WILLIAM HOWITT



The Rural Life of England

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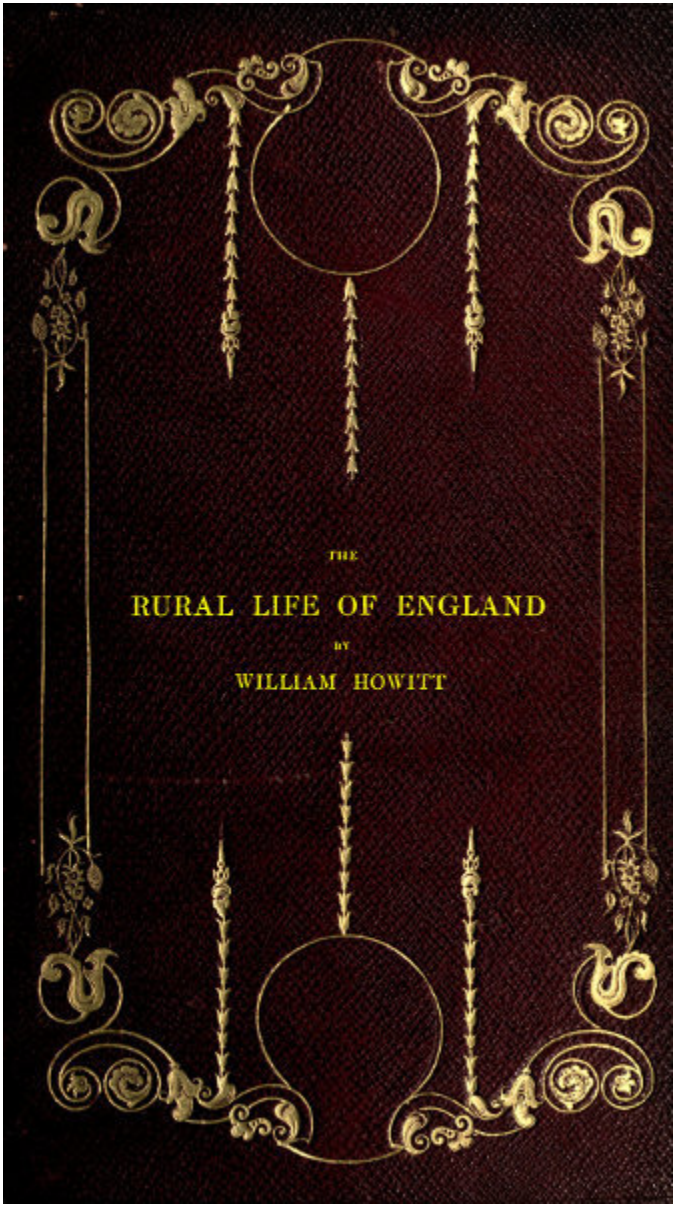
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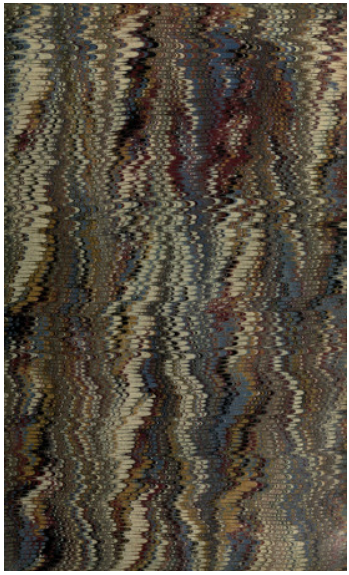
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THE
RURAL LIFE OF ENGLAND
BY
WILLIAM HOWITT





THE

RURAL LIFE OF

ENGLAND.

BY

WILLIAM HOWITT,

AUTHOR OF THE “BOOK OF THE SEASONS,” ETC.



SECOND EDITION, CORRECTED AND REVISED.

WITH

ILLUSTRATIONS ON WOOD BY BEWICK AND S. WILLIAMS.

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THE BALLAD POETRY OF MRS. HOWITT.

To be beautifully embellished with Wood Engravings from original Designs.

TO

THOMAS AND PHEBE HOWITT,

OF HEANOR, IN THE COUNTY OF DERBY.

MY DEAR PARENTS,

There are no living persons to whom this Volume can be with so much propriety inscribed as to you. To you my heart desires to present some visible token of that affection and gratitude which animate it in reviewing all the good it has derived from you. It was to your inculcations, but far more to the spirit of your daily life,—to the purity, integrity, independent feeling, and simple religion,—in fact, to the pervading and perpetual atmosphere of your house, that I owe every thing which has directed me onward in life: scorning whatever is mean; aspiring after whatever is generous and noble; loving the poor and the weak, and fearless of the strong; in a word,

every thing which has not only prolonged life but blessed and sanctified it. Following your counsels and example, I have striven not so much for wealth as for an independent spirit and a pure conscience. Do I not owe you much for these? But besides this, it was under your roof that I passed a childhood and youth the happiest that ever were passed; it was there that I imbibed that love of nature, which must live though it cannot die with me. But beyond this, the present volume is descriptive of that rural life, to which your ancestors for many generations, and yourselves to an honourable old age, have been invariably and deeply attached. To you, therefore, for these and a thousand other kindred reasons,

THE PRESENT VOLUME IS INSCRIBED,

BY YOUR AFFECTIONATE SON,

THE AUTHOR.

O, dear Britain! O my mother isle!
Needs must thou prove a name most dear and holy
To me, a son, a brother, and a friend,
A husband, and a father! who revere
All bonds of natural love, and find them all
Within the limits of thy rocky shores.
O native Britain! O my mother isle!
How shouldst thou prove aught else but dear and holy
To me, who from thy lakes and mountain rills,
Thy clouds, thy quiet dales, thy rocks and seas,
Have drank in all my intellectual life,
All sweet sensations, all ennobling thoughts,
All adoration of the God in nature,
All lovely and all honourable things,

Whatever makes this mortal spirit feel
The joys and greatness of its future being.
There lives not form nor feeling in my soul
Unborrowed from my country. O divine
And beauteous island! thou hast been my sole
And most magnificent temple, in the which
I walk with awe, and sing my stately songs,
Loving the God who made me.

Coleridge.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

The kind and most cordial greeting which this work has received from the public, and by which a very large impression has been speedily exhausted, demands a prompt and grateful acknowledgement. After all, the highest gratification which an author can derive from his writings, next to the persuasion that he has effected some good to his fellow-creatures, is felt in the generous echo of his own sentiments, which reaches him from the amiable and intelligent of his countrymen and countrywomen, on all sides and of every class, and in the nearer sympathy and communication into which he is brought with such minds. With respect to the opinions of the Press, there is one fact connected

with this work which I state with peculiar gratification, because it does honour to human nature,—and that is, that the very warmest approbation has been, in the greater number of instances, bestowed upon it by those critics to whom the author is most decidedly opposed in political opinion. I cannot, either, refrain from observing, that though I did hope to find a quick response in the hearts of Englishmen on a subject in which both the author and his countrymen are alike so deeply interested, I could not anticipate the delight which Americans have manifested in it; and I must take this opportunity, as it is the only one afforded me, to express my sense of the interesting letter of "An American Lady—a stranger in this country," with a copy of Bryant's Poems.

Many evidences of the interest felt in this work by my English readers, known and unknown, and of the benefit thence derived to the work by most valuable corrections and novel information, will become apparent in the progress of perusal.

I have only to add, chiefly from the preface to the former edition, that my object in this volume has been to present to the reader a view of the Rural Life of England at the present period, as seen in all classes and all parts of the country. For this purpose I have not merely depended upon my acquaintance with rural life, which has been that of a great portion of my own life from boyhood, but I have literally travelled, and a great deal of it on foot, from the Land's-End to the Tweed, penetrating into the retirements, and witnessing the domestic life of the country in primitive seclusions and under rustic roofs. If the mountains and valleys, the fair plains and sea-coasts, the halls and farm-houses, the granges, and cottages of shepherds, miners, peasants,

or fishermen, be visited in this volume with a tenth part of the enjoyment with which I have visited them in their reality, it must be a delightful book indeed; for no moments of my existence have been more deliciously spent, than those in which I have wandered from spot to spot of this happy and beautiful island, surveying its ancient monuments, and its present living men and manners.

The embellishments of this volume are both designed and engraved by Samuel Williams: the only exceptions being, that I am indebted to our accomplished friend the late Miss Twamley of Birmingham, now Mrs. Meredith, of Australia, for the sketch on the title-page; for those of the Charcoal-burner's Hut, and Morgan Lewis's last View of the Fairies, to our excellent young friend Miss Tregellis, of Neath Abbey; that of Purkiss's Hut, New Forest, to Mrs. Southey; and to the amiable family of the late FATHER OF MODERN WOOD-ENGRAVING—the unrivalled THOMAS BEWICK, for the Otter-Hunt, at page 302, and the Street-Scene at page 324 of this work, left at his death by that eminent artist unpublished. Both pieces will be found characteristic of the hand from which they come; and the Street-Scene, in particular, is full of those happy satirical sallies which give such piquancy to many of his productions.

W. H.

West-end Cottage, Esher, Surrey,
April 16th, 1840.

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PART I.

RURAL LIFE, PURSUITS, AND ADVANTAGES OF THE GENTRY OF ENGLAND.

CHAPTER I.
PRE-EMINENCE OF ENGLAND AS A PLACE OF COUNTRY RESIDENCE.

Let every man who has a sufficiency for the enjoyment of life, thank heaven most fervently that he lives in this country and age. They may tell us of the beauty of southern skies, and the softness of

southern climates; but where is the land which a man would rather choose to call himself a native of —because it combines more of the requisites for a happy and useful existence; more of the moral, social, and intellectual advantages, without which fair skies or soft climates would become dolorous, or at best, indifferent? I say, let every man gratefully rejoice, who has the means of commanding the full blessings of English life,—for alas! there are thousands and millions of our countrymen who possess but a scanty portion of these; whose lives are too long and continuous a course of toil and anxiety to permit them even to look round them and see how vast are the powers of enjoyment in this country, and how few of those sources of ease, comfort, and refined pleasure are within their reach. I trust a better day is coming to this portion of our population; that many circumstances are working together to confer on the toiling children of these kingdoms the social rewards which their unwearied industry so richly merits; but for those who already hold in their hands the golden key, where is the country like England? If we are naturally proud of making a portion of a mighty and a glorious kingdom, where is the kingdom like England? It is a land of which the most ambitious or magnanimous spirit may well say with a high emotion—"That is my country!" Over what an extent of the earth it stretches its territories; over what swarming and diversified millions it extends its sceptre! On every side of the globe, lie its outspread regions; under every aspect of heaven, walk its free or tributary people. In the West Indies; in the vaster dominions of the East; in America and Australia; through each wide continent, and many a fair island! But its political and moral power extends even far beyond

these. What nation is there, however great, that does not look with breathless anxiety to the movements of England; what country is not bound up with it in the strongest interests and hopes; what country is there which does not feel the influence of its moral energy? Through all the cities and forests of Republican America, the spirit of England, as well as its language, lives and glows. France, Germany, and even Russia to the depths of its frozen heart, feel the emanations of its free and popular institutions. Every pulse of love which beats here—every principle of justice that is more clearly recognised—every sentiment of Christianity that is elevated on the broad basis of the human heart, hence spreads through the earth as from a centre of moral life, and produces in the remotest regions its portion of civilization.

> Hence do I love my country!—and partake
> Of kindred agitations for her sake;
> She visits oftentimes my midnight dream;
> Her glory meets me with the earliest beam
> Of light, which tells that morning is awake.—
> *Wordsworth.*

It is something to make a part, however small, of such a nation. It is something to feel that you have such a scope of power and beneficence in the earth. But when you add to this, the food laid up for the heart and the intellect in this island—the wealth of literature and science; the spirit of freedom in which they are nourished, and by which they are prosecuted; the sound religious feeling which has always distinguished it as a nation; the philanthropic institutions that exist in it—every true heart must felicitate itself that its lot is cast in this kingdom.

Such are the moral, political, and intellectual advantages of English life, which must make any

noble-minded and reflecting man feel, as he considers his position in the scale of humanity, that he is “a citizen of no mean city.” But our social advantages are not a whit behind these. Can any state of society be well conceived, on which the arts and sciences, literature, and general knowledge, can shed more social conveniences and refined enjoyments? In our houses, in our furniture, in all the materials for our dresses, in the apparatus for our tables and the endless variety of good things by which they are supplied, for which every region has been traversed, and every art in bringing them home, or raising them at home, has been exerted; in books and paintings; in the wonderful provision and accumulation of every article in our shops, that the real wants or the most fanciful desires of men or women may seek for; in our gardens, roads, the beautiful and affluent cultivation of the country,—what nation is there, or has there been, which can for a moment bear a comparison with England?

> Ye miserable ancients, had ye these?

And this we may ask, not merely as it respects gas, steam, the marvellous developments of chemistry and electro-magnetism, by which the mode and embellishment of our existence have been so much changed already, and which promise yet changes too vast to be readily familiarized to the imagination,—but of a thousand other privileges and conveniences in which England is pre-eminent. It is, however, to our rural life that we are about to devote our attention; and it is in rural life that the superiority of England is, perhaps, more striking, than in any other respect. Over the whole face of our country the charm of a refined existence is diffused. There is nothing which strikes foreigners so much as the

beauty of our country abodes, and the peculiarity of our country life. The elegances, the arts, and refinements of the city, are carried out and blended, from end to end of the island, so beautifully with the peaceful simplicity of the country, that nothing excites more the admiration of strangers than those rural paradises, the halls, castles, abbeys, lodges, and cottages, in which our nobility and gentry spend more or less of every year. Let Prince Pückler Muskau, Washington Irving, Willis, Count Pecchio, Rice, and others, tell you how beautiful, in their eyes, appeared the parks, lawns, fields, and the whole country of England, cultivated like a garden. It is true that our climate is not to be boasted of for its perpetual serenity. It has had no lack of abuse, both from our own countrymen and others. We are none of us without a pretty lively memory of its freaks and changes, its mists and tempests; its winters wild as some of late, and its springs that are often so tardy in their arrival, that they find summer standing in the gate to tell them they are no longer wanted. All this we know; yet which of us is not ready to forgive all this, and to say with a full heart,

> England, with all thy faults, I love thee still!

Which of us is not grateful and discerning enough to remember, that even our fickle and imperfect climate has qualities to which England owes much of its glory, and we, many a proud feeling and victorious energy? Which of us can forget, that this abused climate, is that which has not enervated by its heats, has not seduced by its amenities, has not depopulated by its malaria, so that under its baneful influence we have become feeble, listless, reckless of honour or virtue; the mean, the slothful, the crouching slaves of barbarians, or even effeminate

despots: it is that which has done none of these things; produced no such effects as these; but it is that which has raised millions of frames strong and muscular and combatant, and enduring as the oaks of its rocky hills; that has nerved those frames to the contempt alike of danger and effeminacy; and has quickened them with hearts full of godlike aspirations after a virtuous glory. What a long line—what ages after ages, of invincible heroes, of dauntless martyrs for freedom and religion, of solemn sages and lawgivers, of philosophers and poets, men sober, and prescient, and splendid in all their endowments as any country ever produced;—what a line of these has flourished amid the glooms and severities of this abused climate; and while Italy has sunk into subjection, and Greece has lain waste beneath the feet of the Turk—has piled up by a succession of matchless endeavours the fame and power of England, to the height of its present greatness.

> In our halls is hung
> Armoury of the invincible knights of old:
> We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
> That Shakspeare spake; the faith and morals hold
> Which Milton held. In every thing we are sprung
> Of earth's best blood, have titles manifold.

And will any man tell me that the spirit of our climate has had nothing to do with begetting and nourishing the energy which has borne on to immortality these great men; which has quickened us with "earth's best blood;" which has given us "titles manifold?" The gloom and desolate majesty of autumn—the wild magnificence of thunder-storms, with their vivid lightnings, their awful uproar, the lurid darkness of their clouds, and the outshining of rainbows—have these had no effect on the

meditations of divines and the songs of poets? Has the soul-concentrating power of winter driven our writers into their closets in vain? Have the fireside festivities of our darkest season; have the blazing yule-clog, and the merriment of the old English hall —things which have grown out of the very asperity of the climate, left no traces in our literature? Did Milton, Bacon, Spenser, Shakspeare, and such spirits, walk through our solemn halls, whether of learning, or religion, or baronial pomp, all of which have been raised by the very genius of a pensive climate; or did they climb our mountains, and roam our forests, amid winds that roared in the boughs and whirled their leaves at their feet, and gather thence no imagery, no similes, no vigour of thought and language, such as still skies and flowery meadows could not originate? Let us turn to the lays and romances of Scott and Byron, and see whether brown heaths and splintered mountains; the savage ruins of craggy coasts, moaning billows, mists, and rains; the thunder of cataracts, and the sleep of glens, all seen and felt under the alternations of seasons and of weather, such only as an unsettled climate could shew,—have not tinged their spirits, and therefore their works, with hues of an immortal beauty, the splendid product of a boisterous climate. Why, they are these influences which have had no small share in the creation of such men as Burns, Bloomfield, Hogg, and Clare—the shepherd-poets of a free land, and an out-of-door life. Yes, we are indebted to our climate for a mass of good, a host of advantages of which we little dream, till we begin to count them up.

And are all our experiences of the English climate those of gloom? Are there no glorious sunsets, no summer evenings, balmy as our dreams of heaven,

no long sunny days of summer, no dewy mornings, whose freshness brings with it ideas of earth in its youth, and the glades of Paradise trod by the fair feet of Eve? Have we no sweet memories of youth and friendship, in which such hours, such days, in which fields of harvest, hay-harvest and corn-harvest, with all their rejoicing rustic companies, lie in the sunshine? Are there none of excursions through the mountains, along the sea shores, of sailing on fair lakes, or lying by running waters in green and flowery dales, while overhead shone out skies so blue and serene that they seemed as though they could never change? In every English bosom there lie many such sweet memories; and if we look through the whole of one of the worst seasons that we have, what intervals of pleasant weather we find in it. One of the great charms of this country too, dependent on its climate, is that rich and almost perpetual greenness, of which strangers always speak with admiration.

But what of climate? There are other claims on our affections for this noble country, which, were its climate the most splendid under heaven, would yet cast that far into the shade. What binds us closely to it, next to our living ties, is that every inch of English ground is sanctified by noble deeds, and intellectual renown; but on this topic Mrs. Howitt has, in her Wood-Leighton, put into the mouth of a worthy clergyman of Staffordshire, words that will better express my feelings, than any I can now use.

“I know not how it is; I cannot comprehend the feeling, with which many quit this noble country for ever for strange lands. And yet it may be said, that hundreds do it every day; and for thousands it may indeed be well. For those who have had no prospect but the daily struggle for existence; for those whose

minds have not been opened and quickened into a sense of the higher and more spiritual enjoyments which this country affords; for the labouring many, the valleys of Australia or the vast forests and prairies of America may be alluring. But to me,—and therefore, it seems, equally to other men with like tastes and attachments—to quit England, noble, fearless, magnanimous, and Christian England, would be to cut asunder life, and hope, and happiness at once. No! till I voyage to 'the better land,' I could never quit England. What! after all the ages that have been spent in making it habitable, and home-like; after all the blood shed in its defence, and for the maintaining of its civil polity; after all the consumption of patriotic thought and enterprise, the labours of philosophers, divines, and statesmen, to civilize and Christianize it; after the time, the capital, the energies employed, from age to age, to cultivate its fields, dry up marshes, build bridges, and lay down roads, raise cities, and fill every house with the products of the arts and the wealth of literature; can there be a spot of earth that can pretend to a tithe of its advantages, or a spot that creates in the heart that higher tone necessary for their full enjoyment? Why, every spot of this island is sanctified, not only by the efforts of countless patriots, but as the birth-place and abode of men of genius. Go where you will, places present themselves to your eyes which are stamped with the memory of some one or other of those 'burning and shining lights,' that have illuminated the atmosphere of England with their collective splendour, and made it visible to the men of farthest climates. Even in this secluded district, which, beautiful as it is, is comparatively little known or spoken of, amongst the generality of English people, how many literary recollections

surround you! To say nothing of the actors in great historical scenes; the Talbots, Shrewsburys, Dudleys, and Bagots of former ages; or the Ansons, Vernons, St. Vincents, and Pagets of the later and present ones; in this county were born those excellent bishops, Hurd and Newton, and the venerable antiquary and herald, Elias Ashmole. To say nothing of the amount of taste and knowledge that exist in the best classes of society hereabout, we have to-day passed the houses of Thomas Gisborne and Edward Cooper, clergymen who have done honour to their profession by their talents and the liberality of their sentiments. In that antiquated Fauld Hall, once lived old Squire Burton, the brother of the author of the 'Anatomy of Melancholy;' and there is little doubt that some part of that remarkable work was written there. By that Dove, Izaak Walton, that pious old man, that lover of the fields, and historian of the worthies of the church, used to stroll and meditate, or converse with his friend Charles Cotton, a Staffordshire man too. In the woods of Wotton, which are very visible hence by daylight, once wandered a very different, but very distinguished person, the wayward Rousseau. In Uttoxeter, that great, but ill-used, and ill-understood astronomer, Flamstead, received the greater part of his education; and from Lichfield, the spires of whose cathedral we have seen to-day, went out Johnson and Garrick, each to achieve supremacy in his own track of distinction. And there, too, lived Anna Seward, who, with all her egotism and faults of taste, was superior to the women of her age, and had the sagacity to perceive amongst the very first, the dawning fame of Southey and Sir Walter Scott.

"If this comparatively obscure district can thus boast of having given birth or abode to so many

influential intellects, what shall not England—entire and glory-crowned England? And who shall not feel proud to own himself of its race and kindred; and, if he can secure for himself a moderate share of its common goods, be happy to live and die in it!"

Thus it is all England through. There is no part of it, in which you do not become aware that there some portion of our national glory has originated. The very coachmen as you traverse the highways, continually point out to you spots made sacred by men and their acts. There say they, was born, or lived, Milton or Shakspeare, Locke or Bacon, Pope or Dryden; that was the castle of Chaucer; there, now, lives Wordsworth, Southey, or Moore. There Queen Elizabeth was confined in her youth, here she confined Mary of Scotland in her age. There Wickliffe lived, and here his ashes were scattered in the air by his enemies. There Hooker watched his sheep while he pondered on his Ecclesiastical Polity. Here was born Cromwell, or Hampden—here was the favourite retreat of Chatham, Fox, Pitt, or other person, who in his day exerted a powerful influence on the mind or fortunes of this country. These perpetual monitions that we are walking in a land filled from end to end with glorious reminiscences, make country residence in England so delightful. But the testimony of foreigners is more conclusive than our own; and therefore, we will close this chapter with the impression which the entrance into England made on two Americans—Washington Irving and Mr. Willis. Irving's mind was full of the inspiration of the character of England as he had found it in books. "There is to an American, a volume of associations with the very name. It is the land of promise, teeming with every thing of which his childhood has heard, or on which his studious years have pondered.

The ships of war, that prowled like guardian giants along the coast; the headlands of Ireland, stretching out into the Channel; the Welsh mountains, towering into the clouds; all were objects of intense interest. As we sailed up the Mersey, I reconnoitred the shores with a telescope. My eye dwelt with delight on neat cottages, with their trim shrubberies and green grass-plots. I saw the mouldering ruin of an abbey overrun with ivy, and the taper spire of a village church rising from the brow of a neighbouring hill—all were characteristic of England." That is the feeling of an American, arriving here directly from his own country: this is that of one coming from the European Continent. Mr. Willis says, on landing at Dover: "My companion led the way to an hotel, and we were introduced by *English* waiters (I had not seen such a thing in three years, and it was quite like being waited on by gentlemen) to two blazing coal fires in the coffee-room of the 'Ship.' O, what a comfortable place it appeared! A rich Turkey carpet snugly fitted; nicely rubbed mahogany tables; the morning papers from London; bell-ropes that *would* ring the bell; doors that *would* shut; a landlady that spoke English, and was kind and civil; and, though there were eight or ten people in the room, no noise above the rustle of a newspaper, and positively rich red damask curtains, neither second-hand nor shabby, to the windows! A greater contrast than this, to the things that answer to them on the Continent, could scarcely be imagined. The fires were burning brilliantly, and the coffee-room was in the nicest order when we descended to our breakfast at six the next morning. The tea-kettle singing on the hearth, the toast was hot, and done to a turn, and the waiter was neither sleepy nor uncivil,—all, again, very unlike a morning at an hotel in *La belle* France.

England is described always very justly, and always in the same words, ‘it is all one garden.’ There is scarce a cottage, between Dover and London (seventy miles) where a poet might not be happy to live. I saw a hundred little spots I coveted with quite a heart-ache. Everybody seemed employed, and everybody well-made and healthy. The relief from the deformity and disease of the way-side beggars of the Continent was very striking.”

It is through this England, thus worthy of our love, whether as seen by our own eyes, or the eyes of intelligent foreigners, that we are about to make our progress, visiting plain and mountain, farm and hamlet, and making acquaintance with the dwellings, habits, and feelings of both gentle and simple.

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CHAPTER II.

ENVIABLE POSITION OF THE ENGLISH COUNTRY GENTLEMAN, AS REGARDS ALL THE PLEASURES AND ADVANTAGES OF LIFE.

Alexander of Macedon said if he were not Alexander, he would choose to be Diogenes; Alexander of Russia also said if he were not Alexander, he would choose to be an English gentleman. And truly, it would require some ingenuity to discover any earthly lot like that of the English gentleman. The wealth and refinement at which this country has arrived, have thrown round English rural life every possible charm. Every art and energy is exerted in favour of the English gentleman. Look at the ancient castle, or the mansion of later ages, and then at the dwelling of the private gentleman now, and what a difference! The castle with its dungeon-like apartments, its few loop-

holes for windows, its walls, mounds, moats, drawbridges, and other defences to keep out the hostile prowlers which a semi-savage state of society brought, ever and anon, around it. Look at its naked walls, its massy, lumbering doors, its floors spread with rushes, and the rude style in which bed and board were constructed and served; and then turn your eyes on the modern mansion of the country gentleman. What a lovely sight is that! What a bright and pleasant abode, instead of that heavy, martial pile! What a fair country—what a peaceful, well-ordered population surround it, instead of dreary forests, and savage hordes! And look again at the mansion of the feudal ages; see its large, cheerless, tapestried halls, its ill-fitting doors and windows, through which the wintry winds come whistling and careering. What naked, or rush-strewn floors still; what rude fashion of furniture, and vessels for the table; what a rude style of cookery; what a dearth of books; what a miserable and scanty display of portraits on the walls, making those they are intended to represent, look grim and hard as a generation of ogres. Then again, look at the modern mansion. What a snug and silken nest of delight is that. See what the progress of the arts and civilization has done for it. How light and airily it rises in some lovely spot. How it is carpeted, and draped with rich hangings and curtains. What soft and elegant beds; what a superior grace in the fashion of furniture, and all household utensils. Silver and gold, brass and steel, porcelain and glass, into what rich and beautiful shapes have they been wrought by skilful hands for all purposes. See what a variety of rooms; what a variety of inventions in those rooms, which artificial and refined wants have called into existence. What books enrich the fair

library; what glorious paintings grace its delicately-papered walls. Hark! music is issuing from instruments of novel and most ingenious construction. And all around what a splendidly cultivated country! What lovely gardens, in which flowers from every region are blowing. Here is a vast change!—a vast advance from the rude life of our ancestors; and the more we look into the present state of domestic life, the more we shall perceive the admirable perfection of its economy and arrangements. What was the life of our great nobility formerly in their country halls? With little intercourse with the capital; in the midst of huge forests, and almost impassable roads; hunting and carousing were their chief pleasures and employments, amid a throng of rude retainers. Look now at the mode of life of a private gentleman of no extraordinary revenue. When he comes down in a morning, he finds on his breakfast-table the papers which left London probably on the previous evening, bringing him the news of the whole world. There is nothing which is going on in Parliament, in the courts of law, in public meetings in the capital, or in any town of the kingdom; no birth, marriage, death, or any occurrence of importance, but they are all laid before him; there is nothing done or said in the mercantile, the literary, the scientific world, nothing which can affect the interests of his country in the most remote degree; nothing, indeed, which can thoroughly affect the well-being of men all the world over, but there it is too. He sits in the midst of his woods and groves, in the quietness of the country a hundred miles from the capital, and is as well acquainted with the movements and incidents of society as a reigning prince could have been some years ago, by couriers, correspondents, spies, fast-

sailing packets, and similar agencies, maintained by all the aid and revenues of a nation. And for his morning meal, China and the Indies, east and west, send him their tea, coffee, sugar, chocolate, and preserved fruits. Lapland sends its reindeer tongues; Westphalia its hams; and his own rich land abundance of rural dainties. When breakfast is over, if he ask himself how he shall pass the day, what numerous and inexhaustible resources present themselves to his choice. Will he have music? The ladies of his family can give it him, in a high style of excellence. Does he love paintings? His walls, and those of his wealthy neighbours, are covered with them. There are said to be more of the works of the great masters accumulated in our English houses than in all the world besides. Is he fond of books? What a mass of knowledge is piled up around him! Greece, Rome, Palestine, Arabia, India, France, Germany, Italy, every country, ancient or modern, which has distinguished itself by its genius and intelligence, has poured into his halls its accumulated wealth of heart and imagination. There is hoarded up in his library, food for the most insatiate spirit for an eternity. In the literature and science merely of this country, he possesses more than the enjoyment of a life. Think only of the works of our historians and divines, of our travellers,—our natural, moral, and scientific philosophers; of the wit, the pathos, the immense extent of inventions and facts in our general literature; of the glorious and ennobling themes of our great poets. What a mighty difference is there between the existence of one of our old baronial ancestors, who could not read, but as he sate over his winter fire solaced his spirit with the lays of a wandering minstrel; and of him who has at his command all the intellectual

splendour, power and wit, the satire, the joyous story, the humour, the elegance of phrase and of mind, the profound sentiment and high argument of such men as Chaucer, Spenser, Ben Jonson, Shakspeare, Beaumont and Fletcher, Milton, Dryden, Addison, Steele, Pope, Sam Johnson, Goldsmith, Cowper, and the noble poets of the present day. Is it possible that *ennui* can come near a man who can at any moment call to his presence our Jeremy Taylors and Tillotsons, our Barrows, Burnets, and Stillingfleets—our travellers from every corner of the earth, and our great novelists with their everlasting inventions? Why, there is more delight in one good country library, than any one mortal life can consume. If a man's house were situated in a desert of sand, the magic of this divine literature were enough to raise around him an elysium of perpetual greenness.

But it is not merely within doors that the singular privileges of an English gentleman lie. He need only step out, and he sees them surrounding him on every side. His gardens—by the labours and discoveries of centuries, by the genius of some men who have blended the spirit of nature most happily with that of art, and by the researches of others who have collected into this country the vegetable beauty and wealth of the whole world—have been made more delightful than those of Alcinous or Armida. Look at his glazed walls, his hot and green houses, which supply his table with the most delicious dessert. But go on—advance beyond the boundaries of his gardens, and the pleasant winding walks of his shrubberies, and where are you? In the midst of his park, his farms, his woods, and plantations. Now every one knows the healthful and perpetual recreation to be found in any one of these places; the

intense delight which many of our country gentlemen take in them, and the beauty and pre-eminence of our English parks, farms, and woods, in consequence. We shall speak more particularly of them presently; but it must not here be forgotten what a boundless field of enjoyment, and increase of wealth, science has of late years opened to the amateur farmer, and to the country gentlemen in general. To their fields, agricultural chemistry, mineralogy, botany, vegetable physiology, entomology, etc., have brought new and inexhaustible charms. They have, in a manner, enlarged the territories of the smallest proprietor into kingdoms of boundless extent and interest. In the study of soils, their defects and remedies; in the selection of plants most consonant to the earth in which they are to grow, or the adaptation of the earth to them; in the inquiry into the mineral wealth that lies below the surface; in cultivating an acquaintance with the various animals, and especially insects, on whose presence or absence depends in a great degree the proper growth or destruction of crops and young woods: in all these the country gentleman has a source of noble and profitable employment for the main part unknown to his ancestors, and worthy of his most earnest pursuit.

But, if all these means of happiness were not enough to satisfy his desires, or did not chime in with his taste, see what another field of animating and praiseworthy endeavour lies before him still, in the official service of his country. Retaining his character of a country gentleman, he can accept the office of a magistrate, and become, if so disposed, a real benefactor and peacemaker to his neighbourhood. But he need not stop here. There is no country, not excepting British America, where the

path of public service lies so open to a man of fortune, or is so wide in its reach. He can enter Parliament; and residing part of the year in the country, can during the other part take his place in an assembly, that for the importance of its discussions and acts has no fellow; for there is no other legislative assembly in the whole world where, with similar freedom of constitution, the same mighty mass of human interests is concerned—to which the same vast extent of influence is appended. I need do no more in proof of this, than merely point to the position of England amid the nations of the earth; her wealth and activity at home; her enormous territories abroad. Over all this,—over this extent of country, over these millions of beings, there is not a single country gentleman who has the ambition, but who may be called to exercise an influence. Here is a field of labour, enough of itself to fill the amplest desires, and by which, if he have the talent, any man of fortune may rise to the highest pitch of rank and distinction.

But if the country gentleman have not the ambition, or the love of so active a life; if he desire to enjoy himself in a different way, there is yet abundant choice. He may travel, if he please; and what a rich expanse of pleasures and interests lies before him in that direction. In our own islands there is a variety of scenery not to be rivalled in the same space in any other part of the world. The mountains, the lakes, the rivers of Wales, Scotland, Ireland, those of Cumberland and Derbyshire; the rich plains; the busy cities, with all their arts and curious manufactures; our ports, with all their interesting scenes; the various historical and antiquarian objects; the numerous breeds of cattle, sheep, and horses; the varied kinds of vegetable products, and modes of

farming;—these, to a mind of any taste and intelligence, offer plentiful matter of observation in short summer excursions. And what splendid roads, fleet horses, convenient carriages, and excellent inns, are ready to convey him on the way, or receive him for refreshment. If he is disposed to go abroad, who has the money, or the education, to give facility and advantage to travel in every region like the English gentleman?—Such are the privileges and pleasures attendant on the country gentleman of England. In all these he has, or may have, the society of women whose beauty and intelligence are everywhere acknowledged; and for the ladies of England living in the country, there are books, music, the garden, the conservatory—an abundance of elegant and womanly occupations. There are drives through woods and fields of the most delicious character; there is social intercourse with neighbouring wealthy families, and a host of kind offices to poor ones, which present the sweetest sources of enjoyment.

I think the extraordinary blessings and privileges of English rural life have never been sufficiently considered. It is only when we begin to count them up that we become aware of their amount, and surpassing character. What is there of divine sentiment or earthly knowledge, of physical, intellectual, or religious good; what is there of generous, social, reflective, retiring or aspiring; what is there of freshness and beauty; of luxurious in life, or preparatory to a peaceful death; what is there that can purify the spirit, ennoble the heart, and prompt men to a wise and extensive beneficence, which may not be found in English rural life? It has every thing in it which is beautiful, and may become glorious and godlike.

Such golden deeds lead on to golden days,

Days of domestic peace—by him who plays
On the great stage how uneventful thought;
Yet with a thousand busy projects fraught,
A thousand incidents that stir the mind
To pleasure, such as leaves no sting behind!
Such as the heart delights in—and records
Within how silently—in more than words!
A Holiday—the frugal banquet spread
On the fresh herbage, near the fountain-head.
With quips and cranks—what time the woodlark there
Scatters his loose notes on the sultry air;
What time the kingfisher sits hushed below,
Where silver-bright the water-lilies blow:—
A Wake—the booths whitening the village green,
Where Punch and Scaramouch aloft are seen;
Sign beyond sign in close array unfurled,
Picturing at large the wonders of the world;
And far and wide, over the Vicar's pale,
Black hoods and scarlet crossing hill and dale,
All, all abroad, and music in the gale:—
A Wedding Dance—a dance into the night,
On the barn-floor, when maiden feet are light;
When the young bride receives the promised dower,
And flowers are flung, herself a fairer flower:
A Morning-visit to the poor man's shed,
(Who would be rich while one was wanting bread?)
Where all are emulous to bring relief,
And tears are falling fast—but not for grief;—
A Walk in Spring—GRATTAN, like those with thee
By the heath-side (who had not envied me?)
When the sweet limes, so full of bees in June,
Led us to meet beneath their boughs at noon:
And thou didst say which of the great and wise,
Could they but hear and at thy bidding rise,
Thou would'st call up and question.
Graver things
Come in their turn. Morning and evening brings
Its holy office; and the sabbath bell,
That over wood and wild, and mountain-dell,

Wanders so far, chasing all thoughts unholy,
With sounds most musical, most melancholy,
Not on his ear is lost. Then he pursues
The pathway leading through the aged yews,
Nor unattended; and when all are there,
Pours out his spirit in the House of Prayer,—
That House with many a funeral-garland hung,
Of virgin white—memorials of the young;
The last yet fresh when marriage chimes were ringing,
And hope and joy in other hearts were springing;—
That House where age led in by filial love,—
Their looks composed, their thoughts on things above,
The world forgot, or all its wrongs forgiven—
Who would not say they trod the path to Heaven?

Rogers' Human Life.

CHAPTER III.

LIFE OF THE GENTRY IN THE COUNTRY.

One of the chief features of the life of the nobility and gentry of England, is their annual visit to the metropolis; and it is one which has a most essential influence upon the general character of rural life itself. The greater part of the families of rank and fortune flock up to town annually, as punctually as the Jews flocked up to Jerusalem at the time of the Passover; and it may be said for the purpose of worship too, though worship of a different kind—that of fashion. A considerable portion of them being, more or less, connected with one or other House of Parliament, go up at the opening of Parliament, generally in February, and remain there till the adjournment, often in July; but the true

season does not commence till April.

> When April verdure springs in Grosvenor Square,
> Then the furred beauty comes to winter there.—
> *Rogers.*

Much has been said of the evil effect of this aristocratic habit, of spending so much time in the metropolis; of the vast sums there spent in ostentatious rivalry, in equipage and establishments; in the dissipations of theatres, operas, routes, and gaming-houses; and unquestionably, there is much truth in it. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that this annual assembling together has some advantages. A great degree of knowledge and refinement results from it, amid all the attendant folly and extravagance. The wealthy are brought into contact with vast numbers of their equals and superiors, and that sullen and haughty habit of reserve is worn off, which is always contracted by those who live in solitary seclusion, in the midst of vast estates, with none but tenants and dependents around them. They are also brought into contact with men of talent and intelligence. They move amongst books and works of art, and are induced by different motives to become patrons and possessors of these things. If they spend large sums in splendid houses and establishments in town, such houses and such establishments become equally necessary to them in the country; and it is by this means that, instead of old and dreary castles and chateaux, we have such beautiful mansions, so filled with rich paintings and elegant furniture, dispersed all over England. From these places, as centres existing here and there, similar tastes are spread through the less wealthy classes, and the elegances of life flow into the parsonages, cottages, and abodes of persons of

less income and less intercourse with society. In town, undoubtedly, a vast number of the aristocracy spend their time and money very foolishly; but it is equally true, that many others spend theirs very beneficially to the country. Men of fortune from all quarters of the kingdom there meet, and every thing which regards the improvement of their estates is discussed. They hear of different plans pursued in different parts of the kingdom. They make acquaintances, and these acquaintances lead to visits, in which they observe, and copy all that can add to the embellishment of their abodes, and the value and productiveness of their gardens and estates. If many acquire a relish only for Newmarket, and the gaming club, and a strong distaste for the quiet enjoyments of the country; many, on the other hand, come down to their estates after a season of hurry and over-excitement, with a fresh feeling for the beauty and repose of their country abodes. The possessors of great houses and estates, invite a party to spend the recess, or especially the shooting season, with them. Thus the world of fashion is broken up and scattered from the metropolis into a multitude of lesser circles, and into every corner of the empire. I can conceive nothing which bears on its surface the aspect of the perfection of human society, so much as this assembling of a choice party of those who have nothing to do but to enjoy life, in the house of some hospitable wealthy man, in some one of the terrestrial paradises of this kingdom,—far off, in some retired vale of England, where the country and its manners remain almost as simple and picturesque as they did ages ago. In some fine Elizabethan mansion, some splendid baronial castle, as Warwick, Alnwick, or Raby; or in some rich old abbey; amid woods and parks, or seated on one of our wild coasts;

or amid the mountains of Wales or Scotland, with all their beautiful scenery, rocks, hanging cliffs, dashing waterfalls, rapid rivers, and fairy wildernesses around them. Here, assembled from the crush and rush of London in its fulness, with new books and new music brought down with them; with plenty of topics suggested by the incidents of the past season in the saloons of the fashionable, and in Parliament; with every luxury before them; with fine shrubberies and parks, and with every vehicle and facility for riding and driving through field or forest, or sailing on river or ocean; if people are not happy in such circumstances, where is the fault?

And imagine the possessor of a noble estate coming down to receive his friends there. To a high and generous mind there must be something very delightful in it. When he enters his own neighbourhood, he enters his own kingdom. The very market-town through which he last passes, is, probably, totally or three-fourths of it his property. If he be a kind and liberal man, the respect which is there testified towards him, has in it the most cordial of flatteries. When he touches his own land, every thing acknowledges his absolute sway. On all sides he sees symptoms of welcome. Wherever he looks, they are the woods, the parks, the fields of his ancestors, and now his own, that meet his eyes. The freshness and greenness of the fields, the sombre grandeur of the woods, the peaceful elegance of his house, all the odours of flowers breathing through the rooms, and the sight of rich fruits on his walls and in his hothouses; after the heat, dust, crowding, noise, political contention, and turning night into day, of London, must be peculiarly grateful. Here he is sole lord and master; and from him, he feels, flow the good of his dependent people, and the pleasures

of his distinguished guests. The same where

> Far to the south a mountain vale retires,
> Rich in its groves, and glens, and village spires;
> Its upland lawns, and cliffs with foliage hung,
> Its wizard stream, nor nameless nor unsung;
> And through the various year, the various day,
> Where scenes of glory burst and melt away.—*Rogers.*

The hamlet, which shews its thatched roofs and lowly smoking chimneys near, is all his own; nay, the rustic church is part and parcel of the family estate. It was probably built and endowed by his ancestors. The living is in his gift, and is perhaps enjoyed by a relative, or college chum. The very churchyard, with its simple headstones, and green mounds, is separated often only by a sunk fence from his grounds. It blends into them, and the old grey tower lifts itself amongst trees which form one majestic mass with his own. The sabbath-bell rings, and he enters that old porch with his guests; he sees the banner of some brave ancestor float above his head, and the hatchments and memorial inscriptions of others on the walls. What can be more delicately flattering to all the feelings of a human creature; what lot can be more perfect?

The ease and perfect freedom from ceremony in these rural gatherings is a feature which has always excited the admiration of foreigners. Every guest has his own apartment, where he can retire at pleasure, and after taking his meals in common can spend the day as he chooses. But, as I have before said, we see our own customs and manners better in the descriptions of foreigners, because they are described by them as they are seen, with the freshness of novelty. Prince Pückler Muskau speaks with enthusiasm of the country-houses and park scenery of England. His book, indeed, is full of such pictures

of country life and scenery. The beautiful dairies which he sometimes found in noblemen's parks delighted him extremely. Thus he speaks of the one at Woburn Abbey:—"The dairy is a prominent and beautiful object. It is a sort of Chinese temple, decorated with a profusion of white marble, and coloured glasses; in the centre is a fountain, and round the walls hundreds of large dishes and bowls, of Chinese and Japan porcelain of every form and colour, filled with new milk and cream. The 'consoles' upon which these vessels stand, are perfect models for Chinese furniture. The windows are of ground-glass, with Chinese painting, which shews fantastically enough by the dim light."

But the testimony of Mr. Willis as an American, and therefore accustomed to a life and sentiment more allied to our own, is still stronger. His account of his visit to Gordon Castle is a perfect example of all such scenes, and is an exact counterpart of the German Prince's description of the English "vie de château," in his third volume, p. 311.

"The immense iron gate, surmounted by the Gordon arms; the handsome and spacious stone lodges on either side; the canonically fat porter, in white stockings and grey livery, lifting his hat as he swung open the massive portal, all bespoke the entrance to a noble residence. The road within was edged with velvet sward, and rolled to the smoothness of a terrace walk; the winding avenue lengthened away before with trees of every variety of foliage; light carriages passed me, driven by gentlemen or ladies, bound on their afternoon airing; a groom led up and down two beautiful blood-horses, prancing along with side-saddles and morocco stirrups; and keepers with hounds and terriers, gentlemen on foot, idling along the walks,

and servants in different liveries hurrying to and fro, betokened a scene of busy gaiety before me. I had hardly noted these various circumstances, before a sudden curve in the road brought the castle into view,—a vast stone pile with castellated wings; and in another moment I was at the door, where a dozen lounging and powdered menials were waiting on a party of ladies and gentlemen to their several carriages. It was the moment for the afternoon drive.

"The last phaeton dashed away, and my chaise advanced to the door. A handsome boy, in a kind of page's dress, immediately came to the window, addressed me by name, and informed me that his Grace was out deer-shooting, but that my room was prepared, and he was ordered to wait on me. I followed him through a hall lined with statues, deers' horns, and armour, and was ushered into a large chamber looking out on a park, extending with its lawns and woods to the edge of the horizon. A more lovely view never feasted human eye.

"'Who is at the castle?' I asked, as the boy busied himself in unstrapping my portmanteau. 'O, a great many, sir'—he stopped in his occupation, and began counting on his fingers a long list of lords and ladies. 'And how many sit down to dinner?' 'Above ninety, sir, besides the Duke and Duchess.' 'That will do;' and off tripped my slender gentleman, with his laced jacket, giving the fire a terrible stir-up in his way out, and turning back to inform me that the dinner hour was seven precisely.

"It was a mild, bright afternoon, quite warm for the end of an English September, and with a fire in the room, and a soft sunshine pouring in at the windows, a seat at the open casement was far from disagreeable. I passed the time till the sun set, looking out on the park. Hill and valley lay between

my eye and the horizon; sheep fed in picturesque flocks; and small fallow-deer grazed near them; the trees were planted, and the distant forest shaped by the hand of taste; and broad and beautiful as was the expanse taken in by the eye, it was evidently one princely possession. A mile from the castle-wall, the shaven sward extended in a carpet of velvet softness, as bright as emerald, studded by clumps of shrubbery, like flowers wrought elegantly in tapestry; and across it bounded occasionally a hare, and the pheasants fed undisturbed near the thickets, or a lady with flowing riding-dress and flaunting feather, dashed into sight upon her fleet blood-palfrey, and was lost the next moment in the woods, or a boy put his pony to its mettle up the ascent, or a gamekeeper idled into sight with his gun in the hollow of his arm, and his hounds at his heels. And all this little world of enjoyment and luxury and beauty lay in the hand of one man, and was created by his wealth in those northern wilds of Scotland, a day's journey almost from the possession of another human being! I never realized so forcibly the splendid results of wealth and primogeniture.

"The sun set in a blaze of fire among the pointed firs crowning the hills; and by the occasional prance of a horse's feet on the gravel, and the roll of rapid wheels, and now and then a gay laugh and many voices, the different parties were returning to the Castle. Soon after, a loud gong sounded through the galleries, the signal to dress, and I left my musing occupation unwillingly to make my toilet for an appearance in a formidable circle of titled aristocrats, not one of whom I had ever seen, the Duke himself a stranger to me, except through the kind letter of invitation lying on the table.

"I was sitting by the fire, imagining forms and

faces for the different persons who had been named to me, when there was a knock at the door, and a tall, white-haired gentleman, of noble physiognomy, but singularly cordial address, entered with a broad red ribbon across his breast, and welcomed me most heartily to the castle. The gong sounded at the next moment, and in our way down, he named over his other guests, and prepared me, in a measure, for the introductions which followed. The drawing-room was crowded like a *soirée*. The Duchess, a tall and very handsome woman, with a smile of the most winning sweetness, received me at the door, and I was presented successively to every person present. Dinner was announced immediately, and the difficult question of precedence being sooner settled than I had ever seen it before in so large a party, we passed through files of servants to the dining-room. It was a large and very lofty hall, supported, at the ends, by marble columns, within which was stationed a band of music playing delightfully. The walls were lined with full-length family pictures, from old knights in armour to the modern dukes in kilt of the Gordon plaid; and on the sideboards stood services of gold plate, the most gorgeously massive, and the most beautiful in workmanship I have ever seen. There were, among the vases, several large coursing-cups, won by the Duke's hounds, of exquisite shape and ornament.

"I fell into my place between a gentleman and a very beautiful woman, of perhaps, twenty-two, neither of whose names I remembered, though I had but just been introduced. The Duke probably anticipated as much, and as I took my seat, he called out to me, from the top of the table, that I had on my right, Lady ——, 'the most agreeable woman in Scotland.' It was unnecessary to say that she was the

most lovely.

"I have been struck everywhere in England with the beauty of the higher classes, and as I looked around me upon the aristocratic company at the table, I thought I had never seen 'Heaven's image double-stamped as man, and noble,' so unequivocally clear. * * * The band ceased playing when the ladies left the table; the gentlemen closed up, conversation assumed a merrier cast, coffee and *liqueurs* were brought in when the wines began to be circulated more slowly, and at eleven there was a general move to the drawing-room. Cards, tea, music, filled up the time till twelve, and then the ladies took their departure, and the gentlemen sat down to supper. I got to bed somewhere about two o'clock; and thus ended an evening, which I had anticipated as stiff and embarrassing, but which is marked in my tablets as one of the most social and kindly I have had the good fortune to record on my travels.

"I arose late in the morning, and found the large party already assembled about the breakfast table. I was struck on entering, with the different air of the room. The deep windows opening out upon the park, had the effect of sombre landscapes in oaken frames; the troops of liveried servants, the glitter of plate, the music, that had contributed to the splendour of the scene the night before, were gone. The Duke sat laughing at the head of the table, with a newspaper in his hand, dressed in a coarse shooting-jacket and coloured cravat; the Duchess was in a plain morning dress and cap of the simplest character; and the high-born women about the table, whom I had left glittering with jewels, and dressed in all the attractions of fashion, appeared in the simplest *coiffure* and a toilet of studied plainness. The ten or twelve noblemen present were engrossed with their

letters or newspapers over tea and toast,—and in them, perhaps, the transformation was still greater. The *soigné* man of fashion of the night before, faultless in costume and distinguished in his appearance—in the full force of the term—was enveloped now in a coat of fustian, with a coarse waistcoat of plaid, a gingham cravat, and hob-nailed shoes, for shooting; and in place of the gay hilarity of the supper-table, wore a face of calm indifference, and eat his breakfast, and read the paper in a rarely broken silence. I wondered as I looked about me, what would be the impression of many people in my own country, could they look in upon that plain party, aware that it was composed of the proudest nobility and the highest fashion of England.

"Breakfast in England is a confidential and unceremonious hour, and servants are generally dispensed with. This is to me, I confess, an advantage it has over every other meal. I detest eating with twenty tall fellows standing opposite, whose business it is to watch me. The coffee and tea were on the table, with toast, muffins, oat-cakes, marmalade, jellies, fish, and all the paraphernalia of a Scotch breakfast; and on the sideboard stood cold meats for those who liked them, and they were expected to go to it and help themselves. Nothing could be more easy, unceremonious, and affable, than the whole tone of the meal. One after another rose and fell into groups in the windows, or walked up and down the long room, and, with one or two others, I joined the duke at the head of the table, who gave us some interesting particulars of the salmon-fisheries of the Spey. The privilege of fishing the river within his lands is bought of him at the pretty sum of eight thousand pounds a-year.

"The ladies went off unaccompanied to their walks

in the park and other avocations; those bound for the covers, joined the gamekeepers, who were waiting with their dogs in the leash at the stables; and some paired off to the billiard-room. Still suffering from lameness, I declined all invitations to the shooting parties, who started across the park, with the dogs leaping about them in a frenzy of delight, and accepted the duke's kind offer of a pony phaeton to drive down to the kennels. The duke's breed, both of setters and hounds, is celebrated throughout the kingdom. They occupy a spacious building in the centre of a wood, a quadrangle enclosing a court, and large enough for a respectable farm-house. The chief huntsman and his family, and perhaps a gamekeeper or two, lodge on the premises, and the dogs are divided by palings across the court. I was rather startled to be introduced into the same enclosure with a dozen gigantic bloodhounds, as high as my breast, the keeper's whip in my hand, the only defence. I was not easier for the man's assertion, that, without it, they would 'have the life out of me in a crack.' They came around me very quietly, and one immense fellow, with a chest like a horse, and a head of the finest expression, stood up and laid his paws on my shoulders, with the deliberation of a friend about to favour me with some grave advice. One can scarce believe that these noble creatures have not reason like ourselves. Those slender, thoroughbred heads, large speaking eyes, and beautiful limbs and graceful action, should be gifted with more than mere animal instinct. The greyhounds were the beauties of the kennel, however; I never had seen such perfect creatures. The setters were in the next division, and really they were quite lovely. The rare tan and black dog of this race, with his silky floss hair, intelligent muzzle,

good-humoured face, and caressing fondness, quite excited my admiration. There were thirty or forty of these, old and young, and a friend of the duke's would as soon ask him for a church living, as for the present of one of them. The former would be by much the smaller favour. Then there were terriers of four or five breeds; of one family of which, long-haired, long-bodied, short-legged, and perfectly white little wretches, the keeper seemed particularly fond. * * * *

"The routine of Gordon Castle was what each one chose to make it. Between breakfast and lunch, the ladies were generally invisible, and the gentlemen rode or shot, or played billiards, or kept in their rooms. At two o'clock, a dish or two of hot game and a profusion of cold meats were set on the small tables in the dining-room, and every body came in for a kind of lounging half-meal, which occupied perhaps an hour. Thence all adjourned to the drawing-room, under the windows of which were drawn up carriages of all descriptions, with grooms, outriders, footmen, and saddle-horses for gentlemen and ladies. Parties were then made up for driving or riding, and from a pony-chaise to a phaeton-and-four, there was no class of vehicle which was not at your disposal. In ten minutes the carriages were usually all filled, and away they flew, some to the banks of the Spey, or the sea-side, some to the drives in the park, and with the delightful consciousness, that, speed where you would, the horizon scarce limited the possession of your host, and you were everywhere at home. The ornamental gates flying open at your approach, miles distant from the castle; the herds of red-deer trooping away from the sound of wheels in the silent park; the stately pheasants feeding tamely in the immense preserves; the hares

scarcely troubling themselves to get out of the length of the whip; the stalking gamekeepers lifting their hats in the dark recesses of the forest,—there was something in this, perpetually reminding you of privileges; which, as a novelty, was far from disagreeable. I could not at the time bring myself to feel, what perhaps would be more poetical and republican, that a ride in the wild and unfenced forest of my own country would have been more to my taste.

"The second afternoon of my arrival, I took a seat in the carriage with Lord A., and we followed the duchess, who drove herself in a pony-chaise, to visit a school on the estate. Attached to a small gothic chapel, a five minutes' drive from the castle, stood a building in the same style, appropriated to the instruction of the children of the duke's tenantry. There were a hundred and thirty little creatures, from two years to five or six, and like all infant schools, in these days of improved education, it was an interesting and affecting sight. The last one I had been in, was at Athens, and though I missed here the dark eyes and Grecian faces of the Ægean, I saw health and beauty, of a kind which stirred up more images of home, and promised, perhaps, more for the future. * * * *

"The number at the dinner-table of Gordon Castle was seldom less than thirty; but the company was continually varied by departures and arrivals. No sensation was made by either one or the other. A travelling-carriage dashed up to the door, was disburdened of its load, and drove round to the stables, and the question was seldom asked, 'Who is arrived?' You are sure to see at dinner—and an addition of half a dozen to the party, made no perceptible difference in any thing. Leave-takings

were managed in the same quiet way. Adieus were made to the duke and duchess, and to no one else, except he happened to encounter the parting guest upon the staircase, or were more than a common acquaintance. In short, in every way the *gêne* of life seemed weeded out, and if unhappiness or *ennui* found its way into the castle, it was introduced in the sufferer's own bosom. For me, I gave myself up to enjoyment with an *abandon* I could not resist. With kindness and courtesy in every look, the luxuries and comforts of a regal establishment at my freest disposal; solitude when I pleased, company when I pleased,—the whole visible horizon fenced in for the enjoyment of a household, of which I was a temporary portion, and no enemy except time and the gout, I felt as if I had been spirited into some castle of felicity, and had not come by the royal mail-coach at all."

This is one of the most perfect and graphic descriptions of English aristocratical life in the country, which was ever written. It is, indeed, on the highest and broadest scale, and is not to be equalled by every country gentleman; but in kind and in degree, the same character and spirit extend to all such life, and I have therefore taken the liberty of transcribing Mr. Willis's sketch as completely as my limits would admit. Nothing, were a volume written on the subject, could bring it more palpably and correctly before the mind of the reader; and I think that if there be a perfection in human life, it is to be found, so far as all the goods of providence and the easy elegances of society can make it so, in the rural life of the English nobility and gentry.

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CHAPTER IV.
THE ROUTINE OF COUNTRY SPORTS.

In my last chapter I took a view of the variety given to rural life by the annual visit to town: but if a gentleman have no desire so to vary his existence; if he love the country too well to leave it at all, most plentiful are the resources which offer themselves for pleasantly speeding on the time. If he be attached merely to field sports, not a moment of the whole year but he may fill up with his peculiar enjoyment. Racing, hunting, coursing, shooting, fishing, all offer themselves to his choice; and rural sports, as every thing else in English life, are so systematized; every thing belonging to them is so exactly regulated; all their necessary implements and accessories, are brought to such an admirable pitch of perfection by the advancement of the arts, that the pleasures of the

sportsman are rendered complete, and are diffused over every portion of the year. Field sports have long ceased to be followed in that rude and promiscuous manner which they were when forests overrun the greater part of Europe, and hunting was almost necessary to existence. Parties of hunters no longer go out with dogs of various kinds—greyhounds, hounds, spaniels, and terriers, all in leash, as our ancestors frequently did, ready to slip them on any kind of game which might present itself, and with bows also ready to make more sure of their prey. We have no battues, such as are still to be found in some parts of the continent, and which used to be the common mode of hunting in the Highlands, when the beasts of a whole district were driven into a small space, and subjected to a promiscuous slaughter; a scene such as Taylor the water-poet describes himself as witnessing in the Braes of Mar; nor such as those perpetrated by the King of Naples in Austria, Bohemia, and Moravia, in which he killed 5 bears, 1820 boars, 1950 deer, 1145 does, 1625 roebucks, 1121 rabbits, 13 wolves, 17 badgers, 16,354 hares, 354 foxes, 15,350 pheasants, and 12,335 partridges. Such scenes are not to be witnessed in this country. Every field sport is here become a science. Hunting, coursing, shooting, each has its own season, its well-defined bounds, its peculiar horses, dogs, and weapons. Our horses and dogs, by long and anxious attention to the preservation of their specific characters, and to the improvement of their breed, are become pre-eminent, each in their own department. Our sporting nobility and gentry have not contented themselves with becoming thoroughly skilful in every thing relating to field diversions; but have many of them communicated their knowledge through the press to their countrymen, and have thus

furnished our libraries with more practical information of this kind than ever was possessed by any one country at any one time; and contributed to make these pursuits as effective, elegant, and attractive as possible. It is not my province to go into the details of any particular sports; for them I refer the reader to Daniel, Beckford, Col. Thornton, Sir John Sebright, Col. Hawker, Tom Oakleigh, Nimrod, and the sporting magazines. My business is to shew how gentlemen may and do spend their time in the country. And in the mere catalogue of out-of-door sports, are there not racing, hunting, coursing, shooting, angling? Hawking once was an elegant addition to this list; but that has nearly fallen into disuse in this country, and may be said to exist only in the practice of Sir John Sebright, and the grand falconer of England, the Duke of St. Albans. Archery too, once the great boast of our forests, and the constant attendant on the hunt, has, as a field exercise, followed hawking. It has of late years been revived and practised by the gentry as a graceful amusement, and an occasion for assembling together at certain periods in the country; but as an adjunct of the field sports it is past for ever. Racing, every one knows, is a matter of intense interest with a great portion of the nobility, gentry, and others; and those who delight in it, know where to find Newmarket, Epsom, Ascot Heath, Doncaster, and other places, often to their cost: almost every county and considerable town, has its course and annual races. These, however, to the country gentleman, unless he be one whose great and costly passion is for breeding and betting on race-horses, are but occasional excitements: the rest run their round of seasons as regularly as the seasons themselves; and place a lover of field sports in the country at any point of the

year, and one or more of them are ready for his enjoyment. Is it winter? He has choice of all, except it be angling. Hunting, coursing, shooting, are all in their full season. Hunting, as I have said, is more confined in its range than it was anciently; but it is more regular, less fatiguing, less savage in its character, more complete in its practice and appointments. There is now neither the boar, the bear, nor the wolf, to try the courage of our youth, and stag and buck hunting may be considered as rare and almost local amusements,—but we may quote the words of a great authority as to the position which hunting occupies amongst the rural sports of England. “There is certainly no country in the world, where the sport of hunting on horseback is carried to such a height as in Great Britain at the present day, and where the pleasures of a fox-chase are so well understood, and conducted on such purely scientific principles. It is considered the *beau idéal* of hunting by those who pursue it. There can be no doubt, that it is infinitely superior to stag-hunting, for the real sportsman can only enjoy that chase, when the deer is sought for, and found like other game which are pursued by hounds. In the case of finding an out-lying fallow-deer, which is unharboured in this manner, great sport is frequently afforded; but this is rarely to be met with in Great Britain: so that fox-hunting is now the chief amusement of the true British sportsman: and a noble one it is—the artifices and dexterity employed by this lively, crafty animal, to avoid the dogs, are worthy of our admiration, as he exhibits more devices for self-preservation than any other beast of the chase. In many parts of this and the sister island, hare-hunting is much followed, but fox-hunters consider it as a sport only fit for women and old men,—but, although it is less

arduous than that of the fox-chase, there are charms attached to it which compensate for the hard riding of the other."

I do not enter here into the question of cruelty in this sport, nor into the other question of injury resulting from it to crops and fences, on which grounds many so strongly object to hunting, and on the former ground, indeed, to all field sports. Lord Byron, for instance, thought hunting a barbarous amusement, fit only for a barbarous country. It is not my intention to undertake the defence of this old English sport from the standing charge against it, we here have only to deal with it as a feature of rural life; and though one cannot say much in praise of its humanity, it cannot be denied that it is a pursuit of a vigorous and exciting character. A fine field of hunters in their scarlet coats, rushing over forest, heath, fence or stream, on noble steeds, and with a pack of beautiful dogs in full cry, is a very picturesque and animating spectacle.

Through the winter, then, up to the very approach of spring, hunting offers whatever charms it possesses; pheasant, woodcock and snipe shooting, in the woods and by the streams, are in all their glory. It is the time for pursuing all manner of wild fowl, in fens and along the sea-coast; and if any one would know what are the eager and adventurous pleasures of that pursuit, let him join some old fowler for a week amongst the reeds of Cambridge, Huntingdon, or Lincolnshire,—now laying his traps and springes, now crouching amongst the green masses of flags and other water plants, or crawling on hands and knees for a shot at teal, widgeon, or wild duck; now visiting the decoys, or shooting right and left amongst the rising and contorting snipes. Or let him read Col. Hawker's delightful description of swivel

shooting on the coasts, the mud-launchers and followers of the sea flocks by night. Those are sports which require a spice of enthusiasm and love of adventure far above the pitch of the ordinary sportsman.

When spring arrives, and warns the shooter to give rest to the creatures of his pursuit, that they may pair, produce, and rear their broods; as he lays down the gun, he can take up the angle. Many a keen and devoted old sportsman, however, never knows when to lay down the gun. Though he will no longer fire at game, he likes through the spring and summer months to carry his gun on his arm through the woods, to knock down what he calls vermin,—stoats, weazels, polecats, jays, magpies, hawks, owls; all those creatures that destroy game, or their young broods, or suck their eggs. He is fond of spying out the nests of partridges and pheasants, and from time to time marking their progress. It is a grand anticipative pleasure to him when, passing along the furrow of the standing corn, his old pointer, or favourite spaniel starts the young birds just able to take the wing, and he counts them over with a silent exultation. He is fond of seeing to the training of his young dogs, of selecting fresh ones, of putting his fowling-pieces and all his shooting gear in order. There are some old sportsmen of my acquaintance, who, during what they call this idle time, have made collections of curious birds and small animals which might furnish some facts to natural history. An old uncle of mine in Derbyshire, who has shot away a fine estate, I scarcely ever recollect to have seen out of doors without his gun. I saw him lately, when in that county, a feeble, worn-out old man, just able to totter about, but still with the gun on his arm. For those, however, who can find it in their hearts to lay

aside the gun at the prescribed time, and yet long for rural sports, what can so delightfully fill up the spring and summer as the fishing-rod? There is no rural art, except that of shooting, for which modern science and invention have done so much as angling. Since Izaak Walton gave such an impetus to this taste by his delicious old book, it has gradually assumed a new and fascinating character. A host of contrivances have been expended on fishing tackle. What splendid rods for simple angling, trolling, or fly-fishing, are now offered to the admiring eyes of the amateur! what a multitude of apparatus of one kind or other! what silver fish and endless artificial flies Angling has become widened and exalted in its sphere with the general expansion of knowledge and the improvement of taste. It has associated itself with the pleasures and refinements of literature and poetry. All those charms which worthy Izaak threw round it, have continued to cling to it, and others have grown up around them. The love of nature, the love of travel have intertwined themselves with the love of angling. Angling has thence become, as it were, a new and more attractive pursuit—a matter of taste and science as well as of health and pleasure. It is found that it may not only be followed by the tourist without diverting him from his primal objects, but that it adds most essentially to the delights of a summer excursion. Since Wordsworth and John Wilson set up their “Angler’s Tent” on the banks of Wast-Water, “at the head of that wild and solitary lake, which they had reached by the mountain-path that passes Barn-Moor-Tarn from Eskdale,” making an angling excursion of seven days amongst the mountains of Westmoreland, Lancashire, and Cumberland, having “their tent, large panniers filled with its furniture, provisions, etc., loaded upon

horses, which, while the anglers, who separated every morning, pursued each his own sport up the torrents, were carried over the mountains to the appointed place, by some lake or stream, where they were to meet again in the evening;" and

> that solitary trade,
> Mid rural peace in peacefulness pursued,
> Through rocky glen, wild moor, and hanging wood,
> White flowering meadow, and romantic glade;

since Sir Humphry Davy went angling and philosophising in the mountain tarns, and along the trout and salmon streams not only of Scotland and Ireland, but of France and Switzerland, the enthusiasm for angling has grown into a grand and expansive passion. We have our "Anglers in Wales," our "Anglers in Ireland;" Stephen Oliver has flourished his lines over the streams of the north, Jesse over the gentle and majestic Thames. The only wonder is, that, as our countrymen walk to and fro through all known regions of the earth, we do not hear of anglers in the Danube—the Ister—the Indus —the Joliba,—of trolling in La Plata, and fly-fishing in South Africa and Australia. All that will come in its own good time: meanwhile let us remind our country friends of the further blessings which await them, even should all the rapid streams of our mountain rivers and rivulets, Loch Leven trout, Loch Fine herrings, and salmon pulled flouncing from the crystal waters of the Teith or the Shannon, to be crimped and grilled by most delicious art, satiate them before the summer is over. The 12th of August approaches! the gun is roused from its slumber—the dogs are howling in ecstasy on their release from the kennel—the heather is burst into all its crimson splendour on the moors and the mountains, and grouse-shooting is at hand once more!

That sentence is enough to make a sportsman start to his feet if it were but whispered to him in his deepest after-dinner doze. In "The Book of the Seasons" I asserted that sportsmen felt the animating

influence of nature and its beauty in their pursuits. For that passage many have been the gentle lectures of the tender-hearted; but that it was a true passage has been shewn by the thanks which many sportsmen have given me for that simple vindication, and by the repeated quotation of the whole article in their books. That they do feel it, is plainly shewn in many papers of the sporting magazines; but nowhere more vividly than in "The Oakleigh Shooting Code." If the unction with which the paper on grouse-shooting is written in that book were more diffused through works of the like nature, vain would be all arguments to check the love of shooting. The feeling on this subject has been evidenced by the avidity with which that part of the book has been quoted far and wide. But the spirit of the picturesque is not more prominent in these chapters than in the description of Oakleigh Hall, and of the "wide-ranging treeless view of the smooth-turfed limestone hills, the white rocks breaking out in patches, so characteristic of Derbyshire."

But we are pausing on our way to the Highlands; and surely nothing can be so inspiring and exciting in the whole circle of sporting scenes as a trip to the moors and mountains of the north, in the height of summer—in the beauty of summer weather, and in the full beauty of the scenery itself. If the season is fine—the roads are dry—the walks are dry—the bogs are become, many of them, passable, the heather is in full bloom, the fresh air of the mountains, or the waters in sailing thither, the rapid changes of scene, the novel aspects of life and nature in progressing onward, by the carriage, the railway, the steamer, with all their varying groups of tourists and pleasure-seekers, of men of business and men of idleness, are full of enjoyment. To the man from the rich

monotonous Lowlands, from the large town, from the heart of the metropolis perhaps, from the weary yoke of business, public or private, of law, of college study, of parliament and committees, what can be more penetrating and delicious than the breathing of the fresh buoyant air, the pleasant flitting of the breeze, the dash of sunny waters, the aspect of mountains and moors in all their shadow and gloom, or in their brightness as they rise in their clear still beauty into the azure heavens, or bask broad and brown in the noon-sun? There go the happy sportsmen; seated on the deck of some fast-sailing steamer, with human groups around them; they are fast approaching the “land of the mountain and the flood.” They already seem to tread the elastic turf, to smell the heather bloom, and the peat fire of the Highland hut; to climb the moory hill, to hear the thunder of the linn, or pace the pebbly shore of the birch-skirted lake. They have left dull scenes or dry studies behind, and a volume of Walter Scott’s novels is in their hands, living with all the character and traditions of the mountain-land before them. Well then, is it not a blessed circumstance that our poets and romancers have kindled the spirit of these things in the heart of our countrymen, that such places lie within our own island, and that science has so quickened our transit to them? Let us just note a few of the symptoms which shew us that this memorable 12th of August is at hand. In the market towns you see the country sportsman hastening along the streets, paying quick visits to his gunsmith, ammunition dealer, tailor, draper, etc. He is getting all his requisites together. His dogs are at his heels. Then you see him already invested in his jacket and straw hat, driving off in his gig, phaeton, or other carriage, with keeper or companion, and perhaps a

couple of dogs stowed away with him. You see the keeper and the dog-cart on their way too. As you get northward these signs thicken. In large towns, as Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow, Edinburgh, you see keeper-like looking men, with pointers and setters for sale tied up to some palisade, or lamp-post, at the corner of a street. But woe to those who have to purchase dogs under such circumstances. It is ten to one but they are grievously gulled; or if they *should* chance to stumble upon a tolerable dog, there is not time for that mutual knowledge to grow up which should exist between the sportsman and his companion of the field. He that sees beforehand his trip to the hills, should beforehand have all in readiness: he who on a summer ramble is smitten with a sudden desire of grouse-shooting, must however, do the best he can.

When you pass into Scotland, the signals of the time grow more conspicuous. In the newspapers, you see everywhere advertisements of Highland tracts to be let as shooting-grounds. When you get into the Highlands themselves, you find in all the inns maps of the neighbouring estates, divided into shooting-grounds for letting. It is very probable that the income derived from this source by the Highland proprietors frequently far exceeds the rental of the same estates for the grazing of sheep and cattle. The waters and the heaths seem to be the most profitable property of a great part of the Highlands. Almost every stream and loch is carefully preserved and let as a trout or salmon fishery, many of them for enormous sums; and so far is this carried, that sportsmen who are not inclined to pay eighty or a hundred pounds a-year for a shooting ground, complain that Ireland is the only country now for shooting in any degree of freedom. Sometimes

several gentlemen join at a shooting ground; and it is a picturesque sight to see them, and their dogs and keepers, drawing towards their particular locations as the day approaches.

On the 10th of August, 1836, we sailed up the Grand Caledonian Canal from Fort William to Inverness in the steam-packet with a large party of these gentlemen. Of their number, principally military men—

> Captains, and colonels, and men at arms;

some notion may be formed from the fact that we had on board upwards of seventy dogs, mostly beautiful setters; a perfect pyramid of gun-cases was piled on the deck, and dog-carts and keepers completed the scene.

One of the singular features of English life at the present moment is the swarming of summer tourists in all interesting quarters. In these Highland regions the consequent effect is often truly ludicrous. Into one miserable village, or one poor solitary inn, pour, day after day, the summer through, from seventy to a hundred people. The impossibility of such a place accommodating such a company is the first thing which strikes every one. The moment, therefore, that the vessel touches the quay, out rushes the whole throng, and a race commences to the house or village to secure beds for the night. Such is the impetus of the rush that the first arrivers are frequently driven by the “pressure from without” up the stairs to the very roof. A scene of the most laughable confusion is exhibited. All are clamouring for beds; nobody can be heard or attended to; and generally all who can, burst into rooms which are not locked up, and take forcible possession. Such scenes, any one who has

gone up this canal, or to the Western Isles must have seen,—at Oban, at Tobermory, and at Inverness, which last place boasts three inns, and where, on our arrival with a hundred fellow-passengers, we found three hundred others had just landed from a London steamer! Our sportsmen, however, who were well aware of the statistics of the north, had written beforehand, and secured bed-rooms at all the sleeping-places, which were duly locked up against their arrival, and they sate very composedly to witness the race of worse-informed mortals.

On this occasion a very characteristic contrast was presented between the sportsmen and a number of students who were on board at the time. These students, many of whom spend the college recess in pedestrianizing through the Highlands, have a character almost as peculiar to themselves as the German Bürschen. In twos and threes, with their knapsacks on their backs, they may be seen rambling on, wherever there is fine scenery or spots of note to be visited. They step on board a packet at one place, and go off at another, steering away into the hills; ready to take up their quarters at such abode as may offer—the road-side inn or the smoky hut of the Gael. Wherever you see them, they are all curiosity and enthusiasm; all on fire with the sublime and beautiful—athirst for knowledge; historical, antiquarian, traditionary, botanical, geological—anything in the shape of knowledge. They are the first to climb the hill, to reach the waterfall, to crowd round every spot of tragic interest; everywhere they go agog with imagination, and everywhere they lament that they do not feel adequately, the power, and beauty, and grandeur of the objects of their attention. Such a group we had on board. On the other hand, the sportsmen had but one object, which

absorbed all their interests and faculties. They cared not at that moment for the Fall of Foyers, saw scarcely the splendid mountains and glens around. Their souls were in the brown hills of their shooting grounds—the fever of the 12th of August was upon them. They kept together, talking of guns, dogs, grouse, roebucks; all their conversation was larded and illustrated with the phraseology of their own favourite pursuit. They were, many of them, clad in a close jacket and trousers of shepherd's tartan, with their telescope slung at their backs. They seemed to look on the students as so many hair-brained and romantic striplings—the students on them, as so many creatures of the chase. As we proceeded, the fiery Nimrods were, one after another, put out at the opening of beautiful glens, and at the foot of wild mountains where their huts lay, and the vessel received a considerable accession of silence by the departure of their keepers, who, having found a Highland piper on board, got up a dance in the steerage cabin, and kept that end of the vessel pretty well alive both day and night. Having thus brought them to their grounds, there can be no better narrator of what passes there than Thomas Oakleigh.

"On the 11th of August the sportsman arrives at his shooting quarters; probably some isolated tavern, 'old as the hills,'—if such a house as the grouse-shooter occasionally locates himself in, in the northern or midland counties of England, or in Scotland, where oatcake and peat supply the place of bread and fuel, can be called a tavern. The place, humble in character, has been the immemorial resort of sportsmen in August, although during the rest of the year, sometimes many months elapse ere a customer, save some itinerant salesman calling for his mug of beer, 'darkens the door.' * * * At the

house will be found all the keepers, and tenters, and poachers, and young men from the country round, assembled, amounting in the whole to not more than some eight or ten persons, all *knowing ones*, each anxious to display his knowledge of the number and locality of the broods, but each differing, wide as the poles asunder, in his statement, except on four points, in which all are agreed, viz.—*That the hatching season has been finer than was ever known before! That the broods are larger and more numerous than were ever counted before! That the birds are heavier and stronger than were ever seen before! and that they will, on the following day, lie better than they ever did on any previous opening day in the recollection of the oldest person present!* Each successive season being, in their idea, more propitious than its precursor! Anxiety and expectation are now arrived at a climax. At night, the blithe and jocund peasantry mingle with their superiors: their pursuits are for once something akin. In the field-sports they can sympathize together: the peasant and the peer associate; the plough-boy and the squire talk familiarly together; it is the privilege of the former, his prescriptive right. The circling cup, and lighthearted and hilarious laugh promiscuously go round! This night distinctions are unknown—and would that it were oftener so! * * * Long before midnight, all who can obtain beds retire, though not an eye is drowsy. The retainers lie on sofas, elbow-chairs, or whatever else presents itself; but sleep is almost a stranger during the night. The soldier before battle, is not more anxious as to the result of the morrow, than is the sportsman on the night of the 11th of August! Morning dawns, ‘and heavily with *mists* comes on the day.’ The occupiers of benches and chairs are first on the alert: the landlady is

called; breakfast is prepared—the dogs are looked at; all is tumult, noise, and confusion. Reckless must he be that can rest longer in bed—'the cootie moor-cocks crowsely crow;' breakfast is hastily dispatched—next is heard the howling and yelping of dogs, the cracking of whips, the snapping of locks, the charging, and flashing, and firing of guns, and every other note of preparation. The march is sounded, and away they wind for the heather and hills, true *peep-o'-day boys*, far, far from the busy, money-getting world, to breathe empyreal air; to enjoy a sport that should be monopolized by princes—if, indeed, princes could be found deserving of such a monopoly! Every person the shooter meets with seems this day to have thrown off his sordid cloak, and to be divested of those meaner passions which render life miserable: all are now warm, open-hearted, frank, sincere, and obliging. The sportsman's shooting-dress is a sibboleth, which introduces him alike to his superiors, to his fellows, and his inferiors: an acquaintance is formed at first sight: there are no distant looks, no coldness, no outpouring of arrogance, or avarice, or pride; but a happy rivalry exists, to eclipse each other in the number and size of birds killed—the chief object of emulation being to kill the finest old cock. Let us be understood to express that this happy state of things subsists only so long as the shooter's peregrinations are circumscribed by the limits of his own or friend's manor. The moment he becomes a borderer, a very different reception awaits him! To the sportsman in training, full of health and strength, and well appointed, it is of little consequence whether there be game or not. The inspiriting character of the sport, and the wild beauty of the scenery, so different from what he is elsewhere in the habit of

contemplating, hold out a charm that dispels fatigue! He feels not the drudgery. To him the hills are lovely in every aspect; whether beneath a hot, autumnal sun, with not a cloud to intercept the torrid beam, or beneath the dark canopy of thunder-clouds; whether in the frosty morn or in the dewy eve—whether, when through the clear atmosphere he surveys, as it were in a map, the countries that lie stretched around and beneath him, or when he wanders darkly on, amidst eternal mists that roll continuously past him—still a charm pervades the hills. The sun shines brighter, and the storm rages more furiously than in the valleys! The very sterility pleases: and to him who has been brought thither by the rapid means of travelling now adopted, from some bustling mart of trade or vortex of fashion, the novelty of loneliness is agreeably exciting! The stillness that reigns around is as wonderful to him as the solidity of land to the stranded sailor! Scarcely is there a change of scene—stillness and solitude, hill and ravine, sky and heather, everywhere magnificent, the outline everywhere bold, and where the view terminates amid rocks and crags, frequently sublime! At noonday, near some rocky summit, perchance on the shepherd's stone, the shooter seats himself, and shares his last sandwich with his panting dogs. We will suppose him to be on the boundary of the muir-lands: on one hand he sees an unbounded expanse of heathery hills, by no means monotonous if he will look upon them with the eye of a painter, for there is every shade of yellow, green, brown, and purple,—the last is the prevailing colour at this season, the heather being in bloom: nor are the hills monotonous, if he looks at them with the eye of a sportsman, for by this time (we suppose him to have been shooting all the morning) he will have

performed many feats, or at any rate will have met with several adventures, and the ground before him is the field of his fame. He now looks with interest on many a rock, and cliff, and hill, which lately appeared but as one of so many ‘crags, knolls, and mounds confusedly hurled!’ He contemplates the site of his achievements, as a general surveys a field of battle during an interval of strife; the experience of the morning has taught him a lesson, and he plans a fresh campaign for the afternoon, or the morrow, or probably the next season, should the same hills be again destined to be the scene of his exploits. The shooter looks down on the other hand from his rocky summit, and, in the bright relief, through the white rents in the clouds, sees the far-off meadows and hamlets, the woods, the rivers, and the lake. He rises, and renews his task. The invigorating influence of the bracing wind on the heights, lends the sportsman additional strength—he puts forth every effort, every nerve is strained—he feels an artificial glow after nature is exhausted, and returns to the cot where he had previously spent a sleepless night, to enjoy his glass of grog, and such a *snooze* as the citizen never knew!”

This is a graphic and true picture of the outset of grouse-shooting; but it is but one amongst many of the exciting situations and picturesque positions which this fine sport presents. There is a wide difference, too, between the grouse-shooting of the north of England and of the Highlands. On the English moors, the majority of shooters who assemble there, are the friends or acquaintances of the proprietors, or of their friends and acquaintances, who have received invitations, or procured the favour to shoot for a day or two at the opening of the season. The outbreak on the morning of the 12th, is

therefore proportionably multitudinous and bustling. The throng of the people on the preceding evening, crowded into the inns and cottages in the neighbourhood where the best shooting lies, is often amazing. Many sportsmen, who on other occasions would think scorn to enter such a hovel, or jostle in such a crowd, may be seen waiting in patient endurance, in a situation in which a beggar would not envy them. Others will be seen stretched on their cloaks on the floor, while their dogs are occupying their beds, or the soft bottom of a huge old chair; their great anxiety being, to have their dogs fresh and able for the coming day. At the faintest peep of dawn, which is about three o'clock at that season, loud is the sound of guns on all sides, going off farther and farther in the distance. At noon, on some picturesque and breezy hill, you may see a large party congregated to luncheon, where provisions and drink have been conveyed by appointment. There, ten or a dozen sportsmen seated on the ground, all warm in body and mind—their dogs watching eagerly for their share of the feast, which is thrown them with liberal hand—their guns reared against some rock—their game thrown picturesquely on the moorland turf—Flibbertigibbets, with their asses who have brought up the baskets of provisions, the keg of beer, and bottles of porter, are running about and acting the waiters in a style of genuine originality; while keepers and markers are at once lunching and keeping an eye on the dogs, lest they are too troublesome to their masters; who are all talking together with inconceivable ardour of their individual achievements. The situation, the mixture of men and animals, of personages and costumes, all go to make up a striking picture. On the English moorlands, however, grouse-shooting is but as it

were a brilliant and passing flash. As the enjoyment of the sport is generally a matter of grace and friendship, and is sought by numbers who can only devote to the excursion, at the best, a few days, it is a scene of animation and havoc for a week or ten days, and then its glory is over. During this time, however, the keepers on many estates make a rich harvest, by presents from gentlemen for attendance and guidance to the best haunts of the game—by the loan of dogs at good interest to such as have not come well provided, or have met with accidents, or whose dogs, as is sometimes the case, unused to this kind of sport and scenery, have bolted and disappeared at the first general discharge of guns; and by furnishing, *sub rosâ*, grouse at a guinea a brace to certain luckless braggadocios, who have boastingly promised to various friends at home plenty of game from the moors; and have not been able to ruffle a single feather! In the Highlands the scene is different. The grounds are more generally rented by individuals or parties; they are wider and wilder, and both from their extent and distance from the populous districts of England are more thinly scattered with shooters. There, some of the sportsmen take their families to their cottages on their shooting-ground, and on which they have probably bestowed some trouble and expense, to render them sufficiently comfortable and convenient for a few months' occasional summer sojourn, and what in nature can afford a more delicious change from the ordinary course and place of life? Up far amongst the wild mountains and moorlands, amid every fresh and magnificent object—amid fairyland glens of birch and hills of pine, the sight of crystal, rapid, sunny streams, and the sound of waterfalls, in the lands of strange and startling traditions. To

intelligent children full of the enjoyment of life and healthful curiosity, in such scenery every thing is wonderful and delightful; to ladies of taste, such a life for a brief season must be equally pleasant. There are some ladies, indeed, of the highest rank, who are in the regular habit of spending a certain portion of every year in the Highlands; and one in particular, of ducal rank, who at that season rambles far and wide amongst the cottages and the beautiful scenery of her native hills, telling her daughters, that if they there indulge in English luxuries, they must prepare them themselves,—such is the simplicity of her mountain residence and establishment; and they take their Cook's Oracle, and wonderfully enjoy the change. The language and costume of the inhabitants are those of a foreign country; every object has its novelty, and the little elegancies of books, music, and furniture, which can be conveyed to such an abode, strike all the more from the stern nature without. Then there is the finest fishing in the lochs and mountain-streams, the most delightful sailing in many places, and in the woods there are the shy roebuck and sometimes the red-deer to be pursued. The grouse and black-cock shooting season is, therefore, longer and steadier there; but the full perfection of its enjoyment is to be found, perhaps, after all, only by the happy mortal who makes one of the select party collected at one of the great Highland houses of the aristocracy, where the best shooting, every requisite of horses, dogs, attendants, etc., are furnished—and where, after the fatigues of the day, the sportsman returns to his own clean room, to an excellent dinner, music, and refined society. But, amid all these seductions, nothing will make the thorough English sportsman forget the first of September. Back he comes, and enters on that

regular succession of partridge, pheasant, woodcock, snipe, and wild-fowl shooting, of hunting and coursing, which diversify and fill up the autumn and winter of English rural life. To these pleasures then we leave him.

A WORD WITH THE TOO SENSITIVE.

I have not attempted to defend the hunter, the courser, or even the shooter, in the preceding chapter, from the charge of cruelty which is perpetually directed against them—they are a sturdy, and now a very intelligent people; often numbering amongst them many of our principal senators, authors, and men of taste, and very capable of vindicating themselves; but I must enact the shield-bearer for a moment, for that very worthy and much-abused old man, Izaak Walton, and the craft which he has made so fashionable. Spite even of Lord Byron's jingle about the hook and gullet, and a stout fish to pull it, they may say what they will of the old man's cruelty and inconsistency—the death of a worm, a frog, or a fish, is the height of his infliction, and what is that to the ten thousand deaths of cattle, sheep, lambs, fish, and fowl of all kinds, that are daily perpetrated for the sustenance of these same squeamish cavillers! They remind me of a delicate lady, at whose house I was one day, and on passing the kitchen door at ten in the morning, saw a turkey suspended by its heels, and bleeding from its bill, drop by drop. Supposing it was just in its last struggles from a recent death-wound, I passed on, and found the lady lying on her sofa overwhelmed in tears over a most touching story. I was charmed with her sensibility; and the very delightful conversation which I held with her, only heightened my opinion

of the goodness of her heart. On accidentally passing by the same kitchen door in the afternoon, six hours afterwards, I beheld, to my astonishment, the same turkey suspended from the same nail, still bleeding, drop by drop, and still giving an occasional flutter with its wings! Hastening to the kitchen, I inquired of the cook, if she knew that the turkey was not dead. “O yes, sir,” she replied, “it won’t be dead, may-happen, these two hours. We always kill turkeys that way, it so improves their colour; they have a vein opened under the tongue, and only bleed a drop at a time!” “And does your mistress know of this your mode of killing turkeys?” “O yes, bless you sir, it’s our regular way; missis often sees ’em as she goes to the gardens—and she says sometimes, ‘Poor things! I don’t like to see ’em, Betty; I wish you would hang them where I should not see ’em!’” I was sick! I was dizzy! It was the hour of dinner, but I walked quietly away,

> And ne’er repassed that *bloody* threshold more!

I say, what is Izaak Walton’s cruelty to this, and to many another such perpetration on the part of the tender and sentimental? What is it to the grinding and oppression of the poor that is every day going on in society,—to the driving of wheels and the urging of steam-engines, matched against whose iron power thousands daily waste their vital energies? What is it to the laying on of burdens of expense and trouble by the exactions of law, of divinity, of custom,—burdens grievous to be borne, and which they who impose them, will not so much as touch with one of their little fingers?

> They sit at home and turn an easy wheel,
> And set sharp racks to work to pinch and peel.—*John Keats.*

These things are done and suffered by human beings, and then go the very doers of these things, and cry out mightily against the angler for pricking the gristle of a fish's mouth!

I do not mean to advocate cruelty—far from it! I would have all men as gentle and humane as possible; nor do I argue that because the world is full of cruelty, it is any reason that more cruelty should be tolerated: but I mean to say, that it is a reason why there should not be so much permission to the greater evils, and so much clamour against the less. Is there more suffering caused by angling than by taking fishes by the net? Not a thousandth,—not a ten thousandth part! Where one fish is taken with a hook, it may be safely said that a thousand are taken with the net: for daily are the seas, lakes, and rivers swept with nets; and cod, haddock, halibut, salmon, crabs, lobsters, and every species of fish that supplies our markets, are gathered in thousands and ten thousands—to say nothing of herrings and pilchards by millions. Over these there is no lamentation; and yet their sufferings are as great—for the suffering does not consist so much in the momentary puncture of a hook, as in the dying for lack of their native element. Then go these tender-hearted creatures and feast upon turtles that have come long voyages nailed to the decks of ships in living agonies; upon crabs, lobsters, prawns, and shrimps, that have been scalded to death; and thrust oysters alive into fires; and fry living eels in pans, and curse poor anglers before their gods for cruel monsters, and bless their own souls for pity and goodness, forgetting all the fish-torments they have inflicted!

"Ay, but"—they turn round upon you suddenly with what they deem a decisive and unanswerable argument—"Ay, but they cannot approve of making

the miseries of sentient creatures a pleasure." What! is there no pleasure in feasting upon crabs that have been scalded, and eels that have been fried alive? In sucking the juices of an oyster, that has gaped in fiery agony between the bars of your kitchen grate? But the whole argument is a sophism and a fallacy. Nobody *does* seek a pleasure, or make an amusement of the misery of a living creature. The pleasure is in the pursuit of an object, and the art and activity by which a wild creature is captured, and in all those concomitants of pleasant scenery and pleasant seasons that enter into the enjoyment of rural sports; —the *suffering* is only the *casual adjunct*, which you would spare to your victim if you could, and which any humane man will make as small as possible. And over what, after all, do these very sensitive persons lament? Over the momentary pang of a creature, which forms but one atom in a living series, every individual of which is both pursuing and pursued, is preying, or is preyed upon. The fish is eagerly pursuing the fly, one fish is pursuing the other, and so it is through the whole chain of living things; and this is the order and system established by the very centre and principle of love, by the beneficent Creator of all life. The too sensitively humane, will again exclaim—"Yes, this is right in the inferior animals: it is their nature, and they only follow the impulse which their Maker has given them." True; but what is right in them, is equally right in man;—the argument applies with double force in his case. For, is there no such impulse implanted in him? Let every sportsman answer it; let the history of the world answer it; let the heart of every nine-tenths of the human race answer it. Yes, the very fact that we do pursue such sports, and enjoy them, is an irrefragable answer. The principle of chase and

taking of prey, which is impressed on almost all living things, from the minutest insect to the lion of the African desert, is impressed with double force on man. By the strong dictates of our nature, by the very words of the Holy Scriptures, every creature is given us for food; our dominion over them, is made absolute. The amiable Cowper asserted that dogs would not pursue game, if they were not taught to do so. We admit the excellent nature of the man, but every day proves that, in this instance, he was talking beyond his knowledge. Every one who knows anything of dogs, knows, that if you bring them up in a town, and keep them away from the habits of their own class to their full growth, the moment they get into the country they will pursue each their peculiar game, with the utmost avidity, and after their own manner. There is then, unquestionably, an instinctive propensity in one animal to prey upon another—in man pre-eminently so—and it is not the work of wisdom to quench this tendency, but to follow it with all possible gentleness and humanity.

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CHAPTER V.
SCIENTIFIC FARMING.

> Res rustica, sine dubitatione, proxima, et quasi consanguinea Sapientiæ est.
> *Columella De Re Rustica.*

> Oh, blessed, who drinks the bliss that Hymen yields,
> And plucks life's roses in his quiet fields.—*Ebenezer Elliot.*

There may be a difference of opinion as to the strict

utility or wisdom of the pursuits noticed in the last chapter;—of the excellence and rationality of those which form the subject of this, there can be none. Nothing can be more consonant to nature, nothing more delightful, nothing more beneficial to the country, or more worthy of any man, than the Georgical occupations which form so prominent a feature in the rural life of England. Whether a country gentleman seek profit or pleasure in them, he can, at any time, find them. While he is increasing the value of his estate, he is in the midst of health, peace, and a series of operations which have now become purely scientific, and have called in to their accomplishment various other sciences and arts. In every age of the world agricultural pursuits have formed the delight of the greatest nations and the noblest men. Some of the most illustrious kings and prophets of Israel were taken from the fold or the plough. David and Elisha are great names in the history of rural affairs. King Uzziah “built towers in the desert, and digged many wells, for he had much cattle both in the low country and in the plains; husbandmen also, and vinedressers in the mountains, and in Carmel, for he loved husbandry.” How delightful are the associations which the literature of Greece and Rome has thrown around country affairs! Homer, Hesiod, and Theocritus—how elysian are the glimpses they give us into rural life! how simple, how peaceful, how picturesque! Laertes, that venerable old monarch, pruning his vines, and fetching young stocks from the woods for his fences. Eumeus, at his rustic lodge, entertaining his prince and his king. Hesiod himself, wandering at the feet of Helicon, less impressed with the sublimity of the poet than with the spirit of the husbandman! He shews us the very infancy of agriculture:

> Forget not when you sow the grain, to mind
> That a boy follows with a rake behind;
> And strictly charge him, as you drive, with care
> The seeds to cover, and the birds to scare.
>
> *Works and Days*, B. 2.

The harrow, an implement well known to King David, for he put the subjected Ammonites under it, was unknown then in Greece! They *raked* in the grain. That was but the second stage in the progress of tillage; the first undoubtedly being that in which their plough was a pointed stick, and their harrow a bush; as the most ancient drawing of hay-forks shews that they were forked sticks cut from the thicket. But to leave those primitive times of Greece,—there is no nation that at once acquired so vast a military renown and yet retained such a passion for the peaceful pursuits of agriculture as Rome. Nothing is so soon familiarized to the mind of the school-boy as the fact of their generals, dictators, and emperors tilling their own lands—leaving them with reluctance for state honours, and retiring to them with gladness to end their days in meditative tranquillity. Cicero tells us that couriers were first introduced by them, to run between the capitol and their farms, that they themselves might leave them only on most important occasions. Almost every one of their writers on rural affairs, whose works have reached us, were men of distinction in the state. Varro was consul; Cato, the most remarkable man of his time, filled the highest offices; Columella and Palladius were men of note; and Pliny, a patrician officer, was governor of Spain. But what is more remarkable even is, that such men as Virgil, Horace, and Cicero, men of imaginative genius, and so involved in court life, or the business of government, should be such passionate lovers of rural concerns. Everyone knows how their writings

overflow with the praises of country life, and what delight they took in their farms and villas. Cicero seems as though he could never have done with telling us of the pleasure he took in farming. “I might expatiate,” he says, “on the beauty of verdant groves and meadows, on the charming aspects of vineyards and olive-yards, but to say all in one word, there cannot be a more pleasing, or a more profitable scene than that of a well-cultivated farm. In my opinion, indeed, no kind of occupation is more fraught with happiness, not only as the business of husbandry is of singular utility to mankind, but, as I have said, being attended with its own peculiar pleasures. I will add too, as a further recommendation, and let it restore me to the good graces of the voluptuous, that it supplies both the table and the altar with the greatest variety and abundance. Accordingly, the magazines of the skilful and industrious farmer are plentifully stored with wine and oil, with milk, cheese, and honey; as his yards abound with poultry, and his fields with flocks and herds of kids, lambs, and porkets. The garden also furnishes him with an additional source of delicacies, in allusion to which the farmers pleasantly call a certain piece of ground allotted to that particular use, their *dessert*. I must not omit, likewise, that in the intervals of their more important business, and in order to heighten the relish of the rest, the sports of the field claim a share of their amusements. * * * Of country occupations I profess myself a warm admirer. They are pleasures perfectly consistent with every degree of advanced years, as they approach the nearest of all others to those of the purely philosophical kind. They are derived from observing the nature and properties of their own earth, which yields a ready obedience to the

cultivator's industry, and returns with interest what he deposits in her charge."—*De Senectute.*

He then goes on to tell us what delight he took in the cultivation of the vine; in watching the springing and progress of corn; the green blade pushing forth, shooting into a knotted stem, nourished and supported by the fibres of the root, terminated in the ear in which the grain is lodged in regular order, and defended from the depredations of birds by its bearded spikes. He tells us that he could name numbers of his most distinguished friends and neighbours, and some of them at very advanced ages, who take such interest in all that is going on at their farms, that they will be present at every important agricultural operation—many of them engaged in improvements of which they will see neither the benefit nor the end. "And what," says he, "do these noble husbandmen, when they are asked for what purpose they dig and plant, reply,—'In obedience to the immortal gods, by whose bountiful providence we received these fields from our ancestors, and whose will it is that we should deliver them down with improvement to posterity!'" And this generous and high sense of duty it was which animated the Romans during the better portion of their republic, and kept alive their virtue and their simplicity of life, so far as to give them power to despise wealth, and to command the fortunes of other men. Cicero is delighted with this noble principle, and he reverts with enthusiasm to the picture of Manlius Curius, who, after having conquered the Samnites, the Sabines, and even Pyrrhus himself, passed the honourable remainder of his age in cultivating his farm. He adds, "I can never behold his villa without reflecting with the highest degree of admiration both on the singular moderation of his mind, and the

general simplicity of the age in which he flourished. Here it was, while sitting by his fireside, that he nobly rejected the gold which was offered him on the part of the Samnites, and rejected it with this memorable saying, 'that he placed his glory, not on the abundance of his own wealth, but in commanding those amongst whom it abounded.'" With equal exultation he refers to the enthusiasm into which Xenophon in his treatise of ŒCONOMICS breaks forth in the praise of agriculture, and relates the interview of Lysander, the Spartan ambassador, with Cyrus the younger, as told by Socrates to his friend Critobulus, in which Cyrus assures Lysander that all the trees, shrubs, etc., which he admired in his garden, were planted by his own hand.

But if such were the charms which agriculture had for the Roman nobility, how much greater ought it to possess for the nobles and gentlemen of England! Amid all the advantages and recreations which have been pointed out in the preceding chapters as surrounding the country life of modern England, that of scientific farming is certainly one of the greatest. It is a pursuit full of interest and variety, at once natural, philosophical, and dignified. It is difficult to imagine a man of wealth and education more usefully or honourably employed than in directing the culture and improvement of his estate. Agriculture is now become, indeed, as Cicero termed it in his day, "the nearest of all employments to the purely philosophical kind." It is a science which requires a first-rate education to prosecute it to its full capability, to make the other arts and sciences of modern times bear upon it, and co-operate with it, so as to add something to its progression, or even to apply beneficially the knowledge of its already established principles and practices.[1] It is no longer

an occupation which requires a man to forego the refined pleasures of society, to bury himself amid woods and wildernesses in some obscure hamlet far from the enjoyments and intelligence of the world. As we have already seen, locate himself where he will in these islands, the arts, the elegances, the news and knowledge of civilized life, will penetrate to him by swift agencies, and give him all the real advantages of the city in the peace and fulness of his retirement. And what a noble art is agriculture now become! Look at the manner it is now practised by the most skilful of its professors. Let any one just turn over the leaves of Mr. Loudon's Encyclopædia of Agriculture, and trace the progress of its implements only, from the plough of the ancients in the shape of a mere pick, to the almost endless machines which the active brains of men and their advancing knowledge of mechanics have given to the scientific farmer. Let any one turn to the list of engravings of farming apparatus in the same excellent work, amounting to about 300, and he will obtain some idea of the amount of science and invention now devoted to the use of the agriculturist. There are no men who have availed themselves of the progress of the arts and of general knowledge more than they. Mechanics, chemistry, hydraulics, steam, all have been seized upon, to develope the principles, or facilitate the operations of agriculture. Within the last century the strides which have been made in this interesting department of knowledge are admirable. The Netherlands may be said to have been the mother of our modern agriculture—Scotland its nurse. Tull's system of horse-hoeing and drill husbandry has been introduced by Dawson, and has brought after it a numerous train of drills, dibbling-machines, horse-hoes, ploughs, rollers, scufflers,

scarifiers, watering-machines, brakes, drill-harrows, etc., which we now see almost everywhere where the old system of plain ploughing, harrowing, and broadcast sowing prevailed to the infinite loss of seed and growth of weeds. Then comes the thrashing machine invented by Menzies, and improved by Meikle from stage to stage, successively adapted to horses, wind, water, and eventually the giant power of steam, thus giving to the operations of the barn a rapidity equal to the skill and neatness displayed in the field. The scientific genius of Sir Humphry Davy, Thompson, Fourcroy, Parmentier, Kirwan, Gay Lussac, and many other eminent chemists, have been employed to investigate more accurately the real nature of soils and manures, and a vast increase of productive power has been the result. Bones, a source of fertility till of late entirely wasted, have done wonders; rape-dust, malt-dust, oil, fish, salt, wood and peat ashes, soot, gypsum, and many other substances, have been made the active agents of human subsistence. The best mixture of crops has been determined by numerous experiments; and the benefits of stall-feeding clearly demonstrated. Mangel-würzel, trifolium incarnatum—a plant which from its rich crimson hue would be an ornament of our fields even were it not a profitable production—and other vegetables, have been added to that plenteous growth of clover, dills, lucerne, rape, turnips, etc., with which modern tillage has enriched both summer and winter stalls. The improvement of the breed of cattle and sheep by Bakewell of Dishly, and the Culleys; the growth of finer and better wools by the introduction and crossing with the Merino by Lord Somerville and others, have been as remarkable as the superior cultivation of the soil. The science of draining has found devotees equally ardent, and has

produced the most striking consequences. In many instances the mere act of draining has quadrupled the produce of land. In the weald of Kent, land which produced only a rental of five shillings an acre, has been raised by this process to five-and-twenty. And all these objects have been watched over, canvassed, and stimulated by the establishment of agricultural societies, agricultural journals and newspapers, and ploughing matches. Agricultural associations are now to be found in almost every county, and in different districts of the same county, which offer premiums on the best specimens of horses, cattle, and sheep; the best ploughing, and the most steady and industrious farm and household servants. It is a new feature in rural life, to see the whole farming population of a district hastening on a given day, gentlemen, farmers, and farm-servants all in their best array, to some one spot where the cattle are shewn, the ploughing is done, the prizes are awarded by umpires chosen from the most skilful, and the different parties then going to a good dinner, and a long talk and hearty toasting of all the interests of agriculture.

[1] This education is now likely to be extended to the great body of farmers. In Ireland, at Templemoyle, a college is established where the sons of farmers are instructed in every branch of science which can enable them to pursue agriculture successfully, while they daily work certain hours on the farm attached, thus making a familiar practical acquaintance with all the best processes of cultivation under the ablest professors. Similar colleges are also contemplated for England.

It is really too, as curious to see on our scientific farms the vast variety of implements and machines which these causes have produced;—ploughs—about

a dozen and a half swing-ploughs, and upwards of a dozen wheel-ploughs of different constructions, and by different patentees; harrows, drills, cultivators. Every species of soil and crop has its peculiar apparatus; in the field and the farm-yard; for getting seed into the ground, clearing and dressing when there, for thrashing it out and cleaning it for market; for sowing peas, beans, turnips, carrots, parsnips, etc., for chopping, slicing, and preparing them for cattle; their machines for tedding hay, for stacking it with least possible risk, for cutting and steaming it; for ploughing up weeds, ploughing up moorlands, and even roads; for reaping by wholesale, and raking by wholesale; for tapping deep springs, and guttering the surface for the escape of top-water; there are their machines for paring and levelling lumpy lands; for cross-cutting furrows to make rough mossy land take seed better; their channels, sluices, and schemes for irrigation. And then, who shall tell all their implements for hay-binding, rope-twisting, furze-pounding for cattle; their novel churns, their ratteries, their new-fangled mole-traps, their poultry-feeders, and pheasant-feeders, by which those birds are enabled to help themselves from tin boxes supplied with grain for them, without feathered depredators being able to go shares with them. Truly Solomon might say that men now-a-days have sought out many inventions!

But who shall calculate all the thoughts and the labours of such men as Fitzherbert, Tusser, Gooch, Platt, Hartlib, Weston, Markham, Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir John Norden, John Evelyn, Worlidge, Stillingfleet, Harte, Arthur Young, Maxwell, Lord Kaimes, Sir John Sinclair, etc. etc.? Who shall aggregate and estimate the numerous and valuable suggestions and articles of anonymous writers in the

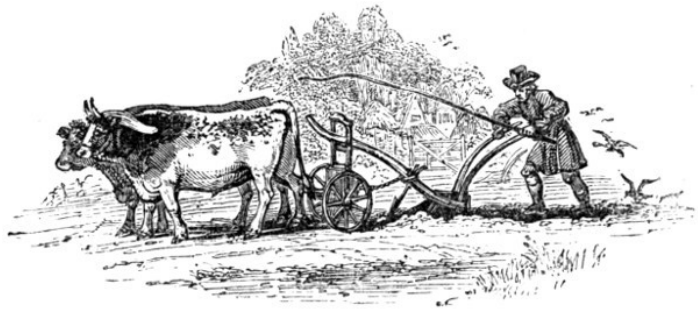
journals; and the personal labours and fostering influence of such men as the late Dukes of Buccleugh, and of Bedford, the Duke of Portland, Earl Spencer, the late Lord Somerville, Mr. Coke of Holkham, now the Earl of Leicester, and many other noblemen and gentlemen who have spent their lives in the unostentatious but most meritorious endeavour to perfect the agricultural science of England? With the exception of naturalists, there are no men whose pursuits seem to me to yield them so much real happiness as intelligent agriculturists whose hearts are in the business; and though there are men whose offices or professions place them more in the public eye, there are none who are more truly the benefactors of their country. Such were Lord Somerville and the Duke of Buccleugh, as described by Sir Walter Scott; and there is a passage in his memoir of the latter nobleman well worth the notice of those who propagate or believe in the nonsense of the economists on the non-influence of absenteeism. “In the year 1817, when the poor stood so much in need of employment, a friend asked the Duke why his Grace did not prepare to go to London in the spring? By way of answer, the Duke shewed him a list of day-labourers then employed in improvements on his different estates, the number of whom, exclusive of his regular establishments, amounted to *nine hundred and forty-seven persons*. If we allow to each labourer two persons, whose support depended on his wages, the Duke was in a manner foregoing, during this severe year, the privilege of his rank, in order to provide with more convenience for a little army of nearly three thousand persons, many of whom must otherwise have found it difficult to obtain subsistence. The result of such conduct is twice blessed; both in the

means which it employs, and in the end which it attains in the general improvement of the country. This anecdote forms a good answer to those theorists who pretend that the residence of proprietors on their estates is a matter of indifference to the inhabitants of that district. Had the Duke been residing, and spending his revenue elsewhere, one half of these poor people would have wanted employment and food; and would probably have been little comforted by any metaphysical arguments upon population, which could have been presented to their investigation."—*Scott's Prose Works*, vol. 4.

Many such things may be daily heard of the present Duke of Portland, in the neighbourhood of Welbeck Abbey, in Nottinghamshire; which convince you that he is one of those men that contrive to pass through life without much noise, but reaping happiness and respect in abundance, and while gratifying the taste for rural occupation, conferring the most lasting benefits upon the country. I shall close this section of this chapter with the *substance* of one such act, related to me some years ago. In the manner of relation it may therefore differ somewhat from that in which originally told, but in fact I believe it to be perfectly correct. The Duke found that one of his tenants, a small farmer, was falling, year after year, into arrears of rent. The steward wished to know what should be done. The Duke rode to the farm; saw that it was rapidly deteriorating, and the man, who was really an experienced and industrious farmer, totally unable to manage it, from poverty. In fact, all that was on the farm was not enough to pay the arrears. "John," said the Duke, as the farmer came to meet him as he rode up to the house, "I want to look over the farm a little." As they went along,—"Really," said he, "every thing is in

very bad case. This won't do. I see you are quite under it. All your stock and crops won't pay the rent in arrear. I will tell you what I must do. I must take the farm into my own hands. You shall look after it for me, and I will pay you your wages." Of course there was no saying nay,—the poor man bowed assent. Presently there came a reinforcement of stock, then loads of manure,—at the proper time, seed, and wood from the plantations for repairing gates and buildings. The Duke rode over frequently. The man exerted himself, and seemed really quite relieved from a load of care by the change. Things speedily assumed a new aspect. The crops and stock flourished; fences and outbuildings were put into good order. In two or three rent days, it was seen by the steward's books that the farm was paying its way. The Duke on his next visit, said, "Well, John, I think the farm does very well now. We will change again. You shall be tenant again; and as you now have your head fairly above water, I hope you will be able to keep it there." The Duke rode off at his usual rapid rate. The man stood in astonishment; but a happy fellow he was, when on applying to the steward he found that he was actually re-entered as tenant to the farm just as it stood in its restored condition;—I will venture to say, however, that the Duke himself was the happier man of the two.

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CHAPTER VI.
PLANTING.

> "Jock, when ye hae naething else to do, ye may be aye sticking in a tree; it will be growing, Jock, when *ye're sleeping.*"—*Heart of Mid-Lothian.*

What we have just said of the pleasures and benefit of scientific farming, may be said also of planting; it is but another interesting mode of employing time by landed proprietors, at once for recreation and the improvement of their estates. What, indeed, can be more delightful than planning future woods, where, perhaps, now sterile heather, or naked declivities present themselves; clothing, warming, diversifying in imagination your vicinity; then turning your visions into realities, and watching the growth of your forests? Since John Evelyn wrote his eloquent Sylva, and displayed the deplorable condition of our woodlands, and since Dr. Johnson penned his sarcastic Tour to the Hebrides, both England and Scotland have done much to repair the ravages made in the course of ages in our woods. A strong spirit on the subject has grown up in the

minds of our landed gentry, and vast numbers of trees of all kinds suitable to our climate have been planted in different parts of the island. The Commissioners of Woods and Forests have made extensive plantations of oak in the New Forest, and other places. In the neighbourhood of all gentlemen's houses we see evidences of liberal planting: and the rich effect of these young woods is well calculated to strengthen the love of planting. In this part of Surrey, wood, indeed, seems the great growth of the country. Look over the landscape from Richmond Hill, from Claremont, from St. George's or St. Anne's Hill, and it is one wide sea of wood. The same is the case in the bordering regions of Buckingham and Berk shires. Richmond Park, Hampton-Court Park, Bushy Park, Claremont and Esher Parks, Oatlands, Painshill, Windsor, Ockham, Bookham—the whole wide country is covered with parks, woods, and fields, the very hedge-rows of which are dense, continuous lines of trees. Look into the part of Kent approaching the metropolis from the heights of Norwood, and the prospect is the same. Many of the extensive commons hereabout, as Bookham and Streatham commons, are scattered with fine oaks, some of them very ancient, and diversified with thickets and green glades, and rather resemble old forests and parks, than commons as seen elsewhere. Then again, the sandy heaths of Surrey are covered in many places with miles of Scotch firs. There certainly is no want of wood in these parts. In the sandy wastes of Old Sherwood Forest in Nottinghamshire, many thousand acres, principally of larch, have been planted on the estates of the Dukes of Portland and Newcastle, Lord Scarborough, Earl Manvers, Colonels Need, Wildman, and other proprietors. Even the cold hills of the Peak of Derbyshire have been planted in some parts

extensively; and lands in those districts which were literally unproductive, are now a source of considerable income from the thinning of the woods. In Scotland the same change is very visible. All along the borders the good lands are beautifully cultivated, the bad extensively planted. From the dreary flats about Gretna Green to the borders of Northumberland and Berwickshire, this is the case. Passing into Scotland by the Cheviots, we saw extensive woods on the border lands of the Duke of Northumberland, Earl Tankerville, Mr. Collingwood, Mr. St. Paul, etc. The cold and wild tract between Kelso and Edinburgh presents cheering appearances of the extension of the planting spirit. In the counties of Argyle, Ross, and Inverness, which Monteith of Stirling, in his Forester's Guide, particularly points out as wanting wood, we were struck with the great extent of planting already done. Every summer tourist up the Clyde sees how much the woods round Roseneath have sheltered and beautified it—and the woods around Inverary Castle are, to a great extent, very splendid—while all the way thence to Oban you pass through mountain glens and over moorlands enriched with woods. The Duke of Athol, about Athol and Dunkeld, has planted upwards of 15,000 acres. The Duke of Montrose has been a great planter. Sir Walter Scott was a diligent planter, as the young woods round Abbotsford testify; and there are no moments of his life in which we can imagine him happier than when mounted on his pony he progressed through his plantations at his leisure, with his pruning-knife in his hand. But what he did on his own estate is trivial to what he did by his writings. He may be said to have planted more trees by his pen than any man alive has with his spade. He himself tells us that the simple words put into the

mouth of the Laird of Dumbiedikes, and placed as a motto at the head of this chapter, induced a certain Earl to plant a large tract of country.

In the neighbourhood of Dingwall, Beuley, Beaufort,—from Inverness to Culloden,—in short, in almost every part of the Highlands,—you find extensive young woods of larch and pine. Many of these, it must be confessed, have apparently been made with more regard to profit than beauty. In many of the sweet straths, and along the feet of the mountains, the long monotonous reaches of larch—an unbroken, unvaried succession of pointed pyramids—present but an indifferent contrast to the free slopes of beauty which the native growth of the birches exhibits; dotting glens and embosoming lochs with a fairyland loveliness. As they become large, and are thinned properly, or rather, where they are planted thinly, on the plan of the Duke of Athol, this defect may be remedied. Scotch firs, when large, assume a wild forest majesty; and larches in mountainous situations, of an ancient growth, have an Alpine sweep of boughs that is extremely picturesque and graceful; but young crowded firs of any kind are too formal for beauty.

Mr. Wordsworth, in his Guide to the Lakes of Westmoreland and Cumberland, complains grievously of the injury done to the scenery there, by the injudicious planting of larch. “Larch and fir plantations have been spread, not merely with a view to profit, but in many instances for the sake of ornament. To those who plant for profit, and are thrusting every other tree out of the way, to make room for their favourite, the larch, I would utter first a regret, that they should have selected these lovely vales for their vegetable manufactory, when there is so much barren and irreclaimable land in the

neighbouring moors, and in other parts of the island, which might have been had for this purpose at a far cheaper rate.—It must be acknowledged that the larch, till it has outgrown the size of a shrub, shews, when looked at singly, some elegance of form and appearance, especially in spring, decorated, as it then is, by the pink tassels of its blossoms; but, as a tree, it is less than any other pleasing. Its branches—for boughs it has none—have no variety in the youth of the tree, and little dignity even when it attains its full growth; *leaves* it cannot be said to have, consequently affords neither shade nor shelter. In spring, the larch becomes green long before the native trees, and its green is so peculiar and vivid, that, finding nothing to harmonize with it, wherever it comes forth a disagreeable speck is produced. In summer, when all other trees are in their pride, it is of a dingy, lifeless hue; in autumn, of a spiritless unvaried yellow; and in winter, it is still more lamentably distinguished from any other deciduous tree of the forest, for they seem only to sleep, but the larch seems absolutely dead. If an attempt be made to mingle thickets, or a certain proportion of other forest trees, with the larch, its horizontal branches intolerantly cut them down, as with a scythe, or force them to spindle up to keep pace with it. The terminating spike renders it impossible that the several trees, where planted in numbers, should ever blend together so as to form a mass, or masses of wood. Add thousands to tens of thousands, and the appearance is still the same—a collection of separate individual trees, obstinately presenting themselves as such; and which, from whatever point they are looked at, if but seen, may be counted upon the fingers. Sunshine, or shadow, has little power to adorn the surface of such a wood; and the trees not

carrying up their heads, the wind raises amongst them no majestic undulations."

There is much truth in these remarks, and they cannot be too much borne in mind by all planters where picturesque beauty is an object. On dreary moors, where the larch is planted merely for profit, and where the *tout-ensemble* cannot readily be attained, woods of it often present a great degree of pleasantness by contrast. They give you green glades and narrow footpaths, between heath and fern, their slender boughs hanging above you, especially in the freshness of their foliage, very agreeably. As a matter of profit, and for the value of its timber, few species of wood can compete with it. The following extract from the Transactions of the Highland Society, gives a very striking view of its importance. "Larch will supply ship-timber at a great height above the region of the oak; and while a seventy-four gun ship will require the oak timber of seventy-five acres, it will not require more than the timber of ten acres of larch; the trees, in both cases being sixty-eight years old. The larch, at Dunkeld, grows at the height of 1300 feet above the level of the sea; the spruce at 1200; the Scotch pine at 700; and deciduous trees at not higher than 500. The larch, in comparison with the Scotch pine, is found to produce three and three-quarter times more timber, and that timber of seven times more value. The larch also, being a deciduous tree, instead of injuring the pasture under it, improves it. The late Duke of Athol, John the Second, planted in the last year of his life, 6500 Scotch acres of mountain ground solely with the larch, which in the course of seventy-two years from the time of planting will be a forest of timber fit for the building of the largest class of ships in her majesty's navy. It will have been thinned out to

about 400 trees per acre. Each tree will contain at the least fifty cubic feet, or one load of timber, which, at the low price of one shilling the cubic foot, only one half of its present value, will give 1000*l.* per acre, or in all, a sum of 6,500,000*l.* sterling. Besides this there will have been a return of 7*l.* per acre from the thinnings, after deducting all expense of thinning, and the original outlay of planting. Further still, the land on which the larch is planted, is not worth above ninepence or one shilling per acre. After the thinnings of the last thirty years, the larch will make it worth at least ten shillings per acre by the improvement of the pasturage, on which cattle can be kept summer and winter."

That is pretty well. This calculation is made upon land stated at 1*s.* per acre, planted with larch; but Monteith, an experienced timber planter and valuer, gives us for oak planted on land of 1*l.* per acre yearly rent, the following statement.

"If the proprietor, for instance, plants 100 acres of ground, the trees being placed four feet distant from each other, each acre will contain 3422 plants. If it be planted with hard woods, chiefly oaks, and a few firs to nurse them up, supposing it is a plantation purely for profit,

the expense of plants and planting, per acre, will be 6*l.*	£ 600	0	0
Rent of land for ten years, at 1*l.* per acre, per annum	1000	0	0
Interest on rent	225	0	0
Expenses of thinning, pruning, and training up for 10 years, at 1*l.* per acre per annum	1000	0	0

Total expenditure				£ 2825	0	0
Deduct produce of 1000 trees thinned from each acre, during the first 10 years, at 2*l.* per acre	£ 200	0	0			
Deduct value of 2422 trees left on the ground after the first 10 years, at 7*l.* 10*s.* per acre	750	0	0	950	0	0
Total outlay at the end of 10 years				£ 1875	0	0
To which add expense of thinning and pruning for the next 10 years, at 2*l.* per acre	£ 200	0	0			
Rent of the land for the same period at 1*l.* per acre per annum	1000	0	0			
Interest on the rent for the same period	275	0	0			
Interest on 1875*l.* for 10 years	937	0	0	2412	0	0
Total outlay for 20 years				£ 4287	0	0
Deduct produce of 1000 trees thinned out during the last 10 years, from each acre, at 6*d.* each, or 25*l.* per acre	£ 2500	0	0			
Deduct for 1422 trees which fall to be enhanced in value during the last 10 years, and will come to at least 35*l.* 11*s.* per acre	3555	0	0	6055	0	0
				£ 1768	0	0

Deduct from this the value of these 1000 trees as they were first estimated at the end of the first 10 years, at 3*l.* 2*s.* per acre	310 0 0
Thus leaving a balance in favour, of	£ 1458 0 0 ”

Hitherto the amount of gain is comparatively small, but this calculation continued according to the growth of the trees for ten years more, will leave the balance no less than 23,667*l.* And to the end of forty years from first planting, the round sum of 41,000*l.* “These calculations,” says Monteith, “may, to those who have paid no attention to the subject, excite wonder if not doubt, but in making them the author has been careful to lessen rather than exaggerate the profits: and if the plantation shall have been carried to the age of sixty or seventy years, and properly thinned, etc., the value will be double what it was at forty years.” Thus, if 100 acres in seventy years will yield 80,000*l.* planted with oak, 6000 acres will yield about 5,000,000*l.*; while 6000 acres of the larch plantations of Athol in the same period are calculated to yield about 6,000,000*l.* There is sufficient agreement to lead us to suppose the calculations probably accurate, and what a splendid inducement to judicious planting do these calculations present!

The following facts, given in the “Encyclopædia Britannica,” (vol. i., art. Agriculture), are also particularly interesting to the planter. Mr. Pavier, in the fourth volume of the Bath Papers, computes the value of fifty acres of oak timber in 100 years to be 12,100*l.*, which is nearly 2*l.* 10*s.* annually per acre; and if we consider that this is continually accumulating, without any of that expense or risk to

which annual crops are subject, it is probable that timber-planting may be accounted one of the most profitable departments of husbandry. Evelyn calculates the profit of 1000 acres of oak land in 150 years at no less than 670,000*l.*

The following table shews the increase of trees from their first planting. It was taken from the Marquis of Lansdowne's plantation, begun in the year 1765, and the calculation made in 1786. It is about six acres in extent, the soil partly a swampy meadow upon a gravelly bottom. The measures were taken at five feet above the surface of the ground; the small trees having been occasionally drawn for posts and rails, as well as rafters for cottages, and when peeled of the bark will stand well for seven years.

		Circumference in	
	Feet in height.	Feet.	Inches.
Lombardy Poplar	60 to 80	4	8
Abeel	50-70	4	6
Plane	50-60	3	6
Acacia	50-60	2	4
Elm	40-60	3	6
Chestnut	30-50	2	9
Weymouth Pine	30-50	2	5
Chester ditto	30-50	2	5
Scotch Fir	30-50	2	10
Spruce	30-50	2	2
Larch	50-60	3	10

From this table it appears that the planting of timber trees, when the return can be waited for twenty years, will undoubtedly repay the original cost of planting as well as the interest of the money laid out, which is better worth the attention of the

proprietor of land, as the ground on which they grow may be supposed good for cattle also.

In Argyleshire, there are probably 40,000 acres of natural coppice wood which are cut periodically; commonly every nineteen or twenty years, and are understood to return about 1*l.* an acre annually. Very extensive plantations have been formed by the Duke of Argyle, and other proprietors. About thirty years ago those of his Grace were reckoned to contain 2,000,000 trees, worth then 4*s.* each amounting to the enormous sum of 400,000*l.*

I knew a certain old military officer who during his early years was a captain in a militia regiment. His brother officers were a gay set of fellows, and were continually drawing on their private incomes, and often coming to him to borrow money; but he made it a rule never to spend more than his own pay, and as to money, he never had any to lend. He went down to his estate every spring and autumn, and planted as many acres of trees as his rental would allow him. His planting gave him a perpetual plea of poverty. At a certain age he retired on his half-pay. A large family was growing around him, but his woods were growing too. Many a time have I seen him, mounted on an old brood mare, with a sort of capacious game-bag across her loins, with his gun slung at his shoulder, his saws and pruning-knives strapped behind his saddle, going away into his woods: and keeping the calculations of Monteith, and of the larch plantations of Athol, in mind, I can now imagine the profound satisfaction which the old gentleman, through a long course of years, must have felt in the depths of his forest solitudes. He is still living, at an advanced age. His family is large, and has been expensive; but his woods were large too, and no doubt their *thinnings* have proved very

grateful *thinnings* of his family charges.

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CHAPTER VII.
GARDENS.

We must now wind up, in a few words, what we have to say of the country life of the gentry, and these words must be on their gardens. In these, as in all those other sources of enjoyment that surround them, perfection seems to be reached. They live in the midst of scenes which, while they appear nature itself, are the result of art consummated only by ages of labour, research, science, travel, and the most remarkable discoveries. Nothing can be more delicious than the rural paradises which now

surround our country houses. Walks, waters, lawns of velvet softness, trees casting broad shadows, or whispering in the stirrings of the breeze; seclusion and yet airiness; flowers from all regions, besides all the luxuries which the kitchen-garden, the orchard, conservatories, hothouses, and sunny walls pour upon our tables, are so blended and diffused around our dwellings, that nothing on earth can be more delectable. It is impossible, without looking back through many ages of English life, to form any idea of the real advantages which we enjoy of this kind,—of the immense stride we have made from the bare and rigid life of our ancestors. How many of the fruits or flowers, or culinary vegetables, which we possess in such excellence and perfection, did this country originally produce? Few, indeed, of our indigenous flowers are retained in our gardens, few of our vegetables besides the cabbage and the carrot; and what were the ancient British fruits besides the crab and the bullace? But we have only to look back to the feudal times to see the wide difference between our gardens and those then existing; for all that could be enjoyed of a garden must be compressed within the narrow boundary of the castle moat. Every thing without was subject to continual ravage and destruction; and though orchards were planted without, and suffered to take their chance, the ladies' little parterre occupied some sheltered nook of the court, or space between grim towers:

> Now was there maide fast by the touris wall,
> A garden faire, and in the corneris set
> An herbere grew; with wandis long and small,
> Railit about, and so with treeis set
> Was all the place, and hawthorn hedges knet,
> That lyfe was now, walkyng there for bye,
> That myght within scarce any wight espye.

The Quair, by James I. of Scotland.

And the plot of culinary herbs occupied some sheltered spot within the moat; which when it is recollected how many other requisites of existence and defence were also compressed into the same space—soldiers, arms, and machines of war; sleeping and eating rooms; room for the stabling and fodder of horses, and often of cattle; space for daily exercise, martial or recreative; bowls, tilting or tennis,—when cooped up by their enemies, or made cautious by critical times, small indeed must have been the space or the leisure for gardens. Even in 1540, Leland in his Itinerary, tells us that our nobility still dwelt in castles, and there retained the usual defences of moats, and drawbridges. This was especially the case, the nearer they approached to the Scotch or Welsh borders; though in the vicinity of London villas and palaces had long sprung up. At Wressel Castle, near Howden, in Yorkshire, he says, "The gardens within the mote, and the orchardes without, were exceeding fair. And yn the orchardes were mounts, *opere topiario*, writhen about with degrees like the turnings in cokil shelles, to come to the top without payn." The career, indeed, by which our gardens have reached their present condition, has been, as I have said, the career of many ages, revolutions, and stupendous events. It is not only curious, but most interesting to trace all those circumstances which have contributed to raise horticulture to its present eminence,—the great national events, the extension of discovery, of the arts, of general knowledge; the deep ponderings in cells and fields; the achievements of genius, of enterprise; the combinations of science, and the variations of taste which have brought it to what it is. The history of our gardening is, in fact, the history

of Europe. The monks, whose religious character gave them an extraordinary security, as they were the first restorers of agriculture, so they were the first extenders and improvers of our gardens. Their long pilgrimages from one holy shrine to another, through France, Germany, and Italy, made them early acquainted with a variety of culinary and medicinal herbs, and with various fruits; and amongst the ruins of abbeys we still find a tribe of plants that they thus naturalized. The crusades gave the next extension to horticultural knowledge; the growing commerce and wealth of Europe fostered it still farther; and the successive magnificent discoveries of the Indies, America, the isles of the Pacific and Australia, with all their new and splendid and invaluable productions, raised the desire for such things to the highest pitch; and made our gardens and greenhouses affluent beyond all imagination. What hosts of new and curious plants do they still send us every season! From every corner of the earth are they daily reaching us: the average value of the plants in Loddige's gardens is calculated at 200,000*l.* But what a blank would they now be but for the mighty spirit of commerce, the thirst of discovery, and of traversing distant regions, which animate such numbers of our countrymen, and send them out to extend our geography, geology, and natural history, or to prosecute astronomical and philosophical science under every portion of the heavens? And besides these causes, how much is yet to be accounted for by the tastes of peculiar ages—out of the peculiar studies of the times, and the singular genius of particular men thence arising. The influence of poets and imaginative writers upon the character of our gardens has been extreme. Whether an age were poetical or mathematical, made a

mighty difference in the garden-style of the time. C. Matius, the favourite of Augustus Cæsar, introduced the fashion at Rome of clipping trees into shapes of animals and other grotesque forms; Pliny admired the invention, and celebrated it under the name of topiary-work; and so strongly did it take hold on the spirits of men, that it descended to all the nations of Europe, and was not exploded by us till the last century. Sir Henry Wotton, the tasteful and poetical courtier of Queen Elizabeth, and ambassador of James to Venice, with notions of the fitness of a garden far beyond his age, yet thought it "*a graceful and natural conceit*" in Michael Angelo to make a fountain-figure in the shape of "a sturdy washerwoman, washing and winding of linen clothes, in which act she wrings out the water which made the fountain." And again Addison, followed by Pope and Walpole, overturned this ancient fondness for pleached walks, and tonsured trees, and quaint fountain-figures, whether of Neptunes, Niles, or washerwomen. Then the great change of the social system, from the feudal and military to civil and domestic, produced a correspondent change in the culture of gardens. While the country was rent to pieces by contentions for the crown, there could be little leisure or taste for gardens; but when men became peaceful, and collected their habitations into clusters, they naturally began to embellish both them and their environs.

From the reign of Edward III. to that of Henry VIII. we look over a large space, and find but slight improvement in horticulture, and scanty traces of its literature. A bushel of onions in Richard II.'s reign cost twelve shillings of our present money: Henry VII. records himself, in a MS. preserved in the Remembrance Office, that apples were in his day one

and two shillings each, a red one fetching the highest price; and Henry VIII.'s queen, Catherine, when she wanted a salad, sent to Flanders for it. The very first book which was written on the culture of the soil in this country, appears to be Walter de Henly's—"De Yconomia sive Housbandria," Then came Nicholas Bollar's books, "De Arborum Plantatione," and "De Generatione Arborum et Modo Generandi et Plantandi," and some other MS. writings. Richard II. rewarded botanical skill in the person of John Bray with a pension. Henry Calcoensis in the fifteenth century composed a Synopsis Herbaria, and translated Palladius de Re Rustica into Gaelic. In the sixteenth century William Horman, Vice-Provost of Eton, wrote Herbarum Synonyma and Indexes to Cato, Varro, Columella, and Palladius; and in the same century Wynkin de Worde printed "Mayster Groshede's Boke of Husbandry," which contained instructions for planting and grafting of trees and vines. Arnold's Chronicle in 1521, had a chapter on the same subject, and how to raise a salad in an hour; and Pynson published the "Boke of Surveying and Improvements." Then came Dr. Bulleyn, Dodoneus, Sir Anthony Fitzherbert, and Tusser; and that is the history of gardens and their literature till the time of Henry VIII.; but thence to the eighteenth century,—to the days of Bridgman and Kent, what multitudes of grand, quaint, and artificial gardens were spread over the country. Nonsuch, Theobalds, Greenwich, Hampton-Court, Hatfield, Moor-Park, Chatsworth, Beaconsfield, Cashiobury, Ham, and many another, stood in all that stately formality which Henry and Elizabeth admired, and in which our Surreys, Leicesters, Essexes; the splendid nobles of the Tudor dynasty, the gay ladies and gallants of Charles II.'s court, had walked and talked, fluttered

in glittering processions, or flirted in green alleys and bowers of topiary-work; and amid figures, in lead or stone, fountains, cascades, copper trees dropping sudden showers on the astonished passers under, stately terraces with gilded balustrades, and curious quincunx, obelisks, and pyramids—fitting objects of the admiration of those who walked in high-heeled shoes, ruffs and fardingales, with fan in hand, or in trunk-hose and laced doublets.

"The palace of Nonsuch," said Hentzner in 1598, "is encompassed with parks full of deer, delicious gardens, groves ornamented with trellis-work, cabinets of verdure (summer-houses, or seats cut in yew), and walls so embowered with trees, that it seems to be a place pitched upon by pleasure herself to dwell in along with health. In the pleasure and artificial gardens are many columns and pyramids of marble; two fountains that spout water, one round, the other like a pyramid, upon which are perched small birds that stream water out of their bills. In the grove of Diana is a very agreeable fountain, with Actæon turned into a stag, as he was sprinkled by the goddess and the nymphs, with inscriptions. Here is, besides, another pyramid of marble full of concealed pipes, which spurt upon all who come within their reach." In the gardens of Lord Burleigh, at Theobalds, he tells us are nine knots, artificially and *exquisitely* made, one of which was set for the likeness of the king's arms. One might walk two miles in the walks before he came to the end.

