SHADOWS ON THE HILLS

NANCY PRICE

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RED PIKE IN THE MIST

SHADOWS ON THE HILLS

by
NANCY PRICE

With a Preface by
Lord Dunsany

Camarado, I will give you my hand,
I will give you my love, more precious
than money.
Will you travel with me?
Walt Whitman

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TO MY FRIEND
CHRISTINA MARTINDALE

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PREFACE

IF I had been asked for a name for this book I should have suggested Underground Readings, so eminently is it a book for someone whose destiny is daily journeys by underground to some office in London, and who, never seeing the hills, must get whatever message they have for us, only by reading. The fells, and the people that live at the feet of them; some hint of the effect of the shadowy fells on their destinies; the animals and the flowers that an understanding sympathy sees in the valleys of Westmorland: this is what the book is about.

You sometimes see people prominent in the public eye photographed far from the main resorts of the public, perhaps beside a river, about to take their favourite horse for a row. Here, however, we have no mere photograph, but the spirit seen in a mirror. The mirror is the waters of Westmorland, held up a long way away and shining through memory. And whether you read the book for the mirror or for the reflection in it; whether, that is to say, you care more for the vivid pictures of the fells, clearly sketched with a few words, and the little animals that glide about them, hiding themselves from a less observant eye, and the mists that come down on the hills, and the storms that hurl them hence; or whether you prefer the mature philosophy with which the authoress sees all these things, it is certainly a book for any townsman to read, for it will help him to preserve that link between eternal things like the wind in the hills, and transitory things like the tramlines in towns; and when that link is broken it is not the hills that pass.

As I turn, myself, these pages, so full of their yearning for the sphinx-like faces of hills staring out across shining fields, so bright with hundreds of memories of them, I see more and more vividly another picture. I see the vision of a woman in a house in the Westmorland country, never quite free from an unaccountable longing, which as the years go by almost turns to regrets. I seem to hear her saying upon some rare occasion when the regret wells up into words: "I sometimes think I should have liked to have gone on the stage; not that I suppose I should have been much good at acting, and I should have certainly got hopelessly lost in London." And someone says "What makes you think that you could have acted at all?" And the longing finds no better words for its expression than: "Well, I went to London once and saw a play, and I somehow thought I should like to." And late evening

comes down from the fells rather bleak and chilly, blotting out the momentary vision of the footlights. But the longing is still there.

And who is this other woman? It is Miss Nancy Price as she might have so easily been, had she taken a different path.

And there are thousands of us that are very glad that she didn't.

DUNSANY

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

IN the fell country a man can walk with his dog without question or reproach, over the hills, across the fields, even through the farmyards. He is free to come and go where and when he will, provided he does not break his way and strew it with litter. If he does that, he may find on his return a notice-board which will shut out both himself, his dog, and his unoffending neighbour.

There are many small variations in the dialect of the lake district, but the general effect is the same. I have only attempted one form, so that the reader may quickly become accustomed to it, and practically all the words are phonetically spelt. I find on the whole the dialect rather similar to the Sussex, both having the same soft, slow lilt and lengthening of vowels.

In my last book on this district I not only consulted my own ear but the dialect authorities. This time I have thought it wiser entirely to follow the dialect as I hear it; another may hear rather differently, but I hope it may give a fair impression of the speech of this fine people. They are proud, generous, sensitive, gracious, aloof. They have a long memory for any good or evil that comes to them; they are slightly on the defensive and difficult to persuade; they have a wry humour. Life is not easy for them, and they take it seriously. They are strongly individual, and reluctant to become part of the herd.

Their country can lift the traveller to the doorstep of the gods, or fling him into the black despair which is hell. There is no half-way house in the fell country, only the heights and the depths.

N. P.

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

CHAPTER I

TRESPASSERS WILL NOT BE PROSECUTED

MY dog and I arrived at Staveley hot and tired. To return to an old love after twenty years is to provoke disillusion, but desire makes the wise foolish, and the foolish bold.

I had left the fell country in sanctuary, guarded by the priests of the high places, but I had heard rumours of violence, exploitation, commercialisation, and I wondered if I should find the heart of the fells as virginal and alluring as ever, and even if they were could I now find the sanctuary I had deserted? The first thing is to seek the track, test my ears with the song of the bird, the hum of the bee, the chirrup of the grasshopper, and my sight by viewing the distant hills. For this I must escape from the hoot, bray, throb, roar, hiss, and shriek of the hard high road, and I cross a little stone bridge. A trickling stream gurgles over the stones—a stream full of light and colour. Four black bullocks are paddling there; the expression on their faces tells me that it is very good, so, dumping my knapsack, I do the same. The years roll from me. Cyclax, Pomeroys, Janet Moores, Adairs, take notice! This is the cure to dispel wrinkles and give back youth—the beautiful earth and all that therein is. Full of physical enjoyment, there suddenly comes to my ears a gentle whirring. I look up and see an old mill wheel, such as Westmorland used to delight in when the bobbins were in constant use. At the Mill House lives my friend Christina Martindale. It is there my dog and I are going to stay, and I know we shall find both hospitality and courtesy, two Westmorland springs that never run dry.

Of courtesy it is much less
Than courage of heart or holiness;
Yet in my walks, it seems to me,
That the grace of God is in courtesy.

The Mill House is in reality three whitewashed cottages, ivy-gripped, with its walls over three feet thick. Both dairy and kitchen are floored with the almost invariable blue slate slabs.

The house is built of rough stone, without mortar, as are most of the early cottages. There are the usual three rooms on the ground floor, a kitchen, a parlour, and one of the finest dairies I have seen in Westmorland. Stone steps lead up to the bedroom I am to occupy, and I can walk out of it into a small upper garden, or down the inner staircase to the kitchen, which has fine oak panelling brought from the church at Ings. Why these old churches were stripped of their beautiful panelling remains a mystery, but I am always glad when I find it in the neighbouring farmhouses.

In one of the adjoining buildings there is a bakestone oven where the haver bread is baked in spring and autumn. The bakings keep two women busy for three or four days, one rolling the bread at the board and the other turning it continually on the bakestone. Children beat the fire, to keep it swift, with bracken or dried broom; their usual reward is toffee. When baked, the haver bread is stored in large kists; before it is eaten it requires to be crisped in the oven, and is usually given to the men, with cheese or churned milk and beer, at the morning break in work. It is very thin, much thinner than the usual oatcake, and is probably the origin of the many dietic biscuits advertised to-day. In the absence of a bakestone oven, haver bread is occasionally made on the girdle, but this is a much slower process.

The parlour was reserved for my special use, so that I should be undisturbed and quiet. Quiet! As if the peace which passeth understanding did not encompass the place. When the lamp is alight and a peat fire glowing, and I have torn myself with difficulty from out of doors, I am able to look round and appreciate the room. Bowls of sweet-smelling flowers, old china, books—comfort, ancestors, and a superb sampler, the work of Mary Kitching, a lady whose presence pervades the whole house, though she is but a memory. The sampler is unusually large—five feet square; it has a richly ornamented border of browns, greens, and dark reds; within are decorous angels, fully clothed, with tunics, flowing skirts, and wings outspread like flurried hens; there are peacocks with many gorgeous colours, baskets of flowers, yew-trees cut into quaint shape, trees which hang with rare fruit, and, crowning glory, Patterdale Hall. This building, which reminded me of nothing so much as a modern Council School, must have been a tedious piece of work: each brick and slate is congruent with its fellow; its mechanical perfection dazzled the eye. This sampler was accomplished by Mary at thirteen.

MARY KITCHING daughter of Thomas and Jane Kitching.
Her work done in her 14th year A.D. 1858.

And three verses in neat cross-stitch and varied colours ran thus:

How short is life, how sure is death;
Our days, alas, how few;
This mortal life is but a breath;
'Tis like the morning dew.

The years roll round, and steal away
The breath that first it gave;
Whate'er we do and where e'er be,
We're travelling to the grave.

Perhaps before we're well aware
He'll give the fatal blow;
Then let us now for death prepare
And die to all below.

At thirteen, death can be contemplated with interest and serenity; as he draws nearer, we would forget the gentleman who is waiting. I doubt if Mary would have chosen these words at seventy.

Her own explanation of this melancholy choice of words was simple: it was the first poem she learnt. It is an irony that these lugubrious verses are all the future will know of her. Generations to come may look at this sampler with admiration, but nothing of Mary Kitching herself will reach them. They will know nothing of her beauty, pride of land, of home, or that she was full of understanding, and scrupulous of honour.

Through some letters her daughter Christina showed me I met not only Mary Kitching, but her husband. I needed no other telling that he was loyal, warm-hearted, full of humour, and possessed a sure faith in the goodness of God; a man of infinite kindness and generosity—the fell's best breed.

"Long Sleddale.
"*Sunday.*

". . . there are five new calves for you to see when you come home. Riggs' horse has had a spavin but I've fixed him up comfortable.

"I met old Betty in the turnip field to-day. She had pulled some of the best turnips and was going to put them in her bag on the top of a good dozen eggs she had stolen from the nests. I asked her if she didn't think it was bad packing. I could see her trembling. She thought I was going to empty her bag. I tried to look severe but I made her come to the farm and take a basket to carry the eggs—

you know I can't abide waste, and I helped to carry the turnips home as I wanted a walk. I don't believe she ever gets much other than kicks and cuffs. She was that grateful I felt ashamed. I believe the poor old woman is starved. We must do something for her.

"Your affectionate father,
WILLIAM MARTINDALE."

"Measand.
"*Sunday.*

". . . Bill Owen's banns went up to-day. You know he has been courting Susan these last ten years, but she never could get him down to brass tacks. I was driving cattle to Kendal last Tuesday all through the night going slow, not to fret them. I came across him and her. She was looking downcast, him walking half asleep by her side. I just kept alongside. After a bit he got riled and asked me what I thought I was doing. I said: 'I've walked me cattle three miles out of me way, hoping to hear thee asking lass to wed, it's about time, and if your banns don't go up Sunday I know somebody else who wants her and means to have her, too.'

"You will be pleased to hear cattle was not walked three miles out of the way for nothing, and Susan brought your mother a nice pair of vases from Kendal yesterday.

"No more news except that your mother's burnt a hole in the parlour rug and blamed it on to me. But she made me a grand bilberry pudding to-day. . . .

"Your affectionate father,
WILLIAM MARTINDALE."

"Measand.
"*Tuesday, April 2nd.*

". . . Father got his own back on your uncles yesterday. They came in prepared to make a fool of him. It was a terribly wet day, and the rain was driving in sheets over the Fells and we were having your father's favourite game stew and pancakes. He had just got in from a hard day. He was met by your uncles who told

him that Tom Rigg was in a rare state over Spot who'd broken his leg. They told him he'd best get off quick if he wanted to save the dog. I saw him glance at the calendar.

"He said of course he must go but it meant he would have to ask them to take sacking and warm milk to the sheep he was tending in Poole's barn as she was having a hard lambing. Your father had his dinner and was enjoying a pipe before the fire when they returned two hours later drenched to the skin. He burst out laughing when he saw them and said: 'It's bad luck it's such dirty weather for All Fools' Day.'

"We have been married twenty-five years to-day and your father brought me a great basket of daffodils he picked from the wood and gave me the loveliest plaid shawl. It must be at least four yards long and three wide orange and black with purple thread running through it.

"Your Aunt Janie and Aunt Isobella walked over the Nan Bield pass to Kentmere last week and spent the night with Molly and walked back the next day. They are knitting you gloves for your birthday and were keeping it a great secret until I found them yesterday very much upset as they had both knitted a right hand!

"Your father brought in Elijah Rawlinson to tea on Sunday. Isobella wouldn't come in. Poor Elijah he never gives up hope.

"With much love from your Mother,

"MARY MARTINDALE."

Then Christina showed me a Mardale hunting-song which she described as a "good snapshot" of her father.

Martindale of Long Sleddle, who knows a fell hare,
Looked on with a smile and a comical air;
He says you may run till you burst their hearts
But you'll ne'er kill a hare that's been bred in these parts.

Bowstead the Master, with spurs and with whip,
And Mounsey of Lowther with boots that would slip,
But of all the brave sportsmen who e'er ran a hare
It was Martindale of Sleddle if he had been there.

She told me he had a wonderful way with animals, and that he was never more content than when healing one of them. His strong hands, with their

long, sensitive fingers, were ever at their service. He took no count of distance if he knew an animal was hurt or sick—I see him returning from such an errand. He is riding his favourite horse, Blue Blood. He is coming home late one night down a steep fell; it is raining, and the little jagged juttings of rock are slippery. Blue Blood slips and rolls over. He picks himself up, miraculously whole. But his master's back is broken. Blue Blood has carried him for the last time—save one. The fells broke his back, but not his spirit. "Doan't think it were Blue Blood slipped. I pulled his rein too tight—and I'll never have another horse carry me, mind," is what he laboured to tell them with his last few minutes of life, and, when he could no longer speak and the family were standing round his bed, he turned to them, puckered his face to a smile and died—with a wink. . . . Death came to him as he would certainly have chosen; disease or a crumbling to decay would be a fearful thing for such a man. . . . Now Blue Blood stood outside the farm, his ears pricked, waiting. He was to carry his master again, at last. He stood quite still; something told him he must control his high spirits. He whinnied expectantly. His nose would be well rubbed; there would be a couple of lumps of sugar and words of understanding, and then—away! His head was turned to the door. He listened for the voice he knew so well, but instead—men carried out a long box. . . . He would follow it, for something told him what was there, and slowly—spiritless, with drooping head—he followed his master down the fell for the last time. . . .

All these memories that were part of Mary Kitching's life became very real to me. Sometimes in the quiet of the evening I felt as if I had turned back a page of time. I was surrounded by Mary Kitching and all that was hers; she was continually stepping from her sampler, which seemed to control the room. First I see her at twelve years old, top of her class for Latin and Greek at the Measand Grammar School. She was surrounded by a lively crowd. I saw the donkeys and ponies which had brought the children over from Shap, Bampton, and Kentmere. She tells me that no girl is considered educated until she has made her sampler, and that she would soon have to leave Measand and go over the fell to Matterdale. There was a schoolmistress there; samplers were no schoolmaster's subject. At this point all the children shouted, "Hurry up, Parlour." She made a face at them. "That's what they call me," she said; "they say I'm too tidy for a Kitching!"

It is a hot August day, and I see her making towards the lake carrying a rhubarb-leaf as a parasol. In her wake come a bevy of laughing children, holding two long strands of ivy which evidently serve as her train. Also towards the lake comes an artist, carrying his easel and stool. I see his amusement and interest. He joins the gay group, and they all make towards

the lake's edge. This was the beginning of a friendship between Jacob Thompson and Mary Kitching. He is known to us as the first lakeland artist, and the young life in all his pictures was certainly inspired by the child whose sampler so controlled my thoughts. These pictures give a vivid contrast, gay childhood in the foreground and the savage side of Harter Fell or Haweswater for background. They all include Mary; she is invariably seen holding up a wild dock or rhubarb-leaf for a parasol. He writes: "These pictures were painted close to that wildest and happily least intruded upon lake, Haweswater." I wonder if Thompson's ghost walks to-day, sighing round the Manchester Corporation Huts?

Other figures join this group at the lakeside; one pats Mary's hand, and invites her artist friend to Lowther Castle to see the pictures there. I see the artist's pleasure, and the children standing round in awe until the stranger[1] departs; then there is a burst of chatter and peals of laughter. Next I see Thompson sitting in Measand Farm kitchen telling Mary of the first visit to the castle and of his embarrassment. "So that I shouldn't be disturbed while I was sketching, my dinner was brought to me—a whole leg of mutton to carve! I'd never carved one before, and when I put the knife in I was so astonished by the gape it made, and so mortified at the thought of what they'd think of my appetite, that I left the food, the pictures, and my sketches, and crept shamedly from the castle!"

The second figure who joins the group is a poet; he is reciting. I watch Mary as she listens. Sometimes the passages are very long, and she fidgets, and the poet is disgruntled. I heard the artist telling her that she should think herself a lucky girl to have a poet and an artist to direct her attention to things in the works of Nature that would certainly otherwise escape her. She was repentant, but it was the years, and not Wordsworth or Thompson, that taught her the rare beauty of the lake and fellside.

The sincere and enduring friendship that existed between Mary and the artist shows what a very remarkable child she must have been. He wrote her a delightful letter when she was paying the only visit she ever made to a city —Glasgow.

"Measand Hall,
"Haweswater,
"*March 5th, '63*.

"DEAR MARY,—I daresay you very often ask yourself the question: What are they doing at Measand? and if (as we used to read in Fairy Tales) you could have put an enchanted ring on your finger and have travelled bodily, as quickly as you can travel

mentally, depend upon it we should have seen the identical black hat and white feathers pop before the windows at Measand Hall; but as the days of enchanted rings are amongst the things that are for ever past, there is nothing left but dipping my pen in ink and telling you all about 'hame.' Well, your father is well and your mother looks bonny. Uncle John's all alive and caught two Haweswater trout when mending the road near the boathouse—which we had to our tea. Sarah grows handsome and makes capital butter, also excellent currant cake. Janet is all smiles as I met her the other evening on her way from Sand Hill with the milking pail. Maria is as active as a child of the mountains and Jane's cheeks are like roses in full bloom, while Isabel is the bonniest bairn in the district. And when I tell you that William is a kind-hearted industrious boy, I shall have gone the round of the family at home; as for yourself I shall say nothing about ye for some canny Scotsmen will be finding out your value and then ye will be settled in the land that claims Robert Burns and Walter Scott; just a word about the house, and the black puddings, and the hams, and the peat fire, and the twa lambs and the fat pig that weighed twenty-eight stone all but two pounds, now would you not like to have a peep at them all sitting round the fire, when the labours of the day are over. I hope you will be able to sail round Loch Lomond and see what a grand loch it is. Then pop on by Loch Katrine (that you have already had a drink of its water) to Stirling, and sail down the Firth of Forth to Edinburgh. Dinna miss seeing Edinburgh, it beats all other places. We are very glad to hear that you have been enjoying your visit so I must conclude by telling you that we are all well at the Hall and Henry is going to Penrith on the Prince's wedding day in his military costume and there is to be a tea drinking at Mardale on that day; but here we shall be as quiet as a set of Quakers when the spirit does not move them.

"Yours truly,

J. THOMPSON."

Now I see Mary Kitching at eighteen; she is wearing a plain dark velvet dress, with neither ornament nor trimming; her straight black hair is parted in the middle; her well-shaped mouth is determined; her soft eyes are full of question and wonder. Here is someone who will rule, yet love; someone vital, yet controlled; someone possessing tremendous energy, yet capable of repose. . . . Now I see a little old lady of eighty-seven; the soft eyes are a little dimmed, the curved mouth has been drawn inward by the hard bit of

the years, the hair is dressed as before, but now it is white. There is the same repose of the hands, and for the rest—to this shrivel must we come at last. Now I see her propped high against the pillows; in short sharp gasps come her last very definite instructions: "Doan't want money wasted on brass knobs fur coffin—wur nivver fur fuss. Westmorland faarmer's wife's the finest thing cud ha' bin. He's gone—it's nowt o' count, a widow dying—shud like tew be laid whear t'sun falls on grave, like warm bed—allus light and warmth."

Her epitaph might well be:

> Ruled her household to the end—
> Kept the devoted love of her children—
> Held the respect of all who knew her—
> Tasted joy and sorrow, passion and pain—
> Had courage, but knew fear—
> Kept her body healthy and her soul active for God.

A full life, and then to pass back to the quiet earth—this seems fulfilment. We who are city-bound have no time to live thus. We rush through life struggling and striving for riches or fame, seeing little or nothing of the beautiful earth. Then comes the final impotent struggle, and the end. "Telephone for the undertaker. Order the motor-hearse. There's something here to be cleared away—quick!"

Townsfolk hustle, chatter, and fidget. Hill-folk are active, steadfast, and silent; and of such is Mary's son. He has his father's knowledge and love of animals and birds, and his prowess in sport. As a fell racer he had few equals in his youth, and his name figures with honour in many of the books in my little sitting-room that tell of local sport. His face is well chiselled and sensitive; his well-knit body is burnt almost as brown as the earth. In spite of an active kindliness towards his neighbours, he remains a stranger to them; cruelly stricken, he has riveted upon himself an armour of silence which none may pierce. His mother had filled his heart; she was his trinity—mother, wife, friend.

After her children, it was flowers she loved best. It was winter when she died, and there were none in the garden, so he went out and picked a laurel-leaf from the bush under her window and a sprig of the scented geranium she always said smelled like Mardale breezes, and he put them into her hand.

Is there any rack that can torture as the still figure with folded hands; those dead hands that can never again unclasp to hold yours; hands that once

comforted, soothed and served?

After she was buried, he disappeared for three days; then he returned quietly to work, unsmiling and silent.

It is many miles over the hills to Troutbeck, but every Sunday soon after daybreak he is there; he would be close to the earth that holds his heart. He always carries a big bunch of the flowers of the fell—gay, ill assorted. Death broke through the barrier of reserve—the flowers we hesitate to put into the hands of the living, we trudge miles to lay upon the breast of the dead.

The sampler and its ghosts at last drive me out of the door. My host has removed his clogs, and with carpet slippers and pipe is sitting on the slab of slate outside the porch. There is an aloof misery in his face. His clear blue eyes are seeing something other than the old mill and the fellside, and he is hearing something other than the birds he is idly feeding.

He is thinking of that little old figure that used to touch his arm, looking wistfully toward the fellside.

"I wish I could get about like I used, I'd be walking up fellside and picking a bunch of daffodils." He smiles and pats her hand with the casual consideration we give to that which is ours.

"When theear's time, ah'll get sum fur yew, moother." But farm life is a busy life, and men have little time for picking daffodils. Now she is not there to see, touch, or smell the bunches which are taken so regularly and laid on the little mound at Troutbeck.

I sat on the slab of slate beside him. I wished he would speak, yet I felt a reticence about breaking his silence. He threw a few more crumbs to the birds, which had now gathered in a circle round him; then he spoke, almost to himself.

"Evenin' shadows carry memories."

"And regrets."

He nodded.

I had nothing to say. He sat on for a few minutes, and then putting on his clogs again, he rose to make the round of the buildings. I heard him shutting up for the night, the mechanical clumping of his clogs upon the stones had a desolate sound. I watched him return and stand in the porch, waiting for me to go in so that he might lock the door. I knew there would be another long gazing at the hills, then a stretch, and the door would be shut. And so on—one day after another; wherever we go, whatever we do, and whoever we are—a stretch, and then to sleep.

[1] Uncle of the present Lord Lonsdale.

CHAPTER II

THE WATER-MILL

THE INGS MILL is one of the few old water-mills left working. Its decaying old age has not quite become a spectacle; the mill is not yet an exhibit; but the dynamo and turbine hum and throb at its very threshold, its life is threatened. If the wheel ceases to turn, fifty centuries of man's ingenuity will sink to oblivion. The old water-mills want protection, and they should have it, not only for their own sake, but in gratitude to their ancestors and the far-flung industry they fostered. For water-mills have provided revenue for emperors, presidents, and kings—the Greeks, Romans, Saxons, and Normans all owe gratitude for its good service to their people, and our own water-mills have given employment to many generations of Englishmen. Alas! very few orders come to the old mill to-day. It was not so long ago that it supplied spools to the Belfast linen-houses, but I was told that "linen wears tew laang an' fawlks naadays likes summat mair flash, summat as wears out quicker, an' sa spools be findin' theer rooard t'dustbin, an' factories be turnin' into they terble bleak flats fawlk be drove tew live in naadays."

Work at the mill to-day is intermittent, and it is carried on by one man with casual help, instead of the forty who were employed in the days of hand-turning. Here is a reversion of time's whirligig; yesterday was chatter and hum, to-day all is quiet and peace; the mill is empty of life and labour; and in the old kitchen, instead of the clumping of twenty or thirty pairs of clogs on the stone floor, the clatter of plates, the sound of voices grumbling and gay—the cat sleeps by the fire, and an occasional hen strolls in through the door to forage.

When my mind is not with the ghosts of the active past and the pity of the dead industry, I enjoy this peace—the sound of the water that drips from the scoops and the silver web it spins in the sunlight. When it is wet, I spend many an hour watching the solitary man at work while the light filters dimly through the old leads, with their curtain of spiders' webs years thick. Every day he told me something new about the various woods which lay around us.

“I doan’t suppose yew’ll be much t’wiser, but it’s allus interestin’ t’kna summat fresh. T’barrel of large bobbins be made of ash or beech wi’ ends fra sycamore. Bobbins used t’be mad fra solid piece of wood an’ wur mighty heavy an’ easy broke; ta-day they be built oop i’ sections, paarts bein’ glued tagither an’ t’grain of woods crossed, sa as they cuddent be broke. They be light an’ smooth as marble when finished, an’ not even silk fibre be damaged.”

After this he relapsed into an impenetrable silence; he would not even glance in my direction. I think he felt he had given enough information for an ignorant person to consume in one day. But the next morning he began again. “Maybe yew doan’t kna this wood as ah’m workin’ on naw; it’s lignum vitæ [he spelt it for me in case I should not understand], t’hardest wood theear be, an’ it’s used fur ivverything as waants t’be made delicate an’ yet strong.”

THE PAGAN TEMPLE

He was very fond of satinwood, which he told me was made into little pirns "t'ga ta linen warehooses ower i' Ireland an' them birch an' beech ower theear we use moastly fur artificial silk spools; they be faavorite trees o' mine. Sycamores be fine trees tew; they an' ash be cut oop ta mak rollers of all sooarts, wringing-machines, lawn-mowers an' t'like. These trees'll see a tidy bit o' life afoor they'm finished. Ah often find masel' wonderin' wheear they'm all ga-in', but yan thing be sartin, them as has un caan't enjoy t'smell of un like we'm dewin'. Ah'm tellin' yew as t'chemist's shops caan't gi' ennythin' t'equal't."

Smell is one of the senses of our savage ancestry that can be given loose rein without evil consequences. There is something refreshingly primeval

about our response to the smell of sawn wood, burnt wood, cut grasses, the sap in the young hedges, crushed thyme, mint, peat. As this wood was sawn, so its fragrance drifted through the mill; it seemed not only the loveliness of the tree was here, but all the freshness and beauty which it had gathered to itself in life; yet all the sweetness in the air came not from living trees but from stripped and lacerated trunks. Few die and leave so fragrant a memory.

The drying-shed for these woods is forty feet high; on either side are thirteen pillars of rough grey stone, nine feet in circumference, and a space of twelve feet between each. No elaborate architecture could be more impressive. In this building's cool dimness I saw a pagan temple; the hens which strayed in and about it did not realise they were sacrificial hens. The man with a jagged saw I suddenly knew for one of the priests of Ings. These priests had sawn the limbs of their victims; they lay in stiff rows waiting the final stage of the sacrifice unconscious now that the priests but tarried the rush of the water-god from the hills. He will rise from his mountain throne in silver robes, his silver hair flowing in the wind as he comes to turn the wheel of his purpose.

I went towards the priest with the saw; he stopped and looked at me with a smile and then looked back at his saw. "Cuts 'un clean, doan't ut? Wonnerful when yew cum t'think on't—how watter works 'un, ah mean." I thought for the moment he was going to say something profound, but he evidently thought better of it. "Maybe yew doan't kna oor wheel be second biggest span i' country; about thirty feet it be, an' side shot. The watter that drives 't cums frae t'Borrans. Why doan't yew waalk oop an' see wheear 't cums frae? Theear's plenty t'see o' all sooarts oop a stream, but best of all tew ma thinkin' be startin'-plaace."

If I followed this stream to its source I knew I should find infinite variety. I should pass over bridges, alongside woods, up the fellside, and then—then I should watch the birth of the water from the hill; but of that which lay beneath—the secret of that fertile womb which produces the variety and beauty of the earth face—of that I should learn nothing. I thought endlessly about the stream, but remained comfortably where I was, lazily watching the man with the saw. He suddenly stopped and looked at me.

"Ah thowt yew wur fond o' waalking."

The reproach in the tone of his voice at last drove me out of the mill. I crossed the millstream by a rotting plank, but the lure of the field the other side was irresistible—clumps of trees, moss-padded rocks, flowers, ferns, and an infinite variety of bird life. I sat down beside the stream instead of following it, hoping the man with the saw was busy and would not see me,

and soon hopping close to me came a pipit. This is one of the few birds that I feel has little individuality of its own; its breast is like the thrush and its song resembles the lark. Some people are under the impression that these hills abound with larks, but the blithe spirits that pour forth their souls "in profuse strains of unpremeditated art" are their competent understudies, the pipits.

Gulls were flying overhead, a sure sign of rough weather; they kept swooping down to the edge of the mill-race to enjoy their favourite tasty bits, the bracken beetles; I noticed the trout from the stream also found them a delicacy. These beetles have no instinct of danger, or perhaps they are a race of dare-devils; they remind me of the human being who continues to build his house on the slopes of an erupting volcano.

I lazily looked across to the old mill-house; an infinity of birds were flying in and about the ivy which covers it. Many of these are wrens, usually the shyest of birds, but here they are as friendly as robins. Frequently through my bedroom window flies one of the smallest I have ever seen; it might well be a large bumble-bee. It perches on the bed-post, and its two black beady eyes give me a surprised stare.

This little bird brought back the delight my childhood had in its secret knowledge of the whereabouts of their tiny eggs; as a child I found more wrens' nests than any others. Their walling of moss and spiders' web and lining of warm down amazed me even then. Hardly daring to breathe, I would wait to see the little ball of fluff go in and out of its front door. I think the mill-house wren came specially to bring me back a joyous memory of long ago, for they favoured the red sandstone caves in the village where I was born.[2]

Carefully picking their way over the rotting plank and coming towards me were two of our mill hens—despite their sex known as David and Jonathan, because they refused to be divided. They stopped a little distance from me, gave me a long embarrassing stare, winked and nodded at each other, then, catching sight of my dog, clucked aggressively at him. He, though sorely tempted, has learnt that with fowls, discretion is the better part of valour. Finding there was nothing doing of any interest, they flew over to a bush and, after much scratching, settled down, and I hoped for at least one brown egg for breakfast. On my first morning, these same hens had been very curious about the stranger within their gates, and had clucked excitedly away with the news of her, returning almost immediately with a friend, known as Charlie Chaplin. This fowl had feet which resembled his namesake's to a nicety, and the walk which has become world-famous. After the first morning Charlie came regularly to breakfast with me, and perched

on my chair. This was the only fowl I ever knew my dog to accept as an equal; he was wise enough to realise that genius must always be an honoured guest. Though she always answered to "Charlie" she was no more a gentleman than David and Jonathan, for she laid an egg every morning regularly under the laurel-bush. She had originality, courage, and independence, and, refusing to live with the other fowls, roosted alone in the apple-tree. She never failed to run to the gate and give me a welcoming cluck when I returned from my walks, and it was with relief that I heard her death-sentence had been commuted.

She reminded me of Scobidge, a pet my daughter Joan had at the age of five. We called it the cocklehen, for its sex was uncertain, until one day it laid an egg in the nursery. This hen had clean and domestic habits; she used to sleep in a dog-basket in my daughter's room and sit beside her at every meal, for she learned good table-manners. When Joan went out in her pony-cart, the hen went too; it was even present at her sister's christening. The country parson, having an understanding soul, accepted the unusual guest, and, with the exception of a very loud "cluck" towards the end of the service, her behaviour was without reproach. When we left the country to return to London, Scobidge was given into the tender care of the gardener. The parting on both sides was bitter. A year passed before we returned, only to learn she had died of a broken heart; she refused to eat or be driven from the doorstep, where she waited patiently for the sight and sound of her beloved mistress who never came. . . .

The shadows were creeping round me; there was a chill wind; I felt stiff and cold, and realised it was late. For some time my dog had been trying to make me understand that we must walk, and he hailed with delighted barks the fact that I at last rose to my feet.

I like walking late in the cool of the evening, when the creatures of the fell and hedgerow are astir. I find the hedges in Westmorland and Cumberland a continual surprise and delight; they are a variety of colour and scent. My dog tells me that he too finds these hedges full of a variety of delightful scents.

I saw a great tawny owl mousing, and chased him off; he made towards the drying-shed with clumsy, uneven flight and eerie cry. There are many owls hereabouts, and they appear to favour mechanical transport, for on the evening I arrived at Staveley I had seen, to my great surprise, a white owl sitting on the top of the train—an adventurous owl; I stared, my dog barked,

the owl hooted, but he made no attempt to move, and was still sitting on his strange perch when the train steamed out.

The lane ended on the high fellside, and spread before me were the great hills. They greeted me with an aloof graciousness, but their aspect left no doubt that they must be treated with respect or they would extend no welcome, and make of me their sport instead of their guest. With them, familiarity breeds destruction. Man must approach them in all humbleness, or he will find, instead of a courteous host, an angry god who does not desire companionship. They smile sardonically at man's efforts to herd on their sides; they know that he will soon pass, and the work of his hands and the sound of his travail will depart; but they will endure—a thousand years in their sight are but as yesterday.

Their aloof grandeur for once depressed me; they did not lift me to glory, they abased me by their indifference. I realised the bitter truth: they no longer knew me as their familiar; we were divided by the years. I was oppressed by Time's remorseless thieving; implacable shadows crowded upon me, they loomed large, inexorable, menacing, and I shrivelled beneath them. My protesting thoughts beat foolishly into unheeding space, my mind whirling—a wheel of sterile thought; and on the spokes of the wheel nightmares blazed.

I turned my face from the hills and listened to the joyous barking of my little dog as we made for home. My thoughts changed; I felt strangely exhilarated. Were not the gods chained? Must they not ever endure splendid isolation? I know freedom; I can go where and when I will; I can say what I will, to whom I will. Up to the gods must creep shadows, pregnant with tidings of the world's suffering and gaiety, yet they must bear the burden of this knowledge and remain impotent; I can share my joys and sorrows with my fellows. I know companionship; I am happy in the possession of my small things; and, even though I pass quickly to dust, I shall have had my gay hour.

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[2] Kinver, Staffordshire.

CHAPTER III

WEATHER

IN the fell country man may enjoy the rare experience of being alone yet completely companioned, neither oppressed by the parsimony of fools nor depressed by loneliness; he may pick and choose his company according to his mood—hills and their shadows, lakes bird-voiced, streams crystal clear, tracks flower-lined, fellside fern and heather clad, or farmhouse welcome warm. Here is variety for the jaded and fresh energy for the weary; here man may go forth each day and adventure. Every hour is pregnant with the unexpected. The hills encircle but do not oppress; they stand aloof, strong, magical: Helvellyn with its clear-cut line, Great Gable with its irresistible allure, and the rocky humps of the Langdales; nearer, rose-tipped hills, the sun shining on the early heather and sweet-smelling thyme.

Walk north, south, east, west, as desired, there is no fear of the law of trespass. See a peak of rock, shining water, a cluster of cottages; pursue, explore, discover. The track may amble by a silver stream, with banks which breed forget-me-not and the witch-faced monkey-musk; of a sudden pass a hedge of honeysuckle; but a flock of geese from a near-by farm refuses to allow thieving—they are wise in their cackling defence. Animals have a knowledge bred of bitter experience; they know man's evil intent, that when he becomes aware of a beautiful thing he must cut it, pick it, lock it up, or kill it. Appreciation creates the desire to possess, and on the heels of possession follow the cage, the shelf, the glass case.

Every day my walks bring me a more intimate acquaintance with some creature. In the crevice of a wall one day I saw a weasel. He had wriggled forth to make his toilet; he was a little self-conscious, and darted sharp looks here and there, but was very determined to make a clean job of himself. At last he was satisfied and he sunned himself with evident pleasure. Suddenly my dog stiffened and the weasel was off. Now for a madcap galloping chase; my dog has a blood-lust for rats and weasels, but, as they are about his own size, I feel the sport is sufficiently courageous not to be condemned,

especially since, when it comes to biting, the shape of a Peke's face is at odds against him. This weasel escaped, and I was glad, because, watching him, I knew that he, even as I, rejoiced exceedingly in life. Just above the weasel's dressing-room, perching on the top of the wall, I saw a wheatear. In the spring I have often searched for the nest which he builds in these walls, and which is carefully knitted together with twigs and given an enticing lining of feather and wool. The nest is not easy to find, for the wheatear knows the cadging cuckoo's habits, so he cunningly hangs over his front door a piece of bracken. He watches jealously over the nest with his bright beady eyes, and if he sights that which threatens the peace or safety of his home his note, so like a little mocking laugh, has an anxious quality. To-day his family has been reared and his thoughts are only for himself, his toilet, his food, and the sun.

Butterflies are everywhere. I have known a butterfly accompany the traveller for the whole of the day, even returning with him in the evening. He will flutter before, as if showing with pride his district.

Their wings with azure, green and purple glossed,
Studded with coloured eyes, with gems embossed;
Inlaid with pearl, and marked with various stains
Of lovely crimson through their dusky veins.

Flowers abound; sometimes my posy is made up of twenty-four different varieties, every size and colour, but my fancy is still faithful to the familiar dandelion. All over the fellside they gleam gold, and even bring beauty to the scrap-heap; no place is too mean for their radiance, no weather too foul for them to flourish. They close their door at the going down of the sun, but though, like all created things, they must wither and die, I never remember having seen a dying dandelion; this little flower keeps perpetual and riotous revel. I drink my toast of beck-water to the dandelion.

I have found many flowers of Alpine character on these hills. Once I collected them, and in my room stood a cabinet filled with Alpine varieties carefully annotated. This was before I realised that I possessed all things with my enjoyment. Then I presented the flower cemetery to my old school, who probably in their turn presented it to the dustbin. Now I do not remember even the names of the flowers, still less their classification, but I see, I possess, I enjoy—though I do not collect.

These Alpine plants live mostly on the rocky ledges—the purple flowering saxifrage, the flax root, and the tiny creeping willow. Among the bog plants I have found the water lobelia, the globe flower, the yellow

balsam, the insect-eating butterwort and sundew, the justly named "stinking willie" which grows profusely along the becks, and that plant which must have been named by a suffering botanist—lousewort. In the fields are marguerites yellow and white, the gold bell-flower, and many varieties of orchid. The herbaceous border of the hedgerow and the carpet-bedding of the open places have been sown by an artist gardener with foxgloves, ragged robin, furry cushions, harebells, and sprinkled with the fragrance of wild thyme.

Ferns are everywhere, in every crack and cranny of the wall and along every stream; I have myself picked more than fifteen different kinds in one day. The regal osmunda, so aptly called the royal fern, kings it over the hedgerow. In spite of its royal blood I hope for its own sake its sympathies are democratic, for hereabouts it is used as litter for cattle though in the south it is cherished in the gardens of the rich.

The grasses that border the track are lush, delicious, tempting. I used to gather a handful and suck their juices and throw them away, but the years teach the preciousness of all life: "the grass withereth, the flower fadeth"; why should the hand of man ever hasten their end?

Weather in the fell country changes as frequently as a woman's mood, and none can tell how long it will last. One such moody day a veil had been cast over the earth, which, partly concealing, piqued curiosity and aroused desire for further acquaintance. The world was grey, remote, chaste. White flaunts virginity, blasts its purity; grey is innocent but not ignorant, it has knowledge, its charm is quietly insidious, and so are the fells on such a day; they wear many dresses, but the one I like best is this silver-grey. The bushes are hanging their gossamer hammocks, the tall grasses have become little silver sticks; every leaf is diamond edged and "all the humming honey folk a fast are keeping."

I passed a woman walking up the hill with a large basket on each arm. Her face was russet brown and her sharp features gave her a quaint bird-like appearance. She was peddling wares—draper's fal-lals—which seemed unlikely merchandise to sell at the lonely farms towards which she was walking, but she assured me that she would return with empty baskets.

I asked her if the mist bothered her.

"Maist fawlk wud raather be cummin' down fellside than ga-in' oop't when mist's theear, unless tha knaws fell that well tha cud walk un blind. It's awreet when thoo's in valley; but it doan't dew t'ventur' fur on fell thoo knaw but liddle."

She was soon wrapped in the mist which came slithering over the hills like nebulous snakes, curling and twisting round rocks and farms. I wondered if she would shelter in some lonely barn, perhaps sleeping there in the dry bracken, waiting for a clearing to peddle her wares.

It was only a matter of minutes before I too was enveloped in this soft grey veil which seemed to enfold all things in a shroud of quiet, when suddenly a cry—a fluttering—and there was one creature the less. The veil of quiet was torn; peace is an illusion—war a reality. In the hedges, the grasses, the trees, the water, the fierce lust for life, incessant hunger, drives earth's creatures to destroy each other. Desire was abroad, ravaging unbridled passion, which takes—kills—feeds—and gives no quarter. The animal, bird, and insect worlds only tolerate their healthy; perhaps they are wiser than we; our unfit are preserved, our fit can die. The animal world knows the fear of death and tries to protect itself against this relentless unseen foe, but fights impotently, even as we. Yet in all the vast world of creatures all trace of death is eliminated. We know little of the secrets or life of this world about us. There is a saying that no one has seen a dead donkey; neither have they seen a dead bird or a dead beetle unless it has been killed or crushed by man. Why are these left to rot? Do the creatures hope to shame us?

A train thundered along the valley, and the hills echoed the sound of it. I thought what a desolate hollow sound the echo gave, how opposite to the pulsing vitality of the train itself, the "Iron Horse," as Wordsworth called it when he was fighting against its intrusion.

> *Is there no nook of English ground secure*
> *From rash assault?*

To-day his dearly loved hills and lakes are girdled, and the iron beast thunders along the quiet valleys, pausing but to vomit humanity, which spreads ever wider and higher.

I could see nothing; there was no sign of life, only the sound of it which came to me through the thick mist. Then there was a swishing through the grasses and hedges; in a few seconds everything was shaking and swaying; wind had suddenly blown up the fellside. It was as though a creature had been tied up and, now breaking loose, made a wild rush to escape. Almost instantly the mist rose. I stood amazed watching this miracle. As the heavens were again revealed, there was a sudden birth and quick breeding of cloud.

No glib explanation of moisture drawn up from the earth will ever dispel my wonder at the sight. Low clouds now tore across the sky. My dog and I ceased to dawdle; we knew we were in for a storm. He was well ahead of me, sniffing the air, his tail blowing sideways. Masses of birds were flying—rooks, peewits, curlews, dozens of seagulls—and smaller birds scuttled in and out of the hedges. The blue harebells were beaten almost flat. Then rain came. My spirits rose, and I felt strangely comforted, as always in rough weather. There was a rift in the clouds, and a shaft of light from above showed the hills.

The wind and the rain bit into my face. Such weather rouses me to a passionate revel in life. My dog turned to see if I was coming, then, assuring himself, galloped on with gleeful yelps; we both shouted "Glory, Glory, Glory, Hallelujah!"

The tarn we passed was riotous; its waters were lashed to a fury; here was unrest, revolution, peace forgotten. There was riot abroad, turbulent dissatisfaction; light moods and fair garments were shed as though they had never been; there were no longer twinkles and smiles, the water seethed with fury; yesterday's blue satins were discarded, iron grey metal was now its wear.

On the great hills or the waters I rouse to rough weather—"Give me the snoring breeze and white waves rearing high"—but in the cities I abhor it, a sea of mackintosh and umbrella, hats awry, wind and rain buffeting at every street corner, gutters flooding, dirty water dripping from every projection; and, splashed with the mud of the streets, ill-tempered, slopping humanity trudges on.

I have desired the hills till my heart was sick: the freedom of open spaces, sweet-smelling turf, flashes of sudden sun through the trees, shining water, giant shadows striding over great hills. I belong there—my birth was among them; I hope I may die there. Though I have been house trained and taught decorum, I am still turbulent and restless. For years I have been caged and exhibited in the city; at rare intervals my cage is opened and I am allowed out, but I am not free; I am tethered by the rope of necessity, and the rope is held firm by the iron rings of duty and family ties.

Depression fell upon me. I suddenly realised that I was wet and cold, and I hurried on. Both my dog and I were glad to see the mill; already the lamp was alight in my room. I am not often so well satisfied indoors, for there is something roving and restless within me, something alien to a room's caging; unless I am absorbed in strenuous work, I do not well endure a walled-in roof-covered place, but when my body is weary and my spirit dark I would be in gallant company. I looked through the bookcase in the

mill parlour and was immediately in such company—poets, artists, clerics, kings, and vagabonds.

Having been entertained, warmed, and well fed, I went up to bed assured by Robert Browning that "God's in His heaven, all's right with the world." . . . The night was now clear and radiant. Such a night to drive out bitterness and rebellion.

I drew my bed close to the window and let this wonder of beauty sooth my whirligig brain, with its wheels ever turning, twisting, sorting. The wheel of the past has spokes of fire which burn and torture with remorse and regret, all those things done and those left undone. The past's enormous disarray. The present's what and which, the future's cautionary bogeys. . . .

Night can affright, confound, devastate the handful of clay which lives in the midst of its immensity. There are evil nights when the mind blasts and shouts, rushing hither and thither, creating, destroying, wearing itself to a dazed impotence and the body to a feeble clod. In the restless watches of the alert London night my tired body turns and frets, vainly seeking the kindly oblivion of sleep, but the active mind refuses to allow it. This ill-assorted pair doomed to life-partnership is ever at variance. . . .

I looked at the sapphire sky, star-sown, the mill-pond reflecting the moon, the myriad spangle of the heavens, the shoulder of the fell stretching on to the greater hills, the sloping fields with dim shapes of cattle; I heard their placid munching of the sweet dewy grass, the wind dancing through the trees, and the occasional cry or splash of the water-fowl. Here, on the breast of the fell, mind and body are at peace; there is a hush, a brooding serenity, a strength which comforts. It would seem all living things sleep, yet the pregnant night is in silent labour with the birth of the coming day. . . . Encompassing is the beauty, enfolding the quiet. Why should I return to the grit and glare, the hoardings, the hootings, the never-ending tramp of a billion feet, the ordered disarray of ceaseless traffic; why go back and be submerged in that weary crowd of wage-earners, pleasure-hunters, place-seekers, money-grabbers; why again become one of the tired, toiling atoms of humanity, dull-eyed, deafened, derelict?

Nevertheless, I know I shall go back. I shall again be one of the herd driven in turn by duty the relentless bully; ambition with its non-stop chariot; instinct, habit, or the quest for that will-o'-the-wisp happiness. Yet I am not forced to be thus driven, and here peace and contentment seem within my grasp. I can stay here apart from the herd in peaceful isolation, but am I one of those who can rest satisfied in the quiet places of the earth—or would this tranquillity become stagnation and boredom? To my turbulent spirit it might. Yet I know I would die thus, looking out on the quiet earth to

the immensity, for then my trembling spirit would surely gather power to free itself from the yearning body and rise from its grip to the vast of eternity, strong and unafraid.

CHAPTER IV

A FELL VILLAGE

VARIETY, beauty, and entertainment are all to be found in Ings, though it is a little place which is often passed unnoticed. I met a fell-lover here who was staying in a grey stone modern house that had been built with great pride by its owners. There was a bathroom—in use!—and electric light made on the premises.

The house shone with signs of elbow-grease and affection, and the garden was as bright as the house, almost glaring with its massed display of brilliant flowers. I looked in vain for a weed or an unused patch of earth.

Sometimes in the evening I walked down to this house and sat and talked with the host, not on a stone slab, but a shining garden bench which came from Kidderminster. Every object within his reach was material for his restless hands.

"Fixin' t'electric light," he said, "has bin a nice bit o' hobby. Nowt like a bit of somethin' interestin' fur keepin' fawlk healthy, happy, an' gud. Fawlk mun wark ta live an' it's not allus wark us likes, but when it be ower, us can git on wi' a bit o' somethin' us do like. Ah nivver ails an' nivver gits worrited, but ah shud dew if ah diddent fill ma mind an' ma hands; they nivver rests till ah sleeps—even then ah dreams o' things as waants doin', an' ah wishes ah wur awake ta dew 'un."

His industrious hand was evident in every inch of the garden, and every corner of his bright little house.

He was a very fine wood-carver; there were carved cupboards, tables, and brackets; even the hand-rail of the staircase was carved. Industry was visible everywhere. The little house seemed to me rather overcrowded, over-bright; it gave a restless atmosphere; the energy and busyness of the town was in its walls; but this may have been the reaction of one who was suffering from the crowd and glare of the city.

It seems churlish to criticise when comfort and courtesy share excess with the furniture and flowers, but I missed something which the old farms have drawn within their walls—the quiet peace of the hills. For those who

live in the midst of the town's cauldron, peace has a value which exceeds "modern conveniences." . . .

The best-loved lady in the land of Ings was she whom they called "Granny." In villages the inhabitants are known by names they have earned through love, service, or default. I never heard "Granny" called by any other name. She was over eighty yet she baked her bread and did all her family's washing, her kitchen was scrubbed and polished by nine every morning and then she was ready to receive friends. All sorts and sizes of them streamed into her open door all day. Both man and animal came into her kitchen to be bathed, bandaged, nursed, and cured. She was the local doctor and lawyer. The children came from all the neighbouring farms and brought even their toys for her to mend, and shattered love-affairs were repaired with equal success. She might well have exhibited a board: "Repairs of all sorts executed on the premises."

INGS

I had a bad tear in my skirt, and had been told to take it to Granny. I found her entertaining nine children in her very small kitchen. They were

drawn in a close circle round her, and they turned and looked at me open-mouthed as I entered. Granny assured me that the skirt would be ready by the evening. I should then have taken my departure but the weather was wet, the kitchen cosy, and I hesitated.

"Sit thoo down a bit an' wait fur weather t'clear if thoo've a mind. These be ma gran'-children fra Borrerdal'. They've cum ower fur day; theear moother have gone on ta big sale at Windermere."

The children, having given me a long and searching stare, now turned back to Granny for further entertainment.

"Wur't a really an' truly wild cat?"

"It wur a wild cat sure enuff, wi' great head an' tail. It wur dragging itself along by t'stream wi' two broken legs."

"Did yew bring it back here, Granny?"

"Yew can tame enny wild thing wi' kindness, save cat. But it's waste o' time coaxin' they; best leave they tew ga back t'woods. Ah cud na carry back t'cottage ta tend, fur it wud let nabuddy touch it, bitin', scratchin', growlin', an' leukin' fearsome whenivver ennybuddy cum near it. It lay i' grasses alangside t'stream an' theear had fower kittens. It wur worritin' ower they kittens an' not her puer legs that dragged her sa close t'village. Ah cuddent sleep nights thinkin' o' thaat puer creature's pain but nabuddy cuddent ga near—not even dogs dursent. Ah tuk her some fewd an' drink but she wuddent nivver touch nowt while ah wur by. Her legs mended grad'al after a fashion. Ah useter watch her, fra t'other side o' bridge, tryin' ta stand on un a bit each day; nature an' time be a wunnerful pair o' doctors, an' yan day she wur gone, nivver leavin' a trace, like t'witch livin' on t'fellside, Crook way."

"An' kittens tew?"

"An' kittens tew. Ay, ah wull nivver furgit t'wild fixed stare of thaat creature's e'es—as wild an' fierce as eagle ah yance see ower Long Sleddale. T'last wolf an' t'last boar be killed but theear'd still be wild creatures whativver fawlk say, an' if thoo cum across yan doan't kill un an' stuff un; keep 't livin'."

"Is theear really an' truly a witch livin' on fellside Crook way? Teacher says she doan't believe i' witches."

"It bain't only what tha see be trew—what tha doan't see be mair interestin' an' important an' ivvery bit as true as what tha sees."

"Teacher says we shud busy oorsen wi' what's trew an not ga stuffin' oorsen wi' fewlish fairy-tales."

"Well, thoo must listen to teacher but see that 'ee nivver be t'same fewls as sum o' t'fawlk i' Borrerdal'. Ah doan't say thoo moother, mind; she's a gud lass, an' gud as ma son cud get ennyway; theear's fewls at Ings an' i' Lunnon tew ah guess"—she paused and looked at me with a smile—"but theear's more i' Borrerdal', ah'm thinkin'."

"Tell us a story aboot Borrerdal', Granny."

"Well—when thoo waants t'be verry rude tew ennybuddy i' Borrerdal' thoo call 'Cuckoo' to him, doan't tha? Thaat means thoo thinks him not as clever as he thinks hissen. T'tale gaws that menny years sen a larned man tell t'fawlk i' Borrerdal' thaat if tha cud only kip cuckoos i' valley theer'd be spring aw t'year roond; sa some o' they fewls set t'wark an' built a girt waall reet across t'valley, an' set a feller to try an' kip t'birds i' Borrerdal' side. O'course, yan day when they'd a mind cuckoos flew ower waall, an' theear wur serious Borrerdal' fawlk as said 'twere pity they didn't mak waall a raw o' stones higher!"

We all laughed at the Borrowdale fools, but Granny looked at us very seriously over her spectacles.

"Jist thoo remember that a high waall woan't kip nowt inside of 't thaat waants tew git ower. Thoos must mak things luv thee if thoo waant un ta stay wi' thee. Cagin', chainin', an' trappin' doan't give nowt tew yew. Thoo caan kill easy enuff, an' dead things caan't get awa, but what's t'use o' thaat? An' to stuff creatures an' kip un starin' at thoo, wheear's sense or pleasurin' i' thaat? They doan't kip tha cumpany, they only haunt thoo thaat way. Mind what ah'm tellin' thoo: doan't iver trap nor cage nowt; leave creatures free same as thoo be."

The boys looked sheepishly at each other; but only for a few seconds; they soon crowded in still closer to the old woman, asking for more stories. She held up the shirt she'd been working on, for my inspection.

"Hoo's thaat fur a patch?"

"Where is it?" I said.

She smiled. "Yew've said quite t'reet thing."

She drew another shirt out of the basket, threaded her needle, handed round the tin of home-made peppermint, and wiped her glasses before she proceeded.

"Well, a laang time sen, laang afoor t'days o' coaches an' t'like, theer cum ta live i' Borrerdal' a man wi' lots o' brass. He turned his nose oop at aw t'lile hooses built widdout mortar, an' sent a feller wi' tew pack pownies ower fellside ta bring limestoan fur t'big girt hoose he were set on buildin'. Well, t'feller gat his limestoan an' set off wi' each powny carryin' a pair o'

secks. Well, t'rain started ta tummle down cats an' dogs, makin' t'secks steeam; t'feller teuk his hat off, an' scrat'd his heead, thinkin' theer mud be summat wrang fur t'secks to be afire! He stopped at t'beckside an' filt his cap wi' watter, tossin' it ower secks. Of coorse, this med un steeam mair an' mair, sa he med oop his mind ta dew summat desperat', an' he chucked all fower secks inta t'beck tew put t'fire oot. But mischief as wud hebben-down[3] mun abin afoot, for watter bubbled an' boiled an' theear wur girt clouds o' steeam, till at t'last feller run back home like a whipped hound, shoutin', 'T'dee'il wur i' secks, as watter wuddent quench fire they wur makin'.'"

"Diddent the man ivver build his big girt hoose?" said her smallest grandchild.

She smiled. "Noa, he left Borrerdal'. Leuk!—rain's stopped; tha best all run off while ah git dinner."

Next door to Granny is a small shop; it is an important shop, because it is the only one. The shop is in the kitchen and the counter is used as a dining-table for the family. It is the Selfridge of the district not only because it sells everything, but because here is met the world of Ings! This shop has a twin in another Westmorland village, wherein I shed my knapsack for one night. And there also the counter was used as a table and when I entered, a man was leaning on it drinking a cup of tea and eating an anæmic-looking pasty. A cat was asleep on the medley that was strewn over the table, and a hen was sitting on the cash register. The lady who presided had beautiful red hair, small green eyes, white eyelashes, no eyebrows, and a spotty sallow skin. She was fat and ungainly, but she had surprisingly beautiful hands, well shaped and clean, though the garments she wore were untidy and ill-assorted. Altogether she was the counterpart of her shop—she stocked variety.

I wanted ink; she sold me half a bottle—all she had left over from a bottle opened last year. I wanted stamps, oranges, needles, a note-book, toothpaste, safety-pins, a dog's comb, a pair of stockings, and a night's lodging; she supplied them all, but, in spite of the cash register, she made out the bill for my purchases on the back of a paper bag in figures only.

"Ma figurin' serves weel enuff. Ah nivver wur much gud at spellin'; it seems a waste o' time tew write down articles; customers knas what they's ordered. An' as often as not ah leaves un tew add oop fur theirsen. Ah find they prefers it. Just dew as yew likes best."

"Well, I suppose somebody must add it up," I said.

"It's as well." She watched me with a tolerant condescension. "Nut fur out?"

"You have put down a shilling too much," I said.

"Ah! Not sa bad, considerin' how menny things yew've bowt. Addin' oop bain't ma side o' business. It's ma 'usband's. Wot ah put across is sellin' stuff."

She reached over into the window for another anæmic-looking pasty and offered it to the man over the counter.

"Won't 'urt you; it's 'ome made."

"She'd sell an Austin to Ford," said the man, taking it.

She gave him an uncomprehending look, and from a tin produced yet another of these delicacies, which she placed on an orange plate in the window beside an egg and an orange tea-cup and saucer; beneath the tempting group was a label which read:

THE ROCK BOTTOM
SIX PENCE.

She turned up the lamp to the full.

"Yew might as well see what we've got. Summat else might tak yew fancy. We stock a gud line in a'most ivverythin'."

The man threw his sixpence on the counter.

"Just misses Marks & Spencer, don't she?"

Mrs. Marks & Spencer—I found it a very good name for the lady of this village shop.

I was told not to disturb the hen, as she was laying.

"She has allus suffered wi' rheumatics, and, wi' aw the damp last 'eear, she caught a bit extry i' her thighs, sa ah spiled her a bit in between customers, an' naw she woan't lay ennywheears else but cash register."

At this point the hen, with a triumphant cluck, flew out at the door.

"Theear yew be!" said Mrs. M. & S., holding out the warm brown egg. "New laaid—three ha'pence."

I bought it.

The shop at Ings is a sister shop, ruled over by a sister mind. I prophesy the lady who keeps it will one day have a large house on the shores of Windermere; she has personality, she is ambitious, the small shop in the little cottage is not sufficient. She has now worked upon her rather easy-going husband to build a new house of cement blocks and ambitious size in the valley. Its walls are rising, and every day she goes and directs the work rather in the manner of Elizabeth of old. I think the people of the district are a little dubious about her; she comes from the restless town. There are many catching advertisements outside her cottage, and, though I deplore her taste, I see that to gain her ends she is right—advertisement pays. I am quite sure that if there is anything to be caught in the village, it is caught by this lady. She will never lose anything by not "meeting a customer." I wanted envelopes; but the shop had only packets of paper and envelopes together; to oblige, she removed the envelopes and sold them to me. I wanted a reel of green cotton; she had none, but immediately went next door, borrowed one from her neighbour, and sold it to me. But, though she had a shrewd head for business, she was good-natured, and I soon discovered was as ready to give as to take. I found an extra orange in the bag—the package of fruit drops was larger than it should have been. My dog was always given a biscuit and I was usually pressed to a cup of tea not in the order. I prophesy that seventy years hence there will be a stained glass window in Ings Church to her memory. She will have endowed a library or given a swimming-pool to Windermere.

In a village, people are not merely people, but man, woman and child; each possessing individuality and personality; they do not share their opinion—they have their opinion. The town creates the herd machine and destroys the individual; numbers take the place of names in the large factories and stores, and the numbered people live in numbered dwellings "in serried ranks assembled. . . ." The span of their robot existence allows but individual birth and death: if only we were allowed individual existence and robot birth and death, life might be more desirable.

It will be some time before robots are accepted in Ings, for the village is alive with personality.

There was a man I used to pass near the church every morning, walking rapidly as if about some important business. He carried a little scythe and wore an habitual expression of open-eyed wonder; his face was smooth,

round and rosy like a healthy baby. Everything seemed to yield him a surprised interest, whether walking, talking or working.

Scythes are cumbersome things to carry and manipulate, they have practically become implements of the past; we have no time for scythes. I regret their passing, for the swish of their blades through the grass is musical hearing. The very name of this queer-shaped implement has a soft caressing sound—scythe; it suggests sweet long grasses, quiet meadows, leisured work.

This particular little scythe appeared to be an invariable companion. It was the same shape as the usual large scythe but evidently easier to carry and manipulate. Both the man and his companion interested me, and one day my interest descended to curiosity.

"I have never seen a scythe like that," I said.

"An' nivver will; her be near a hundred 'eear auld. Theear's menny a new-fangled 'un, but nivver yan as cud beat her. If ah were tew tell yew damage her cud dew wi' yan swish of her blade yew'd be 'mazed. . . . Ah cut t'school-house hedge wi' her."

"What else do you use her for?"

"Pretty near ivverything—her cuts churchyard beautiful."

"I can see she's a good weapon, and one you would not easily part with."

"Money wuddent buy her . . . Ah wud na sell her fur best part of Ings. Ah kna her back'ards—her's nivver failed ma sen ah had her. Gat ma livin' reg'lar an' kip' ma healthy, her has. Ah shud like tew kna enny human who cud better thaat. Ah allus places her i' carner by chimney-piece—kippin' her warm kips her sweet. Allus bright an' cheerful her be, an' ready fur wark; her caan't abear bein' idle. Night time ah see her gleamin' silver in her carner an' seemin' like as if her wur taalkin' tew moon an' stars."

ST. ANNE'S FARM

I looked at the scythe with great interest and respect.

"It's a grand fellow," I said.

"She be—cuts churchyard grand as yew can see. Ah cud shaw yew t'lock an' key of t'church if yew likes. It's interestin' fur them as likes sich things—maybe yew'd like tew hev a see?"

I told him that I should. I felt that any indifference on my part would have hurt him. It was evident that the scythe and the church's lock and key were his pride and pleasure; they made his life worth while.

As we walked through the churchyard he told me that the church was originally high on the fellside.

"But folks gat lazy, wuddent put theirsen out tew waalk oop fellside tew church, sa church had tew cum down tew they. . . . What wur church, be now St. Anne's Faarm oop Grassgarth; this church here in t'valley is not auld, only 1600 odd on t'lock."

Here was a true dalesman—a hundred years in his sight are but as yesterday. Those who belong to the hills have no regard for time; they never have to search time-tables or catch buses, they never have to be checked in and out of work. The rising of the sun means the beginning of the day's work; the going down of the same, rest. Few dalesmen carry a watch; if you ask them the time they will look up to the sun and say, "It's somewheears round . . ."

While we were looking at the lock and key I learnt the church was restored "somewheears round" 1743, and again "somewheears round" 1843. I also learnt that Queen Adelaide had subscribed to the restoration fund.

"Ay, she visited Ings, yew kna, an' it dun her a power of gud."

"So Ings has its queen?"

"Ay—it dew mak it sund grander somehow . . . but what about oor water-wheel? . . . Thaat *be* summat." He paused, spat, and watched the effect of this statement, then he tried the edge of his scythe and forgot all about me and the water-wheel.

"Her's keen," he said with pride, holding it toward me affectionately as a mother might hold out her baby to be admired. I hesitated.

"Thoo can hold her fur a minit if thoo's careful."

I took it, but my handling of the scythe was not to his mind. He took it back quickly. "Yew doan't kna how tew hold her," he said reprovingly.

"Strange hands are always awkward," I said in excuse.

"Ay, an' her knas who's handlin' her, an' her won't cut nowt praper wi' nabuddy but me," he chuckled, and gave the scythe an understanding wink. . . . "Thoo've seen almshouses oop Grassgarth, o' coarse?"

I shook my head.

"Thoo shud. Thoo'll like un, an' thoo'll nivver guess how they cum oop theear."

"You must tell me."

He settled himself comfortably on a tombstