see the mountain heads suddenly shine out all golden-haired—the bleaching of the fell-tops has begun. But if we are in August not blessed with skies of steady blue, at least there are 'goings on' in heaven which give us large compensation. The thunder clouds of August, that roll up to fill the valleys with purple night and blot the mountains from sight, which nevertheless do not break with flash of the levin-bolt to sound of thunder and torrent of rain, but which, having filled all hearts with fear and expectancy, dissolve and pass away into silver air and clearest shining heavens—these are a continual wonder and surprise to the Lakeland wanderer on our August hills.

AT THE GRASMERE RUSHBEARING.

1905.

Who does not know of the Grasmere Rushbearing? Honoured by the poets, Wordsworth in his sonnet, 'Rural Ceremony,' gave to this day,

"Of annual joy, one tributary lay,"

and the Laureate was spoken of as the 'chief supporter' of the rustic festival; while the Rushbearing hymn, which Owen Lloyd composed for a like ceremony at the Ambleside Chapelry, is still sung annually at the mother church of Grasmere.

The Rushbearing has been in the past year

honoured of artists also. All who visited the Academy this year will have felt refreshed by that happy group of singing children who escort the Rushbearers' sheet through the village, and will thank the painter of the 'Hopeless Dawn,' Mr. Bramley—himself an inhabitant of the dale—for having given us in that picture a 'Hopeful Afternoon.'

Many memories of gladness and joy linger in the hearts of those who have joined in the village procession, and if there is sadness to think how friends so often met are met no more beside the Rotha and its ancient House of Prayer, each year calls us who remain with clearer voice to the festival.

Grasmere is happy in having three annual occasions for the gathering of friends from far and near. One is the village Dialect Play in January, the other is the Wrestling Olympiad in August, but the third, and in some respects the most interesting, is the Rushbearing, which is held on the Saturday nearest the festival of the patron saint of the Church of St. Oswald.

The quaint old custom of recarpeting the church for the convenience and comfort of the worshippers with native rush, who at Grasmere until 1840 had only pounded earth to stand or kneel upon, was pretty general in the North Country; but it does not seem that it was made a village festival at many churches, and at the present day this festival only survives at Grasmere and three other places

in the Carlisle Diocese—at Musgrave, at Warcop, and at Ambleside. Whether St. Oswald of the white and incorruptible hand was specially to be honoured by the Rushbearing ceremony we cannot say. It is certain that in Yorkshire the villagers of Warton associated the village Rushbearing with his name, and after leaving their bundles of rushes, decked with crowns of cut paper and flowers, in the church, they went off to the Maypole and mightily enjoyed themselves.

It is, however, interesting to note that the Rushbearing in the Carlisle Diocese still clings about the memories of St. Oswald, St. Theobald, and St. Columba; and this suggests a survival of customs connected with the Northern Church. As to date, though by Act of Convocation in 1530 all such festivals were ordered to be kept on the first Sunday in October, it is clear that the Grasmere folk have felt that tradition, the demand of labour conditions, and all the voices of Nature were of stronger compulsion than Acts of Convocation. Hereabout, near St. Oswald's Day, from early times the shepherds had finished sheep-clipping and hay-grass getting, and had time to give a day to going off to cut 'sieves' or rushes; and as these were for service in the parish church, they would naturally choose a Saturday nearest the festival of the patron saint.

St. Oswald fell in battle on August 5th, 642, and those of us who come together to the Grasmere Rushbearing may not only be linking ourselves in

mind and thought with his day, but may go back to an earlier date, for it is not impossible that in this Grasmere Rushbearing we have an echo of the Floralia; the Roman children who once gathered rushes and ragwort and loosestrife by the lake shore whilst their fathers worked at the Roman road hard by, may perhaps have kept holiday as the Grasmere children to-day keep holiday, with flowers in their hands. Or, again, in British times there may have been some annual rejoicing for deliverance from the enemy, whereof that stern battle cairn in the Gap of Dunmail Raise holds the secret. Certain it is that we who join the rush-bearing procession to-day have echoes from a very far past in our ears, and, whether the festival be, as some aver, a bit of mediæval church life, and a remnant of a mystery play, or a relic of British or Roman feast of thanksgiving, we feel we are honouring an historic past, and are sharers of the joy of centuries, as we meet.

The reason of the hint of the mystery or miracle play will be evident when we gather for the procession. There on the church wall the children and elders will deposit their 'bearings'—no longer sheafs of rush, but elaborate floral devices—and amongst them will be seen David's harp, St. Oswald's hand that could not see corruption, and the serpent on the pole—he, too, of rushes, deftly made, with rowan berries for his fiery eyes. There is an old-world flavour about the whole proceeding. The very tune they march to is Jimmy Dawson's,

the village fiddler for forty-six years, who wrote his tune in the early years of last century; and as for the gingerbread, Mrs. Dixon's gingerbread—Mrs. Dixon of Dove Cottage fame—which is given after the procession to each rushbearer, with a golden penny to boot, it, too, is no modern invention, for the Grasmere parish register of 1830 chronicles the fact that gingerbread for rushbearers cost the churchwardens 6s. 8d. in that year of grace.

The earliest account given of the rushbearing at Grasmere is by Clarke, in his *Survey of the Lakes,* published in 1780. The rushbearing was in his day an autumnal affair. He writes: "About the latter end of September a number of young women and girls (generally the whole parish) go together to the tops of the hills to gather rushes; these they carry to the church, headed by one of the smartest girls in the company. She who heads the procession is 'stiled' the Queen, and carries in her hand a large garland, and the rest usually have nosegays. The Queen then goes and places her garland upon the pulpit, where it remains till after the next Sunday; the rest then straw their rushes upon the bottom of the pews, and at the church door they are met by a fiddler, who plays before them to the public-house, where the evening is spent in all kinds of merriment."

The jigging that went on in Jonathan Bell's Red Lion hayloft was fast and furious, but the folk never forgot that Sunday came next to Saturday,

and when the Grasmere rector used to send his servant as a matter of form to the improvised ball-room with the message, "Master's respects, and will thank you to lend him the fiddle-stick," Jimmy Dawson or his successor, Anthony Hall, recognised the signal, and the rushbearing dance came to an end.

To-day, wrestling in the Red Lion field has taken the place of the dance, and the children's day is kept on a Monday, when tea and toys is the order of the day. In the olden time four Grasmere girls carried round the village a white sheet decorated with ribands and tissue paper, and filled with rushes and flowers. To-day not the least interesting feature in the procession is the little company of six children in grass-green and white frocks, with their white leghorn hats garlanded with stag's horn moss; these head the procession, and walk behind the band, they carry a handspun sheet with rushes in it, and bear in their hands, as sceptres or wands of office, tall reeds from the lake.

All Friday the drifts of rain had been performing a kind of skirt-dance on the Grasmere mountain walls, and St. Oswald's Day broke unpropitiously; but "you nivver kna's if t'day 'll not get oot in t' Lake Country." So the mothers put the last frills to the new frocks, and the children worked away at the trimming of their rushbearings; the wind went to the north, the sun shone out, and a marvellous rainbow laid its banner of hope upon the fellside east of the valley. At half-past four

the customary crowds and the customary photographers had gathered in the Church-road to inspect the 'bearings' which had been arranged for view upon the churchyard wall. Amongst the spectators one noticed the Bishop of the diocese and his Suffragan, with Dons from Oxford and Cambridge, holiday merchants, the rector and clergy from neighbouring parishes, and all the gentlefolk and people of the village. Then the six eldest girls of the day-school came from the Rectory near by—that rectory sacred to lovers of Wordsworth as the place of the poet's one-time home—bearing in their hands the rush sheet broidered with stag's horn moss, and filled with rushes and flowers. The banner-bearer of St. Oswald took up his station before them, and the schoolmaster went along the wall to give the golden penny to the rushbearers and the ticket entitling each to two pieces of the immemorial gingerbread. Suddenly the 'bearings' on the wall became animated and left their stations, and in another minute or two the procession of rushbearers had been formed, the village band struck up, and away they went, with glad hearts and gay floral trophies, round the village to the tune of 'Jimmy Dawson's March,' and back to the grey old church for service.

WRESTLING IN THE NORTH COUNTREE.

Wrestling, or, as it is pronounced in the north, 'warstlin',' 'worstlin',' or 'wrustlin',' has a very ancient pedigree. In Edward the Sixth's time the giant 'Herd' went from Westmoreland to wrestle before the King, and won by his prowess house and home in his native vale. The doings of the 'Cork lad of Kentmere' still echo in the Troutbeck valley. In his day Sunday was the day given over to wrestling throughout the northern countries, and in the time of the Commonwealth, the 'Associated ministers of the churches of Cumberland and Westmoreland' issued a manifesto "suspending from the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, all scandalous persons that shall upon the Lord's Day use any dancing, football, stoolball, or wrestling." The document issued in 1656 was not conciliatory, for it spoke of the counties "as hitherto a proverb and byword in respect of ignorance and prophaneness," and it failed of its effect. Wrestling was still the order of the day, and not only tended to health by keeping men from the alehouses, but indirectly helped to preserve the village greens.

It was not, however, till the middle of the eighteenth century that wrestling, which not improbably came into the country with our Viking forefathers in the ninth century, became a fashion as well as a passion. Old and young took part in it. The champion went to church wearing his

challenge belt on the Sunday after his victory, and, by way of challenge, displayed his decoration at a neighbouring church the Sunday following. 'Stone Carrs,' near Greystoke, was a famous meeting-place for Mid-Cumbrians. Melmerby and Langwathby were other noted villages for wrestlers in the East—the Melmerby 'Rounds' took place on Old Midsummer's Day, the Langwathby on New Year's Day. The former went forward uninterruptedly till 1850, the latter till 1870, when George Steadman, to be the future champion heavy-weight wrestler of the North, won his spurs at the last meeting held on Langwathby Green.

It was not till 1807 that the Swifts, at Carlisle, became a famous ring, and Arlecdon and Lorton and Egremont became famous meeting-places about the same time for men of the West. Though, truth to say, wherever the fell shepherds met for sheep gathering or sheep exchange, whether it was on the top of High Street or on Mosedale, wrestling would be part of the programme, and the Bridewains or Bidden Weddings generally included wrestling in the programme of the entertainment.

As for the country south of the Raise, the Ferry, on Windermere, seems to have been the principal ring for the Lake district till Christopher Wilson of Elleray, got up a ring at Ambleside, and by becoming the donor of a champion's belt and money prizes attracted the countryside thither. When he left the Lake country, the Ferry sports

became again the principal gathering ground, and it was not till the Grasmere Ring grew into a fashion that the Ferry was eclipsed.

Grasmere is to-day the Olympia for wrestling in the North. There was a time when it was ten chances to one that Keswick would be the centre. The ring on the Swifts, at Carlisle, was closed for four years, and the wrestling was removed to Crow Park in 1818, by the banks of Derwentwater. Then and for a few subsequent years, largely owing to the exertions of Mr. Pocklington of Barrow, Keswick became the gathering ground of the most important wrestling in the North.

It may be safely said that the Grasmere sports to-day, in so far as they are a popular gathering for the gentlefolk of the county, owe their popularity to Christopher Wilson. He not only made a practice of trying a fall with the winner at the Ambleside or Ferry Ring, but, backed up by the son of the Bishop of Llandaff, of Calgarth, Richard Watson, he got all his friends amongst the resident gentry to take an interest in the wrestling and to attend the meetings. Still in the farm houses may be seen the simple challenge belt presented by the steward of the Windermere Regatta, and still men speak of the " girt professor wha was a vara bad un to lick."

But Christopher Wilson's personal example has not been followed, and it is a thousand pities that we never see in the wrestling ring at Grasmere the gentleman amateur as opposed to the pro-

fessional wrestler. This is mainly owing to the fact that this grandest of games of skill has never been fostered at any of our public schools, and the sport has been left to the fellside shepherd and the farmer or miner of the countryside.

It is a good thing for the nobility and gentry to be interested in this noble athletic sport. It is a better thing for England that the love of wrestling is not dependent upon their patronage. The really interested spectators at Grasmere are not the carriage folk who come together largely to see one another, but the fellsiders who sit on the grass or the wooden seats round the ring. There are doubtless amongst these spectators descendants of Dodd, Faucett, Richardson, Litt, Miles and James Dixon, Rowland and John Long, Mackereth, Nicholson, Dennison, Todd, Robinson, Weightman, M'Laughlin, Wilson, Longmire, Walker, Chapman, who feel a kind of ancestral joy in their blood at sight of a sport that once brought honour to their fellside farm; and though the days of William Richardson of Caldbeck, the winner of 240 belts, whom Professor Wilson spoke of in 'Maga' as belted Will, and the days of Longmire, whom Charles Dickens saw win his 175th belt, are past, one may see in many a farm's best parlour the broad belt and the carefully-compiled list of wrestling matches, written out with elaborate penmanship and glazed and framed. And never is the 'crack' so keen as when the wrestling bouts are spoken of, and the champion descendant to the

third and fourth generation fights all the old-time battles o'er again.

In Christopher Wilson's day, a politician passing through the county at a time when a contest for Parliamentary honours was 'agate' between Lord Lowther and Mr. Brougham, heard nothing of their claims; the only contest that really mattered lay between Thomas Ford of Egremont, and William Richardson of Caldbeck, who, though he knew it not, were about to wrestle at Carlisle, and he came away feeling Lord Lowther would certainly be ousted by one of these men of nc landed property, and probably Radicals. The fact was that, for the moment, the public of the North cared a great deal more whether Richardson would win his fall at the Carlisle wrestling, than whether Brougham or Lord Lowther would take his seat in the House.

It is true that football and cricket have tended to oust wrestling from the towns, but in the far-off fellside farms the barn floor still sees twinkle of legs and feet, and echoes to the result of 'hype' and 'buttock' in spare times after work. And though the thirst for money prizes and the gambling craze has brought in 'barneying' and the buying and selling of falls in professional rings, there is still, as may be witnessed at Grasmere, a large number of the breeches and flannel-shirt order who have no wish to be promoted to singlet and drawers, and who love the sport for the sport's sake, and wrestle for pure joy in the skill of the game.

These money prizes are not an unmixed good. The old days of the 'Stone Carrs,' when, as in 1787, we read the prizes were "For the wrestlers, a leather belt; for the leapers, a pair of gloves; for the foot-racer, a handkerchief," continued well into last century; and when the Cumberland and Westmoreland Society in London, for the encouragement of wrestling, formed itself, in 1824, the committee limited subscriptions to 2s. 6d., and determined upon offering as prizes to be wrestled for a silver cup, two silver snuff-boxes, three gold seals, and a pair of buckskin gloves to be leapt for. Things have altered for the worse in this respect, and old wrestlers often express the wish that the days when "yan nobbut wrustled for a bit of a leather strap" could come back again; but even now, though £120 is the sum set apart for the wrestling ring at Grasmere, it cannot be said, if there is to be money payment in the matter, that £15 and a belt is too large a reward for the actual exertion involved in six or eight hard bouts for the championship. But though one might well wish the days of the laurel crown might return, or a simple medal might be the prize, that time will not come till something of the enthusiasm for the sport which was quick and alive at the beginning of last century has returned, and every youngster at the village school has been encouraged to "throw down cap and tak hod" for the sake of the skill and splendid exercise of muscle and temper, which the art of wrestling yields.

We are all just now a little Japanese-mad, and one of the things our allies are teaching us is the worth of self-mastery. We cannot learn this better than in the wrestling ring. To be able to meet your man with a smile, and after tremendous exertion to be thrown right over his shoulder or clean off the breast, and then to rise and shake hands, as if one felt one's friendship was the stronger for the fall:—this is fine discipline; and to know that the least loss of temper during the agony of struggle means loss of victory is in every way a gain to character.

It is true that the old Viking power to endure all things, makes for the self-mastery necessary in this sport of their sons in Cumberland and Westmoreland, but if the gambling instinct is kept out of the ring the fellside farms can be trusted to go on giving us just the stuff in bone and sinew, in mind and temper, which has made famous the name of Cumberland and Westmoreland for the past two centuries, and the nation will be the gainer. In no other trial of actual bodily skill does art have such chance against mere brute force. A little man, whose arms are so short that he actually cannot make fingers meet round the girth of the vast back of his opponent, will grass his man as if by magic. It is a day when this gospel needs preaching. We must not leave it to Japan to be the only gospeller. The Grasmere ring may have the message for us all, that science and not bulk, spirit and not force, shall have the mastery.

THE GRASMERE SPORTS.
1905.

There is no gathering like it in the North. The fact that the wrestling ring is eight miles from a station has made it and kept it in a way sacrosanct to its original idea, which was that it should be a gathering of friends—friends among the dale farmers and shepherds who walked to the gathering, and friends among the gentle folks who rode in their carriages. And though it is true that now waggonettes and charabancs come from a radius of thirty miles, it is still a kind of pilgrimage of grace the occupants perform, for they are friends or relations of some local wrestler, and will spend hard savings in a joint ride to 'Girsmer Spworts' in honour of a hero past or present of the 'wrustlin'' ring.

It is true that the homeliness of the arrangements of thirty years ago has passed away. We are no longer in the old field at Pavement End, whose wall used to be tarred to prevent the great unpaying getting their share of the fun without the customary toll of the Queen's shilling, and the little grand stand, with its rough larch poles, to which were affixed the wrestling belt, and from which the silver cups hung shining in the sun, has been superseded by a great construction all nobly upholstered in red cotton cloth for the occasion. But though the ring has grown in circumference till one cannot without field glasses

make out the faces of one's friends in coach or waggonette opposite, the Grasmere gathering is still a gathering of friends from far and near, and of whatever class it be, it is Cumberland and Westmoreland and Lancashire North of the Sands that here meets and makes merry round the sports ring.

'Girsmer Sports,' not the Grasmere games as the pressmen persist in calling them, have a far ancestry. Wordsworth watched them, and I have seen the light come into the eyes of an old man who told me how he had "yance on a time wrustled best oot of three bouts and won," and how the poet came up and said within his hearing, in his solemnest way, "that must be a very strong young man."

Girsmer Sports they are rightly called, for foot racing, pole leaping, jumping, and the hound trail all take place on the same day as the wrestling; and a sack race adds its folly and its fun to the proceedings.

From time immemorial the place of the meeting was at Pavement End, but in 1904, owing to some disagreement with the owner of the old wrestling field, the Sports Committee moved their quarters to the present field near the Grasmere Hall, and great in some way has been the gain. For the field is central to the village, it admits of more space for the carriages as they come in and go out, and the beauty of the surroundings is more wonderful. In the old field the rising ground at Allan

Bank hid much of the northern prospect; here in the new field, it is true, that Butterlyp How intervenes and hides Scaur Crag from view, but it serves as a foil for the fine fells to the west, and brings out the distances in a very remarkable way; while there can be no doubt that the breast of Buthar's Crags and Stone Arthur give a marvellous background for the hound trail, and allow of excellent sight of the 'guides' in their fell race, to all who gathered in the sports field. In the old days people who were really anxious to watch the 'guide' race up Sölva How, left the field for a nearer view.

We are bound for Grasmere to-day. The morning has been too bright to last. A south wind is setting the white roads all asmoke, and this is a bad sign in the Lake country. But the worst sign is the way in which the whole of Thirlmere is laced from end to end with lines of silver. Whenever these parallel lines of foam are seen upon the dark bosom of that lake, there will be heavy rain within twenty-four hours. But the knowing ones say that "Wedder is tied to hod over Girsmer Sports," and we go forward in good heart and hope.

It would look as if every horse and carriage in the county was bound one way. The coaches that pass us Keswick-ward pass us with sparse loads. We have reached the field. Old Edward Wilson, with his cheery smile, gives us our carriage ticket and takes his toll. Five shillings for a pair of

horses, ten shillings for a four-horsed conveyance, and one shilling a head all round, and in a trice we have selected our place in the second ring of carriages, for the first is already full, though it is but half-past ten. The horses are unyoked, the pole is slipped out, and willing hands pull us and back us and twist us and lift us till we are in position. 'Programmes! twopence each,' cries a lad, and we are soon all attention to watch the rounds of the local wrestling, which is to precede the heavy-weights. Meanwhile, it is as good as a play to watch the competitors weighing in for this or that class. 'Locals' wrestle at 10 st. 9 lbs., light-weights at 11 st. 2 lbs. How they draw in their deep breaths and shut their mouths to give themselves such added lightness as a pair of good lungs stuffed with air may give. How cheerily they take the weighman's word, "Nay my lad thoa's ower heavy by hauf a pund," or "Thoo hed just better gang rund wi' dogs on t' trail and coom agean."

It is nearly half-past ten, and the local wrestling begins, but before it begins, Howe, the bellman, who hails from Maryport, feels that the occasion must not be allowed to pass without a speech in the vernacular, and there is an honest pathos about the subject matter of it to-day, that touches the hearts of those who, for so many years past, have seen the fine stalwart form of one of the fairest wrestlers that ever played the game in Cumberland, here in the Grasmere Ring, first as

wrestler, and in later years as a just and incorruptible umpire.

"Noo than, laadies and gentlemen, we've met yance mair wid fine wedder to bless us. I expect you'll keep your umberells doon to-day, and then ivverybody will hev' a chance to see t' plaay. Theer's yan thing ah shud like to menshin, which you will all regret, and that is that a familiar feace hes gone oot o' this ring, and ye'll nin on you ivver see Noble Ewbank in the ring agean. It's yan efter anudder. It may be my turn next year; and noo we're gaan to begin and mek a start wid t' local wrustlin'. Noo than, you men, coom out; a good start maks a good endin', and we want to git heam before dark. Coom oot, you men! I shall call your names three times, and him as doesn't answer to third call ull be blown oot."

So the local wrestling begins. At the same time, in another part of the ring, the cat gallows is set, and bearing their great poles lightly in hand, as though they were entering lists for a joust and these were their lances for turney, the pole-leapers come to their trial of skill. One almost regrets that any such diversion should be made, for the wrestling is, after all, the feature of the meeting, and this pole-leaping is too interesting to miss watching. Yet it is a pity, for in the local light-weight wrestling one sees some of the best-contested bouts of the day, though it may be true that the men who are going to try their luck

in the open classes will not exhaust themselves in this local enterprise.

What a pretty sight this graceful pole-leaping is! The man with the wand at slope and poised rushes forward, the butt end of his wand plants itself in the soft ground and impelled as if by magic rises to the vertical. Now it seems to be a ship's mast with a man clinging to it; steadily it stands, and the man on the mast swarms up it, and still it stands steady. Then, as if by magic, the man throws his body flag-like from the mast, casts himself from the mast, which falls away from him, and he comes bounding over the bar and alights from his ten feet and a half height in safety on the grass. His friends rush at him and rub his legs violently, for he has not yet reached the height of his vaulting ambition, which is eleven feet. He may be the champion pole-leaper of the day, or may share that honour with his brother who is leaping against him, but unless he tops the bar at eleven feet he will not win the silver cup, which is the coveted prize. He tries and tries again. Now, now he is over—alas for the ticket number pinned on to his jersey, it is but a leaf in thickness, but it is crumpled at the corner, and as he throws himself with one prodigious effort across the bar, there is so little to spare that the ticket edge touches the bar, it trembles and falls, and he must go home this year without the cup.

The heavy-weight wrestling follows. There are no less than one hundred and eight entries. There

is a special interest attached to this event, for the well-known champion of past years, Hexham Clarke, is resting on his laurels, and opinion is much divided as to whether Bowman, who was second last year, will be able to secure the belt to-day. Such opponents as Studholme and the younger Steadman, or the veteran T. Kennedy, are not likely to be easily disposed of; and then there is a dark horse from Newcastle in the ring, he should be called a grey horse for his hair is grey, one Barclay. He has not wrestled in a public ring for ten years past, but he has come back to his native county—for he was born at High Hesket—to attempt to emulate the success of eighteen years ago when he won the light-weight wrestling, by carrying off the prize for the heavy-weights this year.

They are soon hard at work. Such swaying of a four-footed being, that seems half man, half new-created thing. One goes back to the struggles of the Lapithae and Centaurs upon the friezes at Olympia, as one watches the human heads and arms and bodies swayed upon the quadrupedal legs and feet. Such agony of contest, such grips and groans, such lifting of huge bodies like feather-weights, twisting and turnings in the air, flashings of feet, tryings of hipe, buttock, click, twist, back-heel. Wild cries from the spectators, "Good lad, noo he hes him; go it, Lang-nose! Hod on Breeches! Good lad! Breeches hes it." And then, as if all that had been struggled for was the

easiest thing in the world, down goes the giant and lies full stretched upon the grass, and you see the conqueror beside him, after hearty handshake, leaned in an attitude, as one sees the dying gladiator leaned upon his arm, in order that he may recover breath, before he rises and walks away ticket in hand to the telegraph man, to put his prowess on record, while the air still rings with the shouts of his friends.

There was one bout in this contest which seemed to send the vast circle of spectators mad with excitement. It was when, after three unsuccessful attempts to get 'hold,' Steadman and Studholme went swiftly to work, and after clever play, the latter back-heeled his opponent. But it was not till the last round that the whole ring seemed moved into a hush of silence, as the Newcastle veteran, with the grey hair, and Studholme, the yellow-haired son of a Viking, got shoulder to shoulder and neck to neck, and the final throw determined the day. An amazingly skilful throw it was. Studholme seemed to lift his man, and with a twist off his breast, to cast clear away from him the great body that rolled helplessly but harmlessly to earth. The enthusiasm for the victory was intense, all the more that Barclay, though in reality a Cumbrian, was by long residence a Novocastrian, and appeared in the eyes of the onlookers as a stranger and a far-comer.

There has been something of a lull in the enthusiasm of the ring for the past half hour.

The carriage folk have come from far, and luncheon seems to be one thing greatly cared for. In the olden time the visitors brought their sandwiches and flasks in their pockets, and if a basket of fruit was handed round as dessert, it seemed in keeping with the simple picnic character of the day, but in these later degenerate times something has been imported from the South which had better have stayed there, and now livery servants are seen laying cloths under the coach wheels, opening champagne bottles, etc., and there is much parade of knife and fork and platter which is alien to the spirit of the Grasmere sports. Still, as of old, there are some residents who steadfastly set their faces against this luxury of luncheontide, and the sandwich and bit of cake and the bunch of grapes may still be found with such to be the rule. It would be a gain every way if the carriage people would return to simpler manners.

It is two o'clock, and the sound as of a pack of hounds in full cry is heard above the hum of voices and the music of the band. This is the prelude of the hound trail—an event which has this added interest about it, that the dogs do not buy and sell their chances of a place to please their backers, and though the cunning older fellows will, if they know the course, sometimes cut corners, they will run for all they are worth from first to finish. The hound trail is so 'sui generis' in the North that one may be pardoned for treating of it more fully at the end of this chapter. It is enough to know

that the dog that wins to-day is a well-known racer, and that long before Cracker was heading for home the field had made up its mind that Cracker would prove itself the champion.

A kind of flutter of excitement passes round the great amphitheatre of spectators close on half-past two, for the Guides are taking up their places for the fell race. There are eight of them ranged in line at the starting point in middle ring. Their faces are towards the sombre crags of Buthar the Viking away there beneath Heron Pike to the East. One naturally regrets the break with the associations of the past in leaving the old sports field. The change of site for the sports is justified, if by nothing else, by the better view that it is possible to obtain of the race from first to finish. In the old Sölva Howe track not only was there interposing of larch woodland, which hid the competitors from view, but the sun was westering, and one could on certain days hardly see the racers for the light in our eyes. Now as they ascend the fell-side breast of Buthar Crags, they shine out in the sunlight, and one, without the aid of glasses, can follow them from base to summit and back again.

This year it is known that a Scotchman, Murray, who has already won four times, is likely to prove victor, and when the signal is given and the dash is made out of the ring over the narrow bridge across the level meadow, Murray leads. But a grey-jerseyed man and a man in scarlet running drawers are seen to be close behind, and one hears

it whispered in the crowd that this year Dalzell of Underskiddaw, who was second last year, will pull off the prize.

They have vaulted the wall; they are racing up the road; they have turned into the meadow at the foot of the fell; they have climbed the wall, and already the steepness of the upward climb so tells upon them that they are apparently walking. I say apparently, but it is much more than a walk, as those may know who realise that they will climb a fellside 1200 feet high, descend and race home across the valley in something like sixteen or seventeen minutes. Only those who have stood among the bracken and seen the almost superhuman exertion and heard the long-drawn breaths as they stride upward, more like cats than men, can know the agony of that terrific climb.

The white body—no longer a straggling crew, but a clustered patch of whiteness—speeds up and up. A flag is turned at the summit, and then the race in reality begins. The fellside is not only rough with boulder and screes, but covered also with bracken, and this means that the men, who come leaping downward like a torrent, must risk fall and bruise, perhaps broken ankle in the descent. I said like a torrent, I can describe the speed in no other way. The men, with their hands uplifted, do not run, they leap, they fly. There! the foremost is fallen! he is up again, and still leads the racers. Down again! but again he is up, and leads them still. There is a great grey

wall running across the breast of the hill. For a moment the lower parts of their bodies are hid; in another moment they are seen full-sized, flashing on down the fell. They have taken the wall at a spring; winged creatures they float in air, they flash forward, they are not human beings. They are gods, spirit-beings not men. And now they have won the road, heads and shoulders are seen racing between the walls. They turn into the meadows, they swing round, they dash for home, and here it is where the race is really determined, for Dalzell of Underskiddaw puts on a spurt and dashes to the front, leaving Murray 150 yards behind him as he gains the ring. Fifty yards separates Murray of Falstone from the Borrowdale man, Mossop, who comes in third. The band strikes up 'See the conquering hero comes,' and one hears cries of "Good lad, Dalzell; well run, Murray; thoo mud win next year, Borradal."

What astounds one is the way in which the runners seem to regather wind and strength at once, and ere they pass from their friends, who supply them with lemonade, and set to work to rub their legs violently, back to the dressing tent, they would seem almost fit for another desperate essay. Look at Buthar Crags and remember that these men got to the top in twelve minutes and a few seconds, and that they covered the distance from the top to the field in under five minutes—that the time was sixteen and two-fifth minutes by a stop watch from start to finish, and you will

gain some idea of the exertion and the need of training for a successful competition in the Grasmere 'guides'' race. I doubt if, as a tax upon heart and lung and staying power, there is any race in the world that makes a larger demand upon an athlete's strength.

The guides' race and the hound trail over, the interest in the day comes to an end. Horses come back to the carriages, the remains of the grand luncheons are packed away, and the crowd begins to stream from the sports' field, and to choke all the bye-ways and streets of the village. Happy now are the guests who find welcome on the hospitable lawns of neighbouring houses. They can now meet friends who were undiscoverable in the great throng round the wrestling ring. But there are some whom even the love of friends or lust of tea and savoury sandwiches and peaches and grapes will not tempt from the field, for now begins the wrestling of eight picked heavy-weights and eight picked light-weights, and if we in a weak moment, tempted by tea, leave the field, it will be well worth our returning any time before five o'clock to see the exciting bouts of these trials of skill. There is always the chance in these tussles for the best wrestler, who may have missed the belt by an unlucky slip or the being taken by surprise, to regain his laurels, and many a disappointed man finds heart of cheer from his better luck in these later tests of the wrestler's art and cunning.

But even these bouts in their very keenness

sometimes work grief of body not cheer of mind. I returned late to the field to find Matthew Steadman victor of the heavy-weights and some very pretty play going forward between the men in the semi-final for the light-weight contest between Blackburn and Shepherd, and Dent and Black. Then came the final; and Dent, a very lithe, delicately-framed man, supple as a serpent, and swift and light with his feet, met Blackburn for the final throw. There were not above a hundred people left to see the game, but it was worth seeing how Dent threw Blackburn. Then, after a tremendous bout, Blackburn threw Dent, but the throw or the pressure of his grasp as he felled him broke some muscle or strained some nerve, and Dent, within sight of the prize, lay like a dead man on the ground. Poor fellow, so near a victory and so suddenly disabled perhaps for all victories in the wrestling ring. These are the chances of war. But it is because of them that the wrestlers' play is so full of training, and conqueror and conquered alike learn so well to bear up bravely in time of defeat and to wear the laurels that they win on chastened brows.

THE HOUND TRAILS OF THE NORTH.

It does not matter what the gathering is, agricultural show, sheep dog trial, or athletic sports, it is not complete without its hound trail.

From the mining villages of Furness, from Ulverston, from Cleator, from Whitehaven, as

well as from the mountain homes of Borrowdale, Sawrey, Ambleside, Threlkeld, and Grasmere, the dogs in their dog clothes and leashes may be seen heading to the trail ground at early dawn, and one may hear the music of their discontent from somewhere in the crowded field long hours before the man with the aniseed drag has come back from his unsavoury laying of scent upon the neighbouring fellside breast.

But if the breeders and trainers of trail dogs may be found in the littoral of Cumberland and Westmoreland, the races must be run on such ground as will give fair view to the spectators, and thus it comes to pass that the sport is essentially a Lake District sport. Nowhere can it be seen to greater advantage than from the Vale of Grasmere or the heights of Applethwaite Fell about the Troutbeck Valley.

A few years ago many of the neighbouring gentry kept dogs; now it would seem that they are the possession for the most part of working men, who give a great deal of their time in training of the hounds to speed, and very jealously watch the strain and keep the pedigree of the dogs unbroken.

The hounds are foxhounds such as the mountain packs are composed of, low-bodied and light-bodied creatures that, compared with the weight and size of the Midland foxhounds, appear to be small, but they are dogs of wonderful staying power and wonderful feet, a mass of muscle with

marvellous cat-like capacity to negotiate the huge stone dykes or walls that run up the breast of the fells, and divide pasture from pasture in the dale.

They are to all intents the racehorses of the peasantry, and just as the gentry seem to think that a horserace is impossible unless money is on it, so the working men of Westmoreland and Cumberland seem to think that a hound trail is no hound trail worth the name unless the odds are offered and taken freely; weeks before the Grasmere Sports or the Troutbeck Shepherd Dog Trials, the excitement in cottage homes far and near as to the favourite is great. And great is the disaster and blank is the dismay if the favourite fails to win. "Aw, So-and-so's dog is tied to win, I suppose, to-day, there's a deal o' money on him," is the kind of remark that is passed round in confidential circles on the morning of the race. Of all kinds are the methods by which the dogs are fettled up and prepared for the great occasion. There is a rule that no trainer shall take his dog over the course or the supposed course, and no trainer is seen to do this; but if a full moon favours the time of the match, and a man take a moonlight walk with a dog in a leash, it is just possible that his walk may in a singular way coincide with the track which he believes the man with the aniseed drag will take on the day of the race.

There is in addition to most careful feeding a great deal of exercise and toilsome and tedious

training over drag line done by the owners of these miniature mountain racehorses, and on the day of the trail various are the finishing touches to be given to the racers by way of improving their breathing or adding to their courage.

But here we are at the Grasmere Sports, and suddenly above the music of the band and the shouting of the 9,000 spectators round the great ring is heard the baying or almost frenzied yelling of a pack of hounds. The fact is that the old huntsman, Anthony Chapman, has just come in across the narrow bridge over the Rotha beck with the aniseed drag in his hands from his long eight miles' tramp along the breast of the great amphitheatre of mountain ground that circles all the vale. He has laid the scent across the green meadow to the east up the slopes of 'Buthar' crags away on to the flank of Stone Arthur, Seat-Sandal, then across the vale beneath the Raise to Steel Fell, Helm Crag, Scaur Crag, along Sölva Howe to the west, then above the Lake on Loughrigg breast, and so back home by White Moss and Chapel Green. The hounds sniff the aniseed and are frantic to be off. One of the favourites spoken of to-day is 'Mountain,' but the inner circle seem to have no doubt that 'Cracker' will win. It will be a very popular victory if 'Cracker' pulls off the prize, for 'Cracker' is a Grasmere hound, and its master, S. Walker, has trained hound-trail dogs for the past forty years in the vale.

Their owners or trainers have stripped them,

have rubbed their chests and chafed their legs, and are in line waiting for the starter's signal. It is given, and like a flash of white light the whole of the twenty-six dogs has swept from the ring over the bridge and away across the valley, over walls, more like birds than beasts in their flight, and are seen again on the breast of Buthar side. Now half-hid by the bracken, now visible like a bracelet of pearls, now appearing like a low-flying string of black and white winged creatures, they pass from crag to crag, from fold to fold of the hill-flanks, and vanish like a dream. The knowing ones have left the sports' field, and have climbed the slope of 'Buthar the Leaper,' the tree-crowned howe in middle vale, and aided by field-glasses follow the feet of the flying pack, now like a torrent on the fell breast, now like a streak of light upon the blue grey shales, and the folk in the sports field climb to the tops of their coaches and cry out, "There they are! They are going along by the wall there on Sölva Howe. There! don't you see them just in the shadow of that larch plantation? There, there they go; one dog is leading, another hound is at its heels. Oh, what a leap! Look at the wall! Now they are heading for home."

The air is filled with shrill whistlings, the owners of the hounds have each their own dog's call, and their eyes, accustomed not only to sight of their hounds, but to the peculiar way of running of them, can tell at a distance incredible just what the

dogs are about and what are the chances of a place at the final run in.

" ' Mountain ' wins; ' Gambler ' has it; ' Cracker ' leads ! " shriek the excited crowd, who are happily fenced off from the winning place by the deep stream that cuts the valley fields in twain. There in the middle of the field are the dogs' masters waiting with leash and dog-clothes and a little bit of something tasty ' lapped-up ' in newspaper as a reward for their mountain-racers. Ah ! how they, too, are fain to rush forward to cheer their hounds to the winning post; but they will be disqualified if they do, and so, dropping on their knees and violently waving their hands, they content themselves with their shrill whistling. Then the heavens are rent with a great shout, and the cry of " ' Cracker ' wins; good lad, ' Cracker ' ! " fills the air.

It had been an easy win, too. ' Mountain ' and ' Gambler ' were not in it as far as the race home from Chapel Green was concerned. Whether knowledge of the ground had to do with this I cannot say. Thirty-five minutes and forty-seven and four-fifths of a second was not a long time for such an eight miles of rough fellside ground to be traversed in; but Cracker was ' sair deun,' and as I watched its heaving ribs I wondered at the courage and endurance of the dog, whose limbs to-night, notwithstanding all care and all chafing, would probably be as stiff as if they had been made of cast iron. I have asked how soon a hound

recovers the elasticity of its muscles after such a trial, and have been told that in two to three days it is fit for another race. Marvellous as is the pluck of the dog that will thus run itself to the stiffness of iron, the thing that strikes one as more wonderful still is the keenness of scent that allows the dog to fly unerringly upon the trail, and though the wind be blowing the scent for forty yards or more, to follow the line without question and without fault.

SEPTEMBER AT THE LAKES.

THE month of September is the month that is *par excellence,* the month for the holiday maker. The days have not yet closed in, the skies are steady, the tourist crush has lessened, and one can begin to realise in the slight changes of colour on the higher fells, something of the glory that will be fully revealed in October.

The bracken, it is true, has not yet felt the frost, but the fellside farmers have been busy with their scythes for bedding, and the dead fern, before it is 'gathered,' lies golden red in patches. September is the month for bracken getting, and nothing more picturesque can be well imagined than this late harvest time of the wild fellside. The old white horse stands with its cart half filled with what at sunset time looks ruddy fire, and down from above comes a rolling wheel of the same flame, the mighty bundle of the netted fern.

Whether our dalesmen got this idea of the net and wheel from the old Beltain fire days, I know not. In those times these same dried bracken in great bundles of rosy fire were set rolling from

THE BRACKEN HARVEST.

the tops of our hills, and these farm folk are sons of Viking forefathers who carried on their fire worshipping with such pertinacity that there are men living to-day, in Grasmere, who have seen the Need fires and heard of Calf-burial in time of cattle pest.

But if the ferns that are uncut are still green upon September slopes, the bents upon our higher fells have already begun to be blanched beneath the cold night airs; and though Helvellyn has not yet put on the tawny cloak which won him, in the olden time, his name of 'Giall-melen' or the 'yellow-moorland,' he shines dead white beneath the September moon, and is gold grey at the dawn.

It is not only the grasses on the upper fells that have begun to change in September which give such interest to the colourist, but the heather has also passed out of bloom and there has come upon it a kind of witchery of puce-purple in place of the rose-pink of August. For real gold on the higher fells one seeks the swamps and peat bogs. There the little tufted grasses are as vivid in their autumnal colour of gold, as is the bog asphodel in seed; whilst here and there as if there had been some deadly fight, spots like drops of blood are seen amongst the water plants. One flower is still found in full beauty, the flower that Faber described as bringing before his mind the great processions of the Vatican—

"And last from Autumn's oozy ground there springs
The snowy blossom, of Parnassus named,

Which in its cup of pencilled porcelain
Great Rome's pontifical insignia bears,
Five peacocks' fans with tremulous green eyes."

For the rest, except that the bog myrtle is changing colour, that the bilberry leaf on the heights is flushing into rose, and that the sweet-scented fern is turning into delicate yellow, there is no seal of Autumn upon the hills.

But the beauty of September for the artist lies in the colouring of the mountain masses. Dry eastern winds prevail, and where they prevail they bring with them from Yorkshire and North Lancashire light drifts of opaline smoke, which, though they take away the whiteness from the fleeces of our herdwick sheep and some of the glory of sunshine and clear air, do nevertheless work marvellous witchery of lilac veil and hyacinthine mist, and add a changeling beauty to our hills.

In the valleys the yellow rag-wort, though scanter, is still gay. The pastures with their heavy 'fogg' upon them still look as if bountiful nature "here had made a lasting spring." That Spring is over and gone may be known by the silence of the birds; it is true that our mornings and evenings are clamorous with rooks—it is true that our twilight is vocal with the hooting of the owl, but except for the robin's song and the wren's tiny pipe our woodland ways are silent.

One tree, however, is sure of sound; wherever the yew trees grow, and the yew berries abound, there in late September will be found the scolding

of the missel-thrush, and the glimmer of his grey under-wing flashes as part suspended in air and part tip-toe on the swaying plume he seeks his coral food.

Towards the end of September also the artist may find colour in the flaming of the wild cherry in the woodland, and of the Virginian creeper on the house. The clematis with its silver gossamer is found on the hedgerows, and the hedgerows themselves, if they are of thorn, are full of colour with the hips and haws. But the chief joy of woodland fruitage lies not with the hips and the haw so much as with the berry of that holy Igdrasil that the Norsemen knew, the mystic rowan—the mountain ash.

It is to the gardens that we dwellers at the English Lakes turn with great gladness in September. When all the flowers have passed away in the gardens of the south, here growing in fullest glory may be found roses, sweet peas, mignonette, dahlias, monbretia, geraniums, sunflowers, hollyhocks, the poker plant, nasturtium, Japanese anemone, Michaelmas daisies, stocks and asters; whilst on the lowliest cottage wall may be seen the glorious garlanding of the scarlet 'tropæolum speciosum.'

As far as the farm folk go, the labours of their day are nearly over; their patches of corn are small, and they are soon housed. Cattle shows and sheep fairs and sheep dog trials are the order of the day, and fortunate are the strangers who will mix at

any of these lake country gatherings. They will not only hear the native Doric, but will realise the native spirit that takes success as a matter of course, and failure as a thing to be borne without a murmur. I was present at a show this year where the biggest swede turnips I had ever seen failed to receive first prize because there was a little something wrong with the topping. I condoled with the loser. "Oh!" said he, "its aw reet; t' judges is a lazy lot yeh see, an' they happen thowt they were ower heavy to lift into t' carts yeh knaw."

It is at these agricultural gatherings that the visitor will realise what splendid help-meets the farmers have in their 'women bodies,' as they call them. It isn't only butter and eggs that they 'ken aw aboot,' and one has but to listen to their remarks to know that they are quite as good judges of sheep or beast or horse as 'oor maister' ever was.

If one wishes to know how it is possible for the shepherds on our lonely fells to keep count or take guardianship of their mountain flocks, one must go to the sheep dog trials and learn how dog and man seem to have one mind and work together as if they were of one nature.

The ordinary sheep dog trial is arranged as follows: Sheep of two or three flocks are brought together into a pen; a course is arranged with flags and hurdles. The sheep will have to be driven round certain flags and between others, and between certain hurdles down to a pen a quarter of a mile or more from the start. A certain time limit is

set in which the work must be done. The master of the dog is then placed in position, and virtually made prisoner by a chain from a post over his arm to that place. At a given signal three sheep are loosed that have never been accustomed to run together before, and the master of the dog gives his directions either by whistle or by hand lifting or voice to his four-footed friend the collie. As soon as the sheep have passed between the last flags and are heading for the pen, the shepherd slips his chain and goes off to help his friend the dog. He knows that he has not more than two or three minutes left to do the trick. There are the sheep close to the door of the pen but absolutely unwilling to enter in—the dog sits silent. The man 'hows' and hisses at them, but they stand obstinate. Suddenly one slips round the corner of the pen, the dog in a moment heads him, and turns him back. They are all three together at the mouth of the pen, two enter, the third flashes round the other way. The dog draws up to guard the pen in which already there are two prisoners, the man meets the runaway and heads him back. The dog disappears into space, for he knows that if he is seen, the runaway will not face him, but in that moment the prisoners inside realise the dog has disappeared, and just as the shepherd brings the delinquent to join the two he thought he had safely penned, they dash forth—the third joins them in a triumphant scamper for freedom—the judge's whistle sounds and the shepherd's chance is lost.

What strikes one most about the shepherd dogs is that youth and age are so apparently nearly balanced in cleverness and skill. I have seen dogs of less than a year old work as well as aged and well tried veterans of twelve summers. "Aw ye knaw its in em before they're pupped," said an old shepherd to me. "Its blood o' generaätions as does it. Yon dog as won to-daay had niver been tried but yance afoor at this gaame, but muther on her is terble cliver and fadder was much sec-like."

"But," said I, "what was that dog at your side mourning so for, when the winner Jess was going round the course with the sheep?"

"It was just interest. Bitch was her sister, and she kenned whoar she was wrang and whoar she was reet. I dar say she felt as pleased as t'maister did hissel when Jess won. I suddent wonder ataw noo—dogs is terble sensible things—they ken your thowts before ye oppen mouth. At least mine does. Yon dog o' Gasgarth's wad likely hev won to-daay, but lad scolded him in t' mornin', so they saay, and it took heart oot on im. Ay, dogs is human beings to feel and to knaw. Leastways that's my experience, and I sud knaw, for I've been shep o' these fells fur sixty year, and me fadder befoor me."

There are few more beautiful places for a sheep dog trial than the broad open meadow beyond Threlkeld Hall, under the southern slopes of Blencathra. One cannot pass to that field without remembering the days of Sir Lancelot Threlkeld

and the kindly shepherds who dwelt hereabout, and who made it possible for the young Lord Clifford to grow up in security till the time came for him to enter into his Bolton Abbey and Shapfell estates. Wordsworth's song, 'At the Feast of Brougham Castle,' is in one's ears as one mingles with the shepherds at that dog trial, and remembers how unchanged they are in their native kindliness to-day. Of the good Lord Clifford it was said,

> "Love had he found in huts where poor men lie
> His daily teachers had been woods and hills
> The silence that is in the starry sky
> The sleep that is upon the noontide hills."

And still one might intrust to the fellside farms of this countryside, the son of any nobleman of the land, and know that he would grow up with all the instincts of a gentleman and all the patient endurance and shrewd commonsense of a northern farmer.

It is a real pleasure when the second week of September brings round again the Threlkeld, or, as it is locally pronounced, the Threlket Sheep Dog Trials. One has to thank the dogs if for nothing else than for their having called us together in that fair meadow at the foot of Gateghyll Fell, for from no other vantage ground does the deep-bosomed mountain side of Blencathra rise up to heaven with such majestic beauty. The bracken on the lower slopes has felt the first touch of autumn, and shines almost as if the gorse had come into bloom. High

up, the puce and plum colour of the faded heather melts into grey shale. Deep shadows of the hollow coves contrast with the sunny loveliness of the flanks of the great natural buttresses that upbuild the mountain's bulk, while moving from east to west, the vast cloud-shadows fall in patches of cobalt blue upon the red brown fern, and, high o'er all, white galleons sail the sunny deeps of air. There never was such a background for the show of sheep dog's skill; and here we can sit on the simple improvised wooden bench outside the ropes and watch to our heart's content how much or how little of the task set before them the dogs and their masters can contrive to get through in the six or seven minutes allotted to them. The friendly chaff and crack that goes on from farm hand to farm hand, from shepherd to shepherd, is well worth coming miles to hear. There is a simplicity about all the arrangements; the tent for tea and ham and bread and butter, the notice "This way to the Dog Trials," pinned by a native thorn twig on the hedge. The unpretentious bench, the absence of professionalism at the gate, and the absence of the gambler among the company, all conspire to make one glad to be with the sons of those shepherds who in the fifteenth century, cared for the son of Lady Lancelot Threlkeld, and though they could not teach him writing, taught him all their shepherd's lore and therewithal that wisdom which, when he became Lord of Shap and Bolton and Barden Towers, "he kept in lofty place."

We cannot pass away from this Threlkeld Dog Trial field and go through the old farmhouse yard of Threlkeld Hall without a thought of the young lad who found covert and rest among the farm folk of the dale, who once bounded

"with joy
On Carrock's side—a shepherd boy,"

and ere he parted

"from Mosedale's groves
And left Blencathra's rugged coves,"

learned not only the courage that made him 'head the flock of war' and seem indeed 'a glory from afar' to the men of Craven in 1513,

"when he with spear and shield
Rode full of years to Flodden Field,"

but learned love of the stars, and love of all the observations of Nature that gave him his desire for scientific research in the observatory he built in after years at Bolton Abbey.

But most does one think of how he too must have shared the shepherd's delight in the management of his trusty friends the collies, and one can in dream believe him back in the sheep-dog trial field shoulder to shoulder with the yeomen of to-day, and keen as any in the sport before our eyes.

We have red colour in our lowland pastures at the end of September from the raddled fleeces of the aged ewes that dot them, but when twilight falls we have red colour on our upper fellsides

also, for September is one of the months in which the shepherds burn the heather, and what through the day was but a faint puff of smoke upon the mountain side becomes at night-time a glorious golden jewel of light, ever changing, now a globe and now a line of fire, and when we waken, behold, where before was the grey puce mantle of the September heather is a jet black patch, as though on some gigantic scale painters had been at work putting together a puzzle map of the dark continent.

Towards the end of September one has a general impression that the hedgerows have suddenly bethought themselves that they belong rather to gardens than to fields. What were before "little sportive lines of wood run wild" are found to be trimmed into the absolute precision of a garden fence. Much beauty passes away when the hedgeman's shears go to work, the swaying wild rose bramble, the wild ash sapling, the fruited elder fall, and alas! there falls with them an innumerable company of thorns, and happy is the bicyclist who finishes his journey without a puncture.

But the beauty of September lies in the sense of the completeness of the year—its quiet entering, notwithstanding the ram battles, into peace, and on sunny days the gossamers go sailing through the air with such content that one feels all the winds are laid asleep for ever and there will be no more storm.

A DAY AT LEVENS.

Do you know Levens—have you seen the garden? If you do not, take advantage of the public-spirited courtesy of the owners and on some Thursday afternoon walk over from Kendal or from Milnthorpe to see the most unique 'opus topiarium' in the North Countree.

It is not only that you may wander about in a vast garden-ground which year by year, since James II.'s gardener, Master Beaumont, planned it, has kept its plan. It is not only that you may here feel what the Medicis of old felt, as they wandered in their pleasaunces, may know the delight of Louis XIV. as he roamed the garden grounds of Versailles St. Cloud and St. Germains, or what the unfortunate monarch King James cared for at Hampton Court, but here, towering above the elaborate topiary, may be seen an unaltered Elizabethan mansion that in the spacious days of that great Queen grew round a border pele tower of the 12th century; here you may feel the sense of seven centuries of home which was shared by three families, Redmans, Bellinghams and Grahams; and here you may realise something of the glamour of the unbroken heritage of happy country-gentleman life which gives such charm to the stately houses of old England.

I know not why, but I never approach Levens without a kind of feeling of the friendliness of hospitality about the place—a silent welcome

breathes from ground and air, and speaks from whispering trees and vocal river bed.

What wealth of history surrounds that ancient hall of Over-Levens by the side of the Kent. Tosti, the great Earl of Northumberland, owned the tower when Domesday Book was written, and the French Roger of Poictou followed him in possession of Lefuennes, as it was then called. About 1170 William de Lancaster II. granted Levens to Norman de Redman; the original deed still exists in the house, in a glass case in the drawing-room. This family for the next three centuries were held in honour in these northern parts and furnished seneschalls of Kendal to the King and men to the English Parliament. It is a fitting name of a warrior whose hand was red with the blood of his enemies, and the Redmans lived up to their name. They were fighting men and knights of the shire for Westmoreland and Lancaster from the earliest times of Parliament.

One of them, Sir Matthew, was a great soldier, whose deeds are recorded in detail by Froissart, and who played a conspicuous part in the battle of Otterburn (Chevy Chase).

Another Sir Richard Redman was Speaker of the Parliament that voted the money for Agincourt, but the rest of the acts of these Redmans are very fully written in Greenwood's book of the *Chronicles of the Redmans of Levens and Harewood,* which was published as lately as 1905 by Wilson of Kendal. We cannot think of war at

Levens now until one descends to the barrel-roofed stone chamber beneath the ancient pele, and remember how on many an occasion the cattle and the corn and the wood and affrighted hinds may have been hastily barred in there against the raiders from the north. But the red hand that held Levens must needs have had the blessing of peace, not war, upon it, that comes of being a hand well-armed. The Redmans strengthened the rectangular keep, and because the owner of Sizergh, their neighbour Strickland had built on a great common hall to his keep, the Redmans at the end of the 14th century would do likewise, and they too built for themselves an open timber-roofed hall upon the west side of the tower. Many a hunting party, many a retainers' gathering made merry in that hall, of which little or nothing remains to tell its tale of lordly hospitality. And yet the present Master of Levens can, on great occasions, summon the ghosts of those former guests, and can call for the Black Jack that still may pour forth the quaint liquor that their hearts were cheered with. For there, in a great vaulted cellar beneath the keep, still stands the huge barrel or vat that contains an ancient brew, and men can still pledge one another, even if they do it with a wry face, in 'Old Morocco.'

For three hundred years the pele tower went from sire to son, and it was not till 1490 that again Northumbria asserted itself, and Alan Bellingham of old Northumbrian stock, though then Alan

Bellingham of Burnside, became the owner of Levens.

How many hundred years the Bellinghams might have held their Kentside home we cannot tell, if a later Alan had not wasted his goods, and after two hundred years had not been forced to sell his estates within the barony of Kendal and pass away from Westmoreland for ever. Spendthrift he may have been, this last Alan, but he must needs have been very generous of hand and kindly of heart if we may judge by some contemporary lines which were quoted in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1721, and which ran as follows:

> "When the great Alan ruled this wide domain,
> The voice of sorrow never mourned in vain,
> Cheered by his pity, by his bounty fed,
> The rich found comfort and the aged bread;
> His jocund tenants filled the lengthened board
> With roasted ox and good 'Marocco' stored;
> But now the witchcraft in the wood is seen,
> Though salmon still enrich the wandering Ken,
> The voice of Bellingham resounds no more
> And hospitality has left the door."

Nor will it be out of place to quote an extract from a letter in the possession of Sir Henry Bellingham, from the hand of one Richardson, the steward of Levens, in 1796, to William Bellingham, private secretary to Mr. Pitt. Richardson congratulates him on his baronetcy, and says: "I write from the fireside of the Parlour built and furnished by your ancestor, the father of the first baronet. I cannot but feel a pride in participating, as a native of the

County, in the revival of that rank in a family for so many ages the blessing and boast of Westmoreland."

But another great Northern family took the place of the Bellinghams. Colonel James Graham, or, as he wrote his name, Grahme, Privy Purse to King James II., and younger brother to Sir Richard Graham of Netherby, bought Levens from Alan Bellingham in 1690, and at the fall of his royal master, Colonel Graham left London and the vicissitudes of court life, and came to peace and quiet at the unchanging Levens.

It was, however, impossible for Graham, who had been a man of affairs, to sit idle. A lover of garden grounds, he had probably been instrumental in bringing over from the French Court the famous gardener whose bluff full face and smart cloth coat and ruffles may still be seen upon the walls of the Levens staircase. It was an ill wind that blew no good, and the fall of James II. meant the rise of the 'topiary' at Levens; Colonel Graham determined that what Mons. Beaumont could not do at Hampton Court for the King, he should at least have chance of doing for the ex-King's 'privy purse,' and so it is that we to-day, as we walk the Levens garden, feel that the shaking of the English throne brought gain to loyal Westmoreland, and the misfortunes of Colonel Graham's royal master was the good fortune of Levens.

I never wander in the deer park without the

sound of elfin horns in my ears. Horns more full of faerie than those Sir Alan Bellingham bore upon his surcoat and placed in plaster panels round his hall, those "three bugles argent, sabled, garnished and furnished or." For while one hears 'the horns of elfland faintly blowing,' up starts and slips like a silver wood-spirit out of sight a white doe, and one remembers how the legend has been for many a long year that ever before the birth of son and heir to Levens, by some unaccountable mystery, there comes into the Levens Park this silver messenger of luck. As one moves down through the oak and beech-trees and sycamore beside the swirling Kent, a kind of feeling takes hold of one that this Levens Park is full of human kindness and human sympathy; the trees speak to one, the wild wood creatures hold a sort of soul-communion with one. It may be that they know that here none do them wrong. That the tender-hearted lady of the house who gave up all she loved most on earth, her children and her Levens garden grounds, to go over seas and become a helper of the sick and wounded in the late African war, has dowered her whole domain with kindly gentleness. All I know is that as one passes down through the park to Levens, one feels as if one was in the haunt of ancient peace and rest. An air of Paradise breathes on us, and in the garden we go to visit we shall surely meet angels unawares.

Will you go to the garden first, or enter the ancient hall that in Elizabeth's day was built about

IN THE GARDEN AT LEVENS.

the old border pele? You shall not drive up to the door. The proud old hall will humble your pride. They only may enter who, leaving their coach of state or humblest jaunting-car, will walk up to the long flight of steps and ask for entrance to that ancient world whose hospitality is ever new.

The hall we enter was the banquet hall of old. Panelling in oak from floor to ceiling is enriched by ornament in the intervening space on dado of plaster parquetry. Such elaborate plaster ornament it is as makes one wish that Morris and his fine paper designs had not been born. Ornamental devices are here picked out with gold and colouring; there shines the Tudor badge—the rose beneath a crown—the white and red roses of York and Lancaster conjoined, with the bugle horn of the Bellinghams. I suppose it is because I was brought up in my Lincolnshire youth among Bellingham cousins that I feel a kind of thrill when I enter that banquet hall and see the plaster panels round the room, the shields that tell the alliances for three hundred years, while over the fireplace gleam the royal arms of great Elizabeth. The halbert gleams and the pikes glisten and the cross-bow hangs in its place, but these cannot disturb by any suggestion of strife the peace and rest and gladness of that old banquet hall a bit more than the wind-blown tops of the old larch trees on the green in front of the house can do anything but emphasise the absolute calm of the filmy haze and sunshine of this September day.

With just one gaze at bluff-faced, kindly Mr. Beaumont as he hangs on the oaken stair so that we may have him with us as we walk his plots and squares, let us go forth to the quaint garden mazes of his making. It is to one who sees Levens for the first time a rare surprise. Whether entering by the gardener's house gate or by the postern near the Hall, one involuntarily stops and draws a long breath at a sight so unexpected. Suddenly one is aware of a garden walled up with rosy walls to heaven, on one side closed by a twenty feet growth of trim beech leaf walls, on the other side the old house, its towers, its quaint stout chimney, its oriel window and delicate leaded panes, its trellised clematis and honey-suckle, and behind us, closing us all into its sequestered loveliness, the grey wall lit with purple Jackmanni and its wealth of clambering roses.

But what is it strikes one at once? It is that one is in a garden ground filled with unutterably strange forms. The great box-tree bushes and yew trees have by some enchanter's wand—a wand waved first in Mons. Beaumont's time, more than two centuries ago—become living creatures, of beast and human kind. Ladies flounced and petticoated in the style of good Queen Bess, lions crowned, gigantic birds, and, not unfit for such a garden of Eden, the serpent standing on its tail. These mix with giant furniture in shape of vast stoppered bottles that contain elixir of life that cannot see death, or huge helmets or busbys such as a giant's

corps d'armée could wear, while the mighty chessmen, giants play with, stand in their chess-board squares and wait the moving of the game with patience inexhaustible. Here and there, as if to remind us of archaic man, the yew-tree caverns yawn at us. Ah, yes, but these are caverns not for man but arbours for something older far, these are the haunts of happy lovers.

Even as I speak a fair girl bride and her knight come from the shadow into the sunshine and laughter rings across the lawn. Wonderful trees these yews and box-trees are. So accommodating! One has but to mention it and they seem ready to take on any shape we please. They will even speak our English tongue and spell out letterwise the name of the owner of the hall.

If we were here next month we should find that the enchanter's wand of Mons. Beaumont really was persuader to this compliance. Men with shears will be working, clip, clip, clip, from morning till night for eight weeks to secure that the spell of the old French court gardener shall not be broken.

But the kind of Noah's Ark feeling of strange beast and creatures, and their attendants in sombre green that possessed one, passes away in the delight of colour that surrounds them. For here with consummate skill, eyes that love colour harmonies and yet delight in oriental glory of flashing light and luxury of flower radiance, have decreed that till September's last sun has set and October's

first frost has come, all through the summer shall roses glow, and geraniums and lobelias and marguerites and salvias, cannas, bergamot, pinks, sweetpeas, stocks, verbena, and cherry pie, shall vie, this one with scent and that with colour, to charm the happy wanderer in Paradise.

I do not remember to have seen anything much more gorgeous than the crimson, saffron and scarlet cannas that rose up from the garden plot on the left of the flower sanctuary door to greet one as I entered. But all this glory passed away before the stately cardinal-red of the lobelias that stood up out of a golden ground of calceolarias and shone against the white wall of the nicotianas behind them, or the coral pink sheets of ivy-leaf geranium laid in sunshine against the background of scented stocks. But the two miracles of the garden seemed to my eyes to be the luxury of the clambering and creeping growth of the deep red 'Gruss im Tiplitz' roses that rioted in middle view; while close beside one the dark blue salvias swam in a moonwhite mist of dainty marguerites. The world of flowerland at its fairest was 'all before one where to choose,' and choice seemed to be impossible. For as one moved among the quaint yew creatures and box-tree forms, always, some new radiant combination rose to the eyes and led one back to the quiet grey violet wall starred with its flowers, and green and scarlet with its virginian creeper — of the ancient home of Redeman, Bellingham, Grahme and Bagot.

Tired out for very luxury of colour-vision, one went with gladness through one of the many arches of the beech-leaf screen that fenced the garden from the south-west wind. There in cloistral calm of velvet turf and soft green walls of foliage, one might call up the memories of the bowlers such as Beaumont knew, or listen to the click of the croquet ball in an adjoining parterre of grassy quadrangle. It was the only sound that broke the absolute silence of the beech-leaf alleys and courts for garden pastime. No, not the only sound, for ringdoves cooed from the tall beech trees beyond, and the robins sang their sweet September tune. Here and there, as if to emphasise the quiet greenery of verdurous carpet and silent walls of living green, a large stone urn stood on its pedestal filled with flaming geranium or blue lobelia; and here to mark the passing of the hour the sun-dial told its tale.

But for whose feet were all these hushed courts and alleys echoless planned? Surely for the feet of happy memory, of thoughtful pleasure, and the peace of a perfect English home.

OCTOBER AT THE LAKES.

It is mid-October, and though there is not yet a speck of snow upon the hills, the shepherds know full well that snow-time is near, all the higher fells are deserted of the flocks, and the roads from time to time are filled with the black-faced herdwick beauties on their way to wintering in the seaboard plain. But as one stands upon Latrigg to-day, one might believe that an all golden summer time such as poets dreamed of had come to stay, so lightly flies the gossamer in air, so warmly falls the sun upon one's cheek. Down in the vale the hedgerows have not quite shed their leaf, though the dazzling corals on the thorns and the hips upon the roses could never have shone so fair if some of their leafage had not first been shed.

Hark! that is the voice of the robber, as with harsh cries the field-fares pass overhead, but unless the wind changes and the Frost king comes, neither rowan-tree, nor holly, nor rose, nor hawthorn will be less beautiful at the end of the month.

But the field-fare is not the only robber who has come to stay in the valley. There is not an Irish yew full-fruited that does not twinkle with the

silver under-wing of the missel-thrush, and white upon the fallows are the people of the sea—the beautiful black-headed gulls.

As one gazes upon Skiddaw one notes that the heather has lost that curious amethystine colour which in certain lights it wore at the end of September, and though not yet ebon-black as November will find it, ere October leaves us, one may know quite well that its rootlets are beginning to think of winter sleep. High above the heather is a surer sign of mid-October, for all the bents and grasses on the higher hills, though this year the rains have not yet fallen, are blanched into marvellous whiteness.

The colour of the hills, and especially of the lower slopes of them, is in this October month more gorgeous than in any season of the year, for the brackens, though they have turned to gold, seem to be full of life and sap still—they sheet the mountain side in living gold; another month, it is true, they will be deeper russet red, but the russet red will have about it a look of death and decay which the October fern can never know.

But there is another reason which makes for its beauty. In November the brackens will be wind-blown and shattered—storms of wind and rain will trample them underfoot; to-day these miniature forests of branchy gold are vigorous and strong. It is true that the witchery of the bracken change is sometimes seen as early as mid-September. Noticeably is this so if violent wind and storm

of rain has interrupted the usual fair weather of that month. Then it would appear that without the touch of frost the brackens on the lower slopes change suddenly into such brightness of yellow that one can easily believe that the gorse or whin bushes have put on their second bloom. This bright yellow soon changes to ruddy gold, and we see the lower slopes russet red, while the higher slopes are still golden. Higher above these comes the white silver gilt of the 'bents' and 'sieves,' and nothing can be imagined more full of wonder than a mountain side in the full flush of evening's afterglow. I have noticed that the eastern fells of a valley running north and south are often of much richer colour than the western. This is accounted for by the thrashing of the wind and rain from the west, which, falling on the eastern slopes, brings about as by enchanter's wand the magic and the mystery of the change of the bracken.

Let us go forward by the larch grove up the steep,—the tresses of the trees are yellow as the Norseman's hair. One cannot get away from the thought of the Norseman, for this Latrigg, this ridge of the dead, as its name implies, was the place where the far fore-elders of the Viking sleep. As one gazes out upon the land they made their home more than ten centuries ago, one must needs believe that except for the thinning of the woodland in the vale, they looked out on the same scene beneath the October sky, saw the same lake, in silver quietude, the same grey-golden fell-sides

burn against the sun, the same far Solway flashing to the North, the same grave Skiddaw lift its purple shales against the unclouded blue.

Come down to the gate—pass through the gate and the camp that once the Romans knew, in ages long before the Vikings came. You will not see in all Cumberland such a mountain side of gleaming copper going into brick-red as yonder slope of Lonsdale swathed in bracken, from blue sky to green meadow, and burning to the westering sun. So down the old pack-horse road that one time led towards Penrith and the east, then curving round the shoulder of Latrigg, come home by one of the most romantic woodland ways we have in the Keswick neighbourhood.

Deep on our left-hand side, the Glenderaterra laughs aloud as it breaks into a thousand mimic suns and goes from black to white beneath the o'erhanging canopy of gold. Then, as we turn at the gate and set our face for the west, the Greta is seen to shine in an enchanted valley and the sound of it grows as we move along towards the woodland of our dream. Here October, as a magician, may be seen in all its grace, the brackens five and six feet high are green and gold and blanched to perfect whiteness; like fountains of fiery red the rowan trees send up their beauty and their light through a tender veil of hazel copse, part vivid green—part lemon yellow, and the oaks in umber brown stand up in contrast to the yellowing birches, and green-blue, with wonderful

contrast against the bronzing larches, the Scotch firs take the sun.

Always beneath us, flashes and flames the Greta; here curves round an emerald meadow, there loses itself from sight among the glorified autumn thickets. Rooks are busy with their acorn feast, wood pigeons clap their cymbals and flash past, a jay clangs, and a rabbit scuttles, and the air all round us swims with reflected gold from leaf and sunset sky.

Every gradation of autumn colouring lies right and left of us, as we pass along, and ever out beyond us against the grey-blue hills there lies the golden mirror of perfect peacefulness—the shining Derwentwater.

October sees the hedger still at work, finishing the trimming of the last hedgerows. In October comes home the last bracken load to the farmsteading, and in October the last ram shows of the season are held, and great is the interest of them to all who care that the strain of our Herdwick sheep shall never run to loss, that still upon our fells shall sheep be found with Roman noses and eyes like elephants', and mighty ruffs more hair than wool, and broad feet, and legs with sturdy brush of wool upon them, that so unfailingly as of old the hardiest sheep that run on any British hills, may fend for themselves and find pasture, and face the snow and weather the storm where a less hardy Norseman would fail.

I say Norseman, for the very word Herdwick

has a Viking ring about it, and notwithstanding the old story that these sheep came ashore from some of the Spanish galleons that were wrecked upon our coast at the time of the Spanish Armada, I believe that they are of a much more ancient lineage as far as our fell stock goes, for it is much more likely that these creatures whose chief characteristics are the hairy mane and the wool-feathered legs that fit them to cope with the snow as they ' peckle ' amongst the heather or bent grass for their food in winter time, came from a Northern climate rather than a Southern one.

But we shall hear more about the Herdwicks if we will go to the Keswick ram hiring. It is one of the last ram shows in the Lake District. These ram hirings are regular North country institutions; it is a time when the sheep-masters delight in showing hospitality. There are some who pride themselves on never having taken a penny for letting the flocks rest in their fields as they go to and fro to the ram fair. In the memory of man it was the custom for all the shepherds who went over the Black Sail or Styhead to be welcomed all Thursday, Friday morning, Friday night and till dinner had been served on Saturday morning at the Wastdale Inn, free, gratis and for nothing; and as many as forty would have free bed and board at the expense of the landlord, " Thoa, na doot," as my informant told me, " they wore a laal bit brass in liquor." And though these days of landlord hospitality are failing, you will find

that in matter of business and accounts, trust and honour of word from man to man is held to be better still than legal document or written agreement, and it would do anyone's heart good to see the informal way in which, having waited a whole year for their money, the flock-masters give it or receive it at the ram fair.

A shepherd will stroll up to anotner from whom he hired rams last year, and say, "I think I should be owing thee a bit o' brass noo," and put into his neighbour's hand — who simply says, "Aw, dost thee, noo?"—the guineas he agreed to give at the last ram fair. "That second tip o' thine was nea good, warse ner nowt." "Aw, indeed, was it noo? that's a bad job then; thoo'll likely be wantin' a luck-penny back?" "Nay, nay," the other will reply, "tips is tips and he was my choosin', not thine, and thoo mun keep th' brass and we mun try a better yan this year."

And so the talk goes on, the business is done in friendly, old-fashioned ways, and men who came as friends go back as friends the more. One gets the impression that the money business is not the important business at a ram fair, but it is the Roman nose and the elephant look of the eye and the broad feet and the great hair ruff and the fine curl of the horns that matters most and is of most interest to these keen shepherds of our Cumbrian fells.

It is at these meetings that one is able to pick up dog stories, and bits of shepherd lore, though

for this latter one always feels one has lived a hundred years too late. Take an example. In the old British times before the primitive inhabitants of the dales had been driven South into the land of the Waelas or strangers, and Wales had been peopled with the wild Cymbri, the shepherds on our fells counted their sheep in a peculiar way according to their fingers, and having counted up to ten began again, so that eleven was one and ten, twelve, two and ten, and so on up to fifteen, and from fifteen to twenty they counted one and fifteen, two and fifteen as before. The British shepherds carried their counting into Wales and left a knowledge of their sheep-scoring method behind them, and up to a hundred years ago it is probable that most of the flock-masters knew the British numerals which ran with variations in the different dales as follows:—"Yan, taen, tethera, hethera, pimp, hata, slata, lowra, dowra, dick." This was varied by, "Yan, taen, tuddera, anuddera, pimp, sethera, lethera, hovera, dovera, dick." Then to go on counting, the numerals ran, "Yan-a-dick, taen-a-dick, tethera-a-dick, hethera-a-dick, bumfit," which stood for fifteen as "dick" stood for ten. Going forward for sixteen the numeral was "yan-a-bumfit" and so forward, "taen-a-bumfit, tethera-a-bumfit, hethera-a-bumfit and giggot," which stood for twenty. Thanks to the labours of the Rev. T. Ellwood of Torver, many of these versions from the dales have been collected, and a similar system of numerals has been found

to exist in Yorkshire, Durham, in Epping Forest, in Cornwall, in Brittany, and amongst the North American Indians of Maine, Connecticut and Ohio.

Of course there are other ways of counting that have analogy, still practised by the school children of Cumberland in their games. "Ena, mena, mina, mo," and "ena, dena, dina, do." But these do not seem to be more than a jingling way of counting by rhyme. But alas! the shepherds on our fellsides no longer know the British speech of old, and though from the oldest shepherds I have been able to glean the numerals up to ten, I have always heard them say, "Not that I ivver uset them, or heard them uset, but my fadder telt'd me," or "my grandfadder kenned all aboot it." The last talk I had about these numerals was at the Keswick ram show in 1904, and one of the oldest shepherds present told me that he remembered the scholars at his school counting in that way, but that he did not know that it had anything to do with sheep scoring, "and the lads thought it was Latin or Greek and were proud aneuf of them in consequence."

But the ram shows are over, and the rams have been sent off to finish fighting some of their battles before they are loosed in November to become the fathers of the future flock. Then, dreary as November may be to the shepherd on the hills, the ram in the valley will find his days filled with love and war pass all too swiftly.

One cannot leave the shepherds and their ram-show without remembering that in October the lower pastures on the fellside have sudden contrast given to their vivid greenness by the presence of ruddy-coated sheep. These are the crock-yews, as they are called,—old ladies of eight summers. They are drafted from the flock and dressed out in gorgeous colours of burning red, their faces are washed with dry soap, and they are ready for the market. The glorious raddle or ruddle makes them shine out as a red-coated huntsman shines out in a far-off pastoral scene. In the olden time this ruddle was the red oxide got from one of the ghylls to the west of the country where hematite ore abounds—in modern time it takes the more prosaic form of some commercial colouring compound. It is not a time of peace for these pleasant autumn meadows. The herdwick rams are notoriously warlike, and one sees the rivals for the affection of the dams, determining to fight their love quarrel to the bitter end. One sees and hears also, for the rams going apart some 20 yards rush towards one another, leap into the air, and meet forehead to forehead with the crash of a gun shot. Why more necks are not broken, or more fractures of the skull do not occur, is a mystery, but one feels that no animal under the sun knows better than a herdwick ram, at the end of a fight, the misery of headache.

AN OCTOBER DAY AT MUNCASTER.

THERE is a witchery about the stretch of coast between St. Bees and Black Combe which is born of the echoes of history and legend that like the sound of the sea fill the air with constant whispering. St. Bega and her maiden broideresses and all the wonder of the snow miracle on Midsummer Day call to us through the salt sea air. The great Viking chieftain who set up his cross in shape of the Igdrasil or holy Tree of Life and to remind him of the Hammer of Thor, at Gosforth, moves still upon the dunes where the huts or 'scales' of his sea-folk once were hidden, and we can watch him on the seventh day—a Christian on land and an honest worshipper of Balder afloat—listening to the harangue of the mission priest in the Gosforth kirk-garth, and joining his brothers on the Thursday at Thor worship in the stone circle by the coast rampire at Seascale. Go on a little further and the druids of the Drigg oak groves come forth to meet one—a little further and King Aveling's town is reached.

Who King Aveling or Eveling was, none know; but there is a breath of early British lore about the word, as there is sign and seal of the occupation of this harbour town in very early days from the great bee-hive burial mound of oaken chambers and earth, which was pierced through by the Furness Railway navvies, when they constructed the

MUNCASTER CASTLE FROM THE ENTRANCE TO THE TERRACE WALK.

line, three hundred yards south of the present railway station of Ravenglass.

Nor is the place free from the haunting of King Arthur. The ancient ruin close by the bee-hive burial mound, bore in the seventeenth century the name of Lyon's Guard and was held to be a mansion of King Arthur, son of Pendragon. As we roam the sand-locked harbour or, by leave of Lord Muncaster, pass the ferry to visit the interesting gullery close by, we may well be roaming the shores of a northern Lyonnesse that once knew the gathering of the goodliest knights whereof this world holds record. The very word Lyonnesse brings us to Viking times. Hither doubtless came the Norse sea-farers in their beaked ships from far-off Mona's Isle, when in the ninth and tenth centuries they swooped down upon the coast of the Cymbri and made themselves the permanent flock-masters of our northern fells.

But earlier than the days of Lyon's-guard and before even the raven standards gave their name to Ravenglass, here flew the Roman eagle in its might. For here in A.D. 79 came the great general Agricola, who gave us our two Roman walls to the North, advancing from Anglesea up the western coasts with his fleet to bear him company. Here he must have left an army of road-makers to construct the continuation of the road from Millom to Moresby and Ellenborough, Allonby and Bowness on Solway, and to establish his line of communication with Ambleside and the interior

of the country by way of Hardknot and Wrynose within signalling distance of Newton Knot. It was no temporary camp that Agricola made here at Ravenglass. Whoever was left in command when the General went northward must have been a man of considerable importance—a man whose dignity needed a palace to give it home. Thus to-day, as we move in thought among the remains of Walls Castle with its thick sandstone masonry on which the terracotta plastering made by Roman cement, mixed with finely crushed tile, still remains, and within which was discovered, a few years ago, the hypocaust for winter's use and for the daily bath, we call up the figure of some mighty captain of a cohort who here, towards the end of the first century after Christ, though he knew not the Father we worship, still believed in spiritual realities, and insisted that a guardian deity of his house, the bust of the Roman Emperor as God's vicegerent, should have place in his house, and bade the architect arrange for the 'cella' or niche wherein the bust should stand.

We leave Walls Castle remembering that nowhere in Great Britain to-day are there any ruins of Roman domestic masonry standing so high above ground, and so we go up by a private drive towards the Decoy. Golden-leaved wych-elms and hazel-wands light the path. The bracken burns at our side, the brook sings through a tangle of fiery maple and rosy bramble leaf, and we are soon in the breezy deer-park on the height that of old time

knew Roman soldier and Viking sailor who had clomb up to have a look out over shining estuary and wooded vale. Passing through the deer park, we find ourselves in a glen walled up to Heaven either side with elm, and pine, and deodar, and sycamore, and horse chestnut. The blue of the *pinus insignis* against the chestnut gold is wonderful, and all the rhododendrons gleam green beneath a canopy of lustrous amber light. So down towards the Castle-hold, with squirrels leaping from bough to bough, and rabbits scuttling across our path, till with a great swoop the rosy-gravelled drive takes us round through verdurous lawn sentinelled by umber beech and russet oak to the terrace upon which the granite tower and hooded porch in one, opens its kindly door. I say kindly advisedly. There is no one in our North country where all the great squires are kind, more public-spirited in the use of his beautiful Castle grounds than the Lord of Muncaster. A letter to the Lord's agent for permission to view the Castle grounds has never yet been unanswered, or answered in the negative. It seems to be the joy of his life to share this goodly heritage of perfect scene with all who have hearts to feel and eyes to see.

We will not linger at the Castle front, though from beneath the mighty tree in the foreground few nobler visions of the valley from here to Scafell foot are vouchsafed us. We have on other visits passed through the beautiful hall to gaze face to face on Tom Skelton, the jester, who was lord of

misrule in ancient time at Muncaster, and on another occasion have been permitted sight of that quaint green glass bowl, enamelled in white lilac and gold, given by the royal Seigneur Henry VI., which whilst it nestles safely in the cotton wool within its oaken case will keep the luck of Muncaster whole. In one of the rooms hangs the panel portrait of the King in his ermine cape presenting the bowl, with the date 1461 beneath it, and, if we walk to the edge of the terrace in front of the Castle door, we may see away to the east the tower that keeps in mind the fact that here after the battle of Towton was given, by Sir John Pennington, sanctuary and welcome to the unfortunate Lancastrian King who had been—so tradition has it—found wandering on the fell near by, by the friendly shepherds of the then Lord of Muncaster.

But we must away to the famous terrace that stretches along the side of the hill in the direction of that memorial tower. There is in Great Britain no Castle terrace that seems better to combine everything needed to a perfect panorama of glorious scene. Bending round a deep cutting filled with rhododendron and crossing what once was the moat, we find ourselves upon a broad walk of softest turf, that seems to run endlessly away to the eastward. Fenced from the north by lilac bushes and arbutus and bay and laurel, the border on our left hand, though it is mid-October, is still gay with flowers. The Michaelmas daisy vies with

the tritonus and lingering gladioli, the last roses and geraniums are still glowing at our side, while the red-admiral butterfly opens and closes his gorgeous wings as though he feared no frost. On our right a low wall of box runs like a rampart; out of it at intervals of twelve paces, rise Irish yews, now darkly green, now gleaming gold, and beyond on the sloping meadow-lawn that falls to the valley of the Esk, stand in every variety of Autumn colour, gorgeous chestnuts and wych-elms and beech trees from whose depths of russet beauty fly in startled hundreds the wood pigeons who clash the grey-winged cymbals of their wings and flash from shadow into sun. The silver torrent suddenly pours back through the sunlit air, and shines against the russet woodland, while startled by the rush of the dainty multitude the sheep look up from their feeding. Down below us glides the silver coiling river. A few hours hence it will be hardly visible, but now it is high tide and here twice a day

> "The salt sea water passes by
> And makes a silence in the hills."

Yet I am not so sure that the babbler up at Eskdale Head needs any silencing, for here as it swerves from left to right, it finds such calm contentment that its voice, except in flood time, is not heard, and the laughter of the black-headed gull and clang of the heron and bleating of the sheep are the only sounds that come up through the quiet

air as we pace the soft green terrace, lost in thought.

I do not know any terrace in England so magical in its entire restfulness. It is true that as one looks out to Birker Moor, the gulls, sailing over towards Devoke, carry one's eye away to the grey-purple Harter Fell and Hardknot, and echoes of Roman arms come back down the light wind from the north-east; or again, one gazes away west to the glimmering sea that saw the Roman galleys and the Viking prows, or south to the huge Black Combe where the Britons lit their Baal fires and cried from their stone circles to their gods to help them against the foe; but none of these sounds seem to disturb the sense of absolute peace and security which this green garden-terrace gives to all who wander here. Peace breathes from the ground. There stands the Fortress Castle but her warfare is accomplished; though the ghost of a king comes pale and haggard from his fellside wandering, the battle terror still upon his face, and passes with his shepherd friends toward the Castle gate, he cannot break the spell of absolute tranquillity that haunts this half a mile of grassy lawn above the gentle Esk.

Away in the distance gleam the Crinkle Crags that lead us ladder-like to the heights of Bowfell, to Great End and the mountain mass of Scafell and Scafell Pike. In this all golden October afternoon the mountains seem to have been carved from chrysolite and lapis lazuli and burning amethyst;

you might believe that August was back again, and had flung its purple mantle over the kingly shoulders of the far-away hills. Sometimes, by one of those magic transformations our October afternoons bring, all colour suddenly fades, and the vast mountain monarchs that just now burned like flame, or seemed built of solid cobalt, are pale as a dead man's face, and shine as if they were not children of the great volcanoes' central fires, but creatures of the sea-shell's making—vast chalk barriers lifted from the deep.

But for the fairest view at Muncaster of those far fells, we must retrace our steps and passing through the retired churchyard with its broken cross, that takes us back to the knot work of Viking times, we may make our way to a lane beyond the Vicarage that leads us on to Muncaster Fell and the tarn that glimmers on its height. Words fail one to describe the prospect from that tarn side, whether a man come in emerald April, in purple heather time, or in the golden Autumn-tide. Here on a ridge that gives fair view of either dale, the Mitedale on the one side and the Eskdale on the other, with view of the old harbour of King Aveling's town, and the rolling dunes of Ravenglass to the west, with Mona's Isle laid like a vast jewel in the far ocean waterflood, a man may dream of all the historic pageant of the past that has gone to make our Cumberland. The Britons holding their 'strengths' of earth upon the shoulders of the inland fells; the Romans marching along the

sea-coast northward, or building their camp at Hardknot; the Christian missionaries landing with St. Bega at Tomlin Head; the Vikings filling the waterpool below with their beakèd ships, or gathering for worship in the far hamlet of Gosforth; the monks of Calder building their Abbey in the woodland further north, the baron of mediæval time rearing his fortress hard by round the ancient tower which the Romans may have founded; the fishermen of Queen Elizabeth's time following the bends of the Irt and Mite and Esk and fishing the shallows for pearl-bearing oysters; the stranding of some Armada wreckage on the shore, the sailing by of the privateer that the daring Captain Paul Jones commanded,—all these are pictures that may rise to the mind's eye, as one gazes; and yet all these fade before the splendour of those mountain giants to the east, that have gazed on the changing life of the men who have lived and died upon this western shore, and know that one work remains untouched, one care undiminished, the work and care of the keepers of the fellside flock, and that one race has outlived all changes, the race of the ruff-necked mountain-sheep, the Herdwicks, that are round about us as we gaze.

"Ay, it's a grand daay is this hooiver for t' time o' year," said the shepherd at my side, "and you can gang farder and fare warse for a bonnie leuk oot I'se thinkin. Fine wedder an aw by t'leuks o' Scafell. It's best when he's a bit o' cloud on't heed on 'im."

As he spoke I saw a white plumy cloud lay its great wreath upon the mountain's height, and fill the lower slopes with shadow of violet blue, while the sun upon the flanks of the hill seemed doubly gold from the fiery warmth of the bracken vesture that it enlightened. I had never seen such colour since I stood upon the hills of Edom, and the heights of Serbal and Sinai, or gazed from Hermon upon the Lebanonian range. The Syrian colours of gold and amber and rose and lilac and puce and purple and amethyst and cobalt and turquoise seemed to have possessed the hills to the east, and to be flooding fell and valley to our very feet; with the lights of amber mixed with emerald, the young gorse and juniper mingling in the withered fern close beside us, swept down the ridge of the Muncaster Fell, and the great cloud shadows dropped purple upon the golden bents and tussock grass, and changing the silver tarn to the colour of mother-of-pearl, passed on out seaward and mottled the sea with islands of steel-blue darkness.

We turned our backs unwillingly upon that fair plain of shadowy green and gold and purple plowland, of white farms seen upon the fells, and clustered hamlets in their happy peace to the north. We turned our backs right loath upon the blue and gold of distant hills and glimmering mountain wastes to the eastward, and homeward through the leaf-strewn lanes that whispered to our feet we went, down the long hill of pleasant Muncaster with assuring whispers of contentment in our heart.

Poorer for loss of the scene, we were richer in soul for all its loveliness, rich with such a treasury of Autumn memories in one's mind as might make a man in sorrow smile to think upon, and a man in gladness give God thanks for joy.

NOVEMBER AT THE LAKES.

We are fortunate in the Lake Country in having a longer leafage of the trees than is found in the Midlands or the South. When November comes the woods have not yet waned and are full of Autumn glory, and though it may happen that a sudden frost, with a strong wind following, may rob us of this glory in a night, if we have the usually mild and calm weather that is our portion, our Lakeland woodlands are still in leaf as late as the middle of the month.

To artists or lovers of colour, we would say, "Do not leave us when October ends: the weather is calm and temperature high, you may still sit and work out of doors. It is in November that the larch puts on its gold, and in November that the deep red of the beech-trees and the fire upon the feathery rowans is seen to contrast most magically with the sombre russet of the oaks." These oaks are themselves a study for variety of hue, for the leaf of the oak which in our country is the Dur-mast oak with its sessile fruit, changes from day to day by the slow crisping of its leafage, and

the under side of the leaf in its duller greyness forms contrast with the leaves as yet uncurled. Those 'Dryads' crowns' which November weaves upon the oak branches, break and splinter the light, and seem to accentuate the density and fullness of the oak tree foliage.

It is now, in the early days of November, that the blue-green of the Scotch fir is seen in most wonderful beauty against the gold, and along the water courses the alders in their unchanging green, come forth to unexpected prominence.

It is in November too that one notes the daintiness of the lady of the wood, for the birch tree, losing its leafage slowly, is seen now like a fountain of golden drops suspended in air. And if one wishes for green and gold upon one tree, we have but to go to the black poplar or aspen tree to fill our eyes with delight. Sometimes in the wood which else is shining with every variety of golden light, a silver-grey light is seen to swim up like vapour and form a delicate background. These are the wych-elm trees that have lost their leaf or clumps of hazels or naked ash trees; for the laggard ash is first to lose his leaf—a slight frost, and its green vesture untouched to gold is seen to cover the ground. But apart from all the beauty of our November woodlands an added charm is given to our fells. It is true that much of the colour of the bracken seems to be sinking into the ground, but with every morning a hoar-frost covers the tops, and long before a general snow-fall on

the higher fells, one can see, through a veil of tenderest powdered frost-silver, the shining of the ruddy fern.

For a man who loves solitude and silence, November is the time for fellside walking; he will neither hear bleat of sheep nor bark of raven, he will not be impeded by heavy snow-fall, for wherever on the tops he meets the snow, he finds it hard to his foot. Always in November as he gazes down into the quiet valleys, in strange contrast to the look of winter round about him, he sees an apparent springtide green beneath him, hears the pleasant sound of cock-crow from farm to farm, and notices the ruddy-coated rams and their mates in the pastures below. One other contrast he notes as he descends into the vale—the music of the brooks with their lack of melody on the higher moorlands. The runlets were frozen with dumbness up above, but in the valley they have found their tongues.

The silence and solitude of the upper fells seem to infect the whole Lake Country. The rush of tourist life has ceased. One may walk from Grasmere to Keswick—that main trunk road, loud all through the summer with noise of wheels and hoot of motor horns—and not pass a single vehicle. Truly, if one seeks for rest and silence, one will find them at the English Lakes in November. The rooks have ceased to clamour and pass silently at morn and eventide to their resting places in the woods. Still the sea sends us its graceful restless

wanderers—the gulls, and the quiet air is at intervals vocal with their quaint cries. Lovers of the fresh plow-land they are seen in fearless beauty of tossing wing hovering about the hind and his horses, or dappling the valley meadows as they feed. Except for these bird life seems to have passed away from us.

But on our lakes, though the boats are drawn ashore and humanity seems to have deserted their silver levels, there comes with November a wonderful gift of life from the wild bird world. Flotillas of the golden-eyed duck and flights of mallard and widgeon may be seen, and the quaint cry of the coot is heard among the reed-beds, while by every beck one's eyes may be delighted with the antics of the Bessy Dooker—the starry-breasted curtseying water ouzel.

In the woodlands too, though the voice of the jay is the only loud voice heard by day, the whisperings of the schools of tits as they go from leafless larch to larch give a sound of content and winter happiness. While, if it is open weather, the squirrels leap from bough to bough, and the "little miracle of the forest," as Ruskin called it, is an engaging companion for any lover of the woods, and the brown owls crow and hoot at dawn and eventide.

The hoar frost at night and the warm sun by day combine to spread a delicate hazy veil over our hills and valleys, and though we have clear morns and eventides with steel white and apple

green skies at dawn, and gorgeous amber sunsets, we have for the most part to be content in November with unaccentuated distances and lilac shadowless hills. Often in November, which is for the most part one of our less rainy months, the walker is tempted out by the sunshine and splendour for a walk on to the fells, and if he climbs high enough he may feel the sun all day. Let him keep to the vales, and he will be disappointed; by noontide the haze has hidden the sun, and he walks in sombre gloom. But heavy as the steady cloud wrack is overhead, 't'wedder,' as the shepherds say, will not 'brek doon,' and the pedestrian in the valley may at eventide see the hill ranges to the west clear purple against a golden store of fiery cloud; while, if he looks westward, he will see the mountain-slopes burning into rose or glowing like molten copper beneath the magic of light that comes he knows not whence.

The days are short and the long twilights of April are almost unthinkable of, but our moonlight evenings in some sense redeem the loss; and when towards the end of November, the snows have covered the hills, though the stars are shining, we hardly think that the day is done. Sometimes in November the flashing of what are called in the Crosthwaite valley 'Lord Derwentwater's lights' are seen, and the aurora—rosy-red or pulsing into spears of light—is seen above Skiddaw. The shepherd tells us that it means a hard winter, and the twinkling flights of the field-fares would seem

to agree. But we have no fear for the birds, for the holly is a weed in our lake country, and though it is not preserved as it used to be preserved in the days of the abbots of Furness, Calder, and Shap, and when the monks of Fountains in the Keswick Vale insisted upon eating only holly-fed mutton during wintertide, we have still an abundance of holly in our woods and a good store of coral fruit for our sisters the birds.

As for the farm life, November sends the plough horse afield, and the hedger to complete the careful cutting and pruning of the field-side hedgerows, while the flail may be heard with merry clatter in the barn. But November brings great cheer to the farms, for, thanks to good St. Martin who sent his friend St. Ninian to preach the gospel to the Northerners, and to be, for all we know to the contrary, the first gospeller to the fellside shepherds of old time, we here in the Lake Country have held the name of the saint in high esteem, and every farm lad and lass not only looks upon St. Martin as giving them a right to change his 'spot,' as he calls his place of work, and go from farm to farm, but also as bidding them claim of their masters a very needful holiday.

The statute hirings have lost something of the simplicity of old time. The men no longer stand about with straws in their mouths as a sign that they wish to be hired, but they still assemble on hiring day at the market towns, and chaffer with their would-be masters for a change of place. Very

amusing it is to hear the talk that then goes forward. "Ye'll likely be wanting a spot? Well, thoo mun get a character and I'll think on't." "Nay, nay," the man will reply, "thoo needn't bodder nin, I'se gitten thy character, and I think ye'll likely not be for suiting me, so I'll saay good-daay."

The hinds are an independent race, the master often feels that it is the man who by consenting to be hired was doing him the favour. At the end of the bargain a king's shilling passes, and the agreement, without writing, holds good.

Things have altered a good deal in matter of hiring ways in the last thirty years. In the old days men and women stood out in the open—rain or no rain—at regular stands, marked with large tickets as are seen at cattle shows,—men, women, boys, girls; and farmers could be seen handling their arms, sounding their chests, much as you see them handling 'herdwicks' on sale, looking at their teeth, and asking how they manage their meat, for a master knows that a man with bad teeth and who might suffer from what is locally called toothwark, would often enough be laid by or out of temper when he was most needed afield with a cheerful mind. In these later days all this has passed away. It is true that the men still stand together or in groups in the open street, but the women have some rendezvous under shelter, and the farmers who want what they call a 'strong gelbody for t'farm' must go off there to 'lait' her.

One other great improvement has been introduced which good St. Martin and his friend and disciple Ninian would sure approve. A ladies' committee takes it in hand to arrange the 'hiring' dance, and instead as of old, the public-houses being filled with young men and maidens till far into the morning, the men and women meet in some airy drill hall where temperance refreshments are served, and where, under careful stewardship, the good old game of heel and toe, so well beloved in Cumberland and Westmoreland, may be played for reasonable hours.

Part of the Martinmas holiday is always spent with the hounds. And in the dusk the running fellside hunters, staves in hand, may be seen coming home with their trophy, poor Reynard slung on a pole, and all the crack for many a winter's evening at the farm will centre round that memorable Martinmas run with the Coniston or the Blencathra pack.

These November evenings at the farms have not the interest in handicraft they used to have, when the girls dipped 'sieves' or rushes for 'cannels' and the men carded wool, and the women spun the flax for good 'harden-sark,' or the wool for linsey petticoats and bed gowns; but the local paper is read over and over again, and the game of whist is played, and after a last look at the calves, the farm door bangs, the swinging lantern disappears, and the men go off 'to sleep all night in Elysium.'

In olden times the hunt was Martinmas Sunday.

Sunday was the day the hard-worked estatesman felt most free to tackle the varmint that wrought such destruction to flock and farm-yard. If the hounds were out, the dale priest had no congregation, and, tradition has it, sometimes went along to the hunt with his people. But that scandal has ceased, and Martinmas Monday is the holiday hunt. Hunting, like dancing, is in the fellside blood. The woman body at Wythburn who, finding her legs impeded by her heavy petticoat as she followed the hounds in full cry, took out a clasp knife and went in for an impromptu divided skirt, was but a sample of this keenness. The fox is the fellside farmer's natural enemy, and he hunts him not for sport only or chiefly, but for dear life upon his land. I confess I am naturally on the side of the fox, but I cannot help feeling the kind of intoxication that certainly possesses the men as they follow the horn upon the high fells. The glorious air, the magnificent and constantly changing view, the music of the hounds as they climb, now lost in a gully, now clear upon the mountain's breast, rings up to one from below; all this 'felt in the blood and felt along the heart,' when there is added to it the brotherliness and camaraderie of the whole company is very exhilarating and healthful here where men follow the game afoot, where there is no earth-stopping, and the fox has a fair chance in the chase. I am inclined to agree with Edward Plantagenet, the second Duke of York, who, writing his book, *The Master of Game,* five

hundred years ago, said, "Furthermore I will prove by sundry reasons in this little prologue that there is no man's life that useth gentle game and disport less displeasureable unto God than the life of a perfect and skilful Hunter, or from which more good cometh. The first reason is that hunting causeth men to eschew the seven deadly sins. . . . For whoso fleeth the seven deadly sins as he believe he shall be saved. Therefore a good hunter shall be saved and in this world have joy enough and of gladness and of solace, so that he keep himself from two things."

If Edward Plantagenet, who as good as died in the hunting field after a difficult and prolonged bear-hunt in 1387, could visit us to-day, he would find that the crown of joy in life, as he held it, was not withheld from the Lake Country sportsman for lack of keeping himself from these two things. "One is, that he leave not the knowledge nor the service of God, from whom all good cometh from his hunting: the second is, that he lose not the service of his master for his hunting nor his own duties which might profit him most."

Master and man in the Lake Country are much too keen brothers of the chase to have any 'difference over a question of goin' off wid t'hunt,' and there is happily no hunting now upon the Sunday.

Nor is November without its charms for the working man who 'follows a last bit of fishing,' at any rate in the Keswick neighbourhood. The

River Greta is the latest salmon river in the north-western land. And though it cannot be said to be great sport to go forth with line and worm and take a black fish more dead than alive on its way to the spawning beds up the St. John's Beck, or in the River Bure when a flood comes down, and the salmon, after long delay in Bassenthwaite, make up to the Greta Bridge and the weir beneath Greta Hall, the fisher folk go crazy with excitement as they watch the great fish moving in the pools or leaping up the amber-coloured torrent stair.

November, with all its silence, its sombre sounds, and its lack of gaiety, has cheer for the sportsman at the Lakes, for if he be neither hunter nor fisher you may tell by the echo of his gun that the water-fowler is busy, and the teal and widgeon and wild duck and golden eye must needs be on the alert if they are to see December days.

November, it is true, has more of colour in the woods and on the fells than in the workaday life of the shepherd or the hind, but it is a cheery month for the children. Band of Hope meetings, parish room concerts, magic lantern entertainments and tea-drinkings to keep the hand of the village hostesses in for some great crowning effort at Christmas and in the New Year, prevent life being dull; and literary society lectures, ambulance classes, choral society practices, nursing aid courses, cookery classes, dress-making meetings, seem to give the lake-land dwellers a chance of mutual improvement at the only season of the

year when, because the visitors have left the country, they feel that their hands are free or their heads have leisure.

THE MARDALE SHEPHERDS' MEETING.

THERE lies to the east of the great High Street range a little water flood the Roman soldiers looked on with delight, for it called them back to their own lakeland hills, but they looked on it too with awe, for its waters seemed as black as the Stygian lake they feared.

Ages before the Romans ran their high street, this lake was cared for by the shepherd children of Neolithic times. Their camps, their burial grounds, their standing stones are with us on the fellsides that slope to this lake which we call Haweswater to-day. The Vikings gave it that name, for it means the Halse Water or Neck-Water, and the neck is the promontory that the Messand beck in lapse of centuries has made, that runs out from the north-west shore towards the Naddle forest, and so nearly divides the lake in two, that one end is called Low Water and the other High Water.

One can get to the lake from Penrith up the Lowther valley or from Shap and Bampton, and when one has reached it one cannot linger by the shore if the sun is westering, for there is no house of call nearer than the Dun Bull, and this is a

mile beyond Haweswater, beneath the Nan Bield Pass. Arrived at the Dun Bull, or, as it is called affectionately by the shepherd folk, 'Dunny,' the traveller must needs stay unless he is a pedestrian, for the road-makers were so pleased with themselves or with the inn when they got there, that they determined to go no further. But Dunny is like Rome, all roads lead to it. If one climbs from Ullswater to the gap between Kidsty Pike and High Raise, or descends by Randale or goes up by High Street from Hayeswater, and comes down by Riggindale, or comes from Staveley over the Nan Bield Pass between Harter Fell and High Street, or passing up from Kendal by the Longsleddale valley descends over the Gatescarth Pass between Harter Fell and Branstree, there is but one house of call to be seen in the Mardale Vale below, and that is the Dun Bull.

There is a certain feeling of royalty as well as royal welcome about this little lakeland hostelry, for it is the ancient seat of the Kings of Mardale. In the reign of King John, so runs the tradition, a certain Hugh Holme, an outlaw by reason of the King's tyranny, found refuge here in the recesses of our Lakeland, and living in a cave under Riggindale Crag became the chieftain of the wild dalesmen here about. One, Rudolphus Holme, of the same family in the fourteenth century built an oratory where the Mardale Church stands, and from that time to the present the Holme family have lived on in the dale. The one house of call,

the Dun Bull, is but the natural outcome of the hospitality of the Kings of Mardale. They, when owners of the one house at Mardale Green, were ever willing to entertain angels unawares, and as the tourist became less of a *rara avis*, they enlarged their house for his reception. Still to-day in part of the building lives the last of the royal line during the summer months.

One does not wonder that a refugee in King John's time found rest to his foot and safety from the terrors of the law in this unfrequented valley. It is still so remote that it is without benefit of police. If a gentleman in blue came to Mardale they would not know whether he belonged to the military or civil arm. So out of the world is this part of the Lake Country that a legend has it there was once, for lack of an almanac, a quarrel between the clerk and the priest of the chapelry of the neighbour dale, Swindale, as to whether it was Saturday or Sunday,—and as for Greenwich time the clocks go their own gate and time o' dale and time o' day are what the shepherds like to make it. It is true that the Mardale folk have a tradition that a kind of weird aerial clock is heard striking the hour on still days above Bampton Moor, so that it would seem as if the good angels that tell the hours are determined the dalesfolk shall not suffer from being sixteen miles from a clock.

But once at least in the year Mardale has 'a gay good getherin o fwoke fra far and near.' On

the third Saturday of November, the shepherds' meeting of the year is held at Mardale. Determining to combine pleasure with business, a hunt is organised, and after the sheep are sorted out and claimed, the rest of the day is spent in merriment and cheer.

It was Friday evening, November 17th, that a lover of the shepherd life and shepherd customs of the dales found himself at the Shap station and began his walk of nine miles towards the nick in the grey hills that told where Nan Bield lay. He passed through the long straggling village street of Shap, out by the trim garden patches and orchards and on by the quaint quickset hedges cut into forms of birds by careful village 'topiarians,' and gained the undulating bleak country with its gleaming white grey walls, its scattered farms surrounded by sheltering trees, and descended to Bampton. Away on the Knipe Scar to his right were, he knew, remains of Druid worship, away in the hollow of the moorland to his left the monks of Shap had left their mark—Shap Abbey, beloved of the 'good Lord Clifford' of old, and perhaps his burial place, lay there. Below him the Lowther sparkled in the keen frosty air through meadows grey with hoar-frost. On went the pilgrim through Bampton, whose little village school gave in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries honourable judges to the Woolsack, and bishops to the Bench, and taught its classics so well in the beginning of the nineteenth century that it was said of the

Bampton hinds 'they plowed their fields in Latin.' As he wandered through Bampton he could not help being in mind of a certain yeoman family that sent forth, in the person of Hogarth the painter, the greatest satirist of the brush England ever produced; in a previous generation it gave to Troutbeck the greatest satirist with his tongue, in humble life, the Lake Country knew. Thence on, over the Lowther where the pearl oysters used to abound, and away to Haweswater, the road led the wanderer by Thornthwaite Hall on the left, where 'Belted Will' is said to have died after a hunting day in the pleasant meadow between the road and Halfa beck—Halfa so written to-day, but surely Halsa in the olden time, for it is the beck that flows from Halsewater. In sight now of Haweswater, what most strikes the traveller is the darkness, the ebon blackness of its gloomy flood at this late season of the year, for the sun passes very early beyond the hills to the north and west, and the gloom of the lake seems intensified by the purple blackness of the heather on the hills near by, and the sombre russet of the leafless Naddle Forest on the far side of the lake.

Not a sheep, not a shepherd is to be seen. Yet all this valley was once filled with the wild tribesman's life. There on the right are the five vast mounds we call to-day the Giants' Graves. A little higher on the hill is the ancient camp enclosure of Winyates; the Menhir or Standing Stones, called to-day Four Stones, are further

along on the ridge, and Dry-Barrows and Beck-Barrows are some of the many memories on the near hill of the long-forgotten races passed away. Forward now the road goes, by Measand Beck and Measand School—school chiefly famous for having trained an estatesman's son to become an eminent Bishop of Carlisle, Bishop Law, whose Ellenborough descendants became famous as lawyers and statesmen. The sky is red-golden in the west and the glow flushes all the children's faces as they come tumbling out of school.

There were different hours kept at Measand School for Mardale children in the old time. One of the rules of the founder of it prescribed that school should commence at 6 a.m. and go on with an intermission of one hour for breakfast, one hour for dinner, till 6 p.m. It was a long day's grind for dominie as for children, but it gave us sturdy scholars and well-furnished brains.

A shepherd passes by with twenty 'herdwicks' bound for the Dun Bull, and the Shepherds' Meeting. "It's gan to be a nippy neet I'se thinkin', and ivvry way it's mappen like a fine daay for t'do up at t'Dunny tomorrer," he said.

So on the wanderer went through the tingling air. The Laythwaite crags and the breast of Bampton Moor, brown and grizzled grey, rose up to the great rampire of the Roman Road on the right hand, and Whelter crags, Basing crag, and Castle crag, stood dark and gaunt in front. The little Mardale Church and its ancient yew trees appeared,

and the road turned sharply to the left round the churchyard and bore towards the Mardale beck, beyond which lay the goal of the journey—the 'Dun Bull' inn.

The Mardale Church has this peculiarity, that for many years it was served by two priests. Situate on the boundary of the two parishes Bampton and Shap, the vicars used to take turn and turn about. This plan was a gain to the worshippers, for they heard two sides of every question. It is to be hoped that they did not keep a box of sermons, as the priest at Swindale was said to have done, and were content to take the first one to hand for Sunday use. If they did, it is to be as devoutly hoped that the priest's landlady interfered, as she did at Swindale, and administered a rebuke which, though it savoured of 'poddish' making, was none the less forcible and plain. "Noo, noo barn," said the good woman, "thoo mun just stir up that box a bit. Sermons is beginnin to coom vara thick."

Maunday Thursday, according to the old churchwardens' accounts, in Mardale Chapel was a great day of the year. It was then that alms were bestowed; then the Holy Communion was partaken of; then that the orphan lads and lasses were hired out to neighbouring farms under strict conditions by the overseers. The churchwardens' accounts contain entries like the following:—"Resolved that Jobby Dobson is let to Mrs. Ritson from Whitsuntide to Whitsuntide 1827. The overseers to find

him a new jacket and a hat and pair of clogs. His mistress to find him with bed, board, and all other necessary apparel, and to deliver him up at Whitsuntide 1827 in as good a state for clothing as she finds him." "Resolved that Betty Jackson is let to Will Simpson till Martinmas at 38d. a week." "Resolved that Ann Mattinson is let to Jonathan Barnes at 3s. a week. She is to go one quarter to school, the overseers paying for her schooling." In such simple practical ways did the Mardale patriarchs care for the poor at their gates, as witnessed by the parish book of Mardale Chapel. Church services cost little enough; there was no lighting or firing to pay for in those days. It is true the sun-dial had to be recut in 1789, at a cost of 16s. 4d., and a pitch-pipe was procured, at a cost of 4s., but these were extraordinary expenses, and the Church was kept in repair and Divine Services carried on for an annual cost of £6. The ravens and foxes and eagles were parishioners that cost much more than the minding of orphans or the ordering of worship. Ravens' heads were paid for at 6d. each, wild cats at 1s., eagle heads 1s., and foxes 3s. 4d. to 2s. 6d.

There was no pack of hounds at Mardale in the early part of the eighteenth century, and the Mardale folk were obliged to take the killing of the vermin into their own hands. Eagles must have been plentiful if only a shilling was set on their head. Alas for it, only one eagle of the golden wing has been seen in the Lake Country in this

past year, and he came to encourage folk to subscribe for a sanctuary for wild life, on Gowbarrow Fell, and only remained for a few days before he returned to the north.

Riggindale opened out finely on the right hand, but the wanderer turned his back to Kidsty Pike and High Raise and Rough Crags and set his face for Selside, crossing the beck from Mardale Green. He was soon sitting a weary but not welcome guest by the cosy kitchen fire of the Dun Bull.

Why not welcome? Because every bed had been engaged by a party of Manchester men who were going to join the Mardale Hunt on the day following, but a bed was found at a farm near by and meals at the 'Dunny' were possible. How the wanderer fared may best be told in his own words: "As I was sitting at tea in the Dun Bull the dogs barked and ran furiously into the road. 'Dogs is likely cooming,' said the servant lass, and in another moment Joe Bowman, the well-known huntsman of the Ullswater pack, and a couple of hounds entered the kitchen.

"'Git oot wilt tha,' he cried, and the dogs disappeared like a flash of lightning, then taking his huntsman's cap off, the stout-built man with the sturdy determined look and close-cut moustache, a man whose face had been weathered into mahogany with a touch of colour in the stain, bowed to the company and was soon at home with us all. I knew Bowman by repute. For two hundred years the horn had been in the family,

and keener sportsmen never drew breath since John Peel was run to earth, or old John Crozier gave his last tallyho.

" ' Are foxes plentiful this year? ' I said.

" ' Nea nut sea menny as theer was a few years back.'

" ' How's that? ' for I remembered that two years ago the pack accounted for one hundred and twenty ' sly-uns ' in one season. ' Have you been hunting them too hard? '

" ' Nea,' said Joe, ' it's not that, but fowks hes taen to putten em doon.'

" And Joe was right. The old days of the Mardale Churchwardens' Accounts had come back with a vengeance, for in the course of the evening I heard that not less than three hundred foxes had been ' put down ' in the district which is hunted by the Ullswater hounds during the past twelve months. And it shows what our Cumberland and Westmoreland hill ' bields ' can do for a hardy foxhood, to think that notwithstanding this, the Ullswater pack have still their work to do.

" We sat down to tea,—' haver bread,' cheese, tea cakes, jam and apple pasty galore, and then I strolled up to the farm where a kindly body had promised to give me shelter for the night. The cupboard near the fire was dated the early part of the sixteenth century, another old oak cupboard was in the hall; my bedroom was furnished with an old-fashioned half tester bed, and I knew the mattress had been aired by the homely method still

in vogue of taking turn and turn about with other mattresses for the good man and his wife to sleep on. The bedroom only seemed to lack one thing—it had no lock on the door. The little daughter of the house was practising away on that instrument so dear to Westmoreland dale-farms, a 'melodeon,' and we soon made friends; for though it is matter of regret with me that the violin has been banished in favour of the melodeon, a farmhouse without a bit of music is no farmhouse at all, and a melodeon at least can make time and tune for a 'laal bit o dancin'.'"

We fell to talk with the good-man of the house about the customs in the dale. Formerly in Mardale, they told me, at weddings everybody, bride, bridegroom and company all went 'to t' Kirk on herseback,' and, after the ceremony, raced a break-neck race home. The first to get in received a silver-mounted whip, the last a consolation prize of 1 lb. of 'bacca.' They still, I found, kept up the custom in the dale of touching the cheek of a dead man lest they should dream of him, and still, though they knew not the reason, used as a charm the rowan tree, the igdrasil or holy ash tree of old Viking times, in the cream pot. The cream-stick, or, as they called it, the 'thivel,' was always of mountain ash; and for the same reason, namely that the rowan berries were berries of the sacred tree of life and immortality, the Mardale women-bodies gathered, so I learned, the mountain-ash berries in the autumn and placed them in salt

and water to preserve them as it were in pickle, and used them during the winter months for the making of funeral wreaths.

I went down with my host to ' Dunny ' at seven o'clock with the wife's voice of warning in my ears, that if we were late ' heam ' we mud sleep ' i't byre, fur she wadn't stay up for us, sea theere.' Already one felt the breath of the shepherds' meeting had possessed the Dun Bull. Farmers and shepherds who had come over the fells with sheep for the morrow's meeting were sitting on the settles, with their dogs at their feet and with pots of hardly-tasted ale in front of them. Very silent and weary they seemed and well they might be. They had been ' raking ' the high fells for a week past in quest of their neighbours' sheep. Presently one whose thoughts were evidently with his dogs out on the moorland said as if he was speaking almost in his sleep, and was addressing nobody in particular, " Ah saw that yan o thine wid t'lamb this mornin'. Ah tried to git till far side on't but my dog wasn't ' wiet ' eneuf, and t'yow bolted and got crag fast, sea ah hed to leave it, but Ah'll hev anudder try furst thing i't morning."

I learned that the shepherds' meeting at Mardale " wasn't founded in't memory of man." That the shepherds gave up a week to ' raking ' the fells and bringing down to the Dun Bull the sheep that were not their own. That though there is a Shepherds' Guide with all the lug-marks and smit marks of the various flocks in it, it is very seldom referred

to, for all the shepherds ken the marks as well as they ken their own bairns. From the time whereof the memory of man runneth not to the contrary, a hunt succeeded by a good dinner ushers in the shepherds' ceremony of 'swortn' the sheep; and after the sorting a hound trail and pigeon shooting at clay pigeons affords diversion till daylight fades; then tea is served and the shepherds who determine 'to remain on spree,' as they call it, instead of driving their sheep home, make a night of it. I gathered from the old farmers that they thought 'nowt' to the hound-trail and pigeon shooting. 'They wur new-fanglements and mud varra weel be dispensed wid.'

"Do you ever have any difficulty about handing the sheep back to their rightful owners?" I said.

"Naay, naay, nobbut when smit-mark's weshed oot or lug-mark hes got destroyed by wear and tear. Noo and agean we send yan back as neaboddy can claaim ye kna."

Poor little unclaimed herdwick! What a picture of forlornness! Surely the scape-goat in the wilderness was not much more forlorn than the friendless sheep that none could own, sent back to the winter mountains.

I learned that as many as two hundred sheep were thus annually brought together and returned to their rightful masters.

"It's very good of you to take so much trouble," said I.

"Naay, naay barn, why its nowt," was the

rejoinder. "Ye see its fair aw roond. They deu t'saame fer me."

A great barking filled the kitchen and all the dogs rushed out, for the noise of wheels was heard and soon Manchester poured itself into the hostelry. Sturdy young fellows in knickerbockers, in leggings, in shooting jackets and every form of unkempt, rough, untidy dress, their faces glowed from the frost, their appetites were keen, and we were all of us soon seated round a supper table where 'taty pot' was the principal dish. Then pipes were filled, songs were called for, and liquor flowed. The Manchester men meant well, but they did ill. The fellside shepherd is not one who thinks that the only way to be happy is to be full of liquor, but he is much too much of a gentleman to wish to hurt the feelings of the man who proffers it, and in his very fear of offence he deems it his duty to take the liquor provided. There was a deal of duty done that evening at the Dun Bull, and I shall never forget how the gude wife up at the farm rounded upon one of those who in his self-sacrificing efforts stayed up till the unconscionable hour of ten. "Thoo girt loompheed thoo. Thoo knaws varra weel that thoos gaan on t'spree termorrer neet, and thoo knaws varra weel that yan neet in't year is mair than will sarra. Git oop to'bed man and be shammed o theeself, a-keepin' decent fowk oop till an hour like this."

I must do my friend the justice to say that he was as sober as a judge, but doubtless ten o'clock

was a late sit up in a Mardale household that wakes and works at five o'clock no matter what the morning weather may be. I was up myself ere the last star had faded, and the household had already long been astir. We were still in the shadow and should be till late on in the afternoon, but the tops of Kidsty Pike and Whelter Crags opposite were blush rose with the rose of dawn. A heavy 'rag' frost whitened the vale, and grizzled the fells. "Owr hard for hunting, I doubt," said my host as I bade him good morning and went down to 'the Dunny' for breakfast. It was a splendid view that one got at the Dun Bull inn door on this crisp bright November morning. Branstreet and Selside were all in shadow, but shone by reflected light from the rosy Whelter Crags in a dress of grey armour damascened with gold, such was the effect of the red bracken seen through the hoar-frost on the slopes. Harter Fell rose up beyond Branstreet, capped with snow, but grim beyond imagining, and Nanbield, striped like a Zulu Kaffir's shield all black and white, seemed to put a touch of horror to the scene, which one forgot in a moment for the friendly laughter and sunlight of the crags that rose up in the happy morning light. Kidsty and High Street were invisible from the hotel door, but one had seen them from the hospitable farm, and one knew by the light in heaven and the golden cloud-galleons sailing high in air that the red deer on the far heights were rejoicing in full sunshine.

Breakfast was now the word. We all sat down together,—hunters, shepherds, Manchester men, landlord and wife. 'Poddish,' ham and sausage 'for ivver,' as my neighbour said, was the fare. Then, after breakfast, Joe Bowman went for his dogs. With but little hope of scent, he 'lowsed,' as it is called, at the Grove Brae farm, and the dogs went up across Branstreet towards the head of the dale. Three of the hounds were seen to disappear over the top. Gone off on a hunt on their own account, Joe knew well what hounds there were, and bidding us, if we wanted to see anything of the sport, get across the valley and climb up to the top of Rough Crags, he went on bravely with the rest of the pack, and was soon lost to view among the crags and the mist that rose, as the sun rose, along the steaming heights.

We crossed the river by a couple of larch-tree poles that do duty for a bridge and clambered up to a vantage ground 2042 ft. above sea level; all the time we heard a kind of elfin music, the voices of a hunt heard in a dream. "Dogs is gaen" was all that was said. At last a keen-eyed sportsman said, "By gocks! dogs is coomin back," and sure enough, with the fox in front of them, the three hounds that had been lost to view, though to Joe Bowman's memory very dear, came tearing over the lower end of Branstreet, then doubling back right across the breast of the Fell above Dunny and so on to Harter Fell, they doubled back again on to Branstreet, dashed along for nearly the whole

length of the fell breast, till the music and crying that was caught up, echoed back from all the crags of the vale, ceased, and we knew by the twinkle of bodies that clustered round a mass of fallen rocks a few hundred yards above the Dun Bull that the Tod had gone to earth, and the hunt was ended.

There was a rush down and across the dale to be in at the death, but my sympathy was with the 'varmint.' I had never been able to understand the nobility or the sport in sending terriers into a 'bield' to worry a holed fox, and I was glad to meet Bowman walking away from the crowd with a look of disquiet and disgust on his fine bronzed face to think that when foxes had been so thinned they should not have let this poor 'varmint' live to run another day.

The hunt had begun at 9. It had ended at noon, and the fox deserved better treatment, for he had brought the hunters back to their dinner table almost to a moment. Such a dinner! Beef boiled and roast, plum-pudding and mince pies. I heard one old shepherd say when pudding time came, "Naay Ah'll nut hev any pudding, thank tha. It'll spoil t'taaste o't round o' beef."

Before dinner the sheep had been driven into a garth at the back of 'the Dunny,' and dinner ended and the fifty shepherds satisfied that they had done all that could in justice be expected of them to do by the roast beef and the plum-pudding, we sallied forth to see the 'sworting out' of the herdwicks and

the return of the lost sheep to their respective owners. What struck one was first the quickness of eye that in that sea of faces could detect in a moment the particular mark, the cropped or 'stuffed' ear, or the particular smit that the owner claimed by. And the dogs were as keen as their masters. "Why, why," a shepherd said to me, "dogs ken as weel as ony of us. Ken by t'smell on em, I think, and wad pick em oot like a man if they war left to theersels."

Certainly as the sheep thus sorted out were released from the pen and headed for home, the dogs seemed as proud and pleased as their masters, and we heard their rejoiceful yapping and barking far away down the valley. But the next thing that struck one was the honesty and honour amongst these fellside shepherd folk. "Is that yan thine, Joe?" a shepherd would say. Nayther me nor Isaac can make owt on't. It's been badly lug-marked and t'smit marks is worn off. I saaid and he thowt it leuked like yan o' thine. T'pop on't showder's t'saame."

"Naay Thomas," came the answer, "it's nut mine. Ah only wish it war. What's ta mak o't lug mark o that hauf-bred yowe theer wid Scotch lamb?"

"Ah mak it oot to be varra nar a fork, but nut quite," says a voice by my side, and I hear the answer, "Dusta ken what that un is thoo hes hod on. Ah think it mud be Jim Birkett's. It hes his mark on, hooiver, an hesn't pop. Ah'll back owt

he's missed poppin it." And up comes Birkett. "Nay he'll not saay of hissel," but if that is the opinion of the majority he'll claim to be owner of the half-marked sheep.

There is a good deal of chaff about a poor little half-sized creature that no one will own. "Dusta ken owt about that thing theer, William?" "Naay that I divvent; but what! it mud beleng to thee I'se thinking. Gress upon thy 'heaf's' varra poor as we aw kna at best of times. Its bin a seun-spaened one, I'se thinking."

"Seun-spaened," said I, "what is that?"

"Seun-spaened," replied the shepherd, "what thoo knaws if a babby is weaned before its time we say, 'It's been ower seun-spaened,' and lamb's is saame way at times."

"Ista gaen to stay on't spree toneet, Bob?" a shepherd says to a younger man. "If thoo is I can tek sheep doon dale for thee."

Little by little the 'herdwick' assembly melts away, and ere the last shepherd has left the garth, we hear the hounds baying in their leashes at the hostel door, for the man with the aniseed cloth has been scented, and they know that in a moment or two they will be flying on the trail, across the valley and up the fellside and so home to the inn.

Hardly had the hounds started when a knot of younger shepherds was seen gathering round a catapult which sent clay pigeons flying into the air. "Well, you see," said one, "pigeon-shooting at live birds, it's not sport, it's just cruelty, and

we'll hev' nin of it at Mardale." Bang went the guns and the clay pigeon generally lived to fly again. It seemed a little incongruous to have any pigeon-shooting of clay-kind or live-kind at Mardale.

As one bade adieu and went back towards Shap through the waning light of the frosty eventide, one could not help wishing that neither Manchester jovialities nor Hurlingham hospitalities had ever been introduced to Mardale. Something of the simplicity of that time-out-of-mind shepherds' meeting in the wilderness had been lost never to return. But there was also something in the surroundings and in the naturalness of those fine gentlemen-shepherds of the fell which nothing could annul; and the honour of give and take at that shepherds' garth at the Dun Bull was a memory that could not fade, a heritage that no modern invention or invasion could destroy.

DECEMBER AT THE LAKES.

There are few months more variable in mood and character than December at the lakes. At times it is a month of storm and wind, and we hear the horns of the Atlantic blowing their thunderous voices among the hills, at other times we have windless calm and our lakes lie like mirrors for Father Christmas or the glad New Year to see their faces in; again, at times, though there is no snow in the valley, for the most part the tops are winter white, whilst again they stand up against the blue-grey sky slopes of lilac melting into brown and russet, or white-grey fell tops of blanched grass falling downward into grey-green.

There is at these times, however, a sound of brooks in the silence and through the grey morning the rooks go forth with clamour and return in the early afternoon to their roosting place with noise, while the solemn evening twilight or the moonlit nights are made glad with the crowing of the owls. If weather permits, the farmers go afield with their horses and the brown fallows are dappled with those fearless children of the sea, the white winged

gulls; the fieldfares chatter amongst the berried hedgerows, and the starlings fill the air with the strange whisper of their wings—except for these sounds December is dumb.

I am wrong, two birds sing. The wrens that run along the mossy walls more like mice than birds may be heard quavering their Christmas song, and well they may, for they dwell in the land of Wrens, the 'Rans' or over-runners of the Viking times and they feel the Norse life in their blood that keeps them warm in fiercest winter time; we have another bird—bird sacred in the Crosthwaite valley to the patron saint, St. Kentigern—the robin redbreast; he is not to be out-done by his little Viking cousin, and he too sings lustily and with good cheer, at morning, noon and eventide.

The charm of the woodland at this time of year lies in the ruddy hue of the fallen leaf and the faded bracken on the ground and the little russet-coated squirrel that sits up alone and regales himself between his slumbers with beech mast and pine-cone seed. But the beauty of the woods is much enhanced by the noble growth of the holly. Hollies grow in the lake country, if they escape the woodman's axe, as if they felt the lake country was peculiarly their own, and though the time is gone past when the shepherds of Furness Abbey, to provide the Abbot with a Christmas delicacy, fed their flocks on holly boughs in the winter months, and though there are no Druids left to give a special sanctity to the tree, still wherever

the holly can grow it will grow, and nothing is more beautiful than the green oases in our winter woodlands made by the sunlit holly trees.

At times in this month we have a sharp spell of frost and then the skaters may be seen going off cheerily to the higher tarns, and the solitary places are glad with the sound of happy voices. But we do not every year have frost enough to give us skating on the lakes, for it is not till the main volume of water has been thoroughly cooled by December and January that we hope for lake side skating.

Christmastide time out of mind has been a time of great festivity. There is still a general feeling that work shall cease on Christmas Day and not be done save in a desultory manner until well into the New Year. The old custom of the 'Merrie Neet' has largely ceased to be. In old days one felt almost in honour bound, if one was a dalesman, to go off to the public-house of the vale as a guest at such a merry night. The village fiddler was there, and a collection was made for him in a pause of the dancing, while, by way of payment to the host or hostess, everybody drank as much as they cared to do for the good of the house. The staple drink was Pow Sowdie; a great cauldron of spiced ale or milk spiced and mixed with hot ale or spirit, sweetened with sugar and filled with sippets of bread,—a sort of glorified bread and milk,—hung on the 'rannel bowk,' and was ladled out from time to time into basins and presented

to the guests. I have often talked with the elders in the dale who remember the 'Merrie Neets,' and they always give me the impression that they were not nights of riot or excess, but pleasant gatherings of friends when master and man and mistress and girl met on frankly open and equal terms, and enjoyed a crack and a dance or a game of whist to their heart's content.

"Why, why," said an old body to me, "in these days there was no pride nor nowt, and we were not clashed with all these tea-drinkings and doments, but we laid by oor shillings and made up oor minds which 'merry neet' we wad tend before ivver it coomed and then we went and enjoyed oorsels and had done wid it. I'll nut say that there was no sweet-hearts, but what it was all plain and straightforrart. There was nin o' this back wark, and gels masters and fadders was along of em, a deal better to my way o' thinking then their grand balls wid neabody to see to nowt and lasses up till aw times in't mornin'." On the main hearth of the public-house, as indeed in the kitchens of most of the farmhouses, a yule-log was alight. I have spoken with old men who remember the taking into the farm kitchen of whole trees whose lighted end was on the hearth and once alight was not allowed to be extinguished until the tree had been consumed. In the little chapel of Newlands it was the duty of the clerk to see that such a yule-log was procured for Sunday use, and the log after having done duty at the service was handed out

into the open and kept till the following Sunday called its services again into requisition. But the open hearth has disappeared and the yule-log is no more.

Another custom has died out of the dales which Wordsworth has well described in the poem which he sent to the Rev. Dr. Wordsworth with sonnets to the river Duddon,

> "The Minstrels played their Christmas tune
> To-night beneath my cottage-eaves;
> While, smitten by a lofty moon,
> The encircling laurels, thick with leaves,
> Gave back a rich and dazzling sheen,
> That overpowered their natural green.
>
> Through hill and valley every breeze
> Had sunk to rest with folded wings;
> Keen was the air, but could not freeze,
> Nor check, the music of the strings;
> So stout and hardy were the band
> That scraped the chords with strenuous hand;
>
> And who but listened?—till was paid
> Respect to every Inmate's claim:
> The greeting given, the music played,
> In honour of each household name,
> Duly pronounced with lusty call,
> And 'merry Christmas' wished to all!"

I have spoken with old men who as boys went round the whole of the dale with the fiddler, and they have told me that, at each house they came to, the procedure was as follows:—The fiddler called out the name of master and mistress of the

house, played them a tune and wished them a merry Christmas. Then the sons' names and the daughters' names were called, another tune was played, then the servant man or maid was called and the tune was repeated and more good wishes given. The family had generally retired to rest, but they rose up at the sound of the fiddle, put their heads out of the window, and returned the Christmas greeting. The fiddler was repaid for his pilgrimage at the Merrie Neet on some succeeding night, though very often cakes and a jug of beer were standing outside the door to be partaken of by all who came. The fiddler has ceased to be, but carol singers in different parts of the lake country carry on the custom of awakening the night with music, whilst one custom has not ceased, and that is the friendly card-party at the various farmhouses. The dalesmen are great players of whist; I have heard of a whist party that began on Christmas Eve and, owing to a heavy fall of snow preventing the departure of the guests, went on for forty-eight hours at a stretch.

Generally speaking, the feeling for Christmas holiday is as strong as it is wide-spread in expression. The old Norse feeling for Yule as a time of rejoicing at the Winter solstice and the return of the sun has never died. Every farmhouse kitchen in the week before Christmas is sweet with the oven's breath. "Standin pie"—a sort of glorified pork-pie in appearance, but made of raisins, currants, suet, meat, candied peel, sugar, nut-meg,

and spice—and mince pies, currant pasties, spice cakes are seen in various stages of manufacture. To refuse to partake of these dainties when offered is looked upon almost as a personal insult, an affront to the good name of the house and the hostess. And to allow a mince pie to remain uneaten after Candlemass, is of the nature of sin. Nor are the humblest cottages devoid of Christmas decoration. Every Christmas market testifies not only to the goose-eating possibility of the dweller at the English lakes, but to his demands for a bit of Christmas, that is a holly bough to decorate his home.

WHITE CHRISTMAS AT THE LAKES.

As I walked towards the sound of the glad bells in the old Crosthwaite Church tower on Christmas morning, along by Greta side, it seemed as if such glimpses of fairyland had never been vouchsafed to mortal eye. The trees of the Greta Hall, which Robert Southey knew, were standing in leaf of dazzling whiteness,—oak and ash, each with its particular beauty, snow-white against a blue-grey sky, while more graceful in its diamond dress the birch tree, like a fountain suddenly frozen ere its waters reached the ground, shone in its silent beauty at my side. The thorns and hollies seemed like ivory set with rose-red jewellery. The poplars on the Vicarage Hill showed like towers of snow, and the limes and beeches in the moveless air were

HOAR-FROST BY DERWENT-SIDE.

bewitched to faery grace of whiteness. The meadows were crusted with diamonds. The only green thing to be seen was the ivy, and every leaf of it was rimmed with hoar-frost. The only dark thing in the vale was the coil of flowing river. Over it and backwards and forwards, with their quaint cries—half scream, half chirm—flew the white-winged wanderers from the sea, who have made a winter home in the Keswick vale.

But it was not till later in the day that the full beauty of white winter at the Lakes was revealed to me. I had come down into Keswick by the sinuous Greta on Saturday afternoon, and the extraordinary wonder of the hoar-frosted woods, all too swiftly passed, remained with me. So on Sunday afternoon I trudged up the Penrith Road, and it is not too much to say that it was with difficulty I got further than the Calvert Bridge.

There the northern side of the River Greta becomes a wooded cliff, and above the cliff stands 'Windebrow,' whose grounds in the old days, when Raisley Calvert came thither to be his brother's guest and to talk with Wordsworth, whom he afterwards befriended, were much beloved by the poet, whose river walks are haunted still by Dorothy and Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

To-day one forgot even the memory of the poet's presence in the marvel of beauty revealed; for every tree in its own peculiar featheriness of frost stood up soft as a cloud to Heaven, and shone reflected like the silver phantom of a dream in the

dark waters beneath. Turning over the Calvert Bridge I took that woodland walk—too little known by the average tourist—through the Brundholme Woods under Latrigg, and above the River Greta. There indeed I found myself in the fairyland of fairylands. The frost had turned the larches into a new winter leafage. All the colour had been taken from the oaks, whose winter leaf was still upon their branches; but away deep below me these living miracles of frost-growth sprang up from a leaf-matted ground of dusky red, and sent up such colour through the frost-white woodland as seemed to turn the beauty of their winter-dazzle into brick-red and amber. High overhead, the hill side, with its russet bracken, sent a similar glow through the hoar frost on the slope, and one walked through a world of colour and marvel I had not dreamed of, nor imagined.

All this the work of the mist-god; whilst men in Manchester and Leeds and London were choking in a sulphurous haze of darkness that could be felt, the happy Keswick people had moved in a gauzy mist as light as lawn, and though for them it was the experience of a lifetime—for a fog in the English Lake District lasting four days is phenomenal—they were well repaid, even though the cold sank into their marrow, by the wonders that when the fog lifted were revealed to them.

Monday morning was the Keswick Hunt—an institution that is as important as any custom in the dale. At 9.30 the wanderer in our midst would

have been astonished to find the Market Place filled with men and boys, armed with their mountain staves, and with their lunch bulging in their pockets. "Why! Why! divn't ye kna," said a cheery yeoman to one of these wanderers, "aw t' fowks as hes twa legs mud be wi' t' hunds to-daay upo' Skidda'. It's a grand daay for aw but t' fox, and I'se not so sewer but he's gaily well pleased to giv sic divarsion as he happen will to-daay." As he spoke I heard a horn, and saw coming round the Royal Oak corner the red-coated huntsman, with the hounds twinkling at his heels. How all the lads rushed to meet him, and how imperturbably he and his hounds came on, through the welcoming crowd, into the Market Square! Then, waving his whip to give his beauties space, he shook hands with the Master of the Hunt, and got his instructions for the day. But, what, we cannot begin the day's 'divarsion' without 'a laal bit' song! The hounds must have music where-ever they go, and grand music it is, as all know who have heard the whole of silent Skiddaw suddenly find a voice and echo to the mellow chiming of the Blencathra pack. But their time for music has not come; it is ours to make music for them. "Where's Melvin?" cries a voice—I think it was the parson. "Melvin, we must have 'John Peel.'" And there, in the middle of the ring, with the old Town Hall to be a sounding-board and all the houses in the Market Square to echo back the song, Melvin of the sturdy voice strikes up "D'ye

ken John Peel," waves his hands when he gets to the end of the first verse, and with a cry " Now, all together ! " obliges the whole crowd—men, women, children, parson, lawyer, banker, tradesman—to shout the chorus, " Yes, I ken John Peel," till one felt the sound of the chorus would fly over Skiddaw-top to far-off Caldbeckdale, and waken from the dead the veteran huntsman who was run to earth fifty years ago.

Then the song ceases. The huntsman winds a blast upon his horn, and away go the dogs, and away at their heels the whole town-multitude, for their annual breather upon Skiddaw's side, through the frost and sunshine of a glorious winter morn.

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