In Hampton-Court, was a fountain with syrens and other statues by Fanelli. At Kensington were bastions and counterscarps of clipped yew and variegated holly, being the objects of wonder and admiration under the name of the siege of Troy. At Chatsworth the temporary cascade, the water-god, the copper-

tree, and the jets-d'eau, still remain in all their glory.

The hands of Bridgman, Kent and Brown, and the pens of Addison, Pope, and Walpole, have put all this ancient glory of Roman style to the flight; and driven us, perhaps, into danger of going too far after nature. The winding walks, the turfy lawns, the bowery shrubberies, the green slopes to the margin of waters, the retention of rocks and thickets where they naturally stood,—all this is very beautiful, and many a sweet elysian scene do they spread around our English houses. But in imitating nature we are apt to imitate her as she appears in her rudest places, and not as she would modify herself in the vicinity of human habitations. We are apt to make too little difference between the garden and the field; between the shrubbery and the wood. We are come to think that all which differs from wild nature is artificial, and therefore absurd. Something too much of this, I think, we are beginning to feel we have had amongst us. It has been the fashion to cry down all gardens as ugly and tasteless, which are not shaped by our modern notions. The formalities of the French and Dutch have been sufficiently condemned. For my part, I like even them in their place. One would no more think of laying out grounds now in this manner, than of wearing Elizabethan ruffs, or bag-wigs and basket-hilted swords; yet the old French and Dutch gardens, as the appendages of a quaint old house, are in my opinion, beautiful. They are like many other things—not so much beautiful in themselves, as beautiful by association—as memorials of certain characters and ages. A garden, after all, is an artificial thing; and though formed from the materials of nature, may be allowed to mould them into something very different from nature. There is a wild beauty of nature, and there is

a beauty in nature linked to art: one looks for a very different kind of beauty in fields and mountains, to what one does in a garden. The one delights you by a certain rude freedom and untamed magnificence; the other, by smoothness and elegance—by velvet lawns, bowery arbours, winding paths, fair branching shrubs, fountains, and juxta-position of many rare flowers.

It appears to me that it is an inestimable advantage as it regards our gardens, that the former taste of the nation has differed so much from its present one. Without this, what a loss of variety we should have suffered! If the taste of the present generation had been that of all past ages, what could there have been in the gardens of our past kings, nobles, and historical characters to mark them as strongly and emphatically as they are now marked? They now, indeed, seem to belong to men and things gone by; and I would as soon almost see one of our venerable cathedrals rased with the ground, as one of those old gardens rooted up. There is something in them of a sombre and becoming melancholy. They are in keeping with the houses they surround, and the portraits in the galleries of those houses. When we wander through the pleached alleys, and by the time-stained fountains of these old gardens, perished years indeed seem to come back again to us. In the centre of some vast avenue of majestic elms or limes, sweeping their boughs to the ground, “the dial-stone aged and green” arrests our attention, and points not to the present hour, but to the past. Our historic memories are intimately connected with such places. Our Howards, Essexes, Surreys, and Wolseys, were the magnificent founders and creators of such places; and in such, Shakspeare and Spenser, Milton and Bacon, and Sidney mused. It is astonishing what

numbers of our poets, philosophers, and literati, are connected with the history of our gardens by their writings, or love of them. Sir Henry Wotton, Parkinson, Ray, John Evelyn, Sir Walter Raleigh, Bacon, Addison, Pope, Sir William Temple, who not only wrote "the Garden of Epicurus," but so delighted in gardening that he directed in his will that his heart should be buried beneath the sun-dial in his garden at Moor-Park in Surrey, where it accordingly was deposited in a silver box: Horace Walpole, Locke, Cowley, Shenstone, Charles Cotton, Waller, Bishop Fleetwood, Spence, the author of Polymetis, Gilpin of the Forest Scenery, Mason, Dr. Darwin, Cowper, and many others, have their fame linked to the history or the love of gardens.

There is something very interesting too, in the biography of our old patriarchs of English gardening. There is scarcely one of those large nurseries and gardens round London but is connected with them, as their founders, or improvers—as the Tradescants of Lambeth,—London and Wise of Brompton,—Philip Miller of Chelsea,—Gray of Fulham,—Furber of Kensington,—Lee of Hammersmith. It is cheering to observe how much our monarchs, from Henry VIII. to George III. were, with their principal nobility, almost to a man, whatever was their character in other respects, not even excepting the dissipated Charles II., munificent patrons of gardening, and founders of grand gardens. It is interesting to read of the giant labours, and now apparently curious locations of our early gardeners and herbalists. How Dr. Turner imbibed botanical knowledge from Lucas Ghinus at Bologna, and came and established a "garden of rare plants" at Kew; while Mrs. Gape had another at Westminster, which furnished the first specimens for Chelsea garden. How Ray, and Lobel,

and Penny, roamed everywhere in search of new plants. How Didymus Mountain published his "Gardener's Labyrinth:" how Sir Hugh Platt, of Lincoln's-Inn, gentleman, wrote the Jewel House of Art and Nature, the Paradise of Kew, and the Garden of Eden, and had, moreover, a garden in St. Martin's Lane. How the "Rei Rusticæ" of Conrad Heresbach, counsellor to the Duke of Cleve, was translated by Barnaby Googe, and reprinted by Gervase Markham, gentleman, of Gotham in Nottinghamshire. How old John Gerarde travelled, when young, up the Baltic, and had his "Physick Garden" in Holborn. How John Parkinson travelled forty years before he wrote his "Paradisus," and was appointed by Charles I. for his Theatre of Plants, Botanicus Regius Primarius. How Gabriel Plattes, though styled by his cotemporaries, "an excellent genius," and "of an adventurous caste of mind," died miserably in the streets. How Walter Blythe of Oliver Cromwell's army wrote the "Survey of Husbandry," which Professor Martyn pronounces "an incomparable work." How Samuel Hartlib, the son of a Polish merchant, the friend of Milton, of Archbishop Usher and Joseph Meade, wrote his "Legacy," and assisted in establishing the embryo Royal Society; how John Tradescant was in Russia, and accompanied the fleet sent against the Algerines in 1620, and collected on that occasion plants in Barbary, and in the isles of the Mediterranean; and how his son John, afterwards made a voyage in pursuit of plants to Virginia, "and brought many new ones back with him." How their Museum, established in South Lambeth, and called "Tradescant's Ark," was the constant resort of the great and learned; how it fell into the hands of Elias Ashmole, and became the *Ashmolean* Museum.

These, and such facts, shew us by what labours

and steps our present garden-wealth has been raised; and diffuse an interest over a number of places familiar to us. Go, indeed, into what part of the island we will, we find some object of attraction and curiosity in the gardens attached to our old houses. As the coach passes the residence of Colonel Howard, at Leven's Bridge in Westmoreland, it stops, the passengers get out, and mount upon its top, and there behold a fine old Elizabethan house, standing in the midst of a garden of that age, with all its topiary-work, its fountains, statues, and lawns. At Stonyhurst in Lancashire, now a Jesuit's College, I was delighted to find a beautiful old garden of this description, which I have elsewhere described; and at Margam Abbey in South Wales, I found a fine assemblage of orange trees, the very trees which Sir Henry Wotton sent from Italy as a present to James I. These trees had been thrown ashore here by the wreck of the vessel, and the owner of the place, by the king's permission, built a splendid orangery to receive them, which stood in the centre of a garden surrounded on three sides by woody hills; and in which fuchsias, at least ten feet high, with stems thick as a man's arm, were growing in the open air, and tulip-trees large as the forest trees around. But what gave a still greater charm to this garden was, that the ruins of a fine old abbey stood here and there on its lawn; arches, overgrown with bushes, and the graceful pillars of a noble chapter-house, around whose feet lay stones of ancient tombs and curious sculpture. These are the things which give so delicious a variety to our English gardens: and when we bear in mind that many of those artifices and figures which we have been accustomed to treat with contempt as *Dutch*, are in reality *Roman*; that such things once stood in the magnificent gardens of

Lucullus and Sallust; that the Romans gathered them again from the Eastern nations; that they are not only classical, but that, like many of the rites of our church and religious festivals, they are the reliques of the most ancient times, I think we shall be inclined to regard them with a greater degree of interest—not as objects to imitate or to place in any competition with our own more natural style, but as things which are of the most remote antiquity, and give a curious diversity to our country abodes. For my part, when I see even a fantastic peacock spreading its tail in yew in some old cottage or farm-house garden I think of Pliny and his admiration of such topiary-work, and would not have it cut down for the world. Even those summer-houses built in trees, such as that built by the King of Belgium, in Winter-Down wood, near Claremont; a sketch of which is presented in the title-page—were Roman fancies; were formed, Pliny tells us, amid the branches of any monarch trees that grew within their grounds, and that even Caligula had one in a plane-tree, near his villa at Velitræ, which he called his Nest.

Here then to all the sweet nests of English gardens, new or old, we bid adieu, with blessings on their pleasantness.

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CHAPTER VIII.
COUNTRY EXCITEMENTS.

Before closing this department of my work, I must just glance at a few occurrences which serve to give an occasional variety to rural life, and may be

classed under the head of Country Excitements. These are races, race-balls, county-balls, concerts, musical festivals, elections, assizes, and confirmations. It will not be requisite to do more than merely mention the greater part of these, for, to describe at length the race-ball and county-balls, the winter concerts of the county town and the musical festivals, would require a separate volume, and they indeed, after all, belong more to the town than to the country. Having, therefore, simply pointed them out as sources of occasional variety to wealthy families during their stay in the country, I shall confine myself in these concluding remarks, to those few particulars which belong more entirely to my subject. Balls and musical exhibitions are sufficiently alike everywhere, to need no distinct details here. It is enough that they serve to break the rural torpor of those who regard existence as only genuine during the London season. The application of the profits both of these balls, and of the musical festivals that have of late years been held in different places, to the support of infirmaries, and to other public objects of benevolence, deserves the highest commendation. Thus dismissing these amusements, neither I nor my readers, I am sure, would wish to have the uproar and exasperation of the county election introduced into this peaceful volume; enough that when it does come to the country Hall, it comes, often as a hurricane, and frequently shakes it to the foundation, leaving in its track debts and mortgages, shyness between neighbours, and rancour amongst old friends.

It would not be giving a faithful view of country life, however, were we to keep out of sight all agitating causes, and all existing drawbacks to the felicity for which such ample materials exist in it.

Surveying those splendid materials, as displayed in the preceding chapters,—those abundant means and opportunities, which the wealthy possess for enjoying their lives in the country;—it would be giving a most one-sided view of the rural life of the rich, if we left it to be inferred that “the trail of the serpent” was not to be perceived at times on the fair lawns, and up the marble steps of rural palaces; that the great “Bubbly-Jock,” (Turkey-Cock) which Scott contended that every man found in his path did not shew himself there. The Serpent and the Bubbly-Jock which disturb and poison the rural life of the educated classes in England, are the very same which dash with bitter all English society in the same classes. They are the pride of life, and the pride of the eye. They are that continual struggle for precedence, and those jealousies which are generated by a false social system. Every man lives now-a-day for public observation. He builds his house, and organizes his establishment, so as to strike public opinion as much as possible. Every man is at strife with his neighbour in the matter of worldly greatness. The consequence is, that a false standard of estimation, both of men and things, is established —shew is substituted for real happiness; and no man is valued for his moral or intellectual qualities, so much as for the grandeur of his house, the style of his equipage, the richness of his dinner service, and the heavy extravagance of his dinners. The result of this is, that most are living to the full extent of their means, many beyond it, and few are finding, in the whole round of their life, that alone, which better and higher natures seek—the interchange of heart and mind, which yields present delight, creates permanent attachments, and fills the memory with enduring satisfaction.

This, it must be confessed, is a wretched state of things; but it is one which every person conversant with society knows to exist, and which intelligent foreigners witness with unfeigned surprise. The worst of it is that this unnatural system of life becomes the most sensibly felt in the country. In large towns every man finds a sufficient circle after his own taste: there the petty influences of locality are broken up by the multitude of objects, and the ample choice in association. But in small towns, and country neighbourhoods, where wealthy or educated families are thinly scattered, nothing can be more lamentable, and, were it not lamentable, nothing could be more ludicrous, than the state of rivalry, heart-burning, jealousy, personal mortification, or personal pride, from mere accidents of condition or favour. The titled have a fixed rank, and are comparatively at their ease, but in the great mass of those who have wealth, more or less, without title, what a mighty and eating sore is the struggle for distinction. In the little town, or thinly-scattered neighbourhood, every one is measuring out his imaginary dignity to see if it does not exceed, at least by some inches, that of one or other of his neighbours. The lower you descend in the scale, the more exacting becomes the spirit of exclusiveness. The professions look down upon the trades; the trades on one another. Everywhere the same uneasy spirit shews itself. Nothing can be more ludicrous, or amusing to the philosophic spectator, than to observe how leadership is assumed in every country neighbourhood by certain wealthy families; how carefully that leadership is avoided and opposed by other families. How the majority of families aspire to move in one or the other circle; what wretched and anomalous animals those feel themselves that are not

recognised by either. How the man who drives his close carriage looks down upon him who only drives his barouche or phaeton; how both contemn the poor occupier of a gig. I have heard of a gentleman of large fortune who, for some years after his residence in a particular neighbourhood, did not set up his close carriage, but afterwards feeling it more agreeable to do so, was astonished to find himself called upon by a host of carriage-keeping people, who did not seem previously aware of his existence; and rightly deeming the calls to be made upon his carriage, rather than himself, sent round his empty carriage to deliver cards in return. It was a biting satire on a melancholy condition of society, the full force of which can only be perceived by such as have heard the continual exultations of those who have dined with such a great person on such a day, and the equally eager complaints of others, of the pride and exclusiveness they meet with; who have listened to the long catalogue of slights, dead cuts, and offences, and witnessed the perpetual heart-burnings incident to such a state of things. These are the follies that press the charm of existence out of the hearts of thousands, and make the country often a purgatory where it might be a paradise.

There is another cause which diminishes in a great degree the enjoyment that might be found in the country, and that is, the almost total cessation of walking amongst the wealthy. Since the universal use of carriages, for anything I can see, thousands of people might just as well be born without legs at all. It would be easy to move them from the bed to the carriage,—thence to the dinner-table, and again to bed. In the country, and especially in the country not far from towns, how rarely do you see the rich except in their luxurious carriages! How rarely do

you meet them walking, or even on horseback, as you used to do! Sir Roger de Coverley rode on horseback to the assizes in his day—were he living now, he would roll there in his carriage—lest some one should imagine that he had mortgaged his estate, and laid down his carriage in retrenchment. During the twelve months that I have resided in this neighbourhood—a neighbourhood studded all over with wealthy houses, nothing has surprised me, and the friends who have visited me here, so much as the great rarity of seeing any of the wealthy classes on their legs. With the exception of the Queen and her attendant ladies, who during the then Princess's abode at Claremont, might be every day met in the winter, walking in frost and snow, and facing the sharpest winds of the sharpest weather, I scarcely remember to have met half-a-dozen of the wealthy classes on foot a mile from their residences. And yet what splendid, airy heaths, what delicious woods, what nooks of bowery foliage, what views into far landscapes, are there all around! It is true, as some of them have observed, that they walk in their own grounds; but what grounds, however beautiful, can compensate for the fresh feeling of the heath and the down; for the dim solemnity of the wild wood; for open, breezy hills, the winding lane, the sight of rustic cottages by the forest side, the tinkle of the herd or the sheep-bell, and all the wild sounds and aspects of earth and heaven, to be met with only in the free regions of nature? They who neglect to walk, or confine their strolls merely to the lawn and the shrubbery, lose nine-tenths of the enjoyment of the country. Those young men, whom it is a pleasure to see with their knapsacks on their backs ranging over moor and mountain, by lake or ocean, in Scotland or Wales, taste more of the life of life in a few summer

months than many dwellers in the country ever dream of through their whole existence. I speak advisedly, for I traverse the country in all directions, let me be where I will; and if any *ladies* think themselves too delicate for walking, I can point them out delicate ladies too that have made excursions on foot through mountain regions of five hundred miles at a time, and recur to those seasons as amongst the most delightful of their lives.

But my desire that all should make their country life as happy as it is capable of being made—which must be by living more to nature and less to fashion —by using both their physical and moral energies; by respecting themselves, and leaving the respect of others to follow as the natural result of a true and pure tone of spirit—is detaining me too long. I must hasten on; and amongst the most prominent of the country excitements, give a passing word to racing. If any one wishes to know how far the turf influences the course of country life, he has only to read the following passage from Nimrod. “Deservedly high as Newmarket stands in the history of the British turf, it is but as a speck on the ocean when compared with the sum total of our provincial meetings, of which there are about one hundred and twenty in England, Scotland, and Wales—several of them twice in the year. Epsom, Ascot, York, Doncaster, and Goodwood, stand first in respect of the value of the prizes, the rank of the company, and the interest attached to them in the sporting world; although several other cities and towns have lately exhibited very tempting bills of fare to owners of good race-horses. In point of antiquity we believe the Roodee of Chester claims pre-eminence of all country race-meetings;—and certainly it has long been in high repute. Falling early in the racing year—always the first Monday in

May—it is most numerously attended by the families of the extensive and very aristocratic neighbourhood in which it is placed; and always continues five days."—*The Turf*, p. 246.

Every one who has seen the crowds of wealthy people who flock to a celebrated race-meeting, and throng the stand and the carriage stations, with brilliant dresses and gay equipages, may imagine, then, how much excitement is spread through that class of society during their stay in the country; by one hundred and twenty race-meetings in one quarter or other of the island; especially as the greater part of these occur during the months that they are absent from town. So having read the passage quoted from Nimrod, he has only to turn to the volume itself—a volume written with great ability; and, making allowance for the author's sporting predilections, in an excellent spirit, and he will thus find that course described as such a horrible resort of blacklegs and desperadoes, of traitorous jockeys and *poisoning* trainers, as makes one at once recoil from the recital, and wonder that our young nobles and gentlemen should commit themselves and their fortunes to such hands; or that the fair and the refined should consent to gaze on such a scene of infamy. Hear Nimrod's own words—"How many fine domains have been shared amongst these hosts of rapacious sharks, during the last two hundred years! and unless the system be altered—how many more are doomed to fall into the same gulf! For, we lament to say, the evil has increased; all heretofore, indeed, has been 'tarts and cheesecakes' to the villanous proceedings of the last twenty years on the English turf." Let us move on to less repulsive scenes.

Amongst these may be reckoned the periodical arrivals of the bishops and the judges. The arrival of

the bishop to perform the ceremony of confirmation, is but a triennial occurrence, but it is one of the most imposing of the rites of the church. The flocking of the clergy and their families to town; the processions of country children on foot, and led by the parish clerk or schoolmaster, or in carts and other rustic vehicles; the gathering of the children of the rich towards the church in their white dresses, and in gay carriages; the assembling of all classes in the common temple of their religion; the solemnity of the address and the imposition of hands by the prelate; the stately music of the organ, and the silent looking on of the congregated people—all combine to produce a very striking spectacle—a spectacle which to those who believe in its essentiality and efficacy, has something in it touching and beautiful.

But perhaps the parade of the assize time, is the most picturesque of this class of occurrences. There is more of the old English ceremony, custom, and costume about it. The judges who go through the land as the representatives of majesty, certainly go through it *en prince*. Nothing can be more unlike than their progress to, and their state in, the courts in town, and the same things in their provincial tour of justice. In town you may see the Lord Chief Justice mount his horse at his own door, and ride quietly away towards Westminster Hall. You may see Lord Abinger in the Court of Exchequer, sitting very much at his ease in his black gown and wig of modest dimensions, dispatching business in a work-a-day manner; but in the country you find these very men arrayed in their scarlet and ermine, seated in much greater state, and dispensing justice in a much fuller court than, except on extraordinary occasions, attends them in town.

The high-sheriff of every county, selected from its

best families, in preparation for the arrival of the county judge, has put his equipage and train in order. His carriage, his horses, his harness, all have undergone a rigid examination, and are all put into the highest condition that paint, gilding, varnish, lining, and plate, can bestow; or if he be a young man of some spirit and ambition, he has purchased a new carriage for the occasion. His tenants and household servants, to the number of forty or fifty, have been put into a new livery in the cut of the old yeomen, and generally of some bright or peculiar colour, green, blue, white, or delicate drab, as indeed the livery of the gentlemen may be. Mounted on their horses, and with their javelins or halberds, and preceded by two trumpeters, who, old Aubrey can tell you, are a very ancient essential on such occasions, they escort the sheriff on his way to meet the judges. The sheriff who has thus showily appointed what are provincially termed his javelin-men, has not in the meantime neglected himself. He has put on at least a court dress, and in cases where he has happened to be a man of taste, and a man of figure to boot, he has put on a rich suit of the fashion of Sir Charles Grandison, or of some one of his ancestors, as he stands in full-length portraiture in his family gallery. He issues from his hall, arrayed perhaps in a rich mulberry coloured coat with huge embroidered cuffs and button-holes, huge gold buttons, and lining of primrose serge; a splendid waistcoat of gold brocaded satin, with ample pockets and flaps reaching half-way to his knees; satin breeches, and silk stockings with immense clocks; large gold buckles at his knees and upon his shoes. Add to this his sword, his cocked hat, and his cravat and ruffles of fine point lace, and you have the high-sheriff in all his glory, just as we saw him in one of

our county assize courts not many years ago, sitting on the right hand of the judge; and it must be confessed in admirable keeping with his old-world robes of scarlet and ermine. Well, he enters the county town with his troop of javelin-men, his trumpeters blowing stoutly before him. He takes up his lodgings there, and on the morning of the judge's approach, he marches out in the same style, followed by a long train of the gentlemen and tradesmen of the place, who are anxious to testify their respect to the ancient forms of justice, and the representative of the monarch. He advances some mile or two on the way by which the judge is to arrive. There the procession halts, generally in a position which commands a view of the road by which the judge is expected. Anon, there is a stir, a looking out amongst them, your eye follows theirs, and you see a carriage, dusty and travel-soiled, come driving rapidly on. It is that of the judge. As they drive up, the javelin-men and gentlemen uncover; the sheriff descends from his carriage; his gowned and bewigged lordship descends from his; the sheriff makes his bow and his compliments; the judge enters the carriage of the sheriff with him, his own carriage falls into the rear, and the procession now moves on towards the town, with bannered trumpets blowing, and amid a continually increasing crowd of spectators. There is something very quaint and old English in the whole affair; and as I have seen the sheriff and his train thus, waiting the approach of the judge on some rising ground in the public road, the scene has brought back to my imagination a feeling of the past times—simpler in heart than the present, but more formal in manner, and perhaps fonder of solemn parade. But the bells are ringing merrily to welcome the learned judge, and thousands are thronging to

see the sight of the sheriff and his men, and to catch a glimpse of the judge's wig as the coach passes, and many of them to wonder how the sheriff can seem so much at his ease with such an awful man: while within the strong walls of the prison, the sounds of bells and the trampling feet of the crowds without, are causing stout hearts and miserable hearts to tremble and feel chill.

Well, the procession and the throng "go sounding through the town," and the court being opened in due form, they arrive at the judge's lodgings, whence, after a suitable time allowed for the judge's refreshment, they proceed to church. Whatever may be the effect of this custom of the judge's going to church before proceeding to discharge his awful duties of deciding upon the destinies of his fellow men, it is a beautiful one, and bespeaks in those who instituted it, a just sense of the value of human life, and of the true source whence all right judgment must proceed. It was well, and more than well, that the judge should be sent to hear from the Christian minister, that the temper in which a judge should sit to decide the fate of his fellow mortals, should be that of the Christian—the divine union of justice and mercy. It was well that he should be reminded that every act of his judgment in the court about to open, must one day be rejudged, in a court and before a judge, from which there can be no appeal.

As they move on towards the great mother-church, thousands on thousands throng to gaze. Every window presents its quota of protruded heads; every flight of steps before the doors of houses, and every other elevated spot, is occupied. Boys are hanging by lamp-posts, and on iron palisades, like bats. The procession used to be much enlivened by the presence of the mayor and corporation in their robes,

and with the mace borne before them; but the New Corporation Act has led to a woful stripping of this pageant. The sheriff selects the clergyman to preach on the occasion, who is generally some young friend or relative whom he wishes to bring into notice. This ceremony being over, the judge returns to the court; the grand jury, selected from the gentlemen of the county, present their bills, and the trials proceed. In the sheriff's gallery may be seen some of his friends, perhaps the ladies of his family and other acquaintances, with others, all introduced by ticket; on the bench by the judge, may often be seen seated with the sheriff, some great man or lady of the neighbourhood, especially if some trial in which one of their own body, some disputed will which involves a large property, or similar cause of interest, draws them from their homes, and fills the court to suffocation. While the court continues, day by day you see the train of javelin-men come marching on foot with the state carriage of the sheriff, to conduct him from his lodgings to those of the judge, and back again at the close of the court in the evening, till the trials are ended; and judge, sheriff, gay carriage, with its splendid hammer-cloth, jolly coachman, and slim footmen, in their cocked hats and flaxen wigs, javelin-men, and crowd, all meet and vanish away, and the excitement of the assize is over for another half-year.

Such are the principal country excitements; and to these may be added those of another class, which have sprung up of late years, and have done much good—the floral and horticultural shews. These have been warmly patronized by the aristocracy; and it forms a striking feature in modern country life, to see carriages and pedestrians hastening, on certain days to certain places, where different flowers and fruits,

in their respective seasons, are displayed with great taste, and with brilliant effect. The place of meeting is sometimes at a country inn, where, on the bowling-green, tents are pitched, in which the flowers or fruits are exhibited, and the whole scene is extremely gay. Such a one I saw at Kingston Hill, near Richmond Park—a Dahlia shew: on the end of the house an invitation to all England being gorgeously emblazoned in dahlia-flowers, surmounted by the crown royal, and the good English initials Q. V.; looking as though the worthy horticulturists meant to set the rational example of using the English language to the English people.

PART II.

LIFE OF THE AGRICULTURAL POPULATION.

CHAPTER I.
THE ENGLISH FARMER.

There are few things which give one such a feeling of the prosperity of the country, as seeing the country people pour into a large town on market-day. There they come, streaming along all the roads that lead to it from the wide country round. The footpaths are

filled with a hardy and homely succession of pedestrians, men and women, with their baskets on their arms, containing their butter, eggs, apples, mushrooms, walnuts, nuts, elderberries, blackberries, bundles of herbs, young pigeons, fowls, or whatever happens to be in season. There are boys and girls too, similarly loaded, and also with baskets of birds' nests in spring, cages of young birds, and old birds, baskets of tame rabbits, and bunches of cowslips, primroses, and all kinds of flowers and country productions imaginable. The carriage-road is equally alive, with people riding and driving along; farmers and country gentlemen, country clergymen, parish overseers, and various other personages, drawn to the market-town by some real or imagined business, are rattling forward on horseback, or in carriages of various kinds, gigs, and spring-carts, and carts without springs. There are carriers' wagons, and covered carts without end, many of them shewing from their open fronts, whole troops of women snugly seated; while their dogs chained beneath, go struggling and barking along, pushing their heads forward in their collars every minute as if they would hang themselves. This is in the morning; and in the afternoon you see them pouring out again, and directing their course to many a far-off hamlet and old-fashioned abode. But there is a wide difference between coming in and going out. The wagons and carts go heavily and soberly, for they are laden with good solid commodities, groceries and draperies, mops, brushes, hardware and crockery, newspapers for the politicians, and sundry parcels of teas, sugars, and soaps, and such et ceteras, for the village shops; but the farmers go riding and driving out three times as fast as they came in, for they are primed with good dinners and strong beer. They have chaffered,

and smoked, and talked with the great grazier and the great corn-factor, and their horses are full of corn too, and away they go, in fours and fives, filling the whole width of the road, and raising a dust, if there be the least dust to be raised, or making the mud fly in all directions; away they go, talking all together, while their horses are trotting at such a pace as one would think would shake the very teeth out of their heads. The sober foot-people who are trudging homeward more soberly than they came, say, as they fly past, "One wouldn't think times very bad neither." And the carriers hold their horses' heads as they rush past, and smiling significantly, say, just as they are gone past,—"Well done my lads! that's it; go it my lads, go it! Yo riden, though your horses go a-foot!"

There is no class of men, if times are but tolerably good, that enjoy themselves so highly as farmers. They are little kings. Their concerns are not huddled into a corner, as those of the town tradesman are. In town, many a man who turns thousands of pounds per week, is hemmed in close by buildings, and cuts no figure at all. A narrow shop, a contracted warehouse, without an inch of room besides to turn him, on any hand; without a yard, a stable, or outhouse of any description; perhaps hoisted aloft, up three or four pair of dirty stairs, is all the room that the wealthy tradesman often can bless himself with; and there, day after day, month after month, year after year, he is to be found, like a bat in a hole of a wall, or a toad in the heart of a stone, or of an oak tree. Spring, and summer, and autumn, go round; sunshine and flowers spread over the world; the sweetest breezes blow, the sweetest waters murmur along the vales, but they are all lost upon him; he is the doleful prisoner of Mammon, and so

he lives and dies. The farmer would not take the wealth of the world on such terms. His concerns, however small, spread themselves out in a pleasant amplitude both to his eye and heart. His house stands in its own stately solitude; his offices and outhouses stand round extensively, without any stubborn and limiting contraction; his acres stretch over hill and dale; there his flocks and herds are feeding; there his labourers are toiling,—he is king and sole commander there. He lives amongst the purest air and the most delicious quiet. Often when I see those healthy, hardy, full-grown sons of the soil going out of town, I envy them the freshness and the repose of the spots to which they are going. Ample old-fashioned kitchens, with their chimney-corners of the true, projecting, beamed and seated construction, still remaining; blazing fires in winter, shining on suspended hams and flitches, guns supported on hooks above, dogs basking on the hearth below; cool, shady parlours in summer, with open windows, and odours from garden and shrubbery blowing in; gardens wet with purest dews, and humming at noon-tide with bees; and green fields and verdurous trees, or deep woodlands lying all round, where a hundred rejoicing voices of birds or other creatures are heard, and winds blow to and fro, full of health and life-enjoyment. How enviable do such places seem to the fretted spirits of towns, who are compelled not only to bear their burthen of cares, but to enter daily into the public strife against selfish evil and ever-spreading corruption. When one calls to mind the simple abundance of farm-houses, their rich cream and milk, and unadulterated butter, and bread grown upon their own lands, sweet as that which Christ broke, and blessed as he gave to his disciples; their fruits ripe and fresh plucked from the

sunny wall, or the garden bed, or the pleasant old orchard; when one casts one's eyes upon, or calls to one's memory the aspect of these houses, many of them so antiquely picturesque, or so bright-looking and comfortable, in deep retired valleys, by beautiful streams, or amongst fragrant woodlands, one cannot help saying with King James of Scotland, when he met Johnny
Armstrong:—

What want these knaves that a king should have?

But they are not outward and surrounding advantages merely, which give zest to the life of the farmer. He is more proud of it, and more attached to it, than any other class of men, be they whom they may, are of theirs. The whole heart, soul, and being of the farmer are in his profession. The members of other professions and trades, however full they may be of their concerns, have their mouths tied up by the etiquette of society. A man is not allowed to talk of his trade concerns except at the risk of being laughed at, and being set down as an egotistic ignoramus. But who shall laugh at or scout the farmer for talking of his concerns? Of nothing else does he, in nine cases out of ten, think, talk, or care. And though he may be called a bore by all other classes, what concerns it him? for other classes are just as great bores to him, and he seeks not their company. The farmers are a large class, and they associate and converse principally with each other. "Their talk is of bullocks," it is true, but to them it is the most interesting talk of all. What is so delightful to them as to meet at each other's houses, and with bright glasses of nectarous ale, or more potent spirit sparkling before them, and pipe in mouth, to talk of markets, rents, tithes, new improvements, and the

promise of crops? To walk over their lands of a Sunday afternoon together, and pronounce on the condition of growing corn, turnips, and grass; on this drainage, or that neighbour's odd management; on the appearance of sheep, cattle, and horses. And this is to be excused, and in a great degree to be admired. For those are no artificial objects on which they expend their lives and souls; they are the delightful things of nature on which they operate; and nature operates with them in all their labours, and sweetens them to their spirits. This is the grand secret of their everlasting attachment to, and enjoyment of agricultural life. They work with nature, and only modulate and benefit by her functions, as she takes up, quickens, and completes the work of their hands. There is a living principle in all their labours, which distinguishes them from most other trades. The earth gives its strength to the seed they throw into it—to the cattle that walk upon it. The winds blow, the waters run for them; the very frosts and snows of winter give salutary checks to the rankness of vegetation, and lighten the soil, and destroy what is noxious for them; and every principle of animal and vegetable existence and organization co-operates to support and enrich them. There is a charm in this which must last while the spirit of man feels the stirrings of the spirit and power of God around him. It may be said that rude farmers do not reason on these things in this manner. No, in many, too many, instances I grant it; but they feel. There is scarcely any bosom so cloddish but feels more or less of this, and by no other cause can an explanation be given of the enthusiasm of farmers for their profession. It is not because they can sooner enrich themselves by it —that they are more independent in it—that they have greater social advantages in it. In all these

particulars the balance is in favour of the active and enterprising tradesman; but it is this charm which has infused its sweetness into the bosoms of all rural people in all ages of the world. From the days of the patriarchs to the present, what expressions of delight the greatest minds have uttered on behalf of such a life. Think of Homer, Theocritus, Virgil, and Horace; of Cicero, whom I have elsewhere quoted; and of the many great men of this country, some of whom too I have noticed, who have devoted themselves with such eagerness to it.

That farmers are as intelligent as a parallel grade of society in large towns I do not mean to assert; that they are as truly aware of, and as united to defend, their real interests I will assert as little. Their solitary and isolated mode of existence weighs against them in these points; but that they have generally a sounder morality than a similar class of townsmen is indisputable. They have a simplicity of mind as well as manners that is more than an equivalent for the polish and conventional customs of society, and with this a cordiality that is very delightful, and very rarely now to be found—the good, homely heartiness of Old English days.

They, indeed, so vividly enjoy the common blessings of life, from their vigorous health, and unvitiated appetites, as well as from the cravings of their inner being, finding their food in the daily communion with nature, instead of that book-knowledge which is so extensively diffused through all classes of the city, and which, too commonly, while it quickens the intellect, and widens the sphere of observation, I am sorry to say, deadens the human sympathies and distorts the heart—that they make so much of their kindness appear in heaping upon you bodily comforts and refreshments as is often truly

ludicrous. They would have you eat and drink for ever. One meal succeeds to another with a profusion and an importunity of hospitality that are overwhelming. They eat their bread with a sweetness and a capacity, generated by their active and laborious habits, that we, who lead more sedentary lives, and with minds and energies dissipated by a hundred objects unknown to them, have no idea of. People of all other classes place a great portion of their happiness in giving and eating great feasts; but a farmer seems to think all the good things of life are involved in feasting, and would feast you not once a year, but every day, and all day long, if he could.

Let us just glance at the routine of one day of good fellowship, such as is seen in farm-houses where there is plenty, and yet no great pretence to gentility. We have seen many such scenes.

The farmer invites his friends to dine with him. He will have a party. Suppose it at some period of the year when he is least busy; for his engagements depending on the progress of the seasons, and his whole wealth being at the mercy of the elements, he cannot postpone his duties, but must take them as they fall out. Suppose it then just before the commencement of hay-harvest, for then he has a short pause, between the putting in of his last crop of potatoes or corn, shutting up his fields, and clearing his green-corn lands, and that moment when the first scythe enters his hay-fields, when a course of arduous and anxious labours begins, that will not cease till all his crops are safely housed,—hay, corn, beans, pease, and potatoes. Suppose at this pause in the growing time of summer, or after harvest, or amid the festive days of Christmas, he feels himself comparatively at leisure, in good spirits, and disposed to enjoy himself. He and his wife arrange

their plans. Invitations are sent. On market-day he lays in all necessaries,—tea, coffee, prime cuts of beef and other meat; wine and spirits; sugar and spices. At home there is busy preparation. His garden is cleaned up; an operation of rare occurrence with a busy farmer, who thinks so much of his fields that he thinks but little of his garden. His stables and his rick-yard are put in order. The very manes and tails of his horses are trimmed, for all will have to pass under the critical notice of his friends, and he feels his professional character at stake. In the house there is equal activity. There is a world of cleaning and setting in order. Floors are scoured. The best carpets are put down. This room is found to want fresh staining; painting wants doing here and there, both within and without. Trees also want nailing and trimming on the walls; and it is probable there may want some spout repairing, or tiles renewing, that have often been talked of, but never could have time found for their doing. The house and all about it look fifty per cent. the better. The neatly cleaned walks and closely mown grass-plots; the brightly cleaned windows, and the scarlet curtains, and the purely white blinds seen within, give an air of completeness that is very satisfactory.

And then within begin the mighty preparations for the feast. Geese, turkeys, ducks and fowls are killed and pulled, and part are cooked, and part are made ready for cooking. If the farmer shoots, and it be the season, there are hares and rabbits, pheasants and partridges, brought to the larder; if he do not, he makes friends with the keeper, who occasionally takes a social pipe and glass with him; or he makes a direct request to his landlord for this indulgence. Hams are boiled, pies are made, puddings of the richest composition are put together. If it be

Christmas, loud is the chopping of meat for minced-pies, busy the mixing of spices; and the washing and picking of currants and raisins; and pork-pies and sausages of most savoury and approved manipulation are raised into material existence. If the sucking-pig escapes whipping—and we hope no honest farmer is now cruel enough for this operation—creams and syllabubs do not; they are whipped, not to death, but into life. There are blanc-mange and jellies, crystalline and fragrant; clouted creams, and cream of strawberries, raspberries, and I know not what melting and delicious things. And O! such cheesecakes, and such patties, and such little cakes of various names and natures, for tea, and *entremets*, and dessert. I see the oven-door open and shut, as the iron tray of nicely laden patty-pans goes into the oven, or comes out with a rich perfection, and with odours most delicious, most mouth-melting, most inexpressible! The good and skilful dame, and the no less skilful and comely daughters, if she have them, and they are grown up to years of discretion in these delicate and culinary arts—what is not their depth of occupation! What glowing looks are theirs; what speculations; what contrivances and anticipations! I would fain take an easy chair in some cool corner of this milk-and-honey-flowing kitchen, and watch all their sweet employment, and hear all their sweet words in a grateful silence. But they are far from the end of their labours. Nuts, walnuts, apples and pears, and other fruit, according as the season may be, are produced from their stores, or from the sunny walls and trees, wiped from every trace of mould or dust from the store-room, and placed in their proper receivers of glass, or china, or possibly of plate. Wine and spirit decanters are to be washed and carefully dried, and to be charged with their bright contents.

The discovery of the richest cheese in the whole cheese-room is to be made by tasting; butter is to be moulded in small cakes, and imprinted with patterns of the deepest and most elegant figure, and a thousand other things made, or done, of which the tasting were to be desired rather than the catalogue to be particularized, for, wonderful and manifold are all thy works, O thou accomplished spouse of a wealthy farmer!

What dainties has that greater oven received into its more capacious cavern. Bread of the most exquisite fineness; and pies of varied character—fruit, pork, beef-steak, and giblet—if in Devon or Cornwall, *sweet* giblet, a pie that all England besides knows not of,—figgy-bread, and saffron-cake of transcendant brilliance and taste.

And then comes the great day! The guests are invited to dinner; but they have been enjoined to *come early*, and they come early with a vengeance. They will not come as the guests of night-loving citizens and aristocrats come, at from six to nine in the evening;—no, at ten and eleven in the morning you shall see their faces, that never yet were ashamed of day-light, and that tell of fresh air and early hours. Then come rattling in sundry vehicles with their cargoes of men and women; lively salutations are exchanged; the horses are led away to the stables, and the guests into the house to doff great coats and cloaks, hats and bonnets, and sit down to luncheon. And there it is ready set out. “They’ll want something after their drive,” says the host. “To be sure,” says the hostess; and there is plenty in truth. A boiled ham, a neat’s tongue; a piece of cold beef; fowls and beef-steak-pie; tarts, and bread, cheese and butter; coffee for the ladies, and fine old ale for the gentlemen.

"Now do help yourselves," exclaims the host from one end of the table, "I am sure you must be very hungry after such a ride." "I am sure you must indeed," echoes the hostess from the other, while a dozen voices cry all at once, "O, really I don't think I can touch a bit. We got breakfast the moment before we set off;" and all the time deep are the incisions made into the various viands: and plentifully heaped are plates; and bright liquor is poured into glasses, and a great deal of talk of this and that, and inquiries after this and that person go on; a hearty luncheon is made, and the gentlemen are ready to set out and look about them. They are warned by the hostess to remember that dinner will be on table at one o'clock —"exactly at one!" and assuming hats and sticks, away they go.

While they perambulate the farm, and pass learned judgments on land, cattle, and crops; and make besides excursions into neighbouring lands, to some particular experiment in management, or extraordinary production of combined art and nature, our hostess shews her female friends her dairy, her cheese-room, her poultry-yard, and discussions as scientific are going on, on the best modes of fattening calves, rearing turkey broods, and on all the most approved manipulations of cheese and butter. The quantities produced from a certain number of cows are compared, and many wonders expressed that lands of apparent equality of richness should some yield little butter and much cheese, and others little cheese and much butter; facts well known to all such ladies, but not easy of explanation by heads that pretend to see further into the heart of a difficulty than they do. A walk is probably proposed and undertaken through the garden and orchard, and flowers and fruits are descanted on; and

all this time in the house roasting, and boiling, and baking, are going on gloriously. Savoury steams are rolling about under the ceilings; busy damsels with faces rosier than ever, are running to and fro on the floors; stable-boys are turned into knife-cleaners, and plough-lads into peelers of potatoes and watchers of boiling pots, and turnspits.

The hour arrives; and a sound of loud voices somewhere at hand announces that our agricultural friends are returned punctually to their time, with many a joke on their fears of the ladies' tongues. Not that they seemed to want any dinner—no, they made such a luncheon; but they had such a natural fear of being scolded. Well, here they all are;—and here are the ladies all in full dress. Hands that have been handling prime stock, or rooting in the earth, or thrust into hay-ricks and corn-heaps, are washed, and down they sit to such a dinner as might satisfy a crew of shipwrecked men. There are seldom any of your "wishy-washy soups," except it be very cold weather, and seldom more than two courses; but then they *are* courses! All of the meat kind seems set on the table at once. Off go the covers, and what a perplexing but unconsumable variety! Such pieces of roast beef, veal, and lamb; such hams, and turkeys, and geese; such game, and pies of pigeons or other things equally good, with vegetables of all kinds in season—peas, potatoes, cauliflowers, kidney-beans, lettuces, and whatever the season can produce. The most potent of ale and porter, the most crystalline and cool water, are freely supplied, and wine for those that will. When these things have had ample respect paid to them, they vanish, and the table is covered with plum-puddings and fruit tarts, cheesecakes, syllabubs, and all the nicknackery of whipped creams and jellies that female invention can

produce. And then, a dessert of equal profusion. Why should we tantalize ourselves with the vision of all those nuts, walnuts, almonds, raisins, fruits, and confections? Enough that they are there; that the wine circulates—foreign and English—port and sherry—gooseberry and damson—malt and birch—elderflower and cowslip,—and loud is the clamour of voices male and female. If there be not quite so much refinement of tone and manner, quite so much fastidiousness of phrase and action, as in some other places, there is at least more hearty laughter, more natural jocularity, and many a

Random shot of country wit,

as Burns calls it. A vast of talk there is of all the country round; every strange circumstance; every incident and change of condition, and new alliance amongst their mutual friends and acquaintances, pass under review. The ladies withdraw; and the gentlemen draw together; spirits take place of wine, and pipes are lighted. We know what subjects will interest them—farming improvements and politics—and so it goes till tea-time.

When summoned to tea, there are additional faces. The pastor and his wife, perhaps a son and daughter, or daughters, are there; and there is the clerk too,—the very model of respect and reverence towards his clerical superior. Whatever that learned authority asserts, this zealous and "dearly-beloved Moses" testifies. He calls attention to what the vicar says; he repeats with great satisfaction his sayings. There too, is the surgeon, and often the veterinary surgeon, especially as he also is often a farmer, and in intercourse with all the farmers far and near. This may seem an odd jumble of ranks, but it is no more odd than true. Who that has seen anything of rural life has not seen odder medleys? Besides, money in all grades of society can do miracles. There are clergymen in many parishes, who maintain their own ideas of dignity, and seldom move out of the circle of squires and dames; but there are others, and in perfectly rural districts there are abundance of others, that know how to mix more freely with the yeomanry of their flocks, and lose nothing neither. If they respect themselves, they insure the respect, and what is better, the attachment of their hearers.

But the vicar's presence on such a day is felt. There is a more palpable approximation towards silence;—

a drawing tighter of the reins of conversational freedom. The great talkers of after-dinner are now become great listeners, and often on such occasions I have seen a scene worthy of the sound sense of English yeomen; for the pastor addresses his observations and inquiries now to this individual, and now to that; and now converses in a tone of pleasant humour with the ladies; so that you may often hear as sober discussions on the passing topics of the day, and on the prospects of the country, and especially of that part of it to which they belong, delivered in a homely manner perhaps, but with a discrimination and practical knowledge that are very gratifying. And on the part of the females you shall see so many symptoms of good-heartedness and real matronly mind as make you feel that sense, soul, and true sympathies, are of no particular grade, or particular style of life.

But there must be a dance for the young, and there are cards for the more sedate; and then again, to a supper as profuse, with its hot game, and fowls, and fresh pastry, as if it had been the sole meal cooked in the house that day. The pastor and his company depart; the wine and spirits circulate; all begin to talk of parting, and are loth to part, till it grows late; and they have some of them six or seven miles to go, perhaps, on a pitch-dark night, through by-ways, and with roads not to be boasted of. All at once, however, up rise the men to go, for their wives, who asked and looked with imploring eyes in vain, now shew themselves cloaked and bonneted, and the carriages are heard with grinding wheels at the door. There is a boisterous shaking of hands, a score of invitations to come and do likewise, given to their entertainers, and they mount and away! When you see the blackness of the night, and consider that they

have not eschewed good liquor, and perceive at what a rate they drive away, you expect nothing less than to hear the next day, that they have dashed their vehicles to atoms against some post, or precipitated themselves into some quarry; but all is right. They best know their own capabilities, and are at home, safe and sound.

Such is a specimen of the festivities of what may be called the middle and substantial class of farmers; and the same thing holds, in degree, to the very lowest grade of them. The smallest farmer will bring you out the very best he has; he will spare nothing, on a holiday occasion; and his wife will present you with her simple slice of cake, and a glass of currant or cowslip wine, with an *empressement*, and a welcome that you feel to the heart is real, and a bestowal of a real pleasure to the offerer.

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CHAPTER II.

THE ENGLISH FARMER, AS OPERATED UPON BY MODERN CAUSES AND THEORIES.

Cobbett complains that the farmer has been spoiled by the growth of luxurious habits and effeminacy in the nation. That the simple old furniture is cast out of their houses; that carpets are laid on their floors; that there are sofas and pianos to be found where there used to be wooden benches and the spinning-wheel; that the daughters are sent to boarding-school, instead of to market; and the sons, instead of growing up sturdy husbandmen, like their fathers, are made clerks, shopkeepers, or some such “skimmy-dish things.”

It is true enough that the general style of living

and furnishing has progressed amongst the farmers as amongst all other classes of the community. And perhaps there has been too much of this. But it should be recollected that Cobbett was opposed to popular education altogether. He would have the rural population physically well off, but it should be physically only. He would have them feed and work and sleep like their sturdy horses or oxen: but is such a state desirable? Is it not far more noble, far more truly human, to have all classes partaking, as far as their circumstances will allow them, of the pleasures of mind? I would have real knowledge go hand in hand with real religious principle and moral feeling, and where they go, a certain and inseparable degree of refinement of manner and embellishment of abode will go with them. Would I have the follies and affectations of the modern boarding-school go into the farm-house? By no means. It is by the circulation of healthful knowledge that all this is to be rooted out, and the race of finical and half-genteel, and wholly ridiculous boarding-school misses to be changed into usefully taught and really valuable and amiable women. We should avoid one extreme as the other.

It should be recollected, too, that amongst farmers are to be found men of all ranks and grades. Farming has been, and is, a fashionable pursuit. We have ducal farmers, and from them all degrees downwards. Gentlemen's stewards, educated men, are farmers; and many farmers are persons whose capital employed in their extensive concerns would purchase the estates of nobles. All these, of course, live and partake of the habits, general character, and refinements of the classes to which they, by their wealth, really belong: and amongst the medium class of farmers we find as little aspiring of gentility, as

amongst the same grade of tradesmen. Nay, go into the really rural and retired parts of the country, and they are simple and rustic enough. Let those who doubt it go into the dales of Yorkshire; into the Peak, and retirements of Derbyshire; into the vales of Nottinghamshire, and midland counties; let them traverse Buckinghamshire and Shropshire; let them go into the wild valleys of Cornwall; ay, into the genuine country of almost any part of England, and they will find stone floors and naked tables, and pewter plates, and straw beds, and homely living enough in all conscience. They may see oxen ploughing in the fields with simple, heavy, wooden yokes, such as were used five hundred years ago; and horses harnessed with collars of straw, and an old rope or two, not altogether worth half-a-crown, doing the tillage of large farms. They may eat a turnip-pie in one place, and oatmeal cake, or an oatmeal pudding in another, and bless their stars if they see a bit of butcher's meat once a week. Yes, there are primitive living and primitive habits left over vast districts of England yet, which, we trust, under a better view of things, will receive no change, except such as springs from the gradual and sound growth of true knowledge.

But they bring up their sons to be clerks and such "skimmy-dish things" in towns. Ay, there is the rub; and this we owe to the rage for large rentals inspired by the war prices; by false notions of improvement generated during the heyday of farming prosperity; by gentlemen making stewards of lawyers, who have no real knowledge of farming interests, and can, therefore, have no sympathies with the small farmer, or patience with him in the day of his difficulty, and whose only object is to get the greatest rent at the easiest rate. But above all, this we owe to the

detestable doctrine of political economy, by which a dozen of moderate farms are swallowed up in one overgrown one,—a desert, from which both small farmers and labourers were compelled to depart, to make way for machinery, and Irish labourers at fourpence a day. Where were the farmers to put their sons when they were brought up? The small farms, the natural resource for divided capitals and commencements in agricultural life, were, in a great measure, annihilated; and a most useful race of men as far as possible rooted out. Thank God! this abomination and worse than Egyptian plague, is now seen through, and what is better, is *felt*. We shall yet have farms from fifty to a hundred acres, where men of small capital may try their fortunes, and have a chance of mounting up, instead of being thrust down into the hopeless condition of serfs. We may have humble homesteads, where a father and his sons may work together; where labour may await their days, and an independent fireside their hours of rest. Where a lowly, but a happy people may congregate at Christmas and other festivals, and the old games of blindman's-buff, turn-trencher, and forfeits, may long be pursued in the evening firelight of rustic rooms.

The farmer has had his ups and downs. During the war he was too prosperous; since then he has been at times ground to the dust by low prices and high rents. Heaven send him a better day! We would see him as he is, in a healthy state of the country,—a rural king, sowing his corn and reaping his harvest with a glad heart, and amid the rejoicings of a numerous peasantry.

Of the great advance in the science of farming; of the various improved modes of management, and ingenious machines invented for facilitating the

farmer's labours, I have spoken under the head of the country gentleman's pursuits and recreations. One or two other observations on the farmer and his life, may as well be given here.

One of the greatest drawbacks to the pleasantness of their abodes, is to be found in their miry roads and yards, and the stagnant pools and drainages that, in the greater number of instances, stand somewhere about them. One would think that the latter nuisances were intended by them to neutralize the effects of so much good fresh air as they have; to act as a check, lest they should, surrounded as they are, by every conducive to health and longevity, really live too long. There is scarcely a farm-house but has one of those drain pools, into which all the liquid refuse of their yards runs, and into which dead dogs and cats find their way as a matter of course. In summer, these places are green over, and often stand thick with the bubbles of a pestiferous fermentation; to all which they appear totally insensible, and must be really so, or they would contrive to locate them at a greater distance, or have them carried in a water-cart, and dispersed over their grass lands, where they would be of infinite service.

It is in winter that they are beset by miry roads; and have often yards so deep in dirt, that you cannot reach them on foot without getting over the shoes. They and their men stalk to and fro through a six-inch depth of mire as if they trod on a Turkey carpet; but I have often amused myself with imagining what would be the consternation of a cockney, or indeed of any townsman only accustomed to clean roads and good pavements, to find himself set down in the middle of one of those lanes that lead up to farm-houses, or away into their fields, or even in one of their fold-yards. But to find himself in one of these,

as I have done many a time on a dark night, and with a necessity of proceeding,—oh patience! patience! then it is really felt to be a virtue. To slip, and plunge, and flounder on in such a darksome, deep-rutted, slipping and stick-fast road—sometimes the puddle soaking into your shoes, and sometimes sent by the pressure of your tread as from a squirt into your face:—"hic labor, hoc opus est."

A few hours' work now and then with an iron scraper in the yard, and a spade to let off the water in the lanes into the ditches, and the nuisance were prevented. One would have thought that the universal excellence of all the highways now would have made them sensible of the luxury of a good, dry footing; but they seem really quite unaware of it, except you point it out, and then they will tell you in good humour that they have road-menders at work regularly twice a-year—dry weather and frost!

I must here, too, say a word on the subject of small farms. Political economists, carrying out their theories of the power of capital, and the division of employments, have written many very plausible things in recommendation of large farms. They tell you that the men of capital, who alone can hold large farms, can alone afford to avail themselves of the aid of machinery for accelerating their operations; of expensive manures, such as bones, the ashes of bog-earth, such as are burnt in Berks and Wiltshire; and of new and improved breeds of sheep and cattle; all of which require long purses, that can pay, and wait for distant returns. These are all excellent reasons for having such men and such farms in the country, by which the march and spirit of improvement may be kept up, and from which, as from reservoirs, may, in due course, overflow the advantages they introduce to their less wealthy

neighbours at a cheaper rate; but they are no arguments at all against the retention of less farms. It is, in fact, a well-known circumstance, that the speculative and amateur farmers generally farm at a greater expense than their neighbours, an expense, in most cases, never fully made up by the returns, and often really ruinous. That enlightened, systematic views, the division of employments, and a judicious outlay of capital, not always in every man's power, enable large farmers to sell at a lower rate than smaller and poorer farmers, is to a certain degree true, but by no means to the extent supposed. No farm which exceeds the ready and daily survey of the cultivator will be found to produce these advantages. Beyond that extent, there must be overlookers employed, and these must be maintained at a great, and probably greater cost than a small farmer lives at on his rented farm; nor can such a system be expected to carry the intentions of the principal into effect with a success like that of his personal surveillance. The small farmer has motives to exertion which do not exist in a troop of hired labourers. Slave labour is notoriously inferior to the labour of freemen, because the freeman has internal motives that the slave never can have; and in the same manner a small farmer who labours on his own rented farm has motives to exertion that the common labourer, who labours for a daily sum, cannot have. If the small farmer employ any of these, he employs them under the influence of his own eye and example, and thereby communicates a stimulus that is absent on a larger scale of cultivation. The small farmer lives economically; frequently, there is no question, more economically, and yet better than the labourer, because he has all his faculties and energies at work to improve his farm and better his condition;

circumstances that do not operate on the labourer, who receives just a bare sufficiency in his wage, and sees no possibility, and therefore entertains no hope, of accumulation. The small farmer works hard himself; his children, if he have them, assist him, and his wife too, who also is a manager and a worker. He looks round him, for his eyes are sharpened by his interests, and observes the plans, and measures, and improvements of his wealthier neighbour, adopts what he can of them, and often makes cheap and ingenious substitutes for others. Even if it were a fact, that the large farmer could drive the small farmer out of the country, it would be a circumstance most deeply to be deplored. It would extinguish a class of men of hardy, homely, and independent habits—a serious loss to the nation. It would break those steps out of the ladder of human aspiration, and the improvement of condition, that would have a most fatal influence on all society. An impassable gulf would be placed between the aristocracy of capital and the freedom of labour; which would produce, as its natural results, insolence, effeminacy, and corruption of manners, on the one side, and perpetual poverty, hopeless poverty, abjectness of spirit, or sullen and dangerous discontent, on the other. Even if, as Miss Martineau, in her interesting stories, has asserted, it were true that the labourer would be better clothed and fed than the small farmer, would the mere comfort of food and clothes make up, to men living in a free and Christian country, and within the daily reach of its influences, for the destruction of that ascending path which hope alone can travel? There would soon, on such a system, either in agriculture or manufactures, be but two classes in the country,—the great capitalist and the slave. The great capitalist would stand, like

Aaron armed with his serpent rod, to eat up all the lesser serpents that attempted to lift their heads above that level which he had condemned them to. The mass would be doomed to a perpetual despair of even advancing one step out of the thraldom of labour and command, and their spirits would die within them, or live only to snatch and destroy what they could not legitimately reach.

But such, happily, is not the case. Circumstances place a limit to such things. The small farmer can and does exist, and has existed, and in many cases, flourished too, in the face of all changes, and surrounded by large farms cultivated with all the skill of modern art, and all the power of capital. I have seen and known such, and happier and more comfortable people do not exist. I do not mean by a small farm, what Miss Martineau has called such,—some dozen acres—mere cottage allotments—but farms of from fifty to a hundred acres. There must be full employment for a pair of horses, or there is created by their keep an undue charge for labour, which is a serious preventive of success. But where there is that full employment, a small farmer may live and prosper. The political economist generally reasons in straight lines. He will not turn aside to calculate the force of incidental circumstances; and yet, these incidental circumstances frequently alter a question entirely. For instance, a small farm may lie near a large town, and thereby furnish the tenant with a very lucrative trade in milk; and such incidental circumstances, owing to a location favourable for market, and other causes, frequently exist. Small farmers often pay attention to sources of profit, nearly, if not altogether, overlooked by larger ones. Who does not know what sums are made by cottagers and small occupiers, of the produce of their

gardens and orchards, by carefully looking after it, and some one of the family bringing it to market, and standing with it themselves; while the great farmer seldom looks very narrowly to the growth or preservation of either, and therefore incurs both badness of crop and waste; and if he sends it to market, he sends it to the huckster at a wholesale price, to save the annoyance of standing with it. Small concerns, having small establishments, and *no dignity to support*, nor other cares to divert the attention, find in these resources alone frequently an income itself nearly equal to their expenditure.

To determine questions of this kind there requires a close examination into all their bearings, and into the habits and feelings of those concerned. The truth of the matter, as regards the most profitable size of farms, and their general benefit to the public, seems to be, that there should be some of various sizes, that various degrees of capital and capacity of management may be accommodated; that there may be a chance for those beginning who have little to begin with, and a chance of the active and enterprising rising, as activity and enterprise should. This seems the only system by which the healthful temperament of a community can be kept up; and that just equilibrium of interests, and that ascending scale of advantages maintained, by which not merely the wealth, but the real happiness of a state is promoted.

CHAPTER III.
FARM-SERVANTS.

The clown, the child of nature, without guile,

> Blessed with an infant's ignorance of all
> But his own simple pleasures; now and then
> A wrestling match, a foot-race, or a fair.—*Cowper.*

We have in a preceding chapter, taken a view of the English farmer. We have seen him at market—in his fields, and in his house receiving his friends to a holiday feast. If we were to go to the farm-house on any other day, and at any season of the year, and survey the farmer and his men in their daily and ordinary course of life, we should always see something to interest us; and we should have to contemplate a mode of existence forming a strong contrast to that of townsmen; and, notwithstanding the innovation which the progress of modern habits has made on life in the country, still presenting a picture of simplicity, homeliness, and quiet, which no other life retains. Thousands, indeed, looking into a farm-house, surveying its furniture, the apparatus and supply of its table, the manners and the language of its inhabitants, would wonder where, after all, was the vast change said to have taken place in the habits of the agricultural population. O! rude and antiquated enough in all conscience, are hundreds of our farm-houses and their inmates, in many an obscure district of merry England yet. The spots are not difficult to be found even now, where the old oak table, with legs as thick and black as those of an elephant, is spread in the homely house-place, for the farmer and his family—wife, children, servants, male and female; and is heaped with the rude plenty of beans and bacon, beef and cabbage, fried potatoes and bacon, huge puddings with "dip" as it is called, that is, sauce of flour, butter, and water boiled, sharpened with vinegar or verjuice, and sweetened with brown sugar or more economical molasses —"dip," so called, no doubt, because all formerly

dipped their morsel into it; a table where bread and cheese, and beer, and good milk porridge and oatmeal porridge, or stirabout, still resist the introduction of tea and coffee and such trash, as the stout old husbandman terms it. Let no one say that modern language and modern habits have driven away the ancient rusticity, while such dialogues between the farmer and guest as the following may be heard—and such may yet be heard in the Peak of Derbyshire, where this really passed.

Farmer at table to his guest.—Ite, mon, ite!

Guest.—Au have iten, mon. Au've iten till Au'm weelly brussen.

Farmer.—Then ite, and brust thee out mon: au wooden we hadden to brussen thee wee.[2]

[2] This is the present genuine dialect of the Peak, and is nearly as pure Saxon. It is curious to see in the southern agricultural counties, how the old Saxon terms are worn out by a greater intercourse with London and townspeople, although the people themselves have a most Saxon look, with their fair complexions and light brown hair; while, as you proceed northward, the Saxon becomes more and more prevalent in the country dialects. In the midland counties bracken is the common term for fern—in the south not a peasant ever heard it. The dialects of Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, and Staffordshire, are so similar to that of the Sassenach of Scotland, the Lowland Scots, that the language of Burns was nearly as familiar to me when I first read his poems, as that of my village neighbours; and the Scotch read that clever romance of low life, "Bilberry Thurland," with a great relish, the dialogues of which are genuine Nottinghamshire, because they said, it was such good Scotch. I have noticed that the plays of the boys in Derbyshire and in the Scotch Lowlands have similar names, differing from the English names in general; as the English game of

bandy, in Derbyshire is shinny, in Scotland shinty.

It is no rare sight to see the farmer himself, with his clouted shoon and his fustian coat, ribbed blue or black worsted stockings, and breeches of corduroy; to see him arousing his household, at five o'clock of a morning, and his wife hurrying the servant-wenches, as they call them, from their beds, crying,—"Up, up, boulder-heads!" that is pebble-heads, or heavy-heads, and asking them if they mean to lie till the sun burns their eyes out; having them up to light fires, sweep the hearth, and get to milking, cheese-making, churning, and what not; while he gets his men and boys to their duties,—in winter, to fodder the horses and cows, and prepare for ploughing, or carting out manure; to supply the "young beast,"—young cattle, in the straw-yard with food; to chop turnips, carrots, mangel-würzel, cut hay, boil potatoes for feeding pigs or bullocks; thrash, winnow, or sack corn. In summer, to be off to the harvest-field. The wife is ready to take a turn at the churn, or to turn up her gown-sleeves to the shoulders, and kneeling down on a straw cushion, to press the sweet curd to the bottom of the cheese-pan. To boil the whey for making whey butter, to press the curd into the cheese-vats; place the new cheese in the press; to salt and turn, and look after those cheeses which are in the different stages of the progress from perfect newness and white softness, to their investment with the unctuous coating of a goodly age. He is ready to go with the men into the farm; she is ready to see that the calves are properly fed, and to bargain with the butcher for the fat ones; to feed her geese, turkeys, guinea-fowls, and barn-door fowls; to see after the collection of eggs; how the milk is going on in the dairy, the cream churning, and moulding of butter for sale. In some

counties, especially in the west of England, numerous are those homely and most useful dames that you see mounted on their horses with nothing but a flat pad, or a stuffed sack under them, jogging to market to dispose of the products of their dairy and poultry yard, as fresh, hale, and independent, as their grandmothers were. As to the farmer himself, he can hold the plough as his father did before him. He hates your newfangled notions; he despises your fine-fingered chaps, that are brought up at boarding-schools till they are fit for nothing but to ride on smart whisk-tailed nags to market, and carry a bit of a sample-bag in their pockets; and had rather, ten times, be off to the hunt or the race-course than to market at all; or to be running after a dog and gun, breaking down fences and trampling over turnip and potato crops, when they ought to be watching that other idlers did not commit such depredations. He sits with his men, and works with his men; and, while he does as much as the best of them—follows the plough, the harrow, or the drill, empties the manure-cart on his fallows, loads the hay or the corn-wagon,—he many a time says to himself that the "master's eye does still more than his hand." The celebrated Mr. Robinson of Cambridge, who was fond of farming, gives in a letter to a friend, a most striking view of the perpetual recurrence of the little occupations which present themselves to the practical farmer, and however apparently trivial, are really important, and full of pleasure to those whose hearts are in such pursuit.—"Rose at three o'clock; crawled into the library, and met one who said, —'work while ye have the light; the night cometh, when no man can work: my father worketh hitherto, and I work.' Rang the great bell, and roused the girls to milking, went up to the farm, roused the

horsekeeper, fed the horses while he was getting up; called the boy to suckle the calves and clean out the cow-house; lighted the pipe, walked round the garden to see what was wanted there; went up to the paddock to see if the weaning calves were well; went down to the ferry to see if the boy had scooped and cleaned the boat; returned to the farm, examined the shoulders, heels, traces, chaff and corn of eight horses going to plough, mended the acre-staff, cut some thongs, whip-corded the plough-boys' whips, pumped the troughs full, saw the hogs fed, examined the swill-tubs, and then the cellar; ordered a quarter of malt, for the hogs want grains, and the men want beer; filled the pipe again, returned to the river, and bought a lighter of turf for dairy fires, and another of sedge for ovens; hunted out the wheelbarrows, and set them a trundling; returned to the farm, called the men to breakfast, and cut the boys' bread and cheese, and saw the wooden bottles filled; sent one plough to the three roods, another to the three half-acres, and so on; shut the gates, and the clock struck five; breakfasted; set two men to ditch the five roods, two men to chop sods, and spread about the land, two more to throw up manure in the yard, and three men and six women to weed wheat; set on the carpenter to repair cow-cribs, and set them up till winter; the wheeler, to mend the old carts, cart-ladders, rakes, etc., preparatory to hay-time and harvest; walked to the six-acres, found hogs in the grass, went back and set a man to hedge and thorn; sold the butcher a fat calf and the suckler a lean one. —The clock strikes nine; walked into the barley-field; barleys fine—picked off a few tiles and stones, and cut a few thistles; the peas fine but foul; the charlock must be topped; the tares doubtful, the fly seems to have taken them; prayed for rain, but could not see a

cloud; came round to the wheat-field, wheats rather thin, but the finest colour in the world; sent four women on to the shortest wheats; ordered one man to weed along the ridge of the long wheats, and two women to keep rank and file with him in the furrows; thistles many, blue-bottles no end; traversed all the wheat-field, came to the fallow-field; the ditchers have run crooked, set them straight; the flag sods cut too much, the rush sods too little, strength wasted, shew the men how to three-corner them; laid out more work for the ditchers, went to the ploughs, set the foot a little higher, cut a wedge, set the coulter deeper, must go and get a new mould-board against to-morrow; went to the other plough, gathered up some wood and tied over the traces, mended a horse-tree, tied a thong to the plough-hammer, went to see which lands wanted ploughing first, sat down under a bush, wondered how any man could be so silly as to call me *reverend*; read two verses in the Bible of the loving-kindness of the Lord in the midst of his temple, hummed a tune of thankfulness, rose up, whistled, the dogs wagged their tails, and away we went, dined, drunk some milk and fell asleep, woke by the carpenter for some slats which the sawyers must cut, etc. etc."

So spends many a farmer of the old stamp his day, and at night he takes his seat on the settle, under the old wide chimney—his wife has her little work-table set near—the "wenches" darning their stockings, or making up a cap for Sunday, and the men sitting on the other side of the hearth, with their shoes off. He now enjoys of all things, to talk over his labours and plans with the men,—they canvass the best method of doing this and that—lay out the course of to-morrow—what land is to be broke up, or laid down; where barley, wheat, oats, etc. shall be sown, or if

they be growing, when they shall be cut. In harvest-time, lambing-time, in potato setting and gathering time, in fact, almost all summer long, there is no sitting on the hearth—it is out of bed with the sun, and after the long hard day—supper, and to bed again. It is only in winter that there is any sitting by the fire, which is seldom diversified further than by the coming in of a neighbouring farmer, or the reading of the weekly news.

Such is the rustic, plodding life of many a farmer in England, and there is no part of the population for which so little has been done, and of which so little is thought, as of their farm-servants. Scarcely any of these got any education before the establishment of Sunday schools—how few of them do yet, compared with the working population of towns? The girls help their mothers—the labourers' wives—in their cottages, as soon almost as they can waddle about. They are scarcely more than infants themselves, when they are set to take care of other infants. The little creatures go lugging about great fat babies that really seem as heavy as themselves. You may see them on the commons, or little open green spots in the lanes near their homes, congregating together, two or three juvenile nurses, with their charges, carrying them along, or letting them roll on the sward, while they try to catch a few minutes of play with one another, or with that tribe of bairns at their heels—too old to need nursing, and too young to begin nursing others. As they get bigger they are found useful in the house—they mop and brush, and feed the pig, and run to the town for things; and as soon as they get to ten or twelve, out they go to nurse at the farm-houses; a little older, they "go to service;" there they soon aspire to be dairymaids, or housemaids, if their ambition does not prompt them

to seek places in the towns,—and so they go on scrubbing and scouring, and lending a hand in the harvest-field, till they are married to some young fellow, who takes a cottage and sets up day-labourer. This is their life; and the men's is just similar. As soon as they can run about, they are set to watch a gate that stands at the end of the lane or the common to stop cattle from straying, and there through long solitary days they pick up a few halfpence by opening it for travellers. They are sent to scare birds from corn just sown, or just ripening, where

> They stroll, the lonely Crusoes of the fields—

as Bloomfield has beautifully described them from his own experience. They help to glean, to gather potatoes, to pop beans into holes in dibbling time, to pick hops, to gather up apples for the cider-mill, to gather mushrooms and blackberries for market, to herd flocks of geese, or young turkeys, or lambs at weaning time; they even help to drive sheep to market, or to the wash at shearing time; they can go to the town with a huge pair of clouted ancle-boots to be mended, as you may see them trudging along over the moors, or along the footpath of the fields, with the strings of the boots tied together, and slung over the shoulder—one boot behind and the other before; and then they are very useful to lift and carry about the farm-yard, to shred turnips, or beet-root—to hold a sack open—to bring in wood for the fire, or to rear turfs for drying on the moors, as the man cuts them with his paring shovel, or to rear peat-bricks for drying. They are mighty useful animals in their day and generation, and as they get bigger, they successively learn to drive plough, and then to hold it; to drive the team, and finally to do all the labours

of a man. That is the growing up of a farm-servant. All this time he is learning his business, but he is learning nothing else,—he is growing up into a tall, long, smock-frocked, straw-hatted, ancle-booted fellow, with a gait as graceful as one of his own plough-bullocks. He has grown up, and gone to service; and there he is, as simple, as ignorant, and as laborious a creature as one of the wagon-horses that he drives. The mechanic sees his weekly newspaper over his pipe and pot; but the clodhopper, the chopstick, the hawbuck, the hind, the Johnny-raw, or by whatever name, in whatever district, he may be called, is every where the same; he sees no newspaper, and if he did, he could not read it; and if he hears his master reading it, ten to one but he drops asleep over it. In fact, he has no interest in it. He knows there is such a place as the next town, for he goes there to statutes, and to the fair; and he has heard of Lunnon, and the French, and Buonaparte, and of late years of America, and he has some dreamy notion that he should like to go there if he could raise the wind, and thought he could find the way—and that is all that he knows of the globe and its concerns, beyond his own fields. The mechanic has his library, and he reads, and finds that he has a mind, and a hundred tastes and pleasures that he never dreamed of before; the clodhopper has no library, and if he had, books in his present state would be to him only so many things set on end upon shelves. He is as much of an animal as air and exercise, strong living and sound sleeping, can make him, and he is nothing more. Just see the daily course of his life. Harvest-time is the jubilee of his year. It is a time of incessant and hurrying occupation—but that is a benefit to him—it is an excitement, and he wants exciting. It rouses him out

of that beclouded and unimaginative dreamy state in which he stalks along the solitary fields, or wields the flail in the barn; digs the drain or the ditch, or plashes the fence, from day to day and week to week. The energies that he has, and they are chiefly physical, are all called forth. He is in a bustle. The weather is fine and warm—his blood flows quicker. The gates are thrown open—the hay rustles in the meadow, or the golden corn stands in shock amid the stubble: the wagons are rattling along the lanes and the fields. His neighbours are all called out to assist. The labourers leave every thing else, and are all in the harvest-field. The women leave their cottages, and are there too. Young, middle-aged, and old,—all are there, to work or to glean. The comely maiden with her rosy face, her beaming eyes, and fair figure, brings with her mirth and joke. The stout village matrons have drawn footless stockings on their arms to protect them from the sun and stubble—they have pinned up their bed-gowns behind, or doffed themselves to the brown stays and linsey-woolsey petticoat, and are amongst the best hands in the field. Even the old are feebly pulling at a rake, or putting hay into wain-row, or looking on, and telling what they have done in their time. The beer-keg is in the field, and the horn often goes round. The lunch is eaten under the tree, or amongst the sheaves. In the house at noon, there is a great setting out of dinner; beans and bacon, huge puddings and dumplings are plentiful,—it is a joyous and a stirring time. There is no other season of the year in which the farm-servant enjoys himself so much as in harvest; not even in his few other days of relaxation—on his visit to the fair, to the statutes, to the ploughing match, or on *Mothering* Sunday, when all the “servant-lads” and “servant-wenches” are, in some parts of the country,

set at liberty for a day, to go and see their mothers. See him at any other time, and what a plodding, simple, monotonous life he leads! He rises at an early hour—we have seen in this chapter at *what an hour* the Rev. Mr. Robinson had his men up;—if he be going to work in the farm-yard, he goes out and gets to it till breakfast-time: but if he be going to plough, or to do work at a distance, or to carry corn home that has been sold at market by his master, or to fetch bones, rape-dust, or other manure from the town, or coals from the pit, he is up, whether it be summer or winter, at an hour at which townspeople are often not gone to bed. In early spring, and autumn he gets up to plough at five and six o'clock in a morning. It is pitch dark, and dismally cold. He strikes a light with his tinder, for lucifers he never saw, and has only heard of, as a horrible invention for setting ricks on fire. He slips on his ancle-boots without lacing them, and out he goes to fodder his horses, and rub them down. That done, he comes in again.

The "servant wench" has lit the fire and set out his breakfast for him and his fellows; huge basins of milk porridge, and loaves as big as beehives, and pretty much of the same shape, and as brown as the back of their own hands. To this fare he betakes himself with a capacity that only country air and hard labour can give. Having made havoc with as much of these as would serve a round family of citizens to breakfast, he then stretches out his hand to a capacious dish of cold fat bacon of about six inches thick; nay, I once saw bacon on such a table actually ten inches thick, and all one solid mass of fat. This is set on the top of half a peck of cold boiled beans that were left the day before, and however strange such viands might seem to a townsman at six o'clock, or earlier, in a

morning, they vanish as rapidly as if they did not follow that mess of porridge, and those huge hunches of bread. Well, to a certainty he has now done. Nay, don't be in such haste—he has *not* done; he has his eye on the great brown loaf again. He must have a snack of bread and cheese; so he takes his knife out of his waistcoat pocket, a gigantic clasp knife, assuredly made by the knowing Sheffielder to hew down such loaves, and lie in such pockets, and fill such stomachs, and for no other earthly purpose. See! he cuts a massy fragment of the rich curly kissing-crust, that hangs like a fretted cornice from the upper half of the loaf, and places it between the little finger and the thick of his left hand; he cuts a corresponding piece of cheese, and places it between the thumb and the two fore-fingers of the same hand, and alternately cutting his bread and cheese with his clasp-knife (for he would not use another for that purpose on any account), as Betty sets a mug of ale before him, he wipes his mouth and says, as he lifts the mug, to his younger companion, who has all this time been faithfully and valiantly imitating him, —"Well, Jack, we must be off, lad; take a draught, then get the horses out, and I'll be with thee."

This is pretty well for five or six o'clock in a morning; but it is quite as likely that it is only one or two in the morning, as it certainly is, if he be going to a distance with a load, or for a load of any thing. The breakfast is as liberally handled, and Betty mean time has put up their luncheons or "ten-o'clocks"—huge masses of bread and cheese, or cold bacon, or cold meat, and a bottle of ale if they are going to plough. Having now breakfasted, he has only to lace his boots, which he generally does in the most inconvenient posture, and not before he has filled himself till it is tenfold additionally inconvenient—so

with a face into which all the blood in his body seems to rush, and with many a grunt, he accomplishes his task, and away he goes;—his whip cracks, his gears jingle, his wagon rumbles, and he is gone. If, however, he be going to plough, he will duly about eleven o'clock lunch under a tree, while his horses rest and eat their hay; and then, at three or four o'clock, he will loose them from the plough, and return home to a dinner as plentiful as his breakfast; his horses are fed, and he goes to bed. If he be going out with corn, or for coals, he is off, as I have said, probably by two o'clock, and in his wagon he duly takes with him a truss of hay and a truss of straw. The hay is for his horses to eat at some wayside public-house, and the straw is for payment for their standing in the stable. The straw is worth a shilling, and in some places, at certain seasons, eighteen-pence. If he does not take straw, he takes a shilling in money. He carries his luncheon and eats it in the alehouse, and he has a shilling for himself and companion to drink, and treat the hostler. This is a custom as old as farms and corn-mills themselves. If it be winter weather, you shall meet him, probably, with straw-bands wrapped round his legs, or even round his hat for warmth; and in heavy rain his Macintosh is a sack-bag, which he throws over his shoulders, and goes on defying the weather for a whole day. In sudden squalls and thunder showers in summer, you may see him, and frequently a whole cluster of harvesters, take shelter under his wagon till the storm is over. By the evening fire, in some farm-houses, they mend their shoes, or shape and polish the heads of flails which they have cut from the black-thorn bush, and have had in a loft or under their bed seasoning for the last six months, or they get into some horse-play, or they doze

Till chilblains wake them, or the snapping fire.

And on Sundays they go to church in the morning to get a quiet nod. Perhaps it is to them that the Apostle alludes when he says—"And your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams." For the only chance of their worship seems to be in their dreams—the daily exposure to the air on the six days making them as drowsy as bats on the seventh. In the afternoon they lean over gates, or play at quoits:—and there is the life of a farmer man-servant, till he is metamorphosed into a labourer by marrying and setting up his cottage, finding himself, and receiving weekly instead of yearly wages. Such is the farm-servant, whether you see him in his white, his blue, his tawny, or his olive-green smock-frock, in his straw-hat, or his wide-awake, according to the prevailing fashion of different parts of the country—and truly, seeing him and his fellows, we may ask with
Wordsworth—

What kindly warmth from touch of fostering hand,
What penetrating power of sun or breeze
Shall e'er dissolve the crust wherein his soul
Sleeps, like a caterpillar sheathed in ice?
This torpor is no pitiable work
Of modern ingenuity; no town
Or crowded city may be taxed with aught
Of sottish vice, or desperate breach of law,
To which in after years he may be roused.
This boy the fields produce:—his spade and hoe—
The carter's whip that on his shoulder rests,
In air high-towering with a boorish pomp,
The sceptre of his sway: his country's name,
Her equal rights, her churches and her schools—
What have they done for him? And, let me ask,
For tens of thousands, uninformed as he?[3]

[3] Who would believe it, that such is the profound ignorance amongst the peasantry even of the Cumberland hills—amongst that peasantry where Wordsworth himself has found his Michaels, his Matthews, and many another man and woman that in his hands have become classical and enduring specimens of rustic heart and mind, that such facts as the following could occur, and yet this did occur there not very long ago. The "statesmen," that is, small proprietors there, are a people very little susceptible of religious excitement; and, we may believe, have, in past years, been very much neglected by their natural instructors. You hear of no "revivals" amongst them, and the Methodists have little success amongst them. Some person, speaking with the wife of one of these "statesmen" on religious subjects, found that she had not even heard of such a person as Jesus Christ! Astonished at the discovery, he began to tell her of his history; of his coming to save the world, and of his being put to death. Having listened to all this very attentively, she inquired where this occured; and that being answered, she asked, "and when was it?" this being also told her, she very gravely observed—"Well, its sae far off, and sae lang since, we'll fain believe that it isna true!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE BONDAGE SYSTEM OF THE NORTH OF ENGLAND.

A person from the south or midland counties of England, journeying northward, is struck when he enters Durham, or Northumberland, with the sight of bands of women working in the fields under the surveillance of one man. One or two such bands, of

from half a dozen to a dozen women, generally young, might be passed over; but when they recur again and again, and you observe them wherever you go, they become a marked feature of the agricultural system of the country, and you naturally inquire how it is that such regular bands of female labourers prevail there. The answer, in the provincial tongue, is—"O they are the Boneditchers," *i. e.* Bondagers. Bondagers! that is an odd sound, you think, in England. What, have we bondage, a rural serfdom, still existing in free and fair England? Even so. The thing is astounding enough, but it is a fact. As I cast my eyes for the first time on these female bands in the fields, working under their drivers, I was, before making any inquiry respecting them, irresistibly reminded of the slave-gangs of the West Indies: turnip-hoeing, somehow, associated itself strangely in my brain with sugar-cane dressing; but when I heard these women called Bondagers, the association became tenfold strong.

On all the large estates in these counties, and in the south of Scotland, the bondage system prevails. No married labourer is permitted to dwell on these estates unless he enters into bond to comply with this system. These labourers are termed hinds. Small houses are built for them on the farms, and on some of the estates—as those of the Duke of Northumberland—all these cottages are numbered, and the number is painted on the door. A hind, therefore, engaging to work on one of the farms belonging to the estate, has a house assigned him. He has 4*l.* a year in money; the keep of a cow; his fuel found him,—a prescribed quantity of coal, wood, or peat, to each cottage; he is allowed to plant a certain quantity of land with potatoes; and has thirteen boles of corn furnished him for his family consumption;

one-third being oats, one-third barley, and one-third peas. In return for these advantages, he is bound to give his labour the year round, and also to furnish a woman labourer at 1*s.* per day during harvest, and 8*d.* per day for the rest of the year. Now it appears, at once, that this is no hereditary serfdom—such a thing could not exist in this country; but it is the next thing to it, and no doubt has descended from it; being serfdom in its mitigated form, in which alone modern notions and feelings would tolerate it. It may even be said that it is a voluntary system; that it is merely married hinds doing that which unmarried farm-servants do everywhere else—hire themselves on certain conditions from year to year. The great question is, whether these conditions are just, and favourable to the social and moral improvement of the labouring class. Whether, indeed, it be quite of so voluntary a nature as, at first sight, appears; whether it be favourable to the onward movement of the community in knowledge, virtue, and active and enterprising habits. These are questions which concern the public; and these I shall endeavour to answer in that candid and dispassionate spirit which public good requires.

In the first place, then, it is only just to say that their cottages, though they vary a good deal on different estates, are in themselves, in some cases, not bad. Indeed, some of those which we entered on the estates of the Duke of Northumberland, were much more comfortable than labourers' cottages often are. Each has its number painted on the door, within a crescent,—the crest of the Northumberland family; and though this has a look rather savouring too much of a badge of servitude, yet within many of them are very comfortable. They are all built pretty much on one principle, and that very different to the

labourers' houses of the south. They are copied, in fact, from the Scotch cottages. They are of one story, and generally of one room. On one side is the fireplace, with an oven on one hand and a boiler on the other; on the opposite side of the cottage is the great partition for the beds, which are two in number, with sliding doors or curtains. The ceiling is formed by poles nailed across from one side of the roof to the other, about half a yard above where it begins to slope, and covered with matting. From the matting to the wall the slope is covered with a piece of chintz in the best cottages; in others, with some showy calico print, with ordinary wall-paper, or even with paper daubed with various colours and patterns. This is the regular style of the hind's cottage; varying in neatness and comfort, it must be confessed, however, from one another by many degrees. Many are very naked, dirty, and squalid. Where they happen to stand separate, on open heaths, and in glens of the hills, nature throws around them so much of wild freedom and picturesqueness as makes them very agreeable. The cottages of the shepherds are often very snug and curious. We went into the cottage of the herd of Middleton, at the foot of the Cheviots, an estate formerly belonging to Greenwich Hospital. This hut was of more than ordinary size, as it was required to accommodate several shepherds. The part of the house on your left as you entered was divided into two rooms. The one was a sort of entrance lobby, where stood the cheese-press and the pails, and where hung up various shepherds' plaids, great coats, and strong shoes. In one place hung a mass of little caps with strings to them, ready to tie upon the sheeps' heads when they become galled by the fly in summer; in another were suspended wool-shears and crooks. The other little room was the

dairy, with the oddest assemblage of wooden quaighs or little pails imaginable. Over these rooms, a step-ladder led to an open attic in the roof, which formed at once the sleeping apartment of the shepherds and a store-room. Here were three or four beds, some of them woollen mattresses on rude stump-bedsteads; others pieces of wicker-work, like the lower half of a pot-crate cut off, about half a yard high, filled with straw, and a few blankets laid upon it. There were lots of fleeces of wool stowed away; and lasts and awls stuck into the spars, shewed that the herds occasionally amused their leisure in winter and bad weather by cobbling their shoes. The half of the house on your right hand on entering, was at all points such as I have before described, with its coved and matted ceiling, its chintz cornice, and its two beds with sliding doors. But the majority of the cottages of the hinds about the great farm-houses, are dismal abodes. They are generally built in a low, and sometimes in a dreary quadrangle, without those additions of gardens, piggeries, etc., which so much enrich and embellish the cottages of the labourers in many parts of the kingdom. And what is the state of feeling within? is it that of contentment or acquiescence? I am bound to say that many inquiries made in various places, discovered one general sentiment of discontent with the system. But in the first place, let us take a view of the general aspect of the country under this system as it appears to a stranger from the south, and here we have at hand the graphic descriptions of Cobbett, from his tour in Scotland and the northern counties of England, in 1832.

He does not seem to have become aware of the existence of the system while in Durham and Northumberland. He perceived, what no man can

pass through those counties without seeing, the large-farm system in full operation, and with all its consequences in its face. “From Morpeth to within four miles of Hexham the land is very indifferent; the farms of an enormous extent. I saw in one place more than a hundred corn-stacks in one yard, each having from six to seven Surrey wagon-loads of sheaves in one stack; and not another house to be seen within a mile or two of the farm-house. There appears to be no such thing as barns, but merely a place to take in a stack at a time, and thrash it out by a machine. The country seems to be almost wholly destitute of people: immense tracts of corn land, but neither cottages nor churches.” p. 56. This was the first glimpse of the thing; it had not yet broken fully upon him; but he had not gone much further before the vast solitude of the depopulative system began to press upon his brain, and to set those indignant feelings and theorizings at work in him, which belonged so peculiarly to his nature. “From Morpeth to Alnwick, the country, generally speaking, is very poor as to land, scarcely any trees at all; the farms enormously extensive: only two churches, I think, in the whole of the twenty miles, *i. e.* from Newcastle to Alnwick. Scarcely any thing worthy the name of a tree, and not one single dwelling having the appearance of a labourer’s house. Here appears to be neither hedging nor ditching; no such thing as a sheep-fold or a hurdle to be seen; the cattle and sheep very few in number; *the farm-servants living in the farm-houses, and very few of them*; the thrashing done by machinery and horses; *a country without people*. This is a pretty country to take a minister from, to govern the south of England! a pretty country to take a Lord Chancellor from, to prattle about *poor-laws*, and about *surplus population*! My

LORD GREY has, in fact, spent his life here, and BROUGHAM has spent his life in the inns of court, or in the botheration of speculative books. How should either of them know any thing about the eastern, southern, or western counties? I wish I had my dignitary, DR. BLACK, here; I would soon make him see that he has all these number of years been talking about the bull's horns instead of his tail and buttocks. Besides the indescribable pleasure of having seen NEWCASTLE, the SHIELDSES, SUNDERLAND, DURHAM, and HEXHAM, I have now discovered the true ground of all the errors of the Scotch *feelosophers*, with regard to population, and with regard to poor-laws. The two countries are as different as any things of the same nature can possibly be; that which applies to the one does not at all apply to the other. The agricultural counties are covered all over with parish churches, and with people thinly distributed here and there. Only look at the two counties of Dorset and Durham. Dorset contains 1005 square miles; Durham contains 1061 square miles. Dorset has 271 *parishes*; Durham has 75 parishes. The population of Dorset is scattered all over the whole county; there being no town of any magnitude in it. The population of Durham, though larger than that of Dorset, is almost all gathered together at the mouths of the TYNE, the WEAR, and the TEES. Northumberland has 1871 square miles; and Suffolk has 1512 square miles. Northumberland has *eighty-eight parishes*; and Suffolk has *five hundred and ten parishes*. So here is a county one-third part smaller than that of Northumberland, with *six times as many villages in it*! What comparison is there to be made between states of society so essentially different? What rule is there, with regard to population and poor-laws, which can apply to both

cases? * * * Blind and thoughtless must that man be, who imagines that all but *farms* in the south are unproductive. I much question whether, taking a strip three miles each way from the road, coming from NEWCASTLE to ALNWICK, an equal quantity of what is called *waste ground* in Surrey, together with the cottages that skirt it, do not exceed such strip of ground in point of produce. Yes; the cows, pigs, geese, poultry, gardens, bees, and fuel that arise from these *wastes*, far exceed, even in the capacity of sustaining people, similar breadths of ground, distributed into these large farms, in the poorer parts of Northumberland. I have seen not less than ten thousand geese in one tract of common, in about six miles, going from CHOBHAM towards FARNHAM in Surrey. I believe these geese alone, raised entirely by care and the common, to be worth more than the clear profit that can be drawn from any similar breadth of land between MORPETH and ALNWICK."

There are two important particulars connected with this statement: one regards the sustenance of life, and the other morals. Much has been said of the morals of the hinds of Northumberland under this system, and in the main their morals may be good; but one or two facts I can state, as it regards the morals of the common people in general in both counties. In going over this very ground, of which Cobbett has been speaking, we witnessed such a scene as we never witnessed in any other part of England. We had taken our places in an afternoon coach, going from Newcastle to Morpeth. It was market-day, and we had not proceeded far out of Newcastle when we found that the coach in which we were, had actually *two-and-thirty passengers*. They consisted of country-people returning from market, who were taken up principally on the road. There

were *nine* inside, and *twenty-three* outside; *six of whom sat piled on each other's knees, on the driving-box*! The greater part of them were drunk; and the number of tipsy fellows staggering along the road, exceeded what we ever saw in any other quarter. We happened to be too at Alnwick fair, and we never saw the farmers and drovers more freely indulge in drink and noise. Moreover, from Alnwick to Belford we had a wealthy farmer in the coach, who was raving drunk, shouted out of the windows, chafed like a wild beast in a cage, and presented a spectacle such as I have never seen in a coach elsewhere. So much for the morals of that region.

But Cobbett had not yet seen the finest lands, or got a glimpse of the Bondage System. He still goes on expressing his astonishment at the solitude, the vast farms with their steam thrashing-machines; "so that the elements seem to be pressed into the amiable service of sweeping the people from the earth, in order that the whole amount may go into the hands of a small number of persons, that they may squander it at London, Paris, or Rome." It was only after he had traversed the Lothians that the full discovery broke upon him; so that, after all, he never seems to have perceived that the Bondage System was prevalent in England, but speaks of it as exclusively a Scotch system. There is every reason to believe it a relic of ancient feudalism; but it is certain that but for the doctrines of the Edinburgh Economists it would have long ago vanished from our soil. When Cobbett arrived at Edinburgh, there he seemed to take breath, and clear his lungs for a good tirade against the system; which he does thus, in his first letter to the *Chopsticks* of the south. "This city is fifty-six miles from the Tweed, which separates England from Scotland. I have come

through the country in a post-chaise, stopped one night upon the road, and have made every inquiry, in order that I might be able to ascertain the exact state of the labourers on the land. With the exception of about seven miles, the land is the finest that I ever saw in my life, though I have seen every fine vale in every county in England, and in the United States of America. I never saw any land a tenth-part so good. You will know what the land is, when I tell you that it is by no means uncommon for it to produce seven English quarters of wheat upon one English acre; and forty tons of turnips upon one English acre; and that there are, almost in every half mile, from fifty to a hundred acres of turnips in one piece, sometimes white turnips, and sometimes Swedes; all in rows, as straight as a line, and without a weed to be seen in any of these beautiful fields.

"Oh! how you will wish to be here! 'Lord,' you will say to yourselves, 'what pretty villages there must be; what nice churches and churchyards. Oh! and what preciously nice alehouses! Come, Jack, let us set off to Scotland! What nice gardens we shall have to our cottages there! What beautiful flowers our wives will have, climbing up about the windows, and on both sides of the paths leading from the wicket up to the door! And what prancing and barking pigs we shall have running out upon the common, and what a flock of geese grazing upon the green!'

"Stop! stop! I have not come to listen to you, but to make you listen to me. Let me tell you, then, that there is neither village, nor church, nor alehouse, nor garden, nor cottage, nor flowers, nor pig, nor goose, nor common, nor green; but the thing is thus:—1. The farms of a whole county are, generally speaking, the property of one lord. 2. They are so large, that the corn-stacks frequently amount to more than a

hundred upon one farm, each stack having in it, on an average, from fifteen to twenty English quarters of corn. 3. The farmer's house is a house big enough and fine enough for a gentleman to live in; the farm-yard is a square, with buildings on the sides of it for horses, cattle, and implements; the stack-yard is on one side of this, the stacks all in rows, and the place as big as a little town. 4. On the side of the farm-yard next to the stack-yard, there is a place to thrash the corn in; and there is, close by this, always a thrashing-machine, sometimes worked by horses, sometimes by water, sometimes by wind, and sometimes by steam, there being no such thing as a barn or a flail in the whole country.

"'Well,' say you, 'but out of such a quantity of corn, and of beef, and of mutton, there must some come to the share of the chopsticks, to be sure!' Don't be too sure yet; but hold your tongue, and hear my story. The single labourers are kept in this manner: about four of them are put into a shed, quite away from the farm-house, and out of the farm-yard; which shed, Dr. Jameson, in his Dictionary, calls a 'boothie,' a place, says he, where labouring servants are lodged. A boothie means a little booth; and here these men live and sleep, having a certain allowance of oat, barley, and pea meal, upon which they live, mixing it with water, or with milk when they are allowed the use of a cow, which they have to milk themselves. They are allowed some little matter of money besides, to buy clothes with, but never dream of being allowed to set foot within the walls of the farm-house. They hire for the year, under very severe punishment in case of misbehaviour, or quitting service; and cannot have fresh service, without a *character* from the *last master*, and also from the *minister of the parish*!

"Pretty well that for a knife and fork chopstick of Sussex, who has been used to sit round the fire with the master and mistress, and pull about and tickle the laughing maids! Pretty well *that*! But it is the life of the married labourer that will delight you. Upon a steam-engine farm, there are perhaps eight or ten of these. There is, at a considerable distance from the farm-yard, a sort of *barrack* erected for these to live in. It is a long shed, stone walls and pantile roof, and divided into a certain number of *boothies*, each having a door and one little window, all the doors being on one side of the shed, and there being no *back-doors*; no such thing, for them, appears ever to be thought of. The ground in front of the shed is wide or narrow according to circumstances, but quite smooth; merely a place to walk upon. Each distinct *boothie* is about seventeen feet one way, and fifteen feet the other way, as nearly as my eye could determine. There is no ceiling, and no floor but the earth. In this place, a man and his wife and family have to live. When they go into it there is nothing but the four bare walls, and the tiles over their head, and a small fireplace. To make the most of the room, they at their own cost erect *berths*, like those in a barrack-room, which they get up into when they go to bed; and here they are, a man, and his wife, and a parcel of children, squeezed up in this miserable hole, with their meal and their washing tackle, and all their other things; and yet it is quite surprising how decent the women endeavour to keep the place. These women, for I found all the men out at work, appeared to be most industrious creatures, to be extremely obliging, and of good disposition; and the shame is, that they are permitted to enjoy so small a portion of the fruit of all their labours, of all their cares.

"But if their dwelling-places be bad, their food is worse, being fed upon exactly that which we feed hogs and horses upon. The married man receives in money about four pounds for the whole year: and he has besides sixty bushels of oats, thirty bushels of barley, twelve bushels of peas, and three bushels of potatoes, with ground allowed him to plant the potatoes. The master gives him the keep of a cow the year round; but he must find the cow himself; he pays for his own fuel; he must find a woman to reap for twenty whole days in the harvest, as payment for the rent of his boothie. He has no wheat,—the meal altogether amounts to about six pounds for every day in the year; the oatmeal is eaten in porridge; the barley-meal and pea-meal are mixed together, and baked into a sort of cakes, upon an iron plate put over the fire; they sometimes get a pig, and feed it upon the potatoes.

"Thus they never have one bit of wheaten bread, or of wheaten flour, nor of beef, nor mutton, though the land is covered with wheat and with cattle. The hiring is for a year, beginning on the 26th of May, and not at Michaelmas. The farmer takes the man just at the season to get the sweat out of him; and if he dies, he dies when the main work is done. The labourer is wholly at the mercy of the master, who, if he will not keep him beyond the year, can totally ruin him, by refusing him a character. The cow is a thing more in name than in reality; she may be about to calve when the 26th of May comes: the wife may be in such a situation as to make removal perilous to her life. This family has *no home*; and no home can any man be said to have, who can thus be dislodged every year of his life at the will of his master. It frequently happens, that the poor creatures are compelled to sell their cow for next to nothing; and,

indeed, the *necessity of character from the last employer*, makes the man a real slave, worse off than the negro by many degrees; for here there is neither law to ensure him relief, nor motive in the master to attend to his health, or to preserve his life.

"Six days from daylight to dark these good, and laborious, and patient, and kind people labour. On an average they have six English miles to go to church. Here are therefore twelve miles to walk on Sunday; and the consequence is, that they very seldom go. But, say you, what do they do with all the wheat, and all the beef, and all the mutton? and what becomes of all the money that they are sold for? Why, the cattle and sheep walk into England upon their legs; the wheat is put into ships to be sent to London or elsewhere; and as to the money, the farmer is allowed to have a little of it, but almost the whole of it is sent to the landlord, to be gambled, or otherwise squandered away at *London*, at *Paris*, or at *Rome*. The rent of the land is enormous; four, five, six, or seven pounds for an English acre. The farmer is not allowed to get much; almost the whole goes into the pockets of the lords; the labourers are their slaves, and the farmers their slave-drivers. The farm-yards are, in fact, *factories* for making corn and meat, carried on principally by the means of horses and machinery. There are no people; and these men seem to think that people are not necessary to a state. I came over a tract of country a great deal bigger than the county of Suffolk, with only three towns in it, and a couple of villages, while the county of Suffolk has 29 market-towns and 491 villages. Yet our precious government seems to wish to reduce England to the state of this part of Scotland; and you are abused and reproached, and called ignorant, because you will not reside in a *boothie*, and live

upon the food which we give to horses and hogs." pp. 102-7.

This is the description of one of the most accurate observers of all that related to the working man that ever lived. Such is the comparison which he draws between the condition of the hinds, and of the southern chopsticks. Such is his opinion of the superior condition of the southern peasantry, that he says he would not be the man who should propose to one of them to adopt the condition of a hind, especially if the fellow should have a bill-hook in his hand. Cobbett's description is as accurate as it is graphic. Let any one compare it with my own in the early part of this paper, made from personal observation in the summer of 1836. Such was the painful impression left upon Cobbett's mind, that he reverts to it again and again. He tells us of a visit made to a farm near Dunfermline, and of the wretched abodes and food of the men he found there; but the last extract contains the substance of the Bondage System.

Let it be understood that the system to the Bondagers, so called, is no hardship. They are principally girls from sixteen to twenty years of age. Full of health and spirits, and glad enough to range over the farm fields in a troop, with a stout young fellow, laughing and gossiping,—the grievance is none of theirs; but the poor hind's, who has to maintain them. Just when his family becomes large, and he has need of all his earnings to feed, and clothe, and educate his troop of children, then he is compelled to hire and maintain a woman to eat up his children's food; and to take away in her wages that little pittance of cash that is allowed him, as many a wife with tears in her eyes has said, "to clothe the puir bairns and put them to school." But

the system is not without its injurious effect on the Bondager herself. It has been said that the Bondagers are of service in the hind's cottage, but the wives over the whole space where the bondage system prevails tell you that the Bondagers are of little or no use in the house. They look upon themselves as hired to work on the farm, and they neither are very willing to work in the house, nor very capable. They get out-of-door tastes and habits; they loathe the confinement of the house; they dislike its duties. "They are fit only," say the women, to "mind the bairns a bit about the door." And this is one of the evils of the system. Instead of women brought up to manage a house, to care for children, to make a fireside comfortable, and to manage the domestic resources well, they come to housekeeping ignorant, unprepared, and in a great measure disqualified for it. They can hoe turnips and potatoes to a miracle, but know very little about the most approved methods of cooking them. They can rake hay better than comb children's hair; drive a cart or a harrow with a better grace than rock a cradle, and help more nimbly in the barn than in the ingle.

The two points of most importance are those of the hind's being compelled to have a character from the last master, and of being at his mercy, to turn him not only out of employ, but out of house and home. I think little of their having no wheaten flour. Many a hardy race of peasants, and even farmers, both in Scotland and England, in mountain districts, never see any thing in the shape of bread but oat-cake. In Lancashire, Yorkshire, Cumberland, and the Peak of Derbyshire, there are thousands that would not thank you for wheaten bread. The girdle-cakes, as they call them, which the wives of the hinds make, of mixed barley and pea meal, I frequently ate of and enjoyed.

They are about an inch thick, and eight or ten inches in diameter, and taste perceptibly of the pea. These, and milk, are a simple, but not a despicable food; but the fact, that these poor people must bring a character from the last master before they can be employed again, is one which may seem at first sight a reasonable demand, but is in fact the binding link of a most subtle and consummate slavery. I have seen the effect of this system in the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire collieries. There, amongst the master colliers, a combination was entered into, and for aught I know still exists, to regulate the price of coal, and the quantity each master should relatively get. This rule, that no man should be employed except he brought a character from his last master, was adopted; and what was the consequence? That every man was the bounden slave of him in whose employment he was; and that soon the price of coals was raised to three times their actual value, and the labour of the men restricted to about three half-days, or a day and a half, per week.

Let any one imagine a body of men bound by one common interest, holding in their possession all the population of several counties, and subjecting their men to this rule. Can there be a more positive despotism? The hind is at the mercy of the caprice, the anger, or the cupidity of the man in whose hand he is; and if he dismiss him, as I said in the early part of this paper, where is he to go? As Cobbett justly remarks, he has NO HOME; and nothing but utter and irretrievable ruin is before him. Such a condition is unfit for any Englishman; such power as that of the master no man ought to hold. A condition like this must generate a slavish character. Can that noble independence of feeling belong to a hind, which is the boast of the humblest Englishman, while he

holds employment, home, character, everything at the utter mercy of another? I have now laid before the reader the combined evidence of my own observation and that of a great observer of the working classes, both in town and country, in the north and the south, and I leave it to the judgment of any man whether such a system is good or bad: but I cannot help picturing to myself what would be the consequence of the spread of this system of large farm and bondage all over England. Let us suppose, as we must in that case, almost all our working population cooped up in large towns in shops and factories, and all the country thrown into large farms to provide them with corn—what an England would it then be! The poetry and the picturesque of rural life would be annihilated; the delicious cottages and gardens, the open common, and the shouting of children would vanish; the scores of sweet old-fashioned hamlets, where an humble sociality and primitive simplicity yet remain, would no more be found; all those charms and amenities of country life, which have inspired poets and patriots with strains and with deeds that have crowned England with half her glory, would have perished; all that series of gradations of rank and character, from the plough-boy and the milk-maid, the free labourer, the yeoman, the small farmer, the substantial farmer, up to the gentleman, would have gone too;

> And a bold peasantry, its country's pride,

would be replaced by a race of stupid and sequacious slaves, tilling the solitary lands of vast landholders, who must become selfish and hardened in their natures, from the want of all those claims upon their better sympathies which the more varied state of society at present presents. The question, therefore,

does not merely involve the comforts of the hind, but the welfare and character of the country at large; and I think no man who desires England not merely to maintain its noble reputation, but to advance in social wisdom and benevolence, can wish for the wider spread, or even the continuance of the Bondage System. I think all must unite with me in saying, let the very name perish from the plains of England, where it sounds like a Siberian word.[4] Let labour be free; and this TRUCK SYSTEM of the agriculturists be abolished, not by Act of Parliament, but by public principle and sound policy. It is a system which wrongs all parties. It wrongs the hind, for it robs his children of comfort and knowledge; it wrongs the farmer, for what he saves in labour he pays in rent, while he gains only the character of a taskmaster; and it wrongs the landholder, for it puts his petty pecuniary interest into the balance against his honour and integrity; and causes him to be regarded as a tyrant, in hearts where he might be honoured as a natural protector, and revered as a father.

[4] Since the publication of the former edition of this work, I understand *the name has been changed*; that, in May 1839, it was agreed to call the *Bondagers Woman's-workers*; a clumsy appellation, and which does not at all do away with anything more in the system *than its name*.

This account of the Bondage System in the first edition, excited, as was to be expected, a strong feeling in the public mind, both in the north and the south. In the south great surprise, for it was a system totally unknown to nine-tenths of readers; in the north great indignation on the part of the supporters of the system. I have received many conflicting

statements from the Bondage district,—some thanking me for having made public so accurate a description of an objectionable system; others vindicating the system, and applauding it. I need not here notice those communications which accorded with my own personal observations and inquiries; but as my object is simply truth, I am more desirous to give a counter-statement, so that all readers may draw their own inferences. The most able, and in itself most interesting, defence of the system, I received from the lady of John Grey, Esq. of Dilstone House, Northumberland. Mr. Grey is well known as an active magistrate, an eminent agriculturist and promoter of the interests of the agricultural class; and Mrs. Grey is evidently a lady of a vigorous intellect and a noble nature. She is a native of Northumberland, proud of her county, and thoroughly persuaded of the excellence of its agricultural system. I regret that my space will not permit me to give more than a very summary notice of her vindication, nor more than a mere reference to the documents by Mr. Grey, Mr. Gilly of Norham, the author of the "Life of Felix Neff," and Mr. Blackden of Ford Castle, which, however, may be found in Mr. Frederick Hill's works on National Education, under the head of "Northern District."

Mrs. Grey denies that Cobbett, though a graphic writer, is an accurate one. She denies that a character is required with a hind from his last master, but merely a certificate called "The Lines," stating that he is free from his former service. She asserts that all hinds *have* gardens; and that Bondagers make good domestic servants, and wives. She reports that Mr. Grey only remembers *two* instances of his hinds receiving parochial relief, and adds that she never saw *two* instances of their own

hinds being intoxicated.

But her description of the cottages of hinds and their way of life, is perfectly Arcadian. “In a glance at cottage life in Northumberland, such as 20 years of intimate observation has shewn it to me, let me introduce you into one of the ‘miserable holes’ where, according to Cobbett, this ‘slave population’ are ‘squeezed up.’ Observe, if you please, its furniture. There are a couple of neatly painted or fir-wood *press-beds*; a dresser and shelves, on which are ranged a goodly display of well-hoarded delf, or of modern blue-and-white Staffordshire ware. There is also a *press* or cupboard, in which are kept the nicer articles of food, and below which are drawers for the clothes of the family. A clock, in a handsome oaken case, ticks, not behind the door, but in some conspicuous situation; and, in many families, is added a *mahogany* half-chest of drawers for the female finery. I admit that *the houses are generally too small, and the want of a back-door and a commodious second apartment*, are great evils; but *this is the landlord’s blame*; and my object is only to shew that the hind, though esteemed by you ‘many degrees worse than a negro,’ has yet the means of making these insufficient abodes look most respectable and comfortable. The press-beds form a partition, behind which is a small space containing in one part a bed for the Bondager, and in another, a little dairy and pantry containing stores of meat, flour, etc. This space ought to be larger, and to form a second respectable apartment, but, such as it is, it is well filled with the necessaries of life, which is no small matter to the inhabitant. We might censure, too, the matted ceiling, were not the eye immediately attracted from it by the plentiful store of bacon which hangs below it, together with hanging shelves

containing a supply of cheeses, pot-herbs, etc., and in other parts bunches of yarn ready for making into stockings or blankets. Then, as to clothing, the men on Sundays are both respectably and handsomely dressed, and the women,—yes, these very 'slaves', the Bondagers, may be seen with their light print or Merino gowns, their winter's plaid, and their summer's *Thibet*, or spun silk shawls; their Tuscan or Dunstable bonnets; and their open-work cotton stockings, or smart boots. A *tawdry* figure is a rare sight; the generality are comfortably and neatly attired, and their dress good in quality.

"When the 'slave-gangs' are at work in the fields under their 'driver' in winter, they are certainly a motley and uncouth group; many of them having on their fathers' great coats, and others long woollen dresses, reaching to their ankles, above their other clothes, to defend them from the cold. But in summer, the jaunty air of their short white, or light cotton jackets, an article of dress which has somewhat the appearance of the waist of a lady's riding-habit, with its open collar displaying a gay handkerchief beneath, with their pink or blue gingham petticoats, give them quite a picturesque appearance.

"I should like to shew you too, what a pleasant sight it is when you pay a visit of enquiry on the occasion of a *birth*. You will find the mother laid among her well-bleached sheets, and comfortable home-made blankets, surmounted by a gaily-patched quilt; and though you may be no admirer—as gentlemen seldom are—of new-born babies, yet, when the little thing is brought out of its snug cradle for your inspection, you cannot but cast an approving glance on its nicely-plaited cap, and the warm flannels and neatly made frock (often

ornamented with braiding), which bespeak it the child of competence and comfort. The Bondager too is there, rather *dressed* for the occasion (though 'said by the wives to be of little or no use to them'), it being customary for her to stay at home to look after the house and nurse the mother, till she is well enough to resume her duties. Should it be a first-born, you are invited to inspect the baby's wardrobe, and there is little appearance of wretchedness in the sufficient stock of neat little garments 'laid up in lavender' for the little stranger. It is expected, too, that you should drink the child's health, and a bottle of wine or spirits is produced from the cupboard, along with a noble cheese, and a loaf to match it, which it would be thought very 'mean' not to have to offer on such occasions." Mrs. Grey luxuriates in descriptions of the "*white loaf* which the women always have, and the dainty *white cake* for tea, kneaded with butter or cream, when a friend comes to visit them; of the fat things with which their cows and their pigs overflow their dairy and larder; of their general good fare; and of the many days when the Bondager is not at field-work, but stays to spin, knit, wash and iron for the household,— always milking the cow, and frequently churning and making cheese." She adds that the hinds' wives make great profit of their butter, about 5*l.* a year; and that they have "great spinning matches, and spin all the woollen articles that they use."

Mr. Grey in "Two Letters on the State of the Agricultural Interests, and the Condition of the Labouring Poor," published by Ridgway, London, 1831, draws a similar picture, describing the hind's cottage as "a scene of comfort and contentment."

Now these hinds must be very unreasonable fellows. Spite of all their bounteous and Arcadian lot;

spite of their cottages being “scenes of comfort and contentment,” they certainly were, as described in the preceding pages, found by us, in 1836, in a most *dis*contented state. And since then they have turned out in great numbers, calling upon their employers to abolish the system. In public meetings held at Wooller, and elsewhere, they described their situation as wretched, and their average weekly gains at about 5*s.* $6^{3}/_{4}$*d.* Mr. L. Hindmarsh, in a paper on the Bondage System, read at Newcastle, in August, 1838, bears testimony to the great dissatisfaction of the hinds. Mr. Grey, in his pamphlet alluded to above, states, on the other hand, that the “conditions” of the hind, as they are called, were in 1831, the year of its publication, as follows; and that however the market-price may vary the quantities are *invariably the same*, and *always of the very best quality*; varying with the price of grain from £30 to £40 a year.

	£.	*s.*	*d.*
36 bushels of oats	6	12	0
24 ditto barley	5	12	0
12 ditto peas	3	0	0
3 ditto wheat	1	5	0
3 ditto rye	0	15	0
36 ditto potatoes, at 1*s.* 6*d.*	2	14	0
24 pounds of wool	1	0	0
A cow’s keep for the year	9	0	0
Cottage and garden	3	0	0
Coals, carrying from the pit	2	0	0
Cash	3	10	0
£	38	8	0

This is also exclusive of what the other branches of the family earn; the females receiving 10*d.* or 1*s.* a

day generally, and 2*s.* or 2*s.* 6*d.* in harvest.

Besides the general discontent and turn-out just noticed, which Mrs. Grey attributes to the waywardness of human nature, we must introduce these facts. The morals of these districts have been highly extolled, and both Mr. and Mrs. Grey strongly reiterate the eulogium. Mrs. Grey does not recollect *two* instances of intoxication amongst the hinds in her life; we saw many one day, as already stated. In the Fourth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, even while advocating "the hinding system," we find these singular paragraphs: "Whatever general merits may or may not otherwise have distinguished Northumberland and Durham from more pauperized districts, these counties must not lay claim to superiority in reference to bastardy, for in no part of England was bastardy more prevalent than in portions of this district, and in none was the practice of relief to the mother more pertinaciously upheld. The Newcastle parishes of All Saints' and St. Andrews, together with the parishes of Sunderland and Berwick, *are the only places we can call to mind* where a weekly allowance for every legitimate child was not a matter of course.

"The difficulties of inducing children in competent circumstances to contribute to the support of their aged parents (whose maintenance the parish had hitherto taken off their hands), were quite as great, if not relatively greater, considering the wages of labour, in the north as in the south."

So much for morals; now for the Arcadian cottages. The Newcastle Courant of November 23d, 1838, stated that "Thomas Dodds, Esq., surgeon, read a very valuable paper on 'Improvement in Cottage Architecture, and the domestic comfort of the peasantry of North Northumberland.' Mr. Dodds'

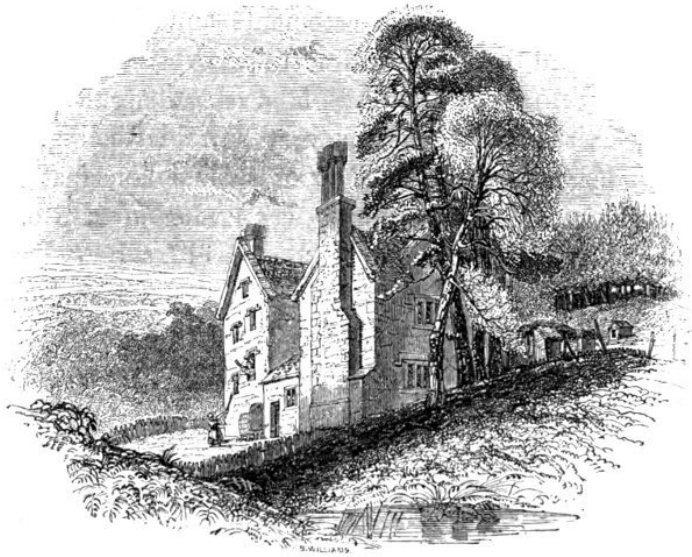
long personal observation, arising from his medical practice," it is stated, "peculiarly qualified him for the discussion of this important and interesting subject," and Mr. Dodds very summarily and pithily characterized these abodes as "a disgrace to Northumberland." He contrasted them with "the splendid edifices, commemorative columns, and magnificent streets, which the people of Northumberland are raising." He said, "The *miserable tenements of numbers of this class* are less carefully constructed than the stables of their horses, formed, as they are, *in a majority of cases, of only one apartment*, open to the roof, with earthen floor, and four-paned windows that dim the light of day, a part of which is often occupied by the cow; and where the decencies of life cannot be observed, there being no separate apartments for the females of the family, one of whom is often a stranger in the capacity of a servant to work 'the bondage.'" He represented them equally detrimental to health as to comfort and morals; and gave many instances from personal observation, especially a case at that moment of a family of eight persons, near Alnwick, all lying ill of typhus fever in their one room with the corpse of one of them laid out in the midst of them. He added a ludicrous anecdote of a cow which, in the night, leaped, in some sudden fear, from its fastening behind the bed of a hind at Hawkhill, right through the bed, and alighted on the hearth, bringing the bed at one crash upon the people in it, and severely injuring the man's wife. Mr. Dodds called the attention of his hearers to some cottages of the Duke of Northumberland erected at Brislee, as models for cottage architecture, and strongly urged that "the hinds should *be no longer compelled to seek in sleep and oblivion the only solace of his cheerless dwelling*,"

but have “an ingle blinking bonnily,” where he might “spend his hours of relaxation in innocent amusements, or in reading books suited to his way of life.”

“A vote of thanks to Mr. Dodds for this address was moved by John Lambert, Esq., and *carried by acclamation*.”

What then are we to infer from these very conflicting statements? Why, that where the people are discontented, and the appeal to their wealthy neighbours on their behalf is received with acclamation,—the evil must be the actual condition, and the “cottage scenes of comfort and contentment,” the exceptions. Mrs. Grey admits that she “has endeavoured to present the *sunny side* of the picture as the reverse of my gloomy one.” I can well believe that she lives on the sunny side of humanity; and that her enlightened husband, and the most liberal portion of the agriculturists, so treat their hinds as to form the exception. It is only another proof of the wisdom of Pope’s words that “whate’er is best administered is best.” That, under a pure despotism, people may be perfectly happy if they happen to have a kind tyrant. That the hinds under the bondage system may be, moral, flourishing, and happy, when they have kind and sympathizing employers but that does not prove that the system itself has a tendency to such happy results, nor consequently remove our objections to it. *Any* condition of the people is good where Christian benevolence and enlightened regard are exercised towards them, and any system, even the bondage system, is better than that deadly neglect of the peasantry by the landowners, which too much prevails in many parts of the south.

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CHAPTER V.
THE TERRORS OF A SOLITARY HOUSE.

The citizen who lives in a compact house in the centre of a great city; whose doors and windows are secured at night by bars, bolts, shutters, locks, and hinges of the most approved and patented construction; who, if he look out of doors, looks upon splendid rows of lamps; upon human habitations all about him; whose house can only be assailed behind by climbing over the tops of other houses; or before, by eluding troops of passengers and watchmen, whom the smallest alarm would hurry to the spot: I say, if such a man could be suddenly set down in one of our many thousand country houses, what a feeling of unprotected solitude would fall upon him. To sit by the fire of many a farm-house, or cottage, and hear the

unopposed wind come sighing and howling about it; to hear the trees swaying and rustling in the gale, infusing a most forlorn sense of the absence of all neighbouring abodes; to look on the simple casements and the old-fashioned locks and bolts, and to think what would their resistance be to the determined attack of bold thieves;—I imagine it would give many such worthy citizen a new and not very enviable feeling. But if he were to step out before the door of such a house at nine or ten o'clock of a winter or autumnal night, what a state of naked jeopardy it would seem to stand in! Perhaps all solitary darkness;—nothing to be heard but the sound of neighbouring woods; or the roar of distant waters; or the baying of the ban-dogs at the scattered and far-off farm-houses; the wind puffing upon him with a wild freshness, as from the face of vast and solitary moors; or perhaps some gleam of moonlight, or the wild, lurid light which hovers in the horizon of a winter-night sky, revealing to him desolate wastes, or gloomy surrounding woods. In truth, there is many a sweet spot that, in summer weather, and by fair daylight, do seem very paradises; of which we exclaim, in passing, "Ay! there could I live and die, and never desire to leave it!" There are thousands of such sweet places, which, when night drops down, assume strange horrors, and make us wish for towers and towns, watchmen, walkers of streets, and gaslight. One seems to have no security in any thing. A single house five or six miles from a neighbour. Mercy! why it is the very place for a murder! What would it avail there to cry help! murder! Murder might be perpetrated a dozen times before help could come!

Just one such fancy as that, and what a prison! a trap! does such a place become to a fearful heart. We

look on the walls, and think them slight as cardboard; on the roof, and it becomes in our eyes no better than a layer of rushes. If we were attacked here, it were all over! This gimcrack tenement would be crushed in before the brawny hand of a thief. And to think of out-of-doors! Yes! of that pleasant out-of-doors, which in the day we glorified ourselves in. Those forest tracts of heath, and gorse, and flowering broom, where the trout hid themselves beneath the overhanging banks of the most transparent streams—ugh! they are now the very lurking-places of danger! What admirable concealment for liers-in-wait, are the deep beds of heather. How black do those bushes of broom and gorse look to a suspicious fancy! They are just the very things for lurking assassins to crouch behind. And what is worse, those woods! those woods that come straggling up to the very doors; putting forward a single tree here and there, as advanced guards of picturesque beauty in the glowing summer noon, or in the spring, when their leaves are all delicately new. Beauty! how could we ever think them beautiful, though we saw them stand in their assembled majesty; though they did tower aloft with their rugged, gashed, and deeply-indented stems, and make a sound as of many waters in their tops, and cast down pleasant shadows on the mossy turf beneath; and though the thrush and the nightingale did sing triumphantly in their thickets. Beautiful! they are horrible! Their blackness of darkness now makes us shudder. Their breezy roar is fearful beyond description. Let daylight and summer sunshine come, and make them look as pleasant as they will, we would not have a wood henceforward within a mile of us. Why, up to the walls of your house, under your very windows, may evil eyes now be glaring from behind those sturdy boles;—they

seem to have grown there just to suit the purposes of robbery and murder. We look now to the dogs and guns for assistance, but they give us but cold comfort: for the guns only remind us that at this moment the muzzle of one may be at that chink in the shutter, at that hole out of which a knot has dropped, and in another moment we are in eternity! And the dogs!—see, they rise! they set up the bristles on their backs! they growl! they bark! our fears are true! the place is beset!

This may seem rather exaggerated, read by good daylight, or by the fire of a city hearth; but this is the natural spirit of the solitary house. It is that which many a one has felt. It has cured many a one of longing to live in a “sweet sequestered cot;” nay, it is the spirit felt by the naturalized inhabitants of such solitary places. I look upon such places to generate fears and superstitions too, in no ordinary degree. The inhabitants of solitary houses are often most arrant cowards; and for this there are many causes. A sense of exposure to danger if it be not lost by time, is more likely to generate timidity of disposition than courage. Then, the sound of woods and waters; the mysterious sighings and moanings, and lumberings, that winds and other causes occasion amongst the old walls and decayed roofs, and ill-fastened doors and casements of large old country houses, have a wonderful influence on the minds of the ignorant and simple, who pass their lives in the solitude of fields; and go to and fro between their homes and the scene of their duties, often through deep and lonesome dells, through deep, o’ershadowed lanes by night; by the cross-road, and over the dreary moor: all places of no good character. Superstitious legends hang all about such neighbourhoods; and traditions enough to freeze the blood of the ignorant, taint a

dozen spots round every such place. In this field a girl was killed by her jealous, or only too favoured lover: to the boughs of that old oak, a man was found hanging: in that deep dark pool the poor blind fiddler was found drowned: in that old stone-quarry, and under that high cliff, deeds were done that have mingled a blackness with their name. Nay, in one such locality, the head of a woodman was found by some mowers returning in the evening from their work. There it lay in the green path of a narrow dingle, horrid and blackening in the sun. It was supposed to have been severed from the wretched man's body with his own axe, by a band of poachers, who charged him with being a spy upon them. The body was found cast into a neighbouring marsh.

What lonely country but has these petrifying horrors? And is it wonderful that they have their effect on the simple peasantry? especially as they are the constant topics round the evening fire, along with a thousand haunted-house and churchyard stories; ghosts, and highway robberies, and

> Horrid stabs in groves forlorn,
> And murders done in caves.—*Hood.*

The very means of defence sometimes become the aggravators of their evils. The dogs and guns have added to the catalogue of their tales of horror. The dogs, as conscious of their solitary station as their masters, and with true canine instinct, feeling a great charge and responsibility upon them, set up the most clamourous barkings at the least noise in the night, and often seem to take a melancholy pleasure, a whole night through, in uttering such awful and long-spun howls as are seldom heard in more secure and cheerful situations. These are often looked upon as prognostics of family troubles, and occasion great

fears. Who has not heard these dismal howlings at old halls, and been witness to the anxiety they occasioned? And, if a branch blown by the wind do but scrape against a pane, or an unlucky pig get into the garden, the dogs are all barking outrageously, and the family is up, in the certain belief that they are beset with thieves; and it has been no unfrequent circumstance, on retiring to rest again, that loaded pistols have been left about on tables, and the servants on coming down next morning, with that fatal propensity to sport with fire-arms, have playfully menaced, and actually shot one another in their rashness. Such a catastrophe occurred in the family of a relative of mine, on just such an occasion. But truly, the horrors and depredations which formerly were perpetrated in such places, were enough to make a solitary house a terrible sojourn in the night. A single cottage on a great heath; a toll-bar on a wild road, far from a town; a wealthy farm-house in a retired region; an old hall or grange, amongst gloomy woods. These were places in which such outrages were committed in former years as filled the newspapers of the time with continual details of terror; and would furnish volumes of the most dreadful stories. It is said that the diminution of highway robberies and stopping of mails, once so frequent, has been in a great measure occasioned by the system of banking and paper-money. Instead of travellers, carrying with them large bags of gold, a letter by post transmits a bill to any amount, which, if intercepted is of no use to the thief, because the fact is immediately notified to the bank, and payment prevented; and notes being numbered, makes it a matter of the highest risk to offer them, lest the public be apprized of the numbers, and the offender be secured. But the wonderful improvement

of all our roads since the days of M'Adam, the consequently increased speed of travelling—the increased population and cultivation of the country, all have combined to spoil the trade of the public plunderer. And the press, as in other respects so in this, has added a marvellous influence. Scarcely has a crime of any sort against society been committed, but it raises a hue and cry; handbills and paragraphs in newspapers are flying far and wide, and dexterous must be the offender who escapes. The house of a friend of mine was entered on a Sunday night, and by means of handbills four of the thieves were secured on the Monday, and tried and transported on the Tuesday. But fifty years ago this could not have been done in a country place. The traveller had to wade through mud and deep ruts, along our well-frequented roads; and if assailed it was impossible to fly. Desperate bands of thieves made nocturnal assaults upon solitary houses; and, long ere a hue and cry could be raised, they had vanished into woods and heaths, or had fled beyond the slow flight of lumbering mails, and newspapers that did not reach their readers sometimes for a fortnight. Those were the times for fearful tragedies in lonely dwellings, which even yet furnish thrilling themes for winter firesides.

There is an account of the attack of the house of Colonel Purcell, which appeared in the newspapers at the time, and was twice reprinted in the Kaleidoscope, a Liverpool literary paper; the last time soon after the gallant Colonel's death, in 1822, which, although it belongs to Ireland, a country whence not volumes, but whole libraries of such recitals might be imported, I shall insert here, because it so well illustrates the sort of horrors to which lonely houses were, in this country, formerly

very much exposed; and from which they are not now entirely exempt; and because perhaps no greater instance of manly courage is upon record. A similar one, of female intrepidity, in a young woman who defended a toll-bar, in which she was alone, against a band of thieves, and shot several of them, I recollect seeing some years ago in the newspapers.

EXTRAORDINARY INTREPIDITY OF SIR JOHN PURCELL.

At the Cork Assizes, Maurice Noonan stood indicted for a burglary, and attempting to rob the house of Sir John Purcell, at Highfort, on the night of the 11th of March, 1812.

Sir John Purcell said, that, on the night of the 11th of March last, after he had retired to bed, he heard some noise outside the window of his parlour. He slept on the ground-floor, in a room immediately adjoining the parlour. There was a door from one room into the other; but this having been found inconvenient, and there being another passage from the bed-chamber more accommodating, it was nailed up, and some of the furniture of the parlour placed against it. Shortly after Sir John heard the noise in the front of his house, the windows of the parlour were dashed in, and the noise, occasioned by the feet of the robbers in leaping from the windows down upon the floor, appeared to denote a gang not less than fourteen in number, as it struck him. He immediately got out of bed; and the first resolution he took being to make resistance, it was with no small mortification that he reflected upon the unarmed condition in which he was placed, being destitute of a single weapon of the ordinary sort. In this state he spent little time in deliberation, as it

almost immediately occurred to him, that, having supped in the bed-chamber on that night, a knife had been left behind by accident, and he instantly proceeded to grope in the dark for this weapon, which happily he found, before the door leading from the parlour into the bed-chamber had been broken. While he stood in calm but resolute expectation that the progress of the robbers would soon lead them to the bed-chamber, he heard the furniture which had been placed against the nailed-up door, expeditiously displaced, and immediately afterwards the door was burst open. The moon shone with great brightness, and when the door was thrown open, the light streaming in through three large windows in the parlour, afforded Sir John a view that might have made an intrepid spirit not a little apprehensive. His bed-room was darkened to excess, in consequence of the shutters of the windows, as well as the curtains being closed; and thus while he stood enveloped in darkness, he saw standing before him, by the brightness of the moonlight, a body of men well armed; and of those who were in the van of the gang, he observed that a few were blackened. Armed only with this case-knife, and aided only by a dauntless heart, he took his station by the side of the door, and in a moment after one of the villains entered from the parlour into the dark room. Instantly upon advancing, Sir John plunged the knife at him, the point of which entered under the right arm, and in a line with the nipple, and so home was the blow sent, that the knife passed into the robber's body, until Sir John's hand stopped its further progress. Upon receiving this thrust, the villain reeled back into the parlour, crying out blasphemously that he was killed; and shortly after another advanced, who was received in a similar

manner, and who also staggered back into the parlour, crying out that he was wounded. A voice from the outside gave orders to fire into the dark room. Upon which, a man stepped forward with a short gun in his hand, which had the butt broke off at the small, and which had a piece of cord tied round the barrel and stock near the swell. As this fellow stood in the act to fire, Sir John had the amazing coolness to look at his intended murderer, and without betraying any audible emotion whatever, which might point out the exact spot which he was standing in, he calmly calculated his own safety from the shot which was preparing for him. He saw that the contents of the piece were likely to pass close to his breast without menacing him with, at least, any serious wound, and in this state of pain and manly expectation, he stood without flinching until the piece was fired, and its contents harmlessly lodged in the wall. It was loaded with a brace of bullets and three slugs. As soon as the robber fired, Sir John made a pass at him with the knife, and wounded him in the arm, which he repeated again in a moment with similar effect; and as the others had done, the villain after being wounded, retired, exclaiming that he was wounded. The robbers immediately rushed forward from the parlour into the dark room, and then it was that Sir John's mind recognised the deepest sense of danger, not to be oppressed by it, however, but to surmount it. He thought that all chance of preserving his own life was over; and he resolved to sell that life still dearer to his intended murderers, than even what they had already paid for the attempt to deprive him of it. He did not lose a moment after the villains had entered the room, to act with the determination he had so instantaneously adopted. He struck at the

fourth fellow with his knife, and wounded him, and at the same instant he received a blow on the head, and found himself grappled with. He shortened his hold of the knife, and stabbed repeatedly at the fellow with whom he found himself engaged. The floor being slippery with the blood of the wounded men, Sir John and his adversary both fell, and while they were on the ground, Sir John thinking that his thrusts with his knife, though made with all his force, did not seem to produce the decisive effect, which they had in the beginning of the conflict, he examined the point of his weapon with his finger, and found that the blade of it had been bent near the point. As he lay struggling on the ground, he endeavoured, but unsuccessfully, to straighten the curvature of the knife; but while one hand was employed in this attempt, he perceived that the grasp of his adversary was losing its constraint and pressure, and in a moment or two after, he found himself released from it; the limbs of the robber were, in fact, by this time, unnerved by death. Sir John found that this fellow had a sword in his hand, and this he immediately seized, and gave several blows with it, his knife being no longer serviceable. At length the robbers, finding so many of their party had been killed or wounded, employed themselves in removing the bodies; and Sir John took this opportunity of retiring to a place a little apart from the house, where he remained a short time. They dragged their companions into the parlour, and having placed chairs with the backs upwards, by means of these they lifted the bodies out of the windows, and afterwards took them away. When the robbers retired, Sir John returned to the house, and called up a man-servant from his bed, who, during this long and bloody conflict, had not appeared, and

had consequently received from his master warm and loud upbraiding for his cowardice. Sir John then placed his daughter-in-law, and grandchild, who were his only inmates, in places of safety, and took such precautions as circumstances pointed out, till the daylight appeared. The next day, the alarm having been given, search was made after the robbers, and Sir John, having gone to the house of the prisoner Noonan, upon searching, he found concealed under his bed, the identical short gun with which one of the robbers had fired at him. Noonan was immediately secured and sent to gaol, and upon being visited by Sir John Purcell, he acknowledged that Sir John "had like to do for him," and was proceeding to show, until Sir John prevented him, the wounds he had received from the knife in his arm.

An accomplice of the name of John Daniel Sullivan was produced, who deposed to the same effect. The party met at Noonan's house; that they were nine in number, and had arms; that the prisoner was one of the number, and that he carried a small gun. Upon the gun, which was in the court, being produced, with which Sir John had been fired at, the witness said it was that with which the prisoner was armed the night of the attack; that two men were killed, and three dreadfully wounded. The witness stood a long and rigorous examination by Mr. Counsellor O'Connell; but none of the facts seemed to be shaken, though every use was made of the guilty character of the witness. The prisoner made no defence, and Judge Mayne then proceeded to charge the jury, and commended with approbation the bravery and presence of mind displayed throughout a conflict so very unequal and bloody, by Sir John Purcell. The jury, after a few minutes, returned their

verdict—guilty.

But it was not only plunder which excited these fearful attacks; party and family feuds were prosecuted in the same savage spirit, even by the light of day. I have heard my wife's mother relate the following incident, which occurred in her own neighbourhood. About sixty-five years ago there lived at Llanelwth Hall, midway between Llandilo and Llandovery, a gentleman of considerable fortune of the name of Powell. He had separated from his wife, by whom he had two daughters,—and her brother, Captain Bowen, inflamed by the animosity which naturally arises out of such family divisions, and supposed to be instigated by a paramour of the lady's of the name of Williams, engaged, in concert with this Williams, a band of men to accompany him on a pretended smuggling expedition; and having plied them well with promises of ample payment and plenty of liquor—a bottle of brandy and a pair of new shoes for the day—marched up to Powell's house at twelve o'clock at noon, and at the time of Llandilo fair, when the conspirators knew that Powell's servants would be absent. The only persons actually left in the house with him, were an old woman, and a daughter of this very Bowen's. The conspirators advanced to the front door, and entered the hall, where the old woman met them. Her they seized, and bound to the leg of an old massy oak table. Powell, attracted to the hall by the noise, was immediately seized and literally hewn to pieces in the most horrible manner in the presence of the old woman, and of the murderer's own daughter, who alarmed at the entrance of so grim a band, had concealed herself under this table. The girl from that hour lost her senses, and wandered about the country, a confirmed maniac. My informant often

saw this girl at her mother's, who was kind to her, and where she often therefore came, having a particular seat by the fire always left for her. In a lucid interval, they once ventured to ask her what she recollected of this shocking event. She said that she believed she had fainted, and on coming to herself, saw her father stand with a hatchet over her uncle in the act to give him another blow, and that she actually saw her uncle's face hanging over his shoulder. At this point of the recital, the recollection of the horrors of it came upon her so strongly, that she fell into one of her most violent fits of madness, and they never dared to mention the subject afterwards in her presence.

A fall of snow happening while the murderers were in the house, caused them to be tracked and secured, and Bowen and several, if not all, of his accomplices were executed. Williams made his escape, and was afterwards taken as a sailor on board an American vessel during the war, where he was recognised by some of his countrymen. He made, however, a second escape, as is supposed through the connivance of some relenting neighbour, and never was heard of afterwards. My informant well recollects two of these murderers coming to her mother's house at Cyfarthfa, a few days after the perpetration of the outrage, having so long managed to elude their pursuers. They were equipped as travelling tinkers; but they had new knapsacks, and what was more provocative of notice at that moment, very downcast and melancholy aspects. They felt by the looks which the mistress of the house fixed on them, that they were suspected, and immediately hastened away over the hills towards Aberdare, where they were secured the next day.

A fact related by a minister of the Society of

Friends, shews at once the primitive simplicity which still prevails in some retired districts, and the evident power of faith in Providence over the spirit of evil. In one of the thinly-peopled dales of that very beautiful, and yet by parts, very bleak and dreary region—the Peak of Derbyshire, stood a single house far from neighbours. It was inhabited by a farmer and his family, who lived in such a state of isolation, so unmolested by intruders, and unapprehensive of danger, that they were hardly in the habit of fastening their door at night. The farmer who had a great distance to go to market, was sometimes late before he got back,—late it may be supposed according to their habits; for in such old-fashioned places, where there is nothing to excite and keep alive the attention but their daily labour, the good people when the day's duties are at an end, drop into bed almost before the sun himself; and are all up, and pursuing their several occupations, almost before the sun too. On these occasions, the good woman used to retire to rest at the usual time, and her husband returning found no latch nor bolt to obstruct his entrance. But one time the wife hearing some one come up to the door, and enter the house, supposed it was her husband; but, after the usual time had elapsed, and he did not come to bed, she got up and went down stairs, when her terror and astonishment may be imagined, for she saw a great sturdy fellow in the act of reconnoitring for plunder. At the first view of him, she afterwards said, she felt ready to drop; but being naturally courageous, and of a deeply religious disposition, she immediately recovered sufficient self-possession to avoid any outcry, and to walk with apparent firmness to a chair which stood on one side of the fireplace. The marauder immediately seated himself in another

chair which stood opposite, and fixed his eyes upon her with a most savage expression. Her courage was now almost spent; but recollecting herself, she put up an inward prayer to the Almighty for protection, and threw herself upon his providence. She immediately felt her internal strength revive, and looked steadfastly at the man, who now had drawn from his pocket a large clasp-knife, opened it, and with a murderous expression in his eyes, appeared ready to spring upon her. She however evinced no visible emotion; she said not a word; but continued to pray for deliverance, or resignation; and to look on the fearful man with a calm seriousness. He rose up, looked at her, then at the knife; then wiped it across his hand; then again eagerly glanced at her; when, at once, a sudden damp seemed to fall upon him; his eyes seemed to blench before her still fixed gaze; he closed his knife, and went out. At a single spring she reached the door; shot the bolt with a convulsive rapidity, and fell senseless on the floor. When she recovered from her swoon, she was filled with the utmost anxiety on account of her husband, lest the villain should meet him by the way. But presently, she heard his well-known step; his well-known voice on finding the door fastened; and let him in with a heart trembling with mingled agitation and thankfulness. Great as had been her faith on this occasion, and great the interposition of Providence, we may be sure that she would not risk the exercise of the one, or tempt the other, by neglecting in future to shoot the bolt of the door; and her husband, at once taught the danger of his house and of his own passage home, made it a rule to leave the market-town at least an hour earlier after the winter markets.

The unwelcome visitant in this anecdote is one of

that class of offenders called “sturdy rogues.” Of the real “sturdy rogue” the city, amongst all its numerous varieties of rogues, knows nothing. He forms one of the terrors of the solitary house. They are such places that he haunts, because he there finds opportunities in the absence of the men to frighten and bully the women. If he find only a single woman left, as is often the case in harvest time, or at fair or market time, when all the family that can leave have left, he then makes the terror of his presence a means of extorting large booty. What can be more fearful than for a single individual, but especially for a woman, at a lonely house, while all the men are absent in the fields, or elsewhere, to see a huge brawny fellow of ill looks come to the door, peering about with a suspicious inquisitiveness, armed with a sturdy staff, followed, perhaps, by a strong sullen bull-dog, professing himself a tinker, a rag-gatherer, a rat-catcher—anything, under which to hide evil designs? Nothing, truly, can be more appalling, except when under the garb of a woman, you feel assured that you have a man before you; or a troop of fellows acting the distressed tradesmen, or sailors with nothing on their bodies, perhaps, but a pair of trousers, and on their heads a handkerchief tied. When such sturdy vagabonds come, and first cringe and beg in a piteous tone, till, having spied out the real nakedness of the place, as to physical strength, they rise in their demands, hint strange things; instead of going away when desired, walk into the house, grow insolent, and at length downright thievish and outrageous,—these are circumstances of peculiar terror not to be exceeded in human experience, and which yet have been often experienced by the dwellers in solitary houses.

I have heard a lady describe her sensations in such

a situation. A figure in a man's hat, tied down with an India silk handkerchief, blue cloak and stuff petticoat, suddenly appeared before her, and demanded a supply of articles of female attire. She offered half-a-crown to be rid of this unpleasant guest, for there was something about her which filled the lady with apprehension; but the money was refused, and with a gesture that threw open the cloak, and revealed the real figure of a man, with naked arms, and in a white Marseilles waistcoat. The demand for women's garments was complied with as speedily as possible, and the person hastily went away. The next day, the lady on going to the neighbouring town, beheld a large handbill in the post-office window, offering a reward of 100*l.* for the apprehension of a delinquent charged with high crimes and misdemeanours, and described as "a Dane well known to the nobility and gentry, having been master of the ceremonies at Brighton and Tunbridge Wells." It was the very description of her yesterday's guest.

But when night is added to such a situation, how much is its fearfulness increased! Imagine one or two unprotected women sitting by the fire of a lone house, on a winter's evening, with a consciousness of the insecurity of their situation upon them. How instinct with danger becomes every thing, every movement, every sound!—the stirring of the trees—the whispering of the wind—the rustling of a leaf—the cry of a bird. They are not wishing to listen, but cannot help it; they are all sense; all eye and ear. A foot is heard without, and is lost again! A face is suddenly placed against a pane in the window! the latch of the door is slowly raised in their sight, or the click of one is heard where it is not seen. Imagine this, and you imagine what has thrilled through the

heart, and frozen the blood of many a tenant of a solitary house.

These are not the least of the causes that contribute to produce that timidity of disposition which, in an early part of the chapter, I have said to belong to many country people. My grandfather's house was such a place. It stood in a solitary valley, with a great wood flanking the northern side. It had all sorts of legends and superstitions hanging about it. This field, and that lane, and one chamber or outbuilding or another, had a character that made them all hermetically sealed to a human foot after dark-hour, as it is there called. My grandmother was a bold woman in some respects, but these fears were perfectly triumphant over her; and she had, on one occasion, met with an incident which did not make her feel very comfortable alone in her house, in the day time. An Ajax of a woman once besieged her when left entirely by herself; who finding the doors secured against her, began smashing the windows with her fists, as with two sledge-hammers; and declared she would wash her hands in her heart's blood. My grandfather too, had had a little adventure which just served to shew what courage he had, or rather had not. In that primitive time and place, if a tailor were wanted, he did not do his work at his own house, but came to that of his employer, and there worked, day after day, till the job was finished; that is, till all making and mending that could possibly be found about the house by a general examination of garments, was completed. He then adjourned to another house, and so went the round of the parish. I know not whether the tailors of those primitive times were as philosophical as Heinrich Johann Jung Stilling, and his fellows of Germany, who thus went from house to house, and both there

with their employers, and on Sundays when they wandered into the woods, held the most interesting conversations on religion, philosophy, and literature: if this were the case, our country tailors have very much retrograded; and yet it would almost seem so, for my grandfather was passionately fond of Paradise Lost, and on a terribly snowy day had been reading it all day to the tailor, who had established himself by the parlour fire, with all his implements and work before him. He had been thus employed; but the tailor was gone, and the old gentleman having supped, dropped asleep on the sofa. When he awoke it was late in the night; no one had ventured to disturb him, but all had gone to bed. The house was still; the fire burning low; but he had scarcely become aware of his situation before he was aware also of the presence of some one. As he lay, he saw a man step out of the next room into the one in which he was. The man immediately caught sight of the old gentleman, and suddenly stopped, fixing his eyes upon him; and perhaps to ascertain whether he were asleep, he stepped back and drew himself up in the shadow of the clock-case. The old gentleman slowly raised himself up without a word, keeping his eyes fixed on the shadow of the clock-case, till he had gained his feet, when with a hop, stride, and jump, he cleared the floor, and flew up stairs at three steps at a time. Here he raised a fierce alarm, crying —"there is a sturdy rogue in the house! there is a sturdy rogue in the house!" But this alarm, instead of getting anybody up, only kept them faster in bed. Neither man, woman, nor child, would stir; neither son nor servant, except to bolt every one his own chamber door. In the morning they found the thief had taken himself off through a window, with the modest loan of a piece of bacon.

This house, however, was not quite out of hearing of neighbours. Beyond the wood was a village, thence called Wood-end; and a large horn was hung in the kitchen at the Fall,—so this house was named, which was blown on any occasion of alarm, and brought the inhabitants of the Wood-end thither speedily. The cowardice which had grown upon this family in such matters,—for in others they were bold as lions, and one son was actually killed in a duel,—was become so notorious, that it once brought a good joke upon them. The farm-servants were sitting, after their day's labour, by the kitchen fire at the close of a winter's day. Preparation was making for tea, and there were some of those rich tea-cakes which wealthy country ladies know so well how to make, in the act of buttering. Now I dare say that the sight of those delicious cakes set the mouths of all those hearty working men a-watering; but there was a cunning rogue of a lad amongst them, who immediately conceived the felicitous design of getting possession of them. It is only necessary to say that his name was Jack; for all Jacks have a spice of roguery in them. Jack was just cogitating on this enterprise, when his mistress said, "Jack, those sheep in the Hard-meadow have not been seen to-day. Your legs are younger than anybody else's; so up and count them before you go to bed;—it is moonlight." Jack, whose blood after the chill of the day was circulating most luxuriously in his veins before that warm hearth, felt inwardly chagrined that so many great lubberly fellows should be passed over, and this unwelcome business be put upon him. "Ay," thought he, "they may talk of young legs, but mistress knows very well that none of those burly fellows *dare* go all the way to the Hard-meadow to-night,—through the dingle; over the brook; and past

the hovel where old Chalkings was found dead last August, with his hand still holding fast his tramp-basket, though his clothes were rotten on his back! No! Jack must trudge, though the old gentleman himself were in the way!" This persuasion furnished him at once with a scheme of revenge, and of coming at the tea-cakes. He therefore rose slowly, and with well-feigned reluctance; put on his clouted shoes, which he had put off to indulge his feet with their accustomed portion of liberty and warmth before he went to bed; and folding round him a sack-bag, the common mantle and dread-naught of carters and farmers in wet or cold weather, he went out. Instead of marching off to the Hard-meadow, however, of which he had not the most remote intention, he went leisurely round to the front door, which he knew would be unfastened; for what inhabitants of an old country-house would think of fastening doors till bed-time? He entered quietly; ascended the front stairs; and reaching a large, old oaken chest which stood on the landing-place, all carved and adorned with minster-work, he struck three bold strokes on the lid with a pebble which he had picked up in the yard for the purpose.

At the sound, up started every soul in the kitchen. "What is that?" said every one at once in consternation. The mistress ordered the maid to run and see; but the maid declared that she would not go for the world. "Go you, then, Betty cook—go Joe—go Harry!" No, neither Betty, Joe, Harry, nor anybody else would stir a foot. They all stood together aghast, when a strange rumbling and grinding sound assailed their ears. It was Jack rubbing the pebble a few times over the carved lid of the chest. This was too much for endurance. A great fellow in a paroxysm of terror, snatched down the

horn from its nail, and blew a tremendous blast. It was not long neither before its effect was seen. The people of Wood-end came running in a wild troop, armed with brooms, pitchforks, spits, scythes, and rusty swords. They were already assured by the dismal blast of the horn that something fearful had occurred, but the sight of the white faces of the family made them grow white too. “What is the matter! What is the matter in heaven’s name?” “O! such sounds, such rumblings, somewhere upstairs!” In the heat of the moment, if heat it could be called, it was resolved to move in a body to the mysterious spot. Swords, scythes, pitchforks fell into due rank; candles were held by trembling hands; and in a truly *fearful* phalanx they marched across the sitting-room and reached the stair-foot. Here was a sudden pause; for there seemed to be heavy footsteps actually descending. They listened—tramp! tramp! it was true; and back fled the whole armed and alarmed troop into the kitchen, and banged the door after them. What was now to be done? Every thing which fear could suggest or terror could enact was done. They were on the crisis of flying out of the house, and taking refuge at Wood-end, when Jack was heard cheerfully whistling as if returning from the field. Jack had made the tramp upon the stairs; for, hearing the sound of the horn, and the approach of many feet below, he thought it was time to be going; and had the armed troop been courageous enough, they would have taken him in the fact. But their fears saved both him and his joke. He came up with a well-affected astonishment at seeing such a body of wild and strangely armed folk. “What is the matter?” exclaimed Jack; and the matter was detailed by a dozen voices, and with a dozen embellishments. “Pshaw!” said Jack, “it is all nonsense, I know. It is a

horse kicking in the stable; or a cat that has chucked a tile out of the gutter, or something. Give me a candle; I durst go!" A candle was readily put into his hands, and he marched off, all following him to the foot of the staircase, but not a soul daring to mount a single step after him. Up Jack went—"Why," he shouted, "here's nothing!" "O!" they cried from below, "look under the beds; look into the closets," and look into every imaginable place. Jack went very obediently, and duly and successively returned a shout, that there was nothing; it was all nonsense! At this there was more fear and consternation than ever. A thief might have been tolerated; but these supernatural noises! Who was to sleep in such a house? There was nothing for it, however, but for them to adjourn and move to the kitchen, and talk it all over; and torture it into a thousand forms; and exaggerate it into something unprecedentedly awful and ominous. The Wood-endians were regaled with a good portion of brown-stout; thanked for their valuable services, and they set off. The family was left alone. "Mistress," said Jack, "now you'd better get your tea; I am sure you must want it." "Nay Jack," said she, "I have had *my* tea: no tea for me to-night. I haven't a heart like thee, Jack; take my share and welcome."

Jack sate down with the servant maids, and talked of this strange affair, which he persisted in calling "all nonsense;" and devoured the cakes which he had determined to win. Many a time did he laugh in his sleeve as he heard this "great fright," as it came to be called, talked over, and painted in many new colours by the fireside; but he kept his counsel strictly while he continued to live there; for he knew a terrible castigation would be the sure consequence of a disclosure; but after he quitted the place, he made a

full and merry confession to his new comrades, and occasioned one long laughter to run all the country round. The people of the Fall, backed by the Woodendians, persisted that the noises were something supernatural, and that this was an after-invention of Jack's to disgrace them; but Jack and the public continued to have the laugh on their side.

After all, I know not whether the world of sprites and hobgoblins may not assume a greater latitude of action and revelation in these out-of-the-world places than in populous ones; whether the Lars and Lemures, the Fairies, Robin-goodfellows, Hobthrushes and Barguests, may not linger about the regions where there is a certain quietness, a simplicity of heart and faith, and ample old rooms, attics, galleries and grim halls to range over, seeing that they hate cities, and knowledge, and the conceit that attends upon them; for certainly, I myself have seen such sights and heard such sounds as would puzzle Dr. Brewster himself, with all his natural magic, to account for. In an old house in which my father lived when I was a boy, we had such a capering of the chairs, or what seemed such in the rooms over our heads; such aerial music in a certain chimney corner, as if Puck himself were playing on the bagpipes; such running of black cats up the bed-curtains and down again, and disappearing no one knew how; and such a variety of similar supernatural exhibitions, as was truly amusing. And a friend of mine, having suffered a joiner to lay a quantity of elm boards in a little room near a kitchen chimney to dry, was so annoyed by their tumbling and jumbling about, that when the man came the next day to fetch part of them, he desired him to take the whole, giving him the reason for it. "O!" said the man, "you need not be alarmed at that—that is always the way

before a coffin is wanted!" As if the ghost of the deceased came and selected the boards for the coffin of its old world-mate the body.

But enough of the terrors of solitary houses without those of superstition. I close my chapter; and yet I expect, dear readers, that in every place where you peruse this, you will say, "O, these are nothing to what I could have told. If Mr. Howitt had but heard so and so." Thank you, my kind and fair friends in a thousand places—I wish I had.

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CHAPTER VI.
MIDSUMMER IN THE FIELDS.

I never see a clear stream running through the fields at this beautiful time of the year but I wish, like old Izaak Walton, to take rod and line and a pleasant book, and wander away into some sylvan, or romantic region, and give myself up wholly to the influence of the season; to angle, and read, and dream by the ever-lapsing water, in green and flowery meadows, for days and weeks, caring no more for all that is going on in this great and many-coloured world, than if there was no world at all beyond these happy meadows so full of sunshine and quietness. Truly that good old man had hit on one of the ways to true enjoyment of life. He knew that simple habits and desires were mighty ingredients in genuine happiness; that to enjoy ourselves, we must first cast the world and all its cares out of our hearts; we must actually renounce its pomps and vanities; and then how sweet becomes every summer bank; how bright every summer stream; what a delicious

tranquillity falls upon our hearts; what a self-enjoyment reigns all through it; what a love of God kindles in it from all the fair things around. They may say what they will of the old prince of anglers, of his cruelty and inconsistency; from those charges I have vindicated him in another place,—we know that he was pious and humane. We know that, in the stillness of his haunts, and the leisure of his latter days, wise and kind thoughts flowed in upon his soul, and that the beauty and sweetness of nature which surrounded him, inspired him with feelings of joy and admiration, that streamed up towards the clear heavens above him in grateful thanksgiving. It is these things which have given to his volume an everlasting charm; and that affect me, at this particular time of the year, with a desire to haunt like places It may be the green banks of the beautiful streams of Derbyshire—the Wye, or the Dove; for now are they most lovely, running on amongst the verdant hills and bosky dales of the Peak, surrounded by summer's richest charms. Their banks are overhung with deep grass, and many a fair flower droops over them; the foliage of the trees that shroud their many windings, is most delicate; and above them grey rocks lift their heads, or greenest hills swell away to the blue sky. And as evening falls over them what a softness clothes those verdant mountains! what a depth of shadow fills those hollows! what a voice of waters rises on the hushed landscape! But even here, in the vale of Trent, it is beautiful. There are a thousand charms gathered about one of these little streams that are hastening towards our fair river. They are charms that belong to this point of time, and that in a week or two will be gone. The spring is gone, with all her long anticipated pleasures. The snowdrop, the crocus, the

blue-bell, the primrose, and the cowslip, where are they? They are all buried children of a delicate time, too soon hurried by.

But see! here are delights that will presently be as irrevocably gone. It is evening. What a calm and basking sunshine lies on the green landscape. Look round,—all is richness, and beauty, and glory. Those tall elms which surround the churchyard, letting the grey tower get but a passing glimpse of the river, and that other magnificent arcade of similar trees which stretch up the side of the same fair stream,—how they hang in the most verdant and luxuriant masses of foliage! What a soft, hazy twilight floats about them! What a slumberous calm rests on them! Slumberous did I say? no, it is not slumberous; it has nothing of sleep in its profound repose. It is the depth of a contemplative trance; as if every tree were a living, thinking spirit, lost in the vastness of some absorbing thought. It is the hush of a dream-land; the motionless majesty of an enchanted forest, bearing the spell of an infrangible silence. And see, over those wide meadows, what an affluence of vegetation! See how that herd of cattle, in colour and form, and grouping, worthy of the pencil of Cuyp or Ruysdael, graces the plenty of that field of most lustrous gold; and all round, the grass growing for the scythe almost overtops the hedges in its abundance. As we track the narrow footpath through them, we cannot avoid a lively admiration of the rich mosaic of colours that are woven all amongst them—the yellow rattle—the crimson stems and heads of the burnet, that plant of beautiful leaves—the golden trifolium—the light quake-grass—the azure milkwort, and clover scenting all the air. Hark! the cuckoo sends her voice from the distance, clear and continuous:—

Hail to thee, shouting Cuckoo! in my youth
Thou wert long time, the Ariel of my hope,
The marvel of a summer! it did soothe
To listen to thee on some sunny slope,
Where the high oaks forbade an ampler scope,
Than of the blue skies upward—and to sit,
Canopied, in the gladdening horoscope
Which thou, my planet, flung—a pleasant fit,
Long time my hours endeared, my kindling fancy smit.

And thus I love thee still—thy monotone,
The selfsame transport flashes through my frame,
And when thy voice, sweet sibyl, all is flown
My eager ear, I cannot choose but blame.
O may the world these feelings never tame!
If age o'er me her silver tresses spread,
I still would call thee by a lover's name,
And deem the spirit of delight unfled,
Nor bear, though grey without, a heart to Nature dead!

Wiffen's Aonian Hours.

And lo! there are the mowers at work! there are the hay-makers! Green swaths of mown grass—haycocks, and wagons ready to bear them away—it is summer, indeed! What a fragrance comes floating on the gale from the clover in the standing grass, from the new-mown hay; and from those sycamore trees, with all their pendant flowers. It is delicious; and yet one cannot help regretting that the year has advanced so far. There, the wild rose is putting out; the elder is already in flower; they are all beautiful, but saddening signs of the swift-winged time. Let us sit down by this little stream, and enjoy the pleasantness that it presents; without a thought of the future. Ah! this sweet place is just in its pride.

The flags have sprung thickly in the bed of the brook, and their yellow flowers are beginning to shew themselves. The green locks of the water-ranunculuses are lifted by the stream, and their flowers form snowy islands on the surface; the water-lilies spread out their leaves upon it, like the palettes of fairy painters; and that opposite bank, what a prodigal scene of vigorous and abundant vegetation it is. There are the blue geraniums, as lovely as ever; the meadow-sweet is hastening to put out its foam-like flowers, that species of golden-flowered mustard occupies the connecting space between the land and water; and hare-bells, the jagged pink lychnis, and flowering grass of various kinds, make the whole bank beautiful. Every plant that is wont to shew itself at this season, is in its place, to give its quota of the accustomed character to the spot; every insect, to beautify it with its hues, and enliven it with its peculiar
sound:—

> There is the grashopper, my summer friend,—
> The minute sound of many a sunny hour
> Passed on a thymy hill, when I could send
> My soul in search thereof by bank and bower,
> Till lured far from it by a foxglove flower,
> Nodding too dangerously above the crag,
> Not to excite the passion and the power
> To climb the steep, and down the blossom drag:—
> Them the marsh-crocus joined, and yellow water-flag.
>
> Shrill sings the drowsy wassailer in his dome,
> Yon grassy wilderness, where curls the fern,
> And creeps the ivy; with the wish to roam
> He spreads his sails, and bright is his sojourn,
> 'Mid chalices with dews in every urn;
> All flying things a like delight have found—
> Where'er I gaze, to what new region turn,

Ten thousand insects in the air abound,
Flitting on glancing wings that yield a summer's sound.

Wiffen's Aonian Hours.

The May-flies, in thousands, are come forth to their little day of life, and are flying up, and dropping again in their own peculiar way. The stone-fly is found head downwards on the bole of that tree. The midges are celebrating their airy and labyrinthine dances with an amazing adroitness. These little creatures pass through a metamorphosis, as they settle on you in your summer walks by river sides, that must strike the careful observer with admiration. You may sometimes see a column of them by the margin of the river, like a column of smoke; and when you come near, numbers of them will settle upon your clothes—small, white, and fleecy creatures. Observe them carefully, and you will see them shake their wings, as in a little convulsive agony, press them to the sides of their body, and fairly creep out of their skins. These skins, fine white films, drawn like a glove from their bodies, and from their very legs, which are but like fine hairs themselves, they leave behind, and dart off into the air as to a new life, and with an accession of new beauty. Dragon-flies of all sizes and colours are hovering, and skimming, and settling amongst the water-plants, or on some natural twig, evidently full of enjoyment. The great azure-bodied one, with its filmy wings, darts past with reckless speed; and slender ones—blue and purple, and dun, and black, with long jointed bodies, made as of shining silk by the fingers of some fair lady, and animated for a week or two of summer sunshine by some frolic spell, now pursue each other, and now rest as in sleep. The whitethroat goes flying with a curious

cowering motion over the top of the tall grass from one bush to another, where it hops unseen, and repeats its favourite “chaw-chaw.” The willow-warbler, the mocking-bird of England, maintains its incessant imitations of the swallow, the sparrow, the chaffinch, and the whitethroat, flitting and chattering in the bushes that overhang the stream. The landrail repeats its continuous “crake-crake” from the meadow grass, and the water itself ripples on, clear and musical, and chequered with small shadows from many a leaf and bent and moving bough. We lift up our heads—and in the west what a ruby sun—what a gorgeous assemblage of sunset clouds!

Readers and friends, are these not the characters of June fields and June brook-sides? Do they not recal to your memory many a pleasant walk, many a pleasant place, and many pleasant friends? They must: for there is nothing gives us so vivid a sense of the careering of time as the passing of spring and summer.





PART III.

PICTURESQUE AND MORAL FEATURES OF THE COUNTRY.

CHAPTER I.
GIPSIES.

All hail! ye British Buccaneers!
Ye English Ishmaelites, all hail!
A jovial and marauding band,

Against the goodliest of the land
Ye go, and ye prevail.

Man's cultured Eden casts ye forth,
Where'er ye list to wander wide,
Wild heaths and wilder glens to tread,
The spacious earth before you spread,
Your hearts your only guide.

The Gipsy King. By RICHARD HOWITT.

The picture of the Rural Life of England must be wofully defective which should omit those singular and most picturesque squatters on heaths and in lanes, the Gipsies. They make part and parcel of the landscape scenery of England. They are an essential portion of our poetry and literature. They are moulded into our memories, and all our associations of the country by the surprise of our first seeing them,—by the stories of their cunning, their petty larcenies, their fortune-tellings,—and by the writings of almost all our best poets and essayists. The poets being vividly impressed by anything picturesque, and partaking of some mystery and romance, universally talk of them with an unction of enjoyment. Romance writers have found them more profitable subjects than her Majesty does—Scott and Victor Hugo especially. But the first introduction to them, which most of us had in print, and to which the mind of every man of taste must instantly revert on seeing or hearing of them, is that most admirable and racy one in the Spectator,—that gipsy adventure of our truly beloved and honoured friend, Sir Roger de Coverley —that perfect model of an old English gentleman. Who does not think of this scene with a peculiar delight, especially since it has received so exquisite a representation from the pencil of Leslie? "As I was yesterday riding out in the fields with my friend Sir

Roger, we saw at a little distance from us a troop of gipsies. Upon the first discovery of them, my friend was in some doubt whether he should not exert the Justice of the Peace upon a band of lawless vagrants; but not having his clerk with him, who is a necessary counsellor on these occasions, and fearing that his poultry might fare the worse for it, he let the thought drop, but at the same time gave me a particular account of the mischiefs they do in the country in stealing peoples' goods, and spoiling their servants. If a stray piece of linen hangs upon a hedge, says Sir Roger, they are sure to have it; if the hog loses its way in the fields, it is ten to one but it becomes their prey. Our geese cannot live in peace for them.

"'If a man prosecutes them with severity, his hen-roost is sure to pay for it. They generally straggle into this part of the country about this time of the year, and set the heads of our servant maids so agog for husbands, that we do not expect to have any business done as it should be while they are in the country. I have an honest dairymaid who crosses their hands with a piece of silver every summer, and never fails being promised the handsomest young fellow in the parish for her pains. Your friend the butler has been fool enough to be seduced by them; and though he is sure to lose a knife, a fork, or a spoon, every time his fortune is told him, generally shuts himself up in the pantry with an old gipsy for above half an hour once a twelvemonth. Sweethearts are the things which they live upon, which they bestow very plentifully upon all those that apply themselves to them. You see now and then some handsome young jades amongst them,—the sluts have very often white teeth and black eyes.'

"Sir Roger observing that I listened with great attention to his account of a people who were so

entirely new to me, told me that if I would, they should tell us our fortunes. As I was very well pleased with the knight's proposal, we rid up and communicated our hands to them. A Cassandra of the race, after having examined my lines very diligently, told me that I loved a pretty maid in a corner; that I was a good woman's man; with some other particulars which I do not think proper to relate. My friend Sir Roger alighted from his horse, and exposing his palm to two or three that stood by him, they crumpled it into all shapes, and diligently scanned every wrinkle that could be made in it; when one of them, who was older and more sunburnt than the rest, told him that he had a widow in his line of life. Upon which the knight cried, 'go, go, you are an idle baggage,' and at the same time smiled upon me. The gipsy, finding that he was not displeased in his heart, told him, after a further inquiry into his hand, that his true-love was constant, and that he should dream of her to-night. My old friend cried, 'Pish,' and bid her go on. The gipsy told him that he was a bachelor, but would not be so long; and that he was dearer to somebody than he thought. The knight still repeated that she was an idle baggage, and bid her go on. 'Ah, master,' says the gipsy, 'that roguish leer of yours makes a woman's heart ache. You have not that simper about the mouth for nothing.' The uncouth gibberish with which all this was uttered, like the darkness of an oracle, made us the more attentive to it. To be short, the knight left the money with her that he had crossed the hand with, and got up again on his horse.

"As we were riding away, Sir Roger told me, that he knew several sensible people who believed these gipsies now and then foretold very strange things; and for half an hour together appeared more jocund

than ordinary. In the height of his good humour, meeting a common beggar upon the road who was no conjuror, as he went to relieve him, he found his pocket picked; that being a kind of palmistry at which this race of vermin are very dexterous."

This is a perfect piece of gipsyism. Wordsworth, Cowper, Crabbe, and others of our poets, have given very graphic sketches of them; but in all these descriptions you have the same characteristics, those of a strange, vagabond, out-of-door, artful, and fortune-telling people. This was for a long time the only point of view in which they were regarded. That they were a thievish and uncivilizable race everybody knew, but what was their real origin, or what their real country, few cared to inquire. It, in fact, quite satisfied the public to consider them as what they pretended to be, Egyptians. In all the descriptions I have alluded to, no reference whatever is made to their origin. Addison alone hints that he could give some historical remarks on this idle people, but he does not think it worth while. But a more inquisitive age came. It began to strike the minds of intelligent men, as the love of the picturesque, the love of whatever was quiet, ancient, singular, or poetic in the features of the country grew into a strong public feeling, that there was something far more curious and mysterious about this people than merely met the eye. That they were a peculiar variety of the human species, and had hereditary causes, whether prejudices or traditions, which stamped them, as distinctly and as stubbornly, a separate portion of humanity as the Jews, became obvious enough. That which had been supposed a mere gibberish in their mouths, was found to be true Eastern language, and it was discovered that they not merely "infested all Europe," as Addison remarked,

but all the world. In every quarter of it they were found, exhibiting the same strange and unchangeable lineaments, manners, and habits; in Egypt, as separate from the Egyptians in speech and custom, as they are separate from the English in England. Great curiosity was now excited concerning them, and we get a glimpse, in the following verses of the Ettrick Shepherd, of the speculations which arose out of the consequent inquiries.

> Hast thou not noted on the by-way side,
> Where England's loanings stretch unsoiled and wide,
> Or by the brook that through the valley pours,
> Where mimic waves play lightly through the flowers,
> A noisy crew far straggling through the glade,
> Busied with trifles, or in slumber laid,
> Their children lolling round them on the grass,
> Or pestering with their sports the patient ass?
> The wrinkled grandam there you may espy,
> The ripe young maiden with her glossy eye;
> Men in their prime—the striplings dark and dun,
> Scathed by the storms, and freckled by the sun;
> O mark them well when next the group you see,
> In vacant barn, or resting on the lea;
> They are the remnant of a race of old—
> Spare not the trifle for your fortune told!
> For there shalt thou behold with nature blent
> A tint of mind in every lineament,
> A mould of soul distinct, but hard to trace,
> Unknown except to Israel's wandering race;
> For thence, as sages say, their line they drew—
> O mark them well! the tales of old are true!

In these verses, which seem intended by Hogg as the commencement of a poem on the Gipsy history, he goes on to tell us that they were a tribe of Arabs that during the Crusades were induced to act as guides and allies of the Crusaders against Jerusalem, and were therefore compelled, on the retreat of the

Christians, to flee too. It was not at all surprising that they should be regarded as the real descendants of Ishmael, for they have all the characteristics of his race,—an Eastern people, retaining all their features of mind or body in unchangeable fixedness—neither growing fairer in the temperate latitudes, nor darker in the sultry ones; perpetual wanderers and dwellers in tents; active, fond of horses, often herdsmen, artful, thievish, restrained by no principle but that of a cunning policy from laying hands on any man's possessions; fond to enthusiasm of the chase after game, though obliged to follow it at midnight; as everlastingly isolated by their organic or moral conformation from the people amongst whom they dwell as the Jews themselves. The very prophecy seemed fulfilled in them, beyond what it could be in Araby itself, where they have been repeatedly subdued to the dominion of some conqueror, while this tribe seems in all countries to maintain its character as the genuine posterity of him who was to be a wild hunter in perpetual independence.

The Germans, however, who pursue every subject of curious inquiry with the same searching perseverance, took up this Gipsy mystery; and the result of their researches, founded principally on their language, at present leads to the adoption of the theory that they are a Hindu tribe. For a full view of the subject, I must refer my readers to the works of Grellman and Buttner, who have pursued this inquiry with great learning and zeal, or to a very able summary in Malte Brun's Geography: my limits will compel me to take a more rapid notice of it. The sum and substance of their case is this. They find occupation in some countries as smiths and tinkers; they mend broken plates, and sell wooden ware. A class of them in Moldavia and Wallachia lead a

settled life, and gain a subsistence by working and searching for gold in the beds of rivers. Those in the Bannat of Hungary are horse-dealers, and are gradually obeying the enactments of Joseph II., by which they are compelled to cultivate the land; but the great majority in Europe abhor a permanent residence and stated hours of labour. The women abuse the credulity of the German and Polish peasants, who imagine that they cure their cattle by witchcraft, and predict fortunate events by inspecting the lineaments of the hand. It is lawful for the wives of the Tchinganes in Turkey to commit adultery with impunity. Many individuals of both sexes, particularly throughout Hungary, are passionately fond of music, the only science in which they have, as yet, attained any degree of perfection. They are the favourite minstrels of the country people: some have arrived at eminence in cathedrals and the choirs of princes. Their guitar is heard in the romantic woods of Spain; and many gipsies, less indolent than the indolent Spaniards, exercise in that country the trade of publicans. They follow willingly whatever occupations most men hate and condemn. In Hungary and Transylvania, they are the flayers of dead horses, and executioners of criminals; the mass of the nation is composed of thieves and mendicants. The total number of these savages in Europe has never been considered less than 300,000; Grellman says 700,000; of these, 150,000 are in Turkey; 70,000 in Wallachia and Moldavia; 40,000 in Hungary and Transylvania; the rest are scattered through Russia, Prussia, Poland, Germany, Jutland, Spain, and other countries. Persia and Egypt are infested with them. They have appeared in Spanish America.

Who then are these people? Grellman and Buttner

do not hesitate to pronounce them to be one of the low Indian castes, Soudras or Correvas, expelled from their country during one of its great revolutions, probably that of Tamerlane, about the year 1400. Their habits as tinkers, musicians, horse-dealers, etc. etc., already alluded to, are exactly in keeping with this supposition; but what is far stronger evidence is, that their language, formerly supposed to be the gibberish of thieves and pickpockets, is really Indostanée. In the tents of these wanderers is spoken the dialects of the *Vedas*, the *Puranas*, the *Brachmans*, and the *Budahs*. This, in different tribes, is in some degree dashed with words of Sclavonic, Persic, Permiac, Finnic, Wogoul, and Hungarian. The structure of the auxiliary verb is the same as others in the Indo-Pelasgic tongues, but the pronouns have a remarkable analogy with the Persic, and the declension of nouns with the Turkish. Pallas infers from their dialect that their ancient country was Moultan, and their origin the same as that of the Hindu merchants at present at Astrakhan. Bartolomeo believes they come from Guzerat, perhaps from the neighbourhood of Tatta, where a horde of pirates called Tchinganes still reside. Lastly, Richardson boasts of having found them among the Bazigurs, a wandering tribe of minstrels and dancers. No caste, however, bears so strong a resemblance to them as that of the Soudras, who have no fixed abodes, but live in tents, and sell baskets, mend kettles, and tell fortunes.

The names by which they have been, or are known in different countries are various. They call themselves Romi, Manusch, and Gadzi, each of these appellatives being connected with a different language—the Copt, the Sanscrit, and the Celtic. In Poland and Wallachia they are Zingani; in Italy and

Hungary, Zingari; in Lithuania, Zigonas; Ziguene in Germany; Tchinganes in Turkey; the Atchinganes of the middle ages; in Spain they are Gitanos; in France, Bohemians, from their having passed out of Bohemia into that country. By the Persians they are called Sisech Hindou, or Black Indians. But the most ancient and general name is that of Sinte, or inhabitants of the banks of the Sinde, or Indus. The celebrated M. Hasse, has indeed proved that for the last 3000 years there have been in Europe wandering tribes bearing the name of Sigynes, or Sinte. He considers the modern gipsies as the descendants of these ancient hordes. Herodotus points out the Sigynes on the north side of the Ister. Strabo describes a people called Siginii, inhabiting the Hyrcanian mountains near the Caspian sea. Pliny speaks of the Caucasian Singi, and of the Indian Singæ. Hesychius reconciles the opinions of the ancients, and calls the Sinde an Indian people. They were noted for their cowardice; for submitting to the lash of Scythian masters, the prostitution of their women, whose name became a term of reproach. Different branches of the same people were scattered through Macedonia, in which was a Sinti district, and in Lemnos, where the Sinties were the workmen of Vulcan.

It will now be sufficiently obvious to the reader what a singular, ancient, and mysterious people are these gipsies, that haunt our lanes and commons, and form so striking and poetical a feature in our country scenery. After all the zealous and learned researches into their history and origin, nothing appears yet established beyond the fact, that they are older than Herodotus, the most ancient of profane historians; that for more than 3000 years they have been wandering through the world as they do at present;

and that their language exhibits incontestable evidence of an oriental origin. The ravages of Tamerlane may perhaps help to account for the circumstance of their pressing upon Western Europe in 1400 in such unusual numbers; but they were wanderers long before Tamerlane's days. Were they enemies of Krishna? for they boast of having formerly rejected Christ. They pretend that they were once a happy people, under kings of their own; but their traditionary knowledge seems nearly extinct. Perhaps an increasing acquaintance with the East and Eastern literature may cast some light on the origin of this peculiar variety of the human race. In the mean time we may proceed to take a close view of them as they now appear in this kingdom. From the first moment of their attracting the public attention in this part of Europe, they have always exhibited the same artful character,—a character above the trammels of either superstition or religion. They have therefore adopted the most plausible pretences to effect their purposes; and for a long time triumphed over the credulity of the christian princes, at all times over that of the common people. Their first appearance in France, as related by Pasquin, is curious enough. "On August 27th, 1427, came to Paris twelve penitents, Penanciers, as they called themselves, viz.: a duke, an earl, and ten men, all on horseback, and calling themselves good christians. They were of Lower Egypt, and gave out, that not long before, the christians had subdued their country, and obliged them to embrace christianity on pain of death. Those who were baptized were great lords in their own country, and had a king and queen there. Soon after their conversion, the Saracens overran the country, and obliged them to renounce christianity. When the emperor of Germany, the king

of Poland, and the christian princes heard of this, they fell upon them, and obliged the whole of them, both great and small, to quit the country, and go to the Pope at Rome, who enjoined them seven years' penance, to wander over the world without lying in a bed.

"They had been wandering five years when they came to Paris. First the principal people, and soon after the commonalty, about 100 or 120—reduced, according to their account, from 1000 or 1200, when they went from home; the rest, with their king and queen, being dead. They were lodged by the police at some distance from the city, at Chapel St. Denis.

"Nearly all of them had their ears bored, and wore two silver rings in each, which they said were esteemed ornaments in their country. The men were black; their hair curled; the women, remarkably black; their only clothes a large old duffle garment, tied over their shoulders with a cloth or cord, and under it a miserable rocket. In fact, they were the most poor, miserable creatures that ever had been seen in France; and, notwithstanding their poverty, there were amongst them women who, by looking into people's hands, told their fortunes, and what was worse, they picked people's pockets of their money, and got it into their own, by telling these things through art magic, etc."

The subtlety of these modern Gibeonites cannot be sufficiently admired. They did not venture to alarm the country by coming at once in full strength into it, but sent a detachment, mounted on horseback as princes, to pave the way by their tale of sufferings; then came a larger troop, in true Gibeonitish condition, to excite the popular commiseration; and that being done, their numbers gradually increased; and under these and similar pretences, they rambled

over France for a whole century, when their real character being sufficiently obvious, and their numbers daily increasing, they were banished by proclamation. The same policy was pursued towards them in all the countries of Europe, if we except Hungary and Wallachia. In Spain, sentence of banishment being found ineffectual, in 1492 an edict of extermination was published; but they only slunk into the mountains and woods, and reappeared in a while as numerously as before. The order of banishment not succeeding in France, in 1561 all governors of cities were commanded to drive them away with fire and sword; and in 1612 a new order for their extermination came out. In 1572, they were expelled from the territories of Milan and Parma, as they had before been driven from the Venetian boundaries. In Denmark, Sweden, and the Netherlands, repeated enactments were made for their expulsion. In Germany, from 1500 to 1577, various similar decrees were promulgated against them. Under these laws they suffered incredible miseries. They were imprisoned; chased about like wild beasts, and put to death without mercy: but, as the European states did not act in concert, when they were driven from one they found an asylum in another; and whenever the storm blew over, they again gradually reappeared in their old haunts. The Empress Theresa, and afterwards the Emperor Joseph II., seem to have been the only sovereigns who set themselves in earnest to reclaim and civilize this singular people; and we have seen that in Hungary some of them are gradually submitting to the regulations made by these wise monarchs.

Their introduction to this kingdom, and their after-treatment were similar. At first they were received as princes and kings, and excited commiseration by the

tale of their injuries. They had royal and parliamentary passes granted them, to go through the country seeking relief, as many of the parish records yet bear testimony. So late as 1647 there appears an entry in the constable's accounts at Uttoxeter, in Staffordshire, of four shillings being given to forty-six Egyptians, travelling with a pass from parliament, to seek relief by the space of six months. But when this delusion was past, and it was seen that they had no intention of quitting the country, they became persecuted by justices of the peace and parish constables, as thieves and vagrants; and the rapid enclosures of waste lands during the war, tended greatly to break up their haunts, and put them into great straits.

About twenty years ago John Hoyland, a minister of the Society of Friends, being struck with commiseration for their condition, began to inquire into their real character; and the researches of Grellman being made known to him, he visited their encampments in various places in Northamptonshire, Hainault Forest, and Norwood, near London. He also sought them out in their winter quarters in London; and the result of his inquiries satisfied him that the English gipsies were a genuine portion of the great tribe described by Grellman; that they possessed the same oriental language, specimens of which he has given in his history. Mr. Hoyland could not ascertain what were the actual numbers of these people in England. They had been stated in parliament to be not less than 30,000, but on what authority did not appear; but it was very evident that enclosures, and the severity of the magistrates, had reduced their numbers. Probably many of them had emigrated. Norwood used to be their great resort, but its enclosure had broken up that rendezvous, yet it

nevertheless appeared, that considerable numbers wintered in London, and at the earliest approach of spring set out on their summer progress through various parts of the country, especially in the counties of Surrey, Bedford, Buckingham, Hereford, Monmouth, Somerset, Wilts, Southampton, Cambridge, and Huntingdon.

Subsequent inquiries have shewn that these people retire into other large towns in winter besides London, particularly Bristol. That in town their chief haunts are in Tottenham-court-road, Banbridge-street, Bolton-street, Church-lane, Battle-bridge, Tunbridge-street, Tothill-fields, and White-street. In Bristol, they are chiefly found in St. Philips, Newfoundland-street, Bedminster, and at the March and September fairs. About London, in April, May, and June, they get work in the market-gardens. In July and August they move into Sussex and Kent for harvest-work, where they continue. Through September, great numbers of them find employment in the hop districts of those counties, and of Surrey. They constantly encamp on the commons near London. On Wimbledon Common, at Christmas 1831, there were no less than seventy of them. In the parks of Richmond, Greenwich, Windsor, and all the resorts of summer visitants from town, the gipsy women are to be found exercising their vocation of fortune-tellers. On this account many of them encamp about Blackheath, Woolwich-heath, Lordship-lane, near Deptford, and Plum-street, near Woolwich. The Archbishop's Wall, near Canterbury; Staple and Wingham Well, near the same city, and Buckland, near Dover, and the New Forest, Hampshire, are great haunts; they also flock in great numbers to Ascot, Epsom, and other races.

Mr. Hoyland extended his researches to Scotland,

and the most prompt assistance was offered him in his inquiries in that country. A circular was dispatched to the sheriff of every county, soliciting, through the medium of an official organ, all the intelligence which could be obtained on the subject. It was found that there were very few gipsies in Scotland at all. From thirteen counties the reports were—"No gipsies resident in them." From most others the answer was, that they appeared there only as occasional passengers. The Border appeared to be their chief resort, and respecting those Sir Walter Scott, then plain Walter Scott, addressed a very characteristic letter to the author. His account of them tallies exactly with that he has given in his celebrated novels. He and Mr. Smith, the Baillie of Kelso, agree in describing them as a single colony at Yetholm, and one family removed thence to Kelso. This colony appears to have acquired a character more daring and impetuous than the gipsies of England; in fact, to have exhibited the true old Border spirit: probably partly from example and partly from intercourse with some of the Border families. Mr. Baillie Smith gives the following instance of this spirit:—"Between Yetholm and the Border farms in Northumberland, there were formerly, as in most border situations, some uncultivated lands, called the Plea Lands, or Debateable Lands, the pasturage of which was generally eaten up by the sorners and vagabonds on both sides of the marches. Many years ago, Lord Tankerville and some other of the English borderers, made their request to Sir David Bennet and the late Mr. Wauchope, of Niddry, that they would accompany them at a riding of the Plea Lands, who readily complied with their request. They were induced to this, as they understood that the gipsies

had taken offence, on the supposition that they might be circumscribed in their pasture for their shelties, and asses, which they had held a long time, partly by stealth and partly by violence. Both threats and entreaties were employed to keep them away; and at last Sir David obtained a promise from some of the heads of the gang, that none of them would shew their faces on the occasion.

"They, however, got upon the hills in the neighbourhood, whence they could see every thing that passed. At first they were very quiet, but when they saw the English Court-Book spread out on a cushion before the clerk, and apparently taken in a line of direction interfering with that which they considered to be their privileged ground, it was with great difficulty that the most moderate of them could restrain the rest from running down and taking vengeance even in sight of their own lord of the manor. They only abstained for a short time, and no sooner had Sir David and the other gentlemen taken leave of each other in the most polite and friendly manner, as border chiefs are wont to do, since border feuds ceased, and had departed to a sufficient distance, than the clan, armed with bludgeons and pitchforks, and such other hostile weapons as they could find, rushed down in a body, and before the chiefs on either side had reached their homes, there was neither English tenant, horse, cow, or sheep, left upon the premises."

This account of their descent on the Plea Lands is like one of Sir Walter Scott's own vivid sketches of border life; and the following anecdote, also related by Mr. Baillie Smith, shews how truly they had imbibed the border spirit of clanship. "When I first knew any thing about the colony, old Will Faa was their king, or leader, and had held the sovereignty

for many years. Meeting at Kelso with Mr. Walter Scott, whose discriminating habits and just observations I had occasion to know from his youth, and at the same time seeing one of my Yetholm friends in the horse-market, I merely said to Mr. Scott, 'Try to get before that man with the long drab coat; look at him on your return, and tell me whether you ever saw him, and what you think of him.' He was so good as to indulge me; and rejoining me said without hesitation, 'I never saw the man that I know of, but he is one of the gipsies of Yetholm that you told me of several years ago.' I need scarcely say that he was perfectly right.

"The descendants of Faa, now take the name of *Fall*, from the Messrs. Fall of Dunbar, who, they pride themselves in saying, are of the same stock and lineage. When old Will Faa was upwards of eighty years of age, he called on me at Kelso, in his way to Edinburgh, telling me that he was going to see the laird, the late Mr. Nisbett of Dirleton, as he understood that he was very unwell, and himself now being old, and not so stout as he had been, he wished to see him once more before he died. The old man set out by the nearest road, which was by no means his common practice. Next market-day some of the farmers informed me that they had been in Edinburgh, and seen Will Faa upon the bridge (the south bridge was not built then), that he was tossing about his old brown hat, and huzzaing with great vociferation, that he had seen the laird before he died. Indeed Will himself had no time to lose, for having set his face homewards, by the way of the sea-coast, to vary his route, as is the general custom with the gang, he only got the length of Coldingham when he was taken ill and died."

No one can fail to recognise in these border gipsies

the Faas and Gordons of Guy Mannering, the desperate clan of Meg Merrilies and Derncleugh. Scott, indeed, informs us that his prototype of Meg Merrilies was Jean Gordon, an inhabitant of Kirk-Yetholm in the Cheviot hills, adjoining to the English border. The Faas, of which family her mother was, were the lineal descendants of John Faa, who styled himself Lord and King of Little Egypt, and with a numerous retinue entered Scotland, in the reign of Queen Mary.

The difference between the English and Scotch gipsies was singularly exemplified in Jean Gordon's own family. The English gipsies have generally had the policy to commit no capital offences; but Jean's sons were all hanged one day. Scott, in the eighth chapter of Guy Mannering, says, their mixture with the Border people gave them a peculiar ferocity, quite alien to their original character. "They understood all out-of-door sports, especially otter-hunting, fishing, and finding game. They had the best and boldest terriers, and sometimes had good pointers for sale. In winter the women told fortunes, the men shewed tricks of legerdemain; and these accomplishments helped to wile away a weary or stormy evening in the circle of the 'farmer's ha'.' The wildness of their character, and the indomitable pride with which they despised all regular labour, commanded a certain awe, which was not diminished by the consideration that these strollers were a vindictive race, and were restrained by no check either of fear or conscience, from taking desperate vengeance upon those who had offended them. These tribes were, in short, the *Parias* of Scotland, living like wild Indians among European settlements; and like them, judged of rather by their own customs, habits, and opinions, than as if they

had been members of the civilized part of the community. Some hordes of them yet remain, chiefly in such situations as afford a ready escape into a waste country, or into another jurisdiction. Nor are the features of their character much softened. Their numbers are, however, so greatly diminished, that instead of one hundred thousand, as calculated by Fletcher of Saltoun, it would now perhaps be impossible to collect above five hundred throughout all Scotland."

Since writing so far, I have visited Kirk-Yetholm, and can testify to the correctness of these details. It was in June, 1836, that I was at this remarkable haunt of this singular class of gipsies. The tribe was then, according to their regular custom, encamping, probably far off on the heaths of Scotland, or in the green lanes of England; and their houses, to the number of about a score, stood along one side of the village, all tenantless, with closed shutters, and doors barricadoed with boards, or locked or nailed up. We asked to whom they belonged, and were told that they were the *Trayvelers*, Anglice, Traveller's houses. They had a strange look of desertion amid the peopled village. Along the lane side leading to the neighbouring hills extended a strip of land, divided into as many allotments as there were houses, in which were growing their crops of corn and potatoes, left till their return to providence and the forbearance of their neighbours; and we were assured that the tribe would not make their appearance here till the crops were ready to house, when they would come and get them in, and then away again till the setting in of winter. We found the feud between them and the shepherds still kept up as hotly as ever, and likely to continue so, from the peculiar location of the land above spoken of, on

which they claim to pasture their horses. About a mile from the village lies a region of pastoral hills, most beautiful in their greenness and loftiness. They are covered from vale to summit with the softest and finest turf, and their loftiest steeps are dotted with flocks. In the very midst of these hills, loftier and more naked than the rest, rises the one which the gipsies and other inhabitants of Yetholm claim. Nothing could be more ingeniously contrived, if by contrivance it had been done, to effect a constant bickering between the shepherds and the Yetholmers. The gipsies of course drive their horses up to their own hill, and nothing is more natural than that seeing better pasture all around them, and no fence to prevent them, they should go down and enjoy it. It is equally natural that the shepherds should be on the look-out, and the moment they find the horses trespassing, should drive them out into the lane leading to the village, and close the gates behind them. This also is expected by the gipsies, and the moment the horses make their appearance at the village, they are driven back again to the hills. Here is perpetual food for resentment and hostility, and to such a height does it sometimes rise, that a gentleman of Kelso informed me that he has seen at Yetholm wool-fair such affrays between the gipsies and the shepherds as would outdo Donnybrook.

We found a Will Faa still the reputed king of the tribe. He was an old man, having none of the common features of the gipsy—his Border blood having done away with the black eyes and swarthy skin; but Will had all the propensities of the gipsy, except that of encamping; smuggling, fishing, and shooting appeared to have been the business of his life. We were told that in an affray with the revenue officers he had defended a narrow bridge somewhere

near Bamborough Castle, while his party made their escape, and had stood fighting singly with his cudgel, till it was cut down by the cutlasses of the officers to "twa nieves lang," and till he finally got a cut across the arm which disabled him. When we asked him of the truth of this story, his grey eyes kindled up into a wild fire, and stretching out his two arms together, he shewed us, with a significant gesture, that one was still at least two inches longer than the other. Old Will Faa had risen into great importance through the writings of Sir Walter Scott. He told us that Sir Martin Archer Shee had been down to take his likeness. He was in daily request at the houses of the neighbouring nobility and gentry to catch trout for them, being intimately acquainted with all the streams of the country round, and all the arts of filling his creel out of them. Will, therefore, is sure to be found either by the side of one of the trout streams, or in the kitchen of some of the neighbouring halls, telling his exploits and drinking his toddy. His niece, who was absent with the tribe, was said to be the belle of the camp; a true gipsy beauty, dark and "weel fa'ured."

Such is the present state of the gipsies of England and Scotland. Their numbers are evidently everywhere on the decrease; yet what do remain in England retain all their ancient characteristics. These characteristics have never been more accurately delineated than by Richard Howitt, in his poem of the "Gipsy King," in the Metropolitan Magazine for June 1836. The groups proceeding to the coronation of their king are living.

> Now come in groups the gipsy tribes,
> From northern hills, from southern plains;
> And many a panniered ass is swinging
> The child that to itself is singing

Along the flowery lanes.

Stout men are loud in wrangling talk,
Where older tongues are gruff and tame;
Keen maiden laughter rings aloft,
Whilst many an undervoice is soft
From many a talking dame.

Their beaver hats are weather stained,—
The one black plume is sadly gay;
Their squalid brats are slung behind,
In cloaks that flutter to the wind,
Of scarlet, brown, and grey.

The king himself is distinguished by some touches that are the life itself, but which I never recollect seeing elsewhere introduced.

The slouching hat our hero wore,
The crown wherewith he king was crowned;
Wherein a pipe and a crow's feather
Were stuck in fellowship together,
Was by a hundred winters browned.

His sceptre was a stout oak sapling,
Round which a snake well-carved was wreathed;
Cunning and strength that well bespoke,
Whilst from his frame, as from an oak,
"Deliberate valour breathed."

His footstool was the solid earth;
His court spread out in pomp before him,
The heath arrayed in summer's smiles;
His empire broad the British isles;
His dome the heaven's arched o'er him.

Antique and flowing was his dress;
And from his temples, bold and bare,
Fell back in many a dusky tress,
As liberal as the wilderness,
His ample growth of hair.

Like Cromwell's was his hardy front,

Where thought but feeling none was shewn;
Where underneath a flitting grace,
Was firmly built up in his face,
A hardness as of stone.

They are not to be confounded with a tribe of wandering potters, who live in tents like them. The true gipsies are readily distinguished by their invariable jet-black hair, black sparkling eyes, Indian complexions, and their genuine oriental language. On the extensive heaths of Surrey, since my residence in that county, I have met with frequent camps of them. In the midland counties, although there is less waste land, they are not unfrequently to be seen. They are there chiefly the Lovell, Boswell, and Kemp gangs. They are great people still for kings and chiefs. Every district has its king. One of these died in the summer of 1835, in their camp in Bestwood Park, in Nottinghamshire; and thousands of people went to see him lie in state. They conveyed his body in a cart to Eastwood, a distance of nine miles, and would fain have stipulated with the clergyman for his interment in the church; not on account of any notion of the sanctity of the place, but for its security. This being refused, they chose a place in the churchyard, for which they paid a handsome sum, and ordered it to be fenced off with iron railings. An old beldame of the tribe said to me, that it was hard that he could not be buried in a church, as most of his ancestors had been before him.

This gang had no less than nine horses, which in the day time grazed in the bare lanes; but if they were not turned into the fields at night, they throve wonderfully on bad commons. The farmers complained dreadfully of their pulling up their hedges for fuel. The whole race seems to have no

fear of man; they are troubled with no *mauvaise honte*. The men seldom condescend to solicit you, but the women are always anxious to lay hold of your money under pretence of telling your fortune; and the moment you approach their encampment, out comes a troop of little impudent, though not insolent, rogues, to beg every thing and any thing they can. The women, many of them, in their youth, are fine strapping figures, with handsome brown faces and most brilliant and speaking eyes,—they have a peculiar *poco-curante* air and jaunty gait, and are extremely fond of finery. Their costume is unique, and pretty uniform,—scarlet cloaks, black beaver hats with broad slouching brims, or black velvet bonnets with large wide pokes trimmed with lace; a handkerchief thrown over the head under the bonnet, and tied beneath the chin; long pendant ear-rings, black stockings, and ankle-boots. So far from shunning any intercourse or inquiries, they approach you with a ready smile and a style of flattery peculiar to them. “A good day to you, sir; your honour is born to fortune. I see that by the cast of your countenance. It was a right luckly planet that shone on your honour’s birth!” If you know any thing of their language, they are only too glad to talk to you in it. Accost a gipsy with “Shaushan, Palla?” “how do you do, brother?” and you will see the effect.

This singular race of people, of whom Grellman calculates there are not less than 700,000 in Europe, seemed to demand a more comprehensive account in the Rural Life of England, than has hitherto been given in any one work. Many of my readers, I am persuaded, will regard them for their antiquity, the mystery of their origin, the strangeness of their history and life, with deeper feelings than they have

hitherto done; and it may be well for such as live in those parts of the country which the gipsies haunt, to ask themselves whether something may not be done by education, and other means, to reclaim those wild denizens of heaths and lanes, or to give them some greater portion of the knowledge and benefits of civilized life. A considerable number have sent their children to schools during the winters in London; and these children, though compared by one of their schoolmasters, at their first entrance, to wild birds suddenly put into a cage, and ready to beat themselves against the bars, having no sense of restraint, soon became not only perfectly orderly, amongst the very first for quickness and avidity in learning, but expressed the utmost regret when obliged to leave at spring. I once saw a woman in a gipsy tent, reading the Bible to a circle of nine children, all her own! and though, on coming near, her blue eyes and light hair shewed her to be an English woman, the daughter, as I found, of a gamekeeper, who had married one of the Boswell gang, yet the interest which the children took in her reading of the Bible, and the interest which she assured me the whole camp took in it, were sufficient evidence that it is only for want of being taught that they still remain in ignorance of the best knowledge. They have been so long treated with contempt and severity, that they naturally look on all men as their enemies. For my part, when I see a horde of them coming on some solitary way, with their dark Indian faces, their scarlet-cloaked women, their troops of little vivacious savages, their asses and horses laden with beds and tents, and, trudging after them, their guardian dogs,—I cannot help looking on them as an Eastern tribe, as fugitives of a most ancient family, as a living enigma in human history—and feeling that,

with all their Arab-like propensities, they have great claims on our sympathies, and on the splendid privileges of a christian land.

GIPSIES OF NEW FOREST.

Since the former edition went to press, I have learned that the New Forest has long been a great haunt of gipsies, particularly of one remarkable family—the Stanleys. I hear with pleasure that the Home Missionary Society has likewise taken up the cause of the gipsies in various parts of the country with a good deal of spirit, and a volume has been put into my hands, entitled "The Gipsies' Advocate." This is edited by the Rev. James Crabbe, a worthy dissenting minister of Southampton, and has run into a third edition. Mr. Crabbe seems a most earnest and indefatigable apostle of this neglected people. Hoyland's "Survey of the Gipsies," together with some painfully interesting circumstances connected with the execution of one of them, turned his attention to their case so early as 1827. He soon fell in with one of the New Forest clan, William Stanley, who, having in his youth been a soldier, had become acquainted with the Bible through attending church, and eventually became so anxious to christianize his gipsy kinsmen, that he went to travel about amongst them, reading the Bible in their tents. Mr. Crabbe soon formed a committee in Southampton for the reclamation of the gipsies, visiting them in their camps, and persuading them to allow their children to be put to school, and to learn trades. He visited the camps in various places, and sought them out, and preached to them at Epsom Races, and in the hop-grounds at Farnham. Stanley served as his messenger and assistant. The committee seems to

have met with great success. At the date of the edition which I quote, 1832, there were twenty-three reformed gipsies living in Southampton, and upwards of forty attending divine service there. The gipsies in almost all instances had evinced the most lively sense of the attention shewn them, and a desire to avail themselves of the privileges of learning to read and of hearing preaching. This little volume contains also some interesting accounts of the attempts to civilize the gipsies in Russia and Germany, and particularly of the zealous endeavours of the Countess von Reden of Buchwald in Silesia.

But from the gipsies of the continent we must return to those of the New Forest of England; of whom Miss Bowles, now Mrs. Southey, was kind enough to send me the following curious particulars:—

"The gipsies who mostly frequent this neighbourhood,—or did frequent it, for their visits are now 'few and far between,'—are Lees and Stanleys; I should have said Stanleys and Lees—for the former tribe hold up their heads very high above the Lees, and call themselves 'the better sort of travellers.' Some years ago a party of these Stanleys came from a distant part of the country to attend a wedding at Newport, in the Isle of Wight. They stopped at the turnpike-gate near my house, being on friendly terms with the tollman and his family, who had often done them kind offices, and to the daughter who is now in my service (1838) they entrusted the important office of making up grey silk spencers and smart flowered chintz petticoats for each of the women; encamping in the neighbourhood while the work was in hand, and '*very particular*' the ladies were about '*good fits*,' etc. Then they went to the best hatters in the town, and ordered hats on

purpose for them—of the long felt, wide-brimmed sort for the women. The tradesmen hesitated about giving credit, as they required, till their return from the island, at which they were highly indignant. 'What!' stormed one, whom they called Brother John —'What! refuse credit to a gentleman ratcatcher!' But they obtained it, and paid honourably on their return, and as honestly remunerated the sempstress for making their gay dresses.

"This same party often camped at a spot in the forest called Marl-pit Oak—and nearer to my residence on a hill near the road, called Gally Hill, and were not ill thought of by the farmers and poor people, and one or two forest girls would sometimes steal to their tents, sure of a savoury regale. The wonder is, how they lived so well—for their kettles were not filled with the produce of poaching or of thefts in the hen-roost—still less with meat '*that had died of its own accord*,' as the people say. No; they used frequently to go back from the town laden with good joints honestly purchased and paid for at the butchers.

"On one occasion, a day or two before Easter Sunday, Brother John and two of the ladies of the tribe displayed their marketing to my neighbours at the turnpike-gate—a fine breast, loin, and leg of veal. 'To-morrow's Easter Sunday;' said they, 'and we always have a feast of veal on that day.' (Singular! is it not?) 'How can you contrive to roast it at your fires?' inquired the woman who is now my servant. 'Better *a deal* than you can at your poor pinched in grates,' was the answer; 'and then we shall have rice-puddings, capital rice-puddings.' 'But you can't *bake*, if you can roast?' 'Can't we? come and taste if you ever knowed better baking in your life.' (I should have accepted the invitation if it had been made to

me). And then they described their culinary process. Having mixed their ingredients—all of the best—in a large brown pan of that sort of ware which is fireproof, they covered it with another of the same sort, set it deep in a bed of glowing peat-ashes, and heaped it over to a foot depth with the same. I have no doubt of the excellency of the method,—not very unlike that in use by many of the savage tribes. There were seven daughters of this particular family of the Stanleys, all splendid beauties;—one but too celebrated, 'the beautiful Caroline Stanley.' She fell into worse company than that of her own people, and on two or three occasions was absent from them for a year and more at a time, living in splendour as 'maitresse en titre,' to more than one officer of high rank; dashed about in elegant carriages, clothed in 'silken sheen,' and all sorts of bravery, and carried it with a high hand (poor Caroline!) through her seasons of 'bad eminence.' But all the while she was out of her element; the free creature of the woods pined to be *there* again; and some fine morning she would be off without leave taking, and leaving behind her every atom of the dear-bought finery, that had become fetters to her. I knew her well by sight, and such a *Cleopatra* of *regal beauty* I never could have imaged to myself.

"A short time before her first initiation in civilization and corruption, I saw her showing off in high style. I called to give some order to my milliner, but sat quietly down to await her leisure, finding her engaged in high disputation with the gipsy beauty, who was rating her in no measured terms for some deviation from orders in the making of a bonnet which Caroline was in the act of trying on before the glass. And such airs and graces she gave herself! I never was more diverted.

"'Woman!' she called the poor milliner, at every sentence. 'Did you think, because I'm a gipsy, I'd wear such a thing as this,' said she, and dashed off the bonnet—an expensive one of black velvet, with a deep lace flounce—to the farther end of the room. When I last heard of her, a few years back, she was wandering—withered and haggard—with her diminished tribe. It has been much diminished of late years by the conviction and transportation of many of the men for horse-stealing; of their proficiency in which I have had sad experience. Some years ago, I lost a very beautiful and favourite pony, at the same time that a rather valuable mare was stolen from a neighbour of mine (a farrier), and a young galloway from another man, named Edward Pierce. Having done every thing in our power to regain our lost steeds, we at last gave up the pursuit as useless.

"Nearly two years afterwards, my neighbour, the farrier, came to ask me if I would join him and Pierce in some further endeavours to recover the stolen horses, which we had a fair chance of doing, he thought, according to the letter he presented for my perusal, a curious one it was, dated, 'The Hulks, Portsmouth.' The writer (one of the Stanleys) stated, that having been condemned to seven years' transportation, for a recent offence, he wished to stock himself with a few comforts for his voyage, and, therefore, if we, the losers of such and such horses, stolen at such a time, would make it 'worth his while,' he would put us in a way to have them back again. He began his letter (it was addressed to Pierce), 'Dear friend,' and said at the conclusion, that not liking to go by his own name in such a place, and in his present circumstances, he had taken the liberty to use his, and begged to be addressed as Edward Pierce. One of the girl Stanleys married a Blake, and

prosperous vagabonds they were,—kept a chaise-cart, and a fine horse, with expensive plated harness. On the occasion of the christening of their first child, which took place at Beaulieu, they invited all the farmers and respectable country folk for miles round to a feast on the heath, and a sumptuous feast it was, and every thing 'done decently and in order.' Abundance of good things, eatables and drinkables.

"The tables, borrowed for the occasion, almost elegantly spread. Liquor in abundance, good ale and strong, but no abuse of it. Fiddling and dancing afterwards till the long summer day closed in, and then the wild hosts and their civilized guests parted with mutual good-will; the most respectable of the latter (good substantial farmers, their wives and families) protesting they had never been so well treated, or in company more decently conducted.

"Mr. Crabbe alludes at p. 29 of the 'Gipsies' Advocate,' to a circumstance connected with gipsy burials, as having occurred in the neighbouring county of Wilts. I suspect it to be the same which was related to me two years ago, by the vicar of a parish in the New Forest, who had it from his intimate friend the curate of a Wiltshire parish, the name of which I forget. A small party of gipsies had remained stationary in the neighbourhood for an unusual length of time, detained by the illness of one of them, a very young woman and beautiful—lately married to a man as comely as herself. 'One of the finest young men,' the curate said, 'he ever set eyes on.' The woman died, and soon after the husband came, almost in a state of distraction, to apply for leave to bury her in the church. The permission could not be granted, though the man pleaded with passionate earnestness, saying, *any required sum*, however large, should be forthcoming, might he but

lay her in the church. Finding that to be impossible, he bought a piece of ground in the churchyard, made a deep vault, where she was interred, and over it caused a monument to be erected, which was not only costly but in good taste, as was the simple record inscribed on it. This occurred several years ago, and not once has he omitted an annual visit to the grave since the day of his wife's interment.

"The magistrates, country gentlemen, and farmers, in the neighbourhood of Mr. Crabbe's gipsy colony, complain bitterly of the effects of his benevolent scheme—affirming that it subjects them to the perpetual depredations of swarms of vagrants of all sorts, and that the good man himself is the dupe of nine-tenths of these persons, who allow him for a time to reckon them among his reformed gipsies. Be it as it may that this well meaning man is or is not imposed on, certain it is, that as a nation we are chargeable with culpable neglect towards these wild denizens. We 'compass sea and land to make one proselyte,' and at home, we suffer fellow beings to live and die among us, as unheeded and uncared for (far more so) as 'the beasts that perish.'"

We may illustrate this just remark of Mrs. Southey's, and at the same time, the occasional scenes of wild life in England, by quoting from Mr. Crabbe's volume the following extraordinary anecdote.

"George III. being out one day hunting, the chase lay through the skirts of the forest. The stag had been hard run, and to escape the dogs, had crossed the river in a deep part. The dogs could not be brought to follow; and it became necessary, in order to come up with it, to make a circuitous route along the banks of the river, through some thick and troublesome underwood. The roughness of the

ground, the long grass, and frequent thickets, obliged the sportsmen to separate from each other; each one endeavouring to make the best and speediest route he could. Before they had reached the end of the forest, the king's horse manifested signs of fatigue and uneasiness, so much so, that his Majesty resolved upon yielding the pleasures of the chase to those of compassion for his horse. With this view he turned down the first avenue of the forest, and determined on riding quietly to the oaks, there to wait for some of his attendants. The king had only proceeded a few yards, when, instead of the cry of the hounds he fancied he heard the cry of human distress. As he rode forward, he heard it more distinctly:—'Oh, my mother! my mother! God pity and bless my poor mother!' The curiosity and kindness of the sovereign led him instantly to the spot. It was a little green plot on one side of the forest, where was spread on the grass, under a branching oak, a little pallet, half covered with a kind of tent; and a basket or two with some packs, lay on the ground at a few paces distant from the tent. Near to the root of the tree he observed a little swarthy girl about eight years of age, on her knees praying, while her little black eyes ran down with tears. Distress of any kind was always relieved by his Majesty, for he had a heart which melted at human woe. 'What my child, is the cause of your weeping?' he asked, 'For what do you pray?' The little creature at first started, then rose from her knees; and pointing to the tent, said,—'Oh sir, my dying mother!' 'What?' said his Majesty, dismounting, and fastening his horse up to the branches of the oak, 'what, my child? tell me all about it.' The little creature now led the king to the tent; where lay, partly covered, a middle-aged female gipsy in the last stages of a decline, and in the last

moments of life. She turned her dying eyes expressively to the royal visiter, then looked up to heaven, but not a word did she utter; the organs of speech had ceased their office; *the silver cord was loosed, and the wheel broken at the cistern*. The little girl then wept aloud, and stooping down, wiped the dying sweat from her mother's face. The king, much affected, asked the child her name, and of her family, and how long her mother had been ill. Just at that moment another gipsy girl, much older, came out of breath to the spot. She had been to the town of W ———, and brought some medicine for her dying mother. Observing a stranger, she curtsied modestly, and hastening to her mother, knelt down by her side, kissed her pallid lips, and burst into tears. 'What, my dear child,' said his Majesty, 'can be done for you?' 'O sir,' she replied, 'my dying mother wanted a religious person to teach her, and to pray with her before she died. I ran all the way before it was light this morning to W———, and asked for a minister, *but no one could I get to come with me to pray with my dear mother*!' The dying woman seemed sensible of what her daughter was saying, and her countenance was much agitated. The air was again rent with the cries of the distressed daughters. The king, full of kindness, instantly endeavoured to comfort them. He said, 'I am a minister, and God has sent me to instruct and comfort your mother.' He then sate down on a pack by the side of the pallet, and taking the hand of the dying gipsy, discoursed on the demerit of sin, and the nature of redemption. He then pointed her to Christ, the all-sufficient Saviour. While doing this, the poor creature seemed to gather consolation and hope: her eyes sparkled with brightness, and her countenance became animated. She looked up—she smiled; but it was the last smile;

it was the glimmering of expiring nature. As the expression of peace, however, remained strong in her countenance, it was not till some time had elapsed, that they perceived the struggling spirit had left mortality.

"It was at this moment that some of his Majesty's attendants, who had missed him at the chase, and had been riding through the forest in search of him, rode up, and found him comforting the afflicted gipsies. It was an affecting sight, and worthy of everlasting record in the annals of kings.

"He now rose up, put some gold into the hands of the afflicted girls, promised them his protection, and bade them look to heaven. He then wiped the tears from his eyes, and mounted his horse. His attendants, greatly affected, stood in silent admiration. Lord L ——— was going to speak, but his Majesty, turning to the gipsies, and pointing to the breathless corpse, and to the weeping girls, said, with strong emotion, —'Who, my lord, who, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto these?'"

GIPSIES OF FASHION.

An incident which occurred to me in the summer of 1837, shewed me most strikingly how next to impossible it is for the peculiar manner and costume of the English gipsies to be personated. In an evening drive on the 27th of July, with a young friend staying with us, as we passed through, or by, the little rustic hamlet of Stoke D'Abernon, for it consists of houses scattered along one side of the road, I was struck with two singular female figures at a little distance before us. They were both young—the one about the middle size, the other rather taller. The taller one was dressed in a dark cotton bedgown,

dark petticoat, grey stockings, and shoes; on her head was tied a yellow silk handkerchief, and in her hand she held, as a walking-staff, a long stout hazel wand, recently cut from the hedge. The other had on also a short bedgown, but of a pink colour, striped and figured with white, a dark petticoat, and ankle-boots. On her head she wore an old straw bonnet. As my eye caught them at a distance,—the one standing with her tall stick by a pool on one side of the way, the other in the act of begging from, or addressing, a gentleman who was sitting on a stile, I could not help exclaiming,—"What have we got here!—Maria de Moulins and Madge Wildfire?" As we drew near, they came running up to us, and, one on each side of the pony-chaise, began begging most importunately: "Will you give us sixpence? Do give us sixpence! Do, dear gentleman, give us sixpence! Dear lady, do tell the gentleman to give us sixpence!" It was only necessary to give a slight glance at the faces of these beggars, and to hear one tone of their voices, to know that it was a frolic—that they were *ladies* of education and family, from some of the neighbouring country houses, thus dressed up. They had hair and eyes jet black as any gipsies; and after all that has been said of the beauty of some of the gipsy women —and they have a great deal—were handsomer than any gipsies I ever saw. The taller, who appeared the younger of the two, was a very lovely woman, of a slender figure, the exquisite symmetry of which was not to be disguised by the rustic dress she had assumed. The other had, or affected, a slight lisp. Irresistible as such beggars might appear, I resolved to refuse them, in order to see how they would keep up the attempt, and how they would take a refusal. I therefore said, laughing, "O! I have no sixpences for beggars like you; you certainly are very charming

beggars; you have chosen a very rustic costume; you act your part very well indeed, and I hope you will enjoy your frolic." All this time I kept driving on at a good pace; but the resolute damsels still ran on, importuning for a sixpence. One soon dropped behind—the taller one still ran on with her stick in her hand, in a voice of much softness and sweetness still begging for sixpence—as they were poor strangers, and had got nothing all day! As she ran, this sort of badinage passed:—"Where do you come from?" "O, we have come all the way from Epsom to meet our young man here, and he has deceived us."—"Well, I hope no young man will deceive you more cruelly." "Dear gentleman, if you won't give us sixpence, give us a penny then to buy us a glass of ale!" "O, you are no ale drinkers—what should you think of a glass of gin?" "I should like something, for I am *very* tired: and what is sixpence to you?—you have a very good horse in your chaise; I have no doubt you are a gentleman of independent fortune—*do* give us sixpence!" "No, I wish I were half as rich as you are." Here the Queen of Love and Beauty stopped, and turned round with an air of very beautiful disdain. As she went back to join her companion, we were again struck with the grace of her form, and the buoyancy of her carriage.

My impression was that these ladies were merely acting beggars; but we soon found that they were acting gipsies; for they offered to tell almost every body's fortunes, and actually did tell some. As we returned, we met them coming up a hollow woody lane, near Bookham Common, about a mile from where we left them; and behold! they and the gentleman who was there sitting on the stile—a military-looking man with light mustachios—were walking familiarly on together. It was evident that

they had found “their young man!” It was a group worthy of the pencil of Stothard; and on the opposite side of the lane, from a cottage above it, out were come a countrywoman, and six or seven children, of different ages, in their rustic costume, and stood to look at them—a little picture after the very heart of Collins. The moment our actresses saw us, they motioned their escort to move off to the other side of the way, and to walk on, as though he did not belong to them, and again renewed their importunity as we passed. I merely smiled, and moved my hat to them. As we proceeded, I stopped and asked of all the country people I met—who was that gentleman? and who the ladies dressed as beggars? The miller thought the gentleman was from Bookham Lodge, the seat of Captain Blackwood—he heard a large party of gentry was just come there; “but the women, sir, they are Dutch women!” Dutch women! Broom-girls, in fact! Broom-girls, with legs and arms like young elephants! and broad solid figures, as if cut out of blocks of wood—how very like those slim and elegant creatures! But it was enough for the worthy miller, whose fortune they *had* offered to tell, that they had on short bedgowns and dark petticoats. A grocer from Epsom, with his spring-cart, going as they do all round the country, from one gentleman’s house to another, had had his fortune told by them, and was lost in amaze at the announcement that he had had nine children, six of whom were still living —five girls and one boy; the very facts to a hair! A farmer and his wife at Stoke, never dreamt that the gentleman whom they had noticed belonged to these “young baggages of beggars,” that had been sitting on the bank by the road-side opposite their house; but his wife said one of them was the handsomest beggar she *ever* saw. “Ay, they were both good-

looking," said the man, "and had famous things on." The groom at the parsonage-gate "didn't know the gentleman in the mustachios; but the women, bless you, they were no *ladies*." "Why?" "O, they carried it on too far for ladies here, I assure you." "What did they do?" "O! they came ringing at the bell like new 'uns; six or seven times they called us out—they would take no nay."

Little did these fair *ladies*, when sallying out for this frolic in the sylvan lanes of Surrey, dream, I dare say, that they should meet "a chiel takin' notes," that would put their exploits into print. Here they are, however; and if they should chance to see this, I must tell them, that they were very sweet nondescripts, but not very perfect beggars; and far, far indeed, from perfect Zinganies. For Madge Wildfires, they were not amiss; but beggars, impudent as they are, seldom ask for sixpences; seldom appear in new apparel; never run by the side of carriages—that is left to beggar children. Pleading looks, and a pitiful whining tone, with low genuflections, mark the young beggar-woman, as she stands fixed at one place;—her husband is dead, and she is going home to her parents or parish; or he is gone for a soldier, and she is following to the garrison. Lancashire witches they would have done for capitally—but then witches don't tell fortunes by palmistry; their vocation is by spell and cauldron; and as for gipsies, why it is just as difficult to mistake the particular expression and cultivated voice of an English lady, as it is the features and voice of the real gipsy-woman. Black eyes and black hair these ladies had; but they had neither the olive skin, nor the bold, easy *degagée* air of the gipsy belle; and what do gipsies with such beautifully *slender* and delicate hands? They were importunate; but nothing

but a life and an education in the gipsy-camp, and perhaps the blood and descent of the gipsy, can give the peculiar style of palaver—the *suaviter in modo*—the unique flattery—the "you are born fortunate, sir"—with which the gipsy accosts you. And the costume! The gipsy wears nothing short. She has a long gown,—a long red cloak—a handkerchief tied over her head, it is true, but upon *it* a large flapping bonnet with lace trimming, or black beaver hat;—instead of that fairy form, she is generally strapping, tall, and strong—and instead of those taper ankles and small feet, which could evidently dance down the four-and-twenty hours, she has her lower limbs arrayed in black stockings and stout shoes that would do for a wagoner. Young gipsy women walk with sticks! how rarely do you see an old one with one? Knowing now who these ladies were, I should, beforehand, have expected a closer personation of the gipsy; but the result only proves the difficulty of the attempt. It must, however be confessed, that this was as pretty a little rural adventure as one could desire to meet with.



CHAPTER II.

NOOKS OF THE WORLD; OR, A PEEP INTO THE BACK SETTLEMENTS OF ENGLAND.

There are thousands of places in this beautiful kingdom, which if you could change their situation—if you could take some plain, monotonous, and uninteresting tracts from the neighbourhood of large cities, from positions barren and of daily observance, and place these in their stead—would acquire an incalculable value; while the common spots would serve the present inhabitants of those sweet places just as well, and often far better, for the ordinary purposes of their lives—for walking over in the day, sleeping in during the night, and raising grass, cattle, and corn upon. The dwellers of cities—the men who have made fortunes, or are making them, and yet long for the quietness and beauty of the country—but especially the literary, the nature-loving, the poetical—would, to use a common expression, jump at them; and, if it were in their power to secure them, would make heavens-upon-earth of them. Yes! they are such spots as thousands are longing for; as the day-dreaming young, and the world-weary old, are yearning after, and painting to their mind's eye, daily in great cities; and the dull, the common-place, the unpercipient of their beauty and their glory, are dwelling in them;—paradisiacal fields and magnificent mountains; or cloudy hollows in their mottled sides; or little *cleuchs* and glens, hidden and green—overhung with wild wood—rocky, and resounding with dashing and splashing streams;—

places, where the eye sees the distant flocks and their slowly-stalking shepherds—the climbing goat, the soaring eagle: and the ear catches their far-off cries; whence a thousand splendours and pageants, changing aspects, and kindling and dying glories, in earth and sky, are witnessed; the cheerful arising of morning—the still, crimson, violet, purple, azure, dim grey, and then dark fading away of day into night, are watched; where the high and clear grandeur and solitude of night, with its moon and stars, and wandering breezes, and soul-enwrapping freshness, are seen and felt. Such places as these, and the brown or summer-empurpled heath, with its patch of ancient forest; its blasted, shattered, yet living old trees, greeting you with feelings and fancies of long-past centuries; the clear, rushing brook; the bubbling and most crystalline spring; and the turf that springs under your feet with a delicious elasticity, and sends up to your senses a fresh and forest-born odour; or cottages perched in the sides of glades, or on eminences by the sea—the soul-inspiring sea—with its wide views of coming and going ships, its fresh gales, and its everlasting change of light and life, on its waters, and on its shores; its sailors, and its fishermen, with all their doings, families, and dependencies—every one of them thoroughly covered and saturated with the spirit of picturesque and homely beauty; or inland hollows and fields, and old hamlets, lying amid great woods and slopes of wondrous loveliness;—if we could but turn things round, and bring these near us, and unite, at once, city advantages, city society, and them! But it never can be! And there are living in them, from generation to generation, numbers of people who are not to be envied, because they know nothing at all of the enviableness of their situation.

We are continually labouring to improve society—to diffuse education—to confer higher and ampler religious knowledge; but these people know little of all this—experience little of its effect; for their abodes, and natural paradises, lie far from the great tracks of travel and commerce; far from our great roads; in the most out-of-the-world places—the very nooks of the world.

If you come by chance upon them, you are struck with their admirable beauty, their solemn repose, their fresh and basking solitude. You cannot help exclaiming, What happy people must these be! But, when you come to look closer into them, the delusion vanishes. They do not, in fact, see any beauty that you see. Their minds have never been stirred from the sluggish routine of their daily life; their mental eye has never been unsealed, and directed to survey the advantages of their situation. They have been occupied with other things. Like the farmer's lad mentioned by Wordsworth, their souls have become encrusted in their own torpor.

> A sample should I give
> Of what this stock produces, to enrich
> The tender age of life, ye would exclaim,
> "Is this the whistling plough-boy whose shrill notes
> Impart new gladness to the morning air?"
> Forgive me, if I venture to suspect
> That many, sweet to hear of in soft verse,
> Are of no finer frame;—his joints are stiff;
> Beneath a cumbrous frock that to the knees
> Invests the thriving churl, his legs appear,
> Fellows to those that lustily upheld
> The wooden-stools, for everlasting use,
> Whereon our fathers sate. And mark his brow!
> Under whose shaggy canopy are set
> Two eyes, not dim, but of a healthy stare;
> Wide, sluggish, blank, and ignorant and strange;

> Proclaiming boldly that they never drew
> A look or motion of intelligence,
> From infant conning of the Christ-cross-row,
> Or puzzling through a Primer, line by line,
> Till perfect mastery crown the pains at last.
>
> *The Excursion*, B. 8.

This, however, is one of the worst specimens of the most stupified class—farm-servants. Wordsworth himself makes his good and wise *Wanderer*, a shepherd in his youth, and describes him, when a lad, as impressed with the deepest sense of nature's majesty. He represents him, in one of the noblest passages of the language, as witnessing the sun rise from some bold headland, and

> Rapt into still communion that transcends
> The imperfect offices of prayer and praise.

And, indeed, the mountaineer must be generally excepted from that torpor of mind I have alluded to. The forms of nature that perpetually surround him, are so bold and sublime, that they almost irresistibly impress, excite, and colour his spirit within him; and those legends and stirring histories which generally abound in them, co-operate with these natural influences. This unawakened intellect dwells more generally amid the humbler and quieter forms of natural beauty; in the "sleepy hollows" of more champaign regions.

It might be supposed that these nooks of the world would, in their seclusion, possess very much one moral character; but nothing can be more untrue. Universally, they may seem old-fashioned, and full of a sweet tranquillity; but their inhabitants differ widely in character in different parts of the country —widely often in a short space, and in a manner that can only be accounted for by their less or greater

communion with towns, less or greater degree of education extended to them—and the kind extended. Where they are far from towns, and hold little intercourse with them, and have no manufactory in them, they may be dull, but they are seldom very vicious. If they have had little education, they lead a very mechanical sort of life; are often very boorish, and have very confined notions and contracted wishes; are rude in manner, but not bad in heart. I have been in places—ay, in this newspaper-reading age, where a newspaper never comes; where they have no public-house, no school, no church, and no doctor; and yet the district has been populous. But, in similarly situated places, where yet they had a simple, pious pastor—some primitive patriarch, like the venerable Robert Walker, of whom so admirable an account is given by Wordsworth; where they have been blest with such a man amongst them, and where they have had a school; where they knew little of what was going on in the world, and where yet you were sure to find, in some crypt-like hole in the wall, or in a little fireside window, about half a dozen books—the Bible, "Hervey's Meditations among the Tombs," "Baxter's Saint's Everlasting Rest," "Romaine's Life of Faith," or his "Drop of Honey from the Rock Christ," "Macgowan's Life of Christ," or "Drelincourt on Death," and such like volumes; or "Robinson Crusoe," "Philip Quarle," "The History of Henry the Earl of Moreland," "Pilgrim's Progress," or "Pamela;"—have you found a simplicity of heart and manner, a quiet prosperity, a nearer approach to the Arcadian idea of rural life, than anywhere else in this country. There are yet such places to be found in our island, notwithstanding the awful truth of what was said by Coleridge, that "Care, like a foul hag, sits on us all;

one class presses with iron foot upon the wounded heads beneath, and all struggle for a worthless supremacy, and all, to rise to it, move shackled by their expenses."

But these are now few and far between; and they are certainly "nooks of the world," far from manufacturing towns; for my experience coincides with that of Captain Lloyd, as given in his "Field Sports of the North:"—"Manufactures, of whatever nature they may be, may certainly tend to enrich individuals, but, to my mind, they add little to the happiness of the community at large. In what parts of any country in the world, are such scenes of vice and squalid misery to be witnessed, as in manufacturing districts?" What he adds is very true —that, though it may appear singular, yet it is a fact, that the farther we retreat from great towns and manufactories, a greater degree of comfort is generally to be observed amongst the peasantry. It is, indeed, a strange relief to the spirit of one who has known something of the eager striving of the world, to come upon a spot where the inhabitants are passing through life, as it were, in a dreamlike pilgrimage, half unconscious of its trials and evils—an existence which, if it have not the merit of great and triumphant virtue, has that absence of selfish cunning, pride, sorrow, and degradation, which one would seek for in vain amid more bustling scenes. To find the young, soberly and cheerfully fulfilling their daily duties—nowhere affluence, but everywhere plenty and comfort observable—and the old, in their last tranquil days, seated in their easy chairs, or on the stone bench at their doors, glad to chat with you on all they have known on earth and hoped for in heaven—why, it would be more easy to scathe such a place with the evil spirit of the town, than to raise

it in the scale of moral life. The experiment of improvement there, you feel, would be a hazardous one. It were easy and desirable to give more knowledge: but not easy to give it unaccompanied by those blighting contaminations that at present cling to it.

It is in those rural districts into which manufactories have spread—that are partly manufacturing and partly agricultural—that the population assumes its worst shape. The state of morals and manners amongst the working population of our great towns is terrible—far more so than casual observers are aware of. After all that has been done to reform and educate the working class, the torrent of corruption rolls on. The most active friends of education, the most active labourers in it, are ready to despair, and sometimes exclaim,—"What have we done, after all!" There, the spirit of man is aroused to a marvellous activity; but it is an unhealthful activity, and overpowers, in its extravagance, all attempts to direct it aright. "Evil communications corrupt good manners" faster than good communications can counteract them; and where the rural population, in its simplicity, comes in contact with this spirit, it receives the contagion in its most exaggerated form—a desolating moral pestilence; and suffers in person and in mind. There, spread all the vice and baseness of the lowest grade of the town, made hideous by still greater vulgarity and ignorance, and unawed by the higher authorities, unchecked by the better influences which there prevail, in the example and exertions of a higher caste of society.

The Methodists have done much to check the progress of demoralization in these districts. They have given vast numbers education; they have taken

them away from the pot-house and the gambling-house; from low haunts and low pursuits. They have placed them in a certain circle, and invested them with a degree of moral and social importance. They have placed them where they have a character to sustain, and higher objects to strive after; where they have ceased to be operated upon by a perpetual series of evil influences, and have been brought under the regular operation of good ones. They have rescued them from brutality of mind and manners, and given them a more refined association on earth, and a warm hope of a still better existence hereafter. If they have not done all that could be desired, with such materials, they have done much, and the country owes them much. The thorough mastery of the evil requires the application of yet greater power —it requires a NATIONAL POWER. The evil lies deeper than the surface; it lies in the distorted nature of our social relations; and, *before the population can be effectually reformed, its condition must be physically ameliorated*!

There never was a more momentous and sure truth pronounced, than that pronounced by Christ,—"They who take the sword, shall fall by the sword." If they do not fall by its edge, they will by its hilt. It is under this evil that we are now labouring. As a nation we have fallen, through war, into all our present misery and crime. It is impossible that the great European kingdoms, with their present wealth and cultivated surfaces, in their present artificial state of society, can carry on war without enduring evils far more extensive, tremendous, and lasting, than the mere ravaging of lands, the destruction of towns, or even of human lives. We are, as a nation, an awful proof of this at this moment. By the chances of war, at one time manufacturing and farming almost for the

world; prospering, apparently, on the miseries of whole kingdoms wrapt in one wide scene of promiscuous carnage and anarchy, our tradesmen and agriculturists commanded their own terms; and hence, on the one hand, they accumulated large fortunes, while, on the other, the nation, by its enormous military preparations—its fleets and armies marching and sailing everywhere, prepared to meet emergencies at all points and in all climes; by its aids and subsidies abroad; by its wasteful expenditure at home—piled up the most astounding debt ever heard of in the annals of the world. A vast working population was not merely demanded by this unnatural state of excitement, but might be said to be forced into existence, to supply all manner of articles to realms too busy in mutual slaughter to be able to manufacture or plough for themselves. Every thing assumed a new and wonderful value. All classes, the working classes as well as the rest, with the apparent growing prosperity, advanced into habits of higher refinement and luxury. The tables of mechanics were heaped with loads of viands of the best quality, and of the highest price, as earliest in the market; their houses were crowded with furniture, till they themselves could scarcely turn round in them—clocks, sometimes two or three in one house; chests of drawers and tables thronged into the smallest rooms; looking-glasses, tea-trays, and prints, stuck on every possible space on the walls; and, from the ceiling depending hams, bags, baskets, fly-cages of many colours, and a miscellaneous congregation of other articles, that gave their abodes more the aspect of warerooms or museums, than the dwellings of the working class. Dress advanced in the same ratio; horses and gigs were in vast request; and the publicans and keepers

of tea-gardens made ample fortunes.

The war ceased. Commerce was thrown open to the competition of the world. The continental nations began to breathe, and to look round on their condition. Their poverty and their spirit of emulation, the sight of their own stripped condition, and of England apparently enriched beyond calculation at their expense, set them rapidly about helping themselves. This could not but be quickly and deeply felt here. To maintain our position, all manner of artificial means were adopted. Every class, feeling the tide of wealth changing its course, strove to keep what it had got. The working class, as individually the weakest, because they had spent their gains as they came, went to the ground. The value of every necessary of life was kept up as much as possible by legal enactments. The rate of wages fell. The manufacturers, impelled by the same necessity of struggling for the maintenance of their rank, were plunged into the most eager competition; the utmost pressure of reduction fell on the labour of the operatives, who, with their acquired habits, were ill able to bear it. They were thrust down to a condition the most pitiful and morally destructive—to excessive labour, to semi-starvation, to pauperism. They could not send their children to school—not so much from the expense of schooling—for that was made light by public contribution, and new plans of facility in teaching large numbers—but because they wanted every penny their children could earn, by any means, to aid in the common support. Hence, mere infants were crowded in pestilent mills when they should have been growing in the fresh air, and were stunted and blighted in body and in mind—a system, the evil of which became so enormous as to call loudly upon the attention of the legislature, and

the indignant wonder of the nation. The parents themselves had not a moment's time to watch over their welfare or their morals; at least sixteen hours' unremitting daily labour being necessary to the most miserable existence. Evils accumulated on all sides. The working class considered themselves cast off from the sympathies of the upper classes, regarded and valued but as tools and machines; their children grew into ignorant depravity, in spite of all efforts of law or philanthropy to prevent them. These causes still operate wherever manufacturing extends: and till the condition of this great class, whether in towns or villages, can be amended; till time for domestic relaxation can be given to the man, and a Christian, rather than a literary, education to the boy—an inculcation of the beauty and necessity of the great Christian principles; the necessity of reverencing the laws of God; doing, in all their intercourse with their fellow men, as they would be done by; the necessity of purity of life and justice of action, rather than the cant of religious feeling, and the blind mystery of sectarian doctrine,—the law and the philanthropy must be in vain.

To the simple, and yet uncontaminated parts of the country, there is yet a different kind of education that I should rejoice to see extended. It should be, to open the eyes of the rural population to the advantages of their situation;—to awaken a taste for the enjoyment of nature;—to give them a touch of the poetical;—to teach them to see the pleasantness of their quiet lives,—of their cottages and gardens,—of the freshness of the air and country around them, especially as contrasted with the poor and squalid alleys where those of their own rank, living in towns, necessarily take up their abode,—of the advantages in point of health and purity afforded to their

children by their position,—of the majestic beauty of the day, with its morning animation, its evening sunsets, and twilights almost as beautiful; its nightly blue altitude, with its moon and stars:—all this might be readily done by the conversation of intelligent people, and by the diffusion of cheap publications amongst them; and done, too, without diminishing the relish for the daily business of their lives. Airy and dreamy notions—notions of false refinement, and aspirations of soaring beyond their own sphere—are not inspired by sound and good intelligence, but by defective and bad education.

The sort of education I mean has long been realized in Scotland, and with the happiest results. There, large towns and manufactories have produced their legitimate effect, as with us; but, in the rural districts, every child, by national provision, has a sound, plain education given him. He is brought up in habits of economy, and sentiments of rational religion, and the most solemn and thorough morality. The consequence is, that almost all grow up with a sense of self-respect; a sense of the dignity of human nature; a determined resolve of depending on their own exertions: and though no people are so national, because they are made sensible of the beauty of their country and the honourable deeds of their forefathers, yet, if they cannot find means of living at home without degradation, and, indeed, without bettering their condition, they soberly march off, and find some place where they can, though it be at the very ends of the earth.

Nothing is better known than the intelligence and order that distinguish a great portion of the rural population of Scotland. No people are more diligent and persevering in their proper avocations; and yet none are more alive to the delights of literature.

Amid wild mountain tracks and vast heaths, where you scarcely see a house as you pass along for miles, and where you could not have passed two generations ago without danger of robbery or the dirk, they have book societies, and send new books to and fro to one another, with an alacrity and punctuality that are most delightful. When I have been pedestrianizing in that country, I have frequently accosted men at their work, or in their working dress—perhaps with their axe or their spade in their hands, and three or four children at their heels—and found them well acquainted with the latest good publications, and entertaining the soundest notions of them, without the aid of critics. Such men in England would probably not have been able to read at all. They would have known nothing but the routine of their business, the state of the crop, and the gossip of the neighbourhood: but there, sturdy and laborious men, tanned with the sun, or smeared with the marl in which they had been delving, have not only been able to give all the knowledge of the district; its histories and traditions; the proprietorships, and other particulars of the neighbourhood; but their eyes have brightened at the mention of their great patriots, reformers, and philosophers, and their tongues have grown perfectly eloquent in discussing the works of their poets and other writers. The names of Wallace, Bruce, Knox, Fletcher of Saltoun, the Covenanters, Scott, Burns, Hogg, Campbell, Wilson, and others, have been spells that have made them march away miles with me, when they could not get me into their own houses, and find it difficult to turn back.

Now, why should not this be so in England? Why should not similar means produce similar effects? They must and would; and by imbuing the rural

population with a spirit as sound and rational, we should not only raise it in the social scale to a degree of worth and happiness at present not easily imaginable, but render the most important service to the country, by attaching "a bold peasantry, the country's pride," to their native soil, by the most powerful of ties, and rendering them both able and more determined to live in honourable dependence on self-exertion. BOOK SOCIETIES, under local management, should do for the COUNTRY what MECHANICS' LIBRARIES are doing for the TOWNS—building up those habits, and perfecting those healthful tastes, for which popular education is but the bare foundation.

Wordsworth gives an account of the early years of his Wanderer, which, under such a system, might be that of thousands.

> Early had he learned
> To reverence the volume that displays
> The mystery, the life which cannot die:—
> What wonder if his being thus became
> Sublime and comprehensive! Low desires,
> Low thoughts, there had no place; yet was his heart
> Lowly; for he was meek in gratitude,
> Oft as he called those ecstasies to mind,
> And whence they flowed; and from them he acquired
> Wisdom, which works through patience:—hence he learned
> In oft-recurring hours of sober thought
> To look on nature with a humble heart,
> Self-questioned, where it did not understand,
> And with a superstitious eye of love.
> So passed the time; yet to the nearest town
> He duly went, with what small overplus
> His earnings might supply, and brought away
> The book that most had tempted his desires,
> While at the stall he read. Among the hills
> He gazed upon that mighty orb of song,

> The divine Milton. Lore of different kind,
> The annual savings of a toilsome life,
> His schoolmaster supplied; books that explain
> The purer elements of truth, involved,
> In lines and numbers, and, by charm severe,
> (Especially perceived where nature droops,
> And feeling is suppressed) preserve the mind
> Busy in solitude and poverty.
>
> Yet still uppermost,
> Nature was at his heart, as if he felt,
> Though yet he knew not how, a wasting power
> In all things that from her sweet influence
> Might tend to wean him. Therefore, with her hues,
> Her forms, and with the spirit of her forms,
> He clothed the nakedness of austere truth,
> While yet he lingered in the rudiments
> Of science, and among her simplest laws,
> His triangles—they were the stars of heaven,
> The silent stars! Oft did he take delight
> To measure th' altitude of some tall crag
> That is the eagle's birthplace, or some peak
> Familiar with forgotten years.——
> In dreams, in study, and in ardent thought,
> Thus was he reared; much wanting to assist
> The growth of intellect, yet gaining more,
> And every moral feeling of his soul
> Strengthened and braced, by breathing in content
> The keen, the wholesome air of poverty,
> And drinking from the well of homely life.
>
> *The Excursion*, B. 1.

Such a process I should rejoice to see producing such characters in England. Yes! Milton, Thomson, Cowper, the pious and tender Montgomery, and Bloomfield, one of their own kind, would be noble and enriching studies for the simplest cottage, and cottage-garden, and field-walk. Some of our condensed historians, our best essayists and divines, travellers, naturalists in a popular shape, and writers

of fiction, as Scott, and Edgeworth, and De Foe, might be with vast advantage diffused amongst them. Let us hope it will one day be so. And already I know some who have reaped those blessings of an awakened heart and intellect, too long denied to the hard path of poverty, and which render them not the less sedate, industrious, and provident, but, on the contrary, more so. They have made them, in the humblest of stations, the happiest of men; quickened their sensibilities towards their wives and children; converted the fields, the places of their daily toil, into places of earnest meditative delight—schools of perpetual observation of God's creative energy and wisdom.

It was but the other day that the farming-man of a neighbouring lady having been pointed out to me as at once remarkably fond of reading and attached to his profession, I entered into conversation with him; and it is long since I experienced such a cordial pleasure as in the contemplation of the character that opened upon me. He was a strong man; not to be distinguished by his dress and appearance from those of his class, but having a very intelligent countenance; and the vigorous, healthful feelings, and right views, that seemed to fill not only his mind but his whole frame, spoke volumes for that vast enjoyment and elevation of character which a rightly directed taste for reading would diffuse amongst our peasantry. His sound appreciation of those authors he had read—some of our best poets, historians, essayists, and travellers—was truly cheering, when contrasted with the miserable and frippery taste which distinguishes a large class of readers; where a-thousand-times-repeated novels of fashionable life, neither original in conception nor of any worth in their object—the languid offspring of a tinsel and

exotic existence—are read because they can be read without the labour of thinking. While such works are poured in legions upon the public, like a host of dead leaves from the forest, driven along in mimic life by a mighty wind—and while such things are suffered to swell the Puffiads of publishers, and shoulder away, or discourage, the substantial labours of high intellect—it is truly reviving to see the awakening of mind in the common people. It is, I am persuaded, from the people that a regenerating power must come—a new infusion of better blood into our literary system. The inanities of fashion must weary the spirit of a great nation, and be thrown off; strong, native genius, from the measureless, unploughed regions of the popular mind—robust, gigantic, uneffeminated by luxury, glitter, and sloth—will rise up, and put all soulless artificialities to shame; and already mighty are the symptoms of such a change manifested, in an array of names that might be adduced. But I must not be led farther away by this seducing topic.

I found this countryman was a member of our Artisans' Library, and every Saturday evening he walked over to the town to exchange his books. I asked him whether reading did not make him less satisfied with his daily work; his answer deserves universal attention:—"Before he read, his work was weary to him; for, in the solitary fields, an empty head measured the time out tediously, to double its length; but, now, no place was so sweet as the solitary fields: he had always something pleasant floating across his mind; and the labour was delightful, and the day only too short." Seeing his ardent attachment to the country, I sent him the last edition of "The Book of the Seasons;" and I must here give a *verbatim et literatim* extract from the note in

which he acknowledged its receipt, because it not only contains an experimental proof of the falsity of a common alarm on the subject of popular education, but shews at what a little cost much happiness may be conveyed to a poor man:—"Believe me, dear sir, this kind act has made an impression on my heart that time will not easily erase. There are none of your works, in my opinion, more valuable than this. The study of nature is not only the most delightful, but the most elevating. This will be true in *every station* of life. But how much more ought the *poor man* to prize this study! which if prized and pursued as it ought, will enable him to bear, with patient resignation and cheerfulness, the *lot* by providence assigned him. O sir! I pity the working man who possesses not a *taste* for reading. 'Tis true, it may sometimes lead him to neglect the other more important duties of his station; but his better and more enlightened judgment will soon correct itself in this particular, and will enable him, while he steadily and diligently pursues his private studies, and participates in intellectual enjoyment, to prize, as he ought, his *character as a man* in every relative duty of life."

What a nation would this be, filled with a peasantry holding such views, and possessing such a consequent character as this!

The sources of enjoyment in nature have been too long closed to the poor. The rich can wander from side to side of the island, and explore its coasts, its fields, and forests—but the poor man is fettered to the spot. The rich can enter the galleries and exhibitions of cities, and contemplate all the great works of art; the poor *ought to be taught to know* that, if they cannot see the works of art—statues and paintings—they can see those of God;—if they

cannot gaze on the finest forms of beauty from the chisel of the sculptor, they may be taught to distinguish the beauty of all *living* forms;—if they cannot behold splendid paintings of landscapes, of mountains, of sea-coasts, of sunrises and sunsets; they can see, one or other of them, all the originals of these—originals to whose magnificence and glory the copies never can approach. To the poor, but properly educated man, every walk will become a luxury, a poem, a painting—a source of the sweetest feelings and the most elevating reflections.

But there is one class in these back settlements of England to whom a liberal education is most requisite, and to whom it would be most difficult to give it—the class of smaller resident proprietors. The effect of the possession of property in such places is singular and most lamentable. It produces the most impenetrable hardness of nature—the most selfish and sordid dispositions. Everywhere, the tendency of accumulation is to generate selfishness: but, in towns, there are many counteracting influences; the emulative desire of vying, in mode of life, with equals and superiors—the greater spread of information—the various objects of pleasure and association, which keep open the avenues of expenditure, not only in the purse, but in the heart. Here there are none. Amusements and dissipations are self-gratulatingly denounced as gross follies and sins; objects of display, as pride. The consequence is, that habits of the strangest parsimony prevail—the rudest furniture, the rudest style of living. Men who, in a town or its neighbourhood, would appear as gentlemen, and, perhaps, keep a carriage, there wear often clouted shoes, threadbare and patched clothes, and a hat not worth a farthing; and all in a fashion of the most awkward rusticity. All wisdom is supposed

to lie in penuriousness. They have abundance of maxims for ever in their mouths, full of that philosophy; as “Penny-wise and pound-foolish”—“A penny saved is a penny got”—“A pin a-day’s a groat a-year.” All ideas seem absorbed in the one grand idea of accumulating coin, that will never be of more value to them than so many oyster-shells. Such a thing as a noble or generous sentiment would be a surprise to their own souls. Of such men are made the hardest overseers of the poor; whose screwing, iron-handed administration of relief is the boast of the parish, and has led to the most monstrous abuses. To them all objects are alike; they have no discrimination; the old and young, the idle and industrious, the sturdy vagabond, and the helpless and dying!—they deem it a virtue to deny them all, till a higher power forces the reluctant doit from their gripe. They are surly, yet proud churls, living wrapped in a sense of their own importance; for they see nobody above them, except there be a squire or a lord in the parish; and they see little of him, and then only to make their passing obsequious bow; for they are at once

> Tyrants to the weak, and cowards to the strong.

Any education, any change, would be a blessing to these men, that would bring them into collision with those of their own supposed standing, but with better education and more liberal views and habits. The excess to which these causes operate in some of these out-of-the-world places, is scarcely to be credited: they produce the strangest scenes and the strangest characters. Let us take a specimen or two from one parish, that would be easily paralleled in many others.

In one part of this secluded neighbourhood, you

approach extensive woods, and behold amongst them a house of corresponding air and dimensions—a mansion befitting a large landed proprietor. If you choose to explore the outbuildings belonging to it, you will find there a regularly educated and authorized physician, living in a dovecot, and writing prescriptions for any that choose to employ him, for a crown, or even half-a-crown, which he spends in drink. Paternal example and inculcations made him what he is; unfitted him for success in his profession, and left him dependent on his elder brother, who affords him the asylum of his dovecot, yet so grudgingly that he has even attempted to dislodge him by pulling off the roof; and the poor doctor owes his retreat, not to his brother's good-will, but to his own possession of a brace of formidable bull-dogs, that menace the destruction of any assailant. The dogs lie in his chamber when you enter, with their noses on the ground, and their dark glittering eyes fixed steadily upon you, and are ready, at a signal, to spring on you, and tear you to pieces. The doctor's free potations have now deprived him of the power of locomotion; he cannot quit his pigeon-house; but one of his bull-dogs he has trained to act as his emissary, and with a note suspended to his neck by a tape, he goes to certain houses in the neighbouring village, and so communicates his wishes to certain cronies of his, who are in the habit of attending to them. The dog would tear any one to pieces that attempted to stop him while on his master's errands, being a very strong and fierce creature; but, if he is not molested, he goes very civilly along to his place of destination, and, when the note is taken off his neck by the proper hands, returns with great punctuality and decorum.

It must be said of this curiosity of a physician, that he is the descendant of a very curious family; whose history for the last three generations would be a regular series of eccentricities; and the first of whom, here resident, was a celebrated piratical captain, who is said to have come hither disguised as a peasant, seeking as secluded a country as he could find, and driving before him an ass loaded with gold. It is certain that he purchased very extensive estates, and that one of his descendants was lately in Parliament, who, partaking of the family qualities, excited more surprise and more laughter in the house, than, perhaps, any man since the days of Sir Thomas Lethbridge.

Not far thence, stands another residence. At some distance it appears a goodly manor-house. It is large; with white walls and many antique gables; a stately avenue of elms in front; tall pines about it, the landmark of the whole country round: a spacious garden, with a summer-house on the wall, seeming to have been built when there was some taste there for those rural enjoyments which such a place is calculated to afford to the amiable, country-loving, and refined. As you come near, there appear signs of neglect and decay. Old timber, litter, and large stones lie about; there are broken windows, unpainted and rotting wood-work: every thing looks forlorn, as if it were the residence of poverty on the verge of utter destitution.

The fact is, the owner has landed property worth from thirty to forty thousand pounds. But see the man himself! There he goes, limping across his yard, having permanently injured one of his legs in some of his farming operations. There he goes—a tall hard-featured, weather-beaten man, dressed in the garb of the most rustic husbandman: strong clouted ankle-

boots, blue or black ribbed worsted stockings; corduroy small-clothes; a yellow striped waistcoat, and a coat of coarse grey cloth, cut short, in a rude fashion, and illustrated with metal buttons; a hat that seems to have been originally made of coarse wool or dog's hair—to have cost some four-and-sixpence some dozen years ago—brown, threadbare, and cocked up behind, by propping on his coat collar.

He has brought up a family of three sons, and never spent on their education three pounds. The consequence has been just what might be expected. They came to know, as they grew up, "for quickly comes such knowledge," their expectations; and they turned out rude, savage, and drunken. One married a servant girl, and she dying, the son brought himself and several children to the old man's to live. Warned by this—for, with all his clownish parsimony, he has pride—the pride of property—he has put the others on farms, and they have married farmer's daughters: but, always living in expectation of the old man's death, they attend to no business; always looking forward to the possession of his wealth, they have already condemned a good part of it. If any man could be punished that man is, for sparing the expense of their education, and for the example set before them; for, what he has made the sole object of all his thoughts and labours, he sees them squandering, and knows that they will squander it all. But he himself is not guilty of all this; he is but the victim of his own education, and the maxims and manners of his ancestors. If he could have seen the usefulness of education to his sons, he could not have found in his heart to spend the necessary money; but he could not see it: anything further than to be able to sign a receipt, and reckon a sum of money in their heads, he called trash and nonsense.

When his sons were growing towards men, I have chanced to pass his farm-yard, and seen him and two of them filling a manure-cart; labouring, puffing and blowing, and perspiring, as if their lives depended on their labour; and the old man was urging them on with continual curses—"Curse thy body, Dick! Curse thy body, Ben!—Ben! Dick! Ben! Dick! work, lads, work!" And these hopeful sons were repaying their father's curses with the same horrible earnestness.

A gentleman once told me that, having to call on this man about some money transaction, he was detained till twelve o'clock, and desired to stay dinner, that being his hour. Out of curiosity he consented. Every thing about the house was in the rudest and most desolate state. I do not know whether they had a cloth spread on the sturdy oak table, which supported a set of pewter plates, a roasted fowl, and a pudding in a huge brown earthen dish. The wife, stripped to her stays and quilted petticoat, was too busy making cheese and scolding the servants to come to dinner. The *pater familias* and his guest sat down together. As he cut up the fowl, the two great lads, Dick and Ben, then about twelve and fourteen years of age, came with their wild eyes staring sharply out of their bushy heads of wild hair, and hung over their father's chair, one on each side, with an eager expression of voracity; for they were not asked to sit down. The father, as if he expected them to pounce on the dinner and carry it off, kept a sharp look-out on them; and though, out of deference to his guest, he restrained his curses, he kept vociferating, as he turned first to one and then to the other, and then gave a cut at the fowl—"Ben! Dick! get away, lads! get away! get away! get away!" But the moment a leg and a wing were cut off, the lads made a sudden spring, and each seizing a joint,

bounded out of the apartment, leaving the old man in wonder at the unmanageableness of his sons. From such an education who can doubt the result?—a brood of savages, the nuisance of the neighbourhood, and torment of the old man's days. To such a height has the old man's agony arisen at times, as he saw the wasteful conduct of his sons, that it is a pretty well established fact, that on one occasion he threw himself down in a ditch in one of his own fields, and —did not pray to die, for he never knew the beginning, middle, or end of a prayer, but he *tried* to die; but, after a long and weary endeavour, finding it in vain, he got up and hobbled off home again, saying—"Well, I see it is as hard to die as to live. I can't die! I can't die! I must even bear it, till these lads kill me by inches—and that must be a plaguy while first; for I measure two yards of bad stuff, and I think I'm as hard as a nur,[5] and as tough as whit-leather."

[5] Nur—a hard knot of wood used by boys at bandy instead of a ball.

Ben, now upwards of forty years of age, still lives with the old man, working as a labourer on his farm, and is maintained with his children. Money he never sees: but his father allows him to sell bundles of straw; and he may be seen, in an evening, with two bundles of straw under each arm, proceeding to the alehouse in the next village, where he barters them for the evening cup. Nay, the other night, a person encountered, as he supposed, a thief, issuing from the old man's yard, with a huge beam on his shoulder. It was Ben, going to turn it into ale; who desired his neighbour to say nothing. Nothing can more strikingly close this account than the old man's usual description of his three sons. "My son Dick has

Cain's mark on his forehead; Ben, if ale was a guinea a-pint, and he had but one guinea in the world, would buy a pint of ale; and, as for Simon—he is a gentleman! He takes a certificate to shoot. He runs with those long legs of his over three parishes, and comes slinging home with a crow, or a pinet[6]—ay, ay, Simon is a gentleman!"

[6] Magpie.

In this same nook of the world might be seen, some years ago, two brothers, stout farmers—farmers of their own property—heaping curses and recriminations on each other about their possessions, in so loud a voice that they have been heard half a mile off. This enmity outlasted the elder, and burned in the breast of the younger for years after. For it was some years after, that he attended the funeral of a niece whom he left through life to the charity of another. When the funeral was over, they adjourned with the parson to the public-house; and here the person who had cared for the neglected niece, urged the uncle now to pay some part of the funeral charges. "Yes," said he, "thou hast been at a deal of cost," (these country people still retain the use of thou and thee), "and here is sixpence for the parson's glass of brandy and water." The astonished man pushed back the sixpence with contempt; but, at this moment, in came a lad to tell them that the grave being made too near that of the deceased brother, the earth had suddenly fallen in, and broken in the lid of the old man's coffin. At this, the living brother started up in evident delight, and exclaimed—"Why, has it? Why, has it? Thou tells me summut, lad! thou tells me summut!" And he gave him the sixpence he had generously destined for the parson's glass.

A scene, described to me by a professional land-

agent, would seem to belong to the generation of Parson Adams and Squire Western, but it actually occurred but the other day, and only seven miles from one of our largest county towns. This land-agent was sent for on business by an old gentleman of large landed estate in that county. As the gentleman's house was in a secluded situation, off the highways, and it was a fine, cool, autumnal day, he took a footpath which led the whole way across delightful fields, and after enjoying his walk through meadows and woods, arrived at the Hall with a most vigorous appetite, just as the squire and his housekeeper were sitting down to dinner. Of course, nothing less could take place than an invitation for him to join them; which he was not in the disposition by any means to decline. I need scarcely say that the fact of the squire and his housekeeper sitting at the same table indicates the ancient gentleman as one of the real old school. He was, in fact, a tall, gaunt, meagre old fellow, whose sole pleasure was putting out his rents on good security, and whose sole family consisted of his housekeeper and one old amphibious animal, who, if he had as many heads as occupations, would have carried at least four more than Janus—occupying his talents, as he did, as gardener, groom, serving-man, and three or four other personages. The whole house and every thing about it bore amplest marks of neglect and antiquity. Not a gate, or a door, or a window, or a carpet, or any other piece of furniture, but was just as his father left it fifty years before, except for the work which time, and such tying and patching as were absolutely needful to keep certain things together, had done. Our agent looked with some curiosity at the two covers on the table before them, which being removed revealed a single partridge and

three potatoes. The housekeeper having cut the partridge into quarters, gave each of the gentlemen one, and took the third herself. Our worthy land-agent supposing this to be but a slight first course, was astounded to hear the squire say, he hoped Mr. Mapleton would make a dinner—for he saw what there was! On this significant hint Mr. Mapleton made haste to dispatch his quarter of bird, and cast eager looks on the remaining quarter in the dish. The housekeeper, indeed, was just proceeding to extend the knife and fork towards it, saying, perhaps Mr. Mapleton would take the other quarter, when the old gentleman said very smartly; “Don’t urge Mr. Mapleton unpleasantly—don’t overdo him—I dare say he knows when he has had enough, without so much teasing. I have made an excellent dinner indeed!”

Hereupon the housekeeper’s arms and weapons were drawn back abruptly; the old gentleman rang the bell, and the shuffling old serving-man entered and cleared all away. As the cloth and the housekeeper disappeared, the squire also opened a tall cupboard on one side of the fireplace, and Mr. Mapleton began to please his fancy with a forthcoming apparition of wine. Having sate, however, some time, and hearing from behind the tall door, which was drawn partly after the old squire so as to conceal him, certain sounds as of decanting liquor, and as of a knife coming in contact with a plate, sounds particularly familiar and exciting to hungry ears, he contrived to lean back so far in his chair as to catch a view of the tall figure of the squire standing with a large plum-cake upon the shelf before him, into which he had made a capacious incision; and a glass of wine, moreover, at a little distance. This discovery naturally making our

land-agent extremely restless, he began to indicate his presence by sundry hems, shuffles, coughs, and drummings on his chair, which immediately produced this consequence. The old squire's head protruded from behind the cupboard door with an inquiring look; and finding the eyes of Mr. Mapleton as inquiringly fixed on him, he said—"Mr. Mapleton, will you take a glass of wine?" "Certainly, sir, with the greatest pleasure." The wine was carefully poured out, making various cluckings or sobbings in the throat of the bottle, as very loath to leave it, and was set on the table before Mr. Mapleton. No invitation, however, to a participation of the cake came; and after sitting perhaps a quarter of an hour longer, listening to the same inviting sounds of scraping plate and decantation, he was compelled again to shuffle, hem, and drum. This had a similar happy effect to the former attempt; out popped the squire's head, with a—"Would you take another glass, Mr. Mapleton?" "Certainly, sir, with the greatest pleasure, I feel thirsty with my walk." The bottle was produced and the glass filled, but to put an end to any further intimations of thirst, the door was instantly closed, the key dropped into the squire's capacious pocket, and the old gentleman forthwith entered upon business, which, in fact, concerned thousands of pounds.

Before closing this gallery of country oddities, I must say that, in some instances, much goodness of heart is mixed up with this wild growth of queerness. There are very many who will know of whom I am speaking, when I say that there was in the last generation a gentleman in one of the midland counties, who was affected with this singular species of monomania: at every execution at the county-town he purchased the rope or ropes of Jack Ketch.

These ropes, duly labelled with the name of the culprit, the date of his execution, and the crime for which he suffered, were hung round a particular room. On one occasion, arriving at the town, and being told that the criminal was reprieved, he exclaimed—"Gracious Heavens, then I have lost my rope!" The son of this gentleman still displays a good deal of hereditary eccentricity, but has destroyed these ropes. Nevertheless, I am told, that the carving-knife used in his kitchen is the very sword with which Lord Byron killed Chaworth. He still lives in the same house, and, old bachelor as he is, maintains the old English style and hospitality in a degree not often to be witnessed now. His personal appearance is unique. He is tall, with a ruddy countenance, with white whiskers, white waistcoat, white breeches, and white lining to his coat. He always appears most scrupulously and delicately clean. His estate is large; and whoever goes to his house on business, finds bread and cheese and ale set before him. His housekeeper is said to receive no regular wages, but every now and then a fifty-pound note is put into her hands, so that she has grown tolerably rich. It is a standing order in the house, that every poor person, come whence he may, who has lost a cow, and is seeking to get another, shall receive a sovereign. I have heard a gentleman say, who knows him well, that his benevolence, particularly to young tradesmen, is most extraordinary: and that being himself once supposed to be on his death-bed, this worthy man came, sate down by him, cried like a child, and told him if he had not provided for his children just as he wished, that he had only to tell him what he would have done, and then and there it should be done. No relationship whatever existed; and this noble offer was not accepted. The same

gentleman told me that it is the regular habit of this worthy example of Old English simplicity and goodness of heart, every evening, before he retires to rest, to sit quietly for a certain time in his easy chair, endeavouring to discover whether he has done any thing wrong during the day, or has possibly hurt any one's feelings; and if he fancies he has, he hastens the next morning to set all right. It is delightful to have to record proofs of the yet existing spirit of ancient hospitality and simple worth of character.[7]

[7] Since the first edition was published, this worthy but eccentric gentleman is dead.

In conclusion,—let me observe that some of the foregoing cases are shocking ones; but they are only too true; and such are but the events of every day in those sleepy hollows, where public opinion has no weight, and where ignorance and avarice are handed down from age to age. I have seen hundreds of such things in such places. And what mode of regeneration shall reach this class of people, who have the rust of whole ages in their souls? You cannot offer to them education, as you do to the poor. You cannot reason with them, as with the poor. They have too much pride. It can only be by educating all around them, that you can reach them. When they feel the effect of the education of the poor, their pride will compel them to educate their children. This will be one of the many good results that will flow from the education of the poor in the back settlements of England. Let us, then, direct the stream of knowledge into the remotest of these obscure places. If the penny periodicals were, by some means, made to circulate there, as they circulate in towns—the *Penny Magazine*, and *Saturday Magazine*, with their host of wood-cuts and useful

facts; and *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*, with its more refined and poetical spirit,—they would work a great change. Prints and cuts from good originals would awaken a better taste; higher ideas of the beauty of created forms: for I say with Rogers,

> Be mine to bless the more mechanic skill
> That stamps, renews, and multiplies at will;
> And cheaply circulates through distant climes,
> The fairest relics of the purest times.

We blame our populace for not possessing the same refined taste as the French and Italians; for being brutal and destructive; that parks, public walks, and public buildings, cannot be thrown open to them without receiving injury. We ought not to blame them for this; for is not this the *English spirit* that has been praised in Parliament? for the encouragement of which, bull-baitings, dog-fightings, cock-fightings, and boxings have been pleaded for by senators, as its proper aliment? and the Romans, with their gladiatorial shows, quoted as good precedents? Forgetting that while the Romans were a growing and conquering people, they were a simple and domestic people. When they had their amphitheatres and their bloody shows of battling-men and beasts, they fell under imperial despotism, and thence into national destruction. If we will have a better spirit, we must take better means to produce it. We can never make our rural population too well informed. Ireland, with all manner of horrible outrages, England with its rick-burnings, and Scotland with its orderly peasantry, all point towards the evils of ignorance and oppression, and the national advantage and individual happiness that are to be reaped from the spread of sound knowledge through our rural districts.

CHAPTER III.
NOOKS OF THE WORLD: LIFE IN THE DALES OF LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE.

The nooks of the world which we visited in our last chapter lay in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire; we will now change the scene a little northward. Such secluded and original spots we might indeed readily undertake to discover in almost every county of England; but I can only give a few specimens from the great whole, and leave every one to look about him for the rest. Lancashire is famous for its immense manufactures, and consequent immense population. In ranging over its wild, bleak hills, we are presently made sensible of the vast difference between the character and habits of the working class, and the character and habits of the pastoral and agricultural districts. We have no longer those picturesque villages and cottages, half buried in their garden and orchard trees; no longer those home-crofts, with their old, tall hedges; no longer rows of beehives beneath their little thatched southern sheds; those rich fields and farm-houses, surrounded with wealth of corn-ricks, and herds and flocks. You have no longer that quiet and Arcadian-looking population; hedgers and ditchers, ploughmen and substantial farmers, who seem to keep through life the “peaceful tenor of their way,” in old English fulness and content. There may be indeed, and there are, such people scattered here and there; but they and their abodes are not of the class which gives the predominant character to the scenery. On the contrary, everywhere extend wild naked hills, in many places totally unreclaimed; in others, enclosed, but exhibiting all the signs of a neglected and

spiritless husbandry; with stunted fences or stone walls; and fields sodden with wet from want of drainage, and consequently overgrown with rushes. Over these naked and desolate hills are scattered to their very tops, in all directions, the habitations of a swarming population of weavers; the people and their houses equally unparticipant of those features which delight the poet and the painter. The houses are erections of stone or brick, covered with glaring red tiles, as free from any attempt at beauty or ornament as possible. Without, where they have gardens, those gardens are as miserable and neglected as the fields; within, they are squalid and comfortless.

In some of these swarming villages, ay, and in the cottages of the large manufacturing towns too, you can scarcely see a window with whole panes of glass. In one house in the outskirts of Blackburn, and that, too, an alehouse, we counted in a window of sixty panes, eight-and-forty broken ones; and this window was of a pretty uniform character with its fellows, both in that house, and the neighbouring ones. It is not possible to conceive a more violent and melancholy contrast than that which the filth, the poverty, and forlornness of these weavers' and spinners' dwellings form to the neatness, comfort, and loveliness of the cottages of the peasantry in many other parts of the kingdom. Any man who had once been through this district, might again recognise the locality if he were taken thither blindfold, by the very smell of oatcake which floats about the villages, and the sound of the shuttles, with their eternal "latitat! latitat!" I ranged wide over the bleak hills in the neighbourhood of Padiham, Belthorne, Guide, and such places, and the numbers and aspect of the population filled me with

astonishment. Through the long miserable streets of those villages, children and dogs were thick as motes in the sun. The boys and men with their hair shorn off, as with a pair of wool-shears, close to their heads, till it stood up staring and bristly, and yet left hanging long over their eyes, till it gave them a most villanous and hangman look. What makes those rough heads more conspicuous, is their being so frequently red; the testimony of nature to the ancient prevalence of the Dane on these hills. The men are besides long and bony; the women often of stalwart and masculine figure, and of a hardness of feature which gives them no claims to be ranked amongst the most dangerous of the "Lancashire witches." Everywhere the rudeness of the rising generation is wonderful. Everywhere the stare of mingled ignorance and insolence meets you; everywhere a troop of lads is at your heels, with the clatter of their wooden clogs, crying—"Fellee, gies a hawpenny!"

In one village, and that too the celebrated Roman station of Ribchester, our chaise was pursued by swarms of these wooden-shod lads like swarms of flies, that were only beaten off for a moment to close in upon you again, and their sisters shewed equally the extravagance of rudeness in which they were suffered to grow up, by running out of the houses as we passed, and poking mops and brushes at the horses' heads. No one attempted to restrain or rebuke them; and yet, what was odd enough, not one of the adult population offered you the least insult, but if you asked the way, gave you the most ready directions, and if you went into their houses, treated you with perfect civility, and shewed an affection for these wild brats that was honourable to their hearts, and wanted only directing by a better intelligence. The uncouthness of these poor people is not that of

evil disposition, but of pressing poverty and continued neglect. As is generally the case, in the poorest houses were the largest families. Ten and eleven children in one small dirty hovel was no uncommon sight, actually covering the very floor till there seemed scarce room to sit down; and amid this crowd, the mother was generally busy washing, or baking oatcakes; and the father making the place resound with the “latitat, latitat” of his shuttle. One did not wonder, seeing this, that the poor creatures are glad to turn out the whole troop of children to play on the hills, the elder girls lugging the babies along with them.

The wildness into which some of these children in the more solitary parts of the country grow, is, I imagine, not to be surpassed in any of the back settlements of America. On the 5th of July, 1836, the day of that remarkable thunder-storm, which visited a great part of the kingdom with such fury, being driven into a cottage at the foot of Pendle by the coming on of this storm, and while standing at the door watching its progress, I observed the head of some human creature carefully protruded from the doorway of an adjoining shed, and as suddenly withdrawn on being observed. To ascertain what sort of person it belonged to, I went into the shed, but at first found it too dark to allow me to discover any thing. Presently, however, as objects became visible, I saw a little creature, apparently a girl of ten years old, reared very erectly against the opposite wall. On accosting her in a kind tone, and telling her to come forward, and not to be afraid, she advanced from the wall, and behold! there stood another little creature about the head shorter, whom she had been concealing. I asked the elder child whether this younger one was a girl. She answered—“Ne-a.” “Was

it a boy?" "Ne-a." "What! neither boy nor girl! was she herself a girl?" "Ne-a." "What was it a boy that I was speaking to?" "Ne-a." "What in the name of wonder were they then?" "We are childer." "Childer! and was the woman in the house their mother?" "Ne-a." "Who was she then?" "Ar Mam." "O! your mam! and do you keep cows in this shed?" "Ne-a." "What then?" "Bee-as." In short, common English was quite unintelligible to these little creatures, and their appearance was as wild as their speech. They were two fine young creatures, nevertheless, especially the elder, whose form and face were full of that symmetry and free grace that are sometimes the growth of unrestrained nature, and would have delighted the sculptor or the painter. Their only clothing was a sort of little bodice with skirts, made of a reddish stuff, and rendered more picturesque by sundry patches of scarlet cloth, no doubt from their mother's old cloak. Their heads, bosoms, and legs to the knees, were bare to all the influences of earth and heaven; and on giving them each a penny, they bounded away with the fleetness and elasticity of young roes. No doubt, the hills and the heaths, the wild flowers of summer and the swift waters of the glens, were the only live-long day companions of these children, who came home only to their oatmeal dinner, and a bed as simple as their garments. Imagine the violent change of life, by the sudden capture and confinement of these little English savages, in the night-and-day noise, labour, and foul atmosphere of the cotton purgatories!

In the immediate neighbourhood of towns, many of the swelling ranges of hills present a much more cultivated aspect, and delight the eye with their smooth, green, and flowing outlines; and the valleys almost everywhere, are woody, watered with clear

rapid streams, and, in short, are beautiful. But along these rise up the tall chimneys of vast and innumerable factories, and even while looking on the palaces of the master manufacturers, with their woods and gardens, and shrubbery lawns around them, one cannot help thinking of all the horrors detailed before the Committees of the House of Commons respecting the Factory System; of the parentless and friendless little wretches, sent by wagon-loads from distant workhouses to these prisons of labour and despair; of the young frames crushed to the dust by incessant labour; of the beds into which one set of children got, as another set got out, so that they were said never to be cold the whole year round, till contagious fevers burst out and swept away by hundreds these little victims of Mammon's ever-urging, never-ceasing wheel. Beautiful as are many of those wild glens and recesses where, before the introduction of steam, the dashing rivulet invited the cotton-spinners to erect their mills; and curious as the remains of those simple original factories are, with their one great water-wheel, which turned their spindles while there was water, but during the drought of summer quite as often stood still; yet one is haunted even there, amongst the shadows of fine old trees that throw their arms athwart streams dashing down their beds of solid rock, by the memory of little tender children who never knew pity or kindness, but laboured on and on, through noon and through midnight, till they slept and yet mechanically worked, and were often awaked only by the horrid machinery rending off their little limbs. In places like these, where now the old factories, and the large houses of the proprietors stand deserted, or are inhabited by troops of poor creatures, whose poverty makes them only appear

the more desolate, we are told by such men as Mr. Fielden of Oldham, once a factory child himself, and now a great manufacturer, who dares to reveal the secrets of the prison-house, that little creatures have even committed suicide to escape from a life worse than ten deaths. And what a mighty system is this now become! What a perpetual and vast supply of human life and energy it requires, with all the facilities of improved machinery, with all the developed power of steam, and with all the growing thirst of wealth to urge it on! We are told that the state of the factories, and the children employed in them, is greatly improved; and I trust they are; but if there be any truth in the evidence given before the parliamentary committees, there is need of great amelioration yet; and it is when we recollect these things, how completely the labouring class has, in these districts, been regarded as mere machinery for the accumulation of enormous capitals, that we cease to wonder at their uncouth and degraded aspect, and at the neglect in which they are suffered to swarm over these hills,—like the very weeds of humanity, cast out into disregarded places, and left to spread and increase in rank and deleterious luxuriance. The numbers of drunken men that you meet in these districts in an evening, and the numbers of *women* that you see seated with their ale-pots and pipes round the alehouse fires, a sight hardly elsewhere to be witnessed, form a striking contrast to the state of things in the agricultural districts, such as Craven, where you may pass through half-a-dozen villages, and not find one pot-house.

It was necessary to take a glimpse at these Lancashire hills in reviewing the rural life of England; let us now pass into a tract of the country which borders immediately upon them, and yet is so

totally unlike in its aspect and population. We shall now penetrate into perhaps the most perfect nook of the world that England holds. The Yorkshire dales are known to most by name, but to comparatively few by actual visitation. They lie amongst that wild tract of hills which stretches along the West Riding of Yorkshire, from Lancashire to Westmoreland, and forms part, in fact, of the great mountainous chain which runs from Derbyshire through these counties and Cumberland into Scotland. Some of these hills are of great bulk and considerable altitude. The old rhymes are well known
of—

> Ingleborough, Pendle, and Pennegent
> Are the highest hills betwixt Scotland and Trent;

and

> Pendle, Pennegent, and Ingleborough
> Are the highest hills all England thorough.

The Yorkshire dales stretch from the foot of Ingleborough north-east and west, over a considerable space of country. It is a wild, and, in many parts, a dreary region. Long ridges of hills covered with black heath, or bare stone,—with stony wastes at their feet of the grimmest and most time-worn character. All round Ingleborough the whole country seems to have been so tossed, shaken, and undermined by the violence which at some period broke it up into its present character, that its whole subterranean space seems to be filled with caves and passages for winds and waters that possess a remarkable connexion one with another, and present a multitude of singular phenomena. On the Craven side lie those celebrated spots Malham Cove and Gordale Scar, well known to tourists; the one, a

splendid range of precipice with a river issuing from its base; the other, Gordale Scar, one of the most solemnly impressive of nature's works. It is the course of a river which has torn its way from the top of a mountain, through a rugged descent in the solid rock, and falls into a sort of cove surrounded by lofty precipices, which make such a gloom, that on looking up, the stars are said sometimes to be seen at noon. Amongst all the magnificent scenes which the mountainous parts of these kingdoms present, I never visited one which impressed me with so much awe and wonder as this. You approach it by no regular road; you have even to ask permission to pass through the yard of a farm-house, to get at it; and your way is then up a valley, along which come two or three streams, running on with a wild beauty and abundance that occupy and delight your attention. Suddenly, you pass round a rock, and find yourself in this solemn cove, the high grey cliffs towering above you on all sides, the water dropping from their summits in a silver rain, and before you a river descending from a cleft in the mountain, and falling, as it were, over a screen, and spreading in white foam over it in a solemn and yet riotous beauty. This screen is formed of the calcareous deposit of the water; and crossing the stream by the stones which lie in it, you may mount from the greensward which carpets the bottom of the cove, climb up this screen, and ascend along the side of the falling torrent, up one of the most wild and desolate ravines, till you issue on the mountain top, where the mountain cistus and the crimson geranium wave their lovely flowers in the breeze.

These scenes lie on the Craven side of Ingleborough, and as you wind round his feet, though distantly, by Settle, to the dales, your way is

still amongst the loftiest fells, and past continual proofs of subterranean agency, and agency of past violence. You are scarcely past Settle, when by the road-side you see a trough overflowing with the most beautifully transparent water. You stop to look at it, and it shrinks before your eyes six or seven inches, perhaps, below the edge of the trough, and then again comes gushing and flowing over. As you advance, the very names of places that lie in view speak of a wild region, and have something of the old British or Danish character in them. To your left shine the waters distantly of Lancaster Sands, and Morecombe Bay, and around you are the Great Stone of Four Stones, the Cross of Grete, Yorda's Cave, that is, the cave of Yorda, the Danish sorceress; Weathercote Cave, and Hurtle-pot and Gingle-pot. Our progress over this ground, though early in July, was amid clouds, wind and rain. The black heights of Ingleborough were only visible at intervals through the rolling rack, and all about Weathercote Cave, Hurtle-pot and Gingle-pot were traces of the violence of outbursting waters. We found a capital inn nearly opposite the Weathercote Cave, where one of the tallest of imaginable women presented us with a luncheon of country fare,—oatcake, cheese, and porter, and laid our cloaks and great-coats to dry while we visited the Cave and the Pots. Weathercote Cave is not, as the imagination would naturally suggest to any one, a cave in the side of a hill or precipice, but a savage chasm in the ground, in which you hear the thunder of falling waters. It is just such a place as one dreams of in ancient Thessaly, haunted by Pan and the Satyrs. When you come to the brink of this fearful chasm, which is overhung with trees and bushes, you perceive a torrent falling in a column of white foam, and with a

thundering din, into a deep abyss. Down to the bottom of this abyss there is a sloping descent, amongst loose and slippery stones. When you reach the bottom, a cavern opens on your left, into which you may pass, so as to avoid the mass of falling water, which is dashed upon a large black stone, and then is absorbed by some unseen channel. The huge blocks of stone which lie in this cave appear black and shining as polished ebony. I suppose this chasm is at least a hundred feet deep, and yet a few days before we were there, it had been filled to overflowing with water, which had rushed from its mouth with such violence as to rend down large trees around it. What is still more remarkable, at a few hundred yards distance is another chasm of equal depth, and of perpendicular descent, whence the torrents swallowed by the Weathercote Cave during great rains are again ejected with incredible violence. This had taken place, as we have said, a few days before our visit, and though this gulf was now dry again, the evidences of its fury were all around us. Wagon-loads of stones lay at its mouth, which had been hurled up with the torrent of water, all churned or hurtled (whence its name of Hurtle-pot) by its violence into the roundness of pebbles; and trees were laid prostrate, with their branches crushed into fragments, in the track by which the waters had escaped. This track was towards the third singular abyss—Gingle-pot. This gulf had a wider and more sloping mouth than the other, so that you could descend a considerable depth into it, but there you found a black and sullen water, which the people say has never been fathomed. It is said to contain a species of black trout, which are caught, we were told, by approaching the surface of the water with lighted torches by night, towards which

they rise. Several country fellows were amusing themselves as we approached with rolling large stones into the abyss, which certainly sunk into the water with an awful sound.

Such is the region which abuts upon the Yorkshire dales. The dales themselves are the intervening spaces betwixt high fells, which run in long ranges one beyond another in a numerous succession. Some of these dales possess a considerable breadth of meadow land, as Wensley-dale, but the far greater number have scarcely more room in the bottom than is occupied by the stream and the public road. Thus every dale seems a little world in itself, being shut in by its high ranges of fell. If you ascend to the ridge of one of these, you find another dale, lying at your feet, with its own little community; were you to cross to the next ridge, you would find another, and so on, far and wide. It is a land of alternating ridge and hollow, ridge and hollow, or in the language of the district, fell and dale, without any intervention of champaign country. Wordsworth's description in Peter Bell, shows that the poet had been there, as well as the potter.

> And he had trudged through Yorkshire dales,
> Among the rocks and winding scars;
> Where deep and low the hamlets lie,
> Beneath their little patch of sky,
> And little lot of stars.

Formerly, when there were no roads into these secluded dales, except some shingly ravine, down which the pedestrian, or one of their native ponies could with considerable caution, and sundry strikings of the foot against loose stones, descend, few, except the inhabitants themselves, could visit them, and they then must have possessed a primitive character indeed. Now, however, good roads run through

them, and a greater intercourse with the surrounding country must have had its effect, yet I know no other corner of England where still linger so patriarchal a character and such peculiar habits.

George Fox, in his travels far and wide through the realm to promulgate his doctrines, penetrated into these dales. From the top of Pendle-hill in Lancashire, where there is an immense prospect, he tells us in his journal, that he had a vision of the triumphs of his ministry, and of the thousands that would be converted to his peculiar faith. Descending in the strength of this revelation, he marched northward, and speedily found in these dales a primitive race, ready to adopt his opinions and practices, so congenial to a simple and earnest-hearted people. There he repeatedly came, and sojourned long; and the accounts of the extraordinary meetings held, and the effect produced, have few parallels in the histories of religious reformers. There is a little Church-of-England chapel perched on the highest point of Kendal Fells, not far from Sedburgh, which is in the outskirts of this district, called Firbank Chapel, where a thousand people are said to have been collected to hear him, and at which three hundred people were convinced of the truth, to use his own words, at one time,—Francis Howgill, the minister, being one of them. That little chapel is standing yet, perhaps the very humblest fabric in England belonging to the Established Church, old and dilapidated, and situated in one of the most singular and wild situations. There are the identical little windows, at which some of the old people stood within the chapel to listen to the preacher without, thinking it strange to worship anywhere but in a church or chapel. Near the door is a rock, on which

he relates that he stood to preach. From its high site you look around over dreary moors, and a vast tract of outstretched country, and wonder whence the people gathered to his ministry. But his fame was that of an apostle all round this country. In Sedburgh churchyard stand two yew trees, under the shade of which, he, on one occasion, preached, drawing all the people out of the church to him. Within the dales themselves he planted several meetings, at Aysgarth, Counterside and Laygate. These meetings still remain, and a considerable number of Friends are scattered through the dales, of a primitive and hospitable character. We went, on the only Sunday which we passed in the dales, to his favourite meeting at Counterside, and could almost have imagined that the remarkable times of his ministry were yet remaining. We found the meeting situated amid a cluster of rustic cottages in pleasant Simmerdale, by Simmerdale Water. The house in which he usually lived during his visits to this valley adjoined the meeting; a true old-fashioned house, where the remains of his oaken bedstead were still preserved; and a very handsome one it must have been, and far too much adorned with the vanity of carving for so plain a man, and so homely a place. But the people were flocking from all sides, down the fells, along the dales, to the meeting, not only the Friends themselves, but the other dalespeople; and we found Mr. Joseph Pease, brother of the M.P., and his lady, from Darlington, addressing a crowded audience. The old times of Fox seemed indeed returned. The preacher's discourse was one of an earnest and affectionate eloquence, and the audience was of a most simple and unworldly character. Almost every person, man or woman, had a nosegay in hand; nosegays in truth, for they very liberally and

repeatedly applied them to the organ whence they are named. The herbs, for they consisted rather of herbs than flowers, were as singular as the appearance of such a host of nosegays itself. Not one of them was without a piece of southernwood, in some instances almost amounting to a bush, and evidently there entitled to its ancient name, “lads’-love and lasses’-delight.” With this was grasped in many a hardy hand, thyme, and alecost, and, in many, mint! No doubt the pungent qualities of these herbs are found very useful stimulants in close and crowded places of worship, and especially under a drowsy preacher, by those whose occupations for the other six days lie chiefly out-of-doors, in the keen air of hills and moors. That such is the object of them was sufficiently indicated by a poor woman who offered us a little bunch of these herbs as we entered the meeting-house, saying with a smile, “they are so reviving.”

Amongst the Friends, are a considerable number of substantial people, who lead here a sort of patriarchal life, with their flocks and herds on the hills around them. And their houses, placed on the slope of the hills, yet not far above the level of the valley, with their ample gardens, must be in the summer months most agreeable abodes. Old English hospitality and kindness are found here in all their strength. We called on several of the resident proprietors, and amongst others Mr. William Fothergill, at Carr-End, since deceased. The garden of this gentleman was a perfect paradise of roses. But the fine old intellectual man himself, retaining beyond his eightieth year, and in this secluded place, all the enthusiasm of youth, the love of books, and aspirations after the spread of knowledge and freedom through the world, was a still more

attractive object. He was the descendant of two well-known men, Dr. Fothergill, and Samuel Fothergill, an eminent minister in this society. Talent and liberality of sentiment seem a congenial growth of these dales, for the able and noble-minded Adam Sedgwick is a native of one of them.

To that valley, the beautiful vale of Dent, we may as well betake ourselves, for in describing these retired regions, one portion may with great propriety be taken as a specimen of the whole. Descending therefore from the moors at Newby-Head, we found this southern entrance of Dent-dale steep and narrow. As we proceeded, it wound on before us for several miles, till we beheld the village of Dent lying at its northern extremity. Dent's-Town, as they call it, has a very Swiss look, with its projecting roofs, and open galleries ascended by steps from the outside. But what strikes you with most surprise in this dale is its high state of cultivation. All the lower part of the dale is divided into small enclosures, rich with grass and summer flowers, and beautifully wooded; and amid the orchards and gardens, peep out houses of various sizes and characters. The hills nearly meet at the bottom, and ascend high, in two long ranges. The upper part, above the enclosures, appears, in some parts, black with heath, but more generally smooth and green, and dotted all over with flocks of sheep and geese. On the wilder parts of these hills graze a great number of cattle, and a shaggy race of ponies peculiar to them, with coats and manes long, and bleached by the wintry winds, till they look at a distance, more like wild bisons than horses. These dun ponies, before the progress of enclosure, used sometimes to follow the tops of the hills right away into Scotland, and have been fetched back from a distance of two hundred miles. When

they have shed their wintry coats, and ceased to have such a look

> As of the dwellers out of doors;

they often turn out very beautiful creatures, remarkably sure-footed, and highly prized for drawing in ladies' pony-carriages. But we must descend into the valley: and here one of the most remarkable features is the river. It has all the character of a mountain torrent; huge stones, and masses of gravel everywhere demonstrating the occasional violence of the waters. But what has the most singular effect, its bed is one of solid stone, in some parts black or dark-grey marble, which is chafed and worn by the fury of the stream in floods, in such a manner that it looks itself like a rushing, billowy river, petrified by enchantment. A great part of this bed during the summer is dry, and therefore the more remarkable in its aspect. Here and there you may walk along it for a considerable distance; then again it descends in precipices, and amid blocks of stone of a gigantic character. One of these places is known by the name of Hell's Cauldron, no doubt, in rainy seasons, a most appropriate name; for the river here, overhung with dark masses of trees, falls over some huge steps of the stony bed into a deep and black abyss, where the rending of the rocks and washing up of heaps of debris, shew with what fury that cauldron boils. But what are still more significant of this fury, are the hollows worn into the very mass of the ledges of rocks over which it passes, one of which, overlooking the abyss, is called the Pulpit, from its form, and in which you may stand. These hollows, which are scooped out with wonderful regularity, appear to be made by the churning and grinding of stones, which get in

wherever the softer parts of the rocks give way to the action of the floods. Yet fearful as this Hell's Cauldron must be when the stream is swollen, we were told that a boy once slipped in, and was carried through it, and washed up on the bank below, unhurt; calling out to his astounded companions —"Here am I! where are you?" The public road runs along the side of the stream, down the valley. This stream is crossed by two queer little foot-bridges, called by the odd names of Tummy and Nelly, or Tummy-Brig and Nelly-Brig, having been built by two persons of these familiar names, to accommodate the inhabitants of the opposite sides of the dale. And truly, as will be shortly evident, a great accommodation they must be, not only in cases of actual business, but in those visitings which go on in the dale.

Not only the people and their houses have an old-fashioned look, but you see continually out-of-doors lingering vestiges of long-past times and ancient usages. There are sledges with which they bring stone and peat from the tops of the fells. I have often wondered at the industry of mountain-people in building up those stone walls, or dykes, as they call them, which you often see running up the mountain sides, to very distant and often very steep places; but crossing these fells, I discovered that the labour was far less than it seemed at first sight. The material has not to be carried up these lofty ascents; it abounds on their summits, and has only to be loosened, and slid down the hill sides on sledges, as they proceed, for they begin to build at the top, and not at the bottom. So their peat for fuel is found in abundance on the wet and spongy tops of these hills, and is dug, and reared on end to dry through the summer, and in the autumn is slid down on sledges. In the Scottish

Highlands you see the women bringing the peat from the mountains in large creels, or baskets, on their backs, while their husbands are perhaps angling in the loch below; but here the men generally act a less lordly part; cutting and drying the peat with the help of their boys, and sledging it into the bargain.

Besides these sledges, they have also that very ancient species of cart, the tumbrel; or, as they call it, the Tumble-Car. This is of so primitive a construction that the wheels do not revolve on a fixed axle, but the axle and wheels all revolve together. The wheels themselves are of a construction worthy of so pristine an axle; they are, in truth, wheels of the original idea; not things of the complex construction of nave, spokes, and fellies, but solid blocks of wood, into which the axle is firmly inserted; upon this axle the body of the vehicle is laid, and kept in its place by a couple of pegs. It is such a cart as you might imagine rumbling down these hills in the days of their Saxon ancestors. Since good roads have been opened through the dales, carts of modern construction have followed, and these tumbrels will in awhile be no longer seen. They have, however, this advantage; in descending the steep sides of the hills, their clumsy construction of axle and wheel prevents them from running down too fast, and this is the cause why they are still retained. And yet this difficulty of movement sometimes becomes the cause of awkward dilemmas. These tumbrels are apt to stick in the bogs as they come down the fells, and are not easily drawn out. We were assured that there was one then sticking in a bog on the hills, past all chance of recovery; and some wag of the dale had made this distich on the accident, denoting the peculiar pre-eminence of clumsiness in the unfortunate vehicle.

Willie O'Middlebrough's tumble-car,
Many were better, and none waur.

With a carriage so antique, one is not surprised to find gears of corresponding character. Consequently, as in Cornwall, so here, collars of straw and a few ropes often serve to harness out the team.

As might be supposed, the inhabitants of one dale form a little community or clan where every one is known to the rest, and where a great degree of sociality and familiarity prevails; but the whole dale sub-divides itself again into neighbourhoods, where a stronger *esprit du corps* exists. The dales are singularly marked by lines of ravines and streams, which run down the sides of the fells from the bogs and springs on the heights. These lines are commonly fringed on the lower slopes by alders and other water-loving trees. The smaller streams are called sikes, the larger gills, and the largest, being generally those which run along the dale, becks. The space from gill to gill generally constitutes a neighbourhood, or if that space is small, it may include two or three gills. Within this boundary they feel it a duty, established by time and immemorial usage, to perform all offices of good neighbourhood, and especially that of associating together. For instance, when a birth is about to take place, they have what is called a Shout. The nearest neighbour undertakes the office of herald. She runs from house to house, through the neighbourhood, though it be dead of night, summoning all the wives with this cry —"Run, neighbour, run, for neighbour such-a-one wants thy help—and take thy warming-pan with thee!" The consequence is, that the house is speedily filled with women and warming-pans; a scene ludicrous, and, one would imagine, inconvenient enough too; but which the women of the dale all

protest is a great comfort. When the child is born, there is a great ceremony of washing its head with brandy, which is performed by the father and his male friends, who are assembled for the occasion; and who then fall to, and make merry over their glasses.

The assembled women regale themselves with a feast of their own kind, being a particular species of bread made for the occasion, and sweet-butter; that is, butter mixed with rum and sugar, and having in truth no despicable flavour. Then comes the Wife-day, generally the second Sunday after the birth, when all the women of the neighbourhood who have attended at the Shout, go dressed in their best, to take tea, and hold a regular gossip, each carrying with her a shilling and the news of the neighbourhood. The highest possible offence that can be given, is to pass over a person within the understood limits of the neighbourhood—it is the dead-cut. Sometimes there occurs a false Shout, either through the wantonness or malice of some ne'er-do-weel. In the night, the mischievous wag runs from house to house, and calls all the good wives to the dwelling whence they are hourly expecting such a summons. When they get there, they find it a hoax, and come under the name of May-goslings,—the term applied to this species of dupe. The joke, however, is no venial one, for it is perhaps played off on a severe and tempestuous night, and the good dames muffled up in their cloaks, and lantern and warming-pan in hand, have to steer their way down the sides of hills, and across becks hidden by the drifts of snow. Similar assemblages take place at deaths, called Passings; and at Christmas, when they eat yule bread and yule cheese, made after a particular formula.

But perhaps the most characteristic custom of the Dales, is what is called their Sitting, or going-a-sitting. Knitting is a great practice in the dales. Men, women, and children, all knit. Formerly you might have met the wagoners knitting as they went along with their teams; but this is now rare; for the greater influx of visiters, and their wonder expressed at this and other practices, has made them rather ashamed of some of them, and shy of strangers observing them. But the men still knit a great deal in the houses; and the women knit incessantly. They have knitting schools, where the children are taught; and where they sing in chorus knitting songs, some of which appear as childish as the nursery stories of the last generation. Yet all of them bear some reference to their employment and mode of life; and the chorus, which maintains regularity of action and keeps up the attention, is of more importance than the words. Here is a specimen.

> Bell-wether o' Barking,[8] cries baa, baa,
> How many sheep have we lost to-day?
> Nineteen have we lost, one have we fun,
> Run Rockie,[9] run Rockie, run, run, run.

This is sung while they knit one round of the stocking; when the second round commences they begin
again—

> Bell-wether o' Barking, cries baa, baa,
> How many sheep have we lost to-day?
> Eighteen have we lost, two have we fun,
> Run Rockie, run Rockie, run, run, run;

and so on till they have knit twenty rounds, decreasing the numbers on the one hand, and increasing them on the other. These songs are sung not only by the children in the schools, but also by

the people at their sittings, which are social assemblies of the neighbourhood, not for eating and drinking, but merely for society. As soon as it becomes dark, and the usual business of the day is over, and the young children are put to bed, they rake or put out the fire; take their cloaks and lanterns, and set out with their knitting to the house of the neighbour where the sitting falls in rotation, for it is a regularly circulating assembly from house to house through the particular neighbourhood. The whole troop of neighbours being collected, they sit and knit, sing knitting-songs, and tell knitting-stories. Here all the old stories and traditions of the dale come up, and they often get so excited that they say, "Neighbours, we'll not part to night," that is, till after twelve o'clock. All this time their knitting goes on with unremitting speed. They sit rocking to and fro like so many weird wizards. They burn no candle, but knit by the light of the peat fire. And this rocking motion is connected with a mode of knitting peculiar to the place, called swaving, which is difficult to describe. Ordinary knitting is performed by a variety of little motions, but this is a single uniform tossing motion of both the hands at once, and the body often accompanying it with a sort of sympathetic action. The knitting produced is just the same as by the ordinary method. They knit with crooked pins called pricks; and use a knitting-sheath consisting commonly of a hollow piece of wood, as large as the sheath of a dagger, curved to the side, and fixed in a belt called the cowband. The women of the north, in fact, often sport very curious knitting sheaths. We have seen a wisp of straw tied up pretty tightly, into which they stick their needles; and sometimes a bunch of quills of at least half-a-hundred in number. These sheaths and cowbands are often presents from

their lovers to the young women. Upon the band there is a hook, upon which the long end of the knitting is suspended that it may not dangle. In this manner they knit for the Kendal market, stockings, jackets, nightcaps, and a kind of caps worn by the negroes, called bump-caps. These are made of very coarse worsted, and knit a yard in length, one half of which is turned into the other, before it has the appearance of a cap.

[8] A mountain over-looking Dent Dale.

[9] The shepherd's dog.

The smallness of their earnings may be inferred from the price for the knitting of one of these caps being three-pence. But all knit, and knitting is not so much their sole labour as an auxiliary gain. The woman knits when her household work is done; the man when his out-of-door work is done; as they walk about their garden, or go from one village to another, the process is going on. We saw a stout rosy girl driving some cows to the field. She had all the character of a farmer's servant. Without any thing on her head, in her short bedgown, and wooden clogs, she went on after them with a great stick in her hand. A lot of calves which were in the field, as she opened the gate, seemed determined to rush out, but the damsel laid lustily about them with her cudgel, and made them decamp. As we observed her proceedings from a house opposite, and, amused at the contest between her and the calves, said, "well done! dairymaid!" "O," said the woman of the house, "that is no dairymaid: she is the farmer's only daughter, and will have quite a fortune. She is the best knitter in the dale, and makes four bump-caps a day;" that is, the young lady of fortune earned a shilling a day.

The neighbouring dale, Garsdale, which is a narrower and more secluded one than Dent, is a great knitting dale. The old men sit there in companies round the fire, and so intent are they on their occupation and stories, that they pin cloths on their shins to prevent their being burnt; and sometimes they may be seen on a bench at the house-front, and where they have come out to cool themselves, sitting in a row knitting with their shin-cloths on, making the oddest appearance imaginable.

It may be supposed that eccentricity of character is the growth of such a place. A spirit of avarice is one of the most besetting evils. Many of the people are proprietors of their little homesteads; but there is no manufacturing beyond that of knitting, and money therefore is scarce. As it is not to be got very easily, the disposition to hold and save it becomes proportionably strong. They are extremely averse to suffer any money to go out of the dale; and will buy nothing, if they can avoid it, of people who travel the country with articles to sell; that would be sending money out of the dale; but they will go to a shop in the dale, and buy the same thing, not reflecting that the shopkeeper must first purchase it out of the dale, and therefore send money out of the dale to pay for it; and that what goes out of the dale for such articles comes back again by the sale of their horses, cattle, and sheep. A person who had been collector of the taxes in one of these dales, described to us the excessive difficulty he had to collect the money, even from those whom he knew always had it. They would put off payments as long as possible, and when he went and told them it was positively the last time he could call, they would sit doggedly, and declare that Samson was strong and Solomon was wise, but neither could pay money when they had

not it. When they saw he would not depart, they would at length get up, go up stairs, where they always kept their cash. There he could hear them slowly open their chest, let down the lid again; open it again in awhile; then shut it again, and walk about the room as if unable to part with it. Then they would come to the top of the stairs, and shout down, saying they would not pay it. Finding him still immovable, they would come slowly down, but still persist—"I'll nae gie it thee!" Then perhaps soon after, as if relenting, they would come towards him, open their hand with the money in it, extending it towards him; but when he offered to take it, snatch it away, saying—"Nay; tou'st niver hae it!" Finally, they would throw it to him, and with it abundance of angry words.

We met a man of a most gaunt and miserable appearance. A young man not more than thirty years of age. He had all the aspect of a penurious fellow. Dirty, unshaven, with soiled clothes and unwashed linen. He was coming along the lane with a rude tumbrel. This man was a thorough miser as ever existed. He lived totally alone. He suffered no woman to come about his house. If his clothes ever were washed they were done by himself, but he never bought an ounce of soap. He had bought a small property; a house and some adjoining crofts, where he lived. From this place he was called Tony of Todcrofts. This man was never known to part with money except to the tax-gatherer. If he wanted a board put on his cart, or a nail to keep it together, he bargained with the wheelwright or the blacksmith to pay them in peat. He baked his own oatcake, and paid the miller in peat for grinding his oats. He drank milk from his own cow, and made his own clogs, cut from his own alder. He contrived to

purchase little, and what he did purchase he still paid for in peat. On the fells he cut peat all summer, making days of uncommon length; and in the autumn he drew it down with a sledge, and on one occasion, having no horse, he carried the sledge, every time he re-ascended the hills, upon his back.

In a neighbouring dale we passed the farm called Barben-park, which we were informed had been held by the family occupying it, on a lease for three lives, now being in the last life; of which the rent is so low that the tenant has oftener, on the rent-day, to receive money, on account of taxes and rates, than to pay any away. The house struck us as one of the most wild and solitary places of abode we had ever seen. It stood on the fell side, and for many miles there appeared no other house, nor any trace of human workmanship, but a few ruinous limekilns. The inhabitants were represented as wild and rude as their location, yet rich, the hills all round being covered with their sheep, ponies, cattle, and geese, which seemed in a great measure to run wild, and increase in a state of complete nature. There were said to be bulls of great savageness amongst them—the bulls of Barben being as awfully famous here as the bulls of Bashan of old; and foxes which the farmers often turned out, and chased with all their men for miles along the hills. A gentleman who had been at this house described the people as living like ancient kings in the rude abundance of earthly plenty. In Wensleydale there is a large farmer who keeps up the primitive custom of two meals a day, from Candlemas to Martinmas, which is the depth of winter. They breakfast at ten o'clock on cold meat, ale, cheese, etc.; and do not go into the house again till six in the evening, by which time they have not only returned from the fields, but have seen all their

cattle served for the night, and a hot dinner of meat, puddings, and other good things, awaits them and their servants, who sit eating and drinking till bed-time.

In such a place a man's appearance is no indication of his actual condition as respects property. Men who have good estates will be seen in a dress not worth three farthings altogether, except it were as a curiosity. They tell a story with great glee, of an old Friend, John Wilkinson, who sate in a patched coat on a large stone by the road-side, knitting, when a gentleman riding by, stopped and fixed his eyes on him as in compassion, and then threw him half-a-crown. He picked it up, told him he was much obliged to him, but added—"May be I'se richer na tou," and returned him the money, desiring him to give it to some one who had greater need of it. In fact, the old Friend was wealthy; and in this case his pride overcame his acquisitive propensity; but that propensity is unquestionably very powerful here, and another instance may be mentioned which occasioned a good deal of laughter in the dale. An old man of some property having a colt which he wanted breaking, instead of putting it into the hands of the horsebreaker, thought he would break it himself, and save the cost. Having brought it to carry him pretty well, he was desirous of making it proof against starting at sudden alarms. He therefore concerted with his wife that she should stand concealed behind the yard gate, with her cloak thrown over her head, and as he entered on the back of his colt, should pop out, and cry—Boh! Accordingly, in he rode, out popped the good-wife, and cried Boh! so effectually, that the horse made a desperate leap, and flung the old man with a terrible shock upon the pavement. Recovering himself,

however, without any broken bones, though sorely bruised and shaken, he said, as he limped into the house—"Ah, Mally! Mally! that was too big a boh! for an old man and a young colt!"

This propensity extends too amongst the women as well as the men: one woman declared she would as lieve part with the skin off her back as with her money. And yet there are things which they will not do for money, as thousands of the poor in other districts do,—they won't work in a factory. The experiment was tried in this dale; but the people, like the French, would only work just when they pleased, and soon would not work at all. One would have thought that the strong love of gain amongst them, and their industrious habits, would have insured success to such an experiment; but they had too much love for their own firesides, and the enjoyment of the fresh mountain air; the parents had too much love for their children to subject them to the daily incarceration amid heat, and dust, and flue from the cotton. The scheme failed; the factory stands a ruinous monument of the attempt, and these beautiful dales are yet free from the factory system. And yet, peaceful, and far removed as they are from the acts and oppressions by which the strong build their houses, and add field to field out of the toils of the weak, they are not unacquainted with occasional instances of the evils done with impunity in the nooks of the world. I do not mean to represent such spots as Arcadias of purity and perfection. In the former chapter, and in this, I have indicated the vices which flourish, and the depravity which spreads in the shade of secluded life. The worst feature of these dales is the penurious spirit which little opportunity of profit produces; but I do not know that this spirit is a more sordid one than pervades the lower streets

and alleys of large towns. There is along with it a strong sense of meum and tuum; a strong and uncorrupted moral principle; and no man is in danger of either being filched of his purse, or if he chanced to lose it by accident, of not regaining it. As the pressure of poverty is not so tremendous, so the extinction of the moral sense is by no means so great as in large towns; and, on the other hand, how much more delightful a view of the social life of these people we have, than of those of similar rank in our large manufacturing towns, and especially amongst the lower classes of the metropolis, where they tread on each other from their multitudes, and yet, from the same cause, pass through life strangers to each other. Here the social sympathies are strongly called forth; a sort of kinship seems to pervade the whole neighbourhood; and they pass their lives, if in a good deal of poverty, yet in mutual confidence, and very pleasant habits of association. Every man and every spot has a name and share of distinction. Every gill and beck have their appellation, as Hacker-gill; Arten-gill; How-gill; Cow-gill; Spice-gill; Thomas O'Harbour-gill; Backstone-gill; Kale-beck; Monkey-beck. Every house has its name;—as Tinkler's Budget; Clint; Henthwaite-Hall; Coat-Fall; The Birchen Tree; Lile-Town; Riveling; Broad Mere; Hollins; Ellen-ha; Scale-gill-foot; Clinter-Bank; Hollow-Mill,—all names in Dent. Their names for one another are the most familiar possible; and they use the christian names, and attach the christian names of their fathers and mothers in such a manner, that it is difficult to get at many people's surnames. They themselves know very well John o' Davits Fletcher, Kit o' Willie, or Willie o' Kit o' Willie; when if the real name of these people were John Davis, Catherine Broadbent, or William Thistlethwaite, they

would have to consider awhile who was meant, if asked for by these names.

The dales-people have, therefore, evidently good elements; a strong social feeling; great simplicity of life and character; great honesty;—and the extension of the facility of voting in elections by dividing the counties, and appointing local polling places, has demonstrated that they have a strong love of liberal principles. All that appears wanting is exactly what is wanting in all these nooks, the introduction of more knowledge by the diffusion of sound and cheap publications, which would at once raise the moral tone, and inspire a more adventurous disposition, as is the case with the Scotch; so that those who do not find profitable employment in these pastoral dales, should set out in quest of more promising fields of action. As to crimes of magnitude, if you hear of them here, they are perpetrated by those in a higher class. There was a story ringing through one of the dales when we were there, which if half of it were true, was bad enough; and that we might arrive at as much truth as possible, we visited and conversed with those who were apparently likeliest to know it. It was said, and this too by those who had been in daily intercourse with the parties—that a very wealthy widow lady, who seemed to have been of weak intellect, or at least so unaccustomed to the world, and matters of business, as to become an easy prey to any clever and designing fellow, had entrusted the management of her affairs to a lawyer of a neighbouring town. That this lawyer twenty years ago made her will, in which he had appointed himself one of the executors, and a gentleman of high character, living at a great distance, the other. That he had left in the will ten per cent. on the accumulations of her income to the executors,

besides 500*l.* each, for the trouble of their office. That a man brought up in the house of the lady was left 5000*l.* That from the original making of the will, it appeared never to have been read over again at any time to the lady; but that she had frequently dictated or written in pencil her instructions for its alteration in many particulars, which instructions or alterations at the final reading of the will after her decease nowhere appeared. That from the time the will was made till that of her death, twenty years, her lawyer-executor had continually tormented her with the fear of poverty. He had told her that her income did not meet her expenses; and through these representations had induced her to curtail her charities, and to lay down her carriage. This, however, did not suffice, and his representations made the poor lady miserable with the constant fear of coming poverty. In an agony of feeling on this subject, she one day sent her confidential servant to the lawyer to order him to sell her West Indian property. The lawyer said, “tell your mistress from me, that her West Indian property is not worth one farthing.” This the servant, whom we took the trouble of seeing, confirmed to us. The poor woman, haunted with the fear of poverty, at length took to her bed, and a few days before her death, when, indeed, her recovery was hopeless, her lawyer appeared at her bedside, and astounded her with the news, that so far from poverty, her West Indian property was very large, and her surplus income had actually accumulated in the funds to the sum of 80,000*l.*! and the hypocritical monster, with a refinement of cruelty perhaps never paralleled, humbly asked her, “how she would wish it disposed of?” The previous progress of the poor lady’s illness, and this overwhelming intelligence, rendered any

present disposal impossible. She was thrown into the most fearful distress of mind,—and continually exclaiming, “O! please God that I might recover, how different things should be!” died on the third day.

When the will was read, the man who had 5000*l.* left him twenty years ago, found it left him still; and yet this man had for years lost the good opinion of the lady by his misconduct, and had not been permitted to come into her presence for two years. This was a striking proof that her will had not of late years been adapted to her altered mind. This man, who first came into the lady’s house as a shoeblack, or some such thing, and had on one occasion for his misconduct, the alternative offered him either to quit her service, or be carried up to the top of the neighbouring fell, on the back of one man and down again, while he was flogged by another, and was of so base a nature that he had chosen the flagellation, and continuance in a family where he was regarded with contempt—this man had now actually purchased the lady’s house of the executors, and lived in it! We walked past it, and naturally regarding it with a good deal of curiosity, a ludicrous scene occurred. I suppose, being strangers, and I having a moreen bag in my hand, it was inferred from our particular observation of the place, that I was a lawyer, come down on the behalf of some dissatisfied expectant, to inquire into the case. However that might be, we presently saw the man’s wife, a very common-looking person, and appearing wonderfully out of place as the mistress of such a house, peeping at us from the windows, first on one side of the house, and then on the other, and at the same time attempting to screen herself from view by partly unclosing the shutters, and placing herself behind them. Soon after, her daughter too came with

stealthy steps, out of the back door, crept cautiously round the house, and posted herself behind a bush to watch us; nor had we advanced far from the place, when the man himself came hurrying along, and went past us with very black and inquisitive looks.

We were told that on the will being read, the other executor being now present, was not more amazed at the fact of his becoming, unknown to himself, so greatly benefited by it, than he was at the general details of it. He inquired of the lawyer if the will had been read to the lady from time to time, in order to see whether it might require some alteration, and being told by him that it had not, he seemed filled with the utmost astonishment and indignation, and abruptly said to him—"Why, there is nothing but damnation for you!" and with that proceeded in such piercing terms to shew to the lawyer the cruelty and wickedness of his conduct, that the man trembled through every joint. It was added that the lawyer "never looked up afterwards," but was in the greatest distress of mind, and daily wasted away. That when the tenants of the property, some time afterwards, went to pay their rents, they found him propped up in bed with bolsters and pillows, a most pitiable object; his inkhorn stitched into the bed-quilt by him, and yet his trembling hand scarcely able to direct his pen into it. That such was the effect of fear, and the visitings of conscience on his superstitious mind, that he drank the water which dropped from the church-roof in rainy weather, in the hope it would do him good!

This is a most extraordinary story, but we found one of these quiet dales ringing with it from end to end, and this was the account given by most trustworthy people, who knew the parties well, and one of whom was the lady's confidential servant.

Amongst the stories which we heard relating to the past state of these dales, was one of the murder of a Highland drover, in its particulars bearing a striking resemblance to the story of Scott's, told under that title. In Swale Dale is said to be a race of gipsies, a very fine set of people; and a remarkable account was given us of one of them, a singularly fine woman in her time, called Nance of Swaledale.

They have some singular customs in these dales, not yet mentioned. One is, when a sow litters, they allow her to champ oats out of a beehive to make the bees lucky; and salt is thrown into the fire, with the same object, when the bees swarm. Another of their customs arises out of their spirit of good neighbourhood, and mutual accommodation. In sheep-shearing time, instead of every one shearing his flock solitarily, they combine together in troops, and go from farm to farm, till they have completed the whole, and celebrate the end of their labours at each house, over a good supper given by the master; in which a sweet pie, that is, a huge pie of legs of mutton cut small and seasoned with currants, raisins, candied peel and sugar, and covered with a rich crust, figures on the board, accompanied by another favourite dish of fresh fried trout, and collops of ham, succeeded by gooseberry, or as they call them, berry pasties, and curd cheesecakes, and strong drink in plenty: a fiddle and a dance concluding the entertainment. The sheep-washing as well as the shearing is accompanied by this jollity.

In Deepdale, the farmers principally employ themselves at home in sorting and carding wool for knitting. They call it *welding*; and the fine locks, selected for the legs of the stockings, they call *leggin*, whilst the coarser part goes by the name of *footing*. Two old people, Laurence and Peggy Hodgson o'

Dockensyke, were both upwards of seventy, when Peggy died. As she lay on her death-bed, she said to her husband, “Laury, promise me ya thing,—at tou’ill not wed again when I’se gane.” “Peggy, my lass,” answered Laurence, “do not mak me promise nae sic thing; tou knaws I’se but young yet.” The old fellow did wed again, and his brother, on returning from the wedding, made this report of the bride:—“Why-a, she’s a rough ane. I’se welded her owre and owre, an’ I canna find a lock o’ leggin in her; she’s a’ footing.”

Here then I close this second chapter of the nooks of the world, bearing grateful testimony that amongst the virtues of the dales-people, hospitality and attachment to their pleasant hills and valleys are pre-eminent. Wherever we went we found them only too happy to shew us all the beauties of their country, the winding becks, the scars and waterfalls, and prospects from the loftiest fells. When they had trudged with us for many a weary mile, through moss and moor, they would hang the girdle upon the peat-fire, and in a wonderfully short time have those delicious little kettle-cakes, or as they call them, sad-cakes, made of pastry, and thickly dotted with currants, smoking on the tea-table. And when you came in at a late hour, would bring you out those rural dainties, equally delicious, gooseberry tarts, with curds and cream. Long may the simple virtues of the Dales remain, while knowledge in its growth, roots out the more earthly traits of character, and implants a bolder spirit of enterprise, with the present moral integrity of mind.



CHAPTER IV.
OLD ENGLISH HOUSES.

Our country houses, and especially the older ones, are in themselves an inestimable national treasure. A thousand endearing associations gather about them. I cannot conceive a more deeply interesting work than a history of them which entered fully into the spirit of the times in which they were raised, and through which they have stood. Which should give us a view of the national changes which have passed over them; mighty revolutions, whether abrupt and violent, or slow and silent, in fortune, in manners, and in mind; and still more, which should, aided by family paintings, family documents and traditions, unfold their domestic annals. What an opening up of the human heart would be there! There is nothing more splendid, or surprising, or fearful, or pathetic, or happy and fanciful in romance, than would be there discovered. There is no success, no glory of life

and action, no image of princely or baronial power, no strange freaks of fortune, none of the startling, or the moving incidents of humanity but have there enrolled themselves. What noble hearts; what great and pathetic spirits have dwelt at one time or other in those old places; and then what beautiful and bewitching creatures have cast through them the sunshine of their presence; have made them glad with their wit, and their gay fancies, and their strong affections; or have hallowed them with their sufferings and their tears. O for the revelation of the fair forms; of the scenes of successful or sorrowful love; of the bridals and the burials; of the poetic dreams and pious aspirations, that have warmed or saddened these old halls through the flight of ages! Much of this is gone for ever; swept into the black and fathomless gulf of oblivion; but enough might be recovered to make us wonder at what has passed upon our ancestral soil, and to make us love it with a still deeper love. There is no portion of our national history, or point of our national character, but would be brought into the sweep of such narratives, and receive illustration from them. Our warriors, statesmen, philosophers, divines, poets, beauties and heroines more admirable than beauty could make them, would all figure there.[10] In the galleries of many of these houses, hang portraits to which traditions are attached that would freeze the blood, or make it dance with ardour and delight; that would chain up the listening spirit in breathless attention, in awe and curiosity. In the very writings by which the estates are secured, in old charters, wills, and other deeds, facts are traced and changes developed of the most singular character; and in the oral annals of the families exist correlative testimonies, which have been imprinted there by the intense interest of

the circumstances themselves.

[10] This was written four years ago. Since then the author has published the first volume of such a work, under the title of “Visits to Remarkable Places, Old Halls, Battle Fields, etc.”

How delightful it is to go through those hereditary abodes of ancient and distinguished families, and to see, in the very construction of them, images of the past times, and their modes of existence. Here you pass through ample courts, amid rambling and extensive offices that once were necessary to the jolly establishment of the age,—for hounds, horses, hawks, and all their attendants and dependences. Here you come into vast kitchens, with fireplaces at which three or four oxen might be roasted at once, with mantelpieces wide as the arch of a bridge, and chimneys as large as the steeple of a country church. Then you advance into great halls, where scores of rude revellers have feasted in returning from battle, or the chase, in the days of feudal running and riding, of foraying and pilgrimages; of hard knocks and hard lying: ere tea and coffee had supplanted beef and ale at breakfast; ere books had charmed away spears and targets, tennis-courts and tourneys, and political squabbles and parliamentary campaigning, the scouring of marches, and firing of neighbours’ castles. Then again, you advance into tapestried chambers, on whose walls mythological or scriptural histories wrought by the fingers of high-born dames, at once impress you with a sense of very still and leisurely and woodland times, when Crockford’s and Almack’s were not; nor the active spirit of civilization had raised up weavers, and spinners, and artificers of all kinds by thousands on thousands, by towns-full and cities-full. And now you come to the very closets and bowers of the ladies

themselves—scenes of worn and faded splendour, but shewing enough of their original state to mark their wide difference from the silken boudoirs and luxurious dormitories of the fair dames of this age of swarming and busy artisans; of ample rents and city life; instead of hunting and fighting, of wars in the heart of France, or civil wars at home, to call out the heads of houses, or perhaps drive their families forth with fire and sword in their absence. Then there is the antique chapel, and the library; the one having, in most cases, been deserted by its ancient faith, the other still bearing testimony to the range of reading of our old squires and nobles, since reading became a part of their education, in a few grim folios,—a Bible, a Gwillim's Heraldry, one or two of our Chroniclers, and a few Latin Classics or Fathers, for the enjoyment of the chaplain.

But the armoury and the great gallery—these are the places in which a flood of historic light pours in upon you, and the spirit of the past is made so palpable, that you forget your real existence in this utilitarian century; you forget reform in all its shapes —ballot, household suffrage, triennial parliaments; you forget the cry of the church and king; and the counter-cry from a million of eager voices, for liberty of hearth and faith; you forget that all around you, from the very walls that surround you to the distant sea, is nothing but fields cultivated like gardens, secured by gates and fences, and tenfold more costly and powerful parchment, to their particular owners; you forget that towns stand by hundreds, and villages by thousands, filled with a busy, an inquisitive, a reading, thinking, aspiring and irresistible population; and that all the institutions, the opinions, the loves and doings of the times when these things before you were matters of familiar life,

are gone, or are going, for ever: that,

> Another race has been, and other palms are won.

Yes, mighty and impressive as these things are; deeply as they visit your daily thought and nightly dreams; woven as they are with the thread of your existence, and your hopes and belief of the future ages,—yes, potent as they are, they vanish for a time. Here are swords, helmets, coats of mail, and plate-armour standing up in its own massiveness; shells from which the active bodies which moved them, have long ago disappeared. Here are buff-coats, ponderous boots, and huge spurs; broad hats, with sweeping feathers, and chains of gold, crosses and amulets, which make the past for ever in time, the past for ever in spirit, come back again with a vivid and intoxicating effect. You gaze upon arms and relics which figured in all the battles and pilgrimages, the desperate strifes and extravagant pageants of our ancestors; you behold things which link your fancies to all the romantic ages of European history. You forget the present; and exist amid forests, the stern strength of castles and the venerable quiet of convents. You are ready to listen to the distant bell of the abbey; for news of the crusaders; you expect as you ride through the woods, to stumble upon the abode of the hermit. These arms and fragments before you, were in the battles of Cressy and Poictiers; in the wars of the Roses; in the Tourney of the Field of Cloth-of-Gold; that mail, on the back of some stout knight, climbed over the ramparts of Ascalon, or of Jerusalem itself; and those, bringing you down the stream of events, are the equipments of Cavaliers and of Puritan leaders, when the spirit of feudalism and that of progression came so rudely into strife as to shake the kingdom

like an earthquake. You step into the gallery, and there are the very men whose iron habiliments you have been contemplating; there are the rude portraitures of the warriors of an earlier day; and there are the Sidneys, the Howards, the Essexes and Leicesters, the Warwicks and Wiltons, of an after one; the men that set up and pulled down kings, that waded through the blood of others, or that poured out their own, for honour and liberty. You have read of some handsome and gallant knight who wrought some chivalric miracle, who perhaps died in its performance—he is there! You have glowed over the accounts of arrogant and fascinating beauties, who turned the heads of kings and nobles—they are there! worthy of all their fame, their very shadows filling you with sighs and dreams of loveliness, which will haunt you in the open sunshine, and amid all the cheerful sounds of present life.

But it is not merely these great historic characters. There are family ones that constitute a history amongst themselves, most interesting and touching. There are the founders of those families. There is the great minister, who once rose to the favour of his sovereign, and swayed the destinies of the kingdom; there is the great churchman, that climbed up from plebeian obscurity to the primacy; there is the judge, who, from a younger brother of an ancient line, became the fortunate founder of a new one; there are admirals, generals, and nobles, who have figured in the campaigns of every reign. There are stern forms that were despots in their own sphere, or calm and smiling faces that have such blots and dark passages attached to them as confound all your physiognomical acuteness; and there are beautiful and gentle-looking creatures, that are most strangely tainted with blood; noble matrons, who knew

sorrows for which neither their rank and affluence, no, nor the possessions of ten kingdoms could make recompense; and lastly, there are young boys and girls, that look on you with most innocent archness or open good-nature, which perished like blossoms ere fully opened, or lived to make you shudder over their remembrance.

Such are many of our older houses, to say nothing of later and more splendid ones; nothing of all the modern attractions that have been added to their ancient ones; nothing of those sumptuous places which our nobility have raised on their estates, and filled with all the luxurious adornments of modern life, and with the wealth of art. And then those houses stand scattered over all the kingdom, in fine old parks, in gardens of quaint alleys and topiary work; or in the freer beauty of modern lawns and shrubberies; objects of pleasure and pride to thousands beside their own possessors.

Horace Walpole wished that they were all collected in London, and then should we have had such a capital as the world could not boast. Heaven forgive him for the wish! A splendid capital no doubt we should have had, but we should not have had such a country, such a people, such a national strength and character as we have. It is by living scattered through the realm, amid their own people, their own lands and woods, that our gentry have retained such high independence of principle, and such healthy tastes as they have done. It is by this means that agriculture, and horticulture, and rural architecture, have been promoted to the extent they have reached; that the whole kingdom has become a paradise, and that the people have been linked to the interests of their superiors. We have only too many temptations already to a crowding into our capital. A

city life to a wealthy aristocracy must become a life of luxury and splendour, a life of dissipation and rivalry. The enjoyments of society, of music, and of public spectacles, at intervals, might refine the taste; but when this species of life becomes almost perpetual, its certain consequence must be to deteriorate and effeminate character; to weaken the domestic attachments; to divert from, or disincline for that sober thought and those studies which lead to greatness, or leave behind solid satisfaction. We have already too much of this, and its effect will daily become more and more conspicuous, as it is of more and more vital importance. Now, while the people are struggling to acquire possession of rights that they long knew not their claim to; now that they are growing informed, and therefore quick to see and to feel—those on whom they look as their natural and powerful rivals, are living at a distance from them; taking no means to conciliate their good-will, or to retain their esteem. Their humble neighbours feel no effect from their estates except the withdrawal of their rents; and they ask themselves what claim these people, who are living in our great Babylon,

> Minions of splendour, shrinking from distress,—

have upon their veneration or regard. Is it not in these noble ancestral houses, amid their ancestral woods and lands, that the spirit of our gentry is most likely to acquire a right tone? Here, where they are surrounded by objects and memories of worth, of greatness and renown, that the fire of a generous and glorious emulation is most likely to be kindled; and that all the best feelings of their nature are likely to be touched, and their best affections quickened? Even Horace Walpole himself furnishes an instance

in proof. Little as he had of the pensive and poetical in him, his visit to the family place at Houghton called up such thoughts and emotions as, if encouraged instead of avoided, might have made him aware of higher qualities in himself than he was habitually accustomed to display. “Here am I,” says he in one of his letters, “at Houghton! and alone; in this spot where, except two hours last month, I have not been in sixteen years! Think what a crowd of reflections! No!—Gray and forty churchyards could not furnish so many; nay, I know one must feel them with greater indifference than I possess, to have patience to put them into verse. Here I am, probably for the last time in my life, though not for the last time; every clock that strikes tells me that I am one hour nearer to yonder church,—that church into which I have not yet had courage to enter; where lies the mother on whom I doated, and who doated on me! There are the two rival mistresses of Houghton, neither of whom ever wished to enjoy it. There too lies he who founded its greatness; to contribute to whose fall, Europe was embroiled. There he sleeps in quiet and dignity, while his friend and his foe, rather his false ally and real enemy, Newcastle and Bath, are exhausting the dregs of their pitiful lives in squabbles and pamphlets.

“The surprise the pictures gave me is again renewed. Accustomed for many years to see wretched daubs and varnished copies at auctions, I look at these as enchantment.... A party arrived just as I did, to see the house: a man and three women, in riding dresses, and they rode fast through the apartments. I could not hurry before them fast enough; they were not so long in seeing for the first time, as I could have been in one room, to examine what I knew by heart. I remember formerly being

often diverted by this kind of *seers*; they come, ask what such a room is called, in which Sir Robert lay: admire a lobster, or a cottage in a market-piece; dispute whether the last room was green or purple; and then hurry to the inn, for fear the fish should be overdressed. How different my situation! Not a picture here but recals a history; not one but I remember in Downing-street, or Chelsea, where queens and crowds admired them, though seeing them as little as these travellers.

"When I had drank tea I strolled into the garden. They told me it was now called the *pleasure-ground*. What a dissonant idea of pleasure! Those groves, those *alleys*, where I have passed so many charming moments, are now stripped up, or overgrown; many fond paths I could not unravel, though with a very exact clue in my memory. I met two gamekeepers, and a thousand hares! In the days when all my soul was tuned to pleasure and vivacity, I hated Houghton and its solitude; yet I loved this garden; as now, with many regrets, I love Houghton;—Houghton, I know not what to call it: a monument of grandeur or ruin! How I wished this evening for Lord Bute! How I could preach to him!—The servants wanted to lay me in the great apartment—what! to make me pass the night as I had done my evening! It were like proposing to Margaret Roper to be a duchess in the court which cut off her father's head, and imagining it could please her. I have chosen to sit in my father's little dressing-room, and am now in his escritoire, where, in the height of his fortune, he used to receive the accounts of his farmers, and deceive himself, or us, with the thoughts of his economy. How wise a man, at once, and how weak! For what has he built Houghton? For his grandson to annihilate, or his son to mourn over."

Horace Walpole's Letters, vol. ii. pp. 227-8.

Having made these preliminary observations, I will now give a specimen or two from my native neighbourhood, because necessarily more familiar with them; let every reader throughout England look round him in his, and he will find others as interesting there.

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CHAPTER V.
HARDWICK HALL.

Mrs. Jameson has lately given a very vivid and charming account of this fine old place. I am not going to tread in her steps, but to describe the impression it made upon myself at different times, in my own way, and with reference to my own object.

My first visit to it was when I was a youth of about seventeen. I had heard nothing at all of it, and had no idea that it was an object of any particular interest. I was at Mansfield, and casually heard that the present Duke of Devonshire, its proprietor, was come of age, and that there, as at his other houses, his birth-day was to be kept by his tenants and the neighbouring peasantry in the old English style. The house lies about five miles to the north of Mansfield, not far from the Chesterfield road. I set off, and learning that there was a footway, I passed through one or two quiet, old-fashioned villages, through solitary fields and deep woody valleys, a road that for its beauty and out-of-the-world air delighted me exceedingly. I at length found myself at the entrance of a large old park. The tall towers of the hall had

been my landmarks all the way, and now that unique building, standing on the broad, level plain, surrounded at a distance by the old oaks of the park, burst upon me with an unexpected effect. It was unlike anything I had seen; but there were solemn halls in the regions of poetry and romance, that my imagination immediately classed it amongst. I advanced toward it with indescribable feelings of wonder and delight. I could have wished that it had been standing in its ordinary solitude, for that seemed to my mind its true and natural state; but it was not so: around it swarmed crowds of rustic revellers, and I determined to take things as I found them; to consider this very scene as a feature of the olden time; and to see how it went, about the baronial dwellings in the feudal ages, on occasions like that.

It was not long before I came upon a man lying on his face under the trees,—he was dead drunk. Soon I passed another, and another, and another: a little farther, and they lay about like the slain on the outskirts of a battle. When I came into the open plain before the hall, the sound of a band of music which had probably been some time silent through the musicians themselves dining, reached me; I heard drunken songs and wild outcries mingling with it. All about the lawn were scattered clustered throngs. I saw barrels standing; spigots running; men catching their hats full, and running here and there, while others were snatching at their prize, and often spilling the ale on the ground. Sometimes there were two or three trying to drink out of a hat at once; others were stooping down to drink at the spigots; there were fighting, scuffling, clamour, and confusion. All round the hall people swarmed like bees. At the doors and gates dense masses were

trying to force their way in; while stout fellows were thumping away at their sculls with huge staves, with an energy that one would have thought enough to kill them by dozens, but which seemed to make little impression.

While this was going on, being a slim youth, I slipped beneath the uplifted arm of a stout yeoman, and made a safe ingress. I stood astonished at the place into which I had entered. Those ample and lofty rooms, in which stood huge pieces of roast-beef on huge pewter dishes, and great leathern jacks, tankards, and modern jugs of ale, at which scores of people were eating and drinking as voraciously as if they had been fasting all the one-and-twenty years to do due honour to this great birth-day; while the servants were running to and fro, filling up foaming measures, which were emptied again with wonderful rapidity. Those vast kitchens too, with their mighty fireplaces, and tongs, and pokers, and spits fit for the kitchen of Polyphemus; with broiling cooks and hurrying menials, called on by twenty voices at once. I made my way to the front court, where, under canvass awnings, long tables were set out for the tenantry and yeomanry of the neighbourhood, admitted by ticket. O what a company of jolly, rosy, full-grown, well-fed fellows, was there, making no sham onset on the plum-pudding and roast-beef of Old England! The band kept up a triumphant din; but when it ceased for a moment, what a rattle of knives and forks, and a clatter of ale-cups, what a clamour of tongues and hearty laughter became perceptible! And all round the court, the walls were covered with swarms of men, that climbed up no trivial height to get a view of the jovial banquet, and many a cry was raised to throw up thither some of those good things. And sure enough, here went a piece of beef, and here

a lump of pudding; and a score of hands caught at them; and a hundred voices joined in the roar of laughter as they were caught, or fell back again into the court, or flew over the wall amongst the scrambling crowd.

But suddenly there was in the midst of all this noise and jollity, a cry of horror; and it was soon seen that one of the pointed stones that stand at intervals on the top of the high wall all round the court, had disappeared. It had given way with a man who clung to it, had fallen upon him, and killed him on the spot. There was a momentary pause in the festivity; a great running together to the spot of the catastrophe; but the body was soon conveyed away to an outbuilding, and the tide of riot rolled on. It was doomed, however, to receive a second check; for another man, in the wild excitement of the time, and of the strong ale, sprang at one bound over a wall that stood on the edge of a precipice, and fell a shattered corpse into the hollow below. These were awful events, and cast over some of the revellers a gloom that would not disperse; but far the greater part were now too highly charged with birth-day ale to be capable of reflection. All around was Bacchanalian chaos. Singing, shouting, attempts at dancing, reeling, and tumbling. Bodies lay thickly strewn through court and hall, and far around on the lawn. Some gay sparks were, with mock respect, carried with much struggling and laughter, and laid in sheds and stables and under trees, and one especial dandy was deposited in a heap of soot. For myself, perhaps the only sober person there, I hastened away, resolving to revisit that fairy mansion in the time of its restored quiet.

And in what a far different aspect did it present itself when I next saw it; and with what a far

different company did I witness it! It was on one of the most glorious days of a splendid summer that we passed under the shadow of its oaks, as happy and attached a company as ever met on earth. Ah! they are all dispersed now! Out of a dozen glad hearts, not more than three are living now. But let me forget that. We were a joyful band of tried friends then. All, except myself and a young Yorkshire damsel, light as a sylph, and lovely and frolic as a fairy, were in carriages; we were on horseback; and scarcely had we entered the park, when, as if the sight of its fine wide level had filled her with an irresistible desire to scour across it, the madcap gave her horse the rein, and darted away. Under the boughs of the oaks she stooped, and flew along with arrowy swiftness. Every moment I expected to see her caught by one of them, and dashed to the ground; but she was too practised a horsewoman for that: she cleared the trees; the deer bounded away as she came galloping towards them, and turned and gazed at her from a distance; the rooks and daws, and lapwings feeding on the turf, soared up and raised wild cries; but she sped on, and there was nothing for me to do but to follow. I spurred forwards, but it was only to see her rush, at the same reckless speed, down a deep descent, where one trip of her horse—and nothing was more likely—and she would have flown far over his head to certain death. Yet down she went, and down I followed; but ere I reached the bottom, she was urging her horse up as steep an ascent, on whose summit, as I approached it, I found her seated on her panting steed, laughing at her exploit and my face of wonder.

When we reached the Hall, there were all our friends in the court, and the kind-hearted old gentleman, the head of the party, standing at the

great hall door, laughing heartily at the attempts of each of the youngsters in succession to walk blindfold up a single row of the flags that lead from the court-gates to the house. Every one began full of confidence; but the laughter and cries of the rest soon proclaimed the failure of the enterprise. When it came to the turn of our merry madcap, up she walked with a bold step, and course as strait as if guided by a clue, from gate to door. All at once exclaimed that she could see, and busy hands were soon at work to fasten the handkerchief so artfully round her head, that she could not possibly get a glimpse of daylight. Again she was led to the gate, and again she marched up to the door as quickly and directly as before. The wonder was great; but still it was asserted that she *must* see;—it was that fine Grecian nose of hers that permitted a glance down beside it, enough for the guidance of the spirited damsel; so handkerchief was bound on handkerchief, aslant and athwart, to exclude every possibility of seeing; and again she was set at the gate; and again went gaily and confidently to the door without one erring footstep. There was a general murmur of applause and wonder. I see that light and buoyant figure still advancing up the line of flags; I see those golden locks dancing in the sunshine as she went; I see that lovely countenance, those blue and laughing eyes, full of a merry triumph, as her friends unbound her beautiful head. I see the same glad creature, all vivacity and happiness, now sitting on the warm turf, now bounding up long flights of stairs; now standing, to the terror of her companions, on the jutting edge of a ruinous tower;—and can it be true, that that fairy creature has long been dead! the light of those lovely eyes extinguished! those lovely locks soiled with the damp churchyard earth! Alas! we know too

well how readily such things come to pass. But no black presage came before us then. All around was summer sunshine; we explored every nook in that old ivied ruin, the older house of Hardwick, in which the Queen of Scots was confined; paced the celebrated banqueting-room, adorned with the figures of Gog and Magog, with an angel flying between them with a drawn sword. We rambled over the leaden roof, and in the happy folly of youth, marked each other's foot upon it, with duly inscribed names and date. We went all through the present house; through its tapestried rooms, along its gallery, into its ancient chapel, and up to its armoury, a tower on the roof; and finally adjourned to the neat little inn at Glapwell, to a merry tea, and thence home.

My next visit to Hardwick was in the autumn of 1834. My companions now were, my true associate for the last seventeen years, and one little boy and girl, who, as we advanced up the park, rambled on before us in eager delight. Twenty years had passed since that youthful party I have just mentioned was there;—twenty years to me of many sober experiences; of naturally extended knowledge; of observation of our old English houses in various parts of the kingdom: but as I once more approached Hardwick, I felt that it had lost none of its effect,—nay, that that effect was actually increased: it was more unworldly, more unlike any thing else, or any thing belonging to common life; more poetical, more crowned and overshadowed with beautiful and solemn associations, than it was when I first beheld it in my youth. The distance you have to advance, from the moment you emerge from amongst the trees of the park into a full view of the Hall, until you reach it, tends greatly to heighten its effect. There it stands,

bold and alone, on a wide unobstructed plain.

No trees crowd upon it, or break, for a moment, the view; it lifts itself up in all its solemn and unique grandeur to the blue heavens, like a fairy palace, in the days of old romance. It is a thing expressly of by-gone times—darkened indeed by age, but not injured. Unlike modern mansions, you see no bustle of human life about it; no gardens and shrubberies; but wings of grey, and not very high walls, extending to a considerable distance over the plain, from each end of the house, inclosing what gardens there are, and paddocks. You see no offices appended,—it seems a place freed from all mortal necessities,—inhabited by beings above them. All offices, in fact, that are not included within the regular walls of the house, are removed to a considerable distance with the farm-yard. As you draw near, its grave aspect strikes you more strongly; you become more sensible of its loftiness, of the vast size of its windows, and of that singular parapet which surmounts it. It is an oblong building, with three square towers at each end, both projecting from, and rising much higher than, the body of the building. The parapet surmounting these towers is a singular piece of open-work of sweeping lines of stone, displaying the initials of the builder, E. S.—Elizabeth Shrewsbury,—surmounted with the coronet of an earl. On all sides of the house these letters and crown strike your eye, and the whole parapet appears so unlike what is usually wrought in stone, that you cannot help thinking that its singular builder, old Bess of Hardwick, must have cut out the pattern in paper with her scissars. It is difficult to say, whether this remarkable woman had a greater genius for architecture or matrimony. She was the daughter of John Hardwick of Hardwick, and sole heiress of this

estate. She married four times, always contriving to get the power over her husband's estates, by direct demise, or by intermarrying the children of their former marriages with those of former husbands, so that she brought into the family immense estates, and laid the foundation of four dukedoms. Her genius for architecture is sufficiently conspicuous in this unique pile, and in the engraving of Worksop Manor in Thoroton's Nottinghamshire, as erected by her, though since destroyed by fire,—a building full of the same peculiar character. It is said that it having been foretold her by some astrologer, that the moment she ceased to build would be the moment of her death, she was perpetually engaged in building. At length, as she was raising a set of almshouses at Derby, a severe frost set in. All measures were resorted to necessary to enable the men to continue their work: their mortar was dissolved with hot water, and when that failed, with hot ale; but the frost triumphed—the work ceased, and Bess of Hardwick expired! This noble building I trust will long continue to perpetuate her memory, lifting aloft on its parapet her conspicuous E. S.

All the lower walls surrounding the courts and paddocks, are finished with similar open-work of bands of curved and knotted stone. A colonnade runs along each side of the house between the projecting towers, and the entrance-front is enclosed by that court of which I have already spoken; having its walls mounted, at intervals, with quaint pyramidal stones. On this side of the house a fine valley opens itself, filled with noble woods, a large water, and displaying beyond a hilly and pleasant country.

At about a hundred yards from the Hall stand the remains of the old one. The progress of dilapidation upon this building, since my last visit, was striking.

Then you could ascend to the leaden roof; but now means were adopted to prevent that, on account of its unsafe state; in fact, the stairs themselves have partly fallen in; many of the floors of the rooms have fallen through; the ceiling of the celebrated banqueting-room itself has given way by places, and in others is propped up by stout pieces of timber. The glory of Gog and Magog will soon be annihilated, or they will be left on the walls, exposed to the astonished gaze of the passer-by, as are some stucco alto-relievoes of stags under forest trees on the chamber walls, with ivy drooping over them from the top of the walls above, and tall trees that have sprung on the hearths of destroyed rooms below, waving before them. This is the outward aspect of those old halls where Mary Stuart, and the almost equally unfortunate Arabella Stuart, once dwelt. Within, the present hall is as perfect a specimen of an Elizabethan house, as can be wished. “The state apartments are lofty and spacious, with numerous transom windows admitting a profusion of light. The hall is hung with very curious tapestry, which appears to be as ancient as the fifteenth century. On one part of it, is a representation of boar-hunting, and on another of otter-hunting. In the chapel, which is on the first floor, is a very rich and curious altar-cloth, thirty feet long, hung round the rails of the altar, with figures of saints under canopies wrought in needlework. The great dining-room is on the same floor, over the chimney-piece of which are the arms of the Countess of Shrewsbury, with the date of 1597. The most remarkable apartments in this interesting edifice are the state room, or room of audience, as it is called, and the gallery. The former is sixty-four feet nine inches, by thirty-three feet, and twenty-six feet four inches high. At one end of it is a

canopy of state, and in another part a bed, the hangings of which are very ancient. This room is hung with tapestry, in which is represented the story of Ulysses; over this are figures, rudely executed in plaster, in bas-relief, amongst which is a representation of Diana and her nymphs. The gallery is about 170 feet long and 26 wide, extending the whole length of the eastern side of the house; and hung with tapestry, on a part of which is the date of 1478."[11] The house has not only been kept in repair, but exactly in the state in which its builder left it, as to furniture and fitting up, with a very few exceptions, and these in the most accordant taste. For instance, the Duke of Devonshire has brought hither his family pictures from Chatsworth, so as to make this fine gallery the family picture gallery. Not another painting has been suffered to enter. He has also now added a most appropriate feature to the entrance hall, a statue of the Queen of Scots, of the size of life, by Westmacott. It stands on a pedestal of the same stone, bearing an armorial escutcheon.

[11] Lyson's Magna Britannia.

Mrs. Jameson expresses strongly the effect of the huge escutcheons, the carved arms thrust out from the wall, intended to hold lights, and the great antlers, as she first entered this hall by night; but what would have been the effect of seeing Mary Stuart herself standing full opposite, as if to receive her to this place of her former captivity.[12] To her, and to every imaginative person, the effect must have been powerful, and solemnly impressive. Gray the poet, instead of thinking that the Queen of Scots had but just walked down into the park for half an hour, would have seen her visibly here. I have seen the portraits of Queen Mary, both here and in

Holyrood, but none of them give me a thousandth part of the idea of what she must have been, compared with this statue.

[12] I do not mean literally that this house was the place of her captivity, it was the old one.

With these two exceptions, both of which tend to strengthen the legitimate influence of the place, all besides is exactly as it was. You ascend the broad, easy oak stairs; you see the chapel by their side, with all its brocaded seats and cushions; you advance along vast passages, where stand huge chests filled with coals, and having ample crypts in the walls for chips and firewood. Here are none of the modern contrivances to conceal these things; but they stand there before you, with an air of rude abundance, according well with the ancient mixture of baronial state and simplicity. You go on and on, through rooms all hung with rich old tapestry, glowing with pictorial scenes from scriptural or mythological history; all furnished with antique cabinets, massy tables, high chairs covered with crimson velvet or ornamental satin. You behold the very furniture used by Queen Mary; the very bed she worked with her own fingers. But perhaps that spacious gallery, extending along the whole front of the house, gives the imagination a more feudal feeling than all. Its length, nearly two hundred feet; its great height; its stupendous windows, composing nearly the whole front, rattling and wailing as the wind sweeps along them. What a magnificent sough, and even thunder of sound, must fill that wild old place in stormy weather. There you see arranged, high and low, portraits of most of the characters belonging to the family or history of the place, of all degrees of execution. It is not my intention to give any details,

either of those or of the furniture; that having been done by Mrs. Jameson with the accuracy and feeling that particularly distinguish her. I aim only at imparting the general effect. It is enough therefore to say that there are “many beautiful women and brave men:” portraits of bluff Harry VIII.; those of the rival queens, Mary and Elizabeth; her keeper, the Earl of Shrewsbury, and his masculine wife, Elizabeth of Hardwick; and the philosophers, Boyle and Hobbs. One interesting particular of Mrs. Jameson’s statement, however, we could not verify:—the tradition of the nocturnal meeting of the rival queens in the gallery. We never heard of it before; nor could we now find, by the most particular inquiries, even among the domestics, any knowledge of such a tradition. It was as new to them as to us; and we therefore set it down as a pleasant poetical tradition of the fair author’s own planting.

The Duke was come hither from Chatsworth, to spend a week, and he seemed to have come in the spirit befitting the place; for there was scarcely more than its usual establishment; scarcely less than its usual quietness perceptible. The Duke himself we had met on the road, and in his absence were shewn through the apartments which he uses on these occasions; and it had a curious effect amid all this staid and sombre antiquity, to find, on a plain oak table in the library, the newspapers of the day; the Athenæum, Court Journal, the Spectator, and Edinburgh Review; the works of Dr. Channing; and Hood’s Tylney Hall, just then published. What an antithesis! what a mighty contrast between the spirit of the past and the present!—the life and stir of the politics and the passing literature of the day, in a place belonging in history, character, and all its appointments, to an age so different, and so long

gone by, with all its people and concerns.

Nothing, perhaps, could mark more vividly the vast changes in the manners and circumstances of different ages in England; the wonderful advance in luxury and refinement of the modern ones, than by passing from Hardwick to the old Hall of Haddon, built in 1427, when the feudal system was in its strength; when the manor-house was but one remove from the castle; to visit this with its rude halls, its massive tables, its floors made from the planks of one mighty oak, its ancient arras and quaint stucco-work; and then pass over to Chatsworth, only a few miles distant, where to the past all the splendour of the present has been added; modern architecture, and all its contrivances for domestic convenience, comfort, and elegance; pictures, statuary, books, magnificent furniture, glowing carpets; every thing that the art, wealth, and ingenuity of this great nation can bring together into one princely mansion. But as my limits will not admit of this, I shall content myself with a survey of a more domestic kind, yet connected with the poetical history of our own day—Annesley and Newstead.

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CHAPTER VI.

ANNESLEY HALL AND HUCKNALL.

Early in the spring of 1834, I walked over with Charles Pemberton from Nottingham, to see Annesley Hall, the birth-place and patrimony of Mary Chaworth; a place made of immortal interest by the early attachment of Lord Byron to this lady, and by the graphic strength and deep passion with

which he has recorded in his poems this most influential circumstance of his youth.

Annesley lies about nine miles north of Nottingham, itself—the scene of his first and most lasting attachment—Newstead, his patrimonial abode—and Hucknall, his burial-place; forming the three points of a triangle, each of whose sides may be about two miles in length. Yet, although Newstead and Hucknall have been visited by shoals of admirers, this place, perhaps altogether the most interesting of the three, has been wholly neglected. Few, or none of them, have thought it worth while to go so little out of their way to see it; perhaps not one in a hundred has known that it was so near; probably to those who inquired about it, it might be replied, "you see that wooded ridge—there lies Annesley. You see all that is worth seeing; it is a poor tumble-down place:" and so they have been satisfied, and have returned in their wisdom to their own place, at a hundred, or a thousand, miles distance. But what is still more remarkable, while Mr. Murray has sent down an artist into this neighbourhood to make drawings of Hucknall church and Newstead for his Life and Poems of Lord Byron; and while others have encompassed sea and land to give us thrice reiterated landscapes illustrative of his biography and writings, and have even presented us with fictitious portraits of the most interesting characters connected with his fortunes,—they have totally passed over Annesley as altogether unworthy of their notice, though it is a spot, at once, full of a melancholy charm; of a sad, yet old English beauty; a spot, where every sod, and stone, and tree, and hearth, is rife with the most strange and touching memories in human existence; and where the genuine likeness of Mary Chaworth, in the most lovely and happy moments of her life, is to

be found.

Need I pause a moment to account for this? Does not the discerning public always tread in one track? As sheep follow one leader, and traverse the heath in a long extended line, so does the public follow the first trumpeter of the praises of one place. It has been fashionable to visit Newstead, and it *has* been visited; —but as Annesley was not at first thought of, it has not been visited at all. Well! we have visited it; and if there be any power in the most melancholy of mortal fortunes—in the retracing the day-dreams of an illustrious spirit—in the gathering of all English feelings round the strongest combination of the glories of nature, with the aspect of decay in the fortunes and habitation of an ancient race, we shall visit it again and again.[13]

[13] Since this was published in the Athenæum in the autumn of 1834, Washington Irving has published his interesting visit to Newstead and *Annesley*.

That wooded ridge was our landmark from the first step of our journey, and we soon reached Hucknall. The approach to Hucknall is pleasant; the place itself is a long and unpicturesque village. Count Gamba is said to have been struck with its resemblance to Missolonghi. Sixteen years have now passed since the funeral of Lord Byron took place here, and yet it seems to me but as yesterday. His admirers, in after ages, will naturally picture to themselves the church, on that occasion, overflowing with the intelligent and poetical part of the population of the neighbourhood. A poet who had spent a good deal of his boyhood and youth in it—whose patrimonial estate lay here—who had gone hence, and won so splendid a renown—whose life had been a series of circumstances and events as

striking and romantic as his poetry—who had finally been cut down in his prime, in so brilliant an attempt to restore the freedom and ancient glory of Greece—would naturally be supposed to come back to the tomb of his ancestors, amidst the confluence of a thousand strongly-excited hearts. But it was not so. There was a considerable number of persons present, but the church was by no means crowded, and the spectators were, with very few exceptions, of that class which is collected, by idle curiosity on the approach of any not very wonderful procession; who would have collected to gaze as much at the funeral of his lordship's grandfather, or his own, though he had not written a line of poetry, or lifted the sword of freedom;—probably, with threefold eagerness at that of a wealthy cit, because there would have been more of bustle and assuming blazonry about it. With the exception of the undertaker's hired company; of Sir John Cam Hobhouse, and his lordship's attorney, Mr. Hanson; his Greek servant Tita, and his old follower Fletcher, the rest of the attendants were the villagers, and a certain number of people from Nottingham, of a similar class, and led by similar motives. There was not a score of those who are called "the respectable" from Nottingham; scarcely one of the gentry of the county. This strange fact can only be accounted for by the circumstance that Nottingham and its vicinity are famous for the manufacture of lace and stockings, but, like many other manufacturing districts, possess no such decided attachment to literature. Many readers there are, undoubtedly, in both town and country, but readers chiefly for pastime—for the filling up of a certain space between and after business—and a laudable way too of so filling it; but not readers from any unconquerable passion for, or attachment to,

literature for its own sake. A few literary persons have lived in or about the neighbourhood, but these are the exception; the character of the district is manufacturing and political, but by no means literary, nor ever was; therefore, the strongest feeling with which Lord Byron was regarded there, was a political one. Though an aristocrat in birth and bearing, he was a very thorough radical in principle. Hence, he had only the sympathy of the radicals with him, those consisting chiefly of the working classes. The whigs of the town and the gentry of the county, chiefly tories, regarded him only in a political light, and paid him not the respect of their presence.

The religious world had a high prejudice against him for his manifold sins of speech, opinion, and life; they of course were not there. No party had so much more admiration of genius—conception of the lofty, intellectual achievements of the noble poet, discernment of the abundant qualifying, and, in fact, overbalancing grace and beauty, and even religious sentiment, which breathed through many of his writings—for no man had more ennobling and truly religious feelings rooted in his soul by the contemplation of the magnificence of God's handiworks in creation; or felt occasionally, more deeply the spiritualizing influence that pervades nature;—no party had so much more of this tone of mind, than of their political or sectarian bias, as to forget all those minor things in his wonderful talent —his early death—his redeeming qualities, and last deeds—and the honour he had conferred, as an everlasting heritage, on this country.

In the evening, after the people who had attended the funeral were dispersed, I went down to the church and entered the vault. There was a reporter from one of the London newspapers copying the

inscriptions on the coffins by the light of a lamp; and a great hobble-de-hoy of a farmer's lad was kneeling on the case that contained the poet's heart, and lolling on the coffin with his elbows, as he watched the reporter, in a manner that indicated the most perfect absence of all thought of the place where he was, or the person on whose remains he was perched.

In the churchyard, a group of the villagers were eagerly discussing the particulars of the funeral, and the character of the deceased. One man attempted to account for the apparently indifferent manner in which the clergyman performed the burial service, by his having understood that he felt himself disgraced by having to bury an atheist. "An atheist!" exclaimed an old woman, "tell me that he was an atheist! D' ye think an atheist would be beloved by his servants as this man was? Why, they fret themselves almost to death about him. And d' ye think they would have made so much of him in foreign parts? Why, they almost worshipped him as a god in Grecia!" giving the final *a* a sound almost as long as one's finger. This was conclusive—the wondering auditors had nothing to reply—they quietly withdrew their several ways, and I mine.

The church was broken into soon after the funeral, and the black cloth with which the pulpit was hung on this occasion, carried away: and this is not the only forcible entry that has been made through Lord Byron's being buried there; for the clerk told me, that when Moore came to see it with Colonel Wildman, being impatient of the clerk's arrival, who lives at some distance, the poet had contrived to climb up to a window, open it, and get in, where the worthy bearer of the keys found him, to his great astonishment.

The indifference shewn by the people of Nottingham towards the great poet, would not seem to have abated, if we are to judge by the entries in an album kept by the clerk, and which was presented for that purpose about twelve years ago by Dr. Bowring. The signatures of visiters in 1834 amounted to upwards of eight hundred, amongst which appear the names of people from North and South America, Russia, the Indies, and various other distant places and countries, but few from Nottingham or its shire, who might be supposed to be amongst the best read and best informed portion of its population. This, however, must be allowed, that the names entered in the clerk's book afford no just criterion of the number or quality of the visiters to the poet's tomb, as many of the most poetical and refined minds might naturally feel reluctant to place their signatures in such a medley of mawkish sentiment as is always found in such albums. A few clergymen, we, however, were pleased to see, had there placed their names; and some dissenting ministers had ventured so far as to do likewise, and to preach some pretty little sermons over him in the book, which opens thus:

TO THE
Immortal and Illustrious Fame
OF
LORD BYRON,
THE FIRST POET OF THE AGE IN WHICH HE LIVED,
THESE TRIBUTES,
WEAK AND UNWORTHY OF HIM,
BUT IN THEMSELVES SINCERE,
Are Inscribed,
WITH THE DEEPEST REVERENCE.
July, 1825.

At this period no monument—not even so simple a slab as records the death of the humblest villager in the neighbourhood—had been erected to mark the spot in which all that is mortal of the greatest man of our day reposes; and he has been buried more than twelve months.—*July, 1825.*

So should it be: let o'er this grave
No monumental banners wave;
Let no word speak—no trophy tell
Aught that may break the charming spell,
By which, as on this sacred ground
He kneels, the pilgrim's heart is bound.
A still, resistless influence,
Unseen, but felt, binds up the sense;
While every whisper seems to breathe
Of the mighty dead who sleeps beneath.
—And though the master-hand is cold,
And though the lyre it once controlled
Rests mute in death; yet from the gloom
Which dwells about this holy tomb,
Silence breathes out more eloquent,
Than epitaph or monument.
One laurel wreath—the poet's crown—
Is here by hand unworthy thrown;
One tear that so much worth should die,
Fills, as I kneel, my sorrowing eye;
This is the simple offering,
Poor, but earnest, which I bring.
The tear has dried; the wreath shall fade,
The hand that twined it soon be laid
In cold obstruction—but the fame
Of him who tears and wreath shall claim
From most remote posterity,
While Britain lives, can never die!—J. B.

The following list contains almost all the names that are known to the public, or are distinguished by rank or peculiarity of circumstance:—

The Count Pietro Gamba, Jan. 31st, 1825.

The Duke of Sussex visited Lord Byron's tomb, October 1824.

Lieut.-Colonel Wildman.

Lieut.-Colonel Charles Lallemand.

The Count de Blankensee, Chamberlain to the King of Prussia, Sept. 7th, 1825.

1825, Sept. 23. William Fletcher visited his ever-to-be-lamented lord and master's tomb.

10th month 1st. Jeremiah Wiffen, Woburn Abbey, Bedfordshire.

1826, July 30. C. R. Pemberton, a wanderer.

1828, Jan. 21. Thomas Moore.

Sept. 12. Sir Francis S. Darwin, and party.

Nov. 21. Lieut.-Colonel D'Aguilar.

——— Eliza D'Aguilar.

Dec. 1. Lieut.-Colonel James Hughes of Llysdulles.

1829, Sept. 3. Lord Byron's Sister, the Honourable Augusta Mary Leigh, visited this church.

1831, May 17. Rev. Joseph Gilbert, Nottingham.

——— Ann Gilbert (formerly Ann Taylor of Ongar).

Aug. 22. Lieut.-Gen. and Mrs. Need, Fountain Dale.

1832, Jan. 8. M. Van Buren, Minister Plenipotentiary from the United States.

——— Washington Irving.

——— John Van Buren, New York, U. S. America.

Dec. 27. Lady Lammine, Salendale.

1834, Feb. 15. Domingo Maria Ruiz de la Vega, Ex-Deputy of the Spanish Cortes, from Granada.

Feb. 23. J. Bellairs, Esq., visited Newstead Abbey, and Lord Byron's tomb, such as it is —one of his greatest admirers of the day!

——— W. Arundale, of London, accompanied the said J. B.!

March 8. J. Murray, Jun. Albemarle-street, London.

Although we did not, at this time, enter even the churchyard, thoughts and feelings which had presented themselves in this very spot, on the day of Lord Byron's funeral, again returned.

His birth, his death, dark fortunes, and brief life,
Wondrous and wild as his impetuous lay,
Passed through my mind; his wanderings, loves, and strife;
I saw him marching on from day to day:
The kilted boy, roaming mid mountains grey;
The noble youth, whose life-blood was a flame,
In the bright land of demi-gods astray;
The monarch of the lyre, whose haughty name
Spread on from shore to shore, the watchword of all fame;

And then, a lifeless form! The spell was broke;
The wizard's wild enchantment was destroyed;
He who at will did dreadful forms invoke,
And called up beautiful spirits from the void,
Back to the scenes in which he early joyed,
He came but knew it not. In vain earth's bloom—
In vain the sky's clear beauty, which oft buoyed
His spirit to delight; an early doom
Brought him in glory's arms to the awaiting tomb.

He lies—how quietly that heart which yet
Never could slumber, slumbers now for aye!
He lies—where first, love, fame, his young soul set
With passionate power on flame; where gleam the grey
Turrets of Newstead, through the solemn sway

Of verdurous woods; and where that hoary crown
Of lofty trees, “in circular array,”
Shroud Mary’s Hall, who thither may look down,
And think how he loved her, ay, more than his renown.

ANNESLEY HALL.

From Hucknall we ascended chiefly through open, wild lands:—to our right the wooded valley of Newstead, every moment spreading itself out more broadly; and before us the forest heights of Annesley, growing more bold and attractive. A wild gusty breeze, and dark flying clouds, added sensibly to the deep solitude and picturesque character of the scene. We soon passed a cottage, having beside it an old brick pillar surmounted with a stone ball, and before it an avenue of lime trees, which appeared some time to have formed the boundary or place of entrance to the park; then a new lodge, and found ourselves at the foot of the steep hill, styled in Byron’s Dream—

A gentle hill,
Green, and of mild declivity.

The greenness and mildness of declivity, however, we afterwards found were on the side by which Byron and Mary Chaworth had ascended it from her house; on this side it is a remarkably barren and extremely steep hill. However, up we went, and on the summit discovered the strict accuracy of his delineation of it.

I saw two beings in the hues of youth,
Standing upon a hill, a gentle hill,
Green, and of mild declivity; the last,
As ’t were the cape of a long ridge of such,
Save that there was no sea to lave its base,

> But a most living landscape, and the wave
> Of woods and corn-fields, and the abodes of men
> Scattered at intervals, and wreathing smoke
> Arising from such rustic roofs:—the hill
> Was crowned with a peculiar diadem
> Of trees in circular array, so fixed,
> Not by the sport of Nature, but of man.

A most living landscape it is indeed, including all the objects so vividly here given; amongst them, the most conspicuous, the house of his living ancestors, and the house where he has joined them in death; and extending from the woody skirts of Sherwood Forest to the mill-crowned heights of Nottingham. By the way, a strange mistake of Moore's here presented itself. Immediately after the passage just quoted, Byron proceeds to speak further of this young pair, and
says:—

> Even *now* she loved another,
> And on the summit of that hill she stood,
> Looking afar, if yet her lover's steed
> Kept pace with her expectancy, and flew.

Moore, commenting on this, tells us that the image of the lover's steed was suggested by the Nottingham race-ground,—a race-ground actually nine miles off, and moreover lying in a hollow and totally hidden from view; had the lady's eyes, indeed, been so marvellously good as to discern a horse nine miles off! Mary Chaworth, in fact, was looking for her lover's steed along the road as it winds up the common from Hucknall.

But a stranger discovery soon made us forget this *Irish bull*. We had no sooner reached the summit of the hill, than to our inexpressible astonishment we found the very trees so strikingly pointed out in this most interesting poem, "the trees in circular array"—

cut down! These trees, and none else, cut down! There were the trees crowning the whole length of the “long ridge” standing in their greyness; and there were the stumps of “the trees in circular array” in the earth at our feet! An immediate and irresistible conviction forced itself on our minds; but we write it not; we merely state the fact, that that memorable landmark of love, made interesting to every age by the poetry of passion, had been removed. Our indignation may be imagined when we found that not only had the trees been cut down, but there was an actual attempt to cut down the hill itself, by making a gravel-pit there;—of all places in the world, to think of making a gravel-pit on the top of that steep hill, when it might be got from the bottom of any hill in the neighbourhood. We have since been told that it was the intention of its present proprietor, the husband of Mary Chaworth, to have cut down all the trees upon that hill; but that his design was prevented by the interference of his eldest son, to whom the estate descends by entail; and that he was compelled by the spirited conduct of the son, to plant the hill afresh; but he has complied with the letter, overlooking the spirit of the agreement, in the most perfect style, having planted the sides of the hill all over with fir-trees, so that it will in a short time shroud the place, and smother it completely from the view.[14]

[14] Mentioning the felling of these trees to a mechanic soon afterwards,—“Trees,” I added, “that might be seen so far.” “Seen, sir!” he exclaimed, “those trees were seen all over the world!” He meant through the medium of Byron’s poetry. It was an expression, and accompanied by an energy of feeling, that would have done honour to any man.

The indignation we felt on this occasion, perhaps,

made us more sensibly alive to the character of the place. Byron, in some juvenile verses, exclaims—

> Hills of Annesley, bleak and barren,
> Where my thoughtless childhood strayed,
> How the northern tempests warring,
> How! above thy tufted shade.

So strongly did the wind drive over this ridge, that we could scarcely make head against it; and remembering to have heard of a temple which formerly crowned this hill, but had been blown down either by tempest or war, we looked amongst the broken ground, and perceived considerable remains of masonry, probably the foundations of the temple: nor can a finer situation for such an erection be imagined.

The trees which crowned "the ridge," and which, at a distance, appeared large, we soon saw, were of stunted growth, with tops curled, and sturdy, as if accustomed to wrestle with the tempests. An avenue of them stretched away into distant woods. Large decayed branches lay here and there beneath, indicating a solitude and neglect of the place pleasing to the imagination. Before us, across a descending slope—the hill of mild and green declivity—extended, right and left, noble woods; and in the midst of them, in the midst of a smaller crescent of wood, we descried the tall grey chimneys and ivy-covered walls and gables of the old Hall, and the top of the church-tower. We hastened down,—observing on our left, in an old forest-slope, a large herd of deer, which had a good effect,—and struck into a footpath that led directly up towards the house. As we drew nearer, the old building, hung with luxuriant ivy and shrouded among tall trees, far overtopping its tall chimneys; amid shrubberies of

wondrous growth of evergreens, among which are conspicuous, three remarkable ilexes, with black-green foliage crowning their short thick black trunks, and with grassy openings sloping down to the warm south; struck us forcibly with its picturesque and silent beauty. We found ourselves now, apparently at the back of a high garden-wall, by the side of which ran a row of lime trees, which seemed at one time to have been pollarded and trained espalier-wise, but had now sent up heads of a luxuriant and fantastic growth. On our other hand, lay a wood, from which the thickets being cleared away, left us ample view of its ivy-mantled trees, and the ground beneath them one green expanse of dog's-mercury and fresh leaves of the blue-bell. Tufts of primroses were scattered all about, and the wood-anemonies trembled in the wind. But over all, such a mantle of deep silence seemed cast, that it reminded us of some enchanted place in the fairy and forest-stories of Tieck.

At the top of this road, turning suddenly to the left, we found ourselves before

> The massy gate of that old hall,

from which Byron declares that,

> Mounting his steed he went his way,
> And ne'er repassed that hoary threshold more.

But all was silent and lifeless. No person was to be discerned in the court to which it opened; there were no signs of life except in the cooing of some pigeons and the cawing of certain jackdaws. We went round the outbuildings into the churchyard, which is level with the top of the court-wall, and looks directly into it. We leaned over a massy parapet, and looked down into this court; the spell of an invincible silence seemed to cover the whole place. In the gravel walks which ran round the court, there were traces of carriage wheels; but you felt as if no carriage with the bustle and vivacity of active life could ever more enter there. In the centre of the grass-plot, a basin surrounded by a hedge of honeysuckle, and which had doubtless once possessed the life and beauty of a fountain, now shewed only water, black, stagnant, and covered with masses of yellow moss. We were close to the house; its curtained windows gave it an air of habitation; but no sound nor visible indication of the presence of man was about it. We walked along the green and picturesque churchyard: the back of the buildings on this side of the court bounded part of it; they were in the last state of decay; wide gaps in the roof gave us a view into dark and dreary stables. We came to the farm-yard, also joining the churchyard: it had the same aspect of desertion. There was neither cattle nor ricks in it, but the brandreth, or frame on which a rick once stood, littered with decaying straw, and its air of desolation made more striking by a piece of old wooden

balustrade cast upon it. There were barn-doors standing wide open; and the litter of the yard even appeared dusty and grey with age. You felt sure no human foot could have disturbed it for years. We descended from the churchyard, and went round the farm-buildings once more towards the old “massy gate.” At the back of these buildings were nailed the trophies of the gamekeeper by hundreds, we might, we think, say thousands; wild cats, dried to blackness, stretched their downward heads and legs from the wall; hawks, magpies, and jays, hung in tattered remnants; but all grey and even green with age; and the heads of birds in plenteous rows, nailed beak upward, were dried and shrivelled by the sun, and winds, and frosts, of many summers and winters, till their distinctive characters were lost. They all seemed to speak the same silent language:—to say, Ay, this was once the abode of a prosperous old family; here were abundance of friends, and dependents going to and fro; horses and hounds going forth in vociferous joy; abroad was the chase and the sound of the gun,—within were spits turning, and good fellowship; but all this is long since over—a blight and a sorrow have fallen here.

We now approached the “massy gateway” by a wide entrance, which a pair of great doors had once closed—one of these had fallen from its hinges, and the other swung in the wind, banging against its post with a hollow sound, whose echoes told of vacancy. Above the gateway, the vane on the cupola turned to and fro in the gusty air, with a dreary queek-quake, queek-quake: all besides was still. We stood and looked at each other with an expression that said,—Did you ever see any thing like this? At this moment an old grey dog came softly out of the court—the first living thing we had seen except the jackdaws

and the pigeons; quietly he came, as if he too felt the nature of his abode. It was with no vivacity of action, or noisy bark: he stood and silently wagged his tail; and as we drew near him, as silently retreated into the court. We entered this silent place, and looked around. The house formed its western end; stables and coach-houses formed its north and eastern sides; the south was open to the shrubbery. The ivy hung in huge masses from all the walls. In the eastern end was the "massy gateway" mentioned by Byron, arched over, and surmounted by a clock and cupola. So profoundly lifeless and deserted seemed the place, that though the clock-finger pointed to the true time of the day—exactly half-past twelve o'clock—our imaginations refused for some time to believe that the clock could actually be going: we felt positive astonishment when it proved to us that it really did.

We now resolved to ascertain at the house itself, if it had any living inhabitants; and on approaching the hall-door, we heard a sound in a stable; we went in, and descried, in a dismal room adjoining it, a man sitting by a fire in a corner, and a dog lying on the hearth. The man and the place were alike forlorn. They were dirty, squalid, desolate. We had said, who could have supposed so abandoned a spot so near Nottingham? but who could have imagined so wild and banditti-like a being as that man, within so short a distance of a large town? His dress and person had every character of reckless neglect; his black hair hung about his pale face; he had no handkerchief about his neck; he sate and devoured his dinner, which he appeared to have cooked with his own hands, looking up at us with ruffian stupidity, as he answered our questions with a surly bluntness, without ceasing to help himself, with a large pocket-knife, and no fork, to his meal. He told us we could

not see the house—master never let it be seen. When asked, why? he could not tell—but it was so; but we might ask the old woman in the house. Away we went, and a jewel of an old woman we found.

She was the very *beau ideal* of an old servant; all simplicity and fidelity, full of the history of the family; wrapped up in its fortunes and its honours—a part and parcel of the race and place, for she had been in the family above sixty years,—being taken, as she said, when she was ten years old, by Mary Chaworth's grandfather, and put to school, and taught to read and write, to mark and to flower; for she would, he said, be a nice sharp girl to wait on him. "Oh! he was a pretty man—a very pretty, well-behaved gentleman," said she with a sigh. Old Nanny Marsland, for such was her name, seemed a pure and unsophisticated creature; the regular influx of visiters had not spoiled her; the curious and the pert, and the idle, the insolent and the foolish, had not troubled the clear sincere current of her thoughts; had not made her heart and spirit turn inward, in self-defence, and converted her into the subtle and parrot shew-woman.

She never dreamt of any thing being blameable that had been done by any of *the family*. She delighted to talk of the Hall and its people; and feeling her solitude,—for she was the sole regular occupant,—some one to talk to was a luxury. Could we have hoped for a creature more to our hearts' desire? Under her guidance we progressed through this most interesting old place; thoughts and feelings, never to be forgotten, springing up at every step.

The house is not large; and desertion had stamped within, the same characters as on all without. Damp had disfigured the walls; a fire of cheerful pine-logs blazed in the hall and in the kitchen; but everywhere

else was the chill and gloom of the old neglected mansion. All the more modern furniture, and most of the paintings, had been removed, and thereby the keeping of the abode was but the better preserved. We know not how to describe the feelings with which we traversed these rooms. It was as if the hall of one of our old English families had been hidden beneath a magic cloud for ages, and suddenly revealed to our eyes, now, at a time when every thing belonging to this country is so much changed; —houses, men, manners, and opinions. When we entered the old-fashioned family hall, standing as it stood ages ago, furnished as it was ages ago, with its antique stove, its antique sofas, if so they can be called, made of wood carved, and curiously painted, and cushioned with scarlet, standing on each side of the fire; the antique French timepiece on its bracket; its various old cabinets and tables standing by walls; and its floor of large and small squares of alternating black marble and white stone—the domestic sanctuary of a race whom we regard as our progenitors, but widely different to ourselves, seemed suddenly revealed to us, and we could almost have expected to see the rough, boisterous squire, or the stately baron, issue from one of the side-doors; or to hear the rustling of the silken robe of some long-waisted dame, who could occasionally leap a five-barred gate as readily as she could dance at the Christmas festival; or one of high and solemn beauty, in whom devotion, deep, uninquiring and undoubting, was the great principle and passion of life; to whom the domestic chapel was a holy place; the chaplain her daily counsellor; and the distribution of alms her daily occupation. We saw before us the hearthstone of a race that lived in the full enjoyment of aristocratic ascendancy, when rank

was old and undisputed; when neither mercantile wealth had pressed on their nobility on the one hand, nor popular knowledge and rights on the other; when the gentry lived only to be reverenced and obeyed, every one in the midst of his own forests and domains as a king, and led forth his tenants and serfs to the wars of his country, or to the chase of his own wide wilds; when field sports and jovial feastings, and love-making, were the life-employment of men and women, who took rank and power as an unquestioned heritage, and never troubled their brain with gathering knowledge: and all below them were supposed to be happy, because they were ignorant and submissive.

This hall, which occupies the centre of the building, is nearly sixty feet long by thirty wide, supported by two elliptic arches and Ionic pillars. The middle of the room is now occupied by a billiard-table, which formerly stood in an upper room, called the terrace-room, of which we shall speak presently. The great door, entering from the porch, was secured by a massy bar of wood which had been rudely let into the walls at each end, at the time of the riots of the Reform Bill, when Nottingham Castle was burnt, and when the mob were expected here, who owed the proprietor a piece of retribution, and actually attempted to burn his house at Colwick; whence his wife, Mary Chaworth, only escaped by being carried from her bed, where illness had long confined her, and hidden for some hours in the shrubbery during excessive rain, and afterwards conveyed across the Trent in a boat. At the lower end of this hall an easy flight of steps leads to the upper apartments. Near the fire, at the upper end, a few steps lead into a beautiful little breakfast-room, which looks out into the garden, and forms

one of the projections of the building, the staircase at the lower end forming the other: the three large, old-fashioned windows which light the hall, lying on this side, and looking out into a little parterre, fenced off with a trellis-fence, even with the two projections we have spoken of—such a parterre as one often meets with, belonging to old houses—a little favoured sanctuary of garden-ground, where choice flowers were trained, and which was the especial care of page and gardener, before ladies took to gardening themselves. This, which is now a perfect wilderness, almost overrun with shrubs and the tall tree-like laurels which encumber wall and window, and almost exclude daylight from the hall, to the great annoyance of our good old woman, was once, as was fitting, the favourite flower-garden of Mary Chaworth.

The little breakfast-room we mentioned, looks out not only by a side window into the parterre, but also by two large low windows into the garden; a fine old garden, with a fine stately old terrace, one of the noblest it was ever our good fortune to see, and such a one as Danby or Turner would be proud to enrich their fine pictures with. In this room were a few family portraits. One a small full-length figure, which the old woman very significantly told us was Byron's Chaworth; that is, the Chaworth killed by the poet's grandfather in a duel. Another portrait she informed us was the last Lord Chaworth; for this estate, which had been in the family of the Annesleys from the time of the Conquest, came into that of Lord Viscount Chaworth of Armagh, in Ireland, by the marriage of one of his ancestors with the sole heiress, Alice de Annesley, in the reign of Henry VI. "And this," she said, pointing to a female portrait, "was his lawful wife." "What then," we said, "there

was an unlawful wife, was there?" "Yes," she added, "she is here." We glanced at the picture placed in the shady corner by the window, next, however, to Lord Chaworth, and exclaimed, "and a good judge was his Lordship too!" A creature of most perfect and wondrous beauty it was that we beheld. What a fine, rich, oval countenance and noble forehead slightly shaded by auburn locks! what large dark eyes of inexpressible expression! what a soft, delicate, yet beautiful and sunny complexion! what a beautiful rounding of the cheek, chin, and throat! what exquisite features! what a perfect mixture of nobility of mind, with elegance and simplicity of taste. Never did we behold a more enchanting vision of youth and beauty; and all this hidden for generations in a dark nook of this old hall, unmentioned, and unknown. It were worth a journey from London but to gaze upon. Beautiful as this portrait is, it represents a mole upon either cheek; but this, instead of detracting from the loveliness of the face, as might be imagined, only appears to give it character and individuality, and vouches for the fidelity of the likeness. The painting, too, is extremely well done; far superior to any thing else in the house, except it be the satin petticoat of a Miss Burdett in the terrace-room. "And who," we inquired, "was this charming creature?" "She was a girl of the village, sir," was the reply. "What! could the village produce a creature like her?" "Yes: his Lordship took her into the house as a servant; but she did not like him and went away; however, he got her afterwards, and built a house for her on the estate, and she had one child. But she died, poor thing! all was not right somehow; and all her money she put in a cupboard for her son,—they would shew you the cupboard in the house to this day; and on the very night she died, her own relations came and

took away the money;—things weren't as they should have been! and she came again." "What, was this the lady that we have heard an old man say, came up out of a well, and sat in a tree by moonlight, combing her hair?" "No, Lord bless you! that was another; but the parson *laid her*, and the well is covered in; but for all that she walks yet!" We smiled at the good woman's very orthodox belief in ghosts; but we know not whether we should not be apt to catch the contagion of superstitious feeling, if we were to dwell all alone in this old house as she does, and hear the winds howling and sighing about it at night; the long ivy rustling about the windows, and dashing against the panes; and the owls hooting about in many a wild, piercing, and melancholy tone; and feel oneself in the unparticipated solitude of those ancient rooms, with all their trains of sad memories.

Besides this portrait of the beautiful and unhappy Mrs. Milner, we bestowed a look of great interest on one of much attraction, the daughter of Viscount Chaworth—not beautiful, but full of the fascination of cultivated mind, and of a heart so living and loving, that it caused the eyelids to droop over their beamy orbs, with an expression that made you tremble for the peace of its possessor. One other picture attracted our attention from its singularity. It represents a landscape, apparently, "the hill of green and mild declivity," the line of trees, and the trees in circular array, from among which rises the temple we spoke of before, and which our cicerone assured us had been considered "the finest in all England, but had been blown down in Oliver Cromwell's days." In the foreground stands, as if painted in enamel, a gentleman in a strange sort of dress-jerkin, of white satin, with a short petticoat of purple velvet

bordered with gold lace. On his right hand his amazonian lady, half the head taller than himself, clad in a riding-dress of green, bordered likewise with gold-lace; and on either side of them a son, in the full dress of William and Mary's reign; with powdered wigs, long lapped scarlet coats, waistcoats, and breeches, with white silk stockings on their neat little legs, and lace ruffles at their hands, each with his little head turned on one side;—the one caressing a fawn, the other a greyhound; and the family group completed by the groom standing a little behind, holding the lady's palfrey ready saddled for her use. These, and a portrait of the son of Lord Chaworth, are all the family pictures which the house contains.

Leaving then this room, we re-crossed the hall, and ascending the staircase at the lower end, entered the drawing-room, which is over the hall—a handsome room, and the best furnished in the house. The most interesting piece of furniture it contains, or perhaps, which the house itself contains, is a screen covered over with a great number of cuttings in black paper, done by a Mrs. Goodchild, and representing a great variety of family incidents and character—those little passing incidents in life, which, though rarely chronicled, are most influential on its fortunes—on which often its very destiny hangs. The receipt of a letter—the first meeting—the last parting—how much do these things involve! Here we were introduced to Mary Chaworth, the lovely and graceful maiden, full of hope, and life, and gaiety; with her friends and dependents about her; at the very time when Lord Byron became attached to her. Of the accuracy of this likeness we have no doubt, from the wonderful fidelity of some of the others, with whose persons we are acquainted.



In one place she is represented as sitting in a room, her attitude one of terror. A man is before her presenting a pistol, and a little terrified page is concealing himself under a table. In another, she sits with her mother and a gentleman at tea; a foot-man behind waiting upon them. Again, she is in the gardens or grounds, walking with her cousin, Miss Radford; her rustic hat thrown back upon her shoulders; her beautiful head turned aside; and her hand put forth to receive a letter from a page, kneeling on one knee,—a letter from her lover and subsequent husband.

Again, she is playing with a little child; and in all, her figure is full of exquisite grace and vivacity, and the profile of the face remarkably fine. It is impossible to say with what intense interest we examined these memorials of private life; these passages so full of vitality and character, incidental, but important—the very essence of an autobiography.

On a small table in this room lay a rich fan belonging to Mary Chaworth, which the old woman told us had been laid down by her there on some

particular occasion—perhaps the last time she used it, and, therefore, was never moved from the spot. We observed, too, another of those little incidents of family history in this house, which have something peculiarly touching in them. On the staircase stood the sea-chest of a son who died at sea. It stood as it had been sent home after his death, sealed up, and the seals still unbroken. Poor Nanny Marsland said sorrowfully—"Ah, poor fellow! he was a pious lad; he would fain have been a clergyman, but he could not be that—for the living went to his elder brother. He did not like the sea; but he used to write to the poor dear lady, his mother, and say—'God's will be done!' Eh! what sweet letters he used to send, if you could but have heard them—but it's all one—he's gone; and his poor mother, that used to sit and cry over them—she's gone too!"

From the drawing-room we passed to the one called the terrace-room, from its opening by a glass door upon the terrace, which runs along the top of the garden at right angles with the house, and level with this second story, descending to the garden by a double flight of broad stone steps, in the middle of its length, which is about eighty yards. This room formerly contained the billiard-table, and in it Mary Chaworth and her noble lover passed much time. He was fond of the terrace, and used to pace backwards and forwards upon it, and amuse himself with shooting with a pistol at a door. It was here that she last saw him, with the exception of a dinner-visit, after his return from his travels. It was here that he took his last leave of Mary Chaworth, when

> He went his way,
> And ne'er repassed that hoary threshold more.

It was here, then, those ill-fated ones stood, and

lingered, and conversed, for at least two hours. Mary Chaworth was here all life and spirit, full of youth, and beauty, and hope. What a change fell upon her after-life! She now stood here, the last scion of a time-honoured race, with large possessions, with the fond belief of sharing them in joy with the chosen of her life. Never did human life present a sadder contrast! There are many reasons why we should draw a veil over this mournful history, much of which will never be known; suffice it to say, that it was not without most real, deep, and agonizing causes, that years after,

> In her home, her native home,
> She dwelt begirt with growing infancy,
> Daughters and sons of beauty,—but behold!
>
> Upon her face there was the tint of grief,
> The settled shadow of an inward strife,
> And an unquiet drooping of the eye,
> As if its lid was charged with unshed tears.

It was not without a fearful outraging of trusting affections, the desolation of a spirit trodden and crushed by that which should have shielded it, that

> She was changed
> As by the sickness of the soul: her mind
> Had wandered from its dwelling, and her eyes
> They had not their own lustre, but the look
> Which is not of the earth; she was become
> The queen of a fantastic realm; her thoughts
> Were combinations of disjointed things;
> And forms impalpable and unperceived
> Of others' sight, familiar were to hers.

There must have come a day, a soul-prostrating day, when she must have felt the grand mistake she had made, in casting away a heart that never ceased to love her and sorrow for her, and a mind that

wrapt her, even severed as it was from her, in an imperishable halo of glory.

There is nothing in all the histories of broken affections and mortal sorrows, more striking and melancholy than the idea of this lady, so bright and joyous-hearted in her youth, sitting in her latter years, for days and weeks, alone and secluded, uninterrupted by any one, in this old house, weeping over the poems which commented in burning words on the individual fortunes of herself and Lord Byron—

> The one
> To end in madness—both in misery.

With this idea vividly impressed on our spirits, a darker shade seemed to settle down on those antiquated rooms;—we passed out into the garden, at the door at which Byron passed; we trod that stately terrace, and gazed at the old vase placed in the centre of its massy balustrade, bearing the original escutcheon of the Lord Chaworth, and standing a brave object as seen from the garden, into which we descended, and wandered amongst its high-grown evergreens. But every thing was tinged with the spirit and fate of that unhappy lady. The walks were overgrown with grass; and tufts of snowdrop leaves, now grown wild and shaggy, as they do after the flower is over, grew in them; and tufts of a beautiful and peculiar kind of fumitory, with its pink bloom, and the daffodils and primroses of early spring looked out from amongst the large forest trees that surround the garden. Every thing, even the smallest, seemed in unison with that great spirit of silence and desolation which hovered over the place; and the gusty winds that swept the long wood-walk by which we came away, gave us a most fitting adieu.

We only saw just in time, this interesting old place in its desolation. It is now repaired, altered, and, I understand, every historical identity as far as possible destroyed.

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CHAPTER VII.
NEWSTEAD.

We left Annesley, as we have said, by that long wood-walk which leads to the Mansfield road; and advancing on that road about a mile, then turned to the right through a deep defile down into the fields. Here we found ourselves in an extensive natural amphitheatre, surrounded by bold declivities—in some places bleak and barren, in others, richly embossed with furze and broom. Before us, at the distance of another mile, lay Newstead amid its woods, across a moory flat. The wind whistled and sighed amongst the dry, white, wiry grass, of last year's growth, as we walked along; and a solitary heron, with slow strokes of its ample wings, flew athwart—not our path, for path we had none, having been tempted into the fields by the beauty of the scene. We followed the course of a little stream, clear as crystal, and swift as human life, and soon found ourselves at the tail of the lake so often referred to by Lord Byron.

> Before the mansion lay a lucid lake,
> Broad as transparent, deep and freshly fed
> By a river, which its softened way did take
> In currents through the calmer water spread
> Around; the wild fowl nestled in the brake
> And sedges, brooding in their liquid bed:
> The woods sloped downward to its brink, and stood

With their green faces fixed upon the flood.

It was a scene that would have delighted Bewick for its picturesque sedgyness. The streams that fed it came down a woody valley shaggy with sedge—the lake thereabout being bordered with tall masses of it. There was a little island all overgrown with it and water-loving trees; and wild fowl in abundance were hastening to hide themselves in its covert, or arose and flew around with a varied clangour. Another moment, and we passed a green knoll, and were in front of the Abbey. John Evelyn, who once visited it, was much struck with the resemblance between its situation and that of Fontainbleau.

Here all was neat and habitable—had an air of human life and human attention about it, that formed a strong contrast to the scene of melancholy desolation we had left; and also to this same scene when I visited it years ago, at the time when it was sold, I believe, to a Mr. Claughton, who afterwards, for some cause or other, threw up the bargain. To give an idea of the impression this place made upon me, I shall merely refer to an account furnished by me many years ago to a periodical of the time, which account was partly quoted by Galt in his Life of Lord Byron, and made liberal use of by Moore, though without acknowledgment. I was a boy, rambling through the woods nutting, when suddenly, I came in front of the Abbey, which I had never seen before, and learned from a peasant who happened to be near, that I might get to see it for the value of an ounce of tobacco given to old Murray, a grey-headed old man—who had been in the family from a boy, and who now, at his own request, lies buried in Hucknall churchyard, as close to the family vault as it was possible to lay him. He and a maid-servant were then the only inmates of the place, being left to

superintend the removal of the goods. I marched up to the dismal-looking porch in front, to which you ascended by a flight of steps, and gave a thundering knock, which almost startled me by the hollow sound it seemed to send through the ancient building. After waiting a good while, some one approached, and began to withdraw bars and bolts, and to let fall chains; and presently, the old grey-headed man opened the massy door cautiously, to a width just sufficient to enable him to see who was there. Finding nothing more formidable than a boy, he opened wide, and I inquired if I could see the place. The old man first looked at me, and then around, and said, "How many are there of you?" As he was evidently calculating the probable amount of profit, I gave him such evidence of sufficient reward that his doors instantly flew open, and he desired me to wander where I pleased, till he could return to me, having left some important affair in *medias res*. Here then was a wilderness of an old house thrown open to me, and the effect it had on my youthful imagination is indescribable.

The embellishments which the abbey had received from his lordship, had more of the brilliant conception of the poet in them than of the sober calculations of common life. I passed through many rooms which he had superbly finished, but over which he had permitted so wretched a roof to remain, that, in about half a dozen years, the rain had visited his proudest chambers; the paper had rotted on the walls, and fell in comfortless sheets upon glowing carpets and canopies; upon beds of crimson and gold; clogging the glittering wings of eagles, and dishonouring coronets. From many rooms the furniture was gone. In the entrance hall alone remained the paintings of his old friends—the dog

and bear.

> The mansion's self was vast and venerable,
> With more of the romantic than had been
> Elsewhere preserved; the cloisters still were stable,
> The cells too and refectory I ween;
> An exquisite small chapel had been able
> Still unimpaired to decorate the scene;
> The rest had been reformed, replaced, or sunk,
> And spoke more of the baron than the monk.
>
> Huge halls, long galleries, spacious chambers, joined
> By no quite lawful marriage of the arts,
> Might shock a connoisseur; but, when combined,
> Formed a whole, which, irregular in parts,
> Yet left a grand impression on the mind,
> At least, of those whose eyes are in their hearts.

The long and gloomy gallery, which, whoever views will be strongly reminded of Lara, as indeed a survey of this place will awake more than one scene in that poem,—had not yet relinquished the sombre pictures of its ancient
race—

> That frowned
> In rude, but antique portraiture around.

In the study, which is a small chamber overlooking the garden, the books were packed up; but there remained a sofa, over which hung a sword in a gilt sheath; and at the end of the room opposite the window stood a pair of light fancy stands, each supporting a couple of the most perfect and finely-polished skulls I ever saw; most probably selected, along with the far-famed one converted into a drinking-cup, and inscribed with some well-known verses, from a vast number taken from the abbey cemetery, and piled up in the form of a mausoleum, but since recommitted to the ground. Between them

hung a gilt crucifix.

To those skulls he evidently alludes in Lara, where he makes his servants ask one another—

> Why gazed he so upon the ghastly head,
> Which hands profane had gathered from the dead,
> That still beside his open volume lay,
> As if to startle all save him away?

And they most probably suggested that fine passage in Childe Harold—

> Remove yon skull from out those shattered heaps:
> Is that a temple where a God may dwell?
> Why, even the worm at last disdains her shattered cell!
>
> Look on its broken arch, its ruined wall,
> Its chambers desolate, and portals foul;
> Yes, this was once ambition's airy hall,
> The dome of thought, the palace of the soul;
> Behold through each lack-lustre, eyeless hole,
> The gay recess of wisdom and of wit,
> And passion's host, that never brooked control:
> Can all, saint, sage, or sophist ever writ.
> People this lonely tower, this tenement refit?

In the servants' hall, lay a stone coffin, in which were fencing gloves and foils; and on the wall of the ample but cheerless kitchen, was painted in large letters, "Waste not, want not."

During a great part of his lordship's minority, the abbey was in the occupation of Lord Grey de Ruthen, his hounds, and divers colonies of jackdaws, swallows, and starlings. The internal traces of this Goth were swept away; but without, all appeared as rude and unreclaimed as he could have left it. I must confess, that if I was astonished at the heterogeneous

mixture of splendour and ruin within, I was more so at the perfect uniformity of wildness without. I never had been able to conceive poetic genius in its domestic bower, without figuring it, diffusing the polish of its delicate taste on every thing about it. But here the spirit of beauty seemed to have dwelt, but not to have been caressed;—it was the spirit of the wilderness. The gardens were exactly as their late owner described them in his earliest poems:—

> Through thy battlements, Newstead, the hollow winds whistle;
> Thou, the hall of my fathers, art gone to decay;
> In thy once smiling gardens the hemlock and thistle,
> Now choke up the rose, that late bloomed in the way.

With the exception of the dog's tomb—a conspicuous and elegant object, placed on an ascent of several steps, crowned with a lambent flame, and panelled with white marble tablets, of which that containing the celebrated epitaph was at that time removed, I do not recollect the slightest trace of culture or improvement. The late lord, a stern and desperate character, who is never mentioned by the neighbouring peasants without a significant shake of the head, might have returned and recognised every thing about him, except, perchance, an additional crop of weeds. There still gloomily slept the old pond, into which he is said to have hurled his lady in one of his fits of fury, whence she was rescued by the gardener; a courageous blade, who was the lord's master, and chastised him for his barbarity. There still, at the end of the garden, in a grove of oak, two towering satyrs—he with his club, and Mrs. Satyr, with her chubby, cloven-footed brat, placed on pedestals, at the intersections of the narrow and

gloomy pathways, struck for a moment, with their grim visages, and silent, shaggy forms, the fear into your bosoms, which is felt by the neighbouring peasantry at "*the old lord's devils*."

In the lake below the abbey, the artificial rock, which he piled at a vast expense, still reared its lofty head; but the frigate which fulfilled old Mother Shipton's prophecy, by sailing on dry land to this place from a distant port, had long vanished; and the only relics of his naval whim were this rock, and his ship-boy, the venerable old Murray, who accompanied me round the premises. The dark, haughty, impetuous, and mad deeds of this nobleman, the poet's grandfather, no doubt, by making a vivid impression on his youthful fancy, furnished some of the principal materials for the formation of his lordship's favourite and ever-recurring poetical hero. His manners and acts are the theme of many a winter's evening in that neighbourhood. In one of his paroxysms of wrath, he shot his coachman, for giving, in his opinion, an improper precedence, threw the corpse into the carriage, to his lady, mounted, and drove himself. In a quarrel, which originally arose out of a dispute between their gamekeepers, he killed his neighbour, Mr. Chaworth, the lord of the adjoining manor. This rencontre took place at the Star and Garter, Pall-Mall, after a convivial meeting—a club of Nottinghamshire gentlemen. His lordship was committed to the Tower, and on April 16th, 1765, placed at the bar of the House of Lords, and without one dissentient voice, convicted of manslaughter, and discharged on paying his fees, having pleaded certain privileges under a statute of Queen Anne. The particulars may be seen in Vol. X. of State Trials, published by order of the House of Peers.

The old lord, from some cause of irritation against his son, said to be on account of his marriage, who died before coming to the title, did all he could to injure the estate. He is said to have pulled down a considerable part of the house, and sold the materials; he cut down very extensive plantations, and sold the young trees to the bakers of Nottingham to heat their ovens with, or to the nurserymen; two of which, Lombardy poplars, bought at that time, now stand at the head of a fish-pond of my father's, grown to an immense size.

Mr. Moore has justly remarked, that Lord Byron derived the great peculiarities of his character from his ancestors. After I came away from the abbey, I asked many people in the neighbourhood what sort of a man the noble poet had been. The impression of his energetic but eccentric character was obvious in their reply. "He is the deuce of a fellow for strange fancies; he flogs the old lord to nothing: but he is a hearty good fellow for all that."

One of these fancies, as related by the miller at the head of the lake, was, to get into a boat, with his two noble Newfoundland dogs, row into the middle of the lake, then dropping the oars, tumble into the water. The faithful animals would immediately follow, seize him by the collar, one on each side, and bear him to land. This miller told me that every month he came to be weighed, and if he found himself lighter he appeared highly delighted; but if heavier, he went away in obvious ill humour, and without saying a word. At this time even, *i. e.* before he came of age, he had the greatest horror of corpulency, to which he deemed himself hereditarily prone, and used to lie a certain time every day in a hot-bed, made on purpose, to reduce himself. The master-builder, who had been engaged in the

restoration of the abbey, said much about a certain *Kaled*, who then was with him,—probably the same that accompanied him to Brighton, as his younger brother,—and of the wild life kept up, and mad pranks played off, by him and his companions. He described the mornings passing in the most profound quiet, for his lordship and his guests did not rise till about one o'clock; in the afternoon, the place was all alive with them;—they were seen careering in all directions; at midnight, the old abbey was all lit up, and resounded with their jollity. On one occasion they were called up to extricate an unfortunate wight from the old stone coffin, where, in some of their mad pranks, he had secreted himself, and fitted it so well, that it was with difficulty he was drawn out, amid the merriment of his comrades. No person, indeed, could form any correct notion of Byron from his poetry, till the publication of his Don Juan, which exhibits more of the style of his youthful conversational manner than any other of his writings, except his journal. I have heard a lady who used to see him at Mrs. Byron's, at Nottingham, say that he was then, in his teens, a most rackety fellow; was very fond of going into the kitchen, and baking oatmeal cakes on the fireshovel; on which occasions, the cook would sometimes pin a napkin to his coat, which being discovered on his return to the parlour, he would rush out and pursue the maids in all directions, and, to use the lady's phrase, turn the house upside down. When they went away, he always took care to ask the servants if his mother had given them any thing; and on their replying in the negative, he would say, "No, no! I knew that well enough;" when he would make them a handsome present.

Such anecdotes of his youth abound; but one is too

characteristic to be omitted. An old man of the name of Kemp, of Farnsfield, was one day in Southwell, when a dog in the minster-yard fell upon his little dog. He was beating it off, when a genteel boy came up, and in a very decided tone said, “Let them fight it out—they find their own clothes, don’t they?” The old man said, clothes or no clothes, his dog should not be worried. A stander-by asked him if he knew to whom he spoke. The old man said he neither knew nor cared. “It is Lord Byron,” said the person; but the old man said he did not care whether he was a lord or a duke, they should not worry his dog; and having got his little dog under his arm, he marched off in none of the best humour. Some time afterwards, however, seeing “Hours of Idleness and other Poems, by Lord Byron,” advertised, he recollected the spirit of the lad with so much admiration, that he took his stick and set off to Newark to purchase the book, and always afterwards remained a great admirer of his works.

Such was my acquaintance with the place then; it is now a good, substantial, and very comfortable family mansion. With its external appearance the public is well acquainted through various prints; and the only objects in the interior, which can much interest strangers, as connected with the history of Lord Byron, are equally familiar. The picture of his wolf-dog, and his Newfoundland-dog—the living Newfoundland-dog which he had with him in Greece; the skull-cup kept in a cabinet in the drawing-room, and the little chapel and cloisters mentioned by him. There are also in a lumber-room the identical stone-coffin, and the foils I saw there twenty years ago, and a portrait of old Murray smoking his pipe. There is also the well-known portrait by Phillips. A full-length likeness of him as

about to embark on his first travels, which was in the drawing-room at that time, is now gone, but has been engraved for Mr. Murray's edition of his Life and Works.

It is fortunate for the public that the place has fallen into the hands of a gentleman who affords the utmost facility for the inspection of it by strangers. Nothing can exceed the easy courtesy with which it is thrown open to them; and, as an old schoolfellow of Lord Byron's, we believe Colonel Wildman is as desirous as any man can be not to obliterate any traces of his lordship's former life here. There are some particulars, however, in which I think this care might have been carried more thoroughly into act. In the first place, I think a style of architecture in restoring the abbey might have been adopted more abbey-like—more in keeping with the old part of it—and more consonant to the particular state of feeling with which admirers of the noble poet's genius would be likely to approach it. To my taste it is too square and massy in its *tout ensemble*. I do not see why the architect, whoever he was, should have gone back in the date of his style beyond that of the ancient remains. The old western front is a specimen of what Rickman calls the early English order of Anglo-Gothic architecture; so light, so airy, so pure and beautiful, that the juxta-position of a heavy Norman style, and especially of the ponderous, square, and stunted tower at the south-west corner, is strange, and anything but pleasing. A greater variety of outline—the projection of porches and buttresses—the aspiring altitude of pointed gables—clustered chimneys, and slender, sky-seeking turrets, would certainly have given greater effect. Instead of a square mass of stone, as it appears at a distance, it would have proclaimed its own beauty to the eye

from every far-off point at which it may be discovered. Any one who has seen Fonthill, Abbotsford from the Galashiel's road, or Ilam from the entrance of Dovedale, may imagine how much more that effect would be in accordance, not only with a low situation, but with the mental impressions of a poetic visiter.

I cannot help, too, regretting that the poet's study should now be converted into a common bed-room; and most of all, that the antique fountain which stood in front of the abbey, and makes so strong a feature in the very graphic picture of the place drawn in Don Juan, should be removed. It now adorns the inner quadrangle, or cloister court, and is certainly a very beautiful object there, as may be seen by the print in Murray's edition of Byron's Works. I do not wonder at Colonel Wildman desiring to grace this court with a fountain, but I wonder extremely at his gracing it with *this* fountain. I must for ever deplore its removal, as the breaking up of that most vivid picture of the front, given by the poet to all
posterity:—

> A glorious remnant of the Gothic pile,
> While yet the church was Rome's, stood half apart,
> In a grand arch, which once screened many an aisle.
> These last had disappeared—a loss to art;
> The first yet frowned superbly o'er the soil,
> And kindled feelings in the roughest heart,
> Which mourned the power of time's or tempest's
> march,
> In gazing on that venerable arch.
>
> Within a niche nigh to its pinnacle,
> Twelve saints had once stood sanctified in stone:
> And these had fallen, not when the friars fell,
> But in the war which struck Charles from his throne.

*****

But in a higher niche, alone, but crowned,
The Virgin Mother of the God-born Child,
With her son in her blessed arms, looked round,
Spared by some chance, when all beside was spoiled;
She made the earth below seem holy ground.
This may be superstition weak, or wild;
But even the painted relics of a shrine
Of any worship, wake some thoughts divine.

A mighty window, hollow in the centre;
Shorn of its glass of thousand colourings,
Through which the deepened glories once could
enter,
Streaming from off the sun like seraph's wings,
Now yawns all desolate: now loud, now fainter,
The gale sweeps through its fretwork; and oft sings
The owl his anthem, where the silenced quire
Lie with their hallelujahs quenched like fire.

Amid the court a Gothic fountain played,
Symmetrical, but decked with carvings quaint—
Strange faces, like to men in masquerade,
And here, perhaps, a monster, there a saint:
The spring gushed through grim mouths, of granite
made,
And sparkled into basins, where it spent
Its little torrent in a thousand bubbles,
Like man's vain glory, and his vainer troubles.

It was seeing how exactly all this was a copy of the original—how there stood the mighty window, shewing through it the garden and dog's tomb—how the Virgin there still stood aloft with her child, distinct, bold, and beautiful—but the fountain was gone, that we could not help loudly expressing our regret. When the valet who attended us came to the inner court, "There," he said, "you see is the fountain —it is all there, quite perfect." "Yes, yes," we could not help replying, "that is the very thing we are sorry

for—its being all there. A man might cut off his nose, and put it in his pocket, and when any one wondered at his mutilated face, cry, ‘O, it is all here; I have it in my pocket.’ The mischief would be, that it was in the wrong place, and his face spoiled for ever.” To every visiter of taste, the abbey front must be thus injured whilst it and the poet’s description of it last together.

These are things to regret; for the rest, the place is a very pleasant place. The new stone-work is very substantially and well done; there is a great deal of modern elegance about the house; a fortune must have been spent upon it. The grounds before the new front are extremely improved; and the old gardens, with very correct feeling, have been suffered to retain their ancient character. An oak planted by Lord Byron is shewn; and why should he not have a tree as well as Shakspeare, Milton, and Johnson? The initials of himself and his sister upon a tree in the satyr-grove at the end of the garden, are said to have been pointed out by his sister herself, the Honourable Mrs. Leigh, on her visit there some time ago. The tree has two boles issuing from one root, a very appropriate emblem of their consanguinity.

The scenery around presents many features that recal incidents in his life, or passages in his poems. There are the houses where Fletcher and Rushton lived—the two followers of his, who are addressed in the ballad in the first canto of Childe Harold, beginning at the third
stanza—

> Come hither, hither, my little page:

But in the progress of improvement, the mill, where he used to be weighed, is just now destroyed. Down the valley, in front of the abbey, is a rich prospect

over woods, and around are distant slopes scattered with young plantations, that in time will add eminently to the beauty of this secluded spot; and supply the place, in some degree, of those old and magnificent woods in which the abbey was formerly embosomed.

Here ended our ramble, having gone over ground and through places that the genius of one man in a brief life has sanctified to all times; for like us—

> Hither romantic pilgrims shall betake
> Themselves from distant lands. When we are still
> In centuries of sleep, his fame will wake,
> And his great memory with deep feelings fill
> These scenes that he has trod, and hallow every hill.

Here too we leave the Old Houses of England, in the words of John Evelyn:—"Other there are, sweet and delectable country-seats and villas of the noblesse, and rich and opulent gentry, built and environed with parks, paddocks, plantations, etc.: adapted to country and rural seats, dispersed through the whole nation, conspicuous, not only for the structure of their houses, built upon the best rules of architecture, but for situation, gardens, canals, walks, avenues, parks, forests, ponds, prospects, and vistas; groves, woods, and large plantations; and other the most charming and delightful recesses, natural and artificial; but to enumerate and describe what were extraordinary in these and the rest would furnish volumes, for who has not either seen, admired, or heard of—

Audley-End, Althorpe, Auckland, Aqualate-Hall, Alnwick, Allington, Ampthill, Astwell, Aldermaston, Aston, Alveston, Alton-Abbey.

Bolsover, Badminster, Breckley, Burghly-on-the-Hill,

and the other Burghly, Breton, Buckhurst, Buckland, Belvoir, Blechington, Blenheim, Blythfield, Bestwood, Broomhall, Beaudesert.

Castle-Rising, Castle-Ashby, Castle-Donnington, Castle-Howard, Chatsworth, Chartley, Cornbury, Cashiobury, Cobham, Cowdrey, Caversham, Cranbourn-Park, Clumber, Charlton, Copt-Hall, Claverton, famous for Sir William Bassett's vineyard, producing forty hogsheads of wine yearly; nor must I forget that of Deepden, planted by the Honourable Charles Howard, of Norfolk, my worthy neighbour in Surrey.

Drayton, Donnington-Park, Dean.

Eastwell, Euston, Eccleswould, Edscombe, Easton, Epping.

Falston, Flankford, Fonthill, Fountains-Abbey.

Greystock, Goodrick, Grooby, Grafton, Gayhurst, Golden-Grove.

Hardwick, Hadden, Hornby, Hatfield, Haland, Heathfield, Hinton, Holme-Pierrepont, Horstmounceaux, Houghton.

Ichinfield, Ilam, Ingestre.

Kirby, Knowsley, Keddleston.

Longleat, Latham, Lensal, Latimer, Lyne-Hall, Lawnsborough.

Morepark, Mulgrave, Marlborough, Margum, Mount Edgcombe.

Normanby, North-Hall, Norborough, Newnham, Newstead.

St. Ostlo, Oxnead.

Petworth, Penshurst, Paston-Hall.

Quorndon, Quickswood.

Ragland, Retford, Ragley, Ricot, Rockingham, Raby.

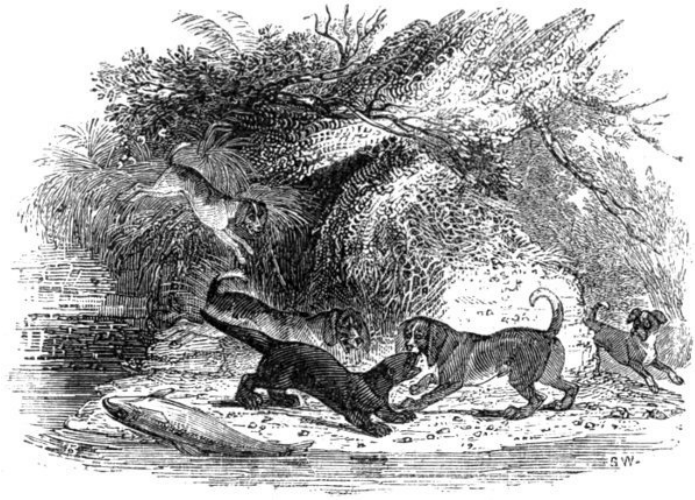
Sherbourn, Sherley, Swallowfield, Stanton-Harold, Shasford, Shaftbury, Shugborough, Sandon, Stowe, Stansted, Scots-Hall, Sands of the Vine.

Theobalds, Thornkill, Thornhill, Trentham.

Up-Park.

Wilton, Wrest, Woburn, Wollaton, Worksop-Manor, Woodstock, which, as Camden tells us, was the first park in England, Wimburn, Writtle-Park, Warwick-Castle,

Wentworth."



CHAPTER VIII.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PARK SCENERY.

How delicious is our old park scenery! How wise that such places as Richmond, Greenwich, and such old parks in the neighbourhood of the Metropolis, are kept up and kept open, that our citizens may occasionally get out of the smoke and noise of the great Babel, and breathe all their freshness, and feel all their influence! Who does not often, in the midst of brick-and-mortar regions, summon up before his imagination this old park or forest scenery? The ferny or heathy slopes, under old, stately, gnarled oaks, or thorns as old, with ivy having stems nearly as thick as their own, climbing up them, and clinging to them, and sometimes incorporating itself so

completely with their heads, as to make them look entirely ivy-trees. The footpaths, with turf short and soft as velvet, running through the bracken. The sunny silence that lies on the open glades and brown uplands; the cool breezy feeling under the shade; the grashopper *chithering* amongst the bents; the hawk hovering and whimpering over-head; the keeper lounging along in velveteen jacket, and with his gun, at a distance, or firing at some destructive bird. The herds of deer, fallow or red, congregated beneath the shadow of the trees, or lying in the sun if not too warm, their quick ears and tails keeping up a perpetual twinkle; the belling of scattered deer, as they go bounding and mincing daintily across the openings, here and there,—the old ones hoarse and deep, the young shrill and plaintive. Cattle with whisking tails, grazing sedately; the woodpecker's laughter from afar; the little tree-creeper running up the ancient boles, always beginning at the bottom, and going upwards with a quick, gliding, progress—the quaint cries of other birds and wild creatures, the daws and the rooks feeding together, and mingling their different voices of pert and grave accent. The squirrel running with extended tail along the ground, or flourishing it over his head, as he sits on the tree; or fixing himself, when suddenly come upon, in the attitude of an old, brown, decayed branch by the tree side, as motionless as the deadest branch in the forest. The hum of insects all around you, the low still murmur of sunny music,

> Nature's ceaseless hum,
> Voice of the desert, never dumb.

The pheasant's crow; the pheasant with all her brood springing around you, one by one, from the turf where you are standing amid the bracken—here

one! there one! close under your feet, with a sudden, startling whirr,—to compare nature with art, country scenes with city ones, like so many squibs and crackers fired off about you in smart succession, where you don't look for them. That most ancient and most original of all ladders, a bough with some pegs driven through it, reared against a tree for the keeper to reach the nests of hawks or magpies, or to fetch down a brood of young jackdaws for a pie, quite as savoury a dish as one made with young rooks or pigeons; or for him to sit aloft amongst the foliage, and watch for the approach of deer, or fawn, when he is commissioned to shoot one. The profound and basking silence all around you, as you sit on some dry ferny mound, and look far and wide through the glimmering heat, or the cool shadow. The far-off sounds—rooks telling of some old Hall that stands slumberously amid the woods; or dogs, sending from their hidden kennel amongst the trees, their sonorous yelling. Forest smells, that rise up deliciously as you cross dim thickets or tread the spongy turf all fragrant with thyme, and sprinkled with the light harebell. Huge limbs of oak riven off by tempests, or the old oak itself, a vast, knotty, and decayed mass, lying on the ground, and perhaps the woodman gravely labouring upon it, lopping its boughs, riving its huge, misshapen stem, piling it in stacks of cord-wood, or binding them into billets. The keeper's house near, in its own paled enclosure; and all about, old thorns hung with the dried and haggard remains of wild-cats, polecats, weasels, hawks, owls, jays, and other *vermin*, as he deems them; or the same most picturesquely displayed on the sturdy boles of the vast oaks; and lastly, the mere, the lake, in the depth of the woodlands, shrouded in screening masses of flags and reeds, the

beautiful flowering-rush, the magnificent great water-dock, with leaves as huge and green as if they grew by some Indian river—the tall club-mace, the thousands of wild-ducks, teals, or wigeons, that start up at your approach with clattering wings, and cries of quick alarm.

Who that has wandered through our old parks and forests, is not familiar with all these sights and sounds? does not long to witness them again, ever and anon, when he has been “long in city pent,” till he is fain to mount his horse and ride off into some such ancient, quiet, and dreamy region, as Crabbe suddenly mounted his, and rode forty miles to see again the sea?



PART IV.

CAUSES OF THE STRONG ATTACHMENT OF THE ENGLISH TO COUNTRY LIFE.

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CHAPTER I.

THE LOVE OF THE SUBLIME AND BEAUTIFUL IN NATURE MORE EMINENTLY DEVELOPED IN MODERN LITERATURE THAN IN THE CLASSICAL.

One of the most conspicuous features of English literature, is that intense love of the sublime and beautiful in Nature, which pervades, with a living spirit, the works of our poets; gives so peculiar a charm to the writings of our naturalists; possesses great prominence in our travellers; is mingled with the fervent breathings of our religious treatises; and even finds its way into the volumes of our philosophy. If we look into the literature of the continental nations, we find it existing there, more or less, but in a lower tone than in our own; if we look back into that of the ancients, we find it there too, but still fainter, more confined in its scope, and scattered, as it were, into distant and isolated spots. I think nothing can be more striking than the truth of this; and it is a curious matter of observation, that there should be this great distinction, and of inquiry whence it has arisen. The love of the beauty and sublimity of Nature is an inherent principle in the human soul; but like all other of our finer qualities, it is later in its development than the common ones, and requires, not repression, but fostering and cultivation. It is like the love of the fine arts; it slumbers in the bosom that passes through life in its

native rudeness. It lies in the unploughed ground of the human mind,—a seed buried below the influence that alone can call it into activity.

> Yes, like unfolded flowers beneath the sea;
> Like the man's thoughts, dark in the infant brain;
> Like aught that is, which wraps what is to be;

there it lies, deep in the soil of common events and cares, and untouched by the divine atmosphere of knowledge which a more easy and advanced condition brings with it. In others, it is partially vivified, but cannot flourish; it is choked with the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches; but in minds that are fed with substantial knowledge, and have their intellectual power reached, and their affections kindled by the blessedness of refined and Christian culture,—then it grows with their growth and strengthens with their strength. It daily enlarges its grasp, and its appetite; it expands perpetually the circle of its horizon. The love of the fine arts is but a modification of this great passion. Their objects are the same—the sublime and the beautiful; and the same purity and elevation of taste accompany them both. This is the original and legitimate passion. In our love of the fine arts, our attention is occupied with human imitations of what is beautiful in nature; —in this, we fix our admiration at once on the magnificent works of the Great Artist of the Universe.

We might, therefore, reasonably expect to find in the literature of the ancients, what is actually the case, a less refined, less expanded, less penetrating and absorbing existence of this affection. Everywhere the love of nature must exist. In all ages and all countries, so is the outward universe framed to influence the inward, that men must be impressed by

the grandeur of creation, and attracted by its beauty, so far as the human is at all advanced beyond the limits of mere animal existence. But in the ancient world education was never popular; it extended only to a few; and of these few a majority were occupied in the pursuits of art, or the speculations of philosophy; and poetry, and especially the poetry of nature, had scanty followers. The great poets of all ages, even of those but semi-civilized, must necessarily have minds so sensitive to the influence of all kinds of beauty that they could not help being alive to that of nature; and this was the case with the great poets of Greece. We put out of the present question the dramatic and lyrical ones; for to them the passions and interests of men were the engrossing objects; but in Homer, Hesiod, and Theocritus, we may fairly expect to discover the amount of the ancients' perception of natural beauty, and their love of it. But in these how far is it behind what it is in the moderns. They were often enraptured with the pleasantness of nature, but it was seldom with more than its pleasantness. Their Elysian Fields are composed of flowery meads, with pleasant trees and running waters, where the happy spirits led a life of luxurious repose. Their celebrated Arcadia is faithfully described in such Idyllia as those of Bion and Moschus;—youths and damsels feeding their flocks amid the charms of a pastoral country, to whose beauties they were alive in proportion as they ministered to luxurious enjoyment. Beyond this they seldom looked;—seldom describe the sublime aspects and phenomena of the universe. Homer, indeed, is the greatest exception,—his soul was cast in a mighty mould. His beautiful description of a moonlight night is known to all readers. He speaks, too, of the splendour of the starry heavens; and he describes

tempests with great majesty; but this rather as they are terrible in their effects on men, than as sublime in themselves. Minds even of the noblest class had not arrived at that full comprehension of nature which sees sublimity in the gloom and terror of tempests, independent of their effects; the grandeur of beauty in desolation itself; in splintered mountains, wild wildernesses, and the awfulness of solitude. They had not become tremblingly alive to all the lesser traces and shades of beauty in the face of nature, for they had not reached either of the extremities of perception—the vast on one hand—minute perfection on the other. They did not pursue the forms of beauty into leaf and flower; into the cheerful culture of the field, or the brown tinges of the desert. They did not watch the growing or fading lights of the sky, and the colours, as they lived or died on the distant mountain tops;—the passing of light and shadow over earth and ocean. Their acquaintance with the subtle spirit of the universe had not become so intimate. They abode most in the general; they admired in the mass; for they had not arrived at the refinement of very delicate, or extensive analysis; and they did not go out to admire as the moderns; their admiration of nature was not advanced, as with us, into an art and a passion. Beauty rather fell upon their senses than was inquired after. They were pleased, and did not always seek out the operative causes of their sensations. Their mention of their delight was, therefore, generally incidental. They were in the condition and state of mind of the old man in Wordsworth's ballad, who
says—

> Think you, mid all this mighty sum
> Of things for ever speaking,

That nothing of itself will come,
But we must still be seeking?

That Homer had an eye for the sublime features of earth, the nobler forms of animal life, and phenomena of nature,—his bold and beautiful similes, scattered all through the Iliad, of storms, of overflowing rivers, of forests on flame, of the lion, the horse, and others, sufficiently testify; that he had a most exquisite sense of the picturesque, is shewn in almost every page of the Odyssey; in the cave of Polypheme; in good old king Laertes occupied in his farm; and in the whole episode of Ulysses at the lodge of Eumeus, the goatherd. But yet it is, after all, only in contemplating some scene of delicious rural beauty, something akin to Arcadian sweetness, that he breaks out into anything like a rapture. The abode of Calypso, as seen by Hermes on his approach to it, is an exact instance.

Then, swift ascending from the azure wave,
He took the path that winded to the cave.
Large was the grot in which the nymph he found,
The fair-haired nymph, with every beauty crowned.
She sate and sung; the rocks resound the lays;
The cave was brightened with the rising blaze;
Cedar and frankincense, an odorous pile,
Flamed on the hearth, and wide perfumed the isle,
While she with work and song the time divides,
And through the loom the golden shuttle guides.
Without the grot a various sylvan scene
Appeared around, and groves of living green;
Poplars and alders, ever quivering, played,
And nodding cypress formed a grateful shade;
On whose high branches, waving with the storm,
The birds of broadest wing their mansion form;
The chough, the sea-mew, and loquacious crow,
And scream aloft, and skim the deeps below.
Depending vines the delving caverns screen,

With purple clusters blushing through the green.
Four limpid fountains from the clefts distil;
And every fountain forms a separate rill,
In mazy, winding wanderings down the hill:
Where bloomy meads with vivid greens were
crowned,
And glowing violets threw odours round—
A scene, where if a god should cast his sight,
A god might gaze and wander with delight!
Joy touched the messenger of heaven; he stayed
Entranced, and all the blissful haunt surveyed.

Odyssey, B. v.

In Hesiod, the perception of even the delights of the summer field were far fainter. Though he fed his flock at the foot of Mount Helicon, he has little to say in praise of its aspect; and though he gives you great insight into the state of agriculture, and the simple mode of life of the country people, a very few verses furnish almost all the praise of nature which he had to bestow. His mind seemed occupied in tracing the genealogy of the gods, and framing grave maxims for the regulation of human conduct.

Of all the Greek writers, Theocritus is the one that luxuriates most in natural beauty. His sense of the picturesque is keen, and his penciling of such subjects is most vigorous and graphic. His two fishermen remind us of Crabbe; nothing can be more exquisite.

Two ancient fishers in a straw-thatched shed—
Leaves were their walls, and sea-weed was their bed,
Reclined their weary limbs; hard by were laid
Baskets and all their implements of trade;
Rods, hooks, and lines composed of stout horse-hairs,
And nets of various sorts, and various snares,
The seine, the cast-net, and the wicker maze,
To waste the watery tribe a thousand ways;
A crazy boat was drawn upon a plank;

Mats were their pillow, wove of osiers dank;
Skins, caps, and coats, a rugged covering made;
This was their wealth, their labour and their trade.
No pot to boil, no watch-dog to defend,
Yet blessed they lived with penury their friend;
None visited their shed, save, every tide,
The wanton waves that washed its tottering side.

Idyl. xxi.

Then again, nothing can be more picturesque, nothing more boldly graphic and solemnly poetical, than the situation in which he makes Castor and Pollux find Anycus, the king of Bebrycia; nothing more striking than the image of that chief.

Meanwhile, the royal brothers devious strayed
Far from the shore, and sought the cooling shade.
Hard by, a hill with waving forests crowned,
Their eyes attracted; in the dale they found
A spring perennial in a rocky cave:
Full to the margin flowed the lucid wave;
Below small fountains gushed, and murmuring near,
Sparkled like silver, and as silver clear.
Above, tall pines and poplars quivering played,
And planes and cypress in dark greens arrayed;
Around balm-breathing flowers of every hue,
The bees' ambrosia, in the meadows grew.
There sate a chief, tremendous to the eye,
His couch the rock, his canopy the sky;
The gauntlet's strokes his cheeks and ears around,
Had marked his face with many a desperate wound.
Round as a globe, and prominent his chest,
Broad was his back, but broader was his breast;
Firm was his flesh, with iron sinews fraught,
Like some Colossus on an anvil wrought.

Id. xxii.

His description of an ancient drinking-cup appears to me to have no rival in all the round of literature,

ancient or modern, except Keats' description of an antique vase. It is life and beauty itself. The figures stand out in bold relief, cut with an energy and precision most wonderful, and with a grace that makes itself felt to the very depths of the spirit.

A deep, two-handled cup, whose brim is crowned
With ivy, joined with helichryse around;
Small tendrils with close-clasping arms uphold
The fruit rich speckled with the seeds of gold.
Within, a woman's well-wrought image shines,
A vest her limbs, her locks a cawl confines;
And near, two neat-curled youths in amorous strains,
With fruitless strife communicate their pains;
Smiling, by turns she views the rival pair;
Grief swells their eyes, their heavy hearts despair.
Hard by, a fisherman, advanced in years,
On the rough margin of a rock appears;
Intent he stands to enclose the fish below,
Lifts a large net, and labours with the throw;
Such strong expression rises on the sight,
You'd swear the man exerted all his might;
For his round neck with turgid veins appears—
In years he seems, yet not impaired by years.
A vineyard next with intersected lines,—
And red, ripe clusters load the bending vines.
To guard the fruit a boy sits idly by,
In ambush near two skulking foxes lie;
This, plots the branches of ripe grapes to strip,
And that, more daring, meditates the scrip;
Resolved, ere long, to seize the savoury prey,
And send the youngster dinnerless away;
Meanwhile on rushes all his art he plies,
In framing traps for grashoppers and flies;
And earnest only on his own designs,
Forgets his satchel, and neglects his vines.

Id. i.

What a glorious subject would this be for one of our modern sculptors.

But in Theocritus, as in Homer, they are Arcadian amenities that engross almost all his passion for nature. They are flowery fields, running waters, summer shades, and the hum of bees; all the elements of voluptuous dreaming and indolent entrancement; the most delicious of all idleness, lying abroad with the blue sky above you, and the mossy turf beneath you, and the bubble of running waters, and the whisper of forest branches near, to lull you to repose. Is it not so? When is it that he invites you to out-of-door enjoyment?

> Now when meridian beams inflame the day;
> Now when green lizards in the hedges lie;
> And crested larks forsake the fervid sky.
>
> *Id.* vii.

And whither would he lead you at this sultry, blazing hour? Ah! hear him!

> Here rest we: lo! cyperus decks the ground,
> Oaks lend their shade, and sweet bees murmur round
> Their honeyed hives; here, two cool fountains spring;
> Here merrily the birds on branches sing;
> Here pines in clusters more umbrageous grow,
> Wave high their heads, and scatter cones below.
>
> *Id.* v.

Ah! cunning Sicilian! well didst thou know where life shed its most delicious dreams. Anacreon at his wine, and Tibullus in the rapture of one of his sweetest love-visions, was a novice in true enjoyment to thee. Hark! to the very sounds which he conjures up! There is nothing startling—nothing exciting.—No! there is enough of excitement already in the climate, in the summer heat, in the very scenes and persons from whose city revels he has just withdrawn. The true secret now is, to summon up

only images of luxurious rest; of calm beauty; of refreshing coolness; that the blood, already running riot, may flow in the veins like the nectar of the gods, and send up to the brain images and trains of images of the very poetry of Elysium. Hark to the sounds about you!

> Sweet low the herds along the pastured ground;
> Sweet is the vocal reed's melodious sound;
> Sweet pipes the jocund herdsman.

But I will give one more extract from him, which seems to combine all the fascinations he loved to paint as existing in the summer woodlands.

> He courteous bade us on soft beds recline,
> Of lentesch and young branches of the vine;
> Poplars and elms above their foliage spread,
> Lent a cool shade, and waved the breezy head.
> Below, a stream, from the nymphs' sacred cave,
> In free meanders led its murmuring wave;
> In the warm sunbeams, verdant shrubs among,
> Shrill grashoppers renewed their plaintive song;
> At distance far, concealed in shades alone,
> The nightingale poured forth her tuneful moan:
> The lark, the goldfinch, warbled lays of love,
> And sweetly pensive cooed the turtle-dove;
> While honey-bees, for ever on the wing,
> Hummed round the flowers, and sipped the silver spring.
> The rich, ripe season gratified the sense
> With summer's sweets and autumn's redolence.
> Apples and pears lay strewed in heaps around,
> And the plum's loaded branches kissed the ground.
>
> *Id.* vii.

Well, we must pass over from the Greeks to the Romans, and I have found it so difficult to escape from Theocritus, that we must make short work of it here. Of Cicero, Seneca, the Plinys,—I will say

nothing. We all know how they delighted in their country villas and gardens. We all know how Cicero, in his Treatise on Old Age, has declared his fondness for farming; and how, between his pleadings in the Forum, he used to seek the refreshment of a walk in a grove of plane-trees. We know how, during the best ages of the Commonwealth, their generals and dictators were brought from the plough and their country retreats—a fine feature in the Roman character, and one which may, in part, account for their so long retaining the simplicity of their tastes, and that high tone of virtue which generally accompanies a daily intercourse with the spirit of nature. All this we know; but what is still more remarkable is, that Horace and Virgil, two of the most courtly poets that ever existed, yet were both passionately fond of the country, and perpetually declare in their writings that there is nothing in the splendour and fascinations of city life, to compare with the serene felicity of a rural one. Horace is perpetually rejoicing over his Sabine farm; and Virgil has, in his Georgics, described all the rural economy of the age with a gusto that is felt in every line. His details fill us with admiration at the great resemblance of the science of these matters at that time, and at this. With scarcely an exception, in all modes of rural management, in all kinds of farming stock—sheep, cattle, and horses, he would be now pronounced a consummate judge; and his rules for the culture of fields and gardens, would serve for studies here, notwithstanding the difference of the Italian and English climates. But it is only in that celebrated passage
beginning—

> O fortunatos nimiùm, sua si bona nôrint,
> Agricolas!

in his second Georgic, so often quoted, that he seems to get into a rapture when contemplating the charms of a country life. We may take this as a sufficient example, and as very delightful in itself.

> Oh happy, if he knew his happy state,
> The swain who free from business and debate,
> Receives his easy food from Nature's hand,
> And just returns of cultivated land.
> No palace with a lofty gate he wants,
> To admit the tide of early visitants,
> With eager eyes, devouring as they pass,
> The breathing figures of Corinthian brass;
> No statues threaten from high pedestals,
> No Persian arras hides his homely walls
> With antic vests, which, through their shadowy fold,
> Betray the streaks of ill-dissembled gold.
> He boasts no wool where native white is dyed
> With purple poison of Assyrian pride.
> No costly drugs of Araby defile,
> With foreign scents, the sweetness of his oil:
> But easy quiet, a secure retreat,
> A harmless life that knows not how to cheat,
> With home-bred plenty the rich owner bless,
> And rural pleasures crown his happiness.
> Unvexed with quarrels, undisturbed by noise,
> The country king his peaceful realm enjoys.
>
> ****
>
> Ye sacred Muses! with whose beauty fired,
> My soul is ravished, and my brain inspired—
> Whose priest I am, whose holy fillets wear—
> Would you your poet's first petition hear;
> Give me the way of wandering stars to know,
> The depths of heaven above, and earth below.
>
> ****
>
> But if my heavy blood restrain the flight
> Of my free soul, aspiring to the height
> Of nature, and unclouded fields of light—

My next desire is, void of care and strife,
To lead a soft, secure, inglorious life—
A country cottage near a crystal flood,
A winding valley, and a lofty wood.
Some god conduct me to the sacred shades
Where Bacchanals are sung by Spartan maids;
Or lift me high to Hemus' hilly crown,
Or in the plains of Tempe lay me down,
Or lead me to some solitary place,
And cover my retreat from human race.

Turn now to the modern world of literature; and what a blaze of light, what a warmth, what a spirit, what a passion bursts upon us! We step, indeed, into a new world. All here is glowing, clear in view, tender in feeling; full of a new, profound, popular, and yet domestic sentiment—a sentiment befitting "the large utterance of the early gods," and yet hallowing and making more brotherly the bosoms of men. We are, in fact, as far advanced beyond the ancients in our knowledge of nature, as we are in that of "the life and immortality brought to light by the gospel." With all the admiration of the ancients for the loveliness of nature, with all their enjoyment of its amenities, what is there in them like the hungering and thirsting, the yearning after her, of such hearts as those of Byron, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, and a thousand other lights of modern literature? The mighty difference is, indeed, most strikingly manifested by comparing Longinus and Burke. The Palmyrian secretary, amongst his five sources of the sublime, does not even include the influence of natural objects. His treatise is, indeed, more truly a treatise on writing strongly and elegantly, than on the sublime. Like the poets, he perceives the amenities of the country; but there is only one passage in his whole work in which he speaks out plainly of the sublimity of external nature.

"The impulse of nature inclines to admire not a little transparent rivulet that ministers to our necessities; but the Nile, the Ister, the Rhine, or still more, the Ocean. We are never surprised at the sight of a small fire that burns clearly, and blazes out on our private hearth; but view with amaze the celestial fires, though they are often obscured by vapours and eclipses. Nor do we reckon anything in nature more wonderful than the boiling furnaces of Etna, which cast out stones, and sometimes whole rocks from their labouring abyss, and pour out whole rivers of liquid and unmingled flame."

See how Burke has expanded and worked out this glimpse of the true view. He is full of the mighty influence of Nature's sublime features. Her heights and depths, her horrors and glooms, the demonstrations of her power and grandeur in storms, earthquakes, and volcanoes. Infinity and Eternity are all before him in their awful majesty, and furnish him with some of his deepest sources and most splendid illustrations of the sublime.

But the fact must be evident to every one. A single glance from the ancients to the moderns, and what a contrast! Throughout all the writings of the most enthusiastic ancients, where are the burning, passionate longings after nature that are transfused through all our modern literature? Nature is not with us a thing incidentally alluded to,—a thing to be voluptuously enjoyed when we find ourselves in the flowery lap of May; ours is a living, permeating, perpetual affection. We seek after communion with her as one of the highest enjoyments of our existence; we seek it to soothe the ruffling of our spirits; to calm our world-vexed hearts; to fill us with the divine presence and overshadowing of beauty. The love of her is with us a daily attraction; the

knowledge of her a daily pursuit; we have advanced her cognizance and admiration into a science. Our naturalists feel the breathings of a celestial spirit come from her secret shrines, even while they are seeking after and arranging her lesser forms and productions. Our romance writers dip their pens in her hues to cast a fascination upon their narratives; and our travellers climb every mountain, traverse every sea, explore every distant region, to catch fresh glimpses of her beauty. True, many of these may not, and do not, feel all the attachment they profess—there are thousands who do but affect it, as they do any other fashion; but their very imitation, and their very number, do homage to the great worship of the age.

But it is through our poetry that the admiration of nature is diffused as one great soul. From Chaucer to the most recent poet, it is the universal spirit. It would seem a contradiction now, to say that a man is a poet, but that he has no ardent feeling for nature. In fact, a new language, a new kind of inspiration, distinguish the modern poets from the ancients altogether. Great as each may respectively be, their object, their vision, and their tone in this particular, are widely opposed. When do we find one of the classical writers, speaking thus of his youth?

> Like a roe
> I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
> Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
> Wherever nature led; more like a man
> Flying from something that he dreads, than one
> Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then,
> To me was all in all—I cannot paint
> What then I was. The sounding cataract
> Haunted me like a passion; the tall rock,
> The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
> Their colours and their forms were then to me

An appetite, a feeling, and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm
By thought supplied, or any interest
Unborrowed of the eye.

Wordsworth.

We should be startled to hear an ancient exclaim, like Shelley:

Magnificent!
How glorious art thou earth! And if thou be
The shadow of some spirit lovelier still,
Though evil stain its work, and it should be,
Like its creation, weak yet beautiful,
I could fall down and worship that and thee.
Even now my heart adoreth. Wonderful!

What would be our astonishment, if we were to stumble in an ancient poet, upon stanzas like these?

I live not in myself, but I become
Portion of that around me; and to me
High mountains are a feeling, but the hum
Of human cities torture; I can see
Nothing to loathe in nature, save to be
A link reluctant in a fleshly chain,
Classed among creatures, when the soul can flee,
And with the sky, the peak, the heaving plain
Of ocean or the stars, mingle and not in vain.

And thus I am absorbed, and this is life!
I look upon the peopled desert past,
As on a place of agony and strife
Where for some sin, to sorrow I was cast.
To act and suffer, but remount at last
With a fresh pinion; which I feel to spring,
Though young, yet waxing vigorous, as the blast
Which it would cope with, on delighted wing
Spurning the clay-cold bonds which round our being cling.

And when, at length, the mind shall all be free
From what it hates in this degraded form,
Reft of its carnal life, save what shall be
Existent happier in the fly and worm,—
When elements to elements conform,
And dust is what it should be, shall I not
Feel all I see, less dazzling, but more warm?
The bodiless thought, the spirit of each spot,
Of which, even now, I share at times the immortal lot?

Are not the mountains, waves, and skies a part
Of me and of my soul, as I of them?
Is not the love of these deep in my heart
With a pure passion? Shall I not contemn
All objects, if compared with these? and stem
A tide of suffering rather than forego
Such feelings, for the hard and worldly phlegm
Of those whose eyes are only turned below,
Gazing upon the ground, with thoughts that dare not glow?

To quote all that bears evidence of this wonderful revolution in the very heart of literature would be, not to quote indeed, but to take the whole mass of modern poetry. Powerfully as the spirit of the ancients was attracted by the sublimity of mortal passion and mortal fortunes; by the strife of families and nations, by the strife of emotions in the soul, and the out-bursting of a blasting or a beneficent sublimity in the deeds of men; and magnificent as are the monuments of tragic or heroic grandeur they have erected on this foundation,—so powerfully is the spirit of the moderns drawn, excited, and inflamed by the sublimity of nature, and beautiful and endearing are the strains it has elicited. And whence is this mighty change? Ay, that is the question. Whence is it that the love of Nature has, in the latter ages, become so much more passionate,

intense, engrossing, refined, elevated, etherealized? Is it because we see Nature with different eyes? Is it that we see something in it that the classics did not? It is! It is to that omnipotent principle that has so utterly changed the whole system of human philosophy, morals, politics, literature, and social life —the hopes, the fortunes, the reasonings of men, that we owe it. IT IS TO CHRISTIANITY! The veil which was rent asunder in the hour that its Divine Founder consummated his mission, was plucked away not only from the heart of man, not only from the immortality of his being, but from the face of Nature. A mystery and a doubt which had hung athwart the sky like a vast and gloomy cloud, was withdrawn, and man beheld Creation as the assured work of God: saw a parental hand guiding, sustaining, and embellishing it: and immediately felt himself brought into a near kinship with it, and into an everlasting sympathy with all that was beautiful around him,—not simply for the beauty itself, but because it was the work of the one Great Father—the one Great Fountain of all life and blessing.

The very introduction to the Hebrew literature in the Old Testament, must have produced a deep and delightful change in human feeling. The contrast between the sentiment and the very language of nature, as addressed to man in the literature of the Greeks and that of the Hebrews, was startling, warming and wonderful beyond measure. The beauty of natural objects was no longer a thing apart;—a thing to be admired on its own account; it was allied to a deep sentiment, it became linked to the life of our inner nature. Waters were beheld as the bountiful blessing of Him “who giveth rain upon the earth, and sendeth waters upon the field.” They became the emblem of that inward purity of which

the noblest pagan could form no adequate conception, but which the God of the Hebrews required. They symbolized many of the evils, as well as the refreshments of life. Now they typified, "brethren that deal deceitfully as a brook, and as the stream of brooks that pass away; which are brackish by reason of the ice, and wherein the snow is hid:" now, they were as the billows of affliction,—scenes of trouble—"all thy billows have gone over me:" and now they were as the refreshment of a thirsty soul. The greenness of the grass and of the branch pointed to the beauty, the fleeting beauty of life; and now to the insecure prosperity of the unjust:—"He is green before the sun, and his branch shooteth forth in his garden; his roots are wrapped about the heap, and he seeth the place of stones. If he destroy him from his place, then it shall deny him, saying I have not seen him. Behold this is the joy of his way, and out of the earth shall others grow."

Every thing in nature, the flower—the wind—the spider's web—darkness and light—calm and tempest —drought and flood—the shadow and the noon-day heat—a great rock in a weary land—every thing about us, and above us, acquired in this splendid and inimitable literature, a new and touching meaning; a meaning bound up with our lives; a worth coeval with our highest hopes, or most fervent desires. Every thing became a moral and a warning. They were made to illustrate not only the operations of providence, but to cast a new light upon our intellectual being. They did not, indeed, speak out as to the exact value stamped upon man by the Deity, but they gave intimations more profound and startling than anything in the whole round of pagan philosophy. And then, there was an undertone of sorrow, a voice of plaintive regret over man—a

delicacy and tenderness of phrase that wonderfully attracted and endeared. What ineffable melancholy is there in these following sentiments! What an intense longing after life, and yet, what a longing for death! What a vivid feeling of the grinding evils of mortal being; and what images of the fulness of peace in the grave!—"Why died I not from the womb? For now should I have lain still, and been quiet; I should have slept: then had I been at rest. With kings and counsellors of the earth, which had built desolate places for themselves; or with princes that had gold, who filled their houses with silver; or, as a hidden, untimely birth, I had not been; as infants which never saw the light. There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary are at rest. There the prisoners rest together, they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and the great is there; and the servant is free from his master. Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery; and life unto the bitter in soul? Which long for death, but it cometh not; and dig for it more than for hid treasures? Which rejoice exceedingly, and are glad when they can find the grave?" Job iii. 11-22.

But this new alliance with nature; this new and spiritual beauty cast upon every thing, was not all. The magnificence of Creation and its phenomena were made tenfold conspicuous; and still beyond this, men were no longer left to suppose, or even to contend that the world was the workmanship of Deity. They were no longer left to bewilder themselves amongst a host of imaginary gods,—the universe in its majesty, and God—the one sublime and eternal founder and preserver of it, were flashed upon the spiritual vision in the broadest and brightest light. Here was seen the clear and continuous history of Creation:—God, the sole and

immortal, sate upon the circle of the world, and its inhabitants were as grashoppers before him. The sun, moon, and stars were of his ordaining and appointing; night and day, times and seasons, revolved before him; his were the cattle on a thousand hills; his all the swarming tribes of humanity. The prophetic writings proclaimed his deity, his power and attributes, in language unparalleled in splendour, and with imagery which embraced all that is glorious, resplendent, beautiful and soothing, or dark, desolate and withering, in nature.

Such was the effect of the Old Testament;—and then came the New!—then came Christ! The Old shewed us the Deity in unspeakable majesty;—his creation as beautiful and sublime;—Christ proclaimed him THE FATHER OF MEN; and in those words poured on earth a new light. The words which guaranteed the eternity of our spirits, chased a dimness from the sky which had hung there from the days of Adam: they rent down the curtains of death and oblivion, and let fall upon earth such a tide of sunshine as never warmed it till then. The atmosphere of heaven gushed down to earth. From that hour a new and inextinguishable interest was given us in nature. It was the work of our Father: it was the birthplace of millions of everlasting souls. Its hills and valleys then smiled in an ethereal beauty, for they were then to our eyes spread out by a mighty and tender parent for our happy abodes. The waters ran with a voice of gladness; the clouds sailed over us with a new aspect of delight; the wind blew, and the leaves fluttered in it, and whispered everywhere of life—eternal consciousness—eternal enjoyment of intellect and of love. Through all things we felt a portion of the divine, paternal Spirit

diffused, and “the wilderness and the solitary place” thenceforth had a language for our hearts full of the holy peace and the revelations of eternity. Then the musing poet felt, what it has been reserved for one in our day only fully to express:—

> A presence that disturbed him with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean, and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
> A motion and a spirit that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things. Therefore is he still
> A lover of the meadows and the woods
> And mountains; and of all that we behold
> From this green earth: of all the mighty world
> Of eye and ear, both what they half create
> And what perceive; well pleased to recognise
> In nature and the language of the sense,
> The anchor of his purest thoughts; the nurse,
> The guide, the guardian of his heart, and soul
> Of all his moral being.

Thus, then, is dissipated the mystery of the more intense love of Nature evinced by the moderns than the ancients. It is but part of that gift of divine revelation which has endowed us with so many other advantages over those grand old philosophers of antiquity, who in the depths of their hearts, darkened and abused by many an hereditary superstition, yet found some of the unquenched embers of that fire of love and knowledge originally kindled there by the Creator, and cherished and fanned them into a noble flame. Had they heard from heaven these living words pronounced—GOD IS LOVE!—had they seen the great ladder of revelation

reared from earth to heaven, and been permitted to trace every radiant step by which man is allowed to ascend from these lower regions into the blaze of God's own paradise, their spirits would have kindled into as intense a glow as ours, and their vision have become as conscious of surrounding glories. GOD IS LOVE! These are words of miraculous power. Once assured that the very principle and source of all life is love, and that it is destined to cast its beams on our heads through eternal ages, we become filled with a felicity beyond the power of earthly evil. All those intimations that creation itself had given us, are confirmed. We feel the influence of the great principle of beneficence in the joy of our own being; in the cheerfulness of surrounding humanity; in the voices and songs of happy creatures; in the face of earth, and the lights of heaven. Seas, mountains, and forests, all become imbued with beauty as they are contemplated in love; and their aspects and their sounds fill us with sensations of happiness. When we read in the Phædon of Plato, the few and feeble grounds, as they now appear to us, on which that good old Socrates raised his arguments for the immortality of the soul; when we hear his exultation on discovering in Anaxagoras the principle laid down, that "the divine intellect was the cause of all beings," we feel with what deep transport he would have witnessed the gates of eternity set wide by the Divine hand; and in what hues of heaven the very circumstance would have invested all about him. Yes! the only difference between modern literature and that of the ancients, lies in our grand advantage over them in this particular. It is from the literature of the Bible, and the heirship of immortality laid open to us in it, that we owe our enlarged conceptions of natural beauty, and our quickened

affections towards the handiworks of God. We walk about the world as its true heirs, and heirs of far more than it has to give. We walk about in confidence, in love, and in peaceful hope; for we know that we are the rightful sons of the house; and that neither death nor distance can interrupt our progress towards the home-paradise of the Divine Father.

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CHAPTER II.

THE PRE-EMINENCE OF THE LOVE OF NATURE IN THE ENGLISH LITERATURE OVER THAT OF ALL OTHER MODERN NATIONS—THE PROMOTION OF THIS PASSION BY THE WRITINGS OF PROFESSOR WILSON, IN BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE; AND BY THE WOOD-CUTS OF BEWICK—MEANS OF STILL FURTHER ENCOURAGING IT.

In the former chapter I have endeavoured to point out the existence of a striking difference as it regards the love of nature between the classical and modern literature, and to explain, and I hope successfully, the principal causes of it. But it is not the less true, that almost as great a difference exists in this same respect between our British literature, and that of almost all other modern nations. I do not intend to go about very laboriously to attempt to prove this fact, for I think it stands sufficiently self-evident on the face of all modern literature. In science, in art, in history; philosophy, natural and moral; in theological, philological and classical inquiries, the continental nations have attained the highest honours. In biography the French are unrivalled; in autobiography the Germans are equally so. In some species of poetry the Germans contest the palm with us; in mathematical industry, and historical research, they are greatly our superiors; but with the solitary exceptions of Gesner, Sturm, and St. Pierre, where have they any writers to range with our Evelyns, Whites, and Waltons? or poets, with our Thomsons and Bloomfields? or indeed, with the whole series of our poets who do not professedly write on the country, but are irresistibly led to it; and from whom the love of it breaks out on all occasions? In the French, the social feeling is the most strongly developed; in the Italian, passion and fancy; in the German, the metaphysical. The Germans, indeed, most strongly resemble the English in their literary tastes. There seems to be a fellow-feeling between them, resulting from ancient kinship. They have a similar character of simplicity; they are alike grave, solid, and domestic, and prone to deep and melancholy thought. They have a love of nature deep as ours, for the tone of their minds makes them, in

every thing they do attach themselves to, earnest and enthusiastic. In every thing relating to the affections, their literature is unrivalled; their feelings are profound, tender, and spiritual; and while a false and superficial taste has made rapid strides amongst us of late years—a taste for glitter, shew, and fashion, the natural accompaniment of wealth and luxury, a growing fondness for German literature must be hailed as a good omen; as likely to give a new infusion of heart and mind to our writings; to re-awaken our love for the simple, the domestic—the fireside love; in fact, to bring us back to what was the ancient character of the English; high-toned in morals, simple in manners, manly and affectionate in heart. Their love of nature is as deep as ours; but it is not so equally and extensively diffused. The solemn and speculative cast of their genius has tended to link it with the gloom of forests and tempests, and with the wild fictions of the supernatural, rather than to scatter it over every cheerful field, and cause it to brood over every sunny cottage-garden, amid the odour of flowers and the hum of bees. There is something wonderfully attractive in their descriptions of the old-fashioned homeliness of their rural and domestic manners; in the unbustling quietness of their lives, and in the holy strength of their family attachments. Such writings as that Idyl of Voss, describing the manner of life of the venerable pastor of Grenau, the autobiographies of Goethe and Stilling, seem to carry us back into the simple ages of our own country. That which characterised them, seems to be preserved to the present hour in Germany; and then, the affectionate intellectuality of their minds, and their very language, so homely and yet so expressive, cause them to abound in such touches of natural pathos as

are nowhere else to be found. Yet, when their love of nature exhibits itself in descriptions of country life, amid all these charms, we are often tempted to exclaim with the pastor's wife in Voss, when in a picnic party they discovered, while taking tea under the forest trees, that they had forgotten the tea-spoons, and had to substitute pieces of stick for them—"O, dear nature, thou art almost too natural!"

But the aspect of the different countries is sufficiently indicative of the natural feeling. Instead of the solitary chateau, or baronial castle, amid dark forests, or wide unfenced plains; instead of the great landed proprietors crowding into large towns, and the very labourers huddling themselves into villages, and going, as they do, in some parts of France, seven or eight miles on asses to their daily work in the fields, the hills and valleys of England are studded all over with the dwellings of the landed gentry, and the cottages of their husbandmen. Villas amid shrubberies and gardens; villages environed with old-fashioned crofts; farm-houses and cottages, singly or in groups—a continuous chain of cultivation and rustic residences stretches from end to end and side to side of the island. Our wealthy aristocrats have caught a fatal passion for burying themselves in the capital in a perpetual turmoil of political agitations, ostentatious rivalry, and dissipation—a passion fatal to their own happiness and to the whole character of their minds; but the love of the country is yet strong enough in large classes to maintain our pre-eminence in this respect. The testimony of foreigners, however, is stronger than our own; and foreigners are always struck with the garden-like aspect of England; and the charms of our country houses. A number of a French literary paper, "Le Panorama de Londres," has fallen accidentally into my hands, while writing

this, which contains an article—De la Poesie Anglaise et de la Poesie Allemande—from which I transcribe the following passages.

"England has produced her great epic poet, her great dramatic poet; and the last age gave her reasoning poets in abundance. The time for the one and the other is past. By a revolution, the causes of which it would be difficult to trace, her poetry has changed both its character and object; and strange enough, under the reign of a civilization the most advanced, her poetry has returned to nature. At first, the fact strikes us as an unaccountable anomaly; for what country owes so much to art as England? The very aspect of the country shews everywhere the hand of man. A scientific culture has changed its whole face. The forests have ceased to be impenetrable; the rivers to be wild torrents; the mountains themselves to be savage. Human industry has appropriated every thing; fire, air, earth, every thing is subjected, every thing is tamed. The very animals seem to submit themselves voluntarily to the service of man. The horse himself, the English horse, so swift and powerful, scarcely neighs with impatience, or capers with eagerness; his very impetuosity is docile. The Englishman is in one sense the king of the world. It is for him that every thing is in motion around him: yet he himself is bound by unchangeable customs. He fears change. He has even a religion of an established order. One would think nothing could be more prosaic than a country thus laboured; yet, nevertheless, all Europe resounds with the songs of her poets. Amid the miracles of industry, the profusion of riches, the refinement of luxury; in the face of steam-engines, suspension bridges, and railroads, imagination has lost nothing of its ancient empire; on the contrary, during the last thirty years,

she has acquired more; she has been borne, as by an irresistible influence, towards the description of natural objects and simple sentiments. She has revelled in the charms of a poetry whose freshness seemed to belong to another age. The fact is, if we regard England more attentively, we shall discover her under a different aspect to what has been usually ascribed to her; and shall be less astonished to find her poetic in seeing her picturesque. That agriculture, so marvellous, is far from having given up every thing to the useful; its object seems rather to have been to embellish than to fertilize the earth. Those fields so well tilled, are green and riant; those quiet streams flow brimful through rich meadows; and, thanks to beautiful trees and living hedges, the very plains are charming. Those seats where opulence parades all its splendour, are environed by greensward pastured by abundant cattle; and the art which designs those immense parks, seems to have no object but to put into a frame a beautiful landscape. The taste is no longer to dig lakes, to cast up mounts, to plant thickets; but to inclose whole rivers, woods, and mountains. Everywhere you discover the sentiment of the beauty of nature. You find it in every class. Neither riches nor poverty have been able to extinguish it. We observe in other countries that the sentiment is unknown to the peasantry. They are the towns which they admire: to them the country is merely useful. But in England everybody loves the country; even those who cultivate it. The most humble cottage is a proof of it. The taste which rarely distinguishes the architecture of the English towns, is reserved, I think, for the country houses. The little gardens which lead to them; the orchards which surround them; even the very bushes of jessamine or of rose, which crown

their porches or tapestry their walls, seem designed to delight the eye. Amid the treasures of an admirable vegetation—gothic ruins, the towers of an old manor, the arches of an abbey, the ivy which clothes the walls of a parish church; the tree scathed and decaying, which has no value but its age; all these things are respected by every one as the monuments of the past, or the ornaments of the country. The whole population interests itself in every thing which adorns its abode; and this nation, the queen of commerce and industry, seems to recollect with affection, that it is to the earth that she owes her wealth, her glory, and her greatness.

"An analogous sentiment pervades the poetry of the English. The verses of their good poets seem to have been composed in the open air; all external objects are by them faithfully portrayed; the impressions they produce are faithfully rendered. Simple sentiments, those of a domestic nature, so well protected by a country life, in them preserve all their force and all their purity. Their recitals are often the most touching and familiar; when they turn upon great adventures, they are related as they would be on a winter's evening before the fire of an ancient castle, or of a humble cottage. Scarcely an English poet is wanting in descriptive talent, not even the least celebrated amongst them. It shines with great *eclat* in Burns, in Crabbe, in Walter Scott. Lord Byron, who has so many others, possesses none perhaps in a greater degree than this."

It is to be hoped that the English poetry will always maintain this character; will always remain the powerful ally of the love of the country: one great means of preserving those features of English rural life so delightfully described in the foregoing extract. Amid the fascinations and temptations to a

corruption of taste, from the mighty wealth and political influence of this country, it is to the combined effect of real, simple Christianity, the love of nature, and of that literature which is in alliance with those great conservative powers, that we must look for the maintenance of a sound national heart and intellect; and consequently, of that great moral ascendency, and genuine glory, that as a nation we have obtained. I long with a most earnest longing, for our stability in this respect; for the preservation of those pure, simple, holy tastes which have led our countrymen in all ages, since reading and civilization came upon them, to delight in the pleasant fields, in the pleasant country houses, in the profound peace of noble woods, so favourable to high and solemn musings; and in all those healthful and animating sports and pursuits that belong to such a life. It has been through the influence of these tastes, and of these home-born but exalted pleasures, by the strong human sympathies engendered by living amongst our manly and high-minded peasantry—the hardy sons and bold defenders of their natal soil,—the strong-hearted old fathers,—the fair and modest daughters of uncorrupted England; by living amongst them as their leaders, counsellors, and protectors; by musing over the inspiring annals of the past days of England; on the solid tomes of our legislators, our divines, philosophers and poets, in the calm twilight of ancient halls, or in the sunny seats of their broad bay-windows, looking out on fields purchased by the blood of patriots, and hoary forests, that have witnessed the toils of their ancestors, or perhaps received them to their dim bosoms in times of danger; it is by such aliment that the British heart has been nourished, and grown to its present greatness, when its pulsations are felt to the very

ends of the earth, and by millions of confiding or submissive men, whose destinies depend upon its motions. Our arms may have been wielded in many a mighty battle for the accomplishment of this magnificent end, but it was here that the power of victory grew: our counsels may have, wearily, and stroke by stroke, worked out this ample breadth of glory; but it is here, and it was thus, that the wisdom, and the prudence, and the irresistible fortitude sprung, increased, and gave to those brave men and high measures their vigour and stability; here that they were born, and fostered to their beneficent fulness.

Therefore would I have every thing which may tend to keep alive this genuine spirit of England, may keep open all the sources of its strength and its inspiration, encouraged: every taste for the sweet serenity, the animating freshness, the preserving purity of country life, promoted; every thing which can embellish or render it desirable. For this cause I delight in the every-day spreading attachment to all branches of Natural History; in the great encouragement given to all books on country affairs; and in the advancing love of landscape-painting, by which the most enchanting views of our mountains, coasts, wild lakes, forests, and pastoral downs will be brought into our cities, and spread in sunshine and in poetry along their walls. For this I am thankful, with a deep thankfulness, for the mighty strains of poetry that have been poured out in this age, brimmed and gushing over with the august spirit of nature: for Wordsworth and Coleridge; Rogers and Campbell; for Shelley and Byron and Keats, and for many another noble bard; for the Romances of Scott, which have pre-eminently piled quenchless fuel on this social flame, by sanctifying many of the most beautiful

scenes in the kingdom with the highest historical remembrances; and not less, for that wonderful series of articles by Wilson, in Blackwood's Magazine,—in their kind, as truly amazing, and as truly glorious, as the romances of Scott, or the poetry of Wordsworth. Far and wide and much as these papers have been admired, wherever the English language is read, I still question whether any one man has a just idea of them as a whole. Whatever may be our opinion of the side which this powerful journal has taken in politics, it must be admitted that while it has fought the battles of Toryism with vigour, it has fought them in a noble spirit. There was a day when a foul influence had crept into it; when it was personal, rancorous, and apt to descend to language and details below the dignity of its strength; but that day is gone by, and it has been seen with lively satisfaction by all parties that it has purged itself of this evil nature, and as it has become peerless in fame,—it has become more and more generous, forgiving, and superior to every petty nature and narrow feeling. Its politics are ultra, but they are full of intellect; and they who desire to see what *can* be said on the Tory side, see it there. But the great attraction to literary men has long been, that splendid series of ample, diffuse, yet overflowing papers, in which every thing relating to poetry and nature find a place. These are singly, and in themselves, specimens of transcendent power; but taken altogether, as a series, are, in the sure unity of one great and correct spirit, such a treasury of criticism as is without a parallel in the annals of literature. For, while they are full of the soundest opinions, because they are the offspring of a deeply poetical mind—a mind strong in the guiding instincts of nature; they are preserved from the dryness and

technicality of ordinary criticism by this very poetic temperament. They come upon you like some abounding torrent, streaming on, amid the wildest and noblest scenes; amid mountains and forests and flowery meadows; and bringing to your senses, at once, all their freshness of odours, dews, and living sounds. They are the gorgeous outpourings of a wild, erratic eloquence, that, in its magnificent rush, throws out the most startling, and apparently conflicting dogmas, yet all bound together by a strong bond of sound sense and incorruptible feeling.

They are all poetry:—sometimes, in its weakest and most diluted form; again, gushing into the most melting pathos; and then again playing and frolicking like a happy boy, half beside himself with holiday freedom and sunshine; then vapouring, and rhodomontading, and reeling along in the very drunkenness of a luxuriant fancy, intoxicated at the ambrosia-fountains of the heart; and then, like a strong man, all at once recovering his power and self-possession—if self-possession that can be called, which, in the next moment, gives way to a new impulse, and soars up into the highest regions of eloquence, pouring forth the noblest sentiments and most fervid imaginations, as from an oracle of quenchless inspiration.

It is in this manner, and this spirit, that the writer has—reviewed shall I say? no, not reviewed, but proclaimed, trumpeted to the farthest regions, idealized, etherealized, and made almost more glorious than they are in their own solemn grandeur, the poems of Wordsworth, of Milton, of Shakspeare, of Spenser, of Homer, and of many another genuine bard. And it is thus that he has led you over the heathy mountains and along the fairy glens of the north, to many a sweet secluded loch, into many a

Highland hut. It is thus that he loves to make you observe the noble peasant striding along in his prime of youth—in his sedate manhood—in his hoary age, more beautiful than youth, for then he is crowned with the wisdom of his simple experience of the trials and vanity of life, and of the feeling that he draws near to eternity. It is thus that he bids you stand, and mark the fair young maiden busied about the door of her parental hut, more graceful and happy in the engrossment of her simple duties, beneath the sun and the blue heavens, than the very daughter of the palace in the lap of her artificial enchantments. It is thus he shews you the young mother tossing her laughing infant in the open air, while her two elder children are rolling on the sunny sward, or scrambling up the heathy brae; and her mother sits silently by the door, in the basking tranquillity of age. It is thus that he fills you with the noblest sympathies, with the purest human feelings; and then astonishes you with some sudden feat of leaping, running, or wrestling; and as suddenly is gone with rod in hand, following the course of a clear rapid stream, eagerly intent upon trout or salmon. And then he is the poet again, every atom of him, meek as a bard of nineteen, or of ninety; all tenderness, purity, and holiness; the poet of the City of the Plague, or of the Children's Dance, forcing you to forget that he ever swaggered in an article, or rollocked in a Noctes. He is now basking in the shine of a May-day, amid the sparkling dews, the waving flowers, the running waters, and all the delights of earth, air, and the blue o'erspanning sky.

These are papers that have already done infinite service to the cause of poetry and nature; and therefore do I rejoice in their existence, and addition to all that sublime accumulation of fervid poetry and

prose in the praise and love of the country, with which our English literature, above all others, is enriched.

But there is one person to whom I must still give a separate mention; an individual to whom we owe a signal increase of country delight,—Thomas Bewick. Every painter of landscape is a friend to the best feelings and tastes of humanity; but Bewick has, in a manner, created a new art. He has struck out a peculiar mode of embellishing books with snatches of rural scenery, that will, if pursued in the true spirit, do more to diffuse a love of the country than all other modes of engraving put together. To see what may be done, let us only see what he has done. Through his revival of the art of wood-cutting, we have now hundreds of wood-engravers, and thousands of wood-embellished books: yet lay your hands on any one of these volumes, and, with all deference to the great talent evinced, the great beauty produced,—till you open Bewick you shall not know what wood-cutting is capable of doing for books on the country.

I have heard some wood-engravers speak with contempt of Bewick, and say—"Why he was very well for his time of day, but we have scores that can excel him now." To such men I have only one reply —"you don't understand the country. I grant you there are many who can produce a more showy print; but it was not show which Bewick aimed at,—it was truth: and if you will know which is most excellent, take the one and the other; and let them be both opened before some country family of taste, and you will see that your print will dazzle the eye for a moment; it will be a moment of surprise and delight; but when the moment is past, the eye will fall on Bewick, and there it will be riveted; and there, the

longer it dwells the stronger will be its fascination, and it will be the beginning of an everlasting love." And why is this? Simply because we have in one, splendour of style; in the other, Nature! pure, faithful, and picturesque Nature,—Nature in her most felicitous, or most solemn moments. I have heard those who loved the country, and loved it because they knew it, say, that the opening of Bewick was a new era in their lives. I have seen how his volumes are loved, and treasured, and reverted to, time after time, in many a country house; the more familiar, the more prized; the oftener seen, the oftener desired.

And why should it not be so? It is not so much as a triumph of art, as a triumph of genius, that they are love-worthy. Yet as specimens of art they have eminent merit. See, in what a small space he gives you a whole landscape—a whole wide heath, or stormy coast, with their appropriate objects. See, with a single line, a single touch, what a world of effect he has achieved! But it is the spirit of the conception, and the sacred fidelity to Nature, which stamp their value upon his works. They are the works of an eye which sees in a moment what in a scene advances beyond common-place; what in it has a story, a moral, a sarcasm, or touch of transcendent beauty. They are the works of a heart bound by a bond of indissoluble love to the sweetness and peace of nature; rich in recollections of all her forms and hues; and of a spirit which cherished no ambition, no hope on earth, superior to that of throwing into his transcriptions the express image of his beloved Nature.

This is the great secret of the delight in his wood-cuts. They are full of all those beauties, those fine yet impressive beauties, that arrest the gaze of the lovers

of nature; and they are so faithful that they never deceive, or disappoint the experienced eye. The vignettes of his Natural History are in themselves a series of stories so clearly told that they require no explanation, and are full of the most varied human interest. He delights in the picturesque and beautiful in nature, and the grotesque in life. Whatever he introduces, its genuine characteristics are all about it; beast or bird, there it is in the very scenery, and amid the very concomitants that you see it surrounded by in nature. You miss nothing that you find in the same situation in the real scene and circumstance; and, what is of more consequence, you never see a single thing introduced which has no business there. He is the very Burns of wood-engraving. He has the same intense love of nature; his bold freedom of spirit; his flashes of indignant feeling; his love of satire; and his ridicule of human vanity and cant. In his landscapes, he gives you every thing the most poetical:—wide, wild moors; the desolation of winter; the falling fane, and the crumbling tower; wild scenes on northern shores, with their rocks and sea-fowl, their wrecks and tempests. In his village scenes you have every feature of village life given with a precision and a spirit equally admirable. He delights to seize hold on humanity even in some of its degradations, as drunkenness and gluttony, and Hogarth-like, to excite your disgust against the abuse of God's good things and man's high nature. He delights equally to exhibit those ragged rapscallions that abound in the streets of towns, and the purlieus of villages; uncultivated, neglected, and therefore graceless, reckless—vulgarity and wickedness stamped on their features, and even in their strong, close-cut, thick-set heads of hair; full of mischief and cruelty from top to

toe. There you have them, just in the commission of those barbarities or depredations that speak volumes for the necessity of better popular education: and as for beggars, strollers with bear and monkey, lame soldiers, and all the groups of tatterdemalions that are scattered all over this country, there is no end of them. At times he is full of whim; at others half in jest, and half in solemn earnest. Again, he touches you with pity for the aged and forlorn; and often rises into a tone of deep moral warning, and into actual demonstrations of the sublime and beautiful.

The elements in their majesty are made to laugh to scorn the inflated vanity of man. A stately church has sometime been reared on a pleasant and commanding mount near the sea. You are made to call to mind the pride and the gratulation in which it was erected in the palmy days of the Catholic faith. You see it in its newness, with all its fair proportions and noble completeness—a beautiful temple to the Christian Deity. You see how the country people come in awe and wonder to behold it; into what a silence of veneration they drop as they approach; with what a prostration of astonishment of heart they enter, while the new and merry bells sound above their heads; and all abroad the glad sunshine of summer is pouring, and casts its light into the glorious interior; and the sea-breeze comes fluttering with a full delight; and every thing seems to speak of triumph, stability, and enduring joy. You know with what solemn pomp the prelate, in full canonicals, and followed by his train of clerical brethren in their becoming robes, and surrounded by the powerful and the beautiful of the neighbourhood, proceeds to perform the rites of consecration. And with what pride the great family, who have given the land to God, and expended the revenues of ample estates for

many years in erecting this goodly fabric, see all, hear all, and find hard work to conceal the inward swell of gratified ambition. How they look on all the accomplished miracle of the place; the lofty, arched roof above; the stately columns along the aisles; the priest in his pulpit; the people in their seats. With what proud gratulation they hear the voices of the choristers break forth, and fill "this house which they have built." With what a high, elating, intoxicating feeling, with what a proud joy they kneel down on the silken cushions, and open the golden clasps of their richly-painted missals! All this we see; and then the dream of strength and glory and endurance is gone;—is gone from them and you. There stands the ancient church! Ancient? Yes, it is now ancient. All that dream of delight, all that throng of wondering people, have long passed away. Yes! the very founders, whose hearts beat in pride, are now dust and ashes beneath your feet;—ay, and their children and children's children to the sixth or seventh generation. That noble fabric, then so fair of hue; so admirable in its workmanship; so sharp in all its mouldings, and delicate in its tracery; that temple in which so many prayers were put up for the mariner tossed on that wilderness of mighty waters on which it looked—is a ruin! The winds and the tempests of ages have blown and beaten upon it. The ocean has come in fury, and rent away its western front, that so gloriously used to fling back the splendours of the setting sun; and the very mound of the dead is rifled by the billows. What is that which I read upon a fallen stone, over which the waves, at every returning tide, wash with insulting strength? "This stone is erected to perpetuate the memory of ——." O pride! O vanity and swelling confidence of "man that is a worm"—what a rebuke! But what is this?

Another stone fallen—and fallen yet lower;—"Custos Rotulorum, of the County of ——." And have time and tide not spared even this great man? Is the very keeper of the Rolls gone, and his monument after him? Where then is human stability? The waves, and that ransacked monument, and that stately ruin of a church, all say, not on earth; not in the works of man. The very house which he had raised, the very ground which he had consecrated, are pulled down by the elements; and even the bones of himself and children are swept into the great deep. I do not know, in the catalogue of the paintings with which this country is enriched, one that speaks with a more sublime power to the imagination than this wood-cut of the littleness of human pride; and of the only sure hope of honour and endurance, in the eternity of virtue.

There is another sketch of a similar class, but of an opposite inculcation. While that strikes at the vaunting spirit of human pride, this speaks a sad consolation to the struggling and miserable. It is a moonlight view of a solitary burial-ground. It is like one of those in Scotland, distant from the place of worship; perhaps on a lonely heath. There is not a building in view to give the least feeling of proximity to human life. It is still—far off—and alone. The moon pours a melancholy light on the wild, grassy turf, and the foliage that overhangs the enclosing wall; and here and there, stoop the heavy headstones of the dead. On one in the foreground is inscribed —"GOOD TIMES, BAD TIMES, AND ALL TIMES GET OVER."

His churchyard scenes, indeed, are all full of the most beautiful and truly human sentiment. In one, you have an old man reading a headstone, —"VANITAS, VANITATUM, OMNIA VANITAS." It is a

sentiment which strikes down to the bottom of his soul, as a voice of warning from heaven, and the voice of memory from the days of his past life. The old man stands propt on his staff, and you cannot misinterpret the thoughts which throng upon him. He is carried back through all his days; his days of boyhood and buoyant youth; his days of manly ardour and triumph; his days of trial and decay—to the very hour in which he stands here. The wife of his youth lies in the dust at his feet; his very children are all gone before him, or remain to neglect him; his friends have dropped away, one after another; he alone is left, a shattered remnant of other and happier times: left in a noisy and a crowded world. Truly it is—"vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

But see, here comes a boy driving his hoop. He bounds over the very ground, past the very stone which has conjured up in the old man's heart such a host of sad thoughts. But none of them come to him. To him all is new; the world is fair; the present is Paradise. He scarcely looks around him, and yet he enjoys all nature. The sunshine plays upon his head; the air visits his cheek; the earth is green beneath him. He thinks not of the dead under his feet; of the awful stones around him. He does not even see the old man himself,—a more striking memorial of mortality and the vanity of life than all the rest. This is true human life: age, sad and observant of every solemn memento; youth, in the reckless happiness of its own charmed existence.

There is but a slight step, and hardly that, from his satire to his humour, for one commonly partakes of the other, and in no instance are these mingled qualities more happily shewn than in the cut now engraved, for the first time, and placed at the head of this chapter. But in humorous incidents he abounds.

Here is a good woman hanging out her clothes. A gipsy-like beggar-woman, with a child at her back, is going out of the garden, and in true beggar recklessness leaves the gate open. While the unconscious dame is busy at her line, in come the hens. One of them is already strutting across her clean white linen, that lies on the grass-plot, and leaving conspicuous marks of her dirty feet; and in are marching a whole drove of young pigs, with the old sow at their heels. In another place is seen the snug garden of some curious florist, with auriculas blooming in pots, and some choice plant under a large glass; and here too a mischievous sow has conducted her brood; and some of them have made their way through the paling, and are in full career towards the auriculas. Another moment, and glass, flowers, all will be one piece of destruction. The old sow, shut out by her bulk, and a yoke upon her neck, the token of her propensities, stands watching from beneath her huge slouch ears, with the utmost satisfaction, this scene of devastation.

Here again, is a country lad mounted on a shaggy pony, and doubtless sent on some important errand; but a flight of birds has captivated his attention, and so engaged is he in watching, that the pony has wandered out of the way, and has reached the precipitous brink of a river. The lad still gazing after the birds, finding the pony halt, bangs him with his cudgel; the pony hangs back, and the little dog behind with uplifted foot wonders what the lad can mean. There are two men fetching a tub of water from a water-cask, but they are so lost in gossip, that the water is running all away. A countryman to avoid paying toll at a bridge, is fording the river below, holding the tail of his cow. But his hat is blown off, and he dare not let go his hold to save it.

He will get a good wetting, and suffer greater loss than the toll; while the tollman and a traveller on the bridge witness and enjoy his dilemma. Another countryman is crossing a river in a style grotesque enough. The old man is wading; on his back is his wife, on her's a child, and on her head a loaded basket. If the old man's foot slip, what a catastrophe! In one place is an old dame going to the village spring, and finding a whole flock of geese frolicking in it. Her looks of execration and her uplifted stick are infinitely amusing. In another, is an old dame about to mount a stile, and a tremendous bull presenting himself on the other side. Notwithstanding the bold bearing and protruded cudgel of the old dame, one knows not whether it be most dangerous to fight or flee. And here is the string of a kite caught on the hat of a countryman crossing a stream on horseback. It would be difficult to decide whether the distress of the man or that of the boys is the greater. On goes the horse, and the rider tries in vain to get rid of the string. His fate is to be pulled backward off the horse, or that of the boys to be dragged into the stream, or to lose their kite.

There is another class of vignettes, in which cruelty to animals is held up to abhorrence. There is the man with his cart, striking his horse on the head with a bludgeon; his hat has fallen off in his passion. Ragged lads are belabouring an ass with a gorse bush. A hardened lad has a cat and dog harnessed to a little cart in which is a child; the cat is nearly terrified to death at the dog, the child is crying amain; and the lad is trying to force the whole team into the water. In most of these cuts a gallows is seen in the distance, as the probable goal of the career.

Another class is that of country accidents, full of appropriate spirit; men crossing streams by means of

the long boughs of trees, which are breaking and letting them fall. A blind man led by his dog, crossing a narrow foot-bridge, where the hand-rail is broken down, and his hat is blown away by the wind. Old people caught in storms on wide, open heaths; old, weary people far away from any town, as indicated by a milestone marked XI. miles on one side, and XV. on the other. But they are endless, and of endless variety. There are some, as I have said, truly sublime. A shipwrecked man on a rock in mid-ocean praying; the waves leaping and thundering around him; no single vessel in view, his only hope in God. The hull of a vessel lying stranded on a solitary coast. It is evident that it has been there for years; for its ribbed timbers are laid bare, and it speaks both of human catastrophe, and solitude, and decay. A fine contrast,—a circle of men on a village green witnessing a fight, all vulgar eagerness and tumultuous passion; the rainbow, that circle of heaven, spanning the sky beyond them in such pure beauty—in the profound calm and holiness of nature.

Through all these representations, the spirit of the picturesque is poured without measure. Such winter scenes! such summer scenes! all the occupations and figures of rustic existence; fishermen, hunters, shooters, ploughmen, all in their peculiar scenery and costume. There are anglers in such delicious places, by such clear, rapid, winding waters, with such overhanging rocks and foliage, that one longs instantaneously to be an angler. We have all the spirit of Izaak Walton’s book, in two square inches of wood-engraving: his descriptions of natural beauty, his deep feeling of country enjoyment, and his single and thankful contentment in his art. There are men and boys sleeping on sunny grass, or beneath the shade of summer trees! O! so luxuriously, that we

long to be sleeping there too. There are such wild sea-shores, and caverned rocks, with boys climbing up to get at the sea-fowls' eggs, and such stormy waters, that we are wild with desire to wander by those rocks and waves. The sedgy water-sides, such as are found on moors where the wild ducks and snipes and herons haunt, are inimitable. Nature is everywhere so gloriously, yet so unostentatiously portrayed, as none but the most ardent and devoted of her lovers can portray her. There is nothing gaudy, shewy, or ambitious; she is most simple, and therefore most beautiful.

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CHAPTER III.

THE PRESENT STATE OF WOOD-ENGRAVING AS IT REGARDS RURAL SUBJECTS.

> Unmeaning glitter, unprecedented softness, unprincipled novelty, shall sometimes set aside for awhile the truth and simplicity of nature, and the approbation of ages.—*Life of Ryland.*

From what has been said in the last chapter, it is obvious that had Bewick been but one of a series of wood-engravers during the established period of the art, his merit would have been eminent and peculiar; but when it is recollected that, at one stride, he brought it to comparative perfection, our obligations to him are wonderfully increased.

The direct consequence of his revival of the art is, that we have now tens of thousands of volumes embellished with wood-cuts, and upwards of two hundred engravers in this department. The Penny Magazine alone is said to pay for its wood-cutting 2000*l.* per annum. This magazine and some of its cheap cotemporaries have made a peculiar application of this art, which is, in itself, a great national blessing. By stereotyping wood-engravings, they are enabled to strike off any number of copies of them with their letter-press, and by this means, prints of a large size, and of great strength of effect, are made to circulate amongst the people, even to an extent to which the only limits must be those of education. Thus are many pictorial subjects placed before the eyes of tens of thousands who could otherwise never have seen them. Subjects from the paintings of the old masters; landscapes from every country on the globe, with their peculiar characteristics; prints of ancient and modern buildings; of ancient and modern sculpture; of animals, plants; in fact, every subject of natural or human history, all brought livingly to the sight, and

at such an amazingly trivial expense, that the desire of knowledge is, at once, quickened and gratified in a degree of which our fathers had not the most distant idea; nor of the effect of which have we, perhaps, any adequate conception. We feel, however, that it must be full of virtue and happiness. Throughout thousands and tens of thousands of cottages shall the eyes which, without these blessed facilities, would never have glanced on anything beyond the objects surrounding their daily life, now gaze in living delight on the magnificent scenes, the beautiful productions of every land and climate; on the stern or fantastic splendour of foreign towns and cities, domes and minarets; on the forms and costumes, the dwellings and implements of the most distant nations; on the animal natures of air, earth, and ocean; on the faces of men who have been the lights, or terrors of the world; of those who have fought for, and thought for, sung for, and died for man and his cause; the spread of knowledge and religion; in fact, for that social and illimitable happiness of which these things are the precursors; a happiness that shall be brought to every house, in city or in desert, to every fireside, however humble.

This is a great and beneficent result, from the union of two noble arts: for whatever tends to embellish human life; to give to toiling men a refining pleasure; to bring them from base excitements and public haunts to the pure and peaceful enjoyments of home; to draw them to their own ingles; to induce them to sit among their children, and delight their eyes with objects of beauty, and feed their growing spirits with those natural facts, in which the wisdom and goodness of God are made so sensible to young minds; whatever does this, does the work of love; the work of human

happiness and national greatness. To enlighten the general mass, and at the same time to kindle the noblest feelings of the soul of man, are the sure means to build up the state with true citizens; to protect the people from despotism, and government from popular caprice.

This, I say, is one great result; yet even this does not seem to me the highest legitimate province of the art. It is obvious that prints of the kind described—of buildings, portraits, or historic scenes, must after all come from metal with greater perfection than from wood. To most subjects metal gives a richness and delicacy that wood can never equal. Wood can give great strength and boldness, but accompanied nevertheless with something of hardness and constraint. It is only the power of striking off prints with the letter-press which gives wood that admirable advantage over metal of which I have been speaking. It becomes, in that case, a substitute for metal, where metal could not be used without defeating the ultimate object by its expense. There it is merely a good substitute for metal. But there is one department in which it is superior even to metal; and that is in such vignette representations of rural life and scenery as Bewick has used it in. Here it triumphs over metal; for it does not here require so much brilliance, or richness, or extreme delicacy, as a certain homely beauty belonging to rustic objects. The beauty of nature does not consist in showiness and dazzling lustre, so much as in pleasing colours, a simple grace of form, and a certain roughness and opacity of surface, on which the eye can rest longer without fatigue than on more polished substances. Now it is in these qualities that Bewick's engravings abound. He is sacredly faithful to Nature. He catches at once the spirit of the country and of its wild

denizens. He is simple, beautiful, but not glaring;—Nature is never so.

Yet amongst all our wood-engravers,—and many of them are continually employed on rural subjects,—it is as true as it may seem astonishing, that there is not one of them who can bear a moment's comparison with Bewick as a delineator of rural life. This is owing to no deficiency of talent—we have many artists of the highest talent—it is owing to other causes. If it seem surprising that no one, from the time of Bewick's restoration of the art to the present moment, should have equalled him in the representation of nature, it is not more surprising than that from the time of Milton to that of Cowper no one wrote good blank verse; that with Milton's free and natural majesty as a model before them, we should have had nothing better than the stilted stiffness of Akenside, and the pompous inflations and ungrammatical distortions of Thomson. The same causes in both cases have produced the same effect. Our artists, like the poets, have forsaken nature herself, to study and imitate one another. While our artists are employed to depict nature, they are living in our mighty capital, cut off from the very face of nature. They have full employ; for the eyes of those for whom they labour are not more familiar with the country than their own. Dash and meretricious show captivate the multitude, and therefore dash and show are given in abundance; the wondering lover of nature looks for her in vain. The ambitious and frippery taste of the age is stamped on all the most excellent productions of what should be the rustic burin. We now and then see a better spirit; things overflowing with talent; and on the very verge of nature. Such are some of the beautiful recent illustrations of Gray's Elegy, Chevy-Chace, Aiken's

Calendar of the Year, Knight's Pictorial Shakspeare, the bold sketches in Hone's Table-Book, and the elegant ones in some of their books for the young published by Darton and Clark, Tegg, and others: but, in general, our most skilful artists are not contented with the simplicity of nature; they want better bread than can be made of wheat. Hence while they are admired in cities, Bewick reigns sole and triumphant all through the country.

But how is this to be remedied? As I have said, we have talent and manual skill equal to any thing; what we want are purer designs,—designs, in fact, from Nature! We want subjects drawn from the same source that Bewick drew them. I do not mean that our artists should imitate Bewick; no, that they should imitate Nature,—the true, the beautiful, the unambitious. Had Bewick lived a thousand years, he would every day have seen some new subject, some new features, in the everlasting changes and combinations that surround the fixed spirit of the universe. We have pupils of his—Harvey and Nesbit in particular, and why do not they, with their high talent, produce the same genuine nature? The answer is obvious. They are citizens. They have abandoned the daily cognizance of Nature; they have taken a directly opposite course to Bewick. He was an inseparable companion of Nature from his boyhood. All his life long he was watching after, and pursuing her into her most hidden retirements. To him

> High mountains were a feeling, but the hum
> Of human cities torture.

He had tried the life of London, but he could not bear it. His soul was robbed of its nourishment. He was shut up, blinded, famished in that huge wilderness of stone; dinned by that eternal chaos of

confused sounds. He gasped for the free air; he pined for the dews; for the solemn roar of the ocean; for the glories of rising and setting suns. His father when he sent him from his country home at Cherryburn, to be apprenticed to Mr. Bielby at Newcastle, said to him at parting—"Now Thomas, thou art going to lead a different life to what thou hast led here: thou art going from constant fresh air and activity, to the closeness of a town and a sedentary occupation: thou must be up in a morning, and get a run." And Thomas followed faithfully, for it chimed exactly with his own bent, his father's injunction. Every morning, rain or shine, often without his hat, and his bushy head of black hair ruffling in the wind, he would be seen scampering up the street towards the country; and the opposite neighbours would cry —"There goes Bielby's fond boy." These morning excursions he kept up during his life; and they did not suffice him. After the expiration of his apprenticeship, he roamed far and wide through the glorious and soul-embuing scenery of Scotland. Year after year, and day after day, it was his delight to stroll over heaths and moors, by sedgy pools and running waters. He saw bird, beast, and fish, from his hidden places, in all the freedom of their wild life. He saw the angler casting his line; the fowler setting his net and his springes; the farmer's boy amusing his solitude, when

He strolled, the lonely Crusoe of the fields—

prowling after water-fowl amid the reedy haunts; watching the flight of birds with greedy eyes; lighting fires under the screening hedge, and collecting sticks for fuel, and blowing them on hands and knees into a flame. Such were his loves, his studies, his perpetual occupations; and to have

similar results, we must have persons of a similar passion and pursuit. We must have designers; for we have plenty of manual dexterity, capable of executing any design to the minutest shade,—we must have designers in whom Nature is, at once, an appetite, a perpetual study, and quenchless delight. Landscape painters we have of this character. Turner, with his gorgeous creations; Copley Fielding, with his heaths and downs, in which miles of space are put upon a few feet of canvass, and that soul of solitude poured upon you in a gallery, which you before encountered only in the heart of living nature; Collins, with his exquisite sea-sides and rustic pieces; Hunt, with his really rustic characters; Barrett, with his sunsets; Stanfield, Cattermole, and others. We want a designer of wood-cuts of a similar character. What scenes of peerless beauty and infinite variety might an individual give us, who would devote himself, heart and soul, to this object; who would ramble all through the varied and beautiful scenery of these glorious islands at successive intervals; who would pedestrianize in simple style; who would stroll along our wild shores; amongst our magnificent hills; prowl in fens and forests with fowlers and keepers; and seek refreshment by the fireside of the wayside inn; and take up his temporary abode in obscure and old-fashioned villages. Such a man might send into our metropolis, and thence, through the aid of the engravers, to every part of the kingdom, such snatches of natural loveliness, such portions of rural scenery and rural life, as should make themselves felt to be the genuine product of nature—for nature will be felt, and kindle a purer taste and a stronger affection for the country.

I am not insensible to all the difficulties which lie in the way of such a devotion; nor that such a

scheme will be pronounced chimerical by those who, at a far slighter cost, can please a less informed taste: but till we have such a man, we shall not have a second Bewick; and till such a mode of study is, more or less, adopted, we shall never have that love of the genuine country gratified, which assuredly and extensively exists.

Since writing the foregoing remarks, it is with great pleasure that I have seen the arts of designing and wood-engraving beginning to separate themselves, and that of designing for the wood-engravers taking its place as a distinct profession.[15] Harvey, Browne, Sargent, Lambert, Gilbert, and Melville, have for some time been designers of this description. This important step has only to be followed up by designers in the manner pointed out in this chapter, to insure that complete return to nature which is so much to be desired, and where such an exhaustless field of beauty and life awaits the observant artist, as would place the present pre-eminent manual skill of our wood-engravers in its true and well-merited position.

[15] The London and Westminster Review, August, 1838, in an article on wood-engraving, very judiciously suggested that it was an art well calculated for the pursuit of ladies, and one which they might convert not only into a source of profit to themselves, but of public advantage. No doubt of it. It is an art simple and of easy acquisition. But why not ladies who are good sketchers become designers for wood-cuts at once? They have all the requisite qualifications already in their hands; and what fresh and original treasures of taste and fancy are now slumbering, lost to the world, which they might embellish, in the minds and portfolios of ladies. So vastly is the demand for wood-engravings every day growing, that nothing is more difficult than to obtain

designs, or when obtained to get them cut. Ladies, therefore, who have a genius for design, would soon find their value amongst the publishers; and while the profession of a designer is both elegant and feminine, how much more independent, and much less laborious, it would be than needlework, or the duties and position of a governess.

PART V.

THE FORESTS OF ENGLAND.

CHAPTER I.
THE FORESTS OF ENGLAND.

Amongst the most interesting features of the country are our forests. There is nothing that we come in contact with, which conveys to our minds such vivid impressions of the progression of England in power and population; which presents such startling contrasts between the present and the past. We look back into the England which an old forest brings to our mind, and see a country one wild expanse of woodlands, heaths, and mosses. Here and there a little simple town sending up

> Its fleecy smoke amongst the forest boughs.
> From age to age no tumult did arouse

Its peaceful dwellers; there they lived and died,
Passing a dreamy life, diversified
By nought of novelty, save, now and then,
A horn, resounding through the neighbouring glen,
Woke them as from a trance, and led them out
To catch a brief glimpse of the hunt's wild route;
The music of the hounds; the tramp and rush
Of steeds and men;—and then a sudden hush
Left round the eager listeners;—the deep mood
Of awful, dead, and twilight solitude,
Fallen again upon that forest vast.

We see in the distance the stately castle of the feudal lord; we hear the bell of the convent from the neighbouring dale. There are solitary hamlets and scattered cottages, with mud walls and thatched roofs, peeping from the ocean of umbrageous tree-tops, and little patches of cultivation. Born thralls are tilling the lands of the thane, or watching his flocks and herds, to defend them from the wolves and bears; foresters are going their rounds beneath hoary oaks, on the watch for trespassers on venison and vert. We meet with the pilgrim with his scallop shell, and sandal shoon; we come suddenly on the solitude of the hermit, where some spring bubbles from the forest turf, or scatters its waters down the fern-hung rocks. Perhaps the noble and his train sweep past in pursuit of the stag or boar; perhaps the outlaw and his train in the same pursuit, and setting at defiance, amid vast woods and tracks familiar to himself, all the keen officers, and bloody statutes of forest law.

It is a pleasure but to hear
The bridles ringing sharp and clear
  Amid the forest green;
To hear the rattle of the sheaves,
And coursers rustling in the leaves.
  With merry blasts between.

Stewart Rose's Red King.

Perhaps there is the sound of martial alarm—the clash of sudden onset in the forest glade. The dwellings of the vassals surrounding the lord's castle are in flames, fired by the band of some hostile noble. Such is the England into which an old forest carries our imagination;—partially peopled with feudal barons and unlettered serfs; without commerce abroad; without union within; brave, yet demi-savage; aspiring, but violent; pious, yet sanguinary in all its penal enactments. When we step out of memory and imagination into the cheerful daylight and conscious present, what an England now! All those forests, with three or four exceptions, are gone!—their names alone left in the land by the powerful impressions of time and custom. One wide expanse of cultivation;—the garden of the world;—swarming towns, splendid cities, busy and populous hamlets appearing everywhere, and fenced fields interscattered with patrician dwellings; not crowned with towers, lit by mere loop-holes, defended with bastioned gateways, portcullises, and drawbridges, and moats; but standing with open aspects of peaceful beauty, amid fair gardens and fair lawns, undefended by feudal ramparts, because a thousand times more strongly fortified by the security of enlightened laws. We see a swarming people, free, and full of knowledge, even to its hinds and mechanics, in possession of the highest arts of life; the hills and dales covered with their harvests and their cattle;—the seas round the whole globe with their ships;—a people, at once the most powerful and the most civilized on the earth.

Those old feudal towers are, for the most part, crumbling into ruin, the wasting vestiges of a barbarous system, or embellished and adapted to the

spirit of the present times. Those abbeys and convents, standing in similar ruins, or exhibiting still more marvellous change,—the altars pulled down, the chantries silenced, and the professors of a sacred celibacy driven out, and replaced by men of the world, with their wives and families;—no longer places of worship, but places of domestic abode. Those two mighty powers, Feudalism and Popery—gone for ever!

Here is an astounding change. A stupendous march has been going on from that time to this; and one from which, is there a man, however much he may murmur at the present times, who would be willing to recede a single step? Would the noble be willing to give up the delights of London for a feudal castle surrounded by wild woods and wastes, a troop of rude retainers, and no resources but the year's round of hunting, or of party feuds—not of tongues in Westminster, but of swords and firebrands in the forests? Would he acquiesce in this, when the country can scarcely keep him a few months, though he can assemble round him kindred spirits, books, the elegancies and mind of social life, and the speediest news of the whole world? Would the country gentleman like to sink into a feudal retainer? The merchant follow his procession of packhorses through narrow roads, and in high peril of bandits? The farmer drop down into the born thrall? The parish priest convert his pleasant parsonage and family into the solitary bachelorship of popery? Would the man most pressed by the cares and heart-griping necessities of this populous and struggling time, be willing to accept the quiet simplicity of those days, with their monotonous solitude, ignorance, servitude, and perpetual danger of arbitrary infliction of death or mutilation?

And yet, in what colours of the rose do our imaginations clothe these times! The repose, the simplicity, the picturesque solitude, come before us with a peculiar feeling of delight. And so, no doubt, there was a wild charm about them. The old minstrels delighted to sing about them, and they did it with a feeling of nature. The green shaws, the merry green woods, especially when "the leaves were lark and long" in summer; when

> The wood wele sang and would not cease,
> Sitting upon the spray;

the exploits of the outlaw; the hymn of the lonely anchorite; the vesper-bell of the convent; and the chivalrous adventures of knights and dames in forests and hoary holts, fired them with a genuine enthusiasm, and communicate their warmth to us. No doubt, too, that baron and esquire, forester and lawless pursuer of the deer, had all a wild delight in their life; and instinctively closing the eyes of our mind upon what was dark and unpalatable in their practice, we open them to all that was free, peaceful, and in contrast with our own situation and mode of existence. We rush from cities and social anxieties into the free world of woods and wildernesses, with hearts that feel the cool refreshments of nature. To us it is a novelty, with all its piquancy about it; and we cannot bide long enough to wear off the charm. We come, too, with the high poetry of a thousand intellectual associations to take possession of woodland freedom. We have all the power of Milton, Shakspeare, Spenser, and Ariosto, upon us; and how delicious seems the picturesque England of the feudal ages! We have, indeed, now too little of what they had too much. They, like the modern Americans, would gladly have exchanged some of their trees for

cultivated lands; they had too much of a good thing; in popular phraseology, they could not see the wood for trees; but O! how delightful are those tree-lands to us, prisoners of civilization, and walkers amongst brick-walls.

Let us wander awhile now amongst those fresh woodlands. Our old chroniclers tell us, that this kingdom was once nearly overspread with forests; that they existed from time immemorial; that is, long before the Norman dynasty commenced, by which they were more perfectly defined, carefully fenced, and protected with sanguinary laws. They were that part of the country, and indeed, the greater part, which retained its original state. That which remained uninclosed, and therefore called forest, or *foresta, uasi ferarum statio*, because there naturally retired and made their abode the wild creatures, *ferœ naturœ*. All this was held to belong to the king; and when the Conqueror began to reign, who had occasion to give away and divide large tracts amongst his military followers, he began to exercise more strictly his prerogative over the remainder. Not satisfied with sixty-nine forests, lying in almost every part of the kingdom, such, and so many, says Evelyn, as no other realm of Europe had, he laid waste a vast tract of country in Hampshire, and created another, thence called the New Forest, because it was the last added to the ancient ones, except that of Hampton Court, the work of Henry VIII.

Various theories respecting the origin of this New Forest have occupied the attention, and divided the opinions of antiquarians and historians. Polydore Virgil asserted that the Conqueror’s motive for afforesting so large a tract of country here, was because it enabled him to maintain it secure from the intrusion of all but his own creatures, and thereby

always to have a most convenient station for the escape of his followers, in case of any revolt, to their own country, or for the secret and secure arrival of fresh forces thence. Mr. Camden, however, has satisfactorily shewn, that no such object was attributed to him by the chroniclers of his own and immediately succeeding times, who certainly were sufficiently bitter against him, for his haughty temper, and the reckless atrocities which he committed in carrying into effect his system of policy, the thorough breaking of the Saxon spirit, and the establishment of his own noblesse. No such motive, however plausible, was attributed to him for five hundred years. As Mr. Carte very reasonably suggests, if such was his intention, he would have carried it into effect within the first five years of his reign, during which time he was engaged in putting down disaffection, and strengthening his position. In the pursuance of these objects he was not in the habit of stopping short at trifles on the score of humanity. “His horrible devastation,” says William of Malmsbury, “of great part of Yorkshire, and all the counties belonging to England north of the Humber, was made that the Danes and Scots invading his kingdom that way might find no subsistence, and to punish the people for disaffection to his government; without regarding what number of innocent persons would be involved in the destruction.” We are told, even by one of the Norman historians—Ord. Vit. iv. p. 314, 515, and by Ingulph. p. 79, who speak of it with horror, that above 160,000 men, women and children, perished by famine in those ruined counties. The devastation was such that, for above sixty miles, where before there had been many large and flourishing towns, besides a great number of villages and fine country-seats, not a single hamlet

was to be seen; the whole country was uncultivated, and remained so till Henry II.'s reign.

If we date the making of this forest at the same time with the publishing of the forest laws, it will follow that it was made merely for the pleasures of the chase. This was natural enough, when we reflect that he had taken up his favourite residence at Winchester; and this is the reason assigned by all the authorities nearest to his own time. The Saxon Chronicler, believed to be cotemporary with William, assigns this sole reason, and adds—"William loved great deer, as if he had been their father;" which Henry of Huntingdon copies. No trace of other motive appears in Gemeticensis, his own chaplain, Knyton, Ordericus Vitalis, Simon Dunelmensis, Brompton, William of Malmsbury, Florence of Worcester, Matthew Paris, Hemingford, or other ancient authority. In such a man the passion for the chase was cause sufficient. In all early stages of a country, where it abounds with forests, and intellectual resources hardly exist, hunting must constitute the great passion of life. The Britons, the Saxons, were passionate hunters. Harold had already restrained all forests to his own use, and William put the finishing stroke to the system. Here, however, occurs a second point of difference of opinion in the historians. Some tell us that he made this forest, others, that he merely enlarged it. It is certain that the ancient forest of Ythene existed here before; but it is probable that it had become rather a woodland than a preserve of game; and that William's enlargement was almost, in fact, a new creation: and strictly speaking, entirely so, as a forest, having its defined boundaries, its stock of deer, its appointed officers, and its code of laws and courts:—this, the very name of New Forest clearly implies.

Others, again, attribute to his son Rufus, the enlargement and the devastations, and thence look upon his own death, in the very spot where he had pulled down a church, as a direct divine judgment. There can be little doubt but that both had a hand in it. The Conqueror probably laid waste and depopulated so as to complete the boundaries of his forest, and carry out his conceived plans, and Rufus went on, on the old royal principle, of making a solitude and calling it peace, to pull down churches, and remove what hamlets or cottages yet remained to interfere with princely ideas of forest seclusion. That William did all that is attributed to him, is declared by all the historians of that and immediately succeeding times; and Gemeticensis, his own chaplain, distinctly declares that it was the popular belief that the death of his two sons, Richard and Rufus, and his grandson, the son of Robert, were judgments of God upon him for his atrocities committed here in the making of it. These atrocities consisted in laying waste the country to the extent of thirty miles in length, or ninety in circumference, the extent still attributed to it; destroying towns, chapels, manors and mansion-houses; according to some writers, twenty-two mother-churches, to others thirty-six, and to others thirty-two. Unquestionably the number was great; two churches only being mentioned in his own Survey in Doomsday Book, between A.D. 1083 and 1086, the 17th and 20th of his reign, as standing in all that space, while in the rest of the county there were 100. This violence he completed by driving out the inhabitants, and stocking the land with deer, stags, and other game.

Such was the origin and extent of the ancient royal forests of England, all preserved and maintained for the especial and exclusive pastime of the kings. Truly

the state of a king was then kingly indeed: 69 forests, 13 chases, and upwards of 750 parks existing in England. There were, in Yorkshire alone, in Henry VIII.'s time, 275 woods, besides parks and chases, most of them containing 500 acres. Over all these the king could sport; for it was the highest honour to a subject to receive a visit from the king to hunt in his chase, or free warren, while no subject, except by special permission and favour, could hunt in the royal parks. These 69 forests of immense extent, lying in all parts of England, and occupying no small portion of its surface, all stood then for the sole gratification of the royal pleasure of the chase, and supplying the king's household; and few persons have now any idea of the state, dignity, and systematic severity of this great hunting establishment of England, maintained through all succeeding reigns to the time of the Commonwealth, and some part of it much longer. Each forest was an imperium in imperio, having its staff of officers,—the lord warden, his deputy, a steward and bow-bearer, rangers, keepers or foresters, verdurers, agistors, regarders, bailiffs, woodwards, beadles, etc. etc., with their own courts. First the COURT of ATTACHMENT, held every forty days, in which all attachments against offenders in the forest were received, evidence heard upon them, and were enrolled to be presented at the COURT of SWAINMOTE. This swainmote was held three times every year, which all the swains, or free tenants, were bound to attend. The warder or his steward presided, and the foresters, verderers, and other ministers of the forest were the judges. Here all the attachments enrolled in the records of the Court of Attachment were received and examined, but no award or judgment was made or executed by this

court; but it swore in a grand jury to examine these attachments, of which all that appeared made on sufficient grounds and evidence were reserved for the decision of the JUSTICE-SEAT, or highest court of the forest. The justice-seat, or Court of Eyre in the forest, was held once in three years. Two justices in Eyre were appointed as supreme judges in these courts: one having jurisdiction in all the forests north, and the other over those south of the Trent. Yet there appears in the early reigns to have been great irregularity in the appointment of these justices. Sometimes there were two, according to the legitimate ordinance; at others we find three going the circuit, or *jornay*, as it was called, in Edward I.'s reign, when in the 15th year of that reign, three are named as going the jornay of the north; viz. Sir William Vesey, Thomas Normanville, and Richard of Gryppinge, justices. This Sir William Vesey, Richard of Gryppinge, and their fellows, justices, are repeatedly mentioned in the king's writs. This might arise from the discovery that collusion and bribery to cover peculation had been the consequence of one justice going alone; for it is complained, that it "was fonden that oure lorde the kynge had sustained grete and many folde hurte fro the jornay of Robert Neville." Great peculation and appointment of his own creatures for his own purposes were proved against Robert Evringham, and he was "deposed from his office of chief forestershippe of fee in the Forest of Sherwood for ever."[16]

[16] MS. documents respecting Sherwood Forest, in Bromley House Library, Nottingham.

Every officer was sworn to present to the court of attachment, every offender against the laws of the forest, for the decision of the justices, through the

process already described; a system of most summary rigour, without favour or concealment; yet abuses still crept in; and the long term between the coming of the justices—three years—tended greatly to this; for as no case could be finally decided till then, it afforded vast scope for the powerful and wealthy to try the force of bribery on the justice, as well as made the case fearfully severe on those who could not find bail or give security, and must therefore be in gaol all that time; especially as a man might be taken up on presumption. This, therefore, became a gross injustice to the innocent.

You would imagine from the oaths of the different officers, that their duties were all alike, for they bound them all to seize, secure, and present for attachment all persons committing any depredations on *vert or venison*; vert, curiously enough Anglicized —Green Hugh, *i. e.* green hue, and so continually written in the Assisæ Forestæ, meaning every thing having a green leaf, and therefore extending from the forest trees to the underwood and shrubs which formed cover for the game, and also to the grass which was the food of the game. All persons seen suspiciously strolling about on the highways, especially if in cloaks, with dogs in leash, or out of it, pursuing small birds, squirrels, or vermin, cutting turf, peat, or boughs, or fallen timber, heath, or fern, without proper authority. The dwellers in the purlieus of the forest were kept a strict eye upon; and all gates, or fences, or dykes were presentable which were too high for the deer to pass from one part of the forest to another. The forests were very systematically divided into walks, or keepings, wards or regards, over which was a properly subordinate succession of officers. The ranger had surveillance over the principal keepers; they over their deputy

keepers, and night-walkers. The verderers had especially to look after the vert, although sworn to watch for and bring to punishment, offenders of all kinds, and to them must all offenders be brought to give surety to appear at the attachment. Besides these, there were in every township, and every regard, woodwards and their men, who attended to the felling and accounting for all timber. There were agistors also to look after the agistment of cattle. The swainmote was empowered to inquire and to see that all officers punctually performed their forest duties, going regularly their rounds; and that they paid the wages of their deputies, so that none might be tempted to commit depredations on the game, wood, browze, peat, turf, deers' horns, or any other product of the forest. A sharp vigilance was kept up on this head, and severe punishment awarded for such offenders. No produce of the forest might be taken out of it without a direct warrant from the justice or warden; neither cattle, timber, dead deer, vert, nor anything whatever. Those who had freeholds within the forest, as came to be the case in time, through grants from kings to favourites of one kind or another, were subject to the same restriction. And where warrant was granted for any of these purposes, or for supplying the religious houses with wood for burning, etc., the verderers were to see that no more was actually taken out than the warrant allowed, and were punished if convicted of failing in this duty.[17] Perambulations at stated periods were made throughout each forest, its enclosures, purlieus, and boundaries, to ascertain that all was kept in order, and that there was neither waste of vert nor *venison*, which included all game; nor encroachment within, nor without. The external boundaries of a forest, were not like those of a park, walls or pales,

but metes and bounds, meres, rivers, and hills, otherwise it was not a forest.

[17] Yet a curious instance is recorded in one of the Inquisitions of Sherwood Forest, of the way in which the vigilance of these laws was evaded. The Countess of Newcastle, whose husband was probably at that time governor of Newark Castle, had procured large quantities of timber out of the forest, under a warrant to furnish such timber for the necessary repairs of that castle. The quantity delivered led to an inquiry, and it was found that the castle was not repaired at all, but that the timber had been sold, and the countess had got the cash. Yet after this it was again found, that not being able to procure another warrant for timber, she had, however, got one for the delivery of cord-wood for burning, and under the title of cord-wood, the deputy-warden had supplied her with some of the best oaks of the forest. On a second investigation it turned out that the deputy-warden was a partner in a timber trade—that timber was thus procured through the means of the countess's plea of public service, and that she and the deputy shared the spoil.

Drifts of the forest were made at least twice in the year. "By the Assises of Pickeringe and Lancaster, the officers of the forest did use to make drifts at least twice in the year: the first, fifteen days before Midsummer, at the beginning of the *fencemonth*, that the forest might be avoided and emptied of all cattle during that time. And every commoner was then forced to come and challenge his beasts, and take them away, or they were taken by the officers of the forest as strays. The second drift was at Holyrood-day, when the agistors did begin to agist the king's demesne woods, and all beasts and cattle of all sorts then found in them were driven by the officers of the forest to some convenient place, and impounded, and

then warning was given that every man should come and fetch his own. Forests are driven for three causes. First, for the avoiding of surcharging; secondly, for the avoiding of *forreners*, who have no right; thirdly, that no beasts be commoned that are not legally commonable, as geese, goats, sheep, and swine, which are not commonable. Swine, however, were admitted to the woods of the king's forests if their noses were duly ringed, and paid for their run there, a sum called pannage; and owners of woods in the forests might run such swine in their own woods. Upon reasonable causes the officers of the forest may make their drifts oftener if they will."

Manwood's Forest Laws, pp. 86-7.

Such was the general constitution of a forest, with its courts, officers, laws, and customs; and so systematic does it seem; surveillance and subdivision so regularly descending downward, till it included watch and ward over every part, and the familiar acquaintance of every forester with his own location, that one really wonders how any Robin Hood could long escape amongst them. The difficulty of the thing no doubt it was that contributed so much to raise his renown. But the vast extent of the forests, the obscurity of the wooded parts, and the immense out-boundaries laying them open to the nocturnal incursions of marauders, still account for the traditionary exploits of deer-stealers, in spite of the then forest-law, which itself gave a strong spice of interest to the adventurer.

The severity of the laws under William and his immediate successors was monstrous. "In the Saxon times," says Blackstone, "though no man was allowed to kill or chace the king's deer, yet he might start any game, pursue and kill it on his own estate, but the rigour of those new constitutions vested the

sole property of all the game in England in the king alone; and no man was entitled to disturb any fowl of the air, or any beast of the field, of such kinds as were specifically reserved for the royal amusement of the sovereign, without express license from the king, of a chase or a free warren; and these franchises were granted as much to preserve the breed of animals as to indulge the subject. From a similar principle to which, though the forest laws are now mitigated, and by degrees grown entirely obsolete, yet from this root has sprung a bastard slip, known by the name of the GAME LAW, now arrived to and wantoning in its highest vigour; both founded upon the same notion of permanent property in wild creatures, and both productive of the same tyranny to the commons; but with this difference, that the forest laws established only one mighty hunter throughout the land; the game laws have raised a little Nimrod in every manor. And in one respect, the ancient law was much less unreasonable than the modern, for the king's grantee of a chase or free-warren might kill game in every part of his franchise, but now, though a freeholder of less than 100*l.* a-year is forbidden to kill a partridge upon his own estate, yet nobody else, not even the lord of the manor, unless he hath a grant of free-warren, can do it without committing a trespass, and subjecting himself to an action."—*Commentaries*, iv. 415, 8vo.

The full rigour of the forest laws of the Norman dynasty must be a curious subject of contemplation to an Englishman now. William decreed the eyes of any person to be pulled out, who took either a buck or a boar. Rufus made the stealing of a doe, a hanging matter. The taking a hare was fined 20*s.*, and a coney 10*s.*, as money was then! Eadmer adds, that fifty persons of fortune, being apprehended by

the last prince for killing his bucks, were forced to purge themselves by the fire of ordeal, etc. Henry I. made no distinction between him who killed a man, and him who killed a buck; and punished them who destroyed the game, though not in the forest, either by forfeiture of their goods or loss of limbs. The monstrous severities of Geoffrey de Langley, who, in the reign of Henry II. had a patent for all benefits accruing from the expeditation of dogs, and rode through most parts of England with an armed band, committing the greatest oppressions, and extorting vast sums, especially from the northern gentry, are recorded with indignation by Matthew Paris. Richard I. enacted mutilation and pulling out of eyes for hunting in the forest, though he afterwards relaxed a little, and contented himself with banishment, imprisonment, or fine. Whoever was summoned to the chase, and refused to go, paid a fine of 50*s.* to the king.

The feeling created amongst the people by this bloody code, may be imagined by the language of John of Salisbury, who, after speaking of the higher offences, says,—"What is more extraordinary is, that it is often made by law criminal to set traps or snares for birds, to allure them by springes and pipes, or use any craft to take them; and offenders are punished by forfeiture of goods, loss of limbs, or even death. One would suppose that the birds of the air and the fish of the sea were common to all; but they belong to the crown, and are claimed by the forest laws wherever they fly. Hands off! keep clear! lest you incur the guilt of high treason, and fall into the clutch of the hunters. The swains are driven from their fields, while the beasts of the forest have a liberty of roving; and the farmer's meadows are taken from him to increase their pasture. The new-

sown grounds are taken from the farmer, the pastures from the grazier and shepherd; the beehives are turned away from the flowery bank, and the very bees are hardly allowed their natural liberty."—*Polycraticon*, i. 4.

Ah! Johannes Sarisburiensis, thou wert a radical! Can any body read the indignant spirit of this passage, and say that radicalism is anything new under the sun? This is the very soul of Hampden. The inhumanity of those proceedings occasioned frequent disturbances, till the revolt of the barons extorted from Henry III. the CHARTA DE FORESTA, by which he repealed those severe laws, and enacted others more equitable. These, again, were from time to time softened by different monarchs, as civilization and popular power and influence advanced, by what are called *Assises of the Forest*, which were a kind of revision and re-enactment of the forest laws, by different kings; omitting or modifying any former provisions which might seem contrary to the spirit of the time; and adding such others as were deemed necessary. As, for instance, the assise of Edward I., the preamble of which was thus:—"Here followeth the Assise of Forest of our lorde the kinge E., sonne of kinge H. and his commandements of his forests in englonde, made by the assent and counsell of Archbusshoppes, busshoppes, abbots, earls, barons, knyghtes of all his realme." This consists of twenty items; and provides principally, that any person found in the forest, or the woods of the forest, trespassing on the venison, shall be taken, and, on conviction of hunting or taking the king's venison, he shall be imprisoned, and not delivered without the king's especial commandment, or that of his justice of the forest.[18] That all trespassers on the vert shall be taken before the verderers, and they shall find

sufficient surety to come before the next court of attachment; and such attachment shall be enrolled, to be presented to the justices of the forest when they next come into those parts to hold the pleas of the forest. That none who held woods within the forest should suffer those woods to be without a keeper, or they should be taken into the king's hands again. Such holders of woods, or any other persons inhabiting within the forest, should not have any bows, arrows, or arbalasts; or any brach, greyhound, or any other engine "to hurte the king of his Deare." But any dogs introduced into the forest shall be expeditated; or, according to the English phrase, lamed, so that they may not be able to seize the deer; and that the expeditation, or laming of dogs, shall be made every three years. This practice of laming is differently described by different writers. Some define it as consisting in cutting off at least one of the fore-feet; others in cutting off the claws only; and others, in cutting out the fleshy part of both fore-paws. Probably the practice differed in different forests, and different ages. At all events, the dogs were so mutilated as to be unable to seize a deer; the Latin term implies the actual lopping off the foot. Future assizes confine this laming to mastiffs; no greyhounds, brachs, or brackets being allowed entrance at all. No mower was allowed to bring "a great mastiff to drive away the deer of our lord the king, but little dogs to look after such things as lie open."

[18] An old rhyme, full of mystery to uninitiated ears, contained the law of attachment in this case. Any person was to be seized and conveyed before a forester or verderer, who was found,—

At dog-draw, stable-stand,

Back-berond, or bloody-hand.

> Which mean,—*at dog-draw*, having a dog in a leash, following a deer by the scent, in order to come upon it and slay it; or having wounded a deer, and following the dog-draw, or guidance of the dog to overtake it. *At stable-stand*, standing in the forest with bow ready to discharge at the deer, or with a dog in a leash ready to slip him on its appearance. *At back-bear* or *back-berond*, actually carrying any forest property away. *At bloody-hand*, with hands or person bloody, as from the actual slaughter of game. Though three of these are truly called by the lawyers *presumption*, they were held sufficient for attachment and conviction.

The assize continues—but no holders of *foreign* woods in the forest shall agiste[19] before the regular time of the king's agistment, "which begins at mychalmas and lastes to martinmasse then next followinge." That none shall assart[20] in the forest without being taken before the verderer, and giving surety to appear at the next attachment. That no tanner or whittawer of leather dwell in the forest, out of boroughs, towns, etc. That any archbishops, bishops, barons, or knight being found hunting, the forester shall demand "a wedde and a pledge," and if he refuse, the forester shall see "his dede," and cause it to be enrolled to be presented before the justice of the forest. Other assizes say, that the bodies of such dignitaries, whether temporal or spiritual, shall be seized till they give security for their appearance; but that any such nobleman, or dignitary, being sent for to the king on any business, shall have the privilege of hunting one or two deer as he goes through the forest, and the same on his return, provided it be in view of the forester, otherwise he shall blow a horn, lest he seem to steal it.

[19] That is, turn in cattle to graze, at so much per head, which was done in most forests, and the money paid to the verderer,—a certain number of persons mostly having a right of common besides, by grant or charter.

[20] Root up the covert and make a clearing.

That any man going along the king's highway, through a forest, with a bow, shall bear it without string; or with dogs, he shall have them coupled, and his greyhounds "knytted in a leash." That if any damage be done to the king's vert or venison, or waste, of which no rational account can be given, the foresters, or verderers, under whose care the said charges have been, shall be taken, and no satisfaction but their own bodies shall be received till the king, or his justice, have had their will of them. Yet, so early as Henry II., it was found that all these strict provisions being insufficient to prevent waste of the woods, and "extreme minishing of the deere," the office of regarder was established. The regarders were originally to be knights, but "other good people" were afterwards admitted. They were to be chosen by the king's writ, and there were to be twelve in each forest. The foresters and verderers were gentlemen: the former appointed by the king's letters-patent; the latter by writ in full county, like our present members of parliament; yet were the regarders set as inspectors over them. They were to go through every part of the forest, accompanied by the foresters, verderers, woodwards, bailiffs, and beadles, and examine into the state of vert and venison; comparing them with the reports of their predecessors, and seeing that no waste, or embezzlement, or improper, or superabundant agistment was made; that no assarts, or purprestures[21] were attempted. This, however, they

could not do when they pleased. They were summoned by writ, once in three years, preparatory to the coming of the justice to hold his pleas, to whom they were to deliver their roll, duly signed and sealed.

[21] Encroachments and obstructions of several kinds, such as impediments in the highways, turning dykes, building swine-cotes, mills, etc.

Queen Elizabeth, who found that, during the minority of her brother Edward and the troubled reign of her sister Mary, great waste, destruction, and embezzlement had taken place, made repeated inquests into the state of the forests by her commissioners, and had general surveys and valuations made. She descends in her assizes to the very bees, which it seems built then abundantly in our woods, as they do in the American forests now—the old, hollow oaks, being very storehouses of honey. Hawks, herons, the nests of hawks, and every species of beast that had been held the legitimate denizens of forests by her predecessors, as stags, bucks, hares, badgers, foxes, and even cats and squirrels, are enumerated.

These forest laws continued till the Commonwealth. One court of justice was held after the Restoration; but after the Revolution of 1688, they fell into desuetude, and now all offences against the forests are cognizable by the common laws of the land.

For the fullest information on this subject, see Cowel, Heskett, Coke, and Blackstone; or Manwood on Forest Laws.

The English Forests were formerly as follows:

1. Aiden, Northumberland.
2. Allerdale, Cumberland.

3. Amsty, Yorkshire.
4. Arden, Warwick.
5. Ashdown, Sussex.
6. Bere, Hants.
7. Bernwood, Bucks.
8. Beverley, York.
9. Blakemore, or Forest of Watchet, Dorset.
10. Braden, Wilts.
11. Charnwood, Leicester.
12. Cheviot, Northumberland.
13. Chute, Hants.
14. Clun.
15. Cors.
16. Dartmoor, Devon.
17. Darval, Hereford.
18. Dean, Gloucester.
19. Deeping, Lincoln.
20. Delamere, Cheshire.
21. Epping, Essex.
22. Exmore, Devon.
23. Feckenham, Worcester.
24. Gillingham, Somerset.
25. Gáltres, York.
26. Hainault, Essex.
27. Hampton Court, Middlesex.
28. Hardwicke, York.
29. Hartlebury.
30. Huckestow, Shropshire.
31. Inglewood, Cumberland.
32. Kingswood, Gloucester.
33. Knaresborough, York.
34. Langden, Durham.
35. Leonard.
36. Lee.

37. Leicester, Leicester.
38. Mendip, Somerset.
39. Malvern, Worcester.
40. Martindale, Cumberland.
41. Maxwell, Cheshire.
42. Needwood, Stafford.
43. New Forest, Hants.
44. Pamber, Hants.
45. Peak, Derbyshire.
46. Penrise.
47. Perbroke, Dorset.
48. Rath.
49. Riddlesdale, Northumberland.
50. Rockingham, Northampton.
51. Rychiche, Somerset.
52. Salcey, Northampton.
53. Savornac, Wilts.
    The only forest in possession of a subject.
54. Selwood, Somerset.
55. Sherwood, Nottingham.
56. Staines, Middlesex.
57. Teesdale, Durham.
58. Waltham, Essex.
59. Whittlebury, Northampton.
60. Wichwood, Oxford.
61. Wencedale.
62. Westbere.
63. Windsor, Berks.
64. Whinfield, Westmorland.
65. Wirrol, Cheshire.
66. Whitby, Yorkshire.
67. Woolmer.
68. Wyre, Worcester.
69. Wrokene, Salop.

Of these, most are now dis-afforested, and have left only their names. Those which remain are under the management of a board of commissioners; the chief of whom is, by virtue of his office, always one of the ministers of the Crown. Needwood is principally inclosed, leaving, however, a portion belonging to the crown, and one lodge. It had formerly four wards and four keepers, with each a handsome lodge, now in the hands of different private gentlemen. In Elizabeth's reign it was about 24 miles in circumference, and in 1658 it contained 9220 acres of land. In 1684 it contained 47,150 trees, and 10,000 cord of hollies and underwood, valued at 30,710*l.* It and Bagot's Park, formerly part of it, still contain some of the largest oaks in England. Windsor is the Royal Park, and the most complete and splendid example of a park in the world.—Of New Forest, and Sherwood, I propose to speak more particularly.

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CHAPTER II.
NEW FOREST.

This forest seems to retain not only more of the forest character than all our other forests, but to have maintained more exactly its ancient boundaries. William of Malmsbury says, the Conqueror laid waste thirty miles of country for this forest. The perambulation of the 22d of Charles II., extending from Milton south along the Avon west, to Bramshire north, and within Southampton Water east, by Fawley and Boldre back to Milton, includes about thirty miles square, and this is the extent that is now attributed to it by the inhabitants of the neighbourhood. In the present hundred of New Forest, we have the parishes of Minstead, Fawley, and Boldre; the chapels, or curacies of Lyndhurst, Beaulieu, Exbury, and Brokenhurst. It is indeed the

only one of our forests which now can give us a perfect idea of what an English forest was in the feudal ages. It has not acquired, like Windsor, too much of a park-like character by containing a royal residence; nor has it been enclosed, and shaped into quadrangular fields: but there it is, in its original extent,—vast, wild, stocked with deer; with its alternations of woods and heaths, morasses and thickets; interspersed with hamlets and farms, and forest-huts, as were the forests of old.

There are the glorious ruins of Beaulieu, of which the able historian of Winchester thus speaks:—"The curious traveller who visits Beaulieu, descends at once into a lovely vale, enclosed with lofty trees, covered with the richest verdure, and watered by a flowing river, the whole of which seem to be the effect of magic. In the most enchanting part of this scene stands the ancient abbey. He will see, in the first place, the outward gate of the sanctuary, to which the brave but unfortunate Margaret of Anjou, the venturous impostor, Perkin Warbeck, and other fugitive victims of the laws, fled, with breathless haste, for safety. He will next come to the abbot's house, with its turrets, moats, and other miniature fortifications, as perfect, and in as good condition as when it was first built. Here fugitives of distinction were entertained. From this he will enter and survey the spacious and noble refectory, now the parish church, rich with innumerable ornaments and monuments of past ages. Finally, he will trace in the splendid remains of the cloisters, chapter-house, and church, the chief effort, if not of the piety, at least of the taste and magnificence of the unfortunate king John."

As you go from Southampton to Lyndhurst, you have a fine ride through the lower regions of the

forest, and see enough to make you desire to steal away into the beautiful woodlands. Lovely streams come winding out of its shades, and hasten towards the sea. You get glimpses of forest glades, and peeps under the trees into distant park-like expanses, or heathy-wastes. The deer are wandering here and there: here you see whole troops of those ponies peculiar to this forest; pheasants and partridges come often running out on the way before you. All about grow hollies, which were encouraged in most ancient forests for winter browze; and you have glimpses of forest trees that were enough to enrich all the landscape painters in the world. But if you wish to know really what New Forest is, you must plunge into its very heart, and explore its farthest recesses. You may go on from wood to wood, and from heath to heath; now coming out on the high ground, as on the Ringwood road, the wild forest lying visible for miles around, and the country towards Southampton and to the very sea, all spread out wide and beautifully to the eye;—now descending into profound solitudes, and the depth of woodland gloom. It is a wild, wide region, in which you may satiate yourselves with nature in its primitive freedom. In Bilhaghe, in the forest of Sherwood, you find a fragment of an ancient forest unique in its kind,—a region of old oaks, shattered by the tempests of five hundred years, and standing in all the hoary grandeur of age; and are thereby struck with a quick feeling of the mighty flight of time,—of the utter change and revolution of manners and government since those trees were in their prime; but when you step into the New Forest, you step at once out of the present world into the past. You do not see it existing before your eyes as a remnant of antiquity, but as a portion of it, into which, as by some charm,

you are carried. It is not a decaying relic; it is a perfect and present thing. The trees are not scathed and hollow skeletons, except in some few places, but stand the full-grown and vigorous giants of the wood. This is owing to the timber being cut down for the navy ere it begins to perish, and yet being left to attain a sufficient growth, and to furnish vast woods that extend over hill and dale, and give you foot-room for days and weeks without fear of exhausting the novelty. It looks now as it must have looked to the eye of one of our Norman monarchs, except that the marks of the Conqueror's ravages and fires are worn out; the ruins of churches and cottages are buried beneath the accumulated mosses and earth of ages; and peaceful smoke ascends from woodland habitations.

In my brief visit to it, I set out from Lyndhurst, and walked up to Stony-Cross, the place of Rufus's death. From the moment that I turned up out of Lyndhurst, I seemed to have entered an ancient region. There was an old-world primitive air about every thing, that filled me with a peculiar feeling of poetry. I left behind the nineteenth century, and was existing in the twelfth or fourteenth. Open knolls, and ascending woodlands on one side, covered with majestic beeches, and the village children playing under them; on the other, the most rustic cottages, almost buried in the midst of their orchard trees, and thatched as Hampshire cottages only are—in such projecting abundance,—such flowing lines. Thatch does not here seem the stiff and intractable thing it does elsewhere; nor is it cut in that square, straight-haired fashion; but it seems the kindliest thing in the world. It bends over gables and antique casements in the roof, and comes sweeping down over fronts resting on pillars, and forming verandas and porches;

or over the ends of the houses, down to the very ground, forming the nicest sheds for plants, or places to deposit garden-tools, milk-pails, or other rural apparatus. The whole of the cottages thereabout are in equal taste with the roof; so different to the red, staring, square brick houses of manufacturing districts. They seem, as no doubt they are, erected in the spirit, and under the influence, of the *genius loci*. The beehives in their rustic rows; the little crofts, all belong to a primitive country. I went on; now coming to small groups of such places; now to others of superior pretensions, but equally blent with the spirit of the surrounding nature;—little paradises of cultivated life. As I advanced, heathery hills stretched away on one hand; woods came down thickly and closely on the other, and a winding road beneath the shade of large old trees, conducted me to one of the most retired and peaceful of hamlets. It was Minstead. There was an old school-house; and beneath the large trees that overshadowed the way, lay huge trunks of trees cut ready for conveyance to the naval dockyards; and the forest children, on their way to school, were playing amongst them; now climbing upon them, now pushing each other off with merry laughter; boys and girls, as I approached, scampering away, and into the school.

I know not how it is, but such places of woodland and old-fashioned seclusion, of such repose and picturesque simplicity, always bring strongly to my mind the stories of Tieck. There must be a great similarity in the aspect of these scenes, and of those which he has so much delighted to describe. I thought of the old woman with her dog and bird. Every solitary cottage seemed just as hers was. I seemed to hear the birch-trees shiver in the breeze, the dog bark, and the bird sing its magic song:

Alone in wood so gay
'Tis good to stay,
Morrow like to-day
For ever and aye:
O, I do love to stay
Alone in wood so gay.

It was early autumn. All birds really had ceased to sing; and the deep hush of nature but made more distinct this spirit-song, amid the delicious reveries in which I went wandering along, enveloped as in a heavenly cloud. All over the moorland ground spread the crimson glow of the heather. I went onward and upward; passing the gates of forest lodges, and looking down into valleys, whence arose the smoke of huts and charcoal fires. And anon, I stood upon the airy height, and saw woods below, and felt near me solitude, and a spirit that had brooded there for ages. I passed over high, still heaths, treading on plants that grow only in nature's most uncultivated soil, to the mighty beeches of Boldre Wood, and thence away to fresh masses of forest. Herds of red-deer rose from the fern, and went bounding away, and dashed into the depths of the woods; troops of those grey and long-tailed forest horses turned to gaze as I passed down the open glades; and the red squirrels in hundreds, scampered up from the ground where they were feeding on fallen mast and the kernels of pine-cones, and stamped and chattered on the boughs above me.

A lady who till recently lived on the skirts of the forest, and who moreover has walked through the spirit-land with power, and is known and honoured by all true lovers of pathos and imagination, had solemnly warned me not to attempt to pass through the larger woods without a guide; but what guide, except such as herself, or as the venerable William

Gilpin would have been, could one have that we should not wish away ten times in a minute? If we must be lost, why, so let it be,—but let us be lost in the freedom of one's own thoughts and feelings. Delighted with the true woodland wildness and solemnity of beauty, I roved onward through the widest woods that came in my way, and once, indeed, I imagined that a guide would really have been agreeable. Awaking as from a dream, I saw far around me one deep shadow, one thick and continuous roof of boughs, and thousands of hoary boles standing clothed, as it were, with the very spirit of silence. A track in the wood seemed to lead in the direction I aimed at; but having gone on for an hour, here admiring the magnificent sweep of some grand old trees as they hung into a glade or a ravine, some delicious opening in the deep woods, or the grotesque figures of particular trees which seemed to have been blasted into blackness, and contorted into inimitable crookedness by the savage genius of the place,—I found myself again before one of those very remarkable trees which I had passed long before. It was too singular to be mistaken, and I paused to hold a serious council with myself. As I stood, I became more than ever sensible of the tomb-like silence in which I was. There was not the slightest sound of running water, whispering leaf, or the voice of any creature; the beating of my own heart, the ticking of my watch, were alone heard. It was that deep stillness which has been felt there by others.

> The watchmen from the castle top
> Almost might hear an acorn drop,
> It was so calm and still;
> Might hear the stags in Hocknell groan,
> And catch, by fits, the distant moan
> Of King-garn's little rill.

The Red King.

Whichever way I looked the forest stretched in one dense twilight. It was the very realization of that appalling hush and bewildering continuity of shade so often described by travellers in the American woods. I had lost now all sense of any particular direction, and the only chance of reaching the outside of the wood was to go as much as possible in one direct line. Away then I went—but soon found myself entangled in the thickest underwood—actually overhead in rank weeds; now on the verge of an impassable bog, and now on that of a deep ravine. Fortunately for me, the summer had been remarkably dry, and the ravines were dry too,—I could descend into them, and climb out on the other side. But the more I struggled on, the more I became confounded. Pausing to consider my situation, I saw a hairy face and a large pair of eyes fixed on me. Had it been a satyr, I felt that I should not have been surprised, it seemed so satyr-like a place. It was only a stag—which, with its head just above the tall fern, and its antlers amongst the boughs, looked very much like Kühleborn of the Undine story. As I moved towards him he dashed away through the jungle, for so only could it be called, and I could long hear the crash of his progress. Ever and anon, huge swine with a fierce guffaw rushed from their lairs—one might have imagined them the wild boars of a German forest. At length I caught the tinkle of a cow-bell—a cheerful sound, for it must be in some open part of the forest, and from its distinctness not far distant. Thitherward I turned, and soon emerged into a sort of island in the sea of woods, a farm, like an American clearing. I sate down on a fallen tree to cool and rest myself, and was struck with the beauty of the place. These green fields lying so peacefully

amid the woods, which, in one place pushed forward their scattered trees, in another retreated; here sprinkling them out thinly on the common, and there hanging their masses of dark foliage over a low-thatched hut or two. The quiet farm-house too, surrounded by its belt of tall hollies; the flocks of geese dispersed over the short turf, and the cows coming home out of the forest to be milked: it was a most peaceful picture, and unlike all that citizens are accustomed to contemplate, except in Spenser or the German writers. These cow-bells too, have something in their sound so quaint and woodland. They are slung by a leathern strap from the neck of the leader, having neither sound nor shape of a common bell, but are like a tin canister, with a ring at the bottom to suspend them by. They seem like the first rudimental attempt at a bell, and have a sound dull and horny, rather than clear and ringing. The leaders of these herds are said to have a singular sagacity in tracking the woods, and finding their way to particular spots and home again, by extraordinary and intricate ways.

Having now a clear conception of my position, I proceeded leisurely towards Stony-Cross, the reputed place of the catastrophe of Rufus. The tree whence the fatal arrow glanced, or, at least, the one marked by popular tradition as it, was standing till about a century ago, when a triangular stone was set down to identify the spot; with these inscriptions, one on each side:

1. Here stood the oak, on which an arrow, shot by Sir Walter Tyrrell at a stag, glanced and struck King William the Second, surnamed Rufus, in the breast, of which he instantly died, on the second of August, A.D. 1100.

2. King William the Second, surnamed Rufus, being

slain, as is before related, was laid in a cart belonging to one Purkess, and drawn from hence to Winchester, and was buried in the cathedral church of that city.

3. A.D. 1745: That the place where an event so memorable had happened, might not be hereafter unknown, this stone was set up by John Lord Delawar, who has seen the tree growing in this place.

This place is called in Doomsday Book, Truham, by Leland, Thorougham, by other writers, Choringham, and Chuham. It is now known by the name of Stony-Cross. Leland says that, in his time (the reign of Henry VIII.) a chapel was standing near the place, most probably built by some of King William's descendants, to pray for his soul; it being the general opinion of the time, that the divine judgment for his cruelties in the forest had fallen upon him here more expressly, because here he had actually destroyed a church. No trace of such a thing is now visible, and indeed, it is one of the singularities of this spot, that so little vestige of the destroyed villages, churches, etc. is to be discovered.

Great numbers of people visit Stony-Cross in the summer. Large parties come out from Southampton, Winchester, and the neighbouring towns, and pic-nic under the trees that are scattered about; and a pleasanter place for a summer day's excursion cannot be well imagined. There is a great charm in visiting a spot marked by a singular historical event 700 years ago, and finding it so similar in all its present features.

It lies on a wide slope amongst the woods. From the Ringwood road above, splendid views over the country present themselves; not far off is a capital inn, and below are a few scattered cottages, standing amid their orchards, a picture of forest simplicity and

peace. When I was there, the trees hung with loads of fruit, yet the little wooden houses stood, some of them empty and unprotected; their inhabitants, I suppose, being out working in the woods. I sate on the trunk of a fallen tree, and contemplated them with a feeling of delight. Supposing that it might be in one of them that the descendants of the Purkess who conveyed the king's body to Winchester, lived, I went to the only one where there appeared anybody at home, to inquire, and learned that Purkess had lived at Minstead, a mile off. This village is said to have received its name from the exclamation of Rufus, when the arrow struck him;—"O myne stede!" Yet he is said to have died instantly: if, therefore, this were the spot of his death, how came Minstead by the name? But the house of Purkess was at Minstead; and the man also is said to have lived near, in a small hut, and maintained his family by burning charcoal. Possibly the difficulty may be explained by what is very likely, that Purkess might be working in the wood at the time of the accident, and conveyed the body to his house before he conveyed it thence to Winchester in his cart. The name of Purkess is not mentioned by any historian, but the fact of the body being so conveyed is, and constant tradition says that Purkess was the man, and that he received as a reward the grant of an acre or two round his hut. His male descendants have continued to occupy the same house, and carry on the same trade from that time till very recently. The last of the lineal occupiers of the hut died an old man a few years ago; his daughter had married away, and his son, having learned some other trade, had gone to Southampton to practise it; so that here a singular residence of 700 years ends. The family is said to be the most ancient in the county. It was said that a

piece of the wheel of the cart on which the body was conveyed, had always been preserved in the hut. When I asked if this were true, "Yes," said the cottager, "the old man had a curious old piece of wood that he used to shew, and when the parties were gone, he used to laugh and say, 'it did very well for the gentlemen.'" Alas! for the honour of all relics that are too shrewdly inquired into!

Mrs. Southey, on reading the former edition, wrote me the following interesting particulars of the Purkess family. "Many of the race and name are still living in and about Minstead. The old cottage of *the* Purkess who 'found the monarch's corse,' stood close to an estate of my father's, now in possession of the Buckleys, where some of my childish years were spent. A damsel of the family,—Lydia Purkess, a true forest damsel, who had three or four colts for her portion, and used to break them in herself without saddle or bridle, other than a rope,—was a great ally of mine, wee thing that I was, bringing me whortle-berries, and service-berries, and dormice, and all sorts of things, to our trysting-place in the holly hedge that divided our domains. The same damsel, when a *little broken in* herself, became in after years our servant, and lived *here* many years, till she married. She came to visit me the other day, and I made her vivify my recollection about the old cottage and the cart wheel. The forester you questioned on the subject was an *envious churl*. The cottage was pulled down when falling, about five years ago. The part of *the* wheel did exist (who dares question our forest creed?) in the possession of the *same Purkesses* till the death of my Lydia's grandfather, and what became of it then she cannot tell. When George III. came last into Hampshire, taking up his abode at Cuffnell, near Minstead, he

sent for the heir of the Purkesses and their heirloom, the wheel, but it was with 'the things which have been and are no more.' I have preserved a sketch of the old cottage; without doubt, I should think, *one* of the most ancient, if not *the most*, in the forest. The reed-pen drawing I send you is a fac-simile of that sketch."



And still—so runs our forest creed,
Flourish the pious yeoman's seed,
Ev'n in the self-same spot:
One horse and cart their little store,
Like their forefathers; neither more
Nor less, the children's lot.—*The Red King.*

Much interesting information respecting this fine old forest is to be found in "Gilpin's Forest Scenery." The Rev. William Gilpin lived at Boldre, in a sweet old parsonage, in a fine situation, facing noble woods. He built and endowed a school-house there, out of the profits of the sale of his drawings, and lies buried in that churchyard. I visited his tomb with Mrs. Southey, who lived near, and who, like all

poetical people who live near one, has an attachment to the forest as enthusiastic as that of her venerable friend Gilpin himself.

Gilpin supposes that the peculiar breed of wild horses with which this forest abounds, are a race descended from the Spanish jennets, driven ashore on the coast of Hampshire in the dispersion of the Invincible Armada. Great numbers of these are annually taken and sold. They are useful for any kind of employment, and are remarkable for being sure-footed. The colts are either hunted down by horsemen, or caught by stratagem. He gives also a curious account of herding the hogs in this forest, which has been so frequently quoted that most readers must be familiar with it.

There is a numerous population within the limits of this forest; having got a habitation there by one means or another. On the skirts of the forest, and round its vast heaths, are numbers of poor huts, whose inmates have very little visible means of existence, but profess themselves to be woodmen, charcoal-burners, and so on; but it is pretty well understood that poaching and smuggling are their more probable vocations. Some of their cabins are the rudest erections of boughs, turf, and heather. Their poles for charcoal-burning are reared in huge pyramids, with the smaller ends uppermost; and they tell a story in the forest, of a popular physician who was sent for on some urgent occasion, and coming to a certain place was met by a party of men, who told him he must submit to be blindfolded. He did not feel in a condition to resist, and therefore acquiesced in the proposal with an apparent good will, though inly not so well pleased with the adventure. He continued to see sufficiently to discover that they took him down a wild and dismal glen. It was

evening; and the light of the charcoal fires was seen glimmering here and there. They came to a huge pile of poles, which the men partly removed, and led him through a sort of labyrinthine passage within them, where his bandage was removed, and he found his patient lying in the midst of a hut, which furnished plenty of evidence that it was not merely the retreat, but the depôt of smugglers. Without, however, seeming to notice anything but his patient, he prescribed, received his fee, was again bandaged, and reconducted to the spot where he had been met, and wished a very good night.

"Foresters and Borderers," says John Evelyn, "are not generally so civil and reasonable as might be wished." And that seems to be exactly the character of those in the New Forest. Many of them, like those in the woods of America, are mere squatters, but the attempt to disturb them is much the same as to disturb a hornets' nest. Conscious that there is no strength but in making common cause, they are all up in arms at any attempt to dislodge any of them. A few years ago, I read in the newspapers of an attempt of the farmers to remove some of these suspicious neighbours to a greater distance, which brought out such a host of hostile foresters against them, threatening to burn their houses over their heads, as compelled them to send for the military. This is just in keeping with the character given of them in the neighbourhood. They are a fine race of men, say they, but many of them desperate. In severe winters the distress and destitution of these wild people have sometimes been found to be beyond description, both in intensity and extent.

In this forest are nine walks, and to each a keeper. It has also two rangers, a bowbearer, and landwarden. There is also an officer of modern date

in the constitution of a forest, the purveyor, appointed by the commissioners of the dockyards at Plymouth, whose business is to assign timber for the use of the navy. There are also various inferior officers, as vermin killers, etc. Many of these offices are now merely sinecures, and are held by gentlemen who rarely see the forest; the greater part of their concern with it being to receive their salaries, and the number of fat bucks belonging by prescription to the office. The lodges were handsome buildings, fit for the residence of any gentleman, and were mostly so occupied. The one at Lyndhurst, called "The King's House," where George III. used to take up his residence during his hunting expeditions, is a substantial brick building close to the road. In it is preserved one of the stirrups of Rufus.

> And still, in merry Lyndhurst hall,
> Red William's stirrup decks the wall;
> Who lists, the sight may see;
> And a fair stone, in green Malwood,
> Informs the traveller where stood
> The memorable tree.

In a note to this stanza of "The Red King," a poem on the death of Rufus, by William Stewart Rose, bowbearer of the New Forest, and therefore, as he himself tells us, successor to Sir Walter Tyrrell, Mr. Rose says—"the stirrup, suspended among smoked escutcheons of the royal arms, and stags' antlers, makes a good addition to the forest ornaments of the hall of judicature. The justice-seat and bar are of ancient and massive oak; an enormous bacon-rack of the same age and materials, surmounts the whole. The green habits of the judge and officers assort well with the rest; and it is impossible to see a court held under this sylvan pomp and circumstance—to view the mixed and oddly accoutred rabble of people

attached—to hear their defences, founded on some wild notions of natural law, delivered in an uncouth jargon, still considerably dashed with Anglo-Saxon—to observe the *sang-froid* with which they hear the decision of their judges, and, not least, to observe the prompt dispatch of justice—it is impossible, I say, to witness such a scene (as a spectator once observed to me), without being transported in imagination back to the fourteenth century."

With the exception of this and Lady-Cross Lodge, all the forest lodges now standing are those appropriated to the use of the under-keepers. Those appropriated to the principal keeper were all pulled down on the decease of the last *royal* Lord Warden, H. R. H. the Duke of Gloucester. Boldrewood was the last that fell, on the death of the Dowager Lady Londonderry, to whom it was lent by her son, the present Marquess.

The fall of these fine old lodges reminds us of one feature which this forest and its neighbourhood possessed in Catholic times, and which it has never lost, the glorious old abbeys. We have already spoken of Beaulieu, but never of Netley and of Binstead in the Isle of Wight opposite, so beautifully alluded to by Mr. Moile in his most extraordinary poems. The State Trials, which few people are acquainted with, but all lovers of poetry ought to know, must have also conferred something of their own character.

> "In Netley Abbey,—on the neighbouring isle,
> The woods of Binstead shade as fair a pile;—
> Where sloping meadows fringe the shores with green,
> A river of the ocean rolls between,
> Whose murmurs, borne on sunny winds, disport
> Through oriel windows, and a cloistered court;

O’er hills so fair, o’er terraces so sweet,
The sea comes twice each day to kiss their feet;—
Where sounding caverns mine the garden bowers,
Where groves intone where many an ilex towers,
And many a fragrant breath exhales from fruit and
flowers:—
And lowing herds and feathered warblers there
Make mystic concords with repose and prayer;
Mixed with the hum of apiaries near,
The mill’s far cataract, and the sea-boy’s cheer,
Whose oars beat time to litanies at noon,
Or hymns at complin by the rising moon;
Where, after chimes, each chapel echoes round
Like one aerial instrument of sound,
Some vast harmonious fabric of the Lord’s.”

The Commissioners of Woods and Forests have made extensive plantations in various parts of the forest, which appear in a thriving condition, and are belted with a variety of pines—Scotch, silver fir, Weymouth pine, pinasters, etc., whose contrasted foliage makes a rich appearance.



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CHAPTER III.
SHERWOOD FOREST.

New Forest, as we have now seen, still retains its completeness as a forest—its herds of deer, its keepers going their daily rounds, its wild horses, and swine almost as wild, and all its ancient extent of wastes, woodlands, and forest people. A widely different condition does this once noble forest exhibit. It was more than all celebrated as the scene of the exploits of Robin Hood, and his merry men. In his day, it extended from the town of Nottingham to Whitby in Yorkshire, or rather it and the forest of Whitby lay open to each other, in perfect contiguity. At a much later day it extended far into Derbyshire; but, after many dis-afforestings and encroachments, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, it contained an equal space with that of New Forest at present. Here our Norman kings delighted to come and enjoy their hunting in summer at their palace of Clypstone, built by Henry II.; and an especially favourite place of John, whose mark upon the forest trees growing in that neighbourhood, has been repeatedly found of late years, in cutting them up for timber.

It was a pleasant region; varied with its hill and dale, fair lakes,—some of which yet remain;—rivulets of most beautiful clearness; woods of noble growth; and the abundant Trent rolling along its southern side. In it lay Nottingham, Mansfield, Hardwick, Welbeck, Thoresby, since the birthplace of Lady Mary Wortley Montague; Newstead, the abode of Lord Byron; Annesley, the heritage of Mary Chaworth, and many another ample domain. It was governed by a warden, his lieutenant, and a steward; a bow-bearer, and a ranger; four verderers, twelve regarders, four agistors, and twelve keepers in the

main forest, under the chief forester, who held it in fee, with liberty to destroy and kill at pleasure, reserving 100 deer in each walk. There were also several woodwards for every township within the forest, and one for every principal wood. It had also five hays, or royal parks, each fenced in, and furnished with its lodge; and having each a forester, going his rounds on horseback, with a page; and two foresters on foot without a page. These hays were Best-wood, Lindby-hay, Welhay, Birkland cum Bilhay, and Clypstone. "In these hays no man commons," says the Inquisition of King Henry III., taken in the thirty-fifth year of his reign, at St. John's house in Nottingham. They were especial reserves of game for the royal use, which was not to be disturbed by the intrusion of any other men, or their cattle, on any pretence.

Besides these, there were extensive woods and demesnes: Newstead, Lyndhurst, Welbeck, Rufford, Romewood, Clumber, Kingshaghe, Carburton, Arnall, Edwinstowe, Mansfield-Woodhouse, Hye Forest, Kyegill, and Ravenshede, Bulwell Risse, Outhesland (*qy.* the land of Robert Fitzouth, or Robin Hood's land?) the barony of Southwell, and others, full of great woods of oak, many of them 700 years old; thirteen hundred head of red deer at the very last Inquisition, besides fallow deer without number.[22] All this is broken up, and dispersed as a dream. These royal hays and demesnes have been bestowed in grants by different monarchs: as Newstead by Henry VIII. to Sir John Byron; Bestwood by Charles II., to the Duke of St. Albans, his son by Nell Gwynn; and so on, or sold. The great woods have fallen under the axe; and repeated enclosures have reduced the open forest to that part which formerly went by the name of the Hye-Forest; a tract of land of about

ten miles long, by three or four wide, extending from the Nottingham road, near Mansfield west, to Clipstone Park east. This tract is, for the most part, bare of trees. Near Mansfield there remains a considerable wood, Harlowe Wood, and a fine scattering of old oaks near Berry-hill, in the same neighbourhood; but the greater part is now an open waste, stretching in a succession of low hills, and long winding valleys dark with heather. A few solitary and battered oaks standing here and there, the last melancholy remnants of these vast and ancient woods; the beautiful springs; swift and crystaline brooks; and broad sheets of water lying abroad amid the dark heath, and haunted by numbers of wild ducks and the heron, still remain. Nature is not easily deprived of these; and in summer, when the plover and the lark build there, and send along those brown dales their merry whistle, or loud cries, and in autumn when the whole waste bursts into a blaze of crimson beauty with the blossoming heather, it is still, stripped as it is, a charming place for a contemplative ride or stroll. Here twenty years ago, Captain Cartwright might be seen following his hawks, and here still you meet a few sportsmen, with their fine dogs leaping amongst the long heather and red fern.

[22] A curious fact is apparent on the face of "A Vewe taken by special commandment from his Majesty to the Lord Warden of his forest, of all the Red Deer in this forest, 1616." The warden was obliged to maintain 100 head of red deer in each of the twelve walks—1200 in the whole. In this inquiry there proved to be 1260; but in Annesley, the property of the Chaworths, and Newstead, the property of the Byrons, there were only ten deer altogether. These Byrons and Chaworths were always notorious Nimrods, and suffered none to escape

them. In Papplewick too, the adjoining parish, there were only two! The keepers indeed affirmed that "some days" there were twenty in Annesley Hills, and fourteen in Newstead Woods, but they did not appear to the Commissioners. In another "Vewe," taken in 1635, though the deer had increased in other walks, so that the total numbers were 1367, in Newstead and Annesley there were only 19!

But at the Clipstone extremity of the forest, still remains a remnant of its ancient woodlands unrifled, except of its deer—a specimen of what the whole once was, and a specimen of consummate beauty and interest. Birkland and Bilhaghe taken together form a tract of land extending from Ollerton, along the side of Thoresby Park, the seat of Earl Manvers, to Clipstone Park, of about five miles in length, and one or two in width,—Bilhaghe is a forest of oaks; and is clothed with the most impressive aspect of age that can perhaps be presented to the eye in these kingdoms. Stonehenge does not give you a feeling of greater eld, because it is not composed of a material so easily acted on by the elements. But the hand of time has been on these woods, and has stamped upon them a most imposing character. I cannot imagine a traveller coming upon this spot without being startled, and asking himself—"what have we got here?" It is the blasted and battered ruin of a forest. A thousand years, ten thousand tempests, lightnings, winds, and wintry violence, have all flung their utmost force on these trees, and there they stand, trunk after trunk, scathed, hollow, grey, gnarled; stretching out their bare, sturdy arms, or their mingled foliage and ruin—a life in death. All is grey and old. The ground is grey beneath, the trees are grey with clinging lichens, the very heather and fern that spring beneath them have a character of the

past. If you turn aside, and step amongst them, your feet sink in a depth of moss and dry vegetation that is the growth of ages, or rather that ages have not been able to destroy. You stand and look round, and in the height of summer, all is silent; it is like the fragment of a world worn out and forsaken. These were the trees under which King John pursued the red deer 600 years ago. These were the oaks beneath which Robin Hood led up his bold band of outlaws. These are the oaks which have stood while king after king reigned; while the Edwards and Henrys subdued Ireland, and ravaged Scotland and France; while all Europe was seeking to rescue Jerusalem from the Saracens; while the wars of York and Lancaster deluged the soil of all this kingdom with blood; while Henry VIII. overthrew popery, wives, ministers, and martyrs with one strong, ruthless hand; while Elizabeth, with an equal hand of unshrinking might and decision, made all Europe tremble at a woman's name, and stand astonished at a woman's jealousy, when she butchered her cousin, the Queen of Scots. Here they stood, while the monarchy of England fell to the ground before Cromwell and the Covenanters; while Charles II., restored to his realm, but not to wisdom, revelled; while under a new dynasty, the fortunes of England have been urging through good and evil their course to a splendour and dominion strangely mingled with suffering and disquiet, yet giving prospect of a Christian glory beyond all precedent and conception. Through all this these trees have here stood silently —and here they are! monuments of ages that cannot be seen without raising in our souls remembrance of all these mighty things. To the contemplative mind they are inscribed all over with characters of strange power. They shew us at a glance, and with a

palpableness which few things besides possess, how far the day of their first growth is past by; how far the ages of feudalism and civilization lie asunder. All around them, instead of that ocean of woods, heaths and morasses, come crowding up green fields, and the boundary-marks of free men; and if we were to see a hoary pilgrim suddenly make his appearance on the pavé of a great modern town, propped on his long staff, and belted in his grey robe, with his sandal-shoon and scallop-shell, we should not feel more strongly the discrepancy of life and character between him and the spruce population around him, than between these hoary and doddered oaks and the cultured country which hems them in.

But Bilhaghe is only the half of the forest-remains here: in a continuous line with it lies Birkland—a tract which bears its character in its name—the land of Birches! It is a forest perfectly unique. It is equally ancient with Bilhaghe, but it has a less dilapidated air. There are old and mighty oaks scattered through it, ay, some of them worn down to the very ultimatum of ruin, without leaf or bough, standing huge masses of blackness; but the birches, of which the main portion of the forest consists, cannot boast the longevity of oaks. Their predecessors have perished over and over, and they, though noble and unrivalled of their kind, are infants compared with the oaken trunks which stand amongst them. Birkland! it is a region of grace and poetry! I have seen many a wood, and many a wood of birches, and some of them amazingly beautiful too, in one quarter or another of this fair island, but in England nothing that can compare with this. It must be confessed that the birch woods which clothe the mountain sides, beautify the glens, and stud the romantic lochs of Scotland, derive a charm from the lovely and

sublime forms of those mountains, glens, and waters, which is not to be expected in this lowland country. The birch trees which rear their silvery stems, tree above tree, on the rocks of the Trosachs; the birch woods that fill the delicious valleys of Rosshire—which imparadise the glens and feather the heathery mountain-sides of Glen-More nan Alpin—the great glen of Scotland, traversed by the Caledonian Canal—thousands of summer tourists can testify with me are lovely beyond description; but Birkland has some advantages which they have not. Its trees have reached a size that the northern ones have not; and the peculiar mixture of their lady-like grace with the stern and ample forms of these feudal oaks, produces an effect most fairylandish and unrivalled.

Advance up this long avenue, which the noble owner of this forest tract has cut through it, and looking right and left as you proceed, you shall not be able long to refrain from turning into the tempting openings that ever and anon present themselves. Enter which you please,—you cannot be wrong. You may wander for hours, and still find fresh aspects of woodland beauty. These winding tracks, just wide enough for a couple of people on horseback, or in a pony-phaeton to advance along, carpeted with a mossy turf that springs under your feet with a delicious elasticity, and closed in with shadowy trunks and flowery thickets—are they not lovely? And then you come to some sudden opening, where the long pensile branches of the birches, and the sweeping masses of oaken boughs surround and shut you in with a delectable solitude, where you may lie on the warm turf and read, or listen to the whispering leaves or the solemn sough of the forest; or a merry party of you may laugh and talk to your hearts' content, glad as the blue sky above you; and

vow that you will come and pitch your tents here for a fortnight,—a jocund company, like Shakspeare's immortal troop in the forest of Arden. There never was scenery to realize more perfectly our idea of that forest. But go on: you enter on a wider expanse, on which a glorious oak stretches out its vast circumference of boughs that droop to the very ground, and form an ample tent, whose waving curtains fan you with the most grateful air. Here you come upon the solitary foot-path that crosses the forest. You hear the light clap of a gate, and presently beneath the glimpsing trees, you see some rustic personage pursuing this path, and going unconsciously past you as you stand amongst the thickets—some old man with heavy pace, or village girl hurrying along as if those woods were still haunted by dubious things. But advance, and here is a wide prospect. The woodmen have cleared away the underwood; they have felled trees that were overtopped and ruined by their fellows; and their billets and fallen trunks, and split-up piles of blocks, are lying about in pictorial simplicity. On all sides, standing in their solemn steadfastness, you see huge, gnarled, strangely-coloured, and mossed oaks, some riven and laid bare, from summit to root, with the thunderbolts of past tempests. An immense tree is called the Shamble-Oak, being said to be the one in which Robin Hood hung his slaughtered deer; but which was more probably used by the keepers for that purpose. By whomsoever it was so used, however, there still remain the hooks within its vast hollow. The old birches, without doubt some of the largest in England, shew like true satyrs of the woods —to the height of a man, being shagged, indented, and cross-hatched, as it were, into a most satyrly roughness, and contrast well with the higher bole,

which rises clear and shining as silver to the boughs, which sweep down again to the ground in graceful lightness.

There is no end to the variety of their aspect and grouping. From the sylvan loveliness around you, you might fancy yourself in the outer wilderness of some Armida's garden. In spring, these woods are all alive with the cawing of jackdaws, which build in thousands in the hollow oaks; and as their bustle ceases as the evening falls, the nightingales are heard, and the owl and the dorhawk come soaring through the dusky air.

It is just the region to grow poetical in. I never walk these woods without forgetting for the time all the cares of towns and common life. It is to me a palpable introduction into the old world of poetry and romance. There is a spirit and feeling of the intellectual world that falls on you as the peculiar spirit of the place. It seems to me that if Milton, Shakspeare, Spenser, and all those noble poets whose minds have moulded the better mind and character of this great country, were to revisit it at times, when they had looked round them on the agitations of city-life, to some such place would they come awhile to refresh themselves with their old delights, and to hold high converse on the present fashion and prospects of humanity. Nothing seems so natural to these scenes, as to imagine their presence thus joined with the kindred spirits of a later day—Scott, Byron, Shelley, Coleridge, Hogg, and the like;—their religion, their passions, their doubts, their philosophical mysticism all now blended down into a heavenly nobility and union of heart and desire; their favourite fancies and pursuits still dear to them as ever, but their intellectual vision widened to the embracement of the universe. I seem to see Shelley

and Keats going hand in hand along some fair glade; the one pouring out all that soul of love which possessed him, which he wished had been the foundation of the Christian religion instead of faith, and who yet, blinded by the impetuosity of youth and indignation against the despotism of priestcraft, failed to see that this same love was the very life and glory of that system;—the other young poet still uttering aloud his longings for time! time! in which to achieve an eternity of
fame:—

> Oh! for ten years, that I may do the deed
> That my own soul has to itself decreed!

Or Lamb, speaking to those old friends of his earthly sojourn, of some fair creature met in the valleys of heaven:

> She loves to walk
> In the bright regions of empyreal light,
> By the green pastures and the fragrant meads,
> Where the perpetual flowers of Eden blow!
> By crystal streams, and by the living waters,
> Along whose margin grows the wondrous tree
> Whose leaves shall heal the nations; underneath
> Whose holy shade a refuge shall be found
> From pain and want, and all the ills that wait
> On mortal life, from sin and death for ever.

But away, spirit of the woods! Time urges; the world calls: and we are thrown once more into the midst of the stirring, rushing, unceasing stream of men. These woods and their fairyland dreams are but our luxuries; snatches of beauty and peace, caught as we go along the dusty path of duty. The town has engulphed us; a human hum is in our ears; and the thoughts and the cares of life are upon us once more.

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CHAPTER IV.
FOREST ENCLOSURES.

Before I quit this part of my volume, let me say a word on the subject of forest enclosures. There are certain persons who, from notions of national benefit, are very desirous that all crown lands should be disposed of; and all forests and wastes enclosed. As a matter of national benefit I think them considerably mistaken. For the very highest purposes of national benefit I desire, and that most earnestly, to see them kept open. I know the logic regularly employed by these people;—to make two blades of corn grow where one grew before; to make all our lands in the highest degree productive of food. Now, if we were cattle, or sheep, the great end of whose existence it was to graze well and get fat, then is their reasoning most excellent. But I look upon humanity as having other wants than mere physical ones. I too would have all our lands produce us food: but then it should be food of various kinds; food not only for one part, the corporeal, but for every part of our nature; and in these forests and open lands the intellectual part of the nation “have a food that these men know not of.” He who attends to our mere animal prosperity may call himself an utilitarian, but the true utilitarian comprehends in his scheme what is good for man in his integral nature; for his spiritual and intellectual needs, as well as for his bodily. But taking them on their own ground, these forest lands are not mere unproductive wastes. They supply our dockyards with an abundance of valuable timber; in them lie farms, and cottage homes, with their orchards, gardens, and little enclosures. They maintain a large population, and they pasture a vast quantity of cattle, sheep, hogs, and horses. Take even

such a tract as that of Dartmoor, now stripped of its trees. There cattle and sheep run in great numbers; and there lies about in inexhaustible quantities, granite, which supplies labour in shaping it, and conveying it away, to a large body of men, and goes forth to build our public works and adorn our metropolis. And there too the mines employ, again, numerous people, and send up large quantities of valuable metal. And what should we gain by an enclosure? We should gain a greater supply of corn, which the farmers and landlords sometimes find they have actually too much of.[23] Having hedged about the kingdom with enactments to prevent the free importation of grain, they ever and anon find that they grow so much of it that they cannot really get a remunerating price for it. But even if we did want it, we have only to throw open our ports, and have as much as we want, at almost any price, and cattle too, which we could give our manufactures in exchange for. This is all that the most sanguine advocates of universal enclosure pretend that we should gain; and then let us see what we should lose by it. In the first place, these lands would go to swell the rentals of the rich, as all others enclosed have done. The enclosure system has been one of unexampled absurdity and injustice. It has been conducted on the principle of—"Unto him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." Unto him who could shew that he had land lying in proximity to the waste about to be enclosed, has been given more, in the exact proportion to the quantity which he had. The more he had, the more was given him; and from him that had none, was taken away that which he had—the custom of commoning his beasts on the waste. One would naturally have supposed that in a *christian*

country there would have been a desire to provide for those who had nothing. That in every parish the waste land should have been, if allotted at all to the inhabitants, allotted to those who had most need of it. The rule has always been exactly the reverse; and the consequence has been that our poor population, stripped of their old common rights, have been thrown upon the parish; their little flock of sheep, their few cows, their geese, their pigs, all gone; and no collateral help left them to eke out their small earnings; and in case of loss of work, or sickness, no resource but parish degradation;—the consequent evil influence upon the character of the rural population has been enormous. They have a sense of injustice, if they have not the power to resist it; and when they see a system of this kind, they say —"much will have more," and their spirits are none the better for the feeling that accompanies the melancholy truth. Now, the same system would assuredly be continued, where common allotments took place; and in the sale of crown lands, a few great persons would purchase them; a few farmers would live and pay high rents, where hundreds of comfortable cottagers now live, who would then be added to the list of paupers.

[23] They did so especially in 1834 and 1835; when wheat was only 38*s.* and 40*s.* per quarter.

But it is not merely the poor that would lose by it. The miner, the artist, the naturalist, the poet, the antiquarian, the lover of the country, and the frequenter of it for health or relaxation, all would suffer most seriously by it, and the country would suffer with them. In the wastes of Devon and Cornwall, in those of Derbyshire, Warwickshire, and Northumberland, the subterranean mass is worth, in

many places, a hundred times the surface. Enclose and cover up with cultivation these wastes, and you bury by millions the wealth of the nation, and the bread of the miners. At present, they lie open to the foot and the eye of the scrutinizing and adventurous. They can traverse heaths and mountains, and amid the barely covered rocks beneath them, or in the precipices that tower above them, they can at leisure hunt out and discover the sparkling vein, or the dull and secret ore; and open up a fountain of labour and affluence that may run for ages. But enclose these wild regions; warn off the curious inquirers with boards threatening "prosecution as the law directs," or as may now be seen on the premises of an old lady in Surrey—that "anybody trespassing will be shot at without farther notice!"—keep them out with fences, and cover up the surface with accumulating soil and manure, and there may the riches of Providence remain buried for ever. With the researches of the miner, you restrict those of the geologist too. With the naturalist it fares the same. Every spadegraft of your cultivation annihilates the habitats and localities of animals, insects, and plants, which can exist only in the unploughed wilderness. You destroy some of the most curious natural productions of your country for ever, and circumscribe some of the most healthful, heart-purifying, and spirit-cheering pursuits of men. Your ploughs and mattocks pierce through and erase immediately the earthy mounds, the circles, the stone vestiges of far-past ages, and with them the pleasant journeys and inspiring speculations of antiquarians; as well as a great portion of the historic light and evidences of the nation. If you could root out the New Forest, you might possibly get as well supplied with timber from some other quarter, but where would you find the

landscape painter such a treasury of sylvan and picturesque beauty, such delicious nooks and hollows, and fair streams winding under forest boughs? Where such groupings and endless variety of foliage and forest stems? Where such lights and shades and colours as nature there diffuses over her own regions in the everlasting circulation of the seasons; and all within six or seven hours' ride of the metropolis?[24] I should like to know where you will find him substitutes for the naked, waste, but glorious expanses of the Surrey heaths, of Dartmoor, Stainmore, the high moors of Derbyshire, those of Northumberland, Lancashire, or of Scotland—that land which has often been called poor, but which from the influence of its wild and magnificent scenery is continually pouring out a wealth of genius that is miraculous? Thank God; they never can pull down its mountains, and reduce them to the dead level, and quadrangular fields of cultivation; and into their fairyland recesses there will always be a retreat from the engrossing, engulphing spirit of mercantile calculation.

[24] By the Southampton Railway, now brought within about three hours' journey of London.

But I am passing from painting to poetry; and yet, one is so blended with the other that I would ask the shrewdest person living to shew me where they totally separate. Where then, I ask, will they find substitutes for the painter, for our wild and desolate moors? There the very air in its elastic freshness is full of health and inspiration to him. There he draws an indemnity for his constitution from the deadly effects of long and close confinement in cities and painting rooms. There every turf is covered with a rude beauty to his eyes; there every rock and stone is

piled in bold and inimitable shapes of savage grandeur by the spirit of nature for him; and the winds, and rains, and vegetative powers of centuries have been busy tinging them with the hues of his admiration. There, amid the sound of falling waters and the roar of coming tempests, he feels all his faculties called into power and life within him, and brings home, season after season, scenes that cover the walls of our city homes with a wild magnificence. Enclose these tracts; hem them in with walls and hedges, and he will no longer visit them. You will no longer find him sitting on some moorland stone, watching the stream which hurries with sea-like sound along its craggy bed; or gazing on those rocky banks and long lines of trees that overhang it, and mark its course along the desert. He will no longer fix the solitary labourer, or the passing group, in their own peculiar character, nor paint the lurid gloom of the storm as it comes with a frown and a thunder of rains and winds only known in such shelterless regions. And when you banish him, you banish the poet, and the lovers of poets too. It is on our moors and our mountains that the profoundest spirit of poetry dwells. There is an influence felt there, which has more than half created our Shakspeares, Miltons, Spensers, Wordsworths, Scotts, Coleridges, Shelleys, and other high spirits that have striven to elevate the English mind above the mere ordinary enjoyments of life. And is it true that any one ever felt the full charm of the works of Scott, who was not familiar with heaths and mountains? Did any one ever feel all the beauty of the opening of Ivanhoe who had not often lingered in our forests? Has any one a true conception of “As you like it,” of “Macbeth,” or of “The Midsummer Night’s Dream,” of “The Fairy Queen,” or of many another divine

creation of the British Muse, who is not conversant with the free, beautiful, and untamed nature by whose influence they are shaped? It is one of the great offices of the poet to keep alive the love of nature; and it is, again, by a corresponding love of nature that they must be comprehended and relished. The more you reduce our whole island to a uniformity of colour and cultivation, the more effectually you extinguish this great action and reaction, which are health to the spirituality of the public mind.

We are now arrived at a crisis in which we can afford a few forests and moors to lie open; but we cannot afford to have our higher tastes and feeling deprived of their legitimate aliment. Shut us up in towns, or within an eternal continuity of hedges and ditches, and we shall cease to be the high-souled people we are. We shall become the drudges of selfish interests, or the victims of false taste. We must have some openness, some freedom, some breathing places left us. As Abernethy said, that the parks of London were its lungs; so our mountains, forests, and moorlands, are the lungs of the whole country. It is there that we rush away from counting-houses, factories, steam-engines, railroads, politics, and sectarian factions, and breathe for a season the air of physical and mental vigour; and feel the peace of nature; and drink in from all things around us a new life, a new feeling, full of the benevolent calm which is shed by its Creator over the world. Scott said he must see the heather at least once a year, or he should die. Crabbe mounted his horse in a passion of desire which could no longer be resisted, and rode fifty miles to see the sea; and more or less of this feeling lies in every bosom that is not totally dead to the true objects of life. The failing in health; the

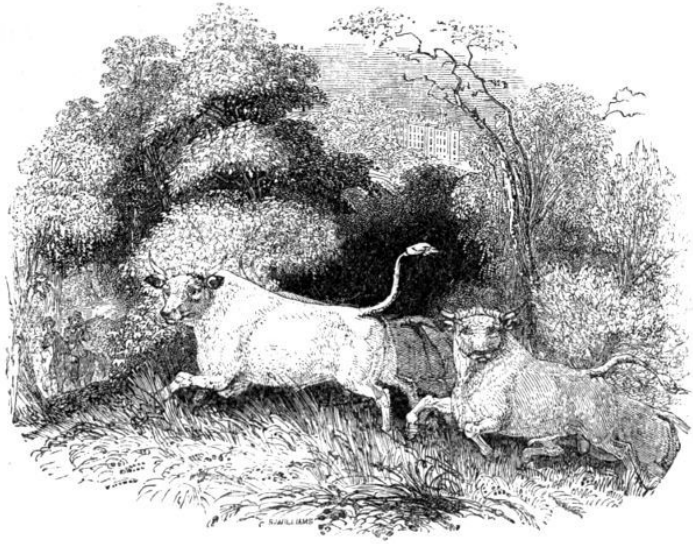
over-worn in spirit; the followers of a summer's recreation, all seek our hills and sea-coasts, and plains, where the peace or magnificence of nature, or where some celebrated monument of the past is to be found. If any one would know the extent of this delight in such things, or the numbers who indulge in it, let him go, as I have elsewhere said, to any such place in this kingdom, on any day through the summer and autumn. If we had the amount of the numbers who make a summer excursion to the sea-side, or to our moorland and mountain districts, it would be amazing. The parties who swarm along our Derbyshire valleys, and in every nook of Scotland, Wales, Ireland, and the Western Isles, are apparently without end.

Now this is a very healthful taste, and one, that with all our trading, manufacturing, and money-getting habits, we cannot too much encourage. We complain of our countrymen seeking pleasure so much abroad, and shall we diminish the objects of popular attraction at home? No, there never was an age in which our forests and moorlands were of half the value they are of to us now. As true utilitarians, we have the strongest motives to keep them open, as we mean to keep alive the fine arts, poetry, the love of antiquity, and the love of nature amongst us; as we would retain and invigorate in us that higher life by which we have climbed to our present national altitude; by which our sages and poets have been nourished, and become the true teachers and inspirers of virtue and nobility to the world; by which we are made to feel our animal life even with a double zest; and are yet, I trust, destined to make the name of England the greatest in the history of the world.

I do not mean to say that no waste lands should be

henceforth enclosed. There are plenty, every one knows, that have no particular grace or interest about them. Let them, in the name of all that is reasonable, be hedged and ditched as soon as you please; but as for the village green, the common lying near a town, the forest, and the moorland that has a poetical charm about it, felt and acknowledged by the public—may the axe and the spade that are lifted up against them be shivered to atoms, and a curse, worse than the curse of Kehama, chase all commissioners, land-surveyors, petitioning lawyers, and every species of fencer and divider out of their boundaries for ever and ever.

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CHAPTER V.
WILD ENGLISH CATTLE.

We have a few herds of the original cattle which once abounded in England and Scotland, still remaining. We have long ago destroyed our wolves, bears, and boars; and it seems almost a miracle that a few of these inhabitants of our ancient forests have been preserved. They form the most interesting objects of those parts of the country where they exist. Every one knows the use Scott has made of them in the Bride of Lammermuir. There was formerly a fine herd of them at Drumlanrig in Scotland. In England they were to be found at Burton-Constable in Yorkshire; Wollaton near Nottingham; Gisburne in Craven; Lime-Hall in Cheshire; Chartley Castle in Staffordshire; and Chillingham Castle in Northumberland. That they were of the true old breed was sufficiently testified by their common resemblance; being universally milk-white; having only the tips of their horns, and their muzzles and ears coloured. The only difference was, that in some herds, the tips and the whole of the inside of the ears, were black, in others red or brown. What may be the numbers remaining at Lime or Gisburne, I do not know. At Wollaton they have become mixed with the common breed; but at Chartley there are about twenty of them, where they retain their ancient characteristics, and their wildness. Here, there are sundry superstitions connected with them. It is believed and asserted, that if they amount to more than a certain number, or if a calf of an unusual colour is produced, some calamity happens in the family of the noble owner, Earl Ferrers. This, it is asserted, was the case when one of the earls was executed; and indeed, that every family calamity has been thus prognosticated.

The noblest herd is to be found at Chillingham Castle, on the Northumbrian borders, the seat of the

Earl of Tankerville. The park is well calculated for the use of such animals. It lies in a solitary country. Care seems taken to render the isolation as complete as possible;—there is not even a public-house permitted by his lordship in the small hamlet, which seems to exist just as the ancient, dependent hamlet of the feudal castle did in the feudal times themselves. The castle, a fine fabric, in true castellated style, and well befitting the classic land of Northumberland—the region of Alnwick, Warkworth, and Chevy-Chace—of the skirmishes of Douglas and Percy—of many an ancient cross, convent, battle-stone, and hermit-cell, lies embosomed in its woods at the foot of wild hills, which ascend eastward for a mile or more, and terminate in a range of bare and craggy eminences of a fine woodland character. This steep slope between the castle and these heights is the park. Various woods and deep dells are scattered over it, so that the cattle can choose a high and airy pasture between them, where they see afar off any approach —a situation they seem particularly to enjoy; or can, at the slightest alarm, plunge into the depth of woods and glens.

Bewick, who visited them, has given capital portraits of this interesting race of cattle, and the following passages from his account of them are marked by his usual accuracy. “At the first appearance of any person, they set off in full gallop, and at the distance of two or three hundred yards make a wheel round, and come boldly up again, tossing their heads in a menacing manner. On a sudden they make a full stop at the distance of forty or fifty yards, looking wildly at the objects of their surprise; but on the least motion being made, they all again turn round, and run off with equal speed, but

not to the same distance: forming a shorter circle, and again returning with a bolder and more threatening aspect than before, they approach much nearer, probably within thirty yards; when they make another stand, and again run off. This they do several times, shortening their distance, and advancing nearer, till they come within ten yards; when most people think it prudent to leave them, not choosing to provoke them further; for there is little doubt but in two or three times more they would make an attack.

"The mode of killing them was, perhaps, the only modern remains of the grandeur of ancient hunting. On notice being given that a wild bull would be killed on a certain day, the inhabitants of the neighbourhood came mounted and armed with guns, etc., sometimes to the amount of a hundred horse, and four or five hundred foot, who stood upon walls or got into trees, while the horsemen rode out the bull from the rest of the herd, until he stood at bay; when a marksman dismounted and shot. At some of these huntings twenty or thirty of these shots have been fired before he was subdued. On such occasions the bleeding victim grew desperately furious, from the smarting of his wounds, and the shouts of savage joy that were echoing from every side; but, from the number of accidents that happened, this dangerous mode has been little practised of late years; the park-keeper alone generally shooting them with a rifled gun, at one shot.

"When the cows calve, they hide their calves for a week or ten days, in some sequestered situation, and go and suckle them two or three times a-day. If any person come near the calves, they clap their heads close to the ground, and lie like a hare in form to hide themselves. This is a proof of their native

wildness, and is corroborated by the following circumstance, that happened to the writer of this narrative, who found a hidden calf of two days old, very lean and very weak. On stroking its head, it got up, pawed two or three times like an old bull, bellowed very loud, stepped back a few steps, and bolted at his legs with all his force. It then began to paw again, bellowed, stepped back, and bolted as before; but knowing its intention, he stepped aside, and it missed him, fell, and was so very weak, that it could not rise, though it made several efforts. But it had done enough: the whole herd was alarmed, and coming to its rescue, obliged him to retire; for the dams will allow no person to touch their calves, without attacking them with impetuous ferocity.

"When any one happens to be wounded, or is grown feeble through age or sickness, the rest of the herd set upon it and gore it to death.

"The weight of the bulls is generally from forty to fifty stone the four quarters; of the cows about thirty. The beef is finely marbled, and of excellent flavour."

We visited the park in 1836, and were at great pains to get a sight of this noble herd. We were told that the keeper was in the park and would get us a view of it; but on going into it, we found him, and some others of the household busily engaged in shooting fawns. For this purpose some men on horseback were galloping round a herd of deer, and driving them in a particular direction, where a keeper lay in ambush, near a narrow opening between the woods, and when they came near enough, shot with his rifle such fawns as he wanted. It was a scene of great animation: the galloping men —the keeper seen cautiously peeping out, to watch for the approach of the herd—the herd here collected into a dense group, in watchfulness and alarm—and

again streaming off in a long line across the park, in some direction which seemed most to promise escape. The cries of the old—the shriller cries of the young—the sudden flash and report from the thicket —the fall of the fawn—and the flying of the herd in some other direction, made up a lively though painful scene.

But this spoiled our peculiar sport. The wild cattle, accustomed to be fired at themselves occasionally, alarmed at the sound of the guns, had retired to the most obscure woodland retreats of the park. Several persons told us that they had seen the whole herd a few minutes before, in the highest part of the park; but we traversed the woods in every direction, and penetrated into their darkest recesses without getting a glimpse of them. This we did for a couple of hours, and spite of the warnings of those who were well acquainted with them, so great was my anxiety to have a view of these fine animals. Two sawyers, who were sawing timber at a pit up in a glade of the park, told us that a few mornings before, on coming to their work, they found several bulls in the glade, which began to shake their heads, and tear up the ground in a style which induced them to betake themselves to the wood as nimbly as possible. We were told too, that Mr. Landseer, while sketching some of these cattle, found it advisable to retreat more than once; and that people are not only frequently pursued, but that one man had been killed by them the previous summer. However, trusting to my ability to mount a tree, in case of need, I determined to hold on till I found them; and having thus gone through all the woods but one, not excepting Robin Hood's Cleuch, for Robin has a traditionary retreat in many a place of the north. I was certain they must be there, and therefore gave

way to the remonstrances of wiser heads, and retired to a distance to watch their issuing forth. The firing of the guns in the lower part of the park had ceased, and we were assured that the cattle would not be long before they made their appearance. And sure enough, in about half an hour, this grand herd of wild cattle came streaming out of this very wood. There were upwards of a hundred of them; and they spread themselves at equal distances across the steep glade, between this and the next wood, and commenced a steady graze, ever and anon lifting up a cautious head, to ascertain the actual absence of danger. It was a sight well worthy of a long journey to see. Their number, their uniformity of colour and shape, the wild shy look of the cows, the sturdy strength of the bulls—some of them of a large size—and their clear snowy hue, which made them conspicuous for many miles distant, as we occasionally turned, on our way over the moors to Wooller, and saw them still grazing in the very same spot and order. They reminded us of the herds of the sun, amongst which Ulysses' hungry crew made such havoc in the meads of Trinacria.

We were told that the hunting of the bulls had been renewed by Lord Ossulston, the eldest son of the Earl of Tankerville, with whom it was a very favourite pursuit—certainly the grandest species of chase yet left in Britain, and the only one which the sense of danger incurred can heighten and ennoble to anything like the same level as that of hunting the tiger in India, or the bear in the northern countries of Europe. It seems, as well he may, that the Earl is proud of this fine herd of cattle, and, it is said, refuses on any terms to furnish any of his noble neighbours with a pair of them to stock their parks similarly. It is to be hoped that this interesting

remnant of the native herd will long be preserved in its present magnificent number and purity of breed.

At the Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science at Newcastle, in August 1838, a paper was read on these wild cattle by Mr. L. Hindmarsh. The only additional facts respecting them were contained in a letter of Lord Tankerville to the writer. His lordship stated that nothing had for generations been known of the origin of these cattle in his family; and that they were mentioned in no family document. That there was great probability of their location there being very ancient. He describes them, as we found them, retiring into the woods on any alarm, and having a faculty of traversing the woods so quietly that it is difficult to obtain a sight of them. He states that he himself has not been able in summer time to get a sight of them for weeks together. That on the contrary, in winter time, being fed in the inner park, they become pretty familiar, and will let you go near them, especially when on horseback. His lordship describes them as very uncertain in their disposition, sometimes struck with sudden panics, and at others very fierce. “When they come down into the lower part of the park, which they do at stated hours, they move like a regiment of cavalry in single files, the bulls leading the van, or in retreat it is the bulls which bring up the rear. Lord Ossulston was witness to a curious way in which they took possession, as it were, of some new pasture recently laid open to them. It was in the evening about sunset. They began by lining the front of a small wood, which seemed quite alive with them, when all of a sudden, they made a dart forward altogether in a line, and charging close by him across the plain, they spread out, and after a little time began feeding.” His lordship says, “Many stories

might be told of hair-breadth escapes, accidents of sundry kinds from these cattle," and gives an instance of a bull attacking a keeper, whom he tossed three times, then knelt down on him, breaking several of his ribs, and would soon have killed him, had not a number of gentlemen from the castle with rifles succeeded in destroying the furious beast, but not till they had lodged six or seven bullets in his skull.

PART VI.

HABITS, AMUSEMENTS, AND CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE.

CHAPTER I.
COTTAGE LIFE.

What a mighty space lies between the palace and the cottage in this country! ay, what a mighty space between the mansion of the private gentleman and the hut of the labourer on his estate! To enter the one: to see its stateliness and extent; all its offices, outbuildings, gardens, greenhouses, hothouses; its extensive fruit-walls, and the people labouring to

furnish the table simply with fruit, vegetables, and flowers; its coach-houses, harness-houses, stables, and all the steeds, draught-horses, and saddle-horses, hunters, and ladies' pads, ponies for ladies' airing-carriages, and ponies for children; and all the grooms and attendants thereon; to see the waters for fish, the woods for game, the elegant dairy for the supply of milk and cream, curds and butter, and the dairymaids and managers belonging to them;—and then, to enter the house itself, and see all its different suites of apartments, drawing-rooms, boudoirs, sleeping-rooms, dining and breakfast rooms; its steward's, housekeeper's and butler's rooms; its ample kitchens and larders, with their stores of provisions, fresh and dried; its stores of costly plate, porcelain and crockery apparatus of a hundred kinds; its cellars of wine and strong beer; its stores of linen; its library of books; its collections of paintings, engravings, and statuary; the jewels, musical instruments, and expensive and interminable nick-knackery of the ladies; the guns and dogs; the cross-bows, long-bows, nets, and other implements of amusement of the gentlemen; all the rich carpeting and fittings-up of day-rooms, and night-rooms, with every contrivance and luxury which a most ingenious and luxurious age can furnish; and all the troops of servants, male and female, having their own exclusive offices, to wait upon the person of lady or gentleman, upon table, or carriage, or upon some one ministration of pleasure or necessity: I say, to see all this, and then to enter the cottage of a labourer, we must certainly think that one has too much for the insurance of comfort, or the other must have extremely too little. If the peasant can be satisfied with his establishment, and the gentleman could not tell how to live without his, one would be almost

persuaded that they could not be of the same class of animals. Knowing, however, that they are of the same species, it only shews of what elastic stuff human nature is made; into what a nutshell it can compress its cravings, and how immensely it can expand itself when the pressure of necessity is withdrawn. I am not going here to moot the old question of whereabout happiness lies in this strange disparity of circumstance; it, no doubt, lies somewhere between the extremes. It certainly cannot be created by external superfluities. *They* lay open their possessors to the exercise of despotic power; to the corruptions of pride and luxury; to false taste, frivolous pursuits, and the diffusion of the attention over so many objects as to prevent the heart from settling firmly on any. They have a tendency to weaken the domestic attachments, and the love of solid pursuits. On the other hand, the pressure of poverty and ignorance certainly can, and too often does, lie so heavily as to destroy the relish of life's enjoyments in the cottager. Yet happiness is a fireside thing; and the simplicity of cottage life, the fewness of its objects, and the strong sympathies awakened by its trials and sufferings, tend to condense the affections, and to strike deep the roots of happiness in the sacred soil of consanguinity. When wealth is accompanied by a desire to do good, it is a glorious and a happy destiny; when lowly life is virtuous, easy, and enlightened, it is a happy destiny too—for it is full of the strong zest of existence, and strong affections. But this is not my present subject.

When we go into the cottage of the working man, how forcibly are we struck with the difference between his mode of life and our own. There is his tenement of, at most, one or two rooms. His naked

walls; bare brick, stone or mud floor, as it may be: a few wooden, or rush-bottomed chairs; a deal, or old oak table; a simple fireplace, with its oven beside it, or, in many parts of the kingdom, no other fireplace than the hearth; a few pots and pans—and you have his whole abode, goods and chattels. He comes home weary from his out-door work, having eaten his dinner under hedge or tree, and seats himself for a few hours with his wife and children, then turns into a rude bed, standing perhaps on the farther side of his only room, and out again before daylight, if it be winter. He has no one to make a fire in his dressing-room, to lay out his clothes, to assist him in his toilet; he flings on his patched garments, washes his face in a wooden or earthen dish at the door; blows up the fire, often gets ready his own breakfast, and is gone.

Such is the routine of his life, from week to week and year to year; Sundays, and a few holidays, are white days in his calendar. On them he shaves, and puts on a clean shirt and better coat, drawn from that old chest which contains the whole wardrobe of himself and children; his wife has generally some separate drawer or bandbox, in which to stow her lighter and more fragile gear. Then he walks round his little garden, if he have it; goes with his wife and children to church or meeting; to sit with a neighbour, or have a neighbour look in upon him. There he sits, his children upon his knee, and tells them how his father used to talk to *him*.

This is cottage life in its best estate; in its unsophisticated and unpauperised condition. He has no carriages, no horses, no cards of invitation, or of admittance to places of amusement; none of the luxuries, fascinations, or embellishments of life belong to him. It is existence shorn of all its

spreading and flowering branches, but not pared to the quick. This is supposing the father of the family is sober and industrious;—that he is neither a pot-house haunter, a gambler at the cockpit, a boxer, a dog-fighter, a poacher, an idle, rackety and demoralized fellow, as thousands are. This is supposing that he brings home his week's wages, and puts them into the hands of his wife, as their best guardian and distributer;—saying,—"Here, my lass, this is all that I have earned; thou must lay it out for the best; *I* have enough to do to win it."

And what are these wages, out of which to maintain his family, aided by the lesser earnings of his wife, by taking in washing, helping in harvest-fields, charring in more affluent people's houses, and so on, and the earnings of the children in similar ways, or in some neighbouring factory? His own probably amount to nine, or, at most, twelve shillings, and if his family be large, and there are several workers among them, the whole united earnings may reach twenty shillings per week; a sum which will hardly find other men wherewith to pay toll-bars, or purchase gunpowder; a sum which we throw away repeatedly on some bauble; and yet, on this will a whole family maintain life and credit for a week, ay, and on much less too. In this little hut, which we should hardly think would do for a cowshed or a hayloft, and to which the stables of many gentlemen are real palaces, is the poor man packed with all his kindred lives, interests, and affections: and so he carries on the warfare of humanity, till He, who is no respecter of persons, calls him to stand, side by side, before his throne with the rich man who "has fared sumptuously every day."

Such are "the short and simple annals" of

thousands and tens of thousands in these kingdoms; and yet what fine strapping young fellows spring up in these little cabins, men who have tilled the soil of England and wielded at home her mechanic tools, and borne her arms abroad, till their industry and genius, under the direction of higher minds, have raised her to her present pitch of eminence; and what sweet faces and lovely forms issue thence to Sunday worship, to village feast and dance; or are seen by the evening passer-by in the light of the ingle, amid the family group, making some smoky-raftered hut a little temple of rare beauty, and of filial or sisterly affections. I often thank God that the poor have their objects of admiration and attraction; their domestic affections and their family ties, out of which spring a thousand simple and substantial pleasures; that beauty and ability are not the exclusive growth of hall and palace; and that, in this country at least, the hand of arbitrary power dare seldom enter this charmed circle, and tear asunder husband from wife, parent from children, brother from sister, as it does in the lands of slavery. Yet our New Poor Laws have aimed a deadly blow at this blessed security; and, till the sound feeling of the nation shall have again disarmed them of this fearful authority, every poor man's family is liable, on the occurrence of some chance stroke of destitution, to have to their misfortune, bitter enough in itself, added the tenfold aggravation of being torn asunder, and immured in the separate wards of a POVERTY PRISON. The very supposition is horrible; and, if this system, this iron and indiscriminating system,—a blind tyranny, knowing no difference between accidental misfortune and habitual idleness, between worthy poverty and audacious imposition, between misfortune and crime,—be the product of

Philanthropy, may Philanthropy be sunk to the bottom of the sea!

But the cottage life I have been speaking of, is that of the better class of cottagers; the sober and industrious peasantry: but how far short of this condition is that of millions in this empire! To say nothing of Irish cabins, the examples of what a state of destitution, misery, and squalor men may sink into; how much below this is the comfort of a Highland hut? What a contrast is there often between the cottage of an English labourer, and the *steading* of a Highland farmer. There it stands, in a deep glen, between high, rocky mountains. His farm is a wild sheep-track among the hills. Wheat, he grows none, for it is too cold and weeping a climate. He has a little patch of oats for crowdie and oatcake; potatoes he has, if the torrent has not risen during sudden rains so high in the glen as to sweep his crop away. He has contrived a little stock of hay for his cows, but where it can have grown you cannot conceive, till some day, as you see a woman or a boy herding the cattle amongst the patches of cultivation—for there are no fences between the grass and arable land—you find one or the other cutting the longer grass from the boggy waste with a sickle, and drying it often in little sheaves as our farmers dry corn. But the house itself;—it is a little, low, long building of mud, or rough stones; the chimney composed of four short poles wrapped round with hay-bands; a flat stone laid upon it to prevent the smoke being driven down into the hut by the tempestuous winds from the hills; and another stone laid upon that, to keep it from being blown away. The roof is thatched with bracken, with the roots outermost; or often the same roof is a patchwork of bracken, ling, broom, and turf. A little window of perhaps one pane of thick glass, or

of four of oiled paper. The door, which reaches to the eaves, is so low that you must stoop to enter; and the smoke is pouring out of it faster than it ascends from the chimney. A few goats are, most likely, lying or standing about the door. You enter, and as soon as you can discern anything through the eternal cloud of smoke, you most probably find yourself in a crowd. The fire of peat lies in the centre of the hut, surrounded by a few stones; wooden benches are nailed on one side against the wall, and the other is partitioned off like a large wooden cupboard, with sliding doors or curtains, for the family bed, as you find all over Scotland, and even in Northumberland. The pigs are running about the floor; hens are roosting over your head; the cows are lowing in, what we should call, the parlour; nine or ten children, or weans, as they call them, and a callant, or boy, who teaches the weans, and the father and mother, and very probably their father and mother, or one of them, in extreme age, are fixing their eyes on the stranger.

In the summer of 1836, Mrs. Howitt and myself passed the night in such a dwelling, and a slight notice of the place may present, to many of our readers, a new view of cottage life. It was in Rosshire, some thirty or forty miles north-west of Inverness, at a spot called the Comrie, lying between Loch Echilty and Loch Luichart. A wild, and yet most beautiful spot it was,—a little strath opening itself out between the wooded mountains which surround Loch Echilty, and the bare stony hills in the direction of Strath Conan. We came upon it after wandering through the delicious fairyland of birch woods that clothe that Loch in the very romance of picturesque beauty, springing up amongst the wildest chaos of crags, here hanging over the water, and here

surrounding the ruinous blackness of some solitary hut, that, but for children playing before it, would appear to have been tenantless for years. A stern defile guarded by vast masses of projecting rocks, by places clothed with the richest drapery of crimson heather, by places naked and lividly grey, and height above height still scattered with climbing birch trees, brought us to a little nameless loch hidden in the woods, girt with a dense margin of reeds, and covered with the most magnificent display of white water-lilies, and then appeared two of those little huts in this Highland solitude. The evening was rapidly sinking into night, and we were uncertain how far it was to the next inn. Two women appeared at the door of one of the huts, and rather startled us with the information, that the nearest inn in the way we proposed to go, was distant five-and-twenty miles! That another mile brought us to the ferry over the Conan, where the carriage-road ceased, and all beyond was mountain and moorland waste. We seemed, as it were, to be on the very verge of civilization; and there appeared to be nothing for us but to retrace our way for some miles, or to take up our lodging in this house.

Weary as we were, this appeared the less objectionable alternative, and we accepted the offer which the elder woman made us. The moment we did so, the poor woman seemed struck with the rashness of her act. “What shall I do for the like of you? What shall I find for the like of you?” We assured her we should not be very fastidious guests, and in we went. It was such a hut as I have just described. The fire lay on a hearth of stones, with a few large stones built up against the mud wall to prevent the house from being burnt. The woman’s husband, a farmer, was gone into Morayshire with

lambs; a hired shepherd sat on the side of the partitioned bed, such as I have already described; two fine sheep-dogs lay before the fire, and a troop of barelegged and kilted boys came running in from some distant school. They were Macgregors, having come hither from Dumbartonshire, and could, fortunately for us, speak English. We sate on a bench in the ingle, and all these little Macgregors, Grigor Macgregor, Peter and Duncan, and the rest, squatted on the mud-floor, and alternately watched us and their eldest sister, a fine barelegged lassie of eighteen, who was busy baking oatcakes for us. It was a hot post both for herself and for us. She put on peats till the hut was like an oven, and the smoke made our eyes smart almost past endurance. Yet we watched the progress of her operation with great interest, as she made a paste of oatmeal and water, rolled it out in cakes, cut it into segments, baked them on an iron girdle over the fire, and then reared them before the glowing peats to make them crisp. This done, she found us some tea, and that was our supper. They had two or three cows, but their milk was already in the process of being converted into cheese; the potatoes and the oats of the last crop were exhausted, and the wet season had prevented the ripening of the present. “There was,” said our hostess, “a great cry in the country for food!” Our fatigue, and this announcement, induced us to think we fared well. They made us a comfortable bed in the spence, where we found four Gaelic Bibles, and the History of Robinson Crusoe! Early in the morning we pursued our way; but ere we took our leave, the poor woman came in from fetching up her cows, her clothes wet to the very knees. When we expressed our surprise—“O,” said she, “that is what we are used to every day of our lives. While you have been

in your bed, the herdboy has three times gone round the corn-fields with his dogs, to chase away the stags and roes into the woods. The last thing every night, while the corn is growing in the field, he goes round —once again at midnight, and then at the earliest dawn of day. Every night it must be done, or a green blade would not be left. If you went in the gloaming with the man into the wood, sir, you would see twenty stags as big as our cows. O it's an awful place for wild beasts—foxes and badgers, and serpents! did you ever see a serpent, ma'am? Sometimes in a morning they rear themselves up in a narrow path, and hiss at me bitterly." As the poor woman spoke, we stood at the door of her little tenement, and saw the heavy dew lie glittering on the grass all round; and the primitive cheese-press, consisting of a pole, one end of which was thrust into a crevice of a rock, and the other weighted with a huge stone; and around us were the heathy mountains and the woods; the mists and clouds clinging to the sides of wild hills, or rolling away before the breeze of morning; and the sound of the neighbouring torrent alone disturbing the deep solitude. We could not avoid feeling how far was all this from the cottage-life of England. We gave the poor woman what we thought a fitting return for her hospitality, and left her overwhelmed with a grateful astonishment, which shewed what was there the real value of money.

This is a scene in the scale of comfort far below the general run of labourers' houses in England; but yet how far, infinitely far lower, do many of our working people's abodes sink. What dens have we in manufacturing towns! What little, filthy, dismal, yet high-rented dens! What cabins do some of our colliers and miners inhabit! What noisome,

amphibious abodes abound in our fishing villages, such as Crabbe has painted! What places have I seen in different parts of England, which everywhere obtain the name of *Rookeries*,—huge piles built for some purpose which has not answered; or some deserted hall, let off in little tenements; the windows broken, and stopped with old rags and hats; the ground all round trodden down, covered with ash-heaps; a few stunted bushes, or gooseberry trees, where once had been a garden, displaying the ragged and tattered wash of the indigence of indigence: altogether exhibiting such an air of poverty as impoverishes one's very spirit, and fills it with a nameless feeling of disgust and despondence for days after. Such a place I particularly recollect seeing somewhere between Netherby and Gretna-Green; and, observing an old man "daundering about," as he called it, as without hope and object, I asked him how this place came to look so forlorn—"O," said he, "we once could run our cows on the waste, and did very well, but that is taken away. Sir James asked the steward what the poor people must do, 'O, they will all hooly[25] away,' said he; but where are we to hooly to?"

[25] Slip quietly away. A word often found in the old Border Ballads, as “Then hooly, hooly up she rose,” etc.

Ah! cottage life! There is much more hidden under that name than ever inspired the wish to build *cottages ornées*, or to inhabit them. There is a vast mass of human interests within its circle, of which the world takes little note. The loves and hopes; the trials and struggles; the sufferings, deaths, and burials; the festivities and religious confraternities; the indignities that fret, and the necessities that compel, to action and union our simple brethren and sisters. How little is truly known; how much is consequently misjudged; how great is the indifference concerning them in those who have the power to work miracles of love and happiness amongst them, and must one day stand with them at the footstool of our common Father, who will demand of his children how each has loved his brethren.

Let us turn our eyes, however, a moment from the dark side to the light one. There is not a more beautiful sight in the world than that of our English cottages, in those parts of the country where the violent changes of the times have not been so sensibly felt. Where manufactures have not introduced their red, staring, bald brick-houses, and what is worse, their beershops and demoralization: where, in fact, a more primitive simplicity remains. There, on the edges of the forests, in quiet hamlets and sweet woody valleys, the little grey-thatched cottages, with their gardens and old orchards, their rows of beehives, and their porches clustered with jasmines and roses,
stand:—

> Hundreds of huts
> All hidden in a sylvan gloom,—some perched
> On verdant slopes from the low coppice cleared;
> Some in deep dingles, secret as the nest
> Of Robin Redbreast, built amongst the roots
> Of pine, on whose tall top the throstle sings.
> Hundreds of huts, yet all apart, and felt
> Far from each other; 'mid the multitude
> Of intervening stems; each glen or glade
> By its own self a perfect solitude,
> Hushed, but not mute.
>
> *John Wilson.*

There they stand, and give one a poetical idea of peace and happiness which is inexpressible. Well may they be the admiration of foreigners. In many of the southern counties, but I think nowhere more than in Hampshire, do the cottages realize, in my view, every conception that our poets have given us of them. One does, no doubt, when looking on their quiet beauty, endow them with a repose and exemption from mortal sufferings that can belong to no human dwelling; and Professor Wilson, in his poem called "An Evening in Furness Abbey," which appeared in Blackwood's Magazine, September, 1829,—a poem flushed all over with the violet hues of poetry, and overflowing with tenderness and grace, gives one this very delightful expression of a thought which has occurred to many of us—

> The day goes by
> On which our soul's beloved dies! The day
> On which the body of the dead is stretched
> By hands that decked it when alive; the day
> On which the dead is shrouded; and the day
> Of burial—one and all go by! The grave
> Grows green ere long; the churchyard seems a place
> Of pleasant rest, and all the cottages,

That keep for ever sending funerals
Within its gates, look cheerful every one,
As if the dwellers therein never died,
And this earth slumbered in perpetual peace.

But sobering down by such sad, yet sweet thoughts as these, our poetical fancies of cottage life, and bringing them within the range of human trouble and suffering, still these rustic abodes must inspire us with ideas of a peace and purity of life, in most soothing contrast with the hurry and immorality of cities. Blessings be on them wherever they stand, in woodland valleys, or on open heaths, throughout fair England; and may growing knowledge bring growth of happiness, widening the capacity of enjoyment without touching the simplicity of feeling and the strength of principle. Well may the weary wayfarer—

Lean on such humble gate and think the while,
O! that for me some home like this would smile;
Some cottage home to yield my aged form,
Health in the breeze, and shelter in the storm.

There are thousands of them inhabited by woodmen, labourers, or keepers, that are fit dwellings for the truest poet that ever lived; and it is the *ideal* of these picturesque and peace-breathing English cottages that has given origin to some of the sweetest paradises in the world—the cottages of the wealthy and the tasteful. What most lovely creations of this description now abound in the finest parts of England, with their delicious shrubberies, velvet lawns, hidden walks, and rustic garden-huts; their little paddocks lying amid woods, and skirted with waters; spots breathing the odour of dewy flowers, and containing in small space all the elegance and the country enjoyments of life.

Happiness, it is true, is not to be dragged into such places; but what places they are for the genuine lover of the country to invite her into! The very feeling of the cumbrous pomp and circumstance of aristocratic establishments in this country, makes one think of such sweet hermitages with a sense of relief and congratulation. What more charming abode has the wide earth for a spirit soothing itself with the pleasures of literature and the consolation of genuine religion, far from the wranglings pf political life, than such a one as the cottage, formerly that of Mrs. Southey, at Buckland, on the border of the New Forest; of Miss Mitford, at Three-Mile-Cross; or that of Wordsworth at Rydal? But we must quit these earthly paradises to speak of other things.

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CHAPTER II.
POPULAR FESTIVALS AND FESTIVITIES.

What a revolution of taste has taken place in the English people as it regards popular festivals and festivities! Our ancestors were passionately fond of shows, pageants, processions, and maskings. They were fond of garlands and ribbons, dancing and festive merriment. May-day, Easter, Whitsuntide, St. John's Day, Yule, and many other times, were times of general sport and gaiety. Music and flowers abounded; mumming, morris-dancing, and many a quaint display of humour and frolic spread over the country. The times, and the spirit of the times, are changed:—we are become a sober people. England is no longer merry England, but busy England; England full of wealth and poverty—extravagance and care.

There has been no small lamentation over this change; and many of our writers have laboured hard to bring us once more to adopt this state of things. They might as well attempt to bring back jousts and tourneys[26], popery, and government without representation. The times, and the spirit of the times are changed. Strutt, Hone, Leigh Hunt, Miss Laurence, and many others, may expatiate on the poetic beauty of these things: they may deplore the extinction of this graceful rite, that jocund festivity, and pray us earnestly to resume them once more; but can they give us our light hearts again? Can they make the nation young again? Can they make us the simple, ignorant, confiding people, living in the present, careless of the future, as our ancestors were? Till they can do this, they must lament and exhort us in vain. As soon might they bid the sun to retrace his path; the seasons reverse their course; earth and heaven turn back in the path of their years. What our ancestors were, they were from circumstances that are gone for ever; and what we are, we are from another mighty succession of circumstances, of which the memory and effect may no more be blotted out, than the stars can be blotted out of the clear heavens of midnight. The country has passed through deep baptisms, and processes of fermentation which have worked out the lighter external characters, and totally reorganised the moral as well as the political constitution of the kingdom. The better qualities of the old English character I trust we fully retain, but the more juvenile and fantastic ones are irrevocably destroyed in the shock of most momentous convulsions.

[26] Since the former edition of this work was written, *that* even *has* been attempted.

Amongst the many attempts to account for the sedater cast of the modern popular mind, Sir E. Bulwer, in "England and the English," has attributed it to the spread of Methodism. Had he attributed it to Puritanism he would have been nearer the mark. Methodism may possibly have done something towards it, but it neither began early enough, nor spread universally enough, to have the credit of this change. The decay of popular festivities has been noticed and lamented by writers for the last century. It has been going on both before and since the rise of Methodism, with much the same pace of progression, and is equally felt where Methodism is not allowed to shew its face, as where it exercises its fullest power. Over what a great extent of this country does the influence of high-church landlords prevail, where Methodism cannot get footing; where the people are all expected to go soberly to church as in the good old times; and yet there the people are just as grave, have grown out of the sports and pastimes of their ancestors, just as much as in the most Methodistic districts. In the manufacturing districts, where the Methodists have gained most influence, it is true enough that they have helped to expel an immense quantity of dog-fighting, cock-fighting, bull-baiting, badger-baiting, boxing, and such blackguard amusements; but Maying, guising, plough-bullocking, morris-dancing, were gone before, or would have gone had not Methodism appeared.

Mighty and many are the causes which have wrought this great national change; causes which have been operating upon us for the last three hundred years; and are so intimately connected with our whole national progress, political and intellectual—with all our growing greatness, with all our glory and our sorrows, that had not Methodism

existed, that character would have been exactly what it is.

The Reformation laid the foundation of this change. While we had an absolute pope, and an absolute king; while the people were neither educated, nor allowed to read the Bible, nor to be represented in Parliament; while the monarch and a few noble families held all the lands of the kingdom, the lower classes had nothing to do but to follow their masters to the wars, or live easily and dance gaily in times of peace. The retainers of great houses, the labourers in the fields, foresters and shepherds, following their solitary occupations, constituted the bulk of the nation. Merchants and merchandise were few; our great trading towns and interests did not exist; the days of newspapers, of religious disputes, of literature and periodicals, were not come. The people were either at work or at play. When their work was over, play was their sole resource. They danced, they acted rude plays and pantomimes, with all the zest and gaiety of children, for their heads were as unoccupied with knowledge and grave concerns as those of children. They lived in poverty it may be, but still they lived in that state of simplicity and dependence which left them little care; and they were cut off, by the impossibility of rising out of their original rank, from all troublesome excitement. It was equally the concern of the civil government and the hierarchy to encourage sports and festivities, to keep them out of dangerous inquiries into their own condition, or rights. In the great feudal halls, the minstrel, the jongleur, the jester, and other ministers of gaiety; hawks and hounds abroad, jollity and drinking at home, kept the minds of all idlers occupied with matters to their taste. The clergy and monks promoted with an equal

zeal of policy, the festivals of saints, keeping of high days and holidays, processions, games, and even acting the mysteries and miracle-plays. While the system continued, this spirit and national character must have continued likewise; but the Reformation burst like a volcano from beneath, and scattered the whole smiling surface into disjointed fragments, or buried it beneath the lava of ruin.

Henry VIII. at once destroyed Monkery and the Catholic church. He at once seized on the ecclesiastical lands, and snapped asunder the ecclesiastical policy. The translation of the Bible let in a flood of light that revealed all the phantasmagoria of the past, and prepared a train of everlasting inquiries, disquietudes, and intellectual and political triumphs for the future. The people saw they had been treated as children, but they now awoke to the passions and the conscious power of men. They had tasted of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and their eyes were opened to their actual condition, never more to be closed. The lands that were rudely seized and arbitrarily distributed, created a new class in the community—the gentry—a link between the aristocracy and the people;—possessing the knowledge of the one, and sharing the interests of the other. Henry's predecessors had hastened this new era by curtailing the wealth and power of the nobility; and the long wars of the houses of York and Lancaster had already done much of this work for him; exterminating some, humbling others, and embarrassing with debts the remainder. So were the elements of a more popular career thrown into the midst of the nation; and the religious persecutions on the Continent, by sending us swarms of jewellers, weavers, and other artificers, laid the foundation of those trading propensities which have

now carried us to such a marvellous length. We came to be a trading and colonizing people, and to possess a fleet in order to protect our new interests. How rapidly this navy grew, indicating by its own growth that of the general wealth and commercial enterprise of England, of which it was the consequence, is seen by this circumstance. In that fine old ballad of Sir Andrew Barton, Lord Howard is made to say to Henry VIII. in
1511—

> Sir Andrew's shipp I bring with mee;
> A braver shipp was never none;
> *Now hath your grace two shipps of warr,*
> *Before in England was but one*!

This one was the *Great Harry*, built in 1504. In about 80 years only afterwards, the English had thirty vessels of war at sea, and with these dared to attack the Invincible Armada of Spain, consisting of one hundred and thirty vessels, and by the assistance of a providential tempest, totally dispersed and destroyed it. Then Howard of Effingham, Drake, Frobisher, Hawkins, were the names of our commanders,—names which thenceforward filled all the known world with terror, and gave to England the empire of the seas. With this extension of national interests, a more active and earnest spirit was diffused through the people. The struggle with enemies abroad, and with the rapidly maturing spirit of religious freedom at home, kept Elizabeth engaged, and induced in her a rigour of persecution, and in the people a rigour of resistance and the soul of martyrdom. Before the development of these antagonist powers, all lightness fled; singing gave way to preaching and listening; dancing, to running anxiously to know the fate of sufferers, and the doctrines of fresh-springing teachers. So completely had the old relish for

merriment and pastimes died out, that her successor, James, endeavoured to compel the people, by the publication of his "Book of Sports" to be jocose and gamesome. But it would not do. The soul of the people was now up in arms for their rights; and the despotic nature of himself and his son, resisting their claims, kept up such a fever of political strife in the kingdom as would have put out all jesting and capering if they had not gone before. The hierarchy fell,—fell in one wide chaos of civil contention; and, as if torrents of blood and volumes of fire, and the trampling hoofs of thousands of careering cavalry had not been enough to overwhelm and dash to pieces every remaining fragment of jollity and popular fête,—in came Puritanism from Geneva, and the Solemn League and Covenant from Scotland. There was a final close to all the pageantry of processions and the merry saintliness of festivals: they were denounced and abhorred as the carnality of Anti-Christ and the rags of the scarlet woman. Charles II. indeed, could revive licentiousness, but he could not bring back the holiday guise of "the old profession." And what has been the course of England since? One ever-widening and ascending course of mighty wars, expanding commerce, vast colonization, and the growth of science, literature, and general knowledge. We are no longer a nation of feudal combatants, of piping shepherds, and thoughtless peasantry,—but of busy, scheming, money-collecting, family-creating men. Our last tremendous war put the climax to this amazing career. In it all Europe seemed torn to pieces and organized anew. We, as a people, were led by circumstances to put forth the most stupendous energies that perhaps any nation ever did. To defend our colonies; to support the interests of our allies

with arms and subsidies; to supply the whole of Europe with all species of manufactures, and almost all species of merchandise, and through this demand stimulating into existence the powers of steam and machinery, a population of amazing numbers to maintain. And then, the shock and the revulsion when this great war-system suddenly ceased! An immense debt, vast taxes, the necessity of maintaining high prices, the necessity of boundless competition and low wages that we might so compete with the continent, returning to its old habits.

Who does not know with what a fiery force this has fallen on the working classes? What distress, what pauperization, what desperation, brought to the very pitch of rebellion, they have gone through; and recollecting this, can any one think otherwise than that it has been enough to sober any people that is not destitute of every element of high character. If we could, after a baptism like this, be still like the French, a dancing, dissipation-loving people, we should, like them, have but a fitful care to secure our liberties, and the comforts of good government; like them, at this moment, we should be the victims of successive revolutions, yielding no fruit but tyranny. But we are a sober and a thoughtful people, and are therefore working out of the mass of our difficulties the form of a renewed constitution, adapted to our present enlarged views and experience. But besides this, our energies have not been called forth for this good end alone; they have brought with their exercise a high relish for intellectual pleasures. Our minds have been stirred mightily, and, like animals that during their wintry torpor feel no hunger, yet feel it keenly the moment they are awake, they have become hungry for congenial aliment. We have fed

on much knowledge, and are no longer children, but full-grown men, with manly appetites and experienced tastes. Could we now sit, as our ancestors did, for nine hours together at a mystery? Could we endure to read through the chronicles and romances of the middle ages,—books which spun out their recitals to the most extraordinary length, and were never too long; for books then were few? If we could not, so neither could the simple pleasures and rural festivities satisfy the peasantry of this. We are the creatures of new circumstances, and of a higher reach of knowledge. A combination of causes, too puissant to be resisted, has made hopeless all return to the juvenilities of the past. And after all, happiness —of which the people, however unwisely, are always in quest, does not consist in booths and garlands, drums and horns, or in capering round a May-pole. Happiness is a fireside thing. It is a thing of grave and earnest tone; and the deeper and truer it is, the more is it removed from the riot of mere merriment:

> The highest mood allowed
> To sinful creatures, for all happiness
> Worthy that holy name, seems steeped in tears,
> Like flowers in dew, or tinged with misty hues,
> Like stars in halo.
>
> *John Wilson.*

And the more our humble classes come to taste of the pleasures of books and intellect, and the deep fireside affections which grow out of the growth of heart and mind, the less charms will the outward forms of rejoicing have for them. Beautiful and poetical, I grant, are many of the old rites and customs of which we have been speaking; but they are beautiful and poetical as belonging to their own times,—and many of them, I am inclined to believe,

as seen in the distance; for, seen at hand, there is a vulgarity in most popular customs that offends invariably our present tastes. Nor do I mean to say that our present population cannot be cheerful. A more truly cheerful people never existed; and they can dance and be merry too when they will; as Christmas, and Whitsuntide, and their annual village feasts and their harvest-homes can testify. Since the Reformation, the saints of the calendar having become mere names in this country, their festivals have accordingly died away. Whitsuntide, Easter, and Christmas seem almost all that have maintained their stand; and of these we will speak a little; but in the first place let us have a few words on May-Day.

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CHAPTER III.
MAY-DAY.

May-day was celebrated with a gaiety and poetical grace far beyond all other festivals. It had come down from the pagan times with all its Arcadian beauty, and seemed to belong to those seasons more than to any Christian occasions. It is one that the poets have all combined to lavish their most delicious strains upon. The time of the year was itself so inspiring,—with all its newness of feeling, its buds and blossoms and smiling skies. It seemed just the chosen period for heaven and earth and youth to mingle their gladness together. There is no festivity that is so totally gone! Washington Irving in his very interesting account of his visit to Newstead Abbey, takes the opportunity to say, that he had been accused by the critics of describing in his Sketch

Book popular manners and customs that had gone by, but that he had found those very customs existing in that neighbourhood. That those who doubted the accuracy of his statements must go north of the Trent. That he found May-poles standing in the old-fashioned villages, and that a band of plough-bullocks even came to the abbey while he was there.

Washington Irving certainly seemed most agreeably impressed with the primitive air of that part of Nottinghamshire, and it is interesting to see the effect which places most familiar to you produce on the minds of strangers of taste and poetical feeling. His delight at finding himself in old Sherwood, the haunt of Robin Hood; in hearing the bells of Mansfield at a distance; and his remarking the names of Wagstaff, Hardstaff, Beardall, as names abounding about the forest, naturally suggesting the character of those who first bore them—names so common to our eyes as never to have awakened any such idea;—all this is very agreeable; but let no lover of ancient customs go thither on the strength of Washington Irving's report, unless he means to travel much farther north of the Trent than Newstead. There is certainly a May-pole standing in the village of Linby near Newstead, and there is one in the village of Farnsfield near Southwell; but I have been endeavouring to recollect any others for twenty miles round and cannot do it, and though garlands are generally hung on these poles on May-day, wreathed by the hands of some fair damsel who has a lingering affection for the olden times, and carried up by some adventurous lad; alas! the dance beneath it, where is it? In the dales of Derbyshire, May-poles are more frequent, but the dancing I never saw. In my own recollection, the appearance of morris-dancers,

guisers, plough-bullocks, and Christmas carollers, has become more and more rare, and to find them we must go into the retired hamlets of Staffordshire, and the dales of Yorkshire and Lancashire.

One would have thought that the May-day fête would have outlasted all others, except it were Christmas, on the strength of the poetical wealth of heart and fancy woven with it through our literature. Every writer of any taste and fancy has referred with enthusiasm to May-day. Chaucer, Spenser, Shakspeare, Fletcher, Milton, Browne, Herrick, and all our later poets, have sung of it with all their hearts. Chaucer, in Palamon and Arcite, describes Arcite going to the woods for garlands on May morning, according to the old custom. He

> Is risen, and looketh on the merry day;
> And for to do his observance to May,
> Remembering on the point of his desire,
> He on the courser, starting as the fire,
> Is risen to the fieldés him to playe;
> Out of the court were it a mile or tway:
> And to the grove of which that I you told,
> By Aventine his way began to hold,
> To maken him a garland of the greves,
> Were it of woodbine, or of hawthorn leaves,
> And loud he sung, against the sunny sheen:
> "O May, with all thy flowers and thy green,
> Right welcome be thou, fairé, freshé May;
> I hope that I some green here getten may."
> And from his courser with a lusty heart,
> Into the grove full hastily he start,
> And in a path he roamed up and down.

Milton has many beautiful glances at it, and Shakspeare touches on it in a hundred places, as in "The Midsummer Night's Dream:"

> If thou lovest me then,

Steal forth thy father's house to-morrow night;
And in a wood, a league without the town,
Where I did meet thee once with Helena,
To do observance to a morn of May,
There will I stay for thee.

The European observance of this custom is principally derived from the Romans, who have left traces of it in all the countries they subdued. It was their festival of Flora. It was the time in which they sacrificed to Maia; and in Spain, where this custom seems to remain much as they left it, the village-queen still is called Maia. But we have traces of it as it existed amongst the Saxons, whose barons at this time going to their Wittenagemote, or Assembly of Wise Men, left their peasantry to a sort of saturnalia, in which they chose a king, who chose his queen. He wore an oaken, and she a hawthorn wreath; and together they gave laws to the rustic sports, during those sweet days of freedom. The May-pole too, or the column of May, was the grand standard of justice amongst these people, in the EY-COMMONS, or fields of May: and the garland hung on its top, was the signal for convening the people. Here it was that the people, if they saw cause, deposed or punished their governors, their barons and kings. It was one of the most ancient customs, which, says Brande, has by repetition been from year to year perpetuated.

But we have traces also of its mode of celebration among our Druid ancestors, for it is certainly one of the old customs of the world, having come down from the earliest ages of Paganism through various channels. Dr. Clarke in his Travels, vol. ii. p. 229, has shewn that the custom of blowing horns on this day, still continued at Oxford, Cambridge, London, and other places, is derived from a festival of Diana. These ancient customs of the country did not escape

the notice of Erasmus when in England, nor the ceremony of placing a deer's head upon the altar of St. Paul's church, which was built upon the site of a temple of Diana, by Ethelbert, king of Kent. Mr. Johnson, in his "Indian Field Sports," also states the curious circumstance, that the Hindoos hold a vernal feast called BHUVIZAH, on the 9th of Baisach, exclusively for such as keep horned cattle for use or profit, when *they erect a pole and adorn it with garlands*; and perform much the same rites as used to be adopted by the English on the first of May. Thus it appears how ancient and how widely spread was this custom; and its celebration by the Druids and Celts points it out as belonging to the worship of the sun. In Ireland and the Highlands of Scotland, the people still kindle fires on the tops of their mountains on this day, called Beal Fires, and the festival then celebrated Beltane, or Bealtane. The practice is to be traced in the mountainous and uncultivated parts of Cumberland, amongst the Cheviots, and in many parts of Scotland. Mr. Pennant says—"On the first of May, in the Highlands of Scotland, the herdsmen of every district hold their Beltein. They cut a square trench in the ground, leaving the turf in the middle. On that they make a fire of wood, on which they dress a large caudle of eggs, butter, oatmeal, and milk, and bring, besides the ingredients of the caudle, plenty of beer and whisky; for each of the company must contribute something. The rite begins with spilling some of the caudle on the ground, by way of libation. On that every one takes a cake of oatmeal, on which are raised nine square knobs, each dedicated to some particular being, the supposed preserver of their flocks and herds; or to some particular animal, the real destroyer of them. Each person then turns his face to the fire, breaks off a

knob, and flinging it over his shoulder, says—"This I give to thee; preserve thou my sheep: this I give to thee; preserve thou my horses:" and so on. After that they use the same ceremony to the noxious animals —"This I give to thee O Fox! spare thou my lambs; this to thee O hooded Crow! this to thee Eagle! When the ceremony is over they dine on the caudle, etc. etc."

Something of this kind is retained in Northumberland, in the syllabub prepared for the May-feast, which is made of warm milk from the cow, sweet cake, and wine; and a kind of divination is practised by fishing with a ladle for a wedding-ring, which is dropped into it for the purpose of prognosticating who shall be first married. This divination of the wedding-ring is practised in the midland counties on Christmas-eve; and they have a peculiar kind of tall pots made expressly for this purpose, called posset-pots. I have myself fished for the ring on many a merry Christmas-eve.

One cannot avoid seeing in these ceremonies their most ancient origin and consequently wide-spread adoption. The throwing over the shoulder offerings to good and evil powers is exactly that of all savage nations, the effect of one uniform tradition. The American Indians, indeed, seldom propitiate the good, but are very careful to appease, or prevent the evil Manitou. These notions have, no doubt, everywhere contributed to connect ideas of the presence and power of spiritual and fairy creatures, and the extraordinary license of witchcraft on this night and day. We cannot avoid thinking of the wizard rites of the Blocksburg in Germany, made so familiar by Goëthe; and we see the reason why all houses were defended by forest boughs, gathered with peculiar ceremonies, and worn by the young on

May-eve, in almost every European country.

What then were the exact ceremonies of May-day? The Romans celebrated the feast of Flora in this manner. The young people went to the woods, and brought back a quantity of boughs, with which they adorned their houses. Women ran through the streets, and had the privilege of insulting every one who came in their way. And here may we not see the custom, still continued in France, though fallen into desuetude here, of the *epousées* (brides) of the month of May? The *epousées* are the little daughters of the common people, dressed in their best, and placed on a chair, or bank, in the streets and public walks, on the first Sunday in May. Other little girls, the brides' companions, stand near with plates, and tease the passengers for some money for their *epousées*.

Like the Romans, then, our ancestors celebrated May-day as a festival of the young. The youth of both sexes rose shortly after midnight, and went to some neighbouring wood, attended by songs and music, and breaking green branches from the trees, adorned themselves with wreaths and crowns of flowers. They returned home at the rising of the sun, and made their windows and doors gay with garlands. In the villages they danced during the day round the May-pole, which was hung to the very top with wreaths and garlands, and afterwards remained the whole year untouched, except by the seasons,—a fading emblem and consecrated offering to the Goddess of Flowers. At night the villagers lighted up fires, and indulged in revellings, after the Roman fashion. In this country they added the pageant of Robin Hood and Maid Marian, with Friar Tuck, Will Stutely, and others of their merry company; the dragon and the hobby-horse,—all of which may be found fully described in Strutt's Queenhoo-Hall.

Spenser and Herrick give very graphic pictures of these popular festivities, which I shall here transcribe; and first, Spenser from the Shepherds' Calendar.

Young folke now flocken in everywhere
To gather May buskets,[27] and smelling brere;
And home they hasten the posts to dight,
And all the kirk pillars, ere daylight:
With hawthorne buds, and sweet eglantine,
And garlands of roses, and sops-in-wine.
Sicker this morrow, no longer agoe,
I sawe a shole of shepherds outgoe
With singing and shouting, and jolly chere;
Before them rode a lustie tabrere,
That to the many a hornpipe played,
Wherto they dauncen, eche one with his mayd.
To see these folks make such jovisaunce
Made my heart after the pipe to daunce.
Tho to the greene-wood they speeden hem all,
To fetchen home May with their musicall,
And home they bringen, in a royall throne,
Crowned as king, and his queen attone
Was Lady Flora, on whome did attend
A fayre flock of faeries, and a fresh band
Of lovely nymphs. O that I were there
To helpen the ladies their May-bush beer!

[27] Bushes.

Herrick's poem is in the form of a lover inviting his sweetheart to go out a May-gathering.

CORINNA'S GOING A-MAYING.

Get up, get up for shame: the blooming morn
Upon her wings presents the God unshorn:
See how Aurora throws her fair
Fresh-quilted colours through the air:
Get up, sweet slug-a-bed, and see
The dew bespangling herb and tree.

Each flower has wept and bowed towards the east
Above an hour ago, yet you not dressed:
Nay, not so much as out of bed
When all the birds have matins said,
And sung their thankful hymns; 'tis sin,
Nay, profanation to keep in;
When as a thousand virgins on this day
Spring sooner than the lark to fetch in May!

Rise and put on your foliage, and be seen
To come forth like the spring time, fresh and green,
And sweet as Flora. Take no care
For jewels for your crown, or hair;
Fear not, the leaves will strew
Gems in abundance upon you:
Besides, the childhood of the day has kept,
Against you come, some orient pearls unwept.
Come and receive them, while the light
Hangs on the dew-locks of the night,
And Titan, on the eastern hill
Retires himself, or else stands still
Till you come forth. Wash, dress, be brief in praying;
Few beads are best when once we go a-Maying!

Come, my Corinna, come, and coming mark
How each field turns a street, each street a park,
Made green and trimmed with trees; see how
Devotion gives each house a bough,
A branch; each porch, and door, ere this,
An ark, a tabernacle is,
Made up of whitethorn, neatly interwove,
As if here were those cooler shades of love.
Can such delights be in the street,
And open fields, and we not see 't?
Come, we'll abroad, and let's obey
The proclamation made for May;
And sin no more, as we have done, by staying;
But my Corinna, come, let's go a-Maying!

There's not a budding boy or girl, this day,
But is got up and gone to bring in May:

A deal of youth, ere this, is come
Back, and with whitethorn laden home:
Some have despatched their cakes and cream,
Before that we have left to dream;
And some have wept, and wooed, and plighted troth,
And chose their priest, ere we can cast off sloth.
Many a green gown has been given;
Many a kiss both odd and even;
Many a glance too has been sent
From out the eye, love's firmament;
Many a jest told, of the key's betraying
This night, and locks picked; yet we're not a-Maying!

Come, let us go while we are in our prime,
And take the harmless folly of the time;
We shall grow old apace, and die
Before we know our liberty:
Our life is short, and our days run
As fast away as does the sun:
And as a vapour or a drop of rain,
Once lost can ne'er be formed again:
So when, or you or I are made
A fable, song, or fleeting shade;
All love, all liking, all delight,
Lie down with us in endless night,
Then, while time serves, and we are but decaying,
Come, my Corinna, come, let's go a-Maying!

Such were the festivities of youth and nature to which our monarchs, especially Henry VIII., Elizabeth, and James, used to go forth and participate. In the reign of the Maiden Queen, pageant seemed to arrive at its greatest height, and the May-day festivities were celebrated in their fullest manner; and so they continued, attracting the attention of the royal and noble, as well as the vulgar, till the close of the reign of James I. In "The Progresses of Queen Elizabeth," vol. iv. part i., is this entry: "May 8th, 1602. On May-day, the queen went a-Maying to Sir Rich. Buckley's, at Lewisham, some

three or four miles off Greenwich." This may be supposed to be one of those scenes represented in Mr. Leslie's magnificent picture of May-day, in which Elizabeth is a conspicuous object. It is recorded by Chambers that Henry VIII. made a grand procession, with his queen Katherine and many lords and ladies, from Greenwich to Shooter's Hill, where they were met by a Robin Hood pageant. In Henry VI.'s time, the aldermen and sheriffs of London went to the Bishop of London's wood, in the parish of Stebenheath, and there had a worshipful dinner for themselves and other comers; and Lydgate the poet, a monk of Bury, sent them by a pursuivant "a joyful commendation of that season, containing sixteen stanzas in metre royall."

In April, 1644, there was an ordinance of the two houses of Parliament for taking down all and singular May-poles; and in 1654, the Moderate Intelligencer says—"this day was more observed by people's *going a-Maying*, than for divers years past, and indeed much *sin* committed by wicked meetings, with fighting, drunkenness, ribaldry and the like. Great resort came to Hyde Park; many hundred of rich coaches, and gallants in rich attire, but *most shameful powdered-hair men, and painted and spotted women*." And this before my Lord Protector! so that the old spirit was rising up again from beneath the influence of Puritanism; and the Restoration was again the signal for hoisting the May-poles. In Hone's Everyday Book, and in that valuable miscellany, Time's Telescope, many particulars of the rearing again the great May-pole in the Strand, and of the latest May-pole standing in London, may be found.

Old Aubrey says, that in Holland they had their *May-booms* before their doors, but that he did not recollect seeing a May-pole in France. Yet nothing is

more certain than the custom of the French of planting tall trees in their villages at this time, and of adorning their houses with boughs, and of planting a shrub of some pleasant kind under the window, or by the door of their sweethearts, before day-break, on a May-morning. Aubrey complains himself bitterly of the people taking up great trees in the forest of Woodstock to plant before their doors; and John Evelyn as bitterly laments the havoc made in the woods in his time. They are safe from such depredations now. Yet in different parts of England still, till within these few years, lingered vestiges of this once great day. At *Horncastle* in Lincolnshire, the young people used to come marching up to the May-pole with wands wreathed with cowslips, which they there struck together in a wild enthusiasm, and scattered in a shower around them. At *Padstow* in Cornwall, they have, or had lately, the procession of the hobby-horse. At Oxford on May-day, at four o'clock in the morning, they ascend to the top of the tower of Magdalen College, and used to sing a requiem for the soul of Henry VII., the founder, which was afterwards changed to a concert of vocal and instrumental music, consisting of several merry catches, and a concluding peal of the bells. The clerks and choristers, with the rest of the performers, afterwards breakfasted on a side of lamb. At Arthur's Seat, at Edinburgh, they make a grand assembly of young people about sunrise, to gather May-dew, and dance. In Huntingdonshire, a correspondent of Time's Telescope says, that the children still exhibit garlands. They suspend a sort of crown of hoops, wreathed and ornamented with flowers, ribbons, handkerchiefs, necklaces, silver spoons, and whatever finery can be procured, at a considerable height above the road, by a rope extending from

chimney to chimney of the cottages, while they attempt to throw their balls over it from side to side, singing, and begging halfpence from the passengers. A May-lady, or doll, or larger figure, sometimes makes an appendage in some side nook. The money collected is afterwards spent in a tea-drinking, with cakes, etc. May-garlands with dolls are carried at Northampton by the neighbouring villagers, and at other places. At Great Gransden in Cambridgeshire, at Hitchin, and elsewhere, they make a lord and lady of May. At night, the farmers' young servants go and cut hawthorn, singing what they call the *Night-song*. They leave a bough at each house, according to the number of young persons in it. On the evening of May-day, and the following evening, they go round to every house where they left a bush, singing *The May-Song*. One has a handkerchief on a long wand for a flag, with which he keeps off the crowd. The rest have ribbons in their hats. The May-Song consists of sixteen verses, of a very religious cast. At Penzance, and in Wales, they keep up May dances and other peculiar ceremonies.

I have been more particular in detailing the rites and customs of this festivity, because, once more popular than any, they are now become more disused. There have been more attempts to revive the celebration of May-day, from its supposed congeniality to the spirit of youth, than that of any other festivity, but all in vain. The times, and the spirit of the times, are changed.



CHAPTER IV.
EASTER FESTIVITIES.

May-day was the great festival of the young. Easter was the great festival of the church. It followed the dismal and abstemious time of Lent, and came heralded by Palm-Sunday, the commemoration of our Saviour's riding into Jerusalem; Maundy-Thursday, the day on which he washed the feet of his disciples; and Good-Friday, the day of his death. All these days were kept with great circumstance. On Palm-Sunday there was, and still is, in Catholic countries, a great procession to church, with tapers and palm-branches, or sprigs of box as a substitute. Stowe says that in the week before Easter, "had ye great shows made for the fetching in of a *twisted tree*, or *withe*, as they termed it, out of the woods into the

king's house, and the like into every man's house of honour and worship."

This was the sallow or large-leaved willow, whose catkins are now in full bloom, and are still called palms by the country people. Maundy-Thursday, or *Dies Mandati*, the day of the command to wash each other's feet, was a great day of humiliation and profession of Christian benevolence. The pope washed the feet of certain poor men; kings and princes did the same; in the monasteries the custom was general, and long retained. After the ceremony, liberal donations were made to the poor, of clothing, and of silver money; and refreshments were given them to mitigate the severity of the fast; on the 15th of April, 1731, Maundy-Thursday, a distribution was made at Whitehall, to 48 poor men and 48 poor women, the king's age then being 48—of boiled beef and shoulders of mutton; loaves and fishes; shoes, stockings, linen, and woollen cloth; and leathern bags with one, two, three, and four penny pieces of silver, and shillings to each; about four pounds in value. The Archbishop of York also washed the feet of a certain number of poor persons. James II. was the last king who performed this in person: but a relic of this custom is still preserved in the donations dispensed at St. James's on this day. In 1814, this donation was made with great ceremony at Whitehall Chapel. In the morning, Dr. Carey, the sub-almoner, and Mr. Hanley, the secretary of the Lord High Almoner, Mr. Nost, and others belonging to the Lord Chamberlain's office, attended by 40 yeomen of the guard, distributed to 75 poor women and 75 poor men—being as many as the king was years old—a quantity of salt fish, consisting of salmon, cod, and herrings; pieces of very fine beef, five loaves of bread, and some ale to drink the king's health. At

three o'clock they met again; the men on one side of the chapel, the women on the other. A procession entered, consisting of a party of yeomen of the guard, one of them carrying a large gold dish on his head, containing 150 bags with 75 silver pennies in each, for the poor people, which was placed in the royal closet. They were followed by the sub-almoner in his robes, with a sash of fine linen over his shoulder and crossing his waist. He was followed by two boys, two girls, the secretary, and another gentleman, with similar sashes, etc. etc.: all carrying large nosegays. The church evening service was then performed; at the conclusion of which the silver pennies were distributed, and woollen cloth, linen, shoes and stockings, to the poor men and women, and, according to ancient custom, a cup of wine, to drink the king's health. This ceremony is still continued in similar style.

At Rome, the altar of the Capella Paolina is illuminated with more than 4000 wax tapers; and the pope and cardinals go thither in procession, bringing the sacrament along with them, and leaving it there. Then the pope blesses the people, and washes the feet of some pilgrims, and serves them at dinner. At Moscow, Dr. Clarke says, the Archbishop washes the feet of the Apostles, that is, twelve monks designed to represent them. The archbishop takes off his robes, girds his loins with a towel, and proceeds to wash their feet, till he comes to St. Peter, who rises up, and the same interlocution takes place between him and the prelate as is said to have done between our Saviour and that Apostle.

The next day is GOOD-FRIDAY, so called by the English, but HOLY-FRIDAY on the continent—the day of our Saviour's death. Thousands of English travellers have witnessed, and many described, the

splendid pageant of this night at St. Peter's at Rome, on which the hundred lamps which burn over the apostle's tomb are extinguished, and a stupendous cross of light appears suspended from the dome, between the altar and the nave, shedding over the whole edifice a soft lustre delightful to the eye, and highly favourable to picturesque representations. This exhibition is supposed to have originated in the sublime imagination of Michael Angelo, and he who beholds it will acknowledge that it is not unworthy of the inventor. The magnitude of the cross, hanging as if self-suspended, and like a meteor streaming in the air; the blaze that it pours forth; the mixture of light and shade cast on the pillars, arches, statues, and altars; the crowd of spectators placed in all the different attitudes of curiosity, wonder, and devotion; the processions, with their banners and crosses gliding successively in silence along the nave, and kneeling around the altar: the penitents of all nations and dresses collected in groups near the confessionals of their respective languages; a cardinal occasionally advancing through the crowd, and as he kneels, humbly bending his head to the pavement; in fine, the pontiff himself without pomp and pageantry, prostrate before the altar, offering up his adorations in silence, form a scene singularly striking.

In various Catholic countries the lights are suddenly put out at the sound of a bell, and a flagellation, in imitation of Christ's sufferings, commences in the dark, with such cries as make it a truly terrific scene. The effect of the singing of the Miserere at Rome, in the time of the darkness, has been described by several writers as inexpressibly sublime.

At Jerusalem the monks go in procession to Mount

Calvary with a large crucifix and image, where they take down the image from it with all the minute procedure of taking down, unnailing, taking off the crown of thorns, etc. etc. In Portugal, they act in the chapel the whole scene of the Crucifixion, the Virgin Mary sitting at the foot of the cross with Mary Magdalene and St. John; the coming of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea; the taking down by order of Pilate, and bringing the body in procession to the tomb.

Such are the ceremonies of Catholic countries: here the people eat hot-cross buns, and go to church, and that is all. The first sound you hear on awaking in the morning, is that of numerous voices crying hot-cross buns, for every little boy has got a basket, and sets out with a venture of buns on this day. Yet how few know or call to mind the amazing antiquity of this custom. Mr. Bryant traces it to the time of early Paganism, when little cakes called *bown* were offered to Astarte, the Catholics having politically engrafted all the Gentile customs on their form of Christianity.

Then came Easter-eve, on which the fast was most rigorous; and then broke Easter-day, the joyous Sunday, the day of the resurrection. All sorrow, fasting, and care now gave way to gaiety; and religious pageants were established, and are so still in Catholic countries, to edify the people. Goëthe gives a lively description of the effect of the coming Easter morn upon Faust. He is just wearied out of life with ambitious cravings, and about to swallow poison, when he hears the sound of bells, and voices in chorus, singing—Christ ist erstanden!

EASTER HYMN.—CHORUS OF ANGELS.

Christ is from the grave arisen!

Joy is his. For him the weary
Earth has ceased its thraldom dreary,
And the cares that prey on mortals;
He hath burst the grave's stern portals;
The grave is no prison:
The Lord hath arisen!

FAUSTUS—O, those deep sounds, those voices rich and heavenly!
How powerfully they sway the soul, and force
The cup uplifted from the eager lips!
Proud bells, and do your peals already ring,
To greet the joyous dawn of Easter morn?

Hymn continued.—CHORUS OF WOMEN.

We laid him for burial
'Mong aloes and myrrh,
His children and friends
Laid their dead master there!
All wrapped in his grave-dress
We left him in fear,
Ah! where shall we seek him?
The Lord is not here!

CHORUS OF ANGELS.

The Lord hath arisen—
Sorrow no longer;
Temptation hath tried him,
But he was the stronger!

Happy, happy victory!
Love, submission, self-denial
Marked the strengthening agony,
Marked the purifying trial:
The grave is no prison:
The Lord is arisen.

FAUSTUS—Those bells announced the merry sports of youth;
This music welcomed in the happy spring;

And now am I once more a happy child,
And old remembrance twining round my heart,
Forbids this act, and checks my daring steps —
Then sing ye forth—sweet songs that breathe of heaven!
Tears come, and earth hath won her child again.

Dr. Anster's Translation.

In this beautiful incident, purely English readers may be apt to attribute to German extravagance the chorus of angels; but Goëthe had in his eye the Catholic pageants—pageants that once were common here. The only theatres of the people were the churches, and the monks were the actors. Plays were got up with a full *dramatis personæ* of monks, in dresses according to the characters they assumed. The sepulchre was erected in the church near the altar, to represent the tomb wherein the body of Christ was laid. At this tomb, which was built at an enormous cost, and lighted at an equal one, and for which there was a gathering from the people, there was a grand performance on Easter day. In some churches Mary Magdalene, Mary of Bethany, and Mary of Nain, were represented by three deacons clothed in dalmatics and amisses, with their heads covered in the manner of women, and holding a vase in their hands. These performers came through the middle of the choir, and hastening towards the sepulchre with downcast looks, said together this verse, "Who shall remove the stone for us?" Upon this, a boy clothed as an angel, in albs, and holding a wheat-ear in his hand before the sepulchre, said, "Whom do you seek in the sepulchre?" The Marys answered, "Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified."

The boy-angel answered, “He is not here, but is risen,” and pointed to the place with his finger. The boy-angel departed very quickly, and two priests in tunics, sitting without the sepulchre, said, “Women, whom do you seek?” The middle one of the three said, “Sir, if you have taken him away, say so.” The priest, shewing the cross, said, “They have taken away the Lord.” The two sitting priests said, “Whom do you seek, women?” The Marys, kissing the place, afterwards went from the sepulchre. In the meantime a priest, in the character of Christ, in an alb, with a stole, holding a cross, met them on the left horn of the altar, and said, “Mary!” Upon hearing this, the mock Mary threw herself at his feet, and with a loud voice, cried, “*Cabboin!*” The priest representing Christ, replied, nodding, “*Noli me tangere*;” touch me not. This being finished, he again appeared at the right horn of the altar, and said to them as they passed before it, “Haik,” do not fear. This being finished, he concealed himself, and the women-priests, as though joyful at hearing this, bowed to the altar, and turning towards the choir, sung “Alleluia, the Lord is risen!” This was the signal for the bishop or priest to begin and sing aloud, *Te Deum.*

Brand quotes, from the churchwardens’ accounts at Reading, several items paid, for nails for the sepulchre; for rosin for the Resurrection-play; for making a Judas; for writing the plays themselves; and other such purposes. Fosbrooke gives “the properties” of the Sepulchre-show of St. Mary Redcliff church, at Bristol, from an original MS. in his possession, formerly belonging to Chatterton, viz. “Memorandum:—That Master Cannings hath delivered, the 4th day of July, in the year of our Lord 1470, to Master Nicolas Pelles, vicar of Redcliff, Moses Conterin, Philip Barthelmew, and John Brown,

procurators of Redcliff aforesaid, a new sepulchre, well gilt with fine gold, and a civer thereto; a image of God Almighty rising out of the same sepulchre, with all the ordinance that longeth thereto; that is to say, a lath made of timber and iron-work thereto. Item; hereto longeth Heven made of timber and strined cloths. Item; Hell made of timber, and iron-work thereto, with Devils the number of thirteen. Item; four knights keeping the sepulchre with their weapons in their hands; that is to say, two spears, two axes, with two shields. Item; four pair of angels' wings, for four angels, made of timber and well painted. Item; the Fadre, the crown and visage; the ball with a cross upon it, well gilt with fine gold. Item; the Holy Ghost, coming out of Heven into the sepulchre. Item; longeth to the four angels four *Perukes*."—*Fosbroke's British Monachism.*

Throughout the Christian world, wherever the Catholic and Greek churches extend, great and magnificent are the pageants, processions, and rejoicings still of this day. The lights themselves at the sepulchre are objects of great admiration. When this kingdom was catholic, the *paschal*, or great Easter taper at Westminster Abbey, was three hundred pounds weight. Sometimes a large wax light called a serpent was used; its name being derived from its form, which was spiral, and was wound round a rod. To light it, fire was struck from a flint consecrated by the abbot. The *paschal* in Durham cathedral was square wax, and reached to within a man's length of the roof, from whence this waxen enormity was lighted by "a fine convenience." From this superior light all others were taken. Every taper in the church was purposely extinguished, in order that this might supply a fresh stock of consecrated light, till at the same season of the next year a

similar parent torch was prepared.

Of the lighting of the annual fire at the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, Turner, in his Tour to the Levant, gives a similar account. “We entered the church of the Holy Sepulchre with difficulty, our janizary carrying before us a whip of several leathern thongs, which he used most liberally. The church was filled with pilgrims and spectators, not less in number than 7000. What a scene was before me! The Greek and Armenian galleries overlooking the dome, were filled with female pilgrims of those nations, enthusiastically looking towards the sepulchre, and crossing themselves. Below me, the whole church, and particularly the circular apartment containing the dome, was absolutely crammed with pilgrims, men and women, hallooing, shouting, singing, and violently struggling to be near the sepulchre, while the Turkish soldiers were driving them back with their whips. One man I saw in the contention had his right ear literally torn off. The place immediately near the window whence the fire was given, was occupied by the richest pilgrims, who, for this precedence, pay to the Turks 200 or 300 sequins. An old woman sitting on the step of the door of the Greek church, had kept that seat for a day and a night without moving, and paid two dollars to get it. A ring was kept, as well as the tumult would allow, by the crowd around the sepulchre, round which pilgrims were carried on others’ shoulders, singing religious songs in Arabic and Greek; while, at other times, a party of ten or twelve ran rioting round it, knocking down every one that stood in their way. The Greek and Armenian bishops were shut in the sepulchre at two o’clock with a single Turk, who is well paid to declare that he saw the fire descend miraculously, or, at least, to keep silence. Before they

enter, the sepulchre is publicly inspected, and all the lamps extinguished.

"At twenty minutes to three, the fire was given from the window, and was received with a tremendous and universal shout through the whole church. On its first appearance, the torch was seized by a boy who rubbed it against his face, hand, and neck, with such vehemence as to extinguish it, for which he was well beaten by those near him. Eight different times was the fire given from the window, and as every pilgrim carried candles in his hand, in bunches of four, six, eight, or twelve, in ten minutes the whole church was in a flame, and in five more nearly every candle was extinguished. But what enthusiasm! The men rubbed them against their heads and faces, their caps, and handkerchiefs; and the women uncovered the bosom, directing the flame along their heads, necks, and faces, and all crossing themselves during the operation, with the utmost devotion and velocity. The candles, when a little of them is burnt, are carried home, and ever afterwards preserved as sacred. Messengers with lanterns, stood ready at the door, to carry the fire to the Greek convent of Bethlehem, of the Cross at Sullah, and of St. Saba, near the Dead Sea."

Equally curious, and far more splendid, are the ceremonies at Rome on this day. The moment they suppose our Saviour is risen, the cannons of the castle of St. Angelo are fired, and all the bells in the city begin ringing at once. The people, throwing off their fasting weeds, give themselves up to rejoicing. The church of St. Peter, and the whole piazza before it, are crowded with all classes of persons in gala dresses. The pope is carried in magnificent state, through the church, shaded by waving peacocks' feathers, attended by his *guardia nobile*, in princely

uniform, glittering with gold, their helmets adorned with plumes of feathers; the ambassadors and their wives; the senators and their trains; the Armenian bishops and priests, in very splendid robes; the cardinals, bishops, and all the Roman troops in grand procession. The pope blesses the people from the terrace, who receive the benediction on their knees, and look up with eager eyes for the indulgences that are scattered amongst them by some of the cardinals. In the evening there is a grand illumination of St. Peter's. "On entering the Piazza," says a traveller, "we beheld the architecture of the dome, façade, and colonnade, all marked out by soft lamps: a bell tolled, and in a moment, as if struck by a magical wand, the whole fabric burst into a dazzling blaze of the most beautiful light; nor could we conceive how the sudden transition was effected. Fireworks and festivities concluded the evening."

In Spain, Portugal, South America, wherever indeed the Catholic religion extends, similar church plays, pageants and rejoicings prevail. In the Greek church, nay even in Turkey, Easter is a great festival. The Russians celebrate it with extraordinary zeal. At Moscow no meetings of any kind take place without repeating the expressions of peace and joy, CHRISTOS VOSCRESS! Christ is risen! To which the answer always is the same; VOISTINEY VOSCRESS! He is risen indeed! On Easter-Monday begins the presentation of the Paschal eggs. Lovers to their mistresses, relations to each other, servants to their masters, all bring ornamented eggs. The meanest pauper in the street presenting an egg, and repeating the words CHRISTOS VOSCRESS, may demand a salute even of the empress. All business is laid aside; the upper ranks are engaged in visiting, balls, dinners, suppers, masquerades; while boors fill the air with their

songs, or roll about the streets drunk. Servants appear in new and tawdry liveries, and carriages in the most sumptuous parade.

In all this may be seen what Easter was in England when it was a Catholic country—what a change in our observance of times the Reformation has produced! Fifteen days were the festivities usually kept up; in many places servants were permitted to rest from their labours; all courts of justice were shut up, and all public games of a worldly nature were forbidden. Still in London it is a great week of relaxation to the mechanics, who pour out to Greenwich and other places by thousands to enjoy themselves. On Easter Monday 1834, as stated under the head of "Sunday in the Country," it appeared that no less than 100,000 persons went by the steam-vessels to different places. In large towns, Easter-Monday is a holiday, and you may see a few swings, shows, and whirligigs for the children; but as you go farther into the country, all trace of this once great festival fades away. In the midland counties you rarely see a Paschal, or as it is more commonly called, a Pace-Egg. These eggs, which are almost as ancient as the Ark, of which they are a symbol, are to be found in almost all civilized countries. They are an emblem of the resurrection. As the whole living world went into the ark, and were shut up for a season, like the life in the egg, so by the egg, the ancients for ages symbolized the tradition of that great event, bringing eggs to the altars of their gods. The Hindoos even conceive their god Brahme, once in a cycle of ages, to enter into the egg, with the whole animated universe, and to float, like the ark, on the waters of eternity, till the time comes to reproduce himself and all things with him. So the Gnostics engrafted this idea on the Christian religion;

for the entrance of Christ into the tomb, and his resurrection, were at once typified by the ark, and the egg, its symbol. This adopted custom, as all such customs do which have a sentiment in them dear to the human heart, flew far and wide. We have seen that the Russians give paschal-eggs: but what is more singular, the Mohammedans do the same. In France, in the week preceding Easter, baskets full of eggs boiled hard, of a red or violet colour, are seen in the streets, and the children amuse themselves with playing with, and afterwards eating them. In Egypt, the cattle and trees were coloured red at this period, because, they said, the world was once on fire at this time. The egg, placed on the paschal table of the Jews, was a symbol of the destruction of the human race, and of its regeneration. The egg entered into all the mysterious ceremonies called apocalyptic; and the Persians, who present it at the commencement of the new year, know that an egg is the symbol of the world. Throughout the country of Bonneval, on the day preceding Easter Sunday, and during the first days of that week, the clerks of the different parishes, beadles, and certain artisans, go about from house to house to ask for their Easter eggs. In many places the children make a sort of feast at breakfast in Easter on red or yellow eggs. The Druids had the egg in their ceremonies; and near Dieppe is a Druidical barrow, where a fête used to be held by the country people, till the Revolution, where vast crowds of both sexes assembled from the neighbouring villages, and gave themselves up to a day of sports and rejoicing, in which eggs figured most singularly.

The Pace-Eggs seem now to have retired northward in England. In Yorkshire and Lancashire, and so northward, they may be found. They are

boiled hard, and beautifully coloured with various colours, some by boiling them with different coloured ribbons bound round them; others by colouring them of one colour, and scraping it away in a variety of figures; others by boiling them within the coating of an onion, which imparts to them the admired dye. Early in the morning of Easter-Monday, in the Lancashire towns and villages where wooden clogs are worn, you may hear a strange clatter on the pavement under your window. It is the children, who are running to and fro, begging their Pace-Eggs.

In Staffordshire, Shropshire, Lancashire, Cheshire, and Durham, they still retain the custom of *heaving* or *lifting* on Easter Monday and Tuesday. In some of these counties on Monday, the men lift the women by taking hold of their arms and legs, which is repeated nine times; and on Tuesday the women use the like ceremony with the men. In other places, the men on one day go decorated with ribbons into every house into which they can get an entrance, force every woman to be seated in this vehicle, and lift her up three times with loud huzzas; and on the next the women claim the same privilege. In some places the women sit out in the streets, and practise this odd ceremony on every male passenger that they can catch, giving him a salute round; afterwards laying him under contribution, and the sum thus derived they lay out in a tea-drinking.

Ball-play used to be practised on Easter-Sunday in the church, the clergy and dignitaries joining in it. Corporations with the mace, sword, and cap of maintenance, carried before them, used to go out on Monday, to play at ball, and dance with the ladies. They used to eat tansy-pudding and bacon as customary to the time. These, and many other, to us, ridiculous customs were all of ancient pagan origin

engrafted on Christianity, and had all a symbolical meaning, most probably unperceived by the multitude who used them. The lifting three times had reference to the resurrection after three days; the ball was a symbol of the world; tansy the bitter herbs of the passion, and bacon to express their abhorrence of Jews, the destroyers of the Saviour.

We now see how all these festivities were kept alive by the art and power of the church, and how soon they fell into mere pageants when the Reformation poured in a truer light.

That the Reformation *did* effect this change is most convincingly proved by the retention of the old Catholic religious plays still in Catholic countries. Mr. Hone, in his "Ancient Mysteries," brings together a variety of modern instances of such things on the continent; and our travellers can furnish us with more. Moore's mention of these plays in his "Fudge Family in Paris," in 1817, must be familiar to everybody:

> What folly
> To say that the French are not pious, dear Dolly,
> When here one beholds so correctly and rightly,
> The *Testament* turned into melo-drames nightly;
> And doubtless, so fond they're of scriptural facts,
> They will soon get the *Pentateuch* up in five acts.
> Here *Daniel*, in pantomime, bids bold defiance
> To *Nebuchadnezzar* and all his stuffed lions.

In a note, he adds, that in this "*Daniel, ou la Fosse aux Lions*," JEHOVAH himself is made to appear! In 1822, M. Michelot, the Editor of the *Mirour*, was arraigned at the tribunal for having ridiculed the state religion, because he had published a description of a puppet-play just then witnessed at Dieppe, consisting of the birth of Christ, the passion, and the resurrection! and in which our Saviour, the Virgin,

Judas, Herod, etc., were most revoltingly introduced. During Congress at Vienna in 1815, the *Allied Monarchs* used to attend a *sacred comedy*, of David, performed by the comedians of the National Theatre, in which Austrian soldiers fired off their muskets and artillery in the character of Jews and Philistines! It is needless to say that nothing of the kind could be tolerated in this country.

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CHAPTER V.
WHITSUNTIDE.

This is the only ancient religious festival that has become a popular one since the Reformation, through the addition of a modern circumstance. Clubs, or Friendly Societies, have substituted for the

old church ceremonies, a strong motive to assemble in the early days of this week as their anniversary; and the time of the year being so delightful, this holiday has, in fact, become more than any other, what May-day was to the people. Both men and women have their Friendly Societies, in which every member pays a certain weekly or monthly sum, and on occasions of sickness or misfortune, claims a weekly stipend, or a sum of money to bury their dead. These Societies were very prudential things, especially before the institution of Savings' Banks, which are still better; and in the vicinity of towns have become most important resources for the working class, and especially servants. In the country, Friendly Societies still do, and will probably long remain, because Savings' Banks are not easily introduced there. In a Savings' Bank, whatever a person deposits he receives with interest. It is safe, and may be demanded any time. On the other hand, a man may contribute for years to a club, and not want a penny for himself on account of sickness, and at his death, with the exception of a fixed sum to bury him, and one for his widow, all his fund goes from his family; or, what is worse, he may pay for many years, and just when he wants help, he finds the box empty, through the great run upon it by the sickness or accidental disabling of his fellows; or the steward has proved dishonest and has decamped; or he has failed. Many such cases have occurred, especially during the violent changes of the last twenty years. In some particular cases the capital of a dozen Friendly Societies has, by some strange infatuation or artifice, been lodged in the hands of the same man, who has proved bankrupt and ruined them all. These are the drawbacks on Friendly Societies; and yet with these, they were better than

nothing for the poor, and some of them have, in many cases, been remedied by the members sharing their fund amongst them once every seven years. They were, and are often, the poor man's sole resource and refuge against the horror of falling on the parish, and have helped him through his time of affliction without burthening his mind with a sense of shame and dependence.

Well then may they come together on one certain day or days throughout the country, to hold a feast of fellowship and mutual congratulation in a common hope. Their wealthier neighbours have encouraged them in this bond of union and mutual help, and have become honorary members of their clubs. It is a friendly and christian act. Accordingly, on Whit-Monday, the sunshiny morning has broke over the villages of England with its most holiday smile. All work has ceased. There has been, at first, a Sabbath stillness, a repose, a display of holiday costume. Groups of men have met here and there in the streets in quiet talk; the children have begun to play, and make their shrill voices heard through the hamlets. There have been stalls of sweetmeats and toys set out in the little market-place on the green, by the shady walk, or under the well-known tree. Suddenly the bells have struck up a joyous peal, and a spirit of delight is diffused all over the rustic place, ay, all over every rustic place in merry England. Forth comes streaming the village procession of hardy men or comely women, all arrayed in their best, gay with ribbons and scarfs, a band of music sounding before them; their broad banner of peace and union flapping over their heads, and their wands shouldered like the spears of an ancient army, or used as walking-staves. Forth they stream from their club-room at the village alehouse.

’T is merry Whitsuntide, and merrily
Holiday goes in hamlet and green field;
Nature and men seem joined, for once, to try
The strength of Care, and force the carle to yield:
Summer abroad holds flow’ry revelry:
For revelry, the village bells are pealed;
The season’s self seems made for rural pleasure,
And rural joy flows with o’erflowing measure.

Go where you will through England’s happy valleys,
Deep grows the grass, flowers bask, and wild bees hum;
And ever and anon, with joyous sallies,
Shouting, and music, and the busy drum
Tell you afar where mirth her rustics rallies,
In dusty sports, or ’mid the song and hum
Of Royal Oak, or bowling-green enclosure,
With bower and bench for smoking and composure.

May’s jolly dance is past, and hanging high,
Her garlands swing and wither in the sun;
And now abroad gay posied banners fly,
Followed by peaceful troops, and boys that run
To see their sires go marching solemnly,
Shouldering their wands; and youths with ribbons won
From fond fair hands, that yielded them with pride,
And proudly worn this merry Whitsuntide.

And then succeeds a lovelier sight,—the dames,
Wives, mothers, and arch sigh-awakening lasses,
Filling each gazing wight with wounds and flames,
Yet looking each demurely as she passes,
With flower-tipped wand, and bloom that flower outshames;
And, in the van of these sweet, happy faces
Marches the priest, whose sermon says, “be merry,”
The frank, good squire, and sage apothecary.

W. H.

Forth stream these happy bands from their club-

room, making the procession of the town before they go to church, and then again after church and before going to dinner, for then begins the serious business of feasting, too important to admit of any fresh holiday parade for the rest of the day. Nothing can be more joyously picturesque than this rural holiday. The time of the year—the latter end of May, or early part of June, is itself jubilant. The new leaves are just out in all their tender freshness: the flowers are engoldening the fields, and making odorous the garden: there are sunshine and brightness to gladden this festival of the lowly. In my mind are associated with this time, from the earliest childhood, sunshine, flowers, the sound of bells, and village bands of music. I see the clubs, as they are called, coming down the village; a procession of its rustic population all in their best attire. In front of them comes bearing the great banner, emblazoned with some fitting scene and motto, old Harry Lomax the blacksmith, deputed to that office for the brawny strength of his arms, and yet, if the wind be stirring, evidently staggering under its weight, and finding enough to do to hold it aloft. There it floats its length of blue and yellow, and on its top nods the huge posy of peonies, laburnum flowers, and lilachs, which our own garden has duly furnished. Then comes sounding the band of drums, bassoons, hautboys, flutes, and clarionets: then the honorary members—the freeholders of the place—the sage apothecary, and the priest whose sermon says “be merry”—literally, for years, his text being on this the words of Solomon—“Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.”—and then the simple sons of the hamlet, walking as stately and as gravely as they can for the nods and smiles of all their neighbours who do not join in the procession, but are all at door and

window to see them go by. There they go, passing down the shady lane with all the village children at their heels, to the next hamlet half a mile off, which furnishes members to the club, and must therefore witness their glory. Now the banner and the gilded tops of their wands are seen glancing between the hedge-row trees; their music comes merrily up the hill; and as it dies away at the next turn, the drumming of distant villages becomes audible in half a dozen different quarters. Then come, one after another, the clubs of the neighbouring hamlets, as the old ballad of the Earl of Murray very expressively says, “sounding through the town;” giving occasion to a world of criticism and comparison to the village gossips, no doubt always terminating in favour of their own folk.

But the most beautiful sight is that of the women’s clubs, which in some places walk on the same day with those of the men, but more commonly on Tuesday. Here the contrast between the band and banner-bearer, and the female array that follows them, gives great effect. In some places they are graced with the presence of some of the ladies of the neighbourhood who are honorary members, and their cultivated countenances, and style of bearing, again contrast with the simple elegance or showy finery of the rustic train which succeeds, consisting of the sedate matrons and blooming damsels of the village. Their light dresses, their gay ribbons and bonnets, their happy, and often very handsome faces, cannot be seen without feeling with Wordsworth, that

> Their beauty makes you glad.

In all the pageants and processions that were ever seen, there is nothing more beautiful than those light

wands with which they walk, each crowned with a nosegay of fresh flowers. These posied wands were worthy of the most chastely graceful times of Greece; and amongst the youthful forms are often such as Stothard would have gloried in seizing upon to figure in his charming procession pieces. Indeed a Whitsuntide procession in his hands would have formed altogether a picture equal to his Canterbury Pilgrimage, and the Procession of the Flitch of Bacon. It has never had justice done it, and Stothard is gone; but we have artists remaining from whose pencil it may, and I trust will, receive honour due. Why not Leslie add it to his Sir Roger Coverley going to church, or Sir Roger and the Gipsies? I can see the painting already in my mind's eye. The village church is in one extremity; the banner of the men's club is stooping at the porch as the train is about to enter, and the women's club is advancing up the street in the foreground: the band composed of figures full of strong character; the female figures full of simple elegance and arch beauty,—their posied wands depicted with the force of reality; the village street in perspective; the village alehouse with depending sign; booths and stalls, and all round merry faces and holiday forms.

These love-feasts of the Friendly Societies seem very appropriately celebrated at this festival, which was originally derived from the AGAPAI, or love-feasts of the early Christians. It is, indeed, a great improvement on the Whitsun-Ales, which succeeded the Agapai in the Roman church. It is, as I have before observed, the happiest and almost sole adaptation of a modern institution to an ancient custom by the Church of England; a policy, on the contrary, so closely studied and extensively practised by the Catholic church. The Whitsun-Ales were so

called from the churchwardens buying, and laying in from presents also, a large quantity of malt, which they brewed into beer, and sold out in the church or elsewhere. The profits, as well as those from Sunday games—there being no poor-rates—were given to the poor, for whom this was one mode of provision, according to the Christian rule, that all festivities should be rendered innocent by alms. “In every parish,” says Aubrey, “was a church-house, to which belonged spits, crocks, and other utensils for dressing provisions. Here the housekeepers met. The young people were there too; and had dancing, bowling, shooting at butts, etc., the ancients sitting gravely by, and looking on.”

King James, to check the progress of nonconformity, and keep people to church, published his “Book of Sports,” and *commanded* attendance on Whitsun-ales, church-ales, etc.; but he soon found that forced sport is no sport at all. These Friendly Societies, however, by adopting this day, have revived the Agapai in a more popular shape, and long may they continue, refined indeed, and made more temperate by better information, and a better morality. These being held at public-houses, and their monthly nights, on which they pay their contributions, being held there too, has made many persons object to them; and the utilitarian spirit, especially during periods of general distress, has induced many of them to give up their bands, banners, and ribbons, and to throw the money thus saved into the general stock: but if we are to retain any rustic festival at all, we cannot, I think, have a more picturesque one, or at a pleasanter time. Let all means be used to preserve a day of relaxation and good-fellowship from gross intemperance, but let not the external grace and rustic pageantry be shorn

away. As I have met these Whitsuntide processions in the retired villages of Staffordshire, or as I saw them in the summer of 1835 at Warsop in Nottinghamshire, I would wish to see them as many years hence as I may live. In the latter village, Miss Hamilton, a lady of poetical taste, and author of several poetical works, had painted the banner for this rural fête with her own hands, and the flowers with which the wands were crowned were selected and disposed in a spirit of true poetry. Long, I say, may this bright day of rejoicing come to the hamlet; and the musing poet stop in the glades of the near woodlands, and exclaim with Kirk White:

Hark how the merry bells ring jocund round,
And now they die upon the veering breeze;
Anon they thunder loud,
Full on the musing ear.

Wafted in varying cadence, by the shore
Of the still twinkling river, they bespeak
A day of jubilee,
An ancient holiday.

And lo! the rural revels are begun,
And gaily echoing to the laughing sky,
On the smooth-shaven green
Resounds the voice of mirth.

Mortals! be gladsome while ye have the power,
And laugh, and seize the glittering lapse of joy;
In time the bell will toll
That warns ye to your graves.

CHAPTER VI.
CHRISTMAS.

The next and last of these popular festivities that I shall notice at any length, is jolly old Christmas,—the festival of the fireside; the most domestic and heartfelt carnival of the year. It has changed its features with the change of national manners and notions, but still it is a time of gladness, of home re-union and rejoicing; a precious time, and one so thoroughly suited to the grave yet cheerful spirit of Englishmen, that it will not soon lose its hold on our affections. Its old usages are so well known; they have been so repeatedly of late years brought to our notice by Washington Irving, Walter Scott, Leigh Hunt in his most graphic and cordial-spirited Months, Indicator, and London Journal, and by many other lovers of the olden time, that I shall not now particularly describe them. We have already seen how, in all our religious festivals, the most ancient customs and rites have been interwoven with Catholicism. Who does not recognise in the decoration of our houses and churches with ivy, holly, and other evergreens, the decorations of the altars of Greece and Rome with laurels and bays as the symbols of the renewal of the year and the immortality of Nature? In our mistletoe branches the practice of Druidical times? Who does not see in the Abbot of Unreason, and his jolly crew, the Saturnalia of ancient times? Those who do not, may find in Brand's Antiquities, the various volumes of Time's Telescope, collected by my worthy friend John Millard, and in Hone's Everyday Table, and Year Books, matter on these subjects, and on the Christmas pageants, rites, and processions of Rome, that would of itself fill a large volume. In old times it was from Christmas to Candlemas a period of general jollification; for the first twelve days—a general carnival. The churches were decorated with

evergreens; midnight mass was celebrated with great pomp; according to Aubrey, they danced in the church after prayers, crying Yole, Yole, Yole, etc. For a fortnight before Christmas, and during its continuance, the mummers, or guisers, in their grotesque array, went from house to house, acting George and the Dragon, having the Princess Saba, the Doctor, and other characters all playing and saying their parts in verse. Others acted Alexander the Great, and the King of Egypt. Bands of carollers went about singing; and all the great gentry had

> A good old fashion when Christmas was come,
> To call in their old neighbours with bagpipe and drum.

And then in those good old halls, what a feasting, and a sporting, and a clamour was there! The Yule block on the fire, the plum-porridge and mince-pies on the table, with mighty rounds of beef, plum-pudding, turkeys, capons, geese, goose-pies, herons, and sundry other game and good things. Ale of twelve months old circling round, and the old butler and his serving-men carrying up the boar's head, singing in chorus the accustomed chant, as they set it before the lord of the feast:

> Caput Apri defero
> Reddens laudes domino.
> The boar's head in hand bring I,
> With garlands gay and rosemary;
> I pray you all sing merrily,
> Qui estis in convivio, etc.

Then, as Burton in his Anatomie of Melancholie, tells us,—"what cards, tables, dice, shovel-board, chesse-play, the philosopher's game, small trunkes, billiards, musicke, singing, dancing, ale-games, catches, purposes, questions, merry tales of arrant

knights, kings, queens, lovers, lords, ladies, giants, dwarfs, thieves, fairies, goblins, friars, witches, and the rest. Then what kissing under the mistletoe! roaring of storms without, and blazing hearths and merry catches within!"

With all this rude happiness we cannot now linger; let us be thankful that our ancestors, rich and poor, enjoyed it so thoroughly, enjoyed it together, as became Christians, on the feast of the nativity of their common Saviour. We will just review this state of things as it existed in the time of old Wither, two hundred years ago; and the remembrance of it, as it glanced on the imagination of Scott, and then turn to it as it exists amongst us now.

CHRISTMAS.

So now is come our joyful'st feast;
Let every man be jolly;
Each room with ivy leaves is dressed,
And every post with holly.

Though some churls at our mirth repine,
Round your foreheads garlands twine;
Drown sorrow in a cup of wine,
And let us all be merry.

Now all our neighbours' chimneys smoke,
And Christmas blocks are burning,
Their ovens they with baked meats choke,
And all their spits are turning.

Without the door let sorrow lie;
And if from cold it hap to die,
We'll bury it in a Christmas pie,
And evermore be merry.

Now every lad is wondrous trim,
And no man minds his labour;
Our lasses have provided them
A bagpipe and a tabor:

Young men and maids, and girls and boys,
Give life to one another's joys;
And you anon shall by their noise
Perceive that they are merry.

Rank misers now do sparing shun;
Their hall of music soundeth;
And dogs thence with whole shoulders run,
So all things there aboundeth.

The country folks themselves advance
With crowdy-muttons out of France;
And Jack shall pipe, and Jyll shall dance,
And all the town be merry.

Ned Squash hath fetched his bands from pawn,
And all his best apparel;
Brisk Nell hath bought a ruff of lawn
With dropping of the barrel.

And those that hardly all the year
Had bread to eat, or rags to wear,
Will have both clothes and dainty fare,
And all the day be merry.

Now poor men to the justices
With capons make their errants;
And if they hap to fail of these,
They plague them with their warrants:

But now they find them with good cheer,
And what they want, they take in beer,
For Christmas comes but once a year,
And then they shall be merry.

Good farmers in the country nurse
The poor, that else were undone;
Some landlords spend their money worse
On lust and pride in London.

There the roysters they do play;
Drab and dice their lands away,
Which may be ours another day,

And therefore let's be merry.

The client now his suit forbears;
The prisoner's heart is eased;
The debtor drinks away his cares,
And for the time is pleased.

Though others' purses be most fat,
Why should we pine or grieve at that?
Hang sorrow! care will kill a cat,
And therefore let's be merry.

Hark! now the wags abroad do call
Each other forth to rambling;
Anon you'll see them in the hall
For nuts and apples scrambling.

Hark how the roofs with laughter sound,
Anon they'll think the house goes round,
For they the cellar's depth have found,
And then they will be merry.

The wenches with their wassail bowls
About the streets are singing;
The boys are come to catch the owls,
The wild mare in it bringing.

Our kitchen-boy hath broke his box,
And to the dealing of the ox
Our honest neighbours come by flocks,
And here they will be merry.

Now kings and queens poor sheepcotes have,
And mute with every body;
The lowest now may play the knave,
And wise men play the noddy.

Some youths will now a mumming go,
And others play at Rowland-bo,
And twenty other games boys mo,
Because they will be merry.

Then wherefore in these merry daies
Should we, I pray, be duller?

No, let us sing some roundelays,
To make our mirth the fuller.

And while we thus inspired sing,
Let all the streets with echoes ring;
Woods and hills and every thing,
Bear witness we are merry.

This is, at once, quaint and graphic. It shews us the joys of our ancestors in their homeliness and their strength. It is full of the spirit of the time, and the impressions of surrounding things. Let us now see the same days through the magic mist of a modern poet's imagination—a poet whose soul turned to all the beauty and picturesque splendour, and the jollity of the past, with a passion never, in any bosom, living with a stronger delight. How, in reverted vision of his heart and mind is every thing purified, sanctified, and refined. What a force of enjoyment breathes through the whole: how vividly are all the characteristics of the time, its fable and its manners given; yet with what a grace and delicacy, unknown to the poet of the times themselves. We have here all the happiness, the hospitality, the generous simplicity of the past, tinged with the beautiful illusions of the present.

ANCIENT CHRISTMAS.

And well our Christian sires of old
Loved, when the year its course had rolled,
And brought blithe Christmas back again,
With all its hospitable train.
Domestic and religious rite
Gave honour to the holy night:
On Christmas-eve the bells were rung;
On Christmas-eve the mass was sung;
That only night of all the year
Saw the stoled priest the chalice rear.

The damsel donned her kirtle sheen;
The hall was dressed with holly green;
Forth to the wood did merry men go
To gather in the mistletoe.
Then opened wide the baron's hall,
To vassals, tenants, serf, and all;
Power laid his rod of rule aside,
And Ceremony doffed his pride.
The heir with roses in his shoes,
That night might village partner choose;
The lord, underogating share
The vulgar game of "post and pair."
All hailed with uncontrolled delight
And general voice the happy night,
That to the cottage, as the crown,
Brought tidings of Salvation down.

The fire with well-dried logs supplied,
Went roaring up the chimney wide;
The huge hall table's oaken face,
Scrubbed till it shone the day to grace,
Bore then upon its massive board
No mark to part the squire and lord.
Then was brought in the lusty braun
By old blue-coated serving-man;
Then the grim boar's-head frowned on high,
Crested with bays and rosemary.
Well can the green-garbed ranger tell
How, when, and where the monster fell;
What dogs before his death he tore,
And all the baiting of the boar,
While round the merry wassail bowl,
Garnished with ribbons, blithe did trowl
There the huge sirloin reeked; hard by
Plum-porridge stood, and Christmas pie;
Nor failed old Scotland to produce,
At such high tide the savoury goose.
Then came the merry maskers in,
And carols roared with blithesome din;
If unmelodious was the song,
It was a hearty note and strong,

Who lists may in their mumming see
Traces of ancient mystery.
White shirt supplied the masquerade,
And smutted cheeks the vizor made;
But oh! what maskers richly dight
Can boast of bosoms half so light!
England was merry England then,
Old Christmas brought his sports again;
'Twas Christmas broached the mightiest ale;
'Twas Christmas told the merriest tale;
A Christmas gambol oft would cheer
A poor man's heart through half the year.

Scott's Marmion.

In these two poems we have sufficient picture of the past; what of these things continue with the present? In Catholic countries, indeed, much of the ancient show and circumstance remain. In Rome, all the splendour of the church is called forth. On Christmas-eve, the pipes of the Pifferari, or Calabrian minstrels, are heard in the streets. The decorators are busy in draping the churches, clothing altars, and festooning façades. Devout ladies and holy nuns are preparing dresses, crowns, necklaces, and cradles, for the Madonna and Child of their respective churches. The toilette of the Virgin is performed, and she blazes in diamonds, or shines in tin, according to the riches of the respective parish treasuries. In the Church of the Pantheon, says Lady Morgan, she was crowned with gilt paper, and decked with glass beads, and on the same day in Santa Maria Novella, we beheld the coal-black face set off with rubies and sapphires, which glittered on her dusky visage "like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear." The cannons of St. Angelo announce the festival; shops are shut, and saloons deserted. The midnight supper and the midnight bands begin the holy revel, and the

splendid pomp in which the august ceremonies are performed at the churches of the Quirinal, St. Louis, and the Ara Cœli, is succeeded by a banquet of which even the poorest child of indigence contrives to partake. The people from the mountains and the Campagna flock in to witness and to enjoy the fête, and present a strange sight of wild figures amid the inhabitants of the city. The churches are lit up with thousands of wax tapers; the *culla*, or cradle of Christ, is removed from the shrine at the chapel of Santa Maria Maggiore, and carried in procession to the chapel of the Santa Croce, where it is exposed on the high altar on Christmas-day to the admiration of the faithful. Musical masses are performed; the Pope himself performs service in the Sextine Chapel on Christmas-eve, and on Christmas-day his Holiness performs mass in St. Peter's, in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin; amid a most brilliant assembly of people of all nations, princes, ambassadors, nobles, and distinguished strangers.

At Naples numbers of shepherds from the mountains of the Abruzzi and the neighbouring Apennines, flock in two or three weeks before Christmas, and go about the streets, playing on their bagpipes, as the Calabrians do both here and in Rome. Most of the Neapolitan families engage some of these itinerant musicians to play a quarter of an hour at their houses on each day of the *Novena*: the wild appearance of these mountaineers, and the shrill notes of their pipes attract the attention of travellers. Fireworks are displayed here in the most extraordinary manner; and, as in other parts of Italy, it is the custom to erect in the churches and in private houses, representations of the birth of our Saviour;—the stable, the shepherds, the oxen, the Virgin Mary, receiving the homage of kings and their

trains, are all exhibited with great ingenuity. A similar custom prevailed in some parts of Spain. Such are the customs of these and other catholic countries. In the north, where Christmas was celebrated as a festival of the gods of the ancient Scandinavians, under the name of Yule, it is now celebrated with great devotion; and in Germany they have some domestic customs of a very interesting nature. Coleridge, in the FRIEND, gives the following account of what he witnessed himself. “The children make little presents to their parents, and to each other; and the parents to their children. For three or four months before Christmas, the girls are all busy; and the boys save their pocket-money to make or purchase these presents. What the present is to be, is cautiously kept secret, and the girls have a world of contrivances to conceal it—such as working when they are out on visits, and the others are not with them; getting up in the morning before daylight, etc. Then, on the evening before Christmas-day, one of the parlours is lighted up by the children, into which the parents must not go. A great yew bough is fastened on the table at a little distance from the wall; a multitude of little tapers are fixed in the bough, but not so as to burn it till they are nearly consumed; and coloured paper, etc. hangs and flutters from the twigs. Under this bough, the children lay out in great order, the presents they mean for their parents, still concealing in their pockets, what they intend for each other. Then the parents are introduced, and each presents his little gift: they then bring out the remainder, one by one, from their pockets, and present them with kisses and embraces. When I witnessed this scene, there were eight or nine children, and the eldest daughter and mother wept aloud for joy and tenderness; and the

tears ran down the face of the father, and he clasped all his children so tight to his breast, it seemed as if he did it to stifle the sob that was rising within him. I was very much affected. The shadow of the bough and its appendages on the walls and arching over on the ceiling, made a pretty picture; and then the rapture of the very little ones, when at last the twigs and their needles began to take fire and snap,—O, it was a delight for them!

"On the next day, in the great parlour, the parents lay on the table the presents for the children. A scene of more sober joy succeeds; as on this day, after an old custom, the mother says privately to each of her daughters, and the father to his sons, that which he has observed most praiseworthy, and that which was most faulty in their conduct. Formerly, and still in all the smaller towns and villages throughout North Germany, these presents are sent by all the parents to some one fellow, who, in high buskins, a white robe, a mask, and an enormous flax wig, personates Knecht Rupert, *i. e.* the servant Rupert. On Christmas night he goes round to every house, and says that Jesus Christ, his master, sent him thither. The parents and elder children receive him with great pomp and reverence, while the little ones are most terribly frightened. He then inquires for the children, and according to the character which he hears from the parents he gives them the intended presents, as if they came out of heaven from Jesus Christ. Or if they should have been bad children, he gives the parents a rod, and, in the name of his master, recommends them to use it frequently. About seven or eight years old, the children are let into the secret, and it is curious how faithfully they keep it."

The bough mentioned by Coleridge as yew, is by other writers said to be of birch. The Christ-child is

said to come flying through the air on golden wings; and causes the birch-bough fixed in the corner of the room to grow, and to produce in the night, all manner of fruit; gilt sweetmeats, apples, nuts, etc., for the good children. Richter makes Quintus Fixlein recal one of these scenes of his youth, very beautifully. “I will,” said he to himself, “go through the whole Christmas-eve, from the very dawn, as I had it of old. At his very rising he finds spangles on the table, sacred spangles from the gold-leaf and silver-leaf with which the Christ-child has been emblazoning and coating his apples and nuts, the presents of the night. Then comes his mother, bringing him both Christianity and clothes; for in drawing on his trousers, she easily recapitulated the ten commandments; and in tying his garters, the Apostles’ creed. So soon as candlelight was over, and daylight come, he clambers to the arm of the settle, and then measures the nocturnal growth of the yellow wiry grove of Christmas-birch. There was no such thing as school all day. About three o’clock the old gardener takes his place on his large chair, with his Cologne tobacco-pipe, and, after this, no mortal shall work a stroke. He tells nothing but lies, of the aeronautic Christ-child, and the jingling Ruprecht with his bells. In the dark our little Quintus takes an apple, and divides it with all the figures of stereometry, and spreads the fragments in two heaps on the table. Then, as the lighted candle enters, he starts up in amazement at the unexpected present, and says to his mother, ‘Look what the good Christ-child has given thee and me, and I saw one of his wings glittering!’ And for this same glittering he himself lies in wait the whole evening.

“About eight o’clock, both of them with necks almost excoriated with washing, and clean linen, and

in universal anxiety lest the Holy Christ-child find them up, are put to bed. What a magic night! What tumult of dreaming hopes! The populous, motley, glittering cave of fancy opens itself in the length of the night, and in the exhaustion of dreaming effort, still darker and darker, fuller and more grotesque; but the waking gives back to the thirsty heart its hopes. All accidental tones, the cries of animals, of watchmen, are, for the timidly devout fancy, sounds out of heaven; singing voices of angels in the air; church music of the morning worship.

"At last come rapid lights from the neighbourhood, playing through the window on the walls, and the Christmas trumpets, and the crowing from the steeple hurries both the boys from their bed. With their clothes in their hands, without fear for the darkness, without feeling for the morning frost, rushing, intoxicated, shouting, they hurry down stairs into the dark room. Fancy riots in the pastry and fruit perfume of the still eclipsed treasures, and haunts her air-castles by the glimmering of the Hesperides-fruit with which the birch-tree is laden. While their mother strikes a light, the falling sparks sportfully open and shroud the dainties on the table, and the many-coloured grove on the wall; and a single atom of that fire bears on it a hanging garden of Eden."

I am informed by a lady friend that German families in Manchester have introduced this custom of the Christmas-tree, and that it is spreading fast amongst the English there,—pine-tops being brought to market for the pupose, which are generally illuminated with a taper for every day in the year.

Such are the rites, fancies, and ceremonies with which other, and especially Catholic countries, have invested this ancient festival. What now remain in

our Protestant nation of these customs?—Much is gone; many are the changes that have taken place in our manners and opinions; and yet it is certain that we regard this season of festivity with a strong and sacred affection. It is true that there is commonly but one day of thorough holiday to the people; one day on which all shops are shut; on which labour in a great measure ceases, and the poor join with the rich in repose and worship. The poor, indeed, do not partake the benefit of this season, as the poor of old time did; the houses of the great are not, as they were then, open to all tenants and dependents. There is now, indeed, upon the great man's table,

> No mark to part the squire and lord;

but there is a mark more immobile than the salt, set in the grain of our minds. The distinctions of society have grown with our commercial wealth, and have multiplied grades and relations. A sense of independence too has sprung up in the lower classes, with commerce and the growth of intelligence. The great man might, indeed, condescend to call his tenants and dependents to his hall to a Christmas revel, but if they went at all they would go reluctantly, and feel ill at ease. They would feel it as a condescension, and not as springing out of the heartiness of old customs. They would feel that they were out of their element; for all classes know instinctively the broad differences of habits, manners, and modes of thinking that separate them from each other more effectually than any feudal institutions did their ancestors. The pride of the yeoman would be more in danger of suffering than the pride of the lord; the pride of the cottager than that of the farmer, if invited to his table. When the brick floor and the wooden bench gave way in the

farm-house to the carpet and the mahogany chair, the feet of the labourer ceased to tread familiarly round the farmer's table. Harvest meals and harvest-home suppers bring them together in rustic districts; they are the remaining links of the old chain of society; but the Christmas custom is broken, and is therefore no longer observable with full content. This great difference between the past and present exists, and therefore the rejoicing of the poor at this time is short and small: would to heaven that the kindly feeling of the community would make it greater!

But, independent of this, to the rest of the community Christmas brings much of its ancient pleasure. Each class within itself, enjoys it, perhaps more deeply, if less noisily than of old. It is, as I have before said, the festival of the fireside. Friends and families are brought together by many circumstances. Summer tourists and out-of-door pleasure-seekers have all turned home at the frown of winter. As it was their delight in the early year to plan excursions, to make parties, and then to fly forth in all directions, to enjoy new scenes, new faces, summer skies, and sea-breezes; it is now their delight to assemble again round their familiar firesides, with the old familiar faces, to talk over all that they have seen, and said, and done. Parliament has adjourned, and weary senators and their families have fled from London, and are, once more, at their country seats. Children are come home from school; business seems to pause, or to move less urgently in the dead season of the year, and releases numbers from its tread-mill round to an interval of relaxation. All the branches of families meet with spirits eager for enjoyment; and storms, frosts, and darkness without, send them for that enjoyment to the fire-bright hearth.

Christmas-eve approaches, and with it signs of observance, and feasting, and amusement. Holly, ivy, and mistletoe appear in vast quantities in the markets, and almost every housekeeper, except those of the Society of Friends, furnishes herself with a quantity to decorate her windows, if not always to sport a kissing-bush. Churches, halls, city houses and country cottages, are all seen with their windows stuck over with sprigs of green and scarlet-berried holly. Mistletoe is said never to be introduced into churches except by ignorance of the sextons, being held in abhorrence by the early Christians on account of its prominence in the Druidical ceremonies. And this is likely enough; but in the house it maintains its station, and well merits it, by the beauty of its divaricated branches of pale-green, and its pearly-white berries. But Christmas-eve brings not only evergreens into request, but abundance of more substantial things. The coaches to town are fairly loaded to the utmost with geese, turkeys and game, as those downwards are with barrels of oysters. The grocers are busy selling currants, raisins, spices, and other good things, for the composition of mince-pies and Christmas sweetmeats. Pigs are killed, and pork-pies, sausages, and spareribs abound, from the greatest hall to the lowest hut. Heaven be thanked that the blessing goes so far in this instance. It is a delight to think of all the little children in the poor man's house, that the year through have lived coarsely if not sparely, now watching the fat pig from their own sty cut up, and pies and spareribs, boiling pieces, black puddings and sausages, springing up as from a magical storehouse unlocked by the key of Old Christmas. O! it is a delicious time, when the father and the mother can sit down amongst their throng of eager little

ones, that “feel their life in every limb,” and feast them to their hearts’ content; and live with them for a short time amid substantial things and savoury smells, and, after all, hang in the chimney-corner two noble flitches for the coming year.

These good things come with Christmas-eve, and with them come the WAITES. Except in some few very primitive districts, these do not go about for a week or more as they used to do, but merely on this night. And it is a fact singularly unfortunate for Mr. Bulwer’s theory of the effect of Methodism noticed before, that wherever Methodists exist they are sure to be amongst these waites, and are, in many places, the only ones. The strange, dreamy, yet delightful effect of the music and singing of these waites, as you hear them in a state rather of sleep than waking, who has not experienced? They are, as Fixlein expresses it, to our conscious senses, but half dormant understandings, “sounds out of heaven, singing voices of angels in the air.” I shall never forget the delicious impressions of this midnight music on my childish spirit, and would fain hear such strains on every returning Christmas-eve till I cease to hear any mortal sounds.

But Christmas morning comes; and ere daylight dawns, you are awoke by the rejoicing music of all the village or the city bells, as it may be; and cannot help feeling, spite of all that puritans and grave denouncers of times and seasons have said, that there is something holy in the remembrance of the time, which does your spirit good. Who can read these verses of, Wordsworth’s addressed to his brother, without feeling the truth of this?

TO THE REV. DR. WORDSWORTH.

The minstrels played their Christmas tune

To-night beneath my cottage eaves;
While, smitten by the 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 sank to rest with folded wings;
Keen was the air but could not freeze
Nor check the music of their 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!

O Brother! I revere the choice
Which took thee from thy native hills;
And it is given thee to rejoice;
Though public care full often tills
(Heaven only witness of the toil)
A barren and ungrateful soil.

Yet would that thou with me and mine
Hadst heard this never-failing rite;
And seen on other faces shine
A true revival of the light—
Which Nature and these rustic Powers,
In simple childhood, spread on ours!

For pleasure hath not ceased to wait
On these expected, annual rounds,
Whether the rich man's sumptuous gate
Call forth the unelaborate sounds,
Or they are offered at the door
That guards the dwelling of the poor.

How touching when at midnight sweep
Snow-muffled winds, and all is dark,

To hear—and sink again to sleep!
  Or, at an earlier call, to mark,
By blazing fire, the still suspense
Of self-complacent innocence.

The mutual nod,—the grave disguise
  Of hearts with gladness brimming o'er;
And some unbidden tears that rise
  For names once heard, and heard no more:
Tears brightened by the serenade,
For infant in the cradle laid!

Ah! not for emerald fields alone,
  With ambient streams more pure and bright
Than fabled Cytherea's zone
  Glittering before the Thunderer's sight,
Is to my heart of hearts endeared
The ground where we were born and reared!

Hail! ancient Manners! sure defence,
  Where they survive, of wholesome laws;
Remnants of love whose modest sense
  Thus into narrow room withdraws;
Hail, Usages of pristine mould,
And ye, that guard them, Mountains old!

Christmas-day then is come! and with it begins a heartfelt season of social delight, and interchanges of kindred enjoyments. In large houses are large parties, music and feasting, dancing and cards. Beautiful faces and noble forms, the most fair and accomplished of England's sons and daughters, beautify the ample firesides of aristocratic halls. Senators and judges, lawyers and clergymen, poets and philosophers, there meet in cheerful and even sportive ease, amid the elegances of polished life. In more old-fashioned, but substantial country abodes, old-fashioned hilarity prevails. In the farm-house hearty spirits are met. Here are dancing and feasting too; and often blindman's-buff, turn-trencher, and

some of the simple games of the last age remain. In all families, except the families of the poor, who seem too much forgotten at this, as at other times in this refined age, there are visits paid and received; parties going out, or coming in; and everywhere abound, as indispensable to the season, mince-pies, and wishes for “a merry Christmas and a happy New-Year.”

It is only in the more primitive parts of the country that the olden customs remain. The Christmas carols which were sung about from door to door, for a week at least, not twenty years ago, are rarely heard now in the midland counties. More northward, from the hills of Derbyshire, and the bordering ones of Staffordshire, up through Lancashire, Yorkshire, Northumberland, and Durham, you may frequently meet with them. The late Mrs. Fletcher (Miss Jewsbury) one of the most highly-gifted, both in talents and principle, of those who are early lost to the world, collected a volume of such as are sung in the neighbourhood of Manchester, and presented it to Mrs. Howitt. Amongst them are many of the most ancient, such as—“Under the Leaves, or the Seven Virgins,”
beginning—

> All under the leaves, and the leaves of life,
> I met with virgins seven;
> And one of them was Mary mild,
> Our Lord’s Mother in Heaven.

“The Moon shone bright,”—beginning with

> The moon shone bright, and the stars gave a light
> A little before it was day,
> The Lord our God he called to us,
> And bade us awake and pray.
>
> Awake, awake, good people all,

Awake and you shall hear,
Our blessed Lord died on the cross
For us whom he loved so dear;

and ending thus—

To day, though you're alive and well,
Worth many a thousand pound,
To-morrow dead, and cold as clay,
Your corpse lies under ground.

God bless the master of this house,
Mistress and children dear;
Joyful may their Christmas be,
And happy their New-Year.

That singular old ballad of Dives and Lazarus, in which occur these stanzas:—

As it fell out upon a day,
Poor Lazarus sickened and died;
There came two angels out of heaven
His soul therein to guide.

"Rise up, rise up, brother Lazarus,
Thine heavenly guides are we;
Thy place it is provided in heaven,
To sit on an angel's knee."

As it fell out upon a day,
Rich Dives sickened and died;
There came two serpents out of hell
His soul therein to guide.

"Rise up, rise up, brother Dives,
Thine evil; guides are we;
Thy place it is provided in hell,
To sit on a serpent's knee!"

One has this home-thrusting stanza:

So proud and lofty do some people grow,
Dressing themselves like players in a show;
They patch and paint, and dress like idle stuff,
As if God had not made them good enough.

The well-known TWELVE JOYS:

The first good joy that Mary had, it was the joy of
one,
To see her own son Jesus to suck at her breast-bone;
To suck at her breast-bone, good man, and blessed
shall he be,
Through, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the One
United Three! etc.

The equally popular one:

God rest you, merry gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay;
Remember Christ our Saviour
Was born on Christmas-day,
To save poor souls from Satan's power,
Who've long time gone astray.

Which ends thus:

God bless the master of this house,
And mistress also;
And all the little children
That round the table go;
With their pockets full of money,
And their cellars full of beer;
And God send you a happy New-Year.

Amongst them is found BETHLEHEM CITY.

In Bethlehem city, in Jewry it was,
That Joseph and Mary together did pass;
And there to be tax'd, as many one mo,
When Cæsar commanded, in truth it was so. etc.

And that fine hymn which is sung in some places at midnight by the Waites, and which the Methodists have adopted for their early morning service:

Christians, awake! salute the happy morn,
Whereon the Saviour of the world was born.

And the following, which, though evidently in a most

defective state, I shall give entire, as exhibiting a striking impress of the character of the middle ages; and shewing how well they understood the true spirit of Christ.

Honour the leaves and the leaves of life,
  Upon this blest holiday,
When Jesus asked his mother dear,
  Whether he might go to play.

To play! to play! said blessed Mary,
  To play, then get you gone;
And see there be no complaint of you
  At night when you come home.

Sweet Jesus, he ran unto yonder town,
  As far as the holy well;
And there he saw three as fine children
  As ever eyes beheld.
He said, “God bless you every one,
  And sweet may your sleep be;
And now, little children, I’ll play with you,
  And you shall play with me.”

“Nay, nay, we are lords’ and ladies’ sons—
  Thou art meaner than us all;
Thou art but a silly fair maid’s child,
  Born in an oxen’s stall.”

Sweet Jesus he turned himself about,
  Neither laughed, nor smiled, nor spoke,
But the tears trickled down from his pretty little
    eyes,
  Like waters from the rock.

Sweet Jesus he ran to his mother dear,
  As fast as he could run—
O mother, I saw three as fine children
  As ever were eyes set on.
I said “God bless you every one,
  And sweet may your sleep be—
And now, little children, I’ll play with you,

And you shall play with me."
"Nay," said they, "we're lords' and ladies' sons,
Thou art meaner than us all;
For thou art but a poor fair maid's child,
Born in an oxen's stall."
Then the tears trickled down from his pretty little eyes
As fast as they could fall.

"Then," said she, "go down to yonder town,
As far as the holy well,
And there take up those infants' souls,
And dip them deep in hell."

"O no! O no!" sweet Jesus then said,
"O no! that never can be;
For there are many of those infants' souls
Crying out for the help of me!"

I must not close this article either without recalling to the recollection of some of my readers that quaint old carol, which was sung by bands of little children at Christmas, and which brings fairly before us the paintings of the old masters, where Joseph is always represented as so old a man, and Mary sits in the "oxen's stall" with her crown on her head.

Joseph was an old man, and an old man was he,
And he married Mary, the Queen of Galilee.

It goes on to describe how they went into the garden, and Queen Mary asked Joseph to gather her some cherries, on which he turned very crabbed, made Mary weep, and then all the cherry-trees made their obeisance;

And bowed down to Mary's knee—
And she gathered cherries by one, two, and three.

These are in the spirit of the legend which relates that Jesus, when a boy, was playing with other boys,

when they made sparrows of clay, and he made a sparrow too, but his sparrow became instantly alive, and flew away.

Simple were the times when such rude rhymes as these were framed, to be sung before the doors and by the blazing yule-clogs of gentle and simple. They are not calculated to stand the test of these days; the schoolmaster will root them all out: but it is to be hoped that he will leave untouched the cordial spirit of piety and affection so fitted to make happy this desolate period of the year.

In Yorkshire, Staffordshire, Cornwall, and Devon, the old spirit of Christmas seems to be kept up more earnestly than in most other counties. In Cornwall, they still exhibit the old dance of St. George and the Dragon. A young friend of ours happening to be at Calden-Low in the Staffordshire hills at Christmas, in came the band of bedizened actors, and performed the whole ancient drama, personating St. George, the King of Egypt, the fair Saba, the king's daughter, the Doctor, and other characters, with great energy and in rude verse. In Devon they still bless the orchards on Christmas-eve, according to the old verses:—

> Wassail the trees, that they may beare
> You many a plum, and many a peare:
> For more or less fruits they will bring
> As you do give them wassailing.

In some places, they walk in procession to the principal orchards in the parish. In each orchard one tree is selected as the representative of the rest; and is saluted with a certain form of words. They then either sprinkle the tree with cider, or dash a bowl of cider against it. In other places, only the farmer and his servants assemble on the occasion, and after immersing cakes in cider, hang them on the apple-

trees. They then sprinkle the trees with cider; pronounce their incantation; dance about the tree, and then go home to feast.

In Mr. Grant Stewart's "Popular Superstitions of the Highlands," may be found an account of the Highland mode of celebrating Christmas; and here we say a hearty good-bye to Jolly Old Christmas.

We have now made a hasty sketch of those old festivals which still retain more or less of their ancient influence. We have endeavoured to shew what is the present state of custom and feeling in these particulars by contrasting it with the past. New Year's-day is yet a day of salutations; Valentine's-day has yet some sportive observance amongst the young; and Plough-Monday, here and there, in the thoroughly agricultural districts, sends out its motley team. This consists of the farm-servants and labourers. They are dressed in harlequin guise, with wooden swords, plenty of ribbons, faces daubed with white-lead, red ochre, and lamp-black. One is always dressed in woman's clothes and armed with a besom, a sort of burlesque mixture of Witch and Columbine. Another drives the team of men-horses with a long wand, at the end of which is tied a bladder instead of a lash; so that blows are given without pain, but with plenty of noise. The insolence of these Plough-bullocks, as they are called, which might accord with ancient license, but does not at all suit modern habits, has contributed more than anything else to put them down. They visited every house of any account, and solicited a contribution in no very humble terms. If it was refused, their practice was to plough up the garden walk, or do some other mischief. One band ploughed up the palisades of a

widow lady of our acquaintance, and having to appear before a magistrate for it, and to pay damages, never afterwards visited that neighbourhood. In some places I have known them enter houses, whence they could only be ejected by the main power of the collected neighbours; for they extended their excursions often to the distance of ten miles or more, and where they were the most unknown, there practised the most insolence. Nobody regrets the discontinuance of this usage.

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CHAPTER VII.
THE FAIRY SUPERSTITIONS.

The Fairies, which gave in old times one of the most interesting and poetical features to the country, have all vanished clean away. Of those supernatural and airy beings who used to haunt the woodlands, hamlets, and solitary houses of Old England, they were the first to depart. “They were of the old profession”—true Catholics; and with Catholicism they departed; and have only left their interest in the pages of our poets, who still cling with fondness to the fairy mythology. Bogards, barguests, ghosts, and hobgoblins, still, in many an obscure hamlet and the more primitive parts of the country, maintain much of their ancient power, and continue to quicken the steps of the clown in lonely places, of the schoolboy past the churchyard, and to add a fearful interest to the winter fireside stories in cottages and farms. Witchcraft, spite of what Sir Walter Scott asserted in his Demonology, is far from having ceased to have stanch believers in numerous places. Are not many of

the Methodists firmly persuaded of demoniacal possession? It is not long ago that Mr. Heaton, one of their ministers, published a volume in support of this doctrine, and detailed a very extraordinary case of possession of a boy who mounted on the surbase of the room, and danced there, on a space where he could not for a moment support himself when not under this influence. In this curious book, which I sent to Sir Walter Scott, and which he assured me he meant to make use of, but was, no doubt, prevented by his quickly succeeding decline, is a minute account of all the process of praying the spirit out of the lad, of the dogged resistance of the demon, and their final triumph over him. John Wesley was strongly impressed with a belief of such things, as may be seen in his "News from the Invisible World," and in the pages of the old series of the Wesleyan Magazine. And if recent demoniacal possession be a living faith of the nineteenth century, witchcraft has no lack of votaries. In Nottingham, a town of seventy thousand inhabitants, I knew a shoemaker who stood six feet in height, and "might dance in iron mail," who lately lived, and probably still lives, in constant dread of the evil arts of witches and wizards. On the lintel and sill of his door, he had the ancient charm of reversed horse-shoes nailed; but he said, he found them of little use against the audacious malice of witchcraft. He had standing regularly by his fireside a sack-bag of salt, for he bought it by a sack at a time for the purpose, and of this he frequently, during the day, but more especially on dark and stormy nights, took a handful, with a few horsenail stumps, and crooked pins, and casting them into the fire together, prayed to the Lord to torment all witches and wizards in the neighbourhood, and he believed that they were tormented. As I stood by the man's fire

while he related this, it was burning with the beautiful purple hue of salt. On all other subjects he appeared as grave and sober as his neighbours.

In the obscure alleys of large towns, as well as in solitary situations, fortunetellers still live, and to my own knowledge draw many customers, besides the gipsies, who haunt there in winter time, and are the regular professors of palmistry. Witches, spectres, gipsies, and cunning people, still remain to diversify common life, spite of all the spread of education; but the fairies, pleasant little people, are gone for ever, and have been gone long. Chaucer, indeed, says that they were gone in his day.

> In olde dayes of the king Artour,
> Of which that Bretons speke gret honour,
> All was this land ful filled of faerie;
> The elf-quene, with her joly compagnie
> Danced ful oft in many a grene mede.
> This was the old opinion as I rede;
> I speke of many hundred yeres ago;
> But now can no man see non elves mo,
> For now the grete charitee and prayeres
> Of limitoures and other holy freeres,
> That serchen every land and every streme,
> As thikke as motes in the sonne beme,
> Blissing halles, chambres, kitchenes and boures,
> Citees and burghes, castles highe and toures,
> Thropes and bernes, shepenes and dairies,
> This maketh that ther ben no fairies;
> For ther as wont to walken was an elf,
> Ther walketh now the limitour himself.

And Dr. Corbet, bishop of Norwich, who died in 1635, wrote the following interesting—

> FAREWELL TO THE FAIRIES.
>
> Farewell rewards and fairies!

Good housewives now may say;
For now foule sluts in dairies,
Doe fare as well as they;
And though they sweepe their hearths no less
Than mayds were wont to doe,
Yet who of late for cleanliness
Finds sixpence in her shoe?
Lament, lament old Abbies,
The Fairies' lost command;
They did but change priests' babies,
But some have changed your land:
And all your children stolen from thence
Are now growne Puritanes,
Who live as changelings ever since
For love of your demesnes.
At morning and at evening both
You merry were and glad,
So little care of sleepe and sloth
Those pretty ladies had.
When Tom came home from labour,
Or Ciss to milking rose,
Then merrily went their tabour,
And merrily went their toes.

Witness those rings and roundelayes
Of theirs which yet remain;
Were footed in Queen Mary's days
On many a grassy playne.
But since of late Elizabeth,
And later James came in,
They never danced on any heath
As when the time hath bin.

By which we note the fairies
Were of the old profession,
Their songs were *Ave Maries*,
Their dances were procession.
But now, alas! they all are dead,
Or gone beyond the seas,
Or farther for religion fled,
Or else they take their ease.

A tell-tale in their company
They never could endure;
And whoso kept not secretly
Their mirth was punished sure.
It was a just and Christian deed
To pinch such black and blue;
O how the commonwealth doth need
Such justices as you.

Now they have left our quarters;
A Register they have,
Who can peruse their charters,
A man both wise and grave.
A hundred of their merry pranks
By one that I could name
Are kept in store; con twenty marks
To William for the same.

To William Churne of Staffordshire
Give laud and praises due,
Who every meal can mend your cheer
With tales both old and true:
To William all give audience,
And pray ye for his noddle;
For all the fairies' evidence
Were lost if it were addle.

Possibly the fairies may yet linger in the dales of Ettrick Forest, where poor Hogg used to see them, and sung so many beautiful lays in their honour that he may be styled the Poet Laureate of the Fairies. But he is gone now—gone after many another great and shining light of the age, having made the shepherd's plaid almost as glorious as the prophet's mantle—and they may not choose to reveal themselves to another. They may possibly yet pay an occasional visit to Staffordshire, the county of William Churne; and we have, indeed, heard of them doing some pleasant miracles on Midsummer-eve on Calden-Low. If we are to believe the report of a certain little

damsel, as given in Tait's Magazine, of June 1835—

Some, they played with the water,
And rolled it down the hill;
And this, they said, shall merrily turn
The poor old miller's mill.

For there has been no water
Ever since the first of May,
And a blithe man shall the miller be
By the dawning of the day.

O, the miller, how he will laugh
As he sees the mill-dam rise—
The jolly old miller how he will laugh
Till the tears fill both his eyes.

And some they seized the little winds,
That sounded over the hill,
And each put a horn into his mouth,
And blew so sharp and shrill.

"And there," said one, "the merry winds go
Away from every horn,
And these shall clear the mildew dank
From the blind old widow's corn."

O! the poor blind widow—
Though she has mourned so long,
She'll be merry enough when the mildew's gone,
And the corn stands stiff and strong.

And some they brought the brown lintseed,
And flung it down from the Low;
"And this," said they, "by the sunrise,
In the weaver's croft shall grow."

O! the poor, lame weaver,
How he will laugh outright,
When he sees his dwindling flax-field
All full of flowers by night.

Then up and spoke a brownie,
With a long beard on his chin,
"And I have spun the tow," said he,
"And I want some more to spin.

"I've spun a piece of hempen cloth,
And I want to spin another;
A little sheet for Mary's bed,
And an apron for her mother."

And with that I could not help but laugh,
And I laugh'd out loud and free,
And then on the top of the Calden-Low
There was no one left but me.
And all on the top of the Calden-Low
The mists were cold and grey,
And nothing I saw but the mossy stones,
That round about me lay.

This deponent saith, that coming down from the Low, she saw all their benevolent intentions already realized. It is to be hoped that such visits may be again paid to Calden-Low, but we have our doubts.

The Pixies may possibly still haunt those caves and dells in Devonshire where Coleridge and Carrington saw them; but with those exceptions—and they received on the faith of poets, who take license—we believe they have all emigrated. In the lays of Shakspeare and Milton, they are made immortal denizens of our soil; and we shall never see moonlight, or come upon the VER-RINGS that still mark our plains and downs, without feeling and poetically believing that the fairies have been there. In Wales, however, the common people still declare that they abide. Scotland may have given up the brownies, and kelpies, and urisks; and we may no longer have hobthrushes dwelling amongst our rocks, or Robin Goodfellow, alias Puck, alias Hobgoblin, playing his pranks, as in this confession:

Whene'er night-wanderers I meet,
As from their night-sports they trudge home,
With counterfeiting voice I greete,
And call them on with me to roame,
Through woods, through lakes,
Through bogs, through brakes;
Or else unseen with them I go,
All in the nicke,
To play some tricke,
And frolicke it with ho, ho, ho!
Sometimes I meet them like a man;
Sometimes an ox, sometimes a hound;
And to a horse I turn me can,
To trip and trot about them round.
But if to ride
My backe they stride,
More swift than wind away I go,
O'er hedge and lands,
Through pools and ponds
I winny, laughing ho, ho, ho!

He may not come to play those pranks, nor as Milton has described his visits to the farm:

To earn the cream-bowl duly set.

The thrashing-machine has thrown the lubber-fiend out of employment; but the Welsh still declare themselves honoured by the continuance of these night-wanderers. They have still the corpse-candles; and hear Gabriel's hounds hunting over the hills by night, and stoutly avow that the fairies are as numerous there as ever. There is a waterfall at Aberpergum, called the Fairies' Waterfall, where they are, almost any night to be heard singing; and I have heard a very grave Friend declare that he has seen them dancing in a green meadow, as he rode home at night. How long, indeed, this may continue, one cannot tell; for old Morgan Lewis, who for fifty years has acted as guide to the beautiful waterfalls of

Neath Valley, and is a most firm believer in all the Fairy faith, especially of their luring children away by assuming the forms of their deceased relatives, and offering them *fairy-bread* to eat, which changes their natures, and they are compelled to join the Elfin troop—declares that they are now gone from that neighbourhood; that "the spirit of man is become too strong for them." A fair friend has sketched for me, the old man in the attitude of describing to a party the exact spot on which his father saw their *very last* appearance. Behind him rises the Dînas Rock, from time immemorial the sanctum sanctorum of Welsh fairyland; and old Morgan is exclaiming, "They are gone! they are gone! and we'll never see them more!"





CHAPTER VIII.
THE VILLAGE INN.

There is nothing more characteristic in rural life than a village alehouse, or inn. It is the centre of information, and the regular, or occasional rendezvous of almost everybody in the neighbourhood. You there see all sorts of characters, or you hear of them. The whereabout of everybody all around is there perfectly understood. I do not mean the low pothouse—the new beer-shop of the new Beer-bill, with LICENSED TO BE DRUNK ON THE PREMISES blazoned over the door in staring characters—the Tom-and-Jerry of the midland counties—the Kidley-Wink of the west of England. No, I mean the good old-fashioned country alehouse; the substantial, well-to-do old country alehouse—situated on a village green, or by the road-side, with a comfortable sweep out of the road itself for carriages or carts to

come round to the door, and stand out of all harm's way. The nice old-fashioned house, in a quiet, rural, out-of-the-way, old-fashioned district. The very house which Goldsmith in his day described—

> Where grey-beard mirth and smiling toil retired,
> Where village statesmen talked with looks profound,
> And news much older than their ale went round.

It is a low, white-washed, or slap-dashed, or stuccoed, or timber-framed house, with its various roof, and steep gables; its casement windows above, bright and clean, peeping out from amongst vines or jasmines, where the innkeeper's neat daughter, who acts the parts of chambermaid, barmaid, and waiter, may be seen looking abroad; and its ample bay-windows below, where parties may do the same, and where, as you pass, you may occasionally see such parties—a pleasant-looking family, or a group of young, gay people, with merry, and often very sweet faces amongst them;—their post-chaise, travelling-carriage, barouche, or spring-cart, according to their several styles and dignities, standing at the door, under the great spreading tree. Ay, there is the old spreading tree, that is as old, and probably older than the inn itself. It is an elm, with a knotty mass of root swelled out around the base of its sturdy stem into a prodigious heap—into a seat, in fact, on holiday occasions, for a score of rustic revellers, or resters. In some cases, where the root has not been so accommodating, a good stout bench runs round it; or where the root is at all endangered by scratching dogs, picking and hewing children, or rooting pigs of the village, it has heaped up a good mound of earth round it; or it is protected by a circle of wattled fence.

You see the tree is a tree of mark and consequence; it is, indeed, *the tree*. It is looked upon as part and parcel of the concern; of as much consequence to the house as its sign; and it is often the sign itself:—THE OLD ELM-TREE! Or it may be a yew—the very yew out of which Robin Hood and Little John, Will Scarlett, or Will Stutely cut their bows—yes, that house is "The Robin Hood." Or it may be a mighty ash—the One-Ash, or the Mony-Ash, as in the Peak of Derbyshire. Or it is an oak of as much dignity—The Royal-Oak. Or it is a whole grove or cluster, by character or tradition—The Seven-Sisters—or The Four-Brothers—or The Nine-Oaks—all of which sisters, brothers, or nine companions, except one, are decayed, dropped off, or thrown down, as many a family beside has been. See!—the sign hangs in it, or is suspended on its post just by, bearing the likeness of the original tree, *attempted* by some village artist.

Just such a tree and such a house, all my Surrey, and many of my metropolitan readers are familiar with at the foot of St. Anne's Hill, by Chertsey. The Golden-Grove, kept by James Snowden,—who does not know it, that loves sweet scenery, sweet associations, or a pleasant steak and pipe, or a tea-party on a holiday of nature, in one of the most delicious nests imaginable? Yes! there is a nice old village inn for you; and such a tree! There you have the picture of the Golden-Grove all in a blaze of gold —somewhat dashed and dimmed, it is true, by the blaze of many suns,—but there it is, in front of the inn, and by the old tree. The inn, the hanging gardens and orchards, the rustic cottages scattered about, the rich woods and splendid prospects above, the beautiful meadows and winding streams below; why, they are enough to arrest any traveller, and make him put up his horse, and determine to breathe

a little of this sweet air, and indulge in this Arcadian calm, amid these embowering woodlands. And where is he? Below, in those fair meadows, amid those cottage roofs and orchard trees, rises the low, square church-tower of Chertsey:—Chertsey, where Cowley lived and died; and where his garden still remains, as delicious as ever, with its grassy walk winding by his favourite brook, and the little wooden bridge leading into the richest meadows. And where his old house yet remains, saving the porch pointing to the street, which was taken down for the public safety, but the circumstance and its cause recorded on a tablet on the wall, with this concluding line—

> Here the last accents flowed from Cowley's tongue.

You then, poetical or enthusiastic traveller or visitant, tread the ground which Abraham Cowley trod in his retirement; and what is more, you tread the ground which Charles James Fox trod in his retirement. The hill above is St. Anne's,—conspicuous through a great part of Surrey, Berks, Bucks, Herts, and Middlesex, delightful for its woods and for its splendid panoramic views, including the winding Thames, Cooper's Hill, celebrated by Sir John Denham, Hampstead, Highgate, Harrow, and mighty London itself, but still more delightful to the patriotic visitant, as the place where Fox retired to refresh himself after his parliamentary contests, and to recruit himself for fresh struggles for his country. It is a place which Rogers by his pen, and Turner by his pencil, have made still more sacred. Who does not know the lines of Rogers in his poem of Human Life, in his last splendidly-embellished edition of his works, referring to Fox?—

And now once more where most he wished to be,
In his own fields, breathing tranquillity—
We hail him—not less happy Fox, than thee!
Thee at St. Anne's so soon of care beguiled,
Playful, sincere, and artless as a child!
Thee, who wouldst watch a bird's nest on the spray,
Through the green leaves exploring, day by day.
How oft from grove to grove, from seat to seat,
With thee conversing in thy loved retreat,
I saw the sun go down!—Ah, then 'twas thine,
Ne'er to forget some volume half divine,
Shakspeare's or Dryden's—through the chequered
shade
Borne in thy hand behind thee as we strayed;
And where we sate (and many a halt we made),
To read there with a fervour all thine own,
And in thy grand and melancholy tone,
Some splendid passage, not to thee unknown,
Fit theme for long discourse.—Thy bell has tolled!
—But in thy place among us we behold
One who resembles thee.

There is the place, drawn by Turner, exactly as it is; and there is still living the widow of the great statesman, at the advanced age of upwards of ninety years.

It must be confessed that the Golden-Grove is located in a very golden situation, and then—its tree! I suppose that is scarcely to be rivalled. I have placed on my title-page the King of Belgium's tree, but James Snowden's tree is every whit as remarkable.

It is a grand old elm, with massy, wide-spreading horizontal branches, on which is laid a stout oaken floor, fenced in by a strong parapet of boards and palisades. It is an aerial, arborean lodge, reached by an easy flight of steps, furnished with seats and tables, and canopied by the green awning of the whole tree's foliage—just the sylvan bower that makes one long to see a joyous party in it on a

summer's day, looking out with glad faces on the passers by; or a rustic company, with their homely pots of ale, and the smoke of their pipes circling out amongst the green leaves about them.

This is the old-fashioned country alehouse, such as I am speaking of, only that we are still merely at the entrance of it, still lingering and haunting about the door, while the landlady and her daughter are on the fidgets to receive us, and the old landlord comes out with his bare head, and his rustic bow, and greets us with—"A fine old tree that, sir! Their heads don't ache as planted it, sir;" and the hostler is advancing from the stable to take charge of our vehicle. But walk in. How clean it is! Bless us, what a nice snug parlour! What an ample, comfortable kitchen, or house-place as they call it, with its wide fireplace! What an array of plates, dishes, and bright pewter pots on the shelves around, and of hams and flitches dangling from the ceiling. It is a substantial place; there is no fear of starvation here. The joint is turning at the fire, and the tea-kitchen stands for ever boiling, ready to mix a tumbler of spirits, or to make coffee or tea at all hours.

These country inns are, of course, some greater, some less; some richer, some more simple—according to their custom, situation, or other contingent circumstances; but they are generally clean to a miracle, and plentiful places. The travelling carriages stop to bait there, for it is between towns; the squire comes there occasionally, for he patronizes it, and has all private and public meetings held there. Most probably it is his own property, and its sign the arms of his family; and what is quite as likely, the landlord is his old servant. Half of these places are kept by old servants of the neighbouring families, who have married and *retired*

to public life. The groom, the coachman, nay the valet or the butler, has married the lady's maid, or the comely laundress, or a daughter of a neighbouring farmer, and there is nothing he can so readily fashion himself to as an inn. It is something after his own way—he is still waiting on somebody at table or at carriage. He is knowing in horses and dogs, and he can't be well spared out of the neighbourhood. He is acquainted with all the farmers, and their acquaintance all round, and they come to the house. In nine cases out of ten he has a farm attached to his inn. In other cases, our country innkeeper is a maltster too, or a miller; and these are the country inns for good cheer. O, what cream, what fresh butter, what fresh eggs, what fresh vegetables, what plump tender pullets, what geese and ducks for the roasting, with all appendages of peas and onions, cucumbers and asparagus, can that larder produce which is situated in the Goshen of rural plenty; where the malt-kiln is at hand instead of the druggist's shop; where barley is steeped instead of coculus; where the hostel has a plentiful garden at its back, and a good farm behind that.

Go up to your bed-chamber; you are delighted with its sweetness—its freshness—its cleanness. You fairly stand to snuff up the air that comes in at the open window. You turn to admire the clean white bed—the snowy sheets—the fresh carpet—the old-fashioned walnut drawers, and wide elbow-chairs of massy workmanship, with damask cushions, clean, though much worn, which have been purchased at the sale of some ancient manor-house. All is as bright and clean as busy and country hands can make them. There is lavender in the drawers! You may, indeed, if you please, be laid in lavender; for you have only to look out of your window, and the garden below has

whole hedges of lavender, and there are trees of rosemary nailed up your walls to the very window-sills of the room. And then you see such filbert-bushes, such damson, and plum, and apple, and pear trees, that you have visions of apple dumplings, damson tarts, and a hundred other rural dainties. And now, if you want to study the character of the place; if you are staying some few days, and are curious in "the short and simple annals of the poor;" if you want to paint like Moreland or Gainsborough; or to vie with Miss Mitford in sunshiny pictures of an English village, there you are in the very watch-tower of observation.

You look out on the green, and there comes all the population—the old to talk and smoke their pipes, the young to play at skittles, nine-pins, quoits, or cricket. You see out over fields and farms; whatever, or whoever you meet with in your walks,—cottage or hall, man, woman, or child,—your landlord can give the whole history and mystery of it; and besides, as I have said, there every body comes. The clergyman himself comes there sometimes to meet his neighbours, on parish or other affairs. All the gentlemen farmers and plodding farmers, the keepers, the labourers,—every body has some business at one time or another there. There are the privileged guests of the bar, the frequenters of the best parlour, the rustic circle of the kitchen fireside. There the wedding-party comes, and often dines there. There the very followers of the funeral find some occasion or need of comfort to draw them.[28] There the soldier on furlough halts—the recruits marching to their destination halt too. If it be a country that is at all frequented for its natural beauty or curiosities, or for sporting, there is always some wild-looking animal or other, a "man at a loose end,"

ready to guide you to the moors, to act as a marker, to carry your game-bag, or your fishing-basket. In all such places there is a wit, an eccentric, a good singer. The Will Wimbles, the broken-down gentlemen, the never-do-wells, all come there. You may see them, and hear them, and when they are gone, may hear all their oddities and their histories; and every evening you shall hear every piece of news, for five miles round, as related and canvassed over by the guests amongst themselves. Many of these landlords are themselves perfect originals; and by their humour, their racy anecdotes, and "random shots of country wit," draw numbers to their ingle. If any of my readers have heard old Matthew Jobson, of the Nag's Head, Wythburn, at the foot of Helvelyn, holding forth in the midst of the rustic frequenters of his hearth, they have a good notion of such Bonifaces,—men that can furnish a Wordsworth or a Crabbe with the rough diamond of a story which they set in imperishable gold,—or flash out sparks of native wit that afterwards set the tables of city palaces in a roar.

[28] In Wales the attenders of a country funeral adjourn, as regularly as they attend the funeral itself, to the alehouse; and it strikes an Englishman very strangely, to meet a funeral going to the church, and to hear the chief mourner, perhaps the widow, crying aloud, and repeating as she goes, all the virtues of the deceased; and in an hour after, to find the whole company seated in the public house, enveloped in a canopy of tobacco-smoke, loud in talk, and drowning their sorrow in their cups. I recollect how my feelings were harrowed by meeting such a funeral, and a widow just so lamenting; but the gentleman with me, a resident of the place, said "O, it is all the better—they run off the poignancy of their feelings by their lamentations. Their grief seems like one of

their mountain torrents—loud and rapid, and then it is gone."

But lest I should be accused of tempting my readers into the abodes of publicans and sinners, I must again remind them that I am only talking of those quiet, respectable old country inns, where the master and mistress had a character to maintain, had a regard to the opinion of the parson and the squire; and of those only as places of necessary refreshment. As parts and parcels of English rural life, I am bound to describe them; and who has not spent a pleasant hour in such a place with a friend, on a pedestrianizing excursion, or with a rural party at dinner or tea? And who has not rejoiced to escape from night and storms, on wide heaths or amongst the mountains, to the "shelter of such rustic roof?" Into such a house I remember, years ago, being driven by a wild night of wind, rain, and pitchy darkness, on the edge of Yorkshire, and the cheerful blaze of the fire, and the rustic group round it, as I entered, were a right welcome contrast to the tempestuous blackness without. Wet, and cold, and weary as I was, I had no intention of being conducted to the best parlour of so small a house as this was, in so secluded a part of the country, on a dismal night in October. Whoever is obliged at such a season to betake himself to such humble hostel, let him, if he do not find a good fire blazing in the parlour, seat himself in the old chimney-corner: there he is sure of warmth and comfort in a homely way. In summer a rustic inn, in the most obscure district, is pleasant enough; but in winter beware! Travellers are few—the best parlour is probably not used once a month, for all country incomers know that the old chimney-corner is always warm. Instead, therefore, of being led, as is the regular custom, on the arrival

of a respectable looking stranger, into the best parlour, while a fire is lighted, and of waiting, chill and miserable, for its burning up, and for the coming of your tea or supper, watching the smoking, snapping, fizzing sticks, and the reek, refused ascent up the damp chimney, ever and anon puffing out into the room in clouds—march at once into the common room, or ensconce yourself as a privileged guest in the bar. If you find a fire blazing in the parlour, that is indication that there is passing enough on that road to keep one burning there: if not, the blazing ingle is your spot. There I took my station, with a high wooden screen behind me, a bright hearth before me; and having ordered a beef-steak and coffee, and secured the room over this very one for my lodging, knowing that that too is always dry in winter, I began to notice what company I had got. The scene presented is worth describing, as a bit of rural life. About half a dozen villagers occupied the centre of the great circular wooden screen, at one end of which I was seated. Before them stood the common three-legged round table of the country public-house, on which stood their mugs of ale. The table, screen, fire-irons, floor, every thing had an air of the greatest cleanness. Opposite to me, in one of the great old elbow-chairs, so common in country inns in the north, some of them, indeed, with rockers to them, in which full-grown people sit rocking themselves with as much satisfaction as children, sate an old man in duffil-grey trousers and jacket, and with his hat on; and close at my left hand a tall, good-looking fellow of apparently fifty-five, who had the dress of a master stonemason, but a look of vivacity and knowingness, very different to the rest of the company. There was a look of the wag, or the rake about him. He was, in fact, evidently a fellow

that in any place or station would be a gay, roystering blade; and if dressed in a court dress, would cut a gallant figure too. He eyed me with that expression which said he only wanted half a word to make himself very communicative. The check which my entrance had given to the talk and laughter which I heard on first opening the door, had now passed, and I found a keen dispute going on, upon the important question of how many quicksets there are in a yard, when planted four inches asunder. The old man opposite I found was what a punster would term a fencing-master,—a planter of fences,—a founder and establisher of hawthorn hedges for the whole country round; and out of his profession the dispute had arisen. The whole question hinged on the simple inquiry, whether a quickset was put in at the very commencement of the line of fence, or only at the end of the first four inches. In the first case there would be evidently nine—in the latter only eight. The matter in dispute was so simple and demonstrable, that one wondered how it could afford a dispute at all. Some, however, contended there were eight quicksets, and some that there were nine; and to demonstrate, they had chalked out the line of fence with its division into yards, and sub-division into four inches, on the hearth with a cinder; but the dispute still went on as keenly as if the thing were not thus plainly before their eyes, or as disputes continue in a more national assembly on things as self-evident: and many an earnest appeal was made from both sides to the old hedger, who having once given his decision, disdained to return any further reply than by a quiet withdrawal of his pipe from his mouth, a quiet draught of ale, and the simple asseveration of—“Nay, I’m sure!” The debate might have grown as tediously prolix as the debates just

alluded to, had not my left-hand neighbour, the tall man of lively aspect, turned to me, and, pointing to the cindery diagram on the hearth, said, “What things these stay-at-home neighbours of mine can make a dispute out of! What would Ben Jonson have thought of such simpletons? Look here! if these noisy chaps had ever read a line of Homer or Hesiod, they wouldn’t plague their seven senses out about nothing at all. Why, any child of a twelvemonth old would settle their mighty question with the first word it learned to speak. Eight or nine quicksets indeed! and James Broadfoot there, who should know rather better than them, for he has planted as many in his time as would reach all round England, and Ireland to boot, has told them ten times over. Eight or nine numbskulls, I say!”

“O!” said I, a good deal surprised—“and so you have read Homer and Hesiod, have you?”

“To be sure I have,” replied my mercurial neighbour, “and a few other poets too. I have not spent all my life in this sleepy-headed place, I can assure you.”

“What, you have travelled as well as read, then?”

“Yes, and I have travelled too, master. Ben Jonson was a stonemason; and if I am not a stonemason I am a sculptor, and that is first-cousin to it. When Ben Jonson first entered London with a hod of mortar on his head, and a two-foot rule in his pocket, I dare say he knew no more that he had twenty plays in his head, than I knew of all the cherubims I should carve, and the epitaphs I should cut; and yet I have cut a few in my time, and written them too beforehand.”

“O! and you are a poet too?”

He nodded assent, and taking up his mug of ale, and fixing his eyes stedfastly on me over the top of it

as he drank with a look of triumph,—then setting down his mug—"And if you want to know that, you have only to walk into the churchyard in the morning, and there you'll find plenty of my verses, and cut with a pen of iron too, as Job wished his elegy to be." Here, however, lest I should not walk into the churchyard, he recited a whole host of epitaphs, many of which must have made epitaph-hunters stare, if they really were put on headstones.

"Well," I said, "you astonish me with your learning and wit. I certainly did not look for such a person in this village—but pray where have you travelled?"

"O! it's a long story—but this I can tell you—I have gone so near to the end of the world that I could not put sixpence between my head and the sky."

At this the whole company of disputants forgot their quicksets, lifted their heads and cried—"Well done Septimus Scallop! That's a good 'un. If the gentleman can swallow that, he can anything."

"O!" said I, "I don't doubt it."

"Don't doubt it!" they shouted all at once—"don't doubt it? Why, do you think any man ever could get to where the sky was so low as he couldn't get in sixpence between his head and it?"

"Yes he could, and often has done—make yourself sure of that. If a man has not a sixpence he cannot put it between his head and the sky; and he is pretty near the world's end too, I think."

Here they all burst into a shout of laughter, in the midst of which open flew the door, and a tall figure rushed into the middle of the house, wrapped in a shaggy coat of many capes, dripping with wet, and holding up a huge horn lantern. A face of wonderful length and of a ghastly aspect glared from behind the lantern, and a voice of the most ludicrous

lamentation bawled out—"For God's sake, lads, come and help me to find my wagon and horses! I've lost my wagon! I've lost my wagon!" Up jumped the whole knot of disputants, and demanded where he had lost it. The man said that while he went to deliver a parcel in the village, the wagon had gone on. That he heard it at a distance, and cried, "woa! woa!" but the harder he cried, and the farther he went, the faster it went too. At this intelligence away marched every one of the good-natured crew excepting the wit. "And why don't you go?" I asked. —"Go! pugh! It's only that soft brother of mine, Tim Scallop, the Doncaster carrier. I'll be bound now that the wagon hasn't moved an inch from the spot he left it in. He has heard the wind roaring, and doesn't know it from his own wagon wheels. Here these poor simpletons will go running their hearts out for some miles, and then they will come back and find the horses where he left them. I could go and lay my hand on them in five minutes. But they are just as well employed as in griming Mrs. Tappit's hearthstone. Never mind;—I was telling you of what the hostler said to Ben Jonson when Ben was reeling home early one morning from a carouse, and Ben declared that he was never so pricked with a horsenail-stump in his life—

BEN.—

Thou silly groom
Take away thy broom,
And let Ben Jonson pass:

GROOM.—

O! rare Ben!
Turn back again,
And take another glass!"

Septimus Scallop laughed at the hostler's repartee, and I laughed too, but my amusement had a different source from his. There was something irresistibly ludicrous in the generous rushing forth of the whole company to the aid of the poor carrier, except the witty brother! But he was quite right: in about an hour, in came the good-natured men, streaming with rain like drowned rats, and declaring that after running three miles and finding no wagon, they bethought themselves of turning back to where the carrier said it was lost; and there they had nearly run their noses against it, standing exactly where he left it.

So much for the village inn. Every traveller must have seen in such a place many a similar piece of country life. A new class of alehouses has sprung up under the New Beer Act, which being generally kept by people without capital, often without character; their liquor supplied by the public brewers, and adulterated by themselves; have done more to demoralize the population of both town and country, than any other legislative measure within the last century. In these low, dirty, fuddling places, you may look in vain for

> The whitewashed wall, the nicely sanded floor,
> The varnished clock that clicked behind the door.

In manufacturing towns, and agricultural districts, they alike multiply the temptations to the poor man, and by their low character are sure to deteriorate his own. Against the swarms of these, in many places, the quiet respectable old village inn has little chance. It must disappear, or be kept by a different and a worse class of people; and when it goes, it goes with Goldsmith's graphic lamentation—for very different are the *shops* that succeed it:

Vain transitory splendours! could not all
Reprieve the tottering mansion from its fall!
Obscure it sinks, nor shall it more impart
An hour's importance to the poor man's heart.
Thither no more the peasant shall repair,
To sweet oblivion of his daily care;
No more the farmer's news, the barber's tale,
No more the woodman's ballad shall prevail;
No more the smith his dusky brow shall clear,
Relax his ponderous strength, and lean to hear;
The host himself no longer shall be found,
Careful to see the mantling bliss go round;
Nor the coy maid, half willing to be prest,
Shall kiss the cup to pass it to the rest.

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CHAPTER IX.

POPULAR PLACES OF RESORT.—WAKES, STATUTES, AND FAIRS.

Besides the remains of the ancient festivals, the country people find a great source of amusement in these gatherings. The WAKE is the parochial feast of the dedication of the church. It has now dwindled into a village holiday, shorn by the Reformation of all its ecclesiastical and sacred character. But it furnishes a certain point in every year, in every individual parish, to which the rural people can look forward as a point of rest and mutual rejoicing. It is a time which leads them to clean up their houses, to look forward and prepare for a renewal of their wardrobe; and which cheers the spirit of many an otherwise solitary and labouring person with the prospect of a short season of relaxation, a short pause in the otherwise ever-going machinery of servitude. The old people—parents, and grand-

parents, say—when telling of their children out at service, in some distant place, or married and settled far off: “Well, well, we shall see them at the wake. They’ll all be here, thank God, well and hearty, I hope.” The children, as they groan at times under the tedium of perpetual labour, suddenly cheer up, and say,—“Well, but we shall go home at the wake;”—a thing which is regularly stipulated for at hiring; and the vision of that joyful time, though but a moment in itself, puts out all the twilight of their weary waiting. The time comes. The merry bells of the church are ringing on the anniversary of that church’s completion, perhaps five or seven hundred years ago. Merrily they ring; and simple and glad creatures, young maidens, and youths, and comely pairs with a troop of children round them, hear them, as they come over hill and dale, approaching from all quarters the place of their nativity, and the place of their ancestors: the one place, however small and however obscure, tinged all over with the memories of childhood, and filled with the stories and legends that were interwoven with the very grain of their minds by their parents’ recitals in early life—the one place, therefore, which seems the most important in the universe. They, like the Chinese, always place in the maps of their simple thoughts their native village in the centre of the earth. Over hill and dale they are coming, all in their holiday array; and in many a bright little cottage, basking in the sunshine of morning, are eager hearts looking out for them; wondering how Grace and Thomas will look; whether they are much altered; and whether the children of the married ones will be much grown. The beauty of these village feasts is, that they do not occur all at one time, so that the friends and acquaintance of the inhabitants of one place, come

pouring in to see them, and are ready in their turn to receive them at their feast.

They are times of pleasant exchange of hospitalities and renewals of simple friendships. Out of doors there are stalls of toys and sweetmeats, and whirligigs for the children; within, there is, for once, plum-pudding and roast beef, and an infinity of such talk as best pleases their tastes. Old notes of by-gone years are compared. Many are recalled to remembrance who have not been thought of for a long time. The hearts of the old are warmed by retracing their early exploits, and early acquaintance, with all the pleasant exaggerations of memory; and the young listen, and think with wonder on those good old times.

In some old-fashioned places, these feasts are named from and mingled with the remains of other old church rites. At Ilkeston in Derbyshire, it is called the Cross-Dressing, and the cross in the village is dressed up with oaken boughs, with their leaves gilt and spangled. At Tissington, near Dovedale, the Well-Dressing or Well-Flowering, when they dress up a beautiful spring with flowers, and have dances and processions and much merriment, is their great feast, though it may not happen to fall exactly on the day of the dedication of the church. At Blidworth, in the old demesnes of Sherwood, it is their Rocking; I suppose from its happening to fall on the day after Twelfth-day, or St. Distaff's-day, the custom of which is described by
Herrick:—

> Partly work, and partly play,
> Ye must on St. Distaff's-day:
> From the plough soone free your teame,
> Then come home and fother them.
> If the maides a spinning goe,

Burn the flax and fire the tow.
Bring in pails of water then,
Let the maides bewash the men:
Give St. Distaff all the right,
Then bid Christmas sport good night.
And next morrow every one,
To his owne vocation.

In different villages, different customs have allied themselves to the great annual feast, the season of meeting of friends and relatives. Long may these meetings remain bound up with, at least, one bright day in the year. I trust, however knowledge and refinement may extend themselves, they will never refine these rural holidays away. Let them root out cruelty and rudeness, and drunkenness, as they have done already in a great degree—for where now are bull-baitings, bear-baitings, dog-fights, and cock-fights, which twenty years ago were the invariable accompaniments and great attraction of these wakes? Let Christian knowledge root out these things, and thus perfect this one white season of the cottager's year—making it entirely an occasion for cultivating the best affections, and knitting together family ties.

STATUTES.

These, which are called provincially STATITZ, or STATICE, are meetings for hiring of farm and household servants, "according to statutes made and provided," and are held in certain central and convenient places. They are attended merely by farmers, and people who happen to want men or maid-servants, and by the servants themselves. By the latter they are looked forward to with much interest. They furnish occasion for a holiday. They are for the time their own masters, having left, or

being about to leave their places, and either to re-engage themselves, or to seek new ones. They here meet their old acquaintances, and compare notes of the past year, of the character of the different places they have had; of what extraordinary has befallen them; and are full of new schemes and speculations as to where they shall go; what advance of wages they shall obtain; in what capacity they shall hire themselves. In many parts of the country he who offers himself as a shepherd appears with a lock of wool in his hat, placed under the band; the wagoner has a bit of whipcord stuck there; the groom a bit of sponge; the milkmaid in her bonnet a tuft of cow-hair; and the general run of farm-servants are conspicuous enough as to what they are, by their carters'-frocks, or slops, hob-nailed ankle boots, and out-of-door, half-waggish, half-sheepish looks.

It is a true country scene, to see all these rude sons of the soil collected together from their farm-yards and solitary fields, where, far from towns, they have gone whistling after the plough, sowing, or gathering in harvest; and the girls that have been scrubbing, churning, and milking, and occasionally helping in the hay or corn fields, here dressed out in their rustic finery, and shewing such robust forms and rosy faces as might astonish our over-delicate citizens. To see the farmers going amongst them, inquiring after their accomplishments and qualities, and cheapening them much as they would cheapen a horse; and their no less wary wives negotiating with the buxom damsels of the mop and pail. These matters all satisfactorily disposed of, and the *Earnest*, or money given on account of future services, or as it is otherwise called, the *Fastening-penny*, from its formerly being a penny, though now a shilling, being given, away go the farmers and farmeresses, and leave the lads and

lasses to a day of jollity and fun. The swains lose no time in selecting each his *chere-amie* for the day; and the afternoon is spent in eating, flirting, drinking, and dancing, and then all separate their several ways, for at least another year.

Some of these STATUTES in agricultural districts bring together a vast concourse of people. In Warwickshire, Oxfordshire, and many other parts of the country, these statutes are held about Old Michaelmas-day, when all the servants, men and women, are at liberty from their servitude, and have a week's holiday to attend the different neighbouring statutes, mops, or bull-roastings, as they are called. All work is at an end. Day-labourers are the only men who can be got to do out-of-doors offices; charwomen take the place of housemaids within; and good housewives are often at their wits' end what to do. As you enter towns you find them swarming with the country lads and lasses, and oxen roasting in the streets; booths, shows, eating, treating, and dancing the order of the day. As you go along the highways you meet the young country people streaming along in their rustic finery to or from the towns; and when you arrive at a country inn, probably the door is barred and bolted, if it be towards evening,—the servants being all gone to be hired, the master to hire, and the mistress left alone, and no little afraid of the loose strolling fellows who are abroad at this unsettled time. I once went, when a boy, with my schoolmaster to Polesworth Statute, in Warwickshire, and well remember that such was the crowd, that although I saw a penny on the ground, and made many attempts to stoop down and pick it up, I found it impossible to do it. In Northumberland, Durham, and the south of Scotland, similar meetings are held, where the hinds hire their Bondagers.

FAIRS.

Statutes are places where the working class of the rural districts amuse themselves, but fairs are great sources of pleasure to all classes of country people. The farmers, and their wives and daughters; the villagers of all descriptions; the cottagers from the most secluded retreats; the squire and his family from the hall—all flock to the fair of their county town, and find some business to be transacted, and a world of pleasure to be enjoyed. There are cheese, cattle, horses, poultry, geese, and a hundred other things, to be sold; and multitudes of household articles, clothing, and trinkets to be bought; and, besides all this, a vast of seeing and being seen to be done. I will describe the great October Fair of Nottingham, called Goose-Fair, as a good specimen of a country fair on a large scale.

In the country, for many miles round, this fair is looked forward to by young and old with views of business and recreation for months; and what was done, and said, and seen at Goose-Fair; who was met there, and what matches were made, serve for conversation for months afterwards. The buyers and sellers of cheese, apples, onions, and a variety of other articles, are making their preparations to be there; some of them from distant counties; horse-jockeys are getting ready their strings of horses; young people are putting their wardrobes in order, and expecting all that such young people do expect on such occasions. In the town, two or three days before, the signs of the approaching fair increase. Huge caravans incessantly arrive, with their wild beasts, theatricals, dwarfs, giants, and other prodigies and wonders. Then come trotting in those light, neat covered wagons, containing the contents of sundry bazaars that are speedily to spring up. As

you go out of the town at any end, you meet caravan after caravan, cart after cart, long troops of horses tied head and tail, and groups of those wild and peculiar-looking people, that are as necessary to a fair as flowers are to May;—all kinds of strollers, beggars, gipsies, singers, dancers, players on harps, Indian jugglers, Punch and Judy exhibitors, and similar wandering artists and professors.

For some days before the general fair commences, the horse-fair is going on. You recognise all the knowing-ones in horse-flesh from all the country round; country gentlemen and smart young farmers, and cunning jockeys with their long drab great coats, short old boots, and their jockey whips stuck carelessly under their arm. Horses of all kinds, light and heavy, full blood, half blood, and no blood at all, are ridden and driven to shew their action, along the pavement in all directions, as if the aim of the riders was to run over everybody they could, and break their own necks into the bargain.

Then on the authentic day of the fair, forth comes the procession of the corporation to proclaim the fair, and march up the market-place and down again in their scarlet robes, mayor and aldermen, the mace borne and the trumpet blown before them, and the beadles with their staves behind. Having made this procession to the wonder of all children, and sight-loving adults, they ascend into the Town-Hall, there, oddly enough, called the Exchange, and the crier proclaims the fair from the charter, at the prompting of the town-clerk. The fair is proclaimed, and is already in existence. There is the market-place, an area of six acres, jammed full of stalls, shows, bazaars, and people. From the earliest hour of the morning, wagons loaded with cheese have been arriving, which are now seen on one side of the

market-place, pitched down in piles, and in quantities enough, one would think, to serve all England for a twelvemonth. There are the farmers, and their wives and daughters, well wrapped up in good market coats, with numerous capes, surveying with pride the workmanship of their hands, and the product of their summer's dairy; and there are the dealers busy amongst it with their cheese-tasters, tasting and chaffering, and buying, and sending off their purchases by wagons to the wharfs. It is incredible in what a little time those great heaps of cheese vanish from the stones, and nuts and onions in abundance.

The whole market-place is now one mass of moving people, and unintermitted din. Wombwell's Menagerie displays all its gigantic animals on its scenes; Holloway's "Travelling Company of Comedians" are dancing with harlequin and clown in front of their locomotive theatre; wonderful women, and children, and animals; wonderful machinery, panoramas, and prodigies are displayed on all sides in pictorial enormity, and the united sounds of Wombwell's fine band of musicians in their beef-eater costume, the band of Holloway, the smaller ones of other shows, and the bawlings, and invitings, and oratorical declamation of a dozen different showmen, with bellowing of gongs and clashing of cymbals, make up a sound enough to drive to distraction more swine than ran into the sea of Gennesaret, but which seems, notwithstanding, wonderfully delightful to ears grown weary of country quiet. It is curious to see the numbers pouring in and out of these places; to see the dense crowd of upturned faces collected before every show where there are antics playing, and clowns and fools talking nonsense for their entertainment. To hear the

hearty laughs which follow their standing jokes, is to feel how cheaply pleasure can be furnished to hungry spirits.

But the crowd of fair-goers walking round and round this annual Babel! During the morning, business is the chief engrossment; but from noon till eleven or twelve o'clock at night, pleasure is the pursuit. The farmers' daughters, who stood in their caped coats before their piles of cheese, are now metamorphosed into most extraordinary belles, and have found beaus as dashing as themselves. At all the stalls, purchases of gingerbread, sweetmeats, nuts and oranges, are going on; and through the bazaars —those modern additions to fairs, goes a perpetual stream of gay people, admiring the endless variety of things that are there displayed on either hand. Tea-caddies, workboxes of rosewood and pearl, china, cut-glass, drums and trumpets, and all kinds of toys; bracelets and necklaces, and all species of female trinkets; fans, and parlour bellows, figures in porcelain and painted wood; purses, musical boxes, and, in short, all the thousand contents of a bazaar.

This afternoon portion of the fair is called the gig-fair, because people come driving in their gigs to it; *i. e.* it is the pleasure-fair, where smart people from all quarters come to see, and to be seen. The second day of the fair, I believe, is the earliest on which *very genteel* people make their appearance, and then you may often see numbers of country families of good standing mingling in the moving mass of Vanity Fair. It is amusing enough to sit at a window, and look over all the stirring and motley scene. To see the eternal stream of smart dresses and fair faces go by. Round and round they move, in one dense throng, every one apparently driven forward by the weight of the coming crowd; and, taking into consideration

the press, the noise, the weariness of such thronged and continued walking, one is apt to wonder how any human beings can find pleasure in it. But that they do find pleasure, and an intense pleasure, their eager and multitudinous flocking thither sufficiently denote. They come out of a quietness that presents a little noise and dissipation as an agreeable contrast. They come to attractions adapted to their taste. The greater part of them are full of youth and expectation. There is no occasion on which so many country flames are struck up as at a fair. And in truth, you see numbers of fine healthy forms of both sexes in this crowd, and beautiful faces in numbers sufficient to make you feel with the poet:

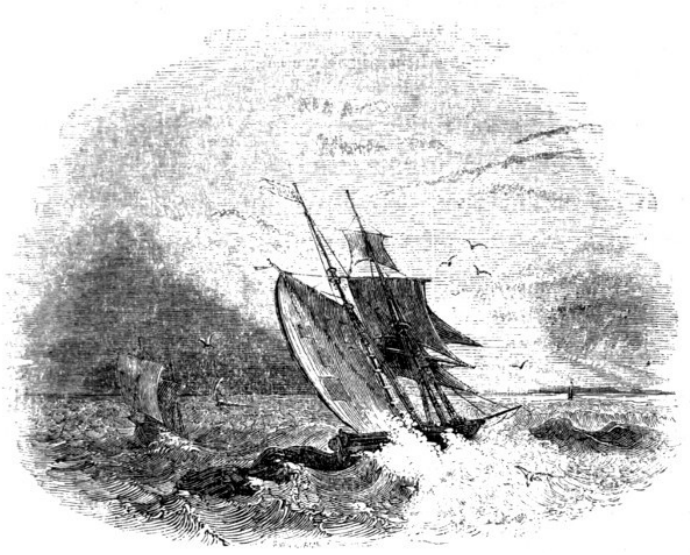
> The ancient spirit is not dead;
> Old times, thought I, are breathing there;
> Proud was I that my country bred
> Such strength, a dignity so fair.

It is a time, in fact, of universal country jollity, pleasure-taking, love-making, present-making, treating, and youthful entertainment, enjoyed to an extent that people of different tastes can form no conception of. Many an important connexion is dated from the fair; many a freak, a pleasure, a piece of wit and fun, are thence registered, and talked of at country firesides to the latest period of life; and these are all so much part and parcel of our common nature, that there must be a stony place in the heart which does not strongly sympathise with the actors and partakers of them. Joy, therefore, to all fair-goers! and with the growth of greater intelligence and taste, long may the healthy capacity of being lightly pleased retain its hold on the robust forms and sweet faces of English Rural Life.

I have often thought that we have artists who go all over the world in quest of novelties of scene,

costume, character, and grouping, many of whom, if they came to an English fair, with minds capable of entering into what they saw, might give us scenes and figures of more real interest than they often bring back after years of absence. The dancing-scene before Holloway's; the figures and coquetting of country belles and their lovers; and the picturesque simplicity of the old men gazing like children on some wonder-promising showman, and now full of consternation and amaze at some of them finding their purses clean vanished from their pockets, would form good subjects for the pencil.

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CHAPTER X.
THE RURAL WATERING-PLACE.

A great deal has been written about our fashionable watering-places, but there is another class of watering-places quite as amusing in their way, of which the public knows little or nothing. There are the rural watering-places, which are part and parcel of our subject, without which any picture of rural life would be incomplete; and which I shall here therefore take due notice of. These are the resort of what may be styled the burgher and agricultural part of our population. The farmer, the shopkeeper, the occupant of the clerk's desk, or the mercantile warehouse,—each and all of these feel the want of a periodical relaxation from business and care, and the want of that change of scene and circumstance, that may give a fresh feeling of both mental and physical renovation. These, as they stand wearily sweltering in the hot field, or bending over the everlasting counter, suddenly see in their mind's eye the flashing of the sea, and feel the breezes blow upon them like a new life. They resolve on the instant "to go to the salt-water" before the summer is over, and begin contriving when and how it shall be, and what wives and children, or old cronies, can go with them. The farmer sees that the only time for him will be in the interval between hay and corn harvest, and speedily he has inoculated some of his friends with the same desire. Many a jolly company is thus speedily made, and at the fixed time away they go, in gigs and tax-carts, or on scampering horses, with more life and spirit than most people return from more celebrated places. In Lancashire the better class of the operatives in the manufacturing districts, consider it as necessary "to go to the salt-water" in the summer, as to be clothed and fed all the rest of the year. From Preston, Blackburn, Bolton, Oldham, and all those great spinning and weaving towns, you see them

turning out by whole wagon and cart-loads, bound for Blackpool and such places; and they who have not seen the swarming loads of these men and women and children, their fast driving, and their obstreperous merriment, have not seen one of the most curious scenes of English life.

In one of those strolls through different parts of the country in which I have so often indulged myself, and in which I have always found so much enjoyment, from the varieties of scenery and character which they laid open to me, I once came upon a watering-place on the coast, that afforded me no small matter for a day or two's amusement. What could have been the cause of the setting up of such a place as a scene of pleasurable resort, it would be difficult to tell, except that it possessed a most bounteous provision of two great articles in demand in the autumnal months in cities—salt water and fresh air, for which a thousand inconveniences would be endured. It was situated quite on the flat coast of a flat country, a few miles from one of its sea-ports, yet near enough to obtain speedily thence all those good things which hungry mortals require—and who are so hungry as people bathing in sea water, and imbibing sea air, and taking three times their usual exercise without being distinctly aware of it?

Strolling along the coast, I found a good hotel, with all the usual marks of such an establishment about it. There were quantities of people loitering about the sands in front and in the garden, and other quantities looking out of windows with the sashes up; some of them, particularly the ladies, holding colloquies out of the windows of upper stories with some of the strollers below; post-chaises, and gigs, and shandray carts, standing here and there in the side scenes; a row of bathing-machines on the shore,

awaiting the hour of the tide; and a loud noise of voices from a neighbouring bowling-green. The odours of roasting and baking that came from the hotel, were of the most inviting description. I inclined to take up my abode there for a few hours at least, but on entering, I found that as to obtaining a room, or a tithe of a room, or even a chair at the table of the ordinary, it was quite out of the question. “Lord bless you, sir,” said the landlady, a woman of most surprising corporeal dimensions, in a white gown, an orange-coloured neckerchief, and a large and very rosy face, as she stood before the bar, filling the whole width of the passage; “Lord bless you, sir, if you’d give me a thousand golden guineas in a silken purse, I should not know where to put you. We’ve turned hundreds and hundreds of most genteel people away, that we have, within this very week, and the house is fit to burst now, it’s so hugeous full. But you’ll get accommodated at the town.” “What town?” said I; “is there a town near?” “Why, town we call it, but it’s the village, you know; it’s Fastside here, not more than a mile off; if you follow the bank along the shore, you’ll go straight to it. You can’t miss it.” Accordingly, following the raised embankment along the shore, I soon descried Fastside, a few scattered cottages, placed amongst their respective crofts and gardens, and here and there a farm-house, with its substantial array of ricks about it, denoting that the dwellers were well off in the world. But I soon found that all the cottages, and many of the farm-houses, had their boarders for the season, and that there was scarcely one but was full. I had the good luck to spy an equipage, and something like a departing group at the door of one of the cottages, and as it moved away, to find that I could have the use of two rooms, a parlour and

chamber over it, if I liked to go to the expense. “Perhaps,” said the neat cottage housewife, “as a single gentleman, you may not like to occupy so much room, for just at this season we charge rather high.” “And pray,” said I, “what may be the enormous price you are charging for these rooms, then?” “Seven shillings a-week each room, and half-a-crown for attendance,” looking at me with an inquiring eye, as if apprehensive that I should be astounded at the sum. “What! the vast charge of sixteen and sixpence per week,” I replied, smiling, “for two rooms and attendance?” “Yes,” said the simple dame; “but then, you see, you will have to live besides, and it all comes to a good deal. But may be you are a gentleman, that doesn’t mind a trifle.” Having assured her that there would, at all events, be no insurmountable obstacle in her terms, I entered and took possession of two as rustic and nicely clean rooms as could be found under such a humble roof. I had taken a fancy to spend a few days, or a week at least, there. It was a new scene, and peopled with new characters, that might be worth studying. The cottage stood in a thoroughly rural garden, full of peas, beans, and cabbages, with a little plot round the house, gay with marigolds, hollyhocks, and roses, and sweet with rosemary and lavender. The old dame’s husband was a shrimper, or fisher for shrimps, whom I soon came to see regularly tracing the edge of the tide with his old white horse and net hung behind him. She had, besides me, it seemed, another lodger, who, she assured me, “was a very nice young man indeed, but, poor young gentleman, he enjoyed but very indifferent health. Sometimes I think he’s been crossed in love, for I happened to cast my eye on one of his books—he reads a power of books—and there was a deal about love in it. It

was all in poetry, you see, and so on; and then again, I fancy he's consumptive, though I wouldn't like to say a word to him, lest it should cast him down, poor young man; but he reads too much, in my opinion, a great deal too much; he's never without a book in his hands when he's in doors; and that's not wholesome, you are sure, to be sitting so many hours in one posture, and with his eyes fixed in one place. But God knows best what's good for us all; and I often wonder whether he has a mother. I should be sorely uneasy on his account, if I were her." So the good dame ran on, while she cooked me a mutton chop and took an account of what tea and sugar and such things she must send for by the postman, who was their daily carrier to the town. I listened to her talk, and looked at the pot of balm of Gilead, and the red and white balsams standing in the cottage window, and the large sleek and well-fed tabby cat sleeping on the cushion of the old man's chair, and was sure that I was in good hands, and grew quite fond of my quarters. Before the day was over, I became acquainted with the old shrimper, who came in after his journey to the next town with his shrimps, and who was as picturesque an old fellow as you would wish to see, and full of character and anecdotes of the wrecks and sea accidents on that coast for forty years past. I had been informed all about who were the neighbours inhabiting the other cottages and farms, and had a good inkling of their different characters too. I had walked out to the bank when the tide was up, and round the garden, and actually got into conversation with "the poor young man," my fellow lodger.

The next morning I was up early, and out to reconnoitre the place and neighbourhood; and this young man having found out that I was also addicted

to the unwholesome practice of reading books, took at once a great fancy to me, and went with me as guide and cicerone. I found that all the mystery about him was, that he was a youth articled to an attorney in great practice, and had stooped over the desk a little too much, but was soon likely to be as strong and sound as ever, being neither consumptive nor *crossed* in love, although in love he certainly was. A more simple-hearted, good-natured fellow, it was impossible could exist. He had the most profound admiration of all poets and philosophers, and read Goldsmith, Shenstone, and Addison, with a relish that one would give a good deal for. As for Sir Walter Scott, and Lord Byron, and Tom Moore, he knew half of their voluminous poetical works by heart; mention any fine passage, and he immediately spouted you the whole of it; and as for the Waverley Novels, he had evidently devoured them entire, and was full of their wonders and characters. Yet, thus fond of poetry and romance, it was not the less true that he had a fancy for mathematics, and played on the fiddle and the flute into the bargain. Nor was this all the extent of his tastes, he had quite a *penchant* for natural history; had he time, he declared he would study botany, ornithology, geology, and conchology too; and yet, although such a book-worm himself, he seemed to enjoy the company of the other visiters there who never read at all. There was a whole troop that he made acquaintance with, and whose characters he sketched to me, particularly those of a merry set who lodged at a cottage opposite, where he often went to amuse them with his fiddle. As my business was to see what were the characters and the amusements of such a place, I desired him to introduce me to them, but in the first place to let us run a little over the country.

The country was rich and flat, divided into great meadows full of luxuriant grass, grazed by herds of fine cattle, and surrounded by noble trees, which served to break up the monotony of the landscape. Here and there you saw the tall, square, substantial tower of a village church peeping over its surrounding screen of noble elms. We were accustomed to stroll into these churchyards, admiring the singularly large and excellent churches, all of solid stone; the spacious graveyard and the large heavy headstones, adorned with carved skulls and cross-bones; and gilded angels with long trumpets figured above the simple epitaphs of the departed villagers. The farm-houses, too, surrounded also with tall elms, and with a great air of wealth and comfort, drew our attention. As we approached nearer to the sea, the country was more destitute of wood; consisted of very large fields of corn, then beginning to change into the rich hues of ripeness; fields also of woad, a plant used in dyeing, and there extensively cultivated; and these fields intersected no longer by hedges, but by deep wide ditches called dykes, in which grew plenty of reeds, water-flags, a tall and splendid species of marsh ranunculus (*R. lingua*) and yellow and white water-lilies. As we drew near to the village, if village such scattered dwellings could be called, we were struck with the peculiar aspect of the dry lanes, and the plants which grew there, so different to those of an inland neighbourhood. They were exactly such as Crabbe has described them in such a situation:—

> There, fed by food they love, to rankest size,
> Around the dwelling docks and wormwood rise;
> Here the strong mallow strikes her slimy root;
> Here the dull nightshade hangs her deadly fruit;

On hills of dust the henbane's faded green,
And pencilled flower of sickly scent is seen;
At the wall's base the fiery nettle springs,
With fruit globose and fierce with poisoned stings.
Above, the growth of many a year, is spread
The yellow level of the stonecrop's bed;
In every chink delights the fern to grow,
With glossy leaf and tawny bloom below.

The great embankment secured all this from the invasion of the sea, and, winding along the flat sands, formed a delightful walk when the tide was roaring up against it. Here also the male portion of the visiters came to bathe; and, when the tide was up, nothing could be more delicious. They could undress on the sunny sward of the mound at whatever distance from the others they pleased, for there were many miles of the bank; and the waves dashing gently against the grassy slope, received them on a secure and smooth sand, at a depth sufficient to allow them either to wade or swim. They generally, however, undressed near enough to swim or wade in company, and to splash one another and play all manner of practical jokes.

When the tide was out, from this bank you had a view of a great extent of level sands, monotonous enough in themselves, but animated by the view of vessels in full sail passing along the Channel to or from the neighbouring port, and by the flight and cries of the sea-birds. Along these sands we ranged every day to a great distance, collecting shells, leaping the narrow channels of salt water left in the hollows, shooting gulls, watching the shrimps that were floating in the tide, and amusing ourselves with the crabs, which, left in the holes in the strand, were running sideways here and there in great trepidation, yet never so much alarmed as not to be ready to

seize and devour those of their own species that were less in personal bulk and prowess than themselves. Then, again, we found a good deal of employment in botanising amongst the patches of sea-wilderness, which were not so often submersed by the tide as to destroy the vegetation altogether, or to produce only fucus and other sea-weeds. The rest-harrow, the eringo with its cerulean leaves, the stag's horn plantain, the glasswort or common (not the true) samphire—these and many others had all an interest for us. In one place we found the sea-convolvulus blowing in its rich and prodigal beauty on the sands; and then we came to wild hills of sand thrown up by the billows of ages, a whole region of desolation, overgrown with the sea-wheat, and the tall yellow stems and umbels of the wild celery.

Such was the scenery; the people of the cottages were generally fishermen, with their families; and the visiters, farmers and persons of that class, often with their families. At the house opposite us, as I have said, was the merriest crew. My friend the young lawyer was in the habit of running in and out amongst them as he pleased. He proposed that we should go and dine with them, as they had a sort of ordinary table, where you could dine at a fixed and very moderate charge, as all charges indeed were there. Here we found about a dozen people. One, who appeared and proved an old gentleman-farmer, a Mr. Milly, always took the head of the table; and a merrier mortal could not have been there, except he who occupied the other end, a fellow of infinite jest, like Sir John Falstaff, and to the full as corpulent. Who and what he was, I know not, save that he was a most fat and merry fellow, and went by the name of Sir John between the young lawyer, whom I shall call Wilson, and myself. This joyous old gentleman

had his wife and son and daughter with him. The son was a young man as fond of a practical joke as his father was of a verbal one; nay, he was not short of a verbal one too, on occasions. He was of a remarkably dark-brown complexion, and on some one asking him how he came to be so dark, when the rest of his family were fair, he at once replied, “Oh, can’t you fancy how that was? It happened when I was a child in the cradle. I got turned on my face, and had like to have been smothered. I got so black in the face, I have never recovered my colour again. My mother can tell you all about it—can’t you mother?” At this repartee, all the company laughed heartily, and truly it was a company that could laugh heartily. They had merry hearts. Then there was a good worthy farmer of the real old school. I was near saying that John Farn was old, but, in fact, he was not more than five-and-thirty, but his gravity gave him an appearance of something like age. He was dressed in a suit of drab, with an ample coat of the good old farmerly cut, and jack-boots like a trooper. But John Farn had a deal of sober sound sense, and a mind that, had it been called out, would have been found noble. I became very fond of John. The rest were young farmers and tradesmen, full of youth and life. They had brought their horses with them, and some of them gigs, and were fond of all mounting and scouring away on the shore for miles together.

The great business, indeed, was to bathe, and eat and drink, and ride or walk, and play at quoits or bowls. If the tide was up early in the morning, all would be up and out, and have their dip before breakfast. Then they would come back hungry as hunters, and devour their coffee, beef, and broiled ham, and shrimps fresh from the cauldron, and then out, some to ride round to have a look at the

neighbouring farms, or on the shore to see the fishing smacks go out or come in. Others got to quoits or bowls till dinner; and after a hearty meal and a good long chat, they would slowly saunter up to the hotel, and see what company was there, and take a glass and a pipe with some of them, and see the newspaper, and perhaps have a game at bowls there, and then back to tea; after which they grew very social, and called on the other boarders at the cottages near, and strolled out with the ladies to the bank, which was not far off; and so wiled the time away till supper. Four meals a-day did they regularly sit down to, and enjoy themselves as much as if they had not eaten for a day or two, praising all the time the wonderful property of sea-air for getting an appetite. As sure as shrimps appeared at breakfast, did soles at supper; and after supper one drew out his bottle of wine, and another got his brandy and water, and all grew merry. Those that liked it took a pipe, and it annoyed nobody. There was plenty of joking and laughter, that it would have done the most fastidious good to hear, and as much wit, and perhaps a good deal more, than where there does not exist the same freedom. More jovial evenings I never saw. Wilson gave them a tune on his flute, or took his fiddle; they cleared the floor of the largest room, invited some of the neighbouring visiters who had wives or daughters with them, and had a dance. On such evenings Sir John Falstaff sat in the large bay-window of the apartment for coolness, and wiped his brow and sang his merriest songs. His songs were all merry, and he had a host of them: it was a wonder where he had picked them up. His son often joined him, sometimes his wife and daughter too. It was a merry family. Surely never could care have found a way into their house. Not even the young man’s

brown complexion could give him a care; it only furnished him with a joke, and made laughter contagious. Never could the old man have been so fat, had care been able to lay hold on him. The whole of that huge bulk was a mass of rejoicing. How his eyes did shine and twinkle with delight as he sang! what silent laughter played around his mouth, and stole over his ruddy cheeks, like gleams of pleasantest lightning of a summer's night, as he lifted his glass to his head, and listened to some one else! But, alas! all his mirth was well-nigh closed one day. He was tempted by the fineness of the weather into the tide, contrary to his wont, and his doctor's order. Some one suddenly missed him; all looked round: at a distance something like a buoy was seen floating; it was Sir John; his fat floated; his head had gone down like a stone; they just pulled him up time enough to save him, but he was blacker in the face than ever his son had been in the cradle, and got a fright that spoiled all his mirth for some days.

But there was a ball at the hotel, and every body was off to it; all except Wilson, who was not well, and myself, who stayed to keep him company. Even grave John Farn, in his drab suit and jackboots, would go. Who would have thought that there was such a taste for pleasure in John Farn? John Farn was very fond of hearing Wilson and myself talk of books. He would come to our cottage, and sit and listen for hours to our conversation, or take up some of our books himself, and read. I perceived that there was an appetite for knowledge in him that had never been called out, because it had had nothing to feed on; but it was clear that it would soon, if it was in the way of aliment and excitement, become fearfully voracious. When he found the name of Dryden in a volume, he declared that he was born in the same

parish. He put the book into his pocket, and was missed all that day. Somebody, by chance, saw him issue out of a great reed bed towards evening; he had read the volume through, and declared that he should think ten times better of his parish now for having produced such a man. Who would have thought that John Farn, the Northamptonshire farmer and grazier, and who had lived all his life amongst bullocks, and whose whole talk was of them, would have fastened thus suddenly on a volume of Dryden's poems? But John used to accompany Wilson and myself, botanising along the shore and the inland dykes; and it was curious to see with what a grave enthusiasm he would climb in his great jack-boots over the roughest fences; how he would leap across those wide dykes; how he would splash through the salt-water pools and streams to tear up a flower or a sea-weed that he wanted; and with what an earnest eye he would look and listen as we mentioned its name, and pointed out its class in the volume, or related its uses! There was an undiscovered world, and a great one, in the soul of that John Farn.

The more I saw of that man, the more I liked him. The stores of yet unstirred life, both of intellect and feeling in his frame, became every day more strongly apparent. He would sit with us on the sea-bank for hours watching the tide come up, or watching its play and the play of light and shadow over it when at flood, and drink down greedily all that was said of this or other countries, all that had in it knowledge of any kind. His whole body seemed full of the joyous excitement of a youth that in years should have passed over him, but was yet unspent, and was now only found. He rose up one day and said, "Let us hire a ship, and sail out to some other country." At

the moment we laughed at the idea, but John Farn persisted with the utmost gravity in his proposal, and eventually we did hire a smack and sailed across to Norfolk. We visited Lynn; walked over the grounds of the school where Eugene Aram was an usher when he was taken for the murder; and nothing but the threatening of the weather would have prevented us crossing over to the Continent. As it was, it was delightful to see the childlike enjoyment with which that grave man saw the breezy expanse of ocean, the fiery colour of its waters as the vessel cut through them in the night, the seals that lay on a mid-sea rock as we sailed along, and the birds of ocean screaming and plunging in its billows.

There was a legion of things in the bosom of John Farn that he knew nothing of all the years that he had been buying and selling cattle, but were now all bursting to the light with a startling vigour. I wonder whether they have since troubled him, like blind giants groping their way to the face of heaven, or whether, amid his cattle and his quiet fields, they have collapsed again into dim and unconscious dreams; but the last action which I witnessed in him, made me sure that his moral feeling was as noble as I suspected his intellectual strength to be great.

There was a robbery at Uriah Sparey's. Money and other articles were missed from the packages of the guests. The suspicion fell on a servant girl. Great was the stir, the inquiry, and the indignation. Mrs. Uriah Sparey was vehement in her wrath. She insisted that the affair should not be talked of lest it should bring discredit on her house; but to satisfy her guests, she would turn the girl out of it that instant. The girl with tears protested her innocence, but in vain. When she came to open her own box, she declared that she was robbed too. Her wages, and the money

given her by visiters, were all gone. Mrs. Sparey exclaimed, that “never did she see such an instance of guilty art as this! The girl to remove from herself the charge of theft, to pretend that she herself was robbed!”

If the girl was guilty, she most admirably affected innocence; if she was of a thievish nature, never did nature so defend vice under the fair shield of virtuous lineaments. All saw and felt this; all had been much pleased with the appearance and behaviour of the girl. Her vows of innocence were now most natural; her tears fell with all the hot vehemence of wronged truth; she earnestly implored that every search and every inquiry should be made, that she might at least regain her character; her money she cared little for. But Mrs. Uriah Sparey only exclaimed, “Minx! get out of my house! I see what you want; you want to fix the theft upon me!” All started at that singular exclamation, and fixed their eyes on Mrs. Sparey; she coloured; but no one spoke. The girl stood weeping by the door. Then said John Earn, “Go home, my girl, go home, and let thy father and mother see into the matter for thee.” At these words, the girl, whose tears were before flowing fast but freely, burst into a sudden paroxysm of sobs and cries, and wrung her hands in agony. “What is the matter?” asked John Farn; “has the poor girl no parents?” “Yes, yes!” she exclaimed, suddenly looking at him, and the tears stopping as if choked in their bed; “but how can I go to them with the name of a thief?” The colour passed from her face, and she laid hold on a chair to save herself from falling. “Mary!” said John Farn, “I will not say who *is* the thief; but this I say, I will hire thee for a year and a day, and there is a guinea for earnest, and another to pay thy coach fare down. Be at my house in a

fortnight, and till then go and see thy mother. Let them call thee thief that dare!" With that he rose up, gave Mary his address, paid his bill to Mrs. Sparey, and marched out of the house with his little round portmanteau under his arm. We all hurried out after him, gave him by turns a hearty rattling shake of the hand as he was about to mount his horse; and that was the last I saw of John Farn. I know no more of him, yet would I, at a venture, rather take the heart of that man, though compelled to take the long drab coat and the jack-boots with it, than that of many a lord with his robes of state, and all his lands and tenements besides.

Such were a few days and their real incidents passed by me at a Rural Watering-place some years ago.

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CHAPTER XI.

SPORTS AND PASTIMES OF THE PEOPLE. HISTORY OF THEIR CHANGES, AND PRESENT STATE.

A mighty revolution has taken place in the sports and pastimes of the common people. They, indeed, furnish a certain indication of the real character of a people, and change with the changing spirit of a state. A mighty revolution has taken place in this respect, within the last thirty years, in England, and that entirely produced by the change of feeling, and advance of character. But if we look back through the whole course of English history, we shall find the sports and pastimes of the people taking their form and character from the predominant spirit of the age; in a great measure copied from the amusements and practices of their superiors, and always influenced by them. While the feudal constitution of society prevailed, and chivalry was in vogue, the sports of the common people had a certain chivalric character. They saw jousts and tourneys and feats of archery, and they jousted and tilted, and shot at butts. Tilting at the quintain was, in all the chivalric ages, a popular game. It was a Roman pastime, instituted for military practice, and continued for the same object by the feudal nations; and was adopted by the common people as a favourite game, because both the laws of chivalry and their slender finances prevented them taking part in jousts and tourneys. In Strutt may be found descriptions and quaint illustrative engravings of the various kinds of this game. “The Quintain,” says Strutt, quoting from Vegetius, *de re militari*, Menestrier and others, “originally, was nothing more than the trunk of a tree, or post set up for the practice of the tyroes in chivalry. Afterwards a staff or spear was fixed in the

earth, and a shield being hung upon it, was the mark to strike at; the dexterity of the performance consisted in striking the shield in such a manner as to break the ligatures and bear it to the ground. In process of time this diversion was improved, and instead of the staff and the shield, the resemblance of a human figure, carved in wood, was introduced. To render the appearance of this figure more formidable, it was generally made in the likeness of a Turk, or a Saracen, armed at all points, having a shield upon his left arm, and brandishing a club or a sabre in his right. Hence this exercise was called by the Italians—'running at the armed man, or at the Saracen.' The quintain thus fashioned, was placed upon a pivot, and so contrived as to move round with facility. In running at this figure, it was necessary for the tilter to direct his lance with great adroitness, and make his stroke upon the forehead, between the eyes, or upon the nose; for if he struck wide of those parts, especially upon the shield, the quintain turned about with much velocity, and in case he was not exceedingly careful, would give him a severe blow upon the back with the wooden sabre held in the right hand, which was considered as highly disgraceful to the performer, while it excited the laughter and ridicule of the spectators. When many were engaged in running at the Saracen, the conqueror was declared from the number of strokes he had made, and the value of them. For instance, if he struck the image upon the top of the nose between the eyes, it was reckoned for three; if below the eyes upon the nose, for two; if under the nose to the point of the chin, for one; all other strokes were not counted: but, whoever struck upon the shield, and turned the quintain round, was not permitted to run again upon the same day, but forfeited his

courses as a punishment for his unskilfulness." Brande, in his Popular Antiquities, tells us that the Saracen was often armed with a bag of sand instead of a sabre, which came upon the back of the unlucky tilter with such violence as to fling him to the earth with no enviable shock. Various were the quintains, according to the age in which they were used, or the means of the players. In some cases the quintain was merely a common stake with a board fastened to it; in others, it was a post with a cross-bar moving on a pivot, something like a turnstile, with the sand-bag at one end of the bar, and the board, or shield, at the other. In others, it was a water-butt set upon a post, so as to throw its contents over the tilter if he struck it unskilfully. In others, it was a living person holding a shield. There was also the water-quintain. "A pole or a mast," says Fitzstephen, "is fixed in the midst of the Thames, during the Easter holidays, with a strong shield attached to it; and a boat being previously placed at some distance, is driven swiftly towards it by the force of oars, and the violence of the tide, having a young man standing at the prow, who holds a lance in his hand, with which he is to strike the shield; and if he be dexterous enough to break the lance against it, and retain his place, his most sanguine wishes are satisfied. On the contrary, if the lance be not broken, he is sure to be thrown into the water, and the vessel goes away without him; but, at the same time, two other boats are stationed near to the shield, and furnished with many young persons, who are in readiness to rescue the champion from danger." It appears to have been a very popular pastime, for the bridge, the wharfs, and the houses near the river, were crowded with people on this occasion, who came, says the author, to see the sports, and make themselves merry.

Running at the quintain continued to be a favourite game till Queen Elizabeth's time; and was universal throughout the country. Plott, in his History of Oxfordshire, mentions it, and Laneham describes a curious instance of it exhibited at Kenilworth during the entertainment given by the Earl of Leicester to Queen Elizabeth. "There was," he says, "a solemn country bridal; when in the castle was set up a quintain for feats of arms, where, in a great company of men and lasses, the bridegroom had the first course at the quintain, and broke his spear *très hardiment*. But his mare in his manage did a little stumble, that much-adoe had his manhood to sit in his saddle. But after the bridegroom had made his course, rose the rest of the band, awhile in some order; but soon after tag and rag, cut and long tail; where the specialty of the sport was to see how some for his slackness had a good bob with the bag, and some for his haste to topple downright, and come tumbling to the post. Some striving so much at the first setting out that it seemed a question between man and beast whether the race should be performed on horseback or on foot; and some put forth with spurs, would run his race byas, among the thickness of the throng, that down they came together, hand over head. Another, while he directed his course to the quintain, his judgment would carry him to a man among the people; another would run and miss the quintain with his staff, and hit the board with his hand."

Boys imitated this game on their own scale, drawing one another on wooden horses to the quintain, or running at it on foot; and various other rustic exercises were derived from it. Of archery we need not speak, every one knowing how universal it was during the feudal ages; and quarter-staff, quoits,

flinging the hammer, pitching the bar, and similar games were the offspring of the same state of society. Playing at ball and at bowls were very ancient and kingly sports, and became general amongst the people. They were ancient classical games, and no doubt were introduced by the Romans into this country. They are mentioned both in the oldest metrical romances, and the oldest of our popular ballads. Tennis courts were common in England in the sixteenth century, and the establishment of such places countenanced by the monarchs. Henry VIII. was a tennis player. Fives courts, and places for the practice of a variety of ball-games,—hand-ball, balloon-ball, stool-ball, principally played at by women; hurling, foot-ball, golf, bandy, stow-ball, pall-mall, club-ball, trap-ball, tip-ball, and that which is now become the prince of English ball-games, cricket.

Another circumstance in the feudal ages, which contributed to promote these and other games, was, that towns were few. The majority of the common people, living in the country; in forests and fields; watching the game, or cultivating the lands, or tending the herds and flocks of their lords, on open downs and wastes, naturally congregated with greater zest in villages after the day's tasks were over, and entered into amusements with the lightheartedness of children; for they were as ignorant of all other cares, of book-learning, and what was going on in the world at a distance, as children. Hence their social pleasures were of an Arcadian stamp—they danced, they leaped, they wrestled, they kicked the foot-ball, or flung the hand-ball, the quoit, or the bar.

But another circumstance which tended to fashion their amusements was that the feudal ages were also

the ages of the Catholic church; a church which delighted to amuse the imaginations of the people with shows, pageants, miracle-plays, and mysteries. The church festivals were all scenes of holiday, feasting, and wonderment. Processions, and representations of the acts and persons of their religious faith, kept them fixed in admiration and insatiable delight. The churches were the first and only theatres. In them all scripture subjects, personages, doctrines, and even opinions were represented, and brought palpably before the wondering people, in mysteries, moralities, and miracle-plays. Things which now would justly be deemed the most revolting blasphemies and desecrations of holy things, were then gravely brought out by the church, for the entertainment and edification of the people. I have already shewn something of this in speaking of the religious festivals, as celebrated in Catholic countries, but we can only see these things in their full growth, by looking back into the middle ages. The theatrical exhibitions of London in the twelfth century were of this kind; representations of the miracles wrought by confessors, and the sufferings of holy martyrs. But these did not suffice. These ecclesiastical actors penetrated into the Holy of Holies, and dared to represent the sacred Trinity before the eyes of the mob. In the mystery called Corpus-Christi, or Coventry-Play, being played in a moveable theatre, by the mendicant friars of Coventry, the Deity himself is represented seated on his throne, delivering a speech commencing thus:

> Ego sum de Alpha et Omega, principium et finis.
> My name is knowyn God and Kynge,
> My worke for to make now wyl I wende,
> In myself now resteth my reyninge,

It hath no gynnyng, ne noe ende.

The angels then enter, singing from the church service, “To Thee all angels cry aloud, the heavens and all the powers therein; to Thee the cherubim and seraphim continually do cry, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts.” Lucifer next makes his appearance, and desires to know if the hymn they sang was in honour of God or of himself? The good angels readily reply, in honour of God; the evil angels incline to worship Lucifer, and he presumes to seat himself on the throne of the Deity, who then banishes him into hell.

In the mysteries, the Devil and his angels seem to have been the principal comic actors; and by all kind of noises, strange gestures, and contortions, excited the laughter of the people. At many of these plays the kings and their courts, all the nobility and gentry of the time, as well as the people, would sit with the highest delight, nine hours a day, for six and eight days together. Nay, at the moralities, which were not representations of facts, but moral reasonings and dialogues, carried on by Virtues, Vices, Good Doctrine, Charity, Faith, Prudence, Discretion, Death, and the like, they would sit equally long. The Scotch were as persevering in these amusements as our own ancestors. They are represented as sitting “frae nine houris afoir none till six houris at evin,” at the representation of Sir David Lindsay’s “Satyr of the Three Estates,” and in 1535, in the reign of the accomplished James IV. Here, however, Sir David, the Chaucer of Scotland, had turned the weapons of the church against itself, and through its favourite medium, the drama, uttered the most caustic satire against it from the mouths of Rex Humanitas, Wantonness, Solace, Placebo, Sensualitie, Homeliness, Flattery, Falsehood, Deceit, Chastity,

Divine Correction, etc. etc.

Besides the church too, during the feudal times, there were the festivities kept up in the castles and halls at Christmas, Easter, birthdays, and other great days, on which all kinds of pageants, mimings, masks, and frolics, were shewn to their followers and dependents, by the great feudal lords; and their minstrels, mimes, and jesters were made to exert their arts for their gratification. Wandering minstrels and jongleurs went from house to house, and from village to village, following their profession of entertainers of the people. All these things combined to fashion the popular taste, and the popular amusements, and all at the Reformation received their death-blow. It was not, indeed, an instant death, but it was a slow and certain one; for though the reigns of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth seemed to carry pageants and tourneys to their climax, the living principle of them was dying out. The Catholic church, the great mother of all festivals and mysteries, was overturned, and in the dispersion of its property the rise of new classes and a new state of things originated; and so far had these causes taken effect in the reign of James I., that he made public proclamation in 1618, that "Whereas, we did justly, in our progress through Lancashire, rebuke some Puritans and precise people, in prohibiting and unlawfully punishing of our good people for using their lawful recreations and honest exercises on Sundays and other holidays after the afternoon service, it is our will that, at the end of Divine service, our good people be not disturbed, letted, or discouraged, from any lawful recreation, such as dancing, either for men or women; archery for men, leaping, vaulting, or any other harmless recreation; nor for having of May-games, Whitsun-ales, and

Morris-dances, and the setting up of May-poles, and other sports therewith used."

But the day was gone by. A new spirit was arisen, and was destined soon to shew itself with overwhelming power. The days of Cromwell and the Puritans were coming, when all these things were to be denounced as popish and heathenish. The spirit and language at that time becoming universally such as that displayed by Thomas Hall, B.D., Pastor of King's-Norton, in his Funebria Floræ, or the Downfall of May-games in 1660, in which he says, "The city of Rome, in the county of Babylon, has contrary to the peace of our lord, his crown and dignity, brought in a pack of practical fanatics, viz.: ignorants, atheists, papists, drunkards, swearers, swashbucklers, maid-marians, morris-dancers, maskes, mummers, May-pole stealers, health-drinkers, gamesters, lewd men, light women, contemners of magistrates, affronters of ministers, rebellious to masters, disobedient to parents, misspenders of time, and abusers of the creature, etc."

This republican Puritanism, in its genuine style, was now again about to cease, but the effects of it could never be obliterated by subsequent kings. Compare the popular amusements as enumerated by Burton in his "Anatomie of Melancholie," a short time before the Commonwealth, with those which remained thirty years ago,—the period when they expired nearly altogether, and gave way to a new era. "Cards, dice, hawks, and hounds," he says, "are the recreations of the gentry; ringing, bowling, shooting, playing with keel-pins, tronks, coits, foot-balls, balowns, running at the quintain, and the like, are the common recreations of country folk. Riding of great horses, running of rings, tilts and tournaments, horse-races and wild-goose chases, are

desports of greater men. The country hath its recreations of May-games, feasts, fairs and wakes; both town and country, bull-baitings and bear-baitings, in which the countrymen and citizens greatly delight; dancing of ropes, jugglings, comedies, tragedies, artillery-gardens, and cock-fightings, Whitsun-ales, maskes, jesters, gladiators, and tumblers."

Thirty years ago, tilts and tournaments had gone after their parent chivalry; archery had fallen before gunpowder; Whitsun-ales had followed many another ecclesiastical merriment; comedies and tragedies had set up their own secular houses apart from the church; and scarcely any of the other amusements were left but bull-baiting, bear-baiting, cock-fighting, and similar barbarities. The public mind had become vulgarized and brutalized. The spirit of chivalry, with its pageants and knightly feats, had diffused some sense of grace and graceful emulation amongst the people; the church, amid all its ludicrous shows and absurdities, had conveyed some moral principles; the wandering minstrels had in their lays and ballads excited some feelings of honour, and many a feeling of true nature and homely poetry: but all these sources of inspiration, feeble and mingled with evil as they were, were dried up, and during the long wars of the Hanoverian dynasty the common people seem to have been neglected as rational and immortal beings, and cultivated and educated only as the instruments and the food of war. Accordingly, the minstrels had dwindled into ballad-singers, the jongleurs into jugglers and mountebanks; the Arcadian amusements of the country—May-games, dances on the green, wrestling and leaping, were nearly extinct; and there remained the very characteristic sports of bull-

baiting, bear-baiting, badger-baiting, dog-fighting, cock-fighting, and throwing at cocks on Shrove-Tuesday. Bear and bull baitings were games that our queens Elizabeth and Anne had both delighted in, but the more elegant pastimes of those queens and their subjects had fallen into disuetude, the savage and brutal alone remaining. This was natural enough. From the days of Marlborough to those of Wellington, the common people had been bred for the battle-field,—the food of the great European Moloch of war; and the bloody spirit which casts out all the fairer spirits of grace and gaiety, had been purposely and avowedly cherished, as the true English spirit. Who that remembers these times, does not recollect the famous speeches of Wyndham and his colleagues in favour of these brutal sports? Who forgets their prognostics that if this spirit was destroyed, there was an end of our martial ascendency? But the point of time had arrived beyond which this spirit could not endure. The brutal and vulgarized condition of the people flashed on the perception of the middle classes, which amid all the noise of war had been progressing in intelligence and refinement. Robert Raikes and Sunday-schools arose. A better spirit, a better sense of our duties and responsibilities towards the people awoke. It was seen that all over the country the more laudable sports of the village green, and the village wakes, as quoits, nine-pins, skittles, wrestling, leaping, cricket, and the other ball games; will-pegs, jumping in sacks, and other athletic amusements, had lost much of their relish, and were abandoned for the bloody spectacles of the bull-ring and the cock-pit. Attempts were made to counteract this spirit; Parliament was petitioned on the subject, and after the repulse given to these attempts by the senators I have alluded to,

nothing was so common as to see the bulls led through the villages adorned with ribbons, and bearing on their necks large placards of —"SANCTIONED BY WYNDHAM AND PARLIAMENT!"

I have before me now a curious specimen of the effect of such doctrines on the minds of those even who are, by national authority, the public teachers of the country, in a little volume published in 1819, by a clergyman of the name of Chafin—"An Account of Cranbourn Chase." He says, "cockfighting also, in the last century was a favourite diversion, greatly delighted in by persons of all ranks; and there was a nobleman, Lord Albemarle Bertie, who was so fond of the amusement, that he attended cock-pits when he was totally blind. And there were but few gentlemen in the country, who did not keep and breed game cocks, and were very anxious and careful in the breeding of them. Frequent matches were made, and there were cock-pits in almost every village, the remains of which are still visible. To this amusement also Cranbourn Chase contributed, for the cocks bred in it were superior to others, both in shape and make, and, as the feeders name it, handled better when brought to their pens; insomuch that Lord Weymouth, of Longleat, an ancestor of the present Marquis of Bath, for many years had a cock at walk at every lodge in the chase, and the keepers were well rewarded for taking care of them; and when they were brought chickens from Longleat, annually, each game cock was accompanied with two dunghill hens, which became the perquisite of the keeper when the cock was taken away. But *in our days of refinement*, this amusement of cock-fighting hath been exploded, and, in a great measure, abandoned, *being deemed to be barbarous and cruel*; but in this *respect the writer thinks differently, and*

believes it to be the least so of any diversions now in vogue, and nothing equal as to cruelty, to horse-racing, in which poor animals are involuntarily forced against their nature to performances against their strength, with whips and spurs, which, in jockey phrase, is styled *cutting up*. But in fighting of cocks *the case is totally different*; for, instead of a force against nature, it is an indulgence of natural propensities; for cocks at their walks, and at full liberty, will seek each other for battle as far as they can hear each other's crowing; and *the arming them with artificial weapons*, when they are brought in the pit to fight, is *the very reverse of cruelty*, for the contest is sooner ended, and sufferings trifling, in comparison to what they would have been had they fought with their own natural weapons, *by lacerating their bodies, and bruising each other in every tender part*."

Now, to feel the full force of the Rev. William Chafin's notion of a game that is the least cruel of any diversions now in vogue, it is necessary to consider that these cocks are stimulated to contest by heating food and artificial contrivances, such as keeping them within the sight or crow of their rivals; that they are then clipped almost bare of feathers; the feathers are clipped off their stomachs; their heads cut clean of their wattles; their wings and tails cut short and square; that they are, in fact, metamorphosed from the most gallant-looking of birds into the most bare, comical, quaint, and strutting objects in nature, I was going to say; but they are put out of all nature, and are, lastly, armed with steel or silver spurs of an inch long, sharp as needles. With these they kick and pierce each other, "lacerating their bodies, and bruising each other in every tender part;" fighting till their heads are all

one mass of gore; till they are often stark blind, and go staggering about like drunken men, till one has the luck to strike the other clean through the head with his artificial spur. This is a game which a clergyman, a teacher of Christianity, could by custom come to think "the least cruel of all the diversions now in vogue." It is impossible to produce more striking evidence of the effect of a familiarity with cruelty. It is just by the same process that men come to approve of war and slavery. God be praised that all these bloody sports are gone for ever from the soil of England. That bull, bear, and badger baiting, have all, after many a hard contest, been eventually put down; that for some years, so much has the mind of the common people been raised and softened, there have scarcely been any cock-fighters, except *noblemen* and *gentlemen*, whose cock-pits have been the nuisances of their neighbourhoods, and their game-cock caravans, travelling from place to place with these cocks, have offended the public eye. It is a satisfaction to record that in the year 1835, even this brutal game was made illegal by Act of Parliament, and that through the exertions of Joseph Pease, the only member of Parliament who is a member of the Society of Friends.

Since these atrocities have been exploded, their place has not been supplied by an equal number of more commendable amusements. The people of large towns, in particular, have not substituted a sufficient equivalent. Politics and alehouses seem, till lately, to have furnished their sole stimulants. There appears to have been a pause in that important portion of human life, amusement, so far as the common people are concerned; but it has been in appearance only. One of the greatest changes that ever took place in human society, has been in this interval maturing;—

the change from the last stage of worn-out feudalism to the commencement of the era of social regeneration;—a change from a system in which the largest portion of mankind was regarded but as the instruments of the luxury and revenge of the wealthy few,—to one in which every part of the human family will be recognised as possessing the same nature, and worthy of enjoying the same domestic and intellectual blessings;—a change, in fact, from Gentilism to Christianity; from the condition in which the great of the earth lorded it over the poor, to that in which the common sympathies of our nature will be honoured and obeyed; and a career of intelligence, benevolence, and mutual good-will and good works will begin, to end in a prosperity beyond our present imagination. And already what symptoms of this better state of things break upon us! What schools, and Mechanics' Libraries and Institutes; what Friendly Societies, and plans on the part of the wealthy for the benefit of the poor. For amusements there has been no time. All workers, both in town and country, have been compelled to plod on solemnly and half-despairingly from day to day, and from year to year. But pleasures of a higher order, and more akin to genuine happiness,—social pleasures and pleasures of the intellect, will open upon and grow upon our more numerous brethren of the operative class. They will find pleasures in books —boundless, unimagined, inexhaustible, inexpressible pleasures;—pleasures in their wives and children, pleasures in their firesides, and in the glorious face of nature, which have hitherto been unknown to their eyes and hearts, sealed up in the frost of ignorance and the contempt of the proud. And already we see the commencement of that new order of pastimes which will assuredly result from

this new order of mind. In the country, indeed, you find with pleasure occasionally, in some old-fashioned hamlet, the villagers and farm-servants in an evening tossing the quoit, that relic of the ancient discus; bowling, or playing at skittles; but rustics, in general, look to wakes and fairs for amusement; and yet at wakes you do not see half the sports there used to be,—as running, leaping, jumping in sacks; or aiming at the snuff-boxes balanced on the will-pegs; and where these games do remain, they are too frequently attached to alehouses, and made gambling baits of. But, in town and country, it is the noble, and as Miss Mitford, the fair historian of rural life, justly calls it, the true English game of cricket, which shews whither the mind of the people is tending, and what will be the future character of English popular sports.

This game seems to have absorbed into itself every other kind of ball-game, trap-ball, tip-cat, or foot-ball. Foot-ball, indeed, seems to have almost gone out of use with the enclosure of wastes and commons, requiring a wide space for its exercise; but far and wide is spread the love of cricketing, and it may now be safely ranked as the prince of English athletic games. I will here describe a match of this fine sport, which was played on the 7th and 9th of September 1835, between the Sussex and the Nottingham Club, and the thoughts which it produced in me at the time.

The Nottingham Club challenged the Sussex to a match for fifty guineas a-side; and played first at Brighton, where the Sussex men were beaten, who then went to play the Nottingham men on their own ground. The match commenced on Monday, September 7th, and was finished on Wednesday the 9th, about half-past four o’clock. Tuesday having

been a wet day, there was no playing. The Nottingham men beat again, having three wickets to go down. A more animating sight of the kind never was seen.

On Sunday morning early, we saw a crowd going up the street, and immediately perceived that, in the centre of it, were the Sussex cricketers, just arrived by the London coach, and going to an inn kept by one of the Nottingham cricketers. They looked exceedingly interesting, being a very fine set of fellows, in their white hats, and with all their trunks, carpet-bags, and cloaks, coming, as we verily believed, to be beaten. Our interest was strongly excited; and on Monday morning we set off to the cricket-ground, which lies about a mile from the town, in the Forest, as it is still called, though not a tree is left upon it,—a long, furzy common, crowned at the top by about twenty windmills, and descending in a steep slope to a fine level, round which the race-course runs. Within the race-course lies the cricket-ground, which was enclosed at each end with booths; and all up the forest-hill were scattered booths, and tents with flags flying, fires burning, pots boiling, ale-barrels standing, and asses, carts, and people bringing still more good things. There were plenty of apple and ginger-beer stalls; and lads going round with nuts and with waggish looks, crying—"nuts, lads! nuts, lads!" In little hollows the nine-pin and will-peg men had fixed themselves, to occupy loiterers; and, in short, there was all the appearance of a fair.

Standing at the farther side of the cricket-ground, it gave me the most vivid idea possible of an amphitheatre filled with people. In fact, it was an amphitheatre. Along each side of the ground ran a bank sloping down to it, and it, and the booths and

tents at the ends were occupied with a dense mass of people, all as silent as the ground beneath them; and all up the hill were groups, and on the race-stand an eager, forward-leaning throng. There were said to be twenty thousand people, all hushed as death, except when some exploit of the players produced a thunder of applause. The playing was beautiful. Mr. Ward, late member of Parliament for London, a great cricket-player, came from the Isle of Wight to see the game, and declared himself highly delighted. But nothing was so beautiful as the sudden shout, the rush, and breaking up of the crowd, when the last decisive match was gained. To see the scorers suddenly snatch up their chairs, and run off with them towards the players' tent; to see the bat of Bart Goode, the batsman on whom the fate of the game depended, spinning up in the air, where he had sent it in the ecstasy of the moment; and the crowd, that the instant before was fixed and silent as the world itself, spreading all over the green space where the white figures of the players had till then been so gravely and apparently calmly contending,—spreading with a murmur as of the sea; and over their heads, amid the deafening clamour and confusion, the carrier-pigeon with a red ribbon tied to its tail, the signal of loss, beating round and round as to ascertain its precise position, and then flying off to bear the tidings to Brighton,—it was a beautiful sight, and one that the most sedate person must have delighted to see.

My thoughts on such occasions overpass the things moving before me, and run on into consequences; and I could not help feeling what a great change the last thirty years had produced in the mind, taste, feeling, and moral character of our working population. What a wide difference was here

presented, to the rude rabbles formerly assembled to the most barbarous and blackguard amusements imaginable. Why this is a near approach to the athletic games of the Greeks; and no Greek crowd could have behaved with more order and propriety, and evincing an intense interest, excited not by any vulgar and unworthy cause, but by a fine trial of skill and activity between their townsmen and their countrymen of a distant county. Such an interest, arising out of such an emulation, not only shews a great progression of the public taste, but will wonderfully promote that progression. Here, if we have been disappointed in many other instances, we see the actual and legitimate effect of general education. It is because the general mind is quickened, raised, and made capable of more refined impulses, that twenty thousand people can now sit, day after day, to witness a contest of manly activity and pure skill, and enjoy a high delight without drunkenness and brutal rows. Never was a more respectable collection of people seen; and although there were plenty of booths and tents well supplied with all sorts of eatables and drinkables, and a good many took a necessary refreshment, or a comfortable glass and a pipe, as they sat and looked on, at the time we left there were no symptoms of drunkenness, but a sight the most gratifying imaginable—thousands of poor workmen streaming off homewards the moment the game was over, many of them with their children, wives, or sweethearts.

I say, therefore, that my thoughts ran on into consequences, and I saw, in prospect, the great good which this better taste for amusement, this purer species of emulation will produce. It is a beautiful sight to see men coming from a distant part of England to contend in a noble gymnastic exercise

with those of another part of the country; and the spirit of generous rivalry thus is spread wider and wider. You see while a match is impending, what numbers of cricket-players are out in the fields, from grown men to boys that can but just wield the lightest bat. You see, even while the great game is going on, boys playing their lesser games in the outskirts of the crowd; and when the match is decided, the spirit is kindled and diffused farther than ever, by the warm discussions of the various merits of the players, and the glory acquired by the best.

This is a spirit which deserves the attention both of the public and the legislature, and if ever we come to see public grounds appropriated to every large town for such exercises, as has been proposed in Parliament by Mr. Buckingham, then not merely cricket but kindred sports will be pursued, quoits, nine-pins, bowls, archery, leaping, and running; all having a direct tendency to strengthen the body and quicken the mind; to counteract both the physical and moral poisons of crowded factories and thickly-populated towns.

It may, indeed, be objected, that all such games would lead to betting; but are we to shrink from every useful measure through fear of its abuse? I say fearlessly, let us set the brand of public abhorrence on such a practice, boldly and firmly, and the practice will disappear. It is not long since the brutal practice of boxing had become a mania, and seemed to set all public censure at defiance, but it did but seem—public censure put it down. Let the higher classes too sanction these laudable exercises by their presence as a public duty, and the British people will, in my opinion, in coming years, exhibit scenes of beautiful skill, activity, and grace, as imposing as

Greece ever saw. In the instance here selected, the two most obvious circumstances were,—first, the absence of the higher classes, especially of the ladies; and secondly, the most perfect and admirable decorum of the people.

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CHAPTER XII.
WRESTLING.

We must not close this department of our subject without saying a word or two on wrestling. This exercise, which at one time was almost universal, is now, like many others, fallen into general disuse; and is confined almost entirely to Cornwall and Devon in the west, and the counties of Chester, Lancaster, Cumberland, and Westmoreland in the north. These counties, indeed, have always been pre-eminent in the science of wrestling, and have possessed practices peculiar to themselves. Formerly, the citizens of London were great wrestlers. Stow tells us, that in the month of August, about the feast of St. Bartholomew, there were divers days spent in wrestling. The lord mayor, aldermen, and sheriffs being present, in a large tent pitched for that purpose, near Clerkenwell; the officers of the city, namely, the sheriffs, sergeants, and yeomen; the porters of the king's beam, or weighing-house, etc., gave a general challenge to such of the inhabitants of the suburbs as thought themselves expert in this exercise. In Sewell's History of the Society of Friends, a curious circumstance is recorded connected with this taste of the Londoners for wrestling. Edward Burrough, a young and enthusiastic preacher in that

society, which then was newly formed, seeing a ring made for a wrestling match in some part of the city where he was passing, and a man in it awaiting the acceptance of his challenge by some one, suddenly stepped into it, to the great amazement both of the champion and the spectators, “who,” say the historian, “instead of some light and airy person, seeing a grave and awful young man,” were utterly posed and confounded; and the eloquent and zealous minister, taking advantage of this surprise, told them he was prepared for a contest, but of another sort to what they were looking for; and forthwith gave them such a sermon in his fiery and vehement style of eloquence, which had gained him the name of Boanerges, or the Son of Thunder, as wonderfully quieted them down, and sent them away in a solemn frame of mind.

This wrestling spirit, however, appears to have vanished for a long period from London as well as the country, and to have been only of late years revived by the West of England, and the Westmoreland, and Cumberland Clubs. These have drawn together great numbers; the spectators at the anniversary display of the Westmoreland club at Chalk-Farm, in the spring of 1837, being about 8000.

Sir Thomas Parkyn, of Bunny Park, in Nottinghamshire, who was a zealous advocate and patron of wrestling, gave an annual prize for the best wrestler, and ordered the continuance of the same in his will; but it would not take root there, and the only remaining traces of his endeavour are, his book on the Cornish Hug, and his effigy in a niche in Bunny church, in the attitude in which a wrestler receives his antagonist, with his favourite title of Thomas Luctator inscribed over his head.

It is singular that in the two extremities of the

country, where wrestling maintains its ancient popularity, adjoining counties, whose rivalry, no doubt, keeps alive the interest in it, should maintain such opposite practices. In some of the northern counties, kicking is allowed, in others it is not. In Devon, kicking shins is a great part of the game; in Cornwall it forms no part of it. Lancashire is famous for its cross-buttock, and Cornwall for its hug. Cornwall and Devon, however, possess unquestionably the pre-eminence in this ancient art, an art which held an eminent rank in the Olympic games of Greece. “The Cornish,” says Fuller, “are masters of the art of wrestling, so that if the Olympian Games were now in fashion, they would come away with the victory. Their hug is a crowning close with their fellow combatant, the fruits whereof is his fair fall, or foil at the least.” “They learn the art,” says Carew, “early in life, for you shall hardly find an assembly of boys in Devon and Cornwall, where the untowardly among them will not as readily give you a muster of this exercise, as you are prone to require it.”

A writer in Hone’s Every-Day Book, in 1828, says, “No kicks are allowed in Cornwall except the players who are in the ring mutually agree to it. A hat is thrown in as a challenge, which being accepted by another, the combatants strip, and put on a coarse loose kind of jacket, of which they take hold, and of nothing else. Play then commences. To constitute a fair fall, both shoulders must touch the ground at or nearly the same moment. To guard against foul play, to decide on the falls, and manage the affairs of the day, four or six STICKLERS, as the umpires are called, are chosen, to whom all these matters are left. Wrestling thrives in the eastern part of Cornwall, particularly about Saint Austle and Saint Columb. At

the latter place, resides Polkinhorne, the champion of Cornwall, and by many considered entitled to the championship of the four western counties; Cann, the Devonshire champion, having declined to meet him, Polkinhorne has not practised wrestling for several years past, while Cann has carried off the prize at every place in Devon that he shewed at. They certainly are both good ones. Parkins, a friend of Polkinhorne's, is a famous hand at these games; and so was Warner of Redruth, till disabled in February 1825, by over-exertion on board the Cambria brig, bound for Mexico."

This writer proceeds to state that John Knill, Esq. bequeathed the income of an estate to be given in various prizes for racing, rowing, and wrestling; these games to be held every fifth year for ever; and that the first was celebrated in July 1801, around a mausoleum which he erected in his lifetime on a high rock near St. Ives. "Early in the morning, the roads from Helston, Truro, and Penzance, were lined with horses and vehicles of every description, while thousands of travellers on foot poured in from all quarters till noon, when the assembly formed. The wrestlers entered the ring; a troop of virgins dressed in white, danced and chanted a hymn composed for the occasion; the spectators ranged themselves along the hills, and, at length, the mayor of St. Ives appeared in his robes of state. The signal was given; the flags were displayed from the towers of the castle; here the wrestlers exerted their sinewy strength; here the rowers dashed through the waves, and the songs of the damsels added delight to the scene. A dinner and ball at the Union Hotel concluded the day. The games were again celebrated in 1806, 1811, 1816, and 1821, with increased favour and admiration."

So much for Cornish play; that of Devon, I have already said, is of a different kind. The Devon wrestlers don't practice the hug, but kick shins dreadfully. For this purpose they have their shoes armed with iron, and before going into the ring, they wrap up their legs with numerous folds of carpeting to defend themselves from the violence of the kicks. "The Devonshire men," says the same writer, who professes to be of neither county, and to admire the champions of both, "have no under-play, nor have they one heaver. Visit a Devon ring, and you will wait a tedious time after a man is thrown ere another appear. After undergoing the necessary preparation for a good kicking, he enters, and shakes his adversary by the hand, and kicks, and lays hold when he can get a fit opportunity. If he is conscious of superior strength, he goes to work, and by force of arm wrests his opponent off his legs, and lays him flat; or if too heavy for this, he carries him round by the hip. But when the men find that they are 'much of a muchness,' it is really tiresome; caution is the word, and the hardest shoe, and the best kicker, carries it. I have seen in Cornwall more persons at these games when the prize has been a gold-laced hat, a waistcoat, or a pair of gloves, than ever attend the sports in Devon, where the prizes are liberal, for they don't like to be kicked for a trifle; or even at the famed meetings of later days in London, at the Eagle in the City-Road, or the Golden Eagle in Mile-End. How is this? Why, in the latter places, six, eight, and at farthest twelve standards, are as much as a day's play will admit of; while in Cornwall I have seen forty made in one day. At Penzance, on Monday, 24th ultimo, thirty standards were made, and the match concluded the day following. In Devon, what with the heavy shoes, and thick padding, and time

lost in equipment and kicking, half that number cannot be made in a day. I have frequently seen men obliged to leave the ring, and abandon the chance of a prize, owing solely to hurts they have received by kicks from the knee downwards; nay, I have seen Cann's brothers, or relations, obliged to do so. To the eye of a beholder unacquainted with wrestling, the Cornish mode must appear as play; that of Devon—barbarous. It is an indisputable fact that no Cornish wrestler of any note ever frequents the games in Devon, and that whenever those from Devon have played in Cornwall, they have been thrown—Jordans by Parkins, and so on."

I think any person not of Devon must give the preference to the play of Cornwall as more scientific and less savage; but before we proceed to compare the rival champions, let us give a little more display of the Devonshire men by an eye-witness in 1820, who has related his visit to the ring at Exmouth, in the London Magazine, with a great feeling of enjoyment. He was told one morning that there was going to be a wrestling, and that "the Canns would be there; and young Brockenden; and Thorne, from Dawlish; and the men from the moors!" This excited his imagination; as well it might, for there is something about the names of these men, the Canns, the Brockendens, the Widdicombs of the moors, that has a wild, grim, and wrestlerish sound; and accords well with those grey, ancient, and romantic moorlands of the western regions of our island. On approaching the ring he found a champion in it. "He was a young man of extremely prepossessing appearance, stripped to the shirt, and enclothed with the linen jacket with a green cock on the back, which I have noticed to be the customary garment. His figure, which in its country garb had not particularly

impressed me with its size or strength, now struck me as highly powerful, compact, and beautiful. His limbs were well grown, and strongly set—yet rather slight than otherwise—and his body was easy, slim, and yet peculiarly expressive of power. The fronts of his legs from the knee to the ankle, were armed with thick carpeting, to protect them from the kicks of his antagonist; and even this strange armour did not give to his person the appearance of clumsiness. His neck was bare, and certainly very fine;—but the shape of his head struck me as being the most expressive and *poetical* (I use the term under correction) I had for a long time beheld—being set off, I conceive, by the way in which his hair was arranged;—and this was dark, hanging in thick *snakish* curls on each side of his forehead, and down the back part of his head: add to all this, a handsome, melancholy, thin countenance, and you will have at once some idea of the young man who now stood before me. I turned to a countryman near me, and inquired who this youth might be, whose undaunted mien and comely port had so taken my favour captive. 'Who is *that*?' said the man, with a tone of surprise, accompanied with a look of profound pity at my ignorance—'why, one of the *Canns* to be sure!'" But we will pass over the first day's play, and come to the evening of the second day's play. "The first shout of the master of the revels was—'The younger Cann, and Widdicomb of the Moors!' and this was received with a low murmur, and a deep interest which almost smothered sound. The younger Cann was the stoutest of the brotherhood, finely formed and fair-haired. He stripped and accoutred himself immediately: his brothers assisting in buckling his leg-armour and fastening his jacket. There was evidently a great anxiety in this group, but still the utmost confidence

in ultimate success; and I could not help taking part in the interest of the brothers, and at the same time entertaining a full share of their faith in their champion's triumph. 'And who,' said I to a neighbour, 'are these Canns?' 'They are farmers; and there are five brothers, all excellent wrestlers; but you only see three here to-night.' But the fine young wrestler stepped into the ring, and our conversation ceased.

"The moon was now very clear, full, and bright; and its light fell upon the noble person of Cann, and shewed every curl of his hair. The Moor-man soon joined him—prepared for the conflict. He was a giant in size, and from what I gathered around me, a man of most savage nature. The popular feeling was painfully on Cann's side. After the cup had been pledged, the opponents seized each other with an iron grasp. Cann stood boldly, but cautiously up, as conscious that he had much to do; and the Moorman opposed him resolutely and grandly. The struggle was immediate; and Cann, with one terrific wrench, threw his antagonist to the earth; but he fell so doubtfully on his shoulder, that it seemed uncertain whether he would fall on his back, which is necessary to victory, or recover himself by rolling on his face. Cann looked proudly down upon him, and saw him by a miraculous strain, which resembled that of a Titan in pain, save the fall, by wrenching himself down on his face. His shoulder and side were soiled—but he was not deemed vanquished.

"By the order of the umpires the struggle was renewed, when owing, as I conceived, to the slippery state of the grass, Cann fell on his knees, and the Moor-man instantly hurled him on his back. All was uproar and confusion—but Cann was declared to have received a fall—and gloom spread itself over

all! He could not be convinced of the justice of his judges—a common case when the verdict is adverse—and it was in real pain of spirit that he pulled off the jacket.

"Young Brockenden followed next, with another man from the Moors; and he received a doubtful fall, which was much cavilled at, but which the judges, nevertheless, gave against him. It now grew late, and the clouds thickened around, so that the wrestlers could scarcely be perceived. I left the sports somewhat unwillingly; but I could not distinguish the parties, and in truth, I was dispirited at my favourite's being foiled. I heard that the brother Canns retrieved the fame of the family—but the darkness of the night, and the state of the grass, gave no chance, either to the spectators or to the wrestlers. In the morning, the ring, the awning, the scaffolding—had vanished; and the young fellows had separated; the Canns to their farms—the men to the moors."

Having now taken a peep at both the Cornish and Devonshire men, let us bring them into contact. In 1826, at the Eagle-Tavern Green, City-Road, several matches took place between Devonshire and Cornish men, on the 19th, 20th, and 21st of September. The following exhibition of the struggle between Abraham Cann, the champion of Dartmoor, and Warren of Cornwall, is equal to a bass-relief from a Grecian frieze, and gives a most graphic view of the systems of the two counties. It is from the London Magazine, and evidently by the same writer.

"The contest between Abraham Cann and Warren not only displayed this difference of style, but was attended with a degree of suspense between skill and strength, that rendered it extremely interesting. The former, who is a son of a Devonshire farmer, has

been backed against any man in England for 500*l.* His figure is of the finest athletic proportions, and his arm realizes the muscularity of ancient specimens. His power in it is surprising: his hold is like that of a vice, and with ease he can pinion the arms of the strongest adversary, if he once grips them, and keep them as close together, or as far asunder, as he chooses. He stands with his legs apart, his body quite upright, looking down good-humouredly on his crouching opponent. In this instance, his opponent, Warren, a miner, was a man of superior size, and of amazing strength, not so well distributed, however, throughout his frame: his arms and body being too lengthy in proportion to their bulk. His visage was harsh beyond measure, and he did not disdain to use a little craft with eye and hand, in order to distract his enemy's attention. But he had to deal with a man as collected as ever entered a ring. Cann put in his hand as quietly as if he were going to seize a shy horse, and at length, caught a slight hold between finger and thumb of Warren's sleeve. At this Warren flung away with the impetuosity of a surprised horse. But it was in vain; there was no escape from Cann's pinch, so the miner seized his adversary in his turn, and at length both of them grappled each other by the arm and the breast of the jacket. In a trice Cann tripped his opponent with the toe in a most scientific but ineffectual manner, throwing him clean to the ground, but not on his back, as required. The second heat began similarly. Warren stooped more, so as to keep his legs out of Cann's reach, who punished him for it by several kicks below the knee, which must have told severely if his shoes had been on, after his country's fashion. They shook each other rudely—strained knee to knee—forced each other's shoulders down, so as to overbalance the body—but all

ineffectually. They seemed to be quite secure from each other's efforts, as long as they held by the arm and breast-collar, as ordinary wrestlers do. A new grip was to be effected. Cann liberated one arm of his adversary, to seize him by the cape behind; at that instant, Warren, profiting by his inclined posture and his long arm, threw himself round the body of the Devon champion, and fairly lifted him a foot from the ground, clutching him in his arms with the grasp of a second Antæus. The Cornish men shouted aloud, 'Well done, Warren!' to their hero, whose naturally pale visage glowed with the hope of success. He seemed to have his opponent at his will, and to be fit to fling him, as Hercules flung Lycas, any how he pleased. Devonshire then trembled for its champion, and was mute. Indeed it was a moment of heart-quaking suspense. But Cann was not daunted; his countenance expressed anxiety, but not discomfiture. He was off terra firma, clasped in the embrace of a powerful man, who waited but a single struggle of his, to pitch him more effectually from him to the ground. Without straining to disengage himself, Cann with unimaginable dexterity, glued his back firmly to his opponent's chest, lacing his feet round the other's knee-joints, and throwing one arm backward over Warren's shoulders so as to keep his own enormous shoulders pressed upon the breast of his uplifter. In this position they stood, at least twenty seconds, each labouring in one continuous strain, to bend the other, one forward, the other backwards. Such a struggle could not last. Warren, with the might of the other upon his stomach and chest, felt his balance almost gone, as the energetic movements of his countenance indicated. His feet too were motionless, by the coil of his adversary's legs round his; so, to save himself from falling backward,

he stiffened his whole body from the ankles upwards, and these last being the only liberated joints, he inclined forward from them, so as to project both bodies, and prostrate them in one column to the ground together. It was like the slow and poising fall of an undermined tower. You had time to contemplate the injury which Cann, the undermost, would sustain, if they fell in that solid, unbending posture to the earth. But Cann ceased bearing upon the spine as soon as he found his supporter going in an adverse direction. With a presence of mind unrateable, he relaxed his strain upon one of his adversary's stretched legs, forcing the other outwards with all the might of his foot, and pressing his elbow on the opposite shoulder. This was sufficient to whisk his man undermost the instant he unstiffened his knee—which Warren did not do till more than half-way to the ground, when from the acquired rapidity of the falling bodies, nothing was discernible. At the end of the fall, Warren was seen sprawling on his back, and Cann, whom he had liberated to save himself, had been thrown a few yards off, on all fours. Of course the victory should have been adjudged to this last. When the partial referee was appealed to, he decided that it was not a fair fall, as only one shoulder had bulged the ground, though there was evidence on the back of Warren that both had touched it pretty rudely. After much debating, a new referee was appointed, and the old one expelled: when the candidates again entered the lists. The crowning beauty of the whole was, that the second fall was precisely a counterpart of the first. Warren made the same move, only lifting his antagonist higher, with the view to throw the upper part of his frame out of play. Cann turned himself exactly in the same manner, using much greater

effort than before, and apparently more put to it by his opponent's great strength. His share, however, in upsetting his supporter was greater this time, as he relaxed one leg much sooner, and adhered closer to the chest during the fall; for at the close he was seen uppermost, still coiled round his massive adversary, who admitted the fall, starting up, and offering his hand to the victor."

Since then Polkinhorne of St. Columb has encountered Cann, and thrown him, and is, or was, the acknowledged champion of the West. He is the keeper of the principal inn at St. Columb, where I on one occasion stopped, having shortly before taken a halfpenny ticket from his dethroned rival, Cann of Dartmoor, at the foot-bridge between Plymouth and Devonport, where he was, if he be not yet, stationed.

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CHAPTER XIII.
FAVOURITE PURSUITS OF ENGLISH COTTAGERS AND WORKMEN.

In my last chapter I gave a general view of the present rural sports and pastimes of the peasantry—perhaps as it regards wrestling, more prominently than some readers might think judicious. But what *is* prominent in the country life of any part of England, it is my bounden duty to set before my readers; and there is no feature of English life more remarkable than the sanguine attachment of the people of some particular parts to particular sports; more especially where those sports have relaxed their ancient hold on the people in all other districts, or have refused to be engrafted on other districts; as golf continues to be one of the prime sports of Scotland, but will not

travel across the Tweed. Let us now, before closing the department of this work appropriated to the peasantry, notice some characteristic features, which I think must strongly interest us all.

After all, the happiness of a people is not found in their amusements. Amusements may indicate, in a certain degree, that a people is happy; but real happiness is a thing of a more domestic nature. It is a Lar, and belongs to the household, or is to be found in the quiet and enclosed precincts of home gardens. A great portion of the happiness of the common people is therefore little perceived, for it is unobtrusive; and consists in following out those peculiar biases and *penchants*, which in higher personages are termed genius. The genius of the working classes, which from its deriving little help from science, or field of exercise from circumstance, is seldom admitted to be genius at all, still exhibits itself in a variety of ways, and contributes at once to their prosperity, their happiness, and to the stamping of individual character. A great deal of it is necessarily exerted in their particular trades, and produces all that is beautiful and exquisite in handicraft arts. That which gives an artisan eminence in the workshop of his master, would probably have produced specimens of art that would have claimed the admiration of the whole community. Those glorious specimens of architectural perfection which adorn our chief cathedrals, the work of the middle ages, are the evidences of masonic skill, which in this age might probably have been employed on our plainer structures, or in building steam-engines, or elaborating some piece of plate, or carving the handles of parasols. Circumstance has much to do in the decision of the fate of all genius and ingenuity. It

is a striking fact, that the greater number of artisans who eminently excel in their own line, partake largely of the temperament and foibles of genius. They are often irregular in their application to business, fond of company and of its excitements; so that nothing is so common as to say, that man is an inimitable workman, but that he will not work half his time, and is too fond of the public-house, where he draws a circle of admirers around him. But when a man is at once skilful, steady, and enthusiastic in his art,—that man is a happy man. His mind has a constant subject of reflection, of exercise, of satisfaction, before it. He sees with pride the workmanship of his hands, and enjoys with as much inward delight the reputation and applause it brings him, as does a poet, a philosopher, or a conqueror the fame of their respective works.

But, in many others, the peculiar instinct shews itself in some other pursuit than their trade. It does not happen to them to have fallen upon that profession which would have called forth the slumbering spirit, and when it wakes it shews itself in some other form. These men are said to have their HOBBY. They have a favourite scheme, or occupation, which shares their attention with their trade, and often supersedes it. Crabbe, that close observer of whatever passed in this grade of life, has well described these propensities. If they shew themselves in a man’s own trade:

Then to the wealthy you will see denied
Comforts and joys that with the poor abide;
There are who labour through the year, and yet
No more have gained than—not to be in debt;
Who still maintain the same laborious course,
Yet pleasure hails them from some favourite source;
And health, amusement, children, wife, or friend,
With life's dull views their consolations blend.

But if the bias of the mind does not lie in the man's own art:

Nor these alone possess the lenient power
Of soothing life in the desponding hour;
Some favourite studies, some delightful care
The mind with trouble and distresses share;
And by a coin, a flower, a verse, a boat,
The stagnant spirits have been set afloat;
They pleased at first, and then the habit grew,
Till the fond heart no higher pleasure knew.
Oft have I smiled the happy pride to see
Of humble tradesmen in their evening glee;
When of some pleasing,fancied good possessed,
Each grew alert, was busy, and was blest.
Whether the *call*-bird yield the hours delight,
Or magnified in microscope, the mite;
Or whether tumblers, croppers, carriers seize
The gentle mind, they rule it, and they please.

Yes, it is in these and many other occupations, dictated by individual organization, or taste, that numbers of the working class find a world of happiness. Some are amateurs of one kind, some of another; some are rearers of fancy pigeons, some of fancy dogs; others are enthusiasts in music, singing, bell-ringing, and make a noise in the world from belfries, organ-lofts, orchestras, at harmonic meetings, and in rural festivals. Some spend a whole life in seeking the perpetual motion; some in

devising improvements in steam-engines, and other machines. Whether they deal with realities, or with chimeras, as too often they do, the busy spirit of humanity will be at work in the breasts of the operative class. In the country it assumes many a shape that is beautiful, and others that are picturesque. Some are incorrigible poachers, from the love of the pursuit of wild creatures, of strolling about in solitary glens and woods, of night-watching, and adventure. Others have an inextinguishable love of a gun,—these men all their lives are noted for this propensity. They have a certain keeper-like appearance. They affect fustian or velveteen jackets, with wide skirts, and huge pockets; gaiters, and strong shoes. They have a lounging, yet unauthorized air, which betrays them to be not the true men of office. They have always some excuse for carrying a gun; they are stuffers of curious birds and animals; or they procure them for one who is; and it is alike amazing how they escape the penalties of the law for trespasses and destruction of game, and yet bring home such owls, squirrels, herons, sea-birds, curlews, plovers, martins, and fillimarts, shrikes, waxen-chatterers, and foxes, and young fawns, as are not to be obtained except by a traversing, daily and nightly, of parks, preserves, woods, and chases, as must be perilous, and, indeed, impracticable to any other men. Noblemen and gentlemen generally find it desirable in the end, to instal this particular variety of the human species in all the honours and freedom of keepership. Happy is the man of this stamp who reaches America. That is the land for him! A land of woods, of herds of deer, and turkeys, of bears and buffaloes. There he may roam the paradise of back settlements, and satiate his soul with hunting and shooting; with lying in wait, and with wild

adventure, without fear of game-laws, and the obstructions of monopoly.

Others, again, have an indomitable passion for hunting otters, badgers, polecats, rats, hedgehogs, and similar tenants of out-of-the-way dales, river-sides, thickets and plantations; and have perpetually at their heels, terriers of every kind, spaniels, and lurchers. These are generally well entitled to be classed under the head of ragamuffins; and are generally more than half poachers, being as ready to snap up a leveret, rabbit, or young wild duck, as they are to destroy a stoat. But the passion for their peculiar fancy is inextinguishable, and not to be put out by a whole bench of magistrates, or a voyage to New South Wales, for there the dogs would instinctively muster at their heels, and they would be after the kangaroos at the very first opportunity.

A congener of these, and yet of a somewhat more civilized grade, is the bird-catcher and trainer. Beware of your nightingales that come in April from some sunny land, and shew you the preference of settling for the season in your shrubbery, or coppice. If this man be your neighbour, the glorious song of midnight will soon experience a mysterious hush. You hear it, and proclaim the news to your family. By day you catch its not-to-be-mistaken notes amongst the budding trees, as you pass in and out of your grounds. “There is the very same bird come to its favourite spot,” you say, to delight your wife, or sister, or children, who clap their hands, and run to carry the news into the housekeeper’s room. “There is the fine old nightingale again in the shrubbery!” At evening on are put bonnets and hats, shawls and cloaks, and forth sallies the happy domestic group. The air is chill, for it is but April; yet the moon is rising in her sweet pensiveness, and the freshness of

the air and the budding boughs are about you. Down the narrow path you go, where the primroses gleam faintly from amongst the mossy stems of the shrubbery trees. Past the rustic summer-house you go, down by the close turf of the shadowy lawn—near to the brook, that flows so subduedly in its singing murmurs that it cannot drown a single bird-note. You have reached the little wooden bridge—and hark!—it is there sure enough! Yes, to-night, and the next, and perhaps the next, it is there,—and then it is gone. You wonder why. Can it have deserted its favourite haunt? Can it be the stormy weather? The east wind must have silenced it? No! it is moping in the cage of that villanous bird-catcher, who is intending to aggravate his crime of kidnapping this prince of air-minstrels, by fetching the blackbird which sings on the top of your ash, and the thrush that flings back his notes from the distant elm. Beware of your woodlarks, and your bullfinches, if this man be your neighbour. He has an ear which recognises in a moment the master singer, and he has a dozen arts to put in practice against his liberty. In his little house is a collection of prisoners that would make any reasonable person's heart ache. He has blackbirds that are studying artificial tunes,—marches and waltzes—how much more apt one would think them to learn dirges and laments! But he has even poor Robin Redbreast put to school under the nightingale—bullfinches that are blinded, and then made to listen in doleful obedience to his flute or pipe. They are to be piping bullfinches of great note and value. But let us leave the melodious melancholy of his prison-house, and when we have lightened our hearts in the open air, we may muster up charity enough to do the man justice. He has, after all, no lack of kindness in his heart. He takes

them captive as the Christians take negroes—to civilize them, and make them happier! His soul is in all that he does. I one day met an old man and woman in a wood. As I drew near them I heard a strange chirping of young birds. It was a fine summer evening. “How is this,” I said; “it is time for the birds to be at roost, and yet I hear young ones chirping?” “0!” said the old man—“here they are;” opening his basket, and shewing a nest full of young canaries. “It was a fine evening,” said he, “and I and my old woman thought a walk would do us good, and we thought it would do the birds good too.”

The delights of angling seize upon another class. People that have not been inoculated with the true spirit, may wonder at the infatuation of anglers—but true anglers leave them very contentedly to their wondering, and follow their diversion with a keen delight. Many old men there are of this class, that have in them a world of science,— not science of the book, or of regular tuition, but the science of actual experience. Science that lives, and will die with them; except it be dropped out piecemeal, and with the gravity becoming its importance, to some young neophyte, who has won their good graces by his devotion to their beloved craft. All the mysteries of times and seasons, of baits, flies of every shape and hue; worms, gentles, beetles, compositions, or substances found by proof to possess singular charms. These are a possession which they hold with pride, and do not hold in vain. After a close day in the shop or factory, what a luxury is a fine summer evening to one of these men, following some rapid stream, or seated on a green bank, deep in grass and flowers, pulling out the spotted trout, or resolutely, but subtilely, bringing some huge pike or fair grayling from his lurking place beneath the broad

stump and spreading boughs of the alder. Or a day, a summer's day, to such a man, by the Dove, or the Wye, amid the pleasant Derbyshire hills; by Yorkshire or Northumbrian stream; by Trent or Tweed; or the banks of Yarrow; by Teith, or Leven, with the glorious hills and heaths of Scotland round him! Why, such a day to such a man, has in it a life and spirit of enjoyment to which the feelings of cities and palaces are dim. The heart of such a man,—the power and passion of deep felicity that come breathing from mountains and moorlands; from clouds that sail above, and storms blustering and growling in the wind; from all the mighty magnificence, the solitude and antiquity of nature upon him—Ebenezer Elliott only can unfold. The weight of the poor man's life—the cares of poverty—the striving of huge cities, visit him as he sits by the beautiful stream—beautiful as a dream of eternity, and translucent as the everlasting canopy of heaven above him;—they come—but he casts them off for the time, with the power of one who feels himself strong in the kindred spirit of all things around; strong in knowledge that he is a man; an immortal—a child and pupil in the world-school of the Almighty. For that day he is more than a king—he has the heart of humanity and the faith and spirit of a saint. It is not the rod and line that floats before him—it is not the flowing water, or the captured prey, that he perceives in those moments of admission to the heart of nature, so much as the law of the testimony of love and goodness written on every thing around him with the pencil of Divine beauty. He is no longer the wearied and oppressed—the trodden and despised—walking in thread-bare garments, amid men who scarcely deign to look upon him as a brother man,—but he is reassured and

recognised to himself in his own soul as one of those puzzling, aspiring and mysterious existences for whom all this splendid world was built, and for whom eternity opens its expecting gates. These are magnificent speculations for a poor angling weaver or carpenter; but Ebenezer Elliott can tell us, that they are his legitimate thoughts when he can break for an instant the bonds of this toiling age, and escape to the open fields. Let us leave him dipping his line into the waters of refreshing thought, and return to the cottage garden. There we shall see another form of that beneficently varied taste which adds so much to the poor man's pleasures.

We may look into many a cottage garden, and find it a little world of beauty and pleasant cares. Here one poor man is a lover of bees. He has stored his little sheltered garden with all sorts of flowers that bees love, or that come out early in the year for them. On the sunny side of his little domain you see his rustic shed with its row of hives; all neatly thatched, and all sending out their busy stream of honey-gatherers. There is no man of any reflection but must feel what a source of enjoyment that row of hives has been. What cares and contrivances have contributed to extend that row from the solitary swarm, purchased perhaps in the days of deeper poverty than now presses upon him. What summer-noon watchings there have been for the flight of new swarms; what hurry and ringing of pans and fire-shovels to charm them down; what recapturings and bringing back to the ancient bench to form a new family in the little bee-state.

There is one circumstance, however, connected with the keeping of bees, which spoils the poetry of it; and that is the brimstone pit of destruction that awaits them. But there is many a poor man that loves

his bees with a strong affection, and loathes to do them that grievous wrong. He levies tribute, but does not destroy. I once saw a fine instance of this feeling. A poor man, a lover and keeper of bees, heard by chance that a swarm had taken up their abode in the roof of Caverswall Nunnery in Staffordshire; and that the abbess was intending to have them destroyed. His residence was at a distance of seven miles from the Abbey, but he instantly put his favourite volume of “Huber on Bees” in his pocket, and set out. Here, being admitted to the presence of the abbess, he told his errand, and begged that she would not commit so barbarous and inhospitable an act,—that providence seemed to have directed those wonderful little creatures thither as it were, for the certainty of protection from the hearts of Christian ladies. At least he begged that she would read that book before she put her threat into execution. He soon afterwards came to me with a face of great delight, saying —“The abbess has read Huber, and she won’t destroy the bees!”

Many cottagers, again, are most zealous and successful florists.[29] This is a taste full of beauty, and possessing a high charm. To select rich and suitable soils; to sow and plant; to nurse and shade, and water; to watch the growth and expansion of flowers of great promise;—it is sufficient for the enjoyment of one spirit. The number of flowers now cultivated by florists is much increased to what it was. They had only the polyanthus, auricula, hyacinth, carnation, tulip, and ranunculus; but the splendid dahlia, and the pansy now engross much of their attention and admiration. Others, again, are collectors and admirers of insects; and as education extends, natural history will, no doubt, receive many zealous adherents from the operative ranks. Crabbe

has described both these tastes as united in one man.

There is my friend, the weaver; strong desires
Reign in his breast; 'tis beauty he admires.
See! to the shady grove he wings his way,
And feels in hope the raptures of the day.
Eager he looks; and soon to his glad eyes,
From the sweet bower, by nature formed, arise
Bright troops of virgin-moths, and new-born
butterflies;
Who broke that morning from their half-year's sleep,
To fly o'er flowers where they were wont to creep.

Above the sovereign oak, a sovereign skims,
The *purple Emperor*, strong in wing and limbs:
There fair *Camilla* takes her flight serene,
Adonis blue, and *Paphia*, silver queen:
With every filmy fly from mead or bower,
And hungry *Sphynx*, who threads the honeyed
flower;
She o'er the larkspurs' bed, where sweets abound,
Views every bell, and hums the approving sound:
Poised on her busy plumes, with feelings nice,
She draws from every flower, nor tries a floret twice.

He fears no bailiff's wrath, no baron's blame,
His is untaxed, and undisputed game;
Nor less the place of curious plants he knows;
He both his *Flora* and his *Fauna* shows.
For him is blooming in its rich array,
The glorious flower which bore the palm away.
In vain a rival tried his utmost art,
His was the prize, and joy o'erflowed his heart.
"This, this is beauty! cast, I pray, your eyes
On this my glory! see the grace—the size!
Was ever stem so tall, so stout, so strong,
Exact in breadth, in just proportion long;
These brilliant hues are all distinct and clean,
No kindred tint, no blending streaks between;
This is no shaded, run-off, pin-eyed thing,
A king of flowers, a flower for England's king!"

[29] So successful that they were amongst the first to raise fine flowers before floral societies and flower-shows were in existence; and the names of some of these village florists are attached to some of the finest specimens, Hufton, Barker, and Redgate, appellations which some of our finest carnations, polyanthuses, and ranunculuses bear, are those of old Derbyshire villagers, well known to me, who scarcely ever were out of their own rustic districts, but whose names are thus made familiar all the country over.

Lastly, the general pleasures of a garden form a grand item in the enjoyments of the poor man. To shew what these pleasures are, to what an extent they are enjoyed in some districts, even by town mechanics, and how much further they may be extended, I shall quote a portion of a paper published by me in November 1835, in Tait's Magazine.

There are, in the outskirts of Nottingham, upwards of 5000 gardens, the bulk of which are occupied by the working class. A good many there are belonging to the substantial tradesmen and wealthier inhabitants; but the great mass are those of the mechanics. These lie on various sides of the town, in expanses of many acres in a place, and many of them as much as a mile and a half distant from the centre of the town. In the winter they have rather a desolate aspect, with their naked trees and hedges, and all their little summer-houses exposed, damp-looking, and forlorn; but, in spring and summer, they look exceedingly well,—in spring all starred with blossoms, all thick with leaves; and their summer-houses peeping pleasantly from among them. The advantage of these gardens to the working-class of a great manufacturing town, is beyond calculation; and I believe no town in the kingdom has so many of them in proportion to its population. It were to be desired that the example of the Nottingham artisans

was imitated by those of other great towns; or rather that the taste for them was encouraged, and, in fact, created by the example of the middle classes, and by patriotic persons laying out fields for this purpose, and letting them at a reasonable rate. A wide difference in the capability of indulging in this healthful species of recreation, must of course, depend on the species of manufacture carried on. Where steam-engines abound, and are at the foundation of all the labours of a place, as in Manchester, for instance, there you will find few gardens in the possession of the mechanics. The steam-engine is a never-resting, unweariable, unpersuadable giant and despot; and will go on thumping and setting thousands of wheels and spindles in motion; and men must stand, as it were, the slaves of its unsleeping energies. O! what was the fate of the ancient genii to the fate of our modern mechanics! What was the fate of "the slaves of the lamp," or the slaves of talismanic ring, to that of the slaves of the steam-engine! *They* could vanish and lie at rest till came the irresistible call; they could sport over ocean and desert, through the air and the clouds; they could speed into the depths of space and wander amid the inconceivable mysteries and miracles of unknown worlds, till the omnipotent spell recalled them to execute some temporary wish of their tyrant, and then return to a wide liberty. But the slave of the steam-engine must be at the beck of *his* tyrant night or day, with only such intervals as barely suffice to restore his wearied strength and faculties:—therefore you shall not see gardens flourish and summer-houses rise in the vicinity of this hurrying and tremendous power. But where it is not, or but partially predominates, there may the mechanic enjoy the real pleasures of a garden. And

how many are those pleasures!

Early in spring—as soon, in fact, as the days begin to lengthen and the shrewd air to dry up the wintry moisture—you see them getting into their gardens, clearing away the dead stalks of last year's growth, and digging up the soil; but especially on fine days in February and March are they busy. Trees are pruned, beds are dug, walks cleaned, and all the refuse and decayed vegetation piled up in heaps; and the smoke of the fires in which it is burnt, rolling up from many a garden, and sending its pungent odour to meet you afar off. It is pleasant to see, as the season advances, how busy their occupants become; bustling there with their basses in their hands and their tools on their shoulders; wheeling in manure; and clearing out their summer-houses; and what an air of daily-increasing neatness they assume, till they are one wide expanse of blossomed fruit-trees and flowering fragrance. Every garden has its summer-house; and these are of all scales and grades, from the erection of a few tub-staves, with an attempt to train a pumpkin or a wild-hop over it, to substantial brick houses with glass windows, good cellars for a deposit of choice wines, a kitchen, and all necessary apparatus, and a good pump to supply them with water. Many are very picturesque rustic huts, built with great taste, and hidden by tall hedges in a perfect little paradise of lawn and shrubbery—most delightful spots to go and read in of a summer day, or to take a dinner or tea in with a pleasant party of friends. Some of these places which belong to the substantial tradespeople have cost their occupiers from one to five hundred pounds, and the pleasure they take in them may be thence imagined; but many of the mechanics have very excellent summer-houses, and there they delight to go, and smoke a solitary

pipe, as they look over the smiling face of their garden, or take a quiet stroll amongst their flowers: or to take a pipe with a friend; or to spend a Sunday afternoon, or a summer evening, with their families. The amount of enjoyment which these gardens afford to a great number of families is not easily to be calculated—and then the health and the improved taste! You meet them coming home, having been busy for hours in the freshness of the summer morning in them, and now are carrying home a bass brimful of vegetables for the house. In the evening thitherward you see groups and families going; the key which admits to the common paths that lead between them is produced; a door is opened and closed; and you feel that they are vanished into a pure and sacred retirement, such as the mechanic of a large town could not possess without these suburban gardens. And then to think of the alehouse, the drinking, noisy, politics-bawling alehouse, where a great many of these very men would most probably be, if they had not this attraction,—to think of this, and then to see the variety of sources of a beautiful and healthful interest which they create for themselves here:—what a contrast!—what a most gratifying contrast! There are the worthy couple, sitting in the open summer-house of one garden, quietly enjoying themselves, and watching their children romping on the grass-plot, or playing about the walks; in another, a social group of friends round the tea-table, or enjoying the reward of all their spring labours, picking strawberries fresh from the bed, or raspberries, gooseberries, and currants from the bush. In one you find a grower of fine apples, pears, or plums, or of large gooseberries; in another, a florist, with his show of tulips, ranunculuses, hyacinths, carnations, or other choice flowers, that

claim all his leisure moments, and are a source of a thousand cares and interests. And of these cares and interests, the neat awning of white canvass, raised on its light frame of wood; the glasses, and screens of board and matting, to defend those precious objects from every rude attack of sun, wind, or rain—all these are sufficient testimonies; and tell of hours early and late, in the dawn of morning and the dusk of evening, when the happy man has been entranced in his zealous labours, and absorbed in a thousand delicious fancies, and speculations of perfection. Of late, the splendid dahlia and the pansy have become objects of attention; and I believe of the latter flower, till recently despised and overlooked, except in the old English cottage-garden, there are now more than a hundred varieties, of such brilliance and richness of hue, and many of them of such superb expanse of corolla, as merit all the value set upon them.

This is the allotment system of the manufacturing town; to the full as desirable as that for the country, and which may be facilitated, fraught as it is with abundant physical and moral good, by philanthropic individuals to a great extent. At Nottingham, as I have observed, the taste seems to have grown up originally of itself, and then, exciting the attention of speculators, has been extended to its present growth by them. The mechanics there have not their gardens at a cheap rate. They all say that they could purchase their vegetables in the market for the amount of their rent and incidental expenses; but then, they get the health and the enjoyment, and their fruit and vegetables they get so fresh.

There are, according to a personal examination made by myself, now, upwards of 5000 of these gardens, containing, as single gardens, 400 square yards each,—the general scale of a garden; though a

good many are held as double, and even treble gardens. These let at from a halfpenny to three halfpence per yard; but averaged at three farthings, make a rental of 1*l.* 5*s.* per garden, or a total of 6250*l.* Five thousand gardens of 400 yards each of clear garden ground, independent of fences and roads, give 413 acres and about a rood. Now, if we add one-fifth for fences and roads, the total quantity of land occupied is 496 acres, or we may say, in round numbers, 500 acres. Here then, 500 acres, which at fifty shillings an acre—a good rent for ordinary purposes, would yield a rent of 1250*l.*; yield, by being converted into gardens, a rent of 6250*l.*, or a clear profit of 5000*l.*

Thus, it is evident, that any persons willing to promote the taste for gardening in the neighbourhood of towns, might double, in many instances, the ordinary rent of the land, and yet let it in gardens at half the price of these Nottingham ones. Even where land in the vicinity of a large town is very highly rented, a halfpenny a yard, and ten gardens to the acre, fences and roads included, would produce 8*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.* per acre; no contemptible sum; to say nothing of the real kindness of the accommodation, and the health, pleasure, and pure taste communicated to their fellow men; whilst, against the increased risk of loss, and the increased trouble of the collection of rent, are to be set the value of the garden stock, fruit trees, shrubs, and flower roots, and the summer-houses, which enhance the value to the next tenant.

Here I close this chapter, and this department of my work,—the habits and amusements of the people. It is a subject to which I attach no common importance. The people make the majority of our race; and if they are all equally the objects of that

divine care which created them, they must be equally the objects of our truest sympathies. This has not hitherto been sufficiently considered: but every day that consideration must be forced more and more upon us; and we shall be made to feel that no philosophy is good which does not include the poor in its theory; no religion is sound which does not recognise their kinship; no legislation is wise which does not operate for their physical and intellectual benefit; and no country can be said to be truly prosperous, where the multitude is not respectable, enlightened, moral, and happy.

Let us all endeavour to hasten this period, as a living proof that Christianity is really preached to the poor; and that our knowledge has produced the most felicitous of its genuine fruits, in peopling this great nation with a race such as no nation has yet possessed; such as may eat,

> Well earned, the bread of service, yet may have
> A mounting spirit;—one that entertains
> Scorn of base action, deed dishonourable,
> Or aught unseemly.
>
> *Charles Lamb.*

CHAPTER XIV.
SUNDAY IN THE COUNTRY.

> Sonst stuerzte sich der Himmels-Liebe Kuss
> Auf mich herab, in ernster Sabbathstille;
> Da klang so ahndungsvoll des Glockentones Fuelle,
> Und ein Gebet war bruenstiger Genuss:
> Ein unbegreiflich holdes Sehnen
> Trieb mich durch Wald und Wiesen hinzugehn,
> Und unter tausend heissen Thraenen,

Fuehlt' ich mir eine Welt entstehn.

Faust.

In other days, the kiss of heavenly love descended upon me in the solemn stillness of the Sabbath; then the full-toned bell sounded so fraught with mystic meaning, and a prayer was vivid enjoyment. A longing, inconceivably sweet, drove me forth to wander over wood and plain, and amid a thousand burning tears, I felt a world rise up to me.

Hayward's Translation.

Goethe, in his Faust, has given a very lively description of a German multitude bursting out of the city to enjoy an Easter Sunday;—mechanics, students, citizens' daughters, servant-girls, townsmen, beggars, old women ready to tell fortunes, soldiers, and amongst the rest, his hero Faust and his friend Wagner, proceeding to enjoy a country walk. They reach a rising ground; and Faust says—"Turn and look back from this rising ground upon the town. From forth the gloomy portal presses a motley crowd. Every one suns himself delightedly to-day. They celebrate the rising of the LORD, for they themselves have arisen: from the dark rooms of mean houses; from the bondage of mechanical drudgery; from the confinement of gables and roofs; from the stifling narrowness of streets; from the venerable gloom of churches—are they raised up to the open light of day. But look! look! how quickly the mass is scattering itself through the gardens and fields; how the river, broad and long, tosses many a merry bark upon its surface; and how this last wherry, overladen almost to sinking, moves off. Even from the farthest paths of the mountain, gay-coloured dresses glance upon us. I hear already the

bustle of the village. This is the true heaven of the multitude; big and little are huzzaing joyously. Here I am a man—here I may be one."

Making allowance for the difference of national manners, this might serve for a picture of Sunday in the neighbourhood of a large town in England. Human nature is the same everywhere. The girls are looking out for sweethearts; and both mechanics and students are seeking after the best beer and the prettiest girl:

> Ein starkes bier, ein beitzender Toback,
> Und eine Magd im Putz dass ist nun mein
> Geschmack.

"Strong beer, stinging tobacco, and a girl all in her best,—that is the taste for me," cries one: and so it is here and everywhere. See how the multitudes of our large manufacturing towns, and of London spend their Sundays. They pour out into the country in all directions, but it is not to enjoy the country only. They *do* enjoy the country; but it is because it heightens their wild delight in smoking, drinking, and flirtation. Who does not know what innumerable haunts there are within five, ten, or even twenty miles round London, to which these classes repair on Sundays: tea-houses and tea-gardens, country inns, hedge-alehouses, all the old and noted places where good beer and tobacco, merry company, and noisy politics are to be found? Norwood, Greenwich, Richmond, Hampton-Court, Windsor, the Nore, Herne-Bay, Gravesend, Margate; and those old-fashioned places of resort that Hone gives you glimpses of; such as Copenhagen-House, the Sluice-House, Canonbury, etc.—what swarming votaries have they all.[30] And what an immensity of new regions will the railroads that are now beginning to

stretch their lines from the metropolis in different directions, lay open—*terræ incognitæ*, as it were, to the millions that in the dense and ever-growing mass of monstrous London pant after an outburst into the country. Truly may these say, through the medium of this modern and most providential means of occasional
dispersion:—

To morrow to fresh fields and pastures new!

[30] The following calculation, made on Whit-Monday 1835, may give some idea of the number of similar pleasure-seekers on a fine summer Sunday. On Monday, between eight in the morning and nine at night, 191 steam-vessels passed through the Pool to and from Margate, Herne-Bay, Sheerness, Southend, the Nore, Gravesend, Woolwich, and Greenwich, including several on their way to and from Scotland, Ireland, and the Continent. Each vessel averaged, at least, 500 persons. The above calculation was made by Mr. Brown, a boat-builder in Wapping, who with his servants, watched them all day. But many passed after nine, swelling the number to upwards of 200; so that more than 100,000 persons must have been afloat in the steamers on Monday, exclusive of the passengers in small boats. Several steam-vessels carried 800 and 900 souls each to the Nore and back, One steam-vessel brought back from Greenwich 1000 persons, another 1300, and a third was actually crowded with 1500 passengers.

I well remember two ladies of high reputation in the literary world, who, after reading Faust, were inspired with a desire to see how the lower classes amused themselves on a Sunday in this country. It was, they thought, a subject of profitable study. They could not divest themselves of the idea that the people must wonderfully enjoy themselves, in their

own way; and perhaps they might imagine that they should be received and complimented, as Faust and his friend Wagner were. Well; the experiment was tried. Another gentleman and myself accompanied them; and of all schemes we hit upon that of going by the steam-packet to Richmond. It was a fine morning in May. Our packet and another sailed from St. Katherine's wharf with crowded decks, and a bright sun over our heads, casting its animating glory upon tower and town, over the majestic river, and the green country to which, anon, we emerged. We swept under bridge after bridge, and saw the mighty metropolis, with its vast wilderness of houses, wharfs, warehouses, and great public buildings, rapidly glide away behind us; above all the towers and spires of churches St. Paul's lifting its solemn dome and glittering cross; and then the villages, splendid villas, and beautiful gardens, with the tall robinias in their new leaves, and covered with their snow-white masses of flowers, in gay succession;—Lambeth, Vauxhall, Chelsea, Battersea, Fulham, Putney, Barnes, Chiswick, Kew, Richmond!—it was a fair and promising scene.

The people on board were well-dressed. There were some portly, middle-aged dames, with gold watches at their sides, and clad in richest silks; and there were some as lovely young ones as London could shew. You were sure that there were plenty of the very-well-to-do-in-the-world about you, if there were none of the very refined; substantial tradespeople, that would have the best the world could procure in eating, drinking, and dressing. And there was a knot of Germans too; men with great mustachios and laced coats; and damsels from whose tongues the strong, homely, expressive German speech seemed to fall wondrous softly. It was quite

an attractive circumstance: for our fair friends, being just in the fresh fervour of studying "Die Deutche Sprache," and reading Faust, imagined every thing in them interesting, and doubtless fancied them just such characters as Goethe would have drawn much out of. All seemed promising, when lo! we were at Richmond, and every thing had been only orderly, cheerful, and nothing more.

Ah well! this was English decorum on a Sunday; if it were not very piquant, it was at least, very commendable. We stepped on shore, lunched, strolled about on the terrace, amid streams of gay people; sat on one of the seats, and gazed over that vast expanse of rich woodland, meads, and villas; wandered down the green meadows towards Petersham and Twickenham, into the woods below the Star-and-Garter, and back to the packet. And now we were destined to see the character of the common people on a Sunday jaunt. The moment the packet began to move, it began to rain, and all the way it rained! rained! rained! The ladies took refuge in the cabin. What a cabin! There were all the sober, orderly throng of the morning, metamorphosed by the power of strong drink into a rackety, roaring, drinking, smoking, insolent, and jammed-together crew. The cabin was crushing full. The stairs were densely packed with people. One of the ladies made a precipitate retreat upon deck, and there, with only the protection of her parasol, stood with the patience of a martyr and the temper of a saint, all the weary length of the voyage, through dripping, drenching, never-ceasing rain! The other, with more fear of her silks and satins, and determined to see what such a crowd *was*, persisted in staying below. It was an act which only the highest heroism could have maintained. There was a group taking tea at a side-

table, all well, very well-dressed people, and holding a conversation of such language! such sentiments! such anecdotes! and accompanied with such bursts of laughter! at what must have stricken people with any sense of decency, dumb! And then there were those spruce youths, so modest in the morning, now drinking pots of porter and smoking cigars. Yes, smoking cigars, though the laws of the cabin, blazoned aloft, proclaimed—"No smoking allowed in the cabin!"—Spite of all cabin, or cabinet, or parliamentary laws, they drank, they smoked, they rolled voluminous clouds from one to another; and when requested to desist, said—"O, certainly! It is perfectly insufferable for people to smoke in such company; they ought to be turned out." And then all laughed together at their own wit. The captain was called, and begged to enforce his own law; and they cried, "O yes, captain! certainly, certainly," and then laughed again; and the captain smiled, and withdrew: for what captain could seriously forbid smoke and drink that were purchased of himself?

These drapers' apprentices and shopmen, for such they seemed, gloried in annoying the whole company; and for this purpose, they placed themselves by the open window, so that the draft carried the smoke across all the place. There did but prove to be one real gentleman in the whole troop, who accommodated the lady with a seat—for not a soul besides would stir—and said, as he saw her annoyance; for with all her endurance, this was visible—"Madam, what a hell we have got into!"

And such, thought I, is a specimen of the populace of the mighty and enlightened London! Truly the schoolmaster has work enough yet before him.

It was a party in a parlour,
  Crammed just as they on land are crammed;

Some sipping punch, some sipping tea,
All noisy, and all damned!

Our fair friends wished to see the character of the common people in their Sunday recreations, and they saw here a specimen that, I feel persuaded, will satisfy them for life. One, at least, saw this; for the other stood stoically silent upon deck, and saw nothing but rain! rain! rain! O the weary time of that voyage! amid oaths and clamour, vulgarity in all its shapes of swaggering, or maudlin foolishness, riot of action, and indecorum of speech, drinking, smoking, crushing, laughing, swearing,—a confusion carried along the fair Thames, and into the heart of London, worse than that of Babel, and worthy of Pandemonium. How many thousands of such Sunday revellers, steeped in drink, and roystering vulgarity, were pouring into that mighty heart of civilization and Christian knowledge, at the moment we joyfully skipped up Westminster-stairs, and thanked heaven that the Goethe experiment was over.

What London exhibits on its own great scale, all our populous manufacturing towns exhibit, each in its own degree. It is curious to observe from the earliest hour of a Sunday morning, in fine weather, what groups are pouring out into the country. There are mechanics who, in their shops and factories,—while they have been caged up by their imperious necessities during the week, and have only obtained thence sights of the clear blue sky above, of the green fields laughing far away, or have only caught the wafting of a refreshing gale on their fevered cheek as they hurried homeward to a hasty meal, or back again to the incarceration of Mammon,—have had their souls inflamed with desires for breaking away into the free country. These have been planning, day after day, whither they shall go on

Sunday. To what distant village; to what object of attraction. There have come visions of a neat country alehouse to them; its clean hearth, sanded floor; its capital ale, and aromatic pipe after a long walk; its pure unadulterated fare, sweet bread, savoury rashers of bacon, beef steaks and onions, and all with most mouth-watering odours. Others have seen clear hurrying trout-streams, or deep still fish-ponds, lying all along wild moors, or amid tangled woods; and they have determined to be with them. They will take angle and net; they will strip off clothes, and take the trout with their hands, from under the grassy banks of their little swift streams. They will have a dash at the squire's carp, when he and all his people are at church. And, in other seasons, mushroom gathering, and nutting, and all kinds of what is called Sabbath-breaking, come before them with an unconquerable impetus. For to their minds—neglected, but full of strong desires and pent-up energies—nature's delights, wild pursuits, bodily refreshments, and the enjoyment of one day's full freedom from towns, red walls, dry pavements, shops, masters, and even wives and children, are mixed up into a strange, but wonderfully bewitching excitement. These are going off, before the world in general is awake, at four, five, or six o'clock in a morning, in clusters of twos and threes, sixes and sevens, with long and eager strides, stout sticks in their hands, and faces set towards the country with a determined expression of fresh-air hungriness. And there, again, are going the bird-catchers; two or three of them, with two or three children with them, perhaps. They have some far-off green lane, or furzy common, or airy down in their mind, to which they are hastening with their cages, carried under a piece of green baize, or blinded with a handkerchief. All

the way will they stalk on at a four-mile rate, and these little lads—the least not more than five years old—will go on trotting after them, and never think of weariness till all the sport is over, and they are making their way homeward in the evening. Then shall you see them dragged along by one of their father's hands; for the men will not slacken pace for them, but pull them along with them; and you will see those little legs go on, trot, trot, trot, till you think they will actually be worn to the stumps before they reach home. These men and eager lads you will find in some solitary spot seven or eight miles off, if you go out so far, seated silently under a tall hedge or old tree, or in some moorland thicket, watching their apparatus, which is placed at a distance; their tame bird, of the species they are seeking to take, chained by its leg to a crossed stick, or a bough thrust into the ground. There it is, hopping about and chirping in the sunshine; and around stand cages containing other decoy birds, and other cages ready to receive the unsuspicious birds, that, attracted by the hopping and chirping of their captive kinsmen, will presently come and alight near them, and speedily get entangled in the limed twigs that are disposed about, or will find the net that is ready spread for them, come swoop over them. Every person who has walked the streets of London, has seen the crowds of these little captives, larks, woodlarks, linnets, goldfinches, nightingales, etc., in the shops, which have been thus caught on all the great heaths and downs, for twenty miles round the metropolis, by fowlers, who are nearly always thus employed there.

Then, again, you see another Sunday class; tradesmen, shopkeepers, and their assistants and apprentices,—all those who have friends in the

country,—on horseback or in gigs, driving off to spend the day with those that come occasionally and pay them a visit at markets and fairs. The faces of these are set for farm and other country-houses within twenty miles round. There is not a horse or gig to be had for love or money at any of the livery-stables on a Sunday. These hebdomadal rusticators,—these good dinner-eaters, fruit-devourers, curd-and-cream-consumers, pipe-smokers, and loungers in gardens, garden-arbours, crofts, orchards,—these soi-disant judges of cattle, crops, dogs, guns, game,—these haunters of country-houses, complimenters of country beauties, and lovers of good country fare,—have got them all. Yes, yes, many a pleasant Sunday in the country do these men spend after their fashion,—none of the worst, if none of the holiest; and yet they go to the village church too sometimes, and wonder that so fine a preacher should be hidden in such a place. Towards nine or ten o'clock in the evening, they will be pouring back into the town as blithely as they rolled out in the morning, being now primed with all those good things that lured them away so sharply after breakfast.

And, when they were gone, how sunnily and cheerily passed the day in the town; the merry bells all ringing, the gay people all abroad, streaming along the smooth pavements to church or chapel, or for the forenoon and evening promenade, in their fresh and handsome attire. Such troops of lovely women, such counterpoising numbers of goodly and well-dressed men: all squalor, and poverty, and trouble, and distress, shrunk backward into the alleys and dens out of sight; all cares and tradesmanship shut up in the closed shops and warehouses; and nothing but ease, leisure, bravery of equipment, and shew of wealth, walking in the face of the sun, as if

there was no reason why they should not walk there for ever. The very beggars are gone, like swallows in autumn—not one to be seen, except in the secret rendezvous where they pass one long day of luxurious idleness. The barrack has sent forth its troop of soldiers in their rich full-dress. They have marched with sounding music to the great church, with their usual crowd of boys and idle men after them. And then, morning, noon, or evening, you have seen a group of people collect in the market-place, or some open street, that has grown and grown into a large, dense crowd; and then you have seen a man suddenly appear, with bare head, and book in hand, in the centre. This is some field-preacher; one of many hundreds that on this day, in towns, villages, rural lanes, or on heaths and commons, go out to preach to them who are too indifferent, or too shabby, to come into a respectable place of worship.

We often think how strange it would have been to have lived in the days of the Reformation, or of the Puritans, when men full of zeal went to and fro, through the length and breadth of the land, to denounce the dominant form of religion, and preach repentance and salvation from the Bible. We have not the opposition and the persecution now, or we should have just such men and such scenes. There is such freedom for every man to choose his own mode of worship, and the religiously inclined have so many modes to choose from, and to associate them with a circle of people so much after their own hearts, that they have no impulse to seek further; no, not to seek after those who have no particular desire to be found; they think it enough that they have chapel-room and open doors for those who will come. It is chiefly, therefore, the poor that are left to

seek after the poor; that feel it incumbent to “go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in.” The mechanic, who has been labouring hard all the week in his worldly vocation, now shaves and washes, and dresses the best he may, and goes forth, fearing not the sneers and the scorn of the great and learned, of the worldly-wise and genteel, but comes into the very face of them, and before their gay windows in the open square; often before the lofty church and majestic cathedral, whose organ-tones are deeply pealing in his ears. There he lifts up his homely features, his rudely clipped head; there he lifts up his horny hand, that has for many a year dealt sturdy strokes to inanimate matter, and now deals, with tenfold zeal, strokes as hard to hearts as hard. There he lifts up his voice in no finely modulated or practised tones, but with earnest pleadings and awful threatenings and unfoldings of God’s judgments on the wicked and careless; and then, with as earnest and affectionate expositions of his mercies, arrests, terrifies, melts, and fills with new sensations and desires the hearts of his fellows in the lowest regions of human life, who have lived beyond the sound of heavenly promises, and of God’s love and fear in a great measure, “because no one cared for their souls.”

The wise may wonder; the learned may curl the lip of classical pride; the gay and the happy, who live in splendid houses, and worship in splendid pews and beneath high and arched roofs, may pass by, and not even glance on the poor illiterate preacher and his spell-bound audience; but that man is, after all, a patriot and a scholar; a good subject of the realm—a good servant of heaven; and will probably effect more real benefit in one day, than a dozen of us, who think sufficiently well of our services to the

commonwealth, shall effect in all our lives: and till some comprehensive plan is adopted, by which the Sabbath may lay all its advantages, all its holy peace, all its knowledge and heavenly fruition, before every man, woman and child, in this great empire, he must and shall do what he can to supply the deficiency. With all his ignorance,—and he has much,—he has learned what is necessary for the good of his own spirit, and the strength of natural sympathy has taught him the way to communicate it to the hearts of his fellows. He knows the language, the style, the tone of sentiment and the species of argument that the soonest reaches them. He knows their besetments and their wants, for he has been pursued by the same needs, tainted by the same corruptions, baptized into the same distresses; he has an experimental knowledge that no man of another class can have. With all his extravagance,—and he has much,—he has not half the amount that we daily see in more dignified places; and for the wildness, the error, the eccentricity of his doctrines, ah! how much more readily could we match them in those after whom carriages roll, and the world runs, and on whom honours and wealth are heaped as an inadequate reward. See there, how he extends his arms! how he beats the air! how he strains every muscle, and exerts every fibre of his frame, till the perspiration rolls from his heated brow; how he thunders, and makes the whole great area ring with the outbreak of his terrors, his adjurations, and his appeals! And yet, from the simple table on which he is mounted shall no folly proceed, that has not its counterpart in the most dignified pulpit, wholly freed—and that is a world of advantage—from the freezing indifference that fills thousands with its torpidity.

For the seamen, London and Liverpool, and other

ports, offer their floating or seamen's chapels, where they may hear the gospel preached in a language that goes straight to their hearts and understandings, but which a landsman would attempt in vain. Like the lower orders in general, they have a language and an experience of their own, and the man who preaches to them in another language, and with other imagery, cannot keep alive their attention, however eloquent, or however learned; and he who attempts their language without a practical knowledge of their life, only excites their ridicule. It is even necessary, occasionally, to accommodate the language of Scripture to their ideas and experience. A very popular preacher once requested permission to address the sailors in their floating chapel at Liverpool, and, attempting seamen's language, told them that he who secured an interest in Christ, cast anchor on a rock! At once all eyebrows were elevated in amazement, and broad grins overspread every face. "Hear him! Hear him!" they cried, one to another, "he talks of casting anchor *on a rock*!" Yet there was no uncommon hardness, or propensity to scoffing in these men; on the contrary, it was admirable to see, when Captain Scoresby, the well-known northern voyager, addressed them, how they kindled with interest, and melted down in emotion: when he told them how Christ preached in a ship, how he loved the mariners of his days, the tears started from their eyes, and rolled over scores of hardy cheeks that had faced the fiercest gales, and been tanned by the hottest suns. It was, and is still, I doubt not, delightful to see such an audience. There was the smart sailor and his smart lass; others with their wives and families; and old men who had spent the greatest portion of a long life on the seas. Such a collection of black and curly heads, of bushy

whiskers, of the thin and white hair of age, of eyes gleaming with youth and life, or dimmed by the extremity of years!—such an intent and childlike throng of listeners! all so little accustomed to artifice,—to conceal or feel shame for their emotions,—that the changes of their expressions were as rapid and striking as those of the sun and wind on their own element. There sate some happy fathers, with their children on their knees, as though they saw so little of them, had found them so lately, or must leave them so soon, that they could not have them near enough. There sate strong men, touched to the depth of their hearts by the pathos of the preacher, leaning against the side of the cabin, and weeping unrestrained tears, or listening, with lips apart, in breathless attention; and there sate women, who, when winds and tempests were mentioned, turned a fond, anxious look to some dear one sitting by them; and others, who when the voyagers at sea were prayed for, clasped their hands, and looked to heaven unutterable things. Great must be the comfort and the blessing of thus bringing Christianity to the knowledge of our seafaring men. Great has been its effect amongst the fishermen of Cornwall, as any one may see, who will visit the crowded chapels of St. Ives, and other places.

But there is still another class of preachers that may be encountered on Sundays: the disciples of Irving. None of your simple mechanics, but gentlemen—gentlemen in appearance, in manners, in education. You will see such a one pulling out his pocket Bible, in some public situation, and beginning to address the two or three that happen to stand near. The singularity of the thing soon attracts others; there begins to be a moving from all parts towards that spot, till there is at length a large and

dense crowd. There, in the midst of this wondering and promiscuous circle, in the most cultivated tones, with the most proper action, and in the purest language, you hear, perhaps, the Honourable and Reverend —— himself, "dealing damnation round the land;" depicting his audience in the most fearful colours, as fallen, utterly corrupt, blackened with every imaginable sin, and wandering blindfold on the very brink of hell. In the opinion of some of these preachers, all the world is lying in ignorance and sin; all other preachers of all other creeds are blind leaders of the blind; to him and his few coadjutors alone has the mystery of godliness been revealed; "they are the men, and wisdom shall die with them." I must confess that to me, this cold Calvinism, this abusive and declamatory zeal, though coming from very gentlemanly mouths, is not a thousandth part so attractive as the warm-hearted, liberal, and affectionate addresses of the illiterate mechanic. Nay, to me it is excessively repulsive; and I would much rather find myself in some far-off village, in some green lane, or on the heath, where such are holding their summer camp-meeting.

> I love the sound of hymns
> On some bright Sabbath morning, on the moor
> Where all is still save praise; and where hard by
> The ripe grain shakes its bright beard in the sun:
> The wild bee hums more solemnly: the deep sky;
> The fresh green grass, the sun, and sunny brook,—
> All look as if they knew the day, the hour,
> And felt with man the need and joy of thanks.
>
> PHILIP BAILEY'S *Festus*.

There at least are warmth and enthusiasm; there at least, if there be extravagance, is also an exhibition of much character, and plenty of the picturesque. A

crowd of rustic people is assembled; a wagon is drawn thither for a stage, and in it stand men with black skull-caps, or coloured handkerchiefs tied upon their heads to prevent taking cold after their violent exertions; men of those grave and massy, or thin, worn, and sharp features, that tell of strong, rude intellects, or active and consuming spirits; men in whose bright, quick eyes, or still, deep gaze, from beneath shaggy brows, you read passions that will lighten, or a shrewdness that will tell with strong effect. In their addresses you are continually catching the most picturesque expressions, the most unlooked-for illustrations,—often the most irresistibly amusing. I heard one edifying his audience with an account of the apples of the Dead Sea, gathered most likely, at a tenth transmission, from Adam Clarke's Commentaries. "Ay," said he, "sin is fair to look at, but foul to taste. It is like those apples that grow by the *Red Sea*. They are yellow as gold on one side, and rosy-cheeked as a fair maid of a morning on the other; but bite them,—yes, I say bite them, and they are full of pepper and mustard!"

Another was talking of God's goodness, and applying Christ's illustration: "'If you ask your father for bread, will he give you a stone?' Now, my brethren I don't mean a stone of bread,—Christ didn't mean a stone of bread: for, may be, it was not sold by the stone in his time; and he would not be a bad father neither, that gave you a stone of bread at a time; but I mean a stone from the road,—a real pebble, as cold as charity, as bare as the back of my hand, and as hard as the heart of a sinner."

Now, none but those who had known the immense value of a stone of bread would be likely to think of such a thing, or to guard against such a mistake. But with such laughable errors, with much ignorance and

outrageous cant, there is often mixed up a rude intellectual strength, and a freshness of thought that never knew the process of taming and trammelling called education, and that fears no criticism; and flashes of poetical light, that please the more for the rudeness of their accompaniment. There are women, too, that exhort in soft voices and pathetic tones on such occasions; and, suddenly the crowd will divide itself into several companies, and go singing to different parts of the field. Their hymns have a wild vivacity, a metaphoric boldness, and strange as it may seem, a greater spirituality about them than those of any other English sect that I have come in contact with. It is well known that they are set to some of the finest and liveliest, and most touching song-tunes; and hence, perhaps partly their startling effect; having divested themselves of that dry and dolorous monotony that hangs about sectarian hymns in general. They describe the Christian life under the figure of battles and campaigns, with "Christ their conquering captain" at their head; as pilgrimages, and night-watches; and hence their addresses are full of the most vivid imagery. I well remember, in the dusk of a fine summer evening, the moon hanging in the far western sky, the dark leaves of the brookside alders rustling in the twilight air, hearing, from the dim heath where they were holding their camp-meetings, the wild sound of one of these hymns. It was the dialogue of a spirit questioning and answering itself in the passage of death and the entrance into the happy land, and the chorused words of "All is well!—All is well!" came over the shadowy waste with an unearthly effect.

Singing then, such hymns,—but on these occasions chiefly of supplication or triumph,—they kneel down, each company in a circle; the leaders pray;

and it is curious to see what looks of holy jealousy are cast from one circle to another, as the voice of one leader predominates over those of the others by its vehemence, its loudness, or its eloquence; drawing speedily away all the audience of the less gifted. It is scarcely now to be expected that we shall ever find a Whitefield, a Wesley, a Fox, or a Bunyan, on such an occasion, but from the effect of the enthusiasm, the earnestness, the wild energy and rude eloquence, that I *have* seen in a few humble men, I can well imagine, with Lord Byron, what must be the impression made by one strong mind under the broad blue sky, and amid the accompanying picturesqueness of scene and people.

But let us away into the far, far country! Into the still, pure, unadulterated country. Ah! here indeed is a Sabbath! What a sunny peace, what a calm yet glad repose lies on its fair hills; over all its solemn woods! How its flowery dales, and deep, secluded valleys reflect the holy tranquillity of heaven! It is morning; and the sun comes up the sky as if he knew it was a day of universal pause in the workings of the world; he shines over the glittering dews, and green leaves, and ten thousand blossoms; and the birds fill the blue fresh air with a rapture of music. The earth looks new and beautiful as on the day of its creation; but it is as full of rest as if it drew near to its close—all its revolutions past, all its turbulence hushed, all its mighty griefs healed, its mysterious destinies accomplished; and the light of eternity about to break over it with a new and imperishable power. Man rests from his labours, and every thing rests with him. There lie the weary steeds that have dragged the chain, and smarted under the lash—that have pulled the plough and the ponderous wagon, or flown over hill and dale at man's bidding; there they

lie, on the slope of the sunny field; and the very sheep and cattle seem imbued with their luxurious enjoyment of rest. The farmer has been walking into his fields, looking over this gate and that fence, into enclosures of grass, mottled with flowers like a carpet, or rich green corn growing almost visibly; at his cattle and his flock; and now he comes back with leisurely steps, and enters the shady quiet of his house. And it *is* a shady quiet. The sun glances about its porch, and flickers amongst the leaves on the wall, and the sparrows chirp, and fly to and fro; but the dog lies and slumbers on the step of the door, or only raises his head to snap at the flies that molest him. The very cat, coiled up on a sunbright border in the garden, sleeps voluptuously:—within, all is cleanness and rest. There is none of the running and racketing of the busy week-day: the pressing of curds, and shaping and turning of cheese; the rolling of the barrel-churn; the scouring of pails; the pumping, and slopping, and working, and chattering, and singing, and scolding of dairymaids. All that can be dispensed with, is, and what must be done is done quietly, and is early away. There is a clean, cool parlour; the open window lets in the odour of the garden—the yet cool and delicious odour, and the hum of bees. Flowers stand in their pots in the window; gathered flowers stand on the breakfast table; and the farmer's comely wife, already dressed for the day, as she sees him come in, sits down to pour out his coffee. Over the croft-gate the labourers are leaning, talking of the last week's achievements, and those of the week to come; and in many a cottage garden the cottagers, with their wives and children, are wandering up and down, admiring the growth of this and that; and every one settles in his own mind, that his cabbages, and peas, and beans

are the best in the whole country; and that as for currants, gooseberries, apricots, and strawberries, there never were such crops since trees and bushes grew.

But the bells ring out from the old church tower. The pastor is already issuing from his pleasant parsonage; groups of peasantry are already seen streaming over the uplands towards the village. In the lanes, gay ribbons and Sunday-gowns glance from between the trees, and every house sends forth its inhabitants to worship. Blessings on those old grey fabrics, that stand on many a hill and in many a lowly hollow, all over this beloved country; for much as we reprobate that system of private or political patronage by which unqualified, unholy, and unchristian men have sometimes been thrust into their ancient pulpits, I am of Sir Walter Scott's opinion, that no places are so congenial to the holy simplicity of Christian worship as they are. They have an air of antiquity about them—a shaded sanctity, and stand so venerably amid the most English scenes, and the tombs of generations of the dead, that we cannot enter them without having our imaginations and our hearts powerfully impressed with every feeling and thought that can make us love our country, and yet feel that it is not our abiding place. Those antique arches, those low massy doors, were raised in days that are long gone by; around these walls, nay, beneath our very feet, sleep those who, in their generations, helped, each in his little sphere, to build up England to her present pitch of greatness. We catch glimpses of that deep veneration, of that unambitious simplicity of mind and manner that we would fain hold fast amid our growing knowledge, and its inevitable remodelling of the whole framework of society. We are made to feel

earnestly the desire to pluck the spirit of faith, the integrity of character, and the whole heart of love to kin and country, out of the ignorance and blind subjection of the past. Therefore is it that I have always loved the village church, that I have delighted to stroll far through the summer fields; and hear still onward its bells ringing happily; to enter and sit down amongst its rustic congregation,—better pleased with their murmur of responses, and their artless but earnest chant, than with all the splendour and parade of more lofty fabrics. Therefore is it that I long to see the people rescued from the thraldom of aristocratic patronage, that they may select at their own will, the pious and pure hearted to fill every pulpit in the land, and station in every parish a lover of God, a lover of the country, and a lover of the poor.

But Sunday morning is past: the afternoon is rolling away; but it shall not roll away without its dower of happiness shed on every down, and into every beautiful vale of this fair kingdom. Closed are the doors of the church, but opened are those of thousands and tens of thousands of dwellings to receive friends and kindred. And around the pleasant tea-table, happy groups are gathering in each other's houses, freed from the clinging, pressing, enslaving cares of the six days; and sweetly, and full of renewing strength to the heart, does the evening there roll away. And does it not roll as sweetly where, by many a cottage-door, the aged grandfather and grandmother sit with two generations about them, and bask in another glorious Sabbath sunset? And is it not sweet where friends stroll through the delicious fields, in high or cheerful talk; along the green lane, or broom-engoldened hill-side; or down into the woodland valley, where the waters run clear

and chimingly, amid the dipping grass and the brooklime; and the yellow beams of the descending sun glance serenely amongst the trees? And is it not sweet where, on some sequestered stile, sit two happy lovers, or where they stray along some twilight path, and the woodbine and the wild-rose are drooping their flowery boughs over them, while earth and heaven, supremely lovely in themselves, take new and divine hues from their own passionate spirits; and youth and truth are theirs: the present is theirs in love, the future is theirs in high confidence: all that makes glorious the life of angels is theirs for the time. Yes! all through the breadth of this great land,—through its cities, its villages, its fair fields, its liberated millions are walking in the eye of heaven, drinking in its sublime calm, refreshed by its gales, soothed by the peaceful beauty of the earth. There is a pause of profound, holy tranquillity, in which twilight drops down upon innumerable roofs, and prayers ascend from countless hearths in city and in field, on heath and mountain,—and then, 'tis gone; and the Sabbath is ended.

But blessings, and ten thousand blessings be upon that day; and let myriads of thanks stream up to the Throne of God, for this divine and regenerating gift to man. As I have sate in some flowery dale, with the sweetness of May around me, on a week-day, I have thought of all the millions of immortal creatures toiling for their daily life in factories and shops, amid the whirl of machinery and the greedy cravings of mercantile gain, and suddenly this golden interval of time has lain before me in all its brightness,—a time, and a perpetually recurring time, in which the iron grasp of earthly tyranny is loosed, and Peace, Faith, and Freedom, the angels of God, come down and walk once more amongst men!

Ten thousand blessings on this day, the friend of man and beast. The bigot would rob it of its healthful freedom, on the one hand, and coop man up in his work-a-day dungeons, and cause him to walk with downcast eyes and demure steps; and the libertine would desecrate all its sober decorum on the other. God, and the sound heart and sterling sense of Englishmen, preserve it from both these evils! Let us still avoid Puritan rigidity, and French dissipation. Let our children and our servants, and those who toil for us in vaults, and shops, and factories, between the intervals of solemn worship have freedom to walk in the face of heaven and the beauty of earth, for in the great temple of nature stand together, Health and Piety. For myself, I speak from experience, it has always been my delight to go out on a Sunday, and like Isaac, meditate in the fields, and especially, in the sweet tranquillity and amid the gathering shadows of evening; and never in temple or in closet, did more hallowed influences fall upon my heart. With the twilight and the hush of earth, a tenderness has stolen upon me; a desire for every thing pure and holy; a love for every creature on which God has stamped the wonder of his handiwork; but especially for every child of humanity; and then have I been made to feel that there is no Oratory like that which has heaven itself for its roof, and no teaching like the teaching of the SPIRIT which created, and still overshadows the world with its Infinite wings.



CHAPTER XV.
CHEAP PLEASURES OF COUNTRY LIFE.

To the real lover of the country there needs no great events, no exciting circumstances to effect his happiness. The freshness of the country, and the profoundness of its quiet, are to him full of happiness. The whole round of the seasons, the passage of every day, the still walk amongst fields and woods, and by running waters, are to him sources of perpetual pleasures. When “the winter is over and gone,” he sees with joy the increased light amongst the breaking clouds and dispersing fogs; he feels with delight the milder temperature; he passes by, and observes the first bursting from the warm southern banks of green, luxuriant plants,—the arum, the mercury, the crisp chervil, the wrinkled leaves of the primrose, the blossomed branch of the apricot and peach on the sunny walls of the cottage, and the almond in the garden and shrubbery, like a tree of rosy sunshine, ere a leaf is yet seen; these things he sees with a feeling that has more true delight in it than ever was known to city drawing-

room or palace. To me, the most ordinary walk in the country is, and always has been a luxury. I remember what joy these things gave me when a boy, and now they give me again a boy's heart. I remember the enjoyment I experienced, when an old sportsman used to take his gun on his arm on a Saturday afternoon, when my village school made holiday, and led me up long lanes, between high mossy banks, where the little runnels come rushing and chiming along, between high, overhanging hedges; and through wide, still, shady woods; and across fields deep with greenest grass, and bright with sunshine, and all the glory of spring; and everywhere pointed out to me the nests of birds, each built in its peculiar situation; the robin and the yellow-hammer on the bank; blackbirds and throstles in the hedges, or under the roots of some old tree overhanging a stream, or set amongst the boughs of the young fir-trees in the plantations. I remember how I used to delight in the depth of rich grass and flowery weeds in the open fields and along the sunshiny hedges; in the hedges themselves, all clad in their young leaves, sprinkled with glittering morning dews, and perhaps waving with the utmost prodigality of hawthorn bloom. I remember too, with what earnest delight I used to gaze on the bushes of the wild-rose briar, and admire the singular beauty of its finely-cut and emerald-green leaves, amongst which the whitethroat framed its gauzy nest. All this I remember: and while I think of it, I seem to hear the lark singing in the clear air above me, as he used to do, with a

> Joy we never can come near:

and I now see more clearly what it was that produced such an effect upon me. It was that beauty,

that wide-spreading, cheering, heart-strengthening beauty—which God hath showered on the face of the earth, to make us feel his presence in his works; and to learn to love him as we go along the most solitary paths, and to rejoice in his goodness, where the world comes not between us and the perception of it. It was that beauty, which is indeed a revelation from heaven, that then made itself felt in my young heart, and has only grown more dear to me every year and every day, and I trust has not been wanting of all that good effect which it is intended it should produce, by weaning us from worldly pleasures, by bringing us to feel habitually the presence of love, and providence, and divine purity, as we go along in solitude and thought; in short, in keeping alive in our hearts the freshness of their feelings and the strength of their better hopes. All this I remember, and it is like the light of a perpetual summer morning in the far-off horizon of memory; and I say, all these delicious feelings have gone with me through life, and do, and will, go with all those who love nature with a filial love.

The first glimpses of spring have in our eyes and hearts an indescribable charm. There is a freshness and a mellowness in the earth then, after the frosts and rains of winter, that give a beauty to it that it possesses at no other period of the year. I never see it, and smell the odour of the upturned soil, without seeming to feel renewed our ancient kinship with the earth whence we sprung, which gives us such manifold blessings all our natural lives, and takes us to its peaceful bosom when we lie down wearied, wasted, and heart-worn. When the labourer cuts his ditches, and piles up his banks anew, there is a beauty in the dark, clear, smooth earth, which his spade cleaves so shiningly. As the children of the

village hunt over the steep banks for violets or snail-shells, or the early robin's nest, your eye is made conscious of the beauty of those banks, with their crumbling mould and springing plants. As the drainer cuts his drain in the greensward of the meadows; as the ploughman turns up the broad lea, all is rich and beautiful. And then, as the hedges and trees clothe themselves in their new and delicate foliage; as the winds come singing sonorously; as the grass and flowers spring beneath your feet; as April now smiles out joyously and bright, and now broods still and beneficent, with a gloom in its sky so unlike the gloom of autumn or winter—a gloom casting a dark shade on the distant landscape, while, in other quarters, the light comes bursting and gushing through the thinner places of the clouds; and fields lie hushed amid light mists, and scattered with a silvery dew in such a living, prolific greenness, that you feel that the birth of millions of flowers is rapidly maturing; that violets *must* be springing in legions along the hedges and in the copses; and that the old, yellow English daffodil is nodding in tufts in village crofts, and over the margins of mossy wells.

At such times, so deeply do we feel the entrancing influence of spring, that we cannot help breaking out into an affectionate apostrophe in praise of her:

> All sadness from my heart is gone—
> All sadness, and all fears,
> Till I forget that thou art one
> Who metest out our years.

And then, when May comes in, and we walk abroad some fine, sunshiny, breezy, yet balmy day,—balmy in hollows and dells, and along southern uplands; fresh blowing on the ridges of the downs—breezy in the forest glades; and hear the ringing notes of the blackbird and thrush, and the lark

calling to high heaven itself in uncontrolable joy; and see peasants out in fields and gardens, women, from the lady of the hall to the dame of the cottage, drawn out to be genial lookers-on, and directors in the renewal of flower-borders, in the sowing of seeds and planting of shrubs; and see old men sitting on stone or wooden benches on the warm side of the house, or leading some little child by the hand down the lane, —two links come strangely together, from the extremities of the chain of human life; one not having yet arrived at the troubles of humanity, the other past them; yet what a wide, dark care-land lying between them!—to see groups of children scattered here and there over the happy fields, tracing the hedge-sides, or the clear streams, or running to secure the first cowslips, while their clear voices come ringing from the distant steeps and hill-tops, why—there is happiness to the nature-loving and man-loving spirit, that is as far beyond the power of human expression, as God's goodness is beyond mortal comprehension.

There is a season of early spring marked by a succession of flowers that has something in it to me more tenderly poetical than any other part of the year. It is that between the appearance of the snowdrop and the cowslip, with all the intermediate links of the crocus, the violet, the primrose, the anemone, and the bluebell. They have, in themselves, such delicate grace, and are surrounded in our minds by so many poetical associations, and they mark the fleet passing of a period of so much anticipation, that they are seen with a delight at their re-appearance, and a regret that they must so soon be gone by. Then, too, they have the world almost all to themselves. They are the few beloved children of the early time. All their more gorgeous

and joyous kindred are still slumbering in the earth. They come forth and salute us amid the naked landscape, amid wild, chill winds and beating rain. When the cowslip disappears it is no longer so; all is greenness and sunshine; a thousand blossoms hang on the forest bough, or flutter on the earth; and the delicacy of our perceptions is lost in the profusion of beauty.

But then, in that calmer season, when May has put on all its wealth and splendour; when the fields are deep with grass, and golden and purple with flowers; when the hawthorn is a miracle of beauty and sweetness, perfuming the whole air, what paradises of delight are gardens—warm, flowery, odorous—happy with the hum of bees: and old orchards, where you may witness what Coleridge so feelingly describes in a noble blank-verse letter to his brother:—

> As now, on some delicious eve,
> We in our sweet sequestered orchard plot
> Sit on the tree crooked earthward; whose old boughs,
> That hang above us in an arborous roof,
> Stirred by the faint gale of departing May,
> Send their loose blossoms slanting o'er our heads!

And thus it is through every season. In June and July, the glow and perpetual beauty of the country; the abundance of grass and flowers; the charm of river sides, of angling in woodland streams; the magnificence of thunder-storms; the breaking out of coolness and freshness after them; the delights of running waters; bathing and sailing; the fragrance of fields and gardens; the beauty of summer moonlight; the picturesque cheerfulness of hay-harvest; the enjoyment of rich mountain scenery; rambling amongst the brightness of morning dews, along valleys, past the outstretched feet of heathy hills;

lying on some moorland slope conscious of all the singular hush and glow of noon; watching all the varying lights and hues, listening to the varied sounds of evening in glens, now basking in the yellow calm sunshine, now deep in gloom; amid towering crags, by the dash of waters, or on some airy ridge that catches the last glow of heaven, taking in a vast stretch of scenes that defy alike the power of pen and pencil.

> Ah! slowly sink
> Behind the western ridge, thou glorious sun!
> Shine in the slant beams of the sinking orb,
> Ye purple heath-flowers! richlier burn, ye clouds!
> Live in the yellow light, ye distant groves!
> And kindle, thou blue ocean! So my friend
> Struck with deep joy may stand, as I have stood,
> Silent with swimming sense; yea, gazing round
> On the wild landscape, gaze till all doth seem
> Less gross than bodily; a living thing
> Which acts upon the mind, and with such hues
> As clothe the Almighty Spirit when he makes
> Spirits perceive his presence.
>
> *Coleridge.*

And then the corn-harvest, with all its happy human groups, and rich colours; the calm, steady splendour of autumn days; the deepening silence of the decaying year, its returning storms and pictorial tints; the very gloom and awfulness with which the year retreats, sending the spirit inwards. In all these scenes and changes, the soul of the lover of Nature luxuriates; and even finds beauty and strength in the stern visitations of winter. He goes with Nature in all her rounds, and rejoices with her in all. There needs for him no great event, no combination of stirring circumstances; it is not even necessary to him that he be poet, or painter, or sportsman; if he have not the

skill or faculty of any, he has the spirit of all. For him there are spread out in earth and heaven, pictures such as never graced the galleries of art. He sees splendours, and scenes painted by the hand of the Almighty, for whose faintest imitations the connoisseur would pay the price of an estate. To him every landscape presents beauty; to him every gale breathes pleasure; and every change of scene or season is a new unfolding of enjoyment. He knows nothing of the heart-burnings and jealousies which infest crowded places. He is not saddened by the sight of wickedness, or the experience of ingratitude and deceit. He is exempt from the *ennui* of polished society; the sneers of its unkindly criticism; and the hollowness of its professions. He converses with the Great Spirit which lives through the universe, and fills the hearts that open to its influence with purity, humanity, the sweetest sympathies, the most holy desires; and overshadows them with that profound peace and that inward satisfaction, which are themselves the most substantial happiness.

That these are no vain imaginations, but positive realities, scattered abroad for universal acceptance as much as the blessings of air and sunshine, we have only to open the works of our best writers to be convinced of;—to see how the expression of their happiness breaks from them continually. It is this overflowing and irrepressible gladness of a heart resting on nature which gives such a charm to the writings of White and Evelyn, and good old Izaak Walton. And the poets—they are full of it. Listen to them, and then consider the nobility of their views, and the lofty purity of their souls, and then admit the power and depth of that influence which lives in Nature and speaks in Christianity.

So shalt thou see and hear

The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
Of that eternal language which thy God
Utters; who from eternity doth teach
Himself in all, and all things in himself.
Therefore all seasons shall be sweet to thee,—
Whether the summer clothe the genial earth
With greenness, or the redbreast sit and sing
Betwixt the turfs of snow in the bare branch
Of mossy apple-tree, while the nigh thatch
Smokes in the sun-thaw; whether the eave-drops fall,
Heard only in the traces of the blast;
Or if the secret ministry of frost
Shall hang them up in silent icicles,
Quietly shining to the quiet moon.

Coleridge.

And for the cordial, substantial, heart-filling contentment which is gathered from the quietness of rural life, hear what Sir Henry Wotton, a most accomplished man, who had seen much of court life, both at home and abroad, says,

Would the world now adopt me for her heir;
Would beauty's queen entitle me the fair;
Fame speak me Fortune's minion; could I vie
Angels[31] with India; with a speaking eye,
Command bare heads, bowed knees; strike justice dumb.
As well as blind and lame; or give a tongue
To stones by epitaphs; be called "great master"
In the loose rhymes of every poetaster—
Could I be more than any man that lives,
Great, fair, rich, wise, all in superlatives;
Yet I more freely would these gifts resign,
Than ever fortune would have made them mine;
And hold one minute of this holy leisure
Beyond the riches of this empty pleasure.

Welcome pure thoughts! welcome ye silent groves!
These guests, these courts my soul most dearly loves.

Now the winged people of the sky shall sing
My cheerful anthems to the gladsome spring;
A prayer-book now shall be my looking-glass,
In which I will adore sweet virtue's face.
Here dwell no hateful looks, no palace cares,
No broken vows dwell here, no pale-faced fears;
Then here I'll sit, and sigh my hot love's folly,
And learn to affect a holy melancholy:
And if contentment be a stranger then,
I'll ne'er look for it but in heaven again.

[31] Piece of money value ten shillings.

Such are the pleasures that lie in the path of the lover of the country; pleasures like the blessings of the Gospel, to be had without money, and without price. There are many, no doubt, who will deem them dull and insignificant; but the peace which they bring "passeth understanding," and we can make a triumphant appeal from the frivolous and the dissipated, to the wise and noble of every country and age.

CHAPTER XVI.
LINGERING CUSTOMS.

Many precious rites
And customs of our rural ancestry
Are gone, or stealing from us.

Wordsworth.

How rapidly is the fashion of the ancient rural life of England disappearing! Every one who lived in the country in his youth, and looks back to that period now, feels how much is lost! How many of the beautiful old customs, the hearty old customs, the

poetical old customs, are gone! Modern ambition, modern wealth, modern notions of social proprieties, modern education, are all hewing at the root of the poetical and picturesque, the simple and cordial in rural life; and what are they substituting in their stead? We will endeavour, anon, to shew what they are doing, and what they are leaving undone; just now let us try to seize on the fluttering apparition of primitive custom, and bid it a hearty good-bye, before it is gone for ever. I have, in another place, shewn how all the more fanciful and refined of our village festal habits have vanished. The May-day dances, and gathering of May-branches—the scattering of flowers on holiday occasions in village streets, and about our houses. Even the planting of flowers about the graves in our village churchyards, once so common in England, is now rarely to be seen. Camden in his Britannia, and John Evelyn mention that it was the custom of their times in Surrey, but who in Surrey sees anything of the kind now?[32] You may meet with a solitary shrub, or with graves bound down with withes and briars; but nothing of that general planting of flowering shrubs which you see in Wales. It is the fate of champaign countries, to have their rustic customs sooner obliterated than those of mountain regions. The Scotch still retain their penny-weddings and Halloweens, the Welsh their singular wedding customs, and funeral customs as singular; but how wonderfully have the simple customs on these occasions of our English hamlets dwindled in our days! Washington Irving, in an interesting paper in the Sketch-Book, speaks of a practice in some villages of hanging up in the churches at the funeral of a maiden, gloves and garlands cut in paper. In what church is that done now-a-days? And yet,

though I never saw a funeral in which so beautiful and appropriate a practice was retained, I well recollect seeing those gloves and garlands hanging in the church of my native village in Derbyshire; and I have heard my mother say, that in her younger days she has helped to cut and prepare them for the funeral of young women of the place. The garlands were originally of actual flowers—lilies and roses—and the gloves of white kid. For these had become substituted simple white paper. There was a garland then, of imitative roses and lilies wreathed round a bow of peeled willow—a pair of gloves cut in paper, and a white handkerchief of the same material on which was written some texts of Scripture, or some stanzas of poetry applicable to the occasion, and to the hope of immortality in the deceased; and these were not unfrequently chosen for the purpose by the dying maiden herself. These emblems of purity and evanescent youth were laid on the coffin during the funeral procession, as the sword and cap of the soldier on his, and were then suspended in the body of the church; and there hung, till they fell through time, or till all who had an interest in the deceased were dead or departed. In all the village churches into which I have been in various parts of the kingdom, I do not recollect seeing any of those maiden trophies, except in this one; and they, on the coming of a new incumbent, were removed in a general church-cleaning many years ago.

[32] In John Evelyn's own churchyard at Wootten, there is now not the least trace of this beautiful custom.

And yet, where is it that our old customs, and the impress of past times and generations, linger so strongly as about our village churches in England!

Entering one of them in some retired district on a Sunday, you seem to step back into a past age. The quaint old place—its rude and ancient pillars and arches—its oaken pews and pulpit, grown almost black with years; the massy font, the grim, grotesque human heads for corbels, every one differing from the other, where the mason seems to have indulged his humorous fancy without regard to the sacred character of the house in which they were to figure—the contrasting, though often faded splendour of the squire's pew; the heavy tombs, with procumbent effigies of knight and dame—the mural tablets to the memory of departed rectors; the hatchment in sign of some once important personage gone to his long home—and the half-worn stones on which you tread,

> Where many a holy text around is strewn,
> To teach the rustic moralist to die.

And then, the simple congregation! All in their best attire, in cut and texture guiltless of modern fashion: the clergyman, who with the air of a gentleman, has probably caught somewhat of the Doric air of the region; and the old clerk with his long coat, and long hair combed over his shoulders, doling out his responses with a peculiar twang, to which an ancient parish clerk can only attain. Then the little music-loft, with its musicians, consisting of a bass-viol, a bassoon, and hautboy, and the whole congregation singing with all their heart and soul. These are remnants of antiquity that are nowhere else to be found. There is a paper in Blackwood's Magazine for April 1838, called "Church Music and other Parochials," which gives you a picture of things which everybody who has gone to a thoroughly old-fashioned country church has seen over and over. The old clerk, the writer says, always reads

Cheberims and Sepherims, and most unequivocally —"I am a Lion to my mother's children," and truly he sometimes looks not unlike one: and when told by the clergyman that he must take him to task to teach him to read and give the responses differently, he replies—"Why, sir, if I must read just like you there wouldn't be a bit of difference between us."

Such is the peculiar elocution of the true old parish clerk, that even a dog is sensible of it. I wandered into a rustic church where I accidentally saw the congregation collecting, having at my heels a little favourite spaniel. The church stood in the middle of a field at some distance from the hamlet, and I did not see where to secure the dog during the service; I therefore trusted to his general good behaviour, and made him lie down under the seat. Here he slept very quietly for some time; but at the very first sound of the clerk's voice, which was of the genuine traditional tone, up he jumped and began to bark most vociferously. I kicked him with my heel; menaced him with look and hand; set my foot on him; held his mouth—but all was in vain. While the clergyman, who, I must confess, shewed great forbearance, perceiving that I was a stranger, and who moreover betrayed by a suppressed smile that he also perceived the true cause of the dog's irritation, was reading the lessons, the dog was perfectly still; again the clerk said, "amen," and again up started Fido and barked as loud as ever. The case was hopeless—nothing remained but to retire.

In some of these rustic temples you sometimes see things that would electrify a city audience with surprise. I once saw a venerable clergyman on the edge of Yorkshire perpetrate a pun in the midst of the service with all gravity. As he was reading the morning lessons, a fellow who had probably been a

little elated over-night, or not *im*probably the same morning, suddenly cried out—"Arise and shine!"—The rector paused and said, "Who was that?" "It was Joseph Twigg, sir," responded some one. "Then *twig* him out!" rejoined the rector, as glibly and yet as gravely as possible. A smile, and indeed a general display of open mouths and grinning teeth appeared in his congregation—but Joseph Twigg was twigged out, and the rector went on.

Around these old buildings cling all the ancient superstitions. They are as much haunted as ever. They are as prolific of stories of ghosts and apparitions as ever. There are yet young people who go and watch in those old porches on St. Mark's-eve to see whom they shall marry, and will sow hempseed backward at midnight round the whole church for the same purpose. In many parts of the country none will be buried on the north side of the church; and accordingly that side of the churchyard is commonly one unbroken level of greensward, although all the rest be crowded to excess with graves. The north side of the church, by immemorial custom, is the allotted portion of the suicide and the outcast. Accordingly, in many churchyards, that part is purposely very small. It is in many so little visited, that it is a wilderness, grown in summer breast-high with mallows, nettles, chervil, elder bushes,

> Hemlocks and darnels dank.

The writer of the article in Blackwood's Magazine just mentioned, says, "I have often tried to make out the exact ideas the poor people have of angels—for they talk a great deal about them. The best that I can make of it is, that they are children, or children's heads and shoulders winged, as represented in church paintings, and in plaster-of-Paris on ceilings.

We have a goodly row of them all the length of one ceiling, and it cost the parish, or rather the then minister, I believe, who indulged them, no trifle to have the eyes blacked, and nostrils, and a touch of light red in the cheeks. It is notorious and scriptural, they think, that the *body* dies, but nothing being said about the head and shoulders, they have a sort of belief that they are preserved to angels—which are no other than dead young children." There is no doubt that nearly all the idea which many country people possess of cherubims and angels is derived from these plaster heads, or from those cherubims with full-blown cheeks and gilded wings, and those gilded angels with long trumpets depicted on gravestones. Ministers preach about angels and spirits as things which everybody comprehends, but which they have no actual conception of, only as they see them represented by the chisels and gold-leaf of country masons; and the story of the country fellow who had shot an owl, and was thus accosted by his wife—"Don't thee know what thee hast done? Why, thee hast killed one of ar parson's cherabums!" is not so *outré* as it might appear to many.

But we must leave these superstitions to the winter fireside of the hamlet. More of the old customs connected with funerals than with any other events, remain in primitive districts. In Derbyshire, when the body is laid out, the nurse who attended the deceased, and has performed this last office, goes round to "bid to the berrin" (funeral). The names of the parties to be invited are given to her, and away she trudges from house to house, over hill and dale, sometimes to a considerable distance. She delivers her message, and names the day and hour. Refreshments are forthwith set before her. However she may protest that she wants nothing—can eat

nothing—out come, at least, the sweet loaf, and currant or ginger wine. The family gathers round as she sits, to hear all particulars of the illness; how it came on; what doctor was employed; all the progress of the complaint; which leads probably to whole histories of similar illnesses which *they* have known, —all the sayings of the deceased; the end he made, which is generally described by saying, “he died like a lamb!”—“What sort of a corpse is it?” which generally is answered by the information, that “he looks just like himself for all the world—with a most heavenly smile on his countenance.” All these matters are drunk in with great interest, and with many solemn wishes that they may all make as comfortable an end. Some trifle, sixpence or thereabout, is given to the nurse, and on she trudges to the next place. There is no doubt but that the death of an individual in one of these rustic places is felt ten times as much by his acquaintance as that of a citizen by his. The bustle of persons and events in city life so break down the force of the event, and so much sooner elbow it out of mind. In the country, the moment a passing bell is heard to toll, you see every individual all attention; every one cries “hush.” They stand in the attitude of profound listeners. The bell, by some signals which they all understand, proclaims to them the sex, and married or single state of the deceased, and then counts out his or her age.[33] Having ascertained these particulars, they begin to speculate, for they already know everybody that is ill in the parish, and thus generally discover pretty certainly before any other intelligence reaches them, whose bell it is. That bell is sufficient text for the discourse of the day. They run over all the biography of the individual, and bring up many an anecdote of him and his cotemporaries, which had

long slept in their minds. When those invited to the funeral arrive, a substantial meal is often given, followed by wine and cake: and besides the customary distribution of scarfs, hatbands and gloves, a packet of sponge-cake made on purpose, of a prescriptive size and shape, and called “berrin-cake,” is delivered to every one before the setting out of the funeral, to take home with him, wrapped in fine writing paper, and sealed with black wax. Nothing can be more solemn than the behaviour of all the spectators as the train passes along the road, all passengers stopping till the funeral is gone by; all taking off their hats, and watching its onward course in silence. In some places the old custom of chanting a psalm as they proceed towards the churchyard is still kept up, and nothing can be more impressive than the effect of that chant, as it comes mingled with the solemn tolling of the bell over some neighbouring hill, or along a quiet valley, of a summer’s evening. When the train reaches the churchyard-gate, it halts, and if the clergyman be not ready to receive it, the coffin is sometimes set down upon trestles or chairs, and the company waits till the clergyman appears. It seems to be looked upon as an established mark of respect for the clergyman to meet the funeral at the gate, and it is beautiful to see the serious and unhurried manner in which the country clergyman of the more pure and primitive districts goes forth to receive the dead to its resting-place, repeating aloud as he precedes the funeral to the church, a portion of the service for the occasion.

[33] The fourme of the Trinity was founden in manne, that was Adam our forefadir, of earth oon personne, and Eve, of Adam, the secunde persone; and of them both was the third persone. At the deth of a manne three bellis shulde be ronge, as his knyll,

> in worscheppe of the Trinetie; and for a womanne, who was the secunde persone of the Trinetee, two bellis should be rungen.—*Ancient Homily.*

The funeral of the young in the country has something particularly striking in it—the coffin being borne by six of the deceased's own age. That of a young girl is more particularly so—the coffin being covered with a white pall, the six bearers being dressed in white with white hoods, the chief mourners in black with black hoods.

Nothing can, in fact, be more widely different in feeling and effect than town and country funerals. In town a strange corpse passes along, amid thousands of strangers, and human nature seems shorn of that interest which it ought, especially in its last stage, to possess. In the country, every man, woman, and child goes down to the dust amid those who have known them from their youth, and all miss them from their place. Nature seems, in its silence to sympathise with the mourners. The green mound of the rural churchyard opens to receive the slumberer to a peaceful resting-place, and the yews or lindens which he climbed when a boy in pursuit of bird's-nest, moth, or cockchaffer, overshadow, as it were, with a kindred feeling his grave.

The custom of strewing flowers before the houses at weddings, and on other occasions of rejoicing, is now nearly gone out, but at Knutsford in Cheshire, and probably at some few other places, they have a practice which seems to have sprung out of it. On all joyful occasions they sprinkle the ground before the houses of all those who are supposed to sympathise in the gladness, with red sand, and then taking a funnel, filled with white sand, sprinkle a pattern of flowers on the red ground. At weddings this is generally accompanied with a stanza or two of

traditionary verse. As

Long may they live,
Happy may they be,
Blest with content,
  And from misfortune free.
Long may they live,
Happy may they be;
And blest with a numerous
  Pro-ge-ny.

In the north of England a curious practice prevails the first time a young child is sent out with the nurse. At every house of the parents' friends, where the nurse calls, it receives an egg and some salt; and in Northumberland it is so general, that they carry a basket for the purpose. The child of a friend of ours received from an old lady from the north, an egg, a penny loaf, and a bunch of matches. The meaning of which let the wise interpret as they can.

Such customs linger northward more tenaciously than in the south, and are even too numerous for record here. In various northern counties, particularly Lancashire, Westmoreland, and Cumberland, they keep up the ancient practice of rush-bearing; but instead of carrying rushes to strew the church floor, as their ancestors did, who had no other floor to the church, they now chiefly retain the gay garland of flowers carried by young women, and accompanied by the rustic minstrels. In Lancashire and Cheshire they still eat Simnel cake on Mid-lent Sunday, that is, a particular saffron cake, called after Lambert Simnel, who was a baker, and is supposed to have been famous for it. They *ride stang*,[34] that is, set a scolding wife on a lean old horse, with the face to the tail, and parade her through the village with a tremendous clamour of frying pans, and other noise. They hang bushes at each others' doors on May

morning which are expressive of each others' characters. A sort of language *des arbres* established by antiquity, expressing either compliment or sincere criticism, as it may be. A branch of birch signifies a pretty girl; of alder or owler, as they call it, a scold; of oak, a good woman; of broom, a good housewife: but gorse, nettles, sawdust, or sycamore, cast the very worst imputations on a woman's character, and vary according as she be girl, wife or widow. These are, it is said, not seldom used by the malicious to blast the character of the innocent. The girls wear little bags of dragon's-blood upon their hearts to inspire their swains with love. They curtsey to the new moon and turn the money in their pockets, which *ought* to be doubled before the moon is old. They shut their eyes when they see a pie-ball horse, and wish a secret wish, taking care never to see the same horse again, or it would spoil the charm. With them the dog-rose is unlucky; if you give one, you will quarrel with the person, however dear to you; if you form a design near one it will come to nought. A shooting star is falling love in their eyes; and in their opinion the foxglove is not like other flowers, it has knowledge; it knows when a spirit passes, and always bows the head. They have, therefore, a secret awe of it. They are careful to have money in their pockets when they hear the first note of the cuckoo, for they will be rich or poor through the year accordingly. They believe also that whatever they chance to be doing when they first hear the cuckoo, they will do all the year. They have the firmest faith that no person can die on a bed in which are the feathers of pigeons or any wild birds. Such are some of the simple chains with which ancient superstition bound the minds of our ancestors, and which education has not yet quite worn asunder.

[34] A stang means a pole, and probably the old custom was to use a pole instead of a horse.

There is, however, one good custom which the present age has rapidly obliterated—that of leaving open the country churchyard. In towns, there is perhaps less attraction to a churchyard in the mass of strange corpses which are there congregated, and the wilderness of bare flags which cover them; and there may be more cause for the vigilant prevention of the violation of the sanctity and decorum of the spot. But why must the country churchyard be shut up? Why should that generally picturesque and quiet place be prohibited to the stranger or the mourner? Some of the churchyards in these kingdoms are amongst the most romantic and lovely spots within them. What ancient, quiet, delicious spots have I seen of this kind amongst our mountains, and upon our coasts! What prospects, landward and seaward, do some of them give! How sweetly lies the rustic parsonage often along their side; its shrubbery lawn scarcely separated from the sacred ground. Why should these be closed? “There have been depredations,” say the authorities. Then let the beadle see to it; let the offenders be punished; let the parish school and the minister teach better manners; but let these haunts of the sad or the meditative, be open to our feet as they were to those of our fathers. I must confess that I strongly sympathise with my brother, Richard Howitt, in the feelings expressed in Tait’s Magazine for June 1836. “The yew trees, which adorned, with a solemn gracefulness, the churchyard of my native place, are cut down; the footpaths across it are closed; the walls are raised; for stiles, there are gates locked, and topped with iron spikes. A wider barrier than death is interposed betwixt the living and the dead. I must confess that I like it not. Why should

man destroy the sanctities of time and nature? Beautiful is the picture drawn by Crabbe:—

> Yes! there are real mourners. I have seen
> A fair, sad girl, mild, suffering, and serene;
> Attention through the day her duties claimed,
> And to be useful as resigned she aimed.
> Neatly she dressed, nor vainly seemed to expect
> Pity for grief, or pardon for neglect;
> But when her wearied parents sank to sleep,
> She sought her place to meditate and weep.
>
> ******
>
> She placed a decent stone his grave above,
> Neatly engraved—an offering of her love:
> For that she wrought, for that forsook her bed,
> Awake alike to duty and the dead.
>
> ******
>
> Here will she come, and on the grave will sit,
> Folding her arms in long abstracted fit;
> But if observer pass will take her round,
> And careless seem, for she would not be found.

"Where is now the free and uninterrupted admission for such mourners? Grief is a retiring creature, who 'would not be found,' and will not knock at the door of the constituted authorities for the keys: she will look lingeringly at the impassable barriers and retire. Easy of access were churchyards until lately, with their pleasant footpaths, lying, with the tranquillity of moonlight, in the bosom of towns and villages; old, simple, and venerable,—trodden, it may be, too frequently by unthinking feet—but able at all times to impress a feeling of sacredness—fraught as they were with the solemnities of life and death—on bosoms not over religious; and now, to a fanciful view, they seem more the prisons than the

resting-places of the dead."

CHAPTER XVII.
EDUCATION OF THE RURAL POPULATION.

We have said that we will look at what education and other causes are doing, and what they are leaving undone in the change of character which they are effecting in the rural population. It appears by the Reports of the Poor-Law and Charity Commissioners that education progresses more in the northern and manufacturing districts than in the southern and agricultural ones. This is, no doubt, very much the case; and what education is leaving undone in these districts is, that it acts too timidly, too much in the spirit of worldly wisdom. It is afraid of making the people too intellectual; of raising their tastes, lest it should spoil them as Gibeonites, hewers of wood and drawers of water. My own experience is, that this is a grand mistake; that you cannot give them too pure and lofty a standard of taste; and that especially, our best and noblest poets, as Milton, Shakspeare, Wordsworth, Cowper, Southey, Campbell, Burns, Bloomfield, etc. should be put into their hands, and particularly into those of the agricultural population. What can be so rational as to imbue the minds of those who are to spend their lives in the fields with all those associations which render the country doubly delightful? It is amazing what avidity they evince for such writers when they are once made familiar with them; and whoever has his mind well stored with the pure and noble sentiments of such writers will never condescend to

debase his nature by theft, idleness, and low habits. The great alarm has always been that of lifting the poor by such knowledge above their occupations, and filling their heads with airy notions. I can only point again to the agricultural population of Scotland, where such knowledge abounds. If the labourers have not the genius of Burns, many of them have a great portion of the manly and happy feeling with which

> He walked in glory and in joy,
> Following his plough along the mountain side.

There is every reason, so far as experiment goes, to suppose that the same effect would follow in England. Where are there men so sober and industrious as those artisans who are now the steadiest frequenters of Mechanics' Libraries? I have given, in the first chapter of the Nooks of the World, a striking instance of the effects of such reading on an agricultural labourer. Through my instigation several intelligent families have made themselves acquainted with this meritorious man, and speak with admiration of his manly and superior character. Let the experiment be repeated far and wide!

But education itself yet wants introducing to a vast extent into the agricultural districts. The commissioners give a deplorable picture of the neglect of the agricultural population in the counties bordering on the metropolis. In some parts of Essex, Sussex, Kent, Buckinghamshire, Berks, etc., schools of any description are unknown; in others not more than one in fifteen of the labourers are represented as able to read. In this county, Surrey, much the same state of things exists. I have been astounded at the very few labourers that you meet with that can read; and I think I see some striking causes for this

neglect of the labouring class in the peculiar state of society here—it has no middle link. A vast number of the aristocracy reside in the county from its proximity to town; and besides these, there are only the farmers and their labourers; the servants of the aristocratic establishments—a numerous and very peculiar class; and the few tradesmen who supply the great houses. The many gradations of rank and property which are found in more trading, manufacturing, and mixed districts do not here exist. It seems as if the Normans and the Saxons had here descended from age to age; two races, distinct in their habits as their condition, and with no one principle of amalgamation. The aristocracy shut themselves up in their houses and parks, and are rarely seen beyond them except in their carriages, driving rapidly to town, or to each other's isolated abodes. They know nothing, and therefore can feel nothing for the toiling class. The effect is visible enough. The working classes grow up with the sense that they are regarded only as necessary implements of agriculture by the aristocracy—and they are churlish and uncouth. They have not the kindliness, and openness of countenance and manner that the peasantry of more socially favourable districts have. The farmers too seem little to employ them as house-servants, fed at their own table. You do not hear of those jolly harvest-suppers, which you may still find in many old-fashioned places, where master and man feast and rejoice together over the in-gathered plenty. So far as downright rusticity goes, there is as much of that within a dozen miles of London as in the farthest county of England; but the peasants seem to have lost much of the sentiment which those of more distant counties possess. They have their wakes and fairs on their extensive commons and greens,

and leap in bags, and have wheelbarrow races, and races of women for certain articles of female apparel, gipsies with their lucky-bags and will-pegs; but as to anything of a poetical cast, I do not see it. What a fall from the funeral train going chanting a psalm on its way to the churchyard, to one which I saw the other day in this neighbourhood. The coffin was laid on a cart, and secured with ropes; one shaggy horse went jostling it along; another cart followed, occupied by the chief mourners, half a dozen of them huddled together, and the rest succeeded on foot, in a rude and straggling company.

In many villages I see no church at all; and where they are seen, how different to the fine old churches of most parts of England. As you cast your eyes over a wide landscape, you look in vain for those tall taper spires and massy towers which rise here and there in most English scenery; and find perhaps somewhere a solitary little erection resembling a little wooden dovecote. The piety of these parts never expended itself much in church-building. The villages themselves are often very picturesque. They are frequently scattered along extensive commons, amidst abundant woods and grey heaths; generally buried in their old orchards, and built with many pictorial angles and projections; often thatched, and consisting of old framed timber-work, or wood altogether, with gardens full of flowers, and goodly rows of beehives. Vines run luxuriantly over their very roofs, and in autumn hang with a prodigality of grapes; and as to the country itself, nothing can be more pastorally and sylvanly sweet than this county. Its grey heaths and pine woods, in one part, remind you of Scotland—its commons, in others, covered with the greenest turf and scattered with oaks, have the appearance of old forests; and wherever you go,

you get glimpses into fine woodland valleys, and of old solitary halls standing far off in the midst of them; grey farm houses; old water mills; the most rustic huts; some pastoral stream like the Mole, which goes wandering about through this scenery, fringed with its flags and meadow-sweet, and with its bullrushes bending in its copious stream, as if it were loath to leave it; in short it is a region full of the spirit of the poetry of Keats,—a region lying as it might lie

> ———————— Before the faëry broods
> Drove Nymph and Satyr from the prosperous woods;
> Before King Oberon's bright diadem,
> Sceptre and mantle, clasped with dewy gem,
> Frighted away the Driads and the Fauns
> From rushes green, and brakes, and cowslipped
> lawns,—
> From beechen groves, and shadows numberless.

But the people themselves seem lost in their umbrageous hamlets, and on their commons, unthought of. There is the village of Oxshott, some three miles hence.—Go through it on a Sunday, when the agricultural people are all at leisure, and there they are as thick as motes in the sun, in the middle of the village street. There appears to be no church, nor any inhabitants but farmers and labourers. Boys, girls, men and women, all seem to be out of doors, and all in their every-day garbs. The colour of tawny soiled slops and straw-hats gives, as a painter would say, the prevailing tint to the scene. The boys are busy enough playing at ball, or cricket. The men seem to pass their time sitting on banks and stiles, or gossiping and smoking in groups. Scarcely a soul will move out of the way to let you pass on. The intellectual condition of this obscure hamlet is strikingly indicated to every passer through, by a

large school-house bearing on its front, cut in stone, this proud title—"THE ROYAL KENT SCHOOL, founded in 1820;"—but which has been since so far *con*founded, that its windows are broken to atoms, and it is at once recent and in ruins! This state of things should not be suffered to continue. The vast wealth of the aristocracy living hereabout, and the ignorance around them, very ill accord. Amongst the affluent families in the county, there are, no doubt, many who would be anxious to secure an education to the rural children, *if they actually knew that it was needed*! In the village of Esher this has recently been done: let us hope that other places will "go and do likewise."[35]

[35] I am told by intelligent people, who have spent the greater part of their lives here, that the farmers are particularly jealous of the peasantry receiving any education,—they conceive it would spoil them as beasts of burden. This shews what is the deplorable ignorance of *this* class, too, of the rural population.

Since writing the above, I have met with the following statements, in Mr. Frederick Hill's excellent work on National Education. They are in his account of Mr. William Allen's School of Industry at Lindfield, in Sussex; and are, at once, most confirmatory of the view I have taken of the state of things in this county, and of the remedy to be applied. To benevolent and wealthy landed proprietors they are full of encouragement.

"We visited the school at Lindfield, in July 1831, and it had then been established several years. Before fixing on the spot where to build his school, Mr. Allen sent an intelligent young man on a tour through the county, to find out where a school was most wanted. After a diligent search, Lindfield was pitched upon as the centre of a district in which the

peasantry were in a very low state of ignorance. Lindfield is on the road from London to Brighton; distant from London about thirty-seven miles, from Brighton fifteen.

"Not only did Mr. Allen receive no assistance in building his school, but most of the wealthy inhabitants endeavoured to thwart him; while among the peasantry themselves, the most preposterous stories were afloat respecting his designs. These poor people had been so little accustomed to see persons act from other than selfish motives, that they could not believe it possible that any one would come and erect a large building, at great cost and trouble to himself, merely from a desire of promoting their good. They felt sure that all this outlay was not without some secret object; and at last they explained all, much to their own satisfaction, by referring it to the following notable project.—The building was to be applied to the diabolical purpose of kidnapping children; a high palisade was to be thrown up all round it, and other measures taken to prevent entrance or escape. Then the school was to be opened, and every thing carried on smoothly, and with great appearance of kind and gentle treatment, until such a number of children had been collected as would satisfy the rapacious desires of the wretches who had hatched the wicked scheme; when all at once the gates were to be closed upon them, and the poor innocents shipped off to some distant land!

"Greatly indeed must a school have been wanted where such unheard-of absurdity could circulate and obtain credence. At length the building, a most substantial and commodious one, was completed, though few indeed were those who at once ventured within the dreaded bounds. However, by dint of perseverance, this number was gradually increased.

The few children who did come, began in a short time to take home with them sundry pence, which they had earned in plaiting straw, making baskets, etc.; arts they were learning at school. The boys began to patch their clothes and mend their shoes, without their parents having a penny to pay for the work. Meanwhile there came no authentic accounts of ships lying in wait on the neighbouring coast, nor had even the dreaded iron palisades raised their pointed heads. Little by little, the poor ignorant creatures became assured that there was nothing to fear, but, on the contrary, much practical good to be derived from sending their children to the school; and that strange and incredible as it might seem, the London 'gemman' was really come among them as a friend and benefactor. A breach being thus fairly made in the mud-bank of prejudice, it was not long before the whole mass gave way. In short, the scheme proved so completely successful, that at the time we visited the school, almost every child whose parents lived within a distance of three miles, was entered as a pupil, the total number on the list being no less than 300. The children are at school eight hours each day; three being employed in manual labour, and five in the ordinary school exercises. There is a provision for a diversity of tastes in the classes of industry; indeed the most unbounded liberality is manifest in all the arrangements. Some are employed as shoemakers, others as tailors, and others again, at platting, basket-making, weaving, printing, gardening, or farming. The children work very cheerfully, and are found to like the classes of industry better than the school.

"The first employment to which the little workers are put, is platting straw. When they are *au fait* at this, which is generally at the end of a few months,

they are promoted to some other craft; the one of highest dignity being that of printer. Before leaving school the child will become tolerably expert at three or four trades. Those who work on the farm have each the sole care of a plot of ground, measuring one-eighth part of an acre, and each is required to do his own digging, sowing, manuring, and reaping. An intelligent husbandman, however, is always on the ground, to teach those who are at fault. The plots of land were all clean and in nice order; and from the variety of produce, oats, turnips, mangel-wurzel, potatoes, and cabbages, the whole had a curious and amusing appearance, reminding one of the quilted counterpanes of former years. We found the system of *matayer* rent in use; each boy being allowed one half of the produce for himself, the other half being paid for the use of the land, the wear and tear of tools, etc. One lad, twelve years old, had in this way received no less a sum than twenty-three shillings and sixpence, as his share of the crop of the preceding year; and we were told that such earnings were by no means uncommon."

Lady Noel Byron established a school on a similar plan at Ealing, which has been eminently successful. She there educates a number of boys in a manner which must render them far better qualified to fulfil those duties to which they will be called as they grow up, than has yet been done by the old defective modes of England, and especially of English villages. Besides being taught the most useful branches of English education, they work three hours each day, partly for the institution, partly for themselves, in their own gardens. Gardens of a sixteenth of an acre are let to the elder boys at threepence a month; seeds they either buy of their masters, or procure from their friends. Racks for the tools are put up and

numbered, so that each boy has a place for his own, and in that he is required to keep them. The objects of this school are to educate children destined for country pursuits, in a manner to make them better workmen, and more intelligent and happy men than is at present the case. For this purpose it was conceived necessary that they should early acquire the habits of patient industry; that they should be acquainted with the value of labour, and know the connexion between it and property; that they should have intelligence, skill, and an acquaintance with the objects with which they are surrounded; that the higher sentiments, the social and moral part of their being, should obtain a full development.

So industriously have the boys laboured, and so well have they succeeded, that their gardens, with few exceptions, present before the crops are harvested, an appearance of neatness and good husbandry. They have all since, either disposed of their vegetables or taken them home to their families. But vegetables are not the only crop; around the borders of each, flowers are cultivated. It is a great matter to induce a taste for, and give a knowledge of, the manner of cultivating flowers. They are luxuries within the power of every person to command.

There is a considerable gaiety and alacrity in all this; the boys learn to sing many cheerful and merry songs. They strike up a tune as they go out in bands to works, and as they return, they do the same.

It is with the greatest satisfaction that I add, similar schools have been established by Mrs. Tuckfield in Devonshire, Mr. James Cropper in Lancashire, and that the Earl of Lovelace has now built a school on the same plan at Ockham in Surrey, where the same course of education will be given to

the peasant children of the neighbourhood. The institution in fact, contains three schools, a boy's, a girl's, and an infant school. Suitable buildings are in progress for teaching the boys the rudiments of the most common handicraft trades, as shoemaking, tailoring, carpentry, basket-making, etc. The girls are employed at certain hours, in the dairy, the laundry, and in all kinds of household work. For this purpose able masters and mistresses are engaged, who have been prepared by an especial education and long practice for their arduous office. On our first visit to this interesting establishment, though it was far from being completed, we found about 130 children educating in it. It was delightful to see the young chopsticks of this county, where, from generation to generation, the intellect of the working class has long been suffered to lie as dead and as barren as one of their own sand-hills, clustered about the master in the school, answering questions in geography and natural history with as much quickness and obvious delight, as any children of city or of hall could possibly do; their little ruddy faces, no longer indicative only of health and stupidity, but fairly a-blaze with the workings of their minds, the pleasant thirst of knowledge, and the generous emulation of honest distinction. We walked through the house, and found the neat little girls sewing and ironing, cleaning and scouring, engaged in those very avocations which must some day give comfort to their homes. We saw the boys turn out with their spades, and soon found some of them planting forest trees in a nursery-ground, others planting their own gardens; and what delighted us, was to find on the bordering of their garden ground, a string of little flower-beds, belonging to the girls, which carried me at once away to my own school-days and school-

garden at Ackworth.

I have not room here to do more than indicate the existence of this most invaluable school, in a part of the country where rural education is so much wanted. And, indeed, where throughout England are not such invaluable schools wanted? The attention of land owners everywhere ought to be called to this patriotic experiment. Let but such schools as those of the late Captain Brenton, William Allen, Lady Byron, and Lord Lovelace, be once diffused throughout the towns and villages of England, and a revolution will be effected, such as never yet was achieved in any country. An educated population; men no longer apt to grow up in the mere consciousness of their animal nature, but made acquainted with their intellectual powers, their moral qualities and social affections; women having the energies of their true character called forth, and taught to give comfort, and the attraction of intelligence to their homes,—then will England truly have "a bold peasantry, their country's pride." Brutishness and low debauchery must disappear. All will feel the claims which society has upon them; and all will see that, to attain a common share of the good things of life, they must possess activity, prudence, good management, and perseverance. Who can, indeed, imagine to himself what this country must become, with a population thus judiciously educated, filling its towns, its villages, its fields, and overflowing into our colonies, with the certain and splendid dower of industry and intellectual strength?

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CHAPTER XVIII.
CONCLUDING CHAPTER.

She smiles, including in her wide embrace
City, and town, and tower, and sea with ships
Sprinkled; be our companion while we track
Her rivers populous with gliding life;
While, free as air, o'er printless sands we march,
Or pierce the gloom of her majestic woods;
Roaming, or resting under grateful shade,
In peace and meditative cheerfulness.

Wordsworth.

We have now taken a comprehensive view of the rural life of England; of the mode in which "gentle and simple," rich and poor, pass their life in the country; of the sports, the pastimes, the labours and various pursuits which fill up the round of rural existence; of the charms and advantages which there await the lovers of peace, of poetry, of natural beauty, and of pure thoughts: and I think it must be confessed that though other countries may boast a more brilliant climate, none can offer a more varied and attractive beauty; other modes of life may be more exciting, but none can be more calmly delightful, none more conducive to a healthful and manly spirit.

The more we see of our own country, the more do we love it; and it is for this reason, that in closing this volume, I cannot take leave of my readers without advising them to do as I have done,—see as much of it as they can. There is no part of it but is filled with some high historical or literary association: it is the land where brave men have contended and poets sung, and philosophers and politicians have meditated works and measures, of which the world is now reaping the honour and enjoyment; there is no part of it but has some trace of those manners and dialects which belong to the

living of a thousand years ago, and therefore are most interesting motives to our tracing back the stream of time, and beholding the growth of our country's fortunes from age to age; there is no part of it, but has its swarming cities, or its fields smiling like a garden beneath the triumphant effect of British tillage,—or its wild hills and forests, that, untouched by the plough, are left to be fruitful of free thoughts, of poetic feelings, of picturesque beauty and magnificence, of health to the hearts and spirits of our countrymen and countrywomen, necessary to generate those high thoughts and maintain those endeavours that shall yet lead noble England to the height of its destined honour.

It is glorious, indeed, to visit the countries of ancient art and renown—Greece, Italy, Egypt, or sacred Palestine—my spirit kindles at the very mention of them,—yet whether it were my privilege or not to traverse those glorious regions, I should still wish to wander over every hill, and through every busy city of my native land. To me, I repeat, there is no part of this illustrious country but opens some new feeling of affection. As I pass over her plains, I am filled with admiration of that skill and indefatigable industry which have covered them with such affluence of cattle, such exuberant grass, such depths of waving corn; as I pass by her rural halls and hamlet abodes, I find myself perpetually on classic ground, amid the homes of poets and patriots; when I enter her cities, I am struck with all their busy and swarming children, with their endless manufactures; their institutions for rebutting human evils, and raising the human character; with rich men carrying on gigantic enterprises of commerce or national improvement, and poor men associating to ascertain and defend their rights. These are all

animating objects of notice; and I will tell those who may not hope to see much of foreign regions, that there is enough in merry England to fill the longest life with delight, go where they will. I would have those who are young and able, to take their knapsacks on their backs, and with a stick in their hand, they may find pleasures worth enjoying, go which way they will in these islands, though they do as many an adventurer has done, set up their staff as an indicator, and march off in the direction in which it falls.[36]

[36] Jamais je n'ai tant pensé, tant existé, tant vécu, tant été moi, si j'ose ainsi dire, que dans ceux voyages que j'ai faits seul et à pied. La marche a quelque chose qui anime et avive mes idées; je ne puis presque penser quand je reste en place; il faut que mon corps soit en branle pour y mettre mon esprit. La vue de la campagne, la succession des aspects agréables, le grand air, le grand appétit, la bonne santé que je gagne en marchant, la liberté du cabaret, l'éloignement de tout ce qui me fait sentir ma dépendance, de tout ce qui me rappelle à ma situation, tout cela dégage mon âme, me donne une plus grande audace de penser, me jette en quelque sorte dans l'immensité des êtres pour les combiner, les choisir, me les approprier sans gêne et sans crainte. Je dispose en maître de la nature entière; mon cœur, errant d'objet en objet, s'unit, s'identifie à ceux qui le flattent, s'entoure d'images charmantes, s'enivre de sentiments délicieux. Si pour les fixer je m'amuse à les décrire en moimême, quelle vigueur de pinceau, quelle fraîcheur de coloris, quelle énergie d'expression je leur donne!—*Rousseau.*

What a summer's delight there lies in any one such progress. Suppose you took your route from the metropolis through the south and west. How delightful are the richly cultivated fields, the green

hop-grounds, the hanging woods of Kent; how pleasant the heathy hills and scattered woodlands of Surrey; the thickly-strewn villas of the wealthy, the vine-covered cottages and village greens of the poor. Are not the flowery lanes and woody scenery of Berkshire, and the open downs of Wiltshire worth traversing? What a sweet sylvan retirement in the one; what an airy, wide-spreading amplitude of vision in the other! It were worth somewhat to read Miss Mitford's living sketches in her own sweet neighbourhood; it were worth a great deal more to meet Miss Mitford herself, as she lives amongst her simple neighbours, who know how much she is their friend, or amongst her wealthy and educated ones, who know how much she deserves of their esteem and admiration. Would it be nothing to ramble amongst the ancient walls of Winchester, every spot of which is as thickly strown with historical recollections as it is venerable in presence? Would it be nothing to climb those downs, and see around far-spreading greenness, sinking and swelling in the softest lines of beauty; and below, vales, stretching in different directions, contrasting their rich woodiness most strikingly with the bare solitudes of the down? To see the venerable cathedral lifting its hoary head from the vale, and numbers of subject churches shewing their humbler towers and spires all along the valleys; and catch the glitter of those streams which water those valleys, as they wind to the sun. I have trodden these downs and dales in summer weather with feelings of buoyant delight, that admit of no description. There is Stonehenge, standing in the midst of Salisbury Plain, which is worth a long pilgrimage to see. To see! Yes, and to feel in all its lonely grandeur, with all its savage and mysterious antiquity upon it. It is a walk from Salisbury, that, on

a spring or autumn day, with a congenial spirit, were enough to make that a life's pleasant memory. Ascend first from that truly old English city, along whose streets and past almost every door run living streams of most beautiful water from the sweet brimful Avon—to the ramparts of Old Sarum. What a stupendous work of antiquity you stand upon; what a scene lies all around you! How beautifully rises that noble cathedral above the subject city; how finely the magnificent spire above the fabric itself! And *en passant*, what a feature of fair and solemn dignity is the cathedral in our English cities! As you approach them, and see afar off these noble monuments of past science towering aloft in sublime dignity, you are at once reminded that you are on classic ground; that you are about to enter a place where our ancestors worked out some portion of the national fame; and are thereby awakened from other thoughts to look about you for all that is worthy of notice. But this is but a passing tribute to the grave beauty of those glorious old piles—they deserve more; but other objects now call us on. See what green and watered valleys allure you forward. See where the downs stretch their solitary heads amid the clear and spiritual hues of the sky. And as you go on, the chime of flocks, and the discovery of sweet hamlets, and the voices of their children at play, and the tinkle of the plough-team bells, shall make you feel that the rural peace and delight of Old England are as strong in her heart as ever. For myself, the smallest peculiarity of rural fashions and habits in different parts of the country attracts my attention, and gives me a certain degree of pleasure. The sight of herds of swine grazing in the wide fields of Berkshire and Hampshire as orderly as sheep do, is what, at the first view, gives an agreeable surprise to

the man from the midland and northern counties, where it is never seen. The sight of the clematis, which flings its flowery masses over hedges and copses; of myrtles, hydrangeas, fuchias, and other tender plants, blossoming in the gardens of the south: the appearance of different birds and insects, as the chough, the nightingale in greater frequency, the woodlark sending its voice from the distant uplands; the large stag-beetle, and other insects; these, and other things observed in one part of the island which are never met with in another, small matters though they be in themselves, all give a novel interest to some new spot, and some agreeable hour. Nay to me, I say, the very varying of rural costumes and implements are objects of interest. Those odd ladders in Berkshire, stretching at the feet to a width of sometimes two yards, and then tapering up rapidly; as if Berkshire peasants could not stand on such ladders as all England beside stands on. The light wagons and carts in the south, so different from the heavy ones of the midland counties; and some of them so painted and adorned in front with large roses, and other flowers; and their teams, with bells at their bridles, and frames of bells over the leader's head, and barbaric top-knots on their heads, and scarlet fringes and tassels on their gears; and tails all bound up with ribbons, and curious platting. The wagoners, each in his straw hat and white slop, with

> His carter's-whip, that on his shoulder rests,
> In air high towering with a boorish pomp,
> The sceptre of his sway.

Horses at plough, harnessed with a simple collar of straw, and a few ropes. Oxen with their heavy wooden yokes ploughing in one part of the country as primitively as they did in the days of Alfred, ay, or

of King David; and shepherds with their crooks in another, shew to those who never saw them but in books, that some of our oldest practices still remain.

The various constructions of billhooks, shovels, and wheelbarrows which prevail in different quarters of the island, contribute to the picturesque: from the clumsy rudiment of a barrow seen in Cornwall, which lies on the ground without legs, and the sides of which are cut out of two pieces of wood, rudely tapering off into handles; through all the various shapes of that little vehicle, up to its most perfect one. The shovels used by the labourers in the West of England, with handles as tall as themselves, would make the men of the midland counties stare; and again, the billhook of the midland counties, with a back edge as well as a front one, would be equally strange to the chopsticks of Surrey and Sussex. The various modes of country employment promote the same effect. The ploughman whistling after his team; the shepherds on the downs, driving their white flocks before them like a rolling cloud to evening fold or morning pasture; the dwellers on heaths and moors, paring the turf for fuel, or cutting from the peat-beds their black bricks, and piling their black pyramids on the waste. Every different district displays its peculiar employment. Durham and Northumberland exhibit their extensive and curious coal mines; Yorkshire and Lancashire their weaving and spinning; the hills of Derbyshire their lead mines; Nottingham and Leicester shires their coals again; Lincoln and Norfolk their vast corn farms; the Southern downs their shepherds; Devon and Cornwall their tin and copper mines; Gloucester and Somerset display their fields of teazles again, indicating that there our finest broad-cloths are made; Stafford and Warwick shires swarm with

collieries, iron-founderies, and potteries; and so on. Each district has its peculiar pursuit and occupation pointed out by nature, and all these things give variety to the country and its inhabitants, and scatter everywhere interesting subjects of inquiry for the passer-by.

I say then, cross only the south of England, and how delightful were the route to him who has the love of nature and of his country in his heart; and no imperious cares to dispute it with them. Walk up, as I have said, from Salisbury to Stonehenge. Sit down amid that solemn circle, on one of its fallen stones:—contemplate the gigantic erection, reflect on its antiquity, and what England has passed through and become while those stones have stood there. Walk forth over that beautiful and immense plain,—see the green circles, and lines, and mounds, which ancient superstition or heroism have everywhere traced upon it, and which nature has beautified with a carpet of turf as fine and soft as velvet. Join those simple shepherds, and talk with them. Reflect, poetical as our poets have made the shepherd and his life,—what must be the monotony of that life in lowland counties—day after day, and month after month, and year after year,—never varying, except from the geniality of summer to winter; and what it must be then; how dreary its long reign of cold, and wet and snow!

When you leave them, plunge into the New Forest in Hampshire. There is a region where a summer month might be whiled away as in a fairyland. There, in the very heart of that old forest you find the spot where Rufus fell by the bolt of Tyrell, looking very much as it might look then. All around you lie forest and moorland for many a mile. The fallow and red deer in thousands herd there as of

old. The squirrels gambol in the oaks above you; the swine rove in the thick fern and the deep glades of the forest as in a state of nature. The dull tinkle of the cattle bell comes through the wood; and ever and anon, as you wander forward, you catch the blue smoke of some hidden abode curling over the tree tops; and come to sylvan bowers, and little bough-overshadowed cottages, as primitive as any that the reign of the Conqueror himself could have shewn. What haunts are in these glades for poets: what streams flow through their bosky banks, to soothe at once the ear and eye enamoured of peace and beauty. What glades for endless grouping and colourings for the painter.

At Boldre you may find a spot worth seeing, for it is the parsonage once inhabited by the venerable William Gilpin, the descendant of Barnard Gilpin, the apostle of the north; the author of "Forest Scenery,"—and near it is the school, which he built and endowed for the poor from the sale of his drawings. Not very distant from this, stands the rural dwelling for many years, and till lately, the residence of one of England's truest-hearted women, Caroline Bowles, now Mrs. Southey—and not far off you have the woods of Netley Abbey—the Isle of Wight, the Solent, and the open sea.

But still move on through the fair fields of Dorset and Somerset, to the enchanted land of Devon. If you want stern grandeur, follow its north-western coast; if peaceful beauty, look down into some one of its rich vales, green as an emerald, and pastured by its herds of red cattle; if all the summer loveliness of woods and rivers, you may ascend the Tamar or the Tavy, or many another stream; or you may stroll on through valleys that for glorious solitudes, or fair English homes, amid their woods and hills, shall

leave you nothing to desire. If you want sternness you may pass into Dartmoor. There are wastes and wilds, crags of granite, views into far-off districts, and the sound of waters hurrying away over their rocky beds, enough to satisfy the largest hungering and thirsting after poetical delight. I shall never forget the feelings of delicious entrancement with which I approached the outskirts of Dartmoor. I found myself among the woods near Haytor Crags. It was an autumn evening. The sun, near its setting, threw its yellow beams amongst the trees, and lit up the ruddy tors on the opposite side of the valley into a beautiful glow. Below, the deep dark river went sounding on its way with a melancholy music, and as I wound up the steep road beneath the gnarled oaks, I ever and anon caught glimpses of the winding valley to the left, all beautiful with wild thickets and half shrouded faces of rock, and still on high those glowing ruddy tors standing in the blue air in their sublime silence. My road wound up, and up, the heather and the bilberry on either hand shewing me that cultivation had never disturbed the soil they grew in; and one sole woodlark from the far-ascending forest to the right, filled the wide solitude with his wild autumnal note. At that moment I reached an eminence, and at once saw the dark crags of Dartmoor high aloft before me, and one large solitary house in the valley beneath the woods. So fair, so silent, save for the woodlark's note and the moaning river, so unearthly did the whole scene seem—that my imagination delighted to look upon it as an enchanted land,—and to persuade itself that that house stood as it would stand for ages, under the spell of silence, but beyond the reach of death and change.

But even there you need not rest—there lies a land

of grey antiquity, of desolate beauty still before you —Cornwall. It is a land almost without a tree. That is, all its high and wild plains are destitute of them, and the bulk of its surface is of this character. Some sweet and sheltered vales it has, filled with noble wood, as that of Tresilian near Truro; but over a great portion of it extend grey heaths. It is a land where the wild furze seems never to have been rooted up, and where the huge masses of stone that lie about its hills and valleys are clad with the lichen of centuries. And yet how does this bare and barren land fasten on your imagination! It is a country that seems to have retained its ancient attachments longer than any other. The British tongue here lingered till lately—as the ruins of King Arthur's palace still crown the stormy steep of Tintagel; and the saints that succeeded the heroic race, seem to have left their names on almost every town and village.

It were well worth a journey there merely to see the vast mines which perforate the earth, and pass under the very sea; and the swarming population that they employ. It were a beautiful sight to see the bands of young maidens, that sit beneath long sheds, crushing the ore and singing in chorus. But far more were it worth the trip to stand at the Land's-End, on that lofty, savage, and shattered coast, with the Atlantic roaring all round you. The Hebrides themselves, wild and desolate, and subject to obscuring mists as they are, never made me feel more shipped into a dream-land than that scenery. At one moment the sun shining over the calm sea, in whose transparent depths the tawny rocks were seen far down. Right and left extend the dun cliffs and cavernous precipices, and at their feet the white billows playing gracefully to and fro over the nearly

sunken rocks, as through the manes of huge sea-lions. At the next moment all wrapt in the thickest obscurity of mist; the sea only cognizable by its sound; the dun crags looming through the fog vast and awfully, and all round you on the land nothing visible, as you trace back your way, but huge grey stones that strew the whole earth. In the midst of such a scene I came to a little deserted hut, standing close by a solitary mere amongst the rocks, and the dreamy effect became most perfect. What a quick and beautiful contrast was it to this, as the very same night I pursued my way along the shore, the clear moon hanging on the distant horizon, the waves of the ocean on one hand coming up all luminous and breaking on the strand in billows of fire, and on the other hand the sloping turf sown with glowworms for some miles, thick as the stars overhead.

I speak of the delight which a solitary man may gather up for ever from such excursions; that will come before him again and again in all their beauty from his past existence, into many a crowd and many a solitary room; but how much more may be reaped by a congenial band of affectionate spirits in such a course. To them, a thousand different incidents or odd adventures, flashes of wit and moments of enjoyment, combine to quicken both their pleasures and friendship. The very flight from a shower, or the dining on a turnip-pie, no very uncommon dish in the rural inns of Cornwall, may furnish merriment for the future. And if this one route would be a delicious summer's ramble, with all its coasting and its sea-ports into the bargain, how many such stretch themselves in every direction through England. The fair orchard-scenes of Hereford and Worcester, in spring all one region of bloom and fragrance,—the hills of Malvern and the Wrekin. The fairy dales of

Derbyshire; the sweet forest and pastoral scenes of Staffordshire; the wild dales, the scars and tarns of Yorkshire; the equally beautiful valleys and hills of Lancashire, with all those quaint old halls that are scattered through it, memorials of past times, and all connected with some incident or other of English history. And then there is Northumberland—the classic ground of the ancient ballad—the country of the Percy—of Chevy Chace—of the Hermit of Warkworth—of Otterburn and Humbledown—of Flodden, and many another stirring scene. And besides all these are the mountain regions of Cumberland, of Wales, of Scotland, and Ireland, that by the power of steam are being brought every day more within the reach of thousands. What an inexhaustible wealth of beauty lies in those regions! These, if every other portion of the kingdom were reduced by ploughing and manufacturing and steaming to the veriest common-place, these, in the immortal strength of their nature, bid defiance to the efforts of any antagonist, or reducing spirit. These will still remain wild and fair, the refuge and haunt of the painter and the poet—of all lovers of beauty, and breathers after quiet and freshness. Nothing can pull down their lofty and scathed heads; nothing can dry up those everlasting waters, that leap down their cliffs, and run along their vales in gladness; nothing can certainly exterminate those dark heaths, and drain off those mountain lakes, where health and liberty seem to dwell together; nothing can efface the loveliness of those regions, save the hand of Him who placed them there. I rejoice to think that while this great nation remains, whatever may be the magnitude of the designs for the good of the world in which Providence purposes to employ it,—however populous it may be necessary for it to become,—

whatever the machinery and manufactories that may be needfully at work in it; that while Cumberland, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland continue, there will continue regions of indestructible beauty—of free and unpruned nature, so fair that those who are not satisfied therewith, would not be satisfied with the whole universe. More sublimity other countries may boast, more beauty has fallen to the lot of none on God's globe. And what a satisfaction it is, to see that our poetry of late years has awakened the public mind to a full sense of our natural advantages. It may be said that many traverse the continent who never see their own country, but it cannot be said that the beauty of our own fair islands is overlooked. On the contrary, every one who travels through them himself, sees how increasing are the numbers who do the same. To many a point of beauty and historic interest I have been, from the very Land's-End to John O'Groat's; and I do not know one spot of any claims to attention, which I did not find numerously visited from the earliest spring to late in the year. I once was at Loch Katrine early in April, and there were arrivals of several carriages a day. I was at the Land's-End late in October, and as I reached the Logan Rock, a very interesting party of young people were just coming away from it. As I have said, I walked up to Stonehenge from Salisbury in order to enjoy it in all its solitude. This was late in the autumn; yet I found a large party there, and the shepherds assured me that every day, and all day long, it would continue so till severe weather set in. When Dr. Johnson went as far as the Hebrides, it was reckoned a rare thing. In the summer of 1836, I visited Staffa and Iona in company with seventy persons; and all summer long, three or four times a-week, do those places see scarcely less than a

hundred English people land upon them.

Who indeed does not know how every pleasant place on our coasts, how the Peak of Derbyshire, how all Wales, the Highlands of Scotland and many parts of Ireland are annually thronged with people, who break away from towns and trade to refresh their spirits with the invigorating spirit of the mountains, and with the sights and sounds of ocean? Nay, such is the pressure of the tourist current, that whatever place steam-vessels reach in the mountain districts—it is one of the most ludicrous scenes imaginable to see a packet come to the pier, and its whole swarm of passengers leap ashore and proceed at full gallop to storm the inns for beds and accommodation. I have myself, as I believe I have before stated, been forced in the throng up to the very attics of one of these inns by the rush of people, who filled the whole staircase, and indeed house, calling out for beds, while the poor landlady was wringing her hands in despair of reducing the clamorous chorus into some sort of order.

Ludicrous as this recital however is, the spirit which occasions it is an excellent one. It is full of health and good moral feeling. It is one which, if it goes on, hand in hand with our machinery and our literature, must produce the happiest effects. I trust that this volume will add its quota to that love of the country which I would desire to see possessing a corner of every human being's heart. While that is there, I am sure there must be an undecayed portion of the original heart of humanity,—a remnant, at least, of that tone of spirit which makes heaven desirable, and which is capable of enjoying it. He that loves the country as God has made it, in all its varying beauty and immortal freshness, must love God and man too; and while he seeks in mountain

solitudes and on sea shores, relief from the weariness of too long jostling in the crowd, will find with delight how this very solitude will quicken his appetite for human society, and his perception of the comforts and home-pleasures of towns. I declare, that when I have been for weeks roaming amongst forests and mountain wastes, I feel, on coming into a city, a sense of its life, activity, and social condition which was before become comparatively dim. As I have entered one in the early morning, and have seen the neat young housemaids rubbing the knockers and cleaning down the steps of their masters' doors, and have caught glimpses, as I passed along, of well oil-clothed passages, and well carpeted rooms, and fires already burning cheerfully,—I have felt a sense of the comforts and pleasantness of English homes that I have rarely felt besides. Or at evening, as we pass where blinds are yet undrawn, and where fires are seen warmly illumining fair rooms, and happy faces are congregated around them, who has not felt the same thing?

But we must now close this volume; and how can that be more fitly done than by ending as we began, and acknowledging with a rejoicing thankfulness, "that the lines have indeed fallen to us in pleasant places," in a land which it would be difficult to pronounce more blessed in its literature, its religious spirit, or in the splendid dowry of its natural beauty.



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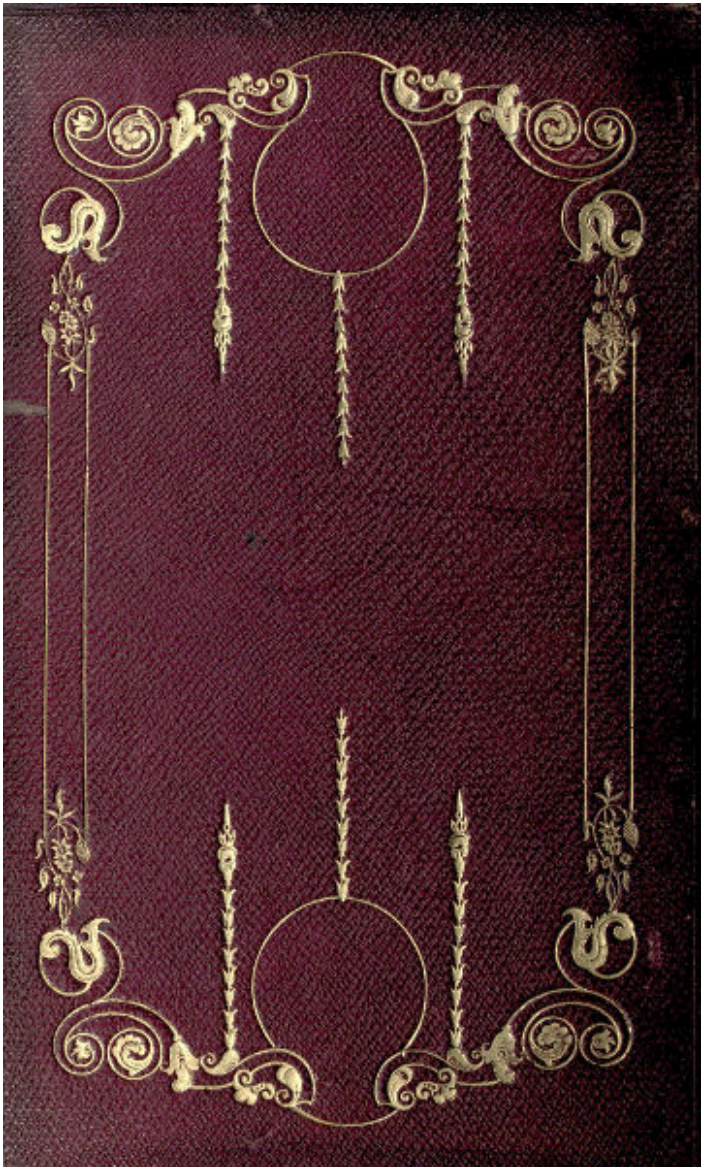
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Page 38, Bürschen: should be either Burschen (plural) or Bürschchen (diminutive plural).
Page 171, Ziguene: should be Zigeuner.
Page 555, ahndungsvoll: should be ahnungsvoll.

Changes made
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Page xi: Embellishment numbers added
Page xviii: part title CAUSES OF THE STRONG ATTACHMENT OF THE ENGLISH TO COUNTRY LIFE. inserted cf. text
Page xx: Purkiss changed to Purkess cf. text
Page 28: géne changed to gêne

Page 31: beau ideal changed to beau idéal
Page 64: closing quote mark inserted at the end of the calculation
Page 165: part title PICTURESQUE AND MORAL FEATURES OF THE COUNTRY inserted cf. table of contents
Page 173: overrun the country changed to overran the country
Page 301: closing quote mark inserted after list of houses
Page 348: part title THE FORESTS OF ENGLAND inserted cf. table of contents
Page 358/359: the lay-out of the quoted sources has been standardised
Page 371: salvage genius changed to savage genius
Page 376: this forests abounds changed to this forest abounds
Page 414-415, footnote 26: the footnote marker was missing from the source document; a later (1841) corrected edition has the footnote marker after ... jousts and tourneys
Page 491: closing quote mark inserted after verse
Page 493: closing quote mark inserted after at the wake
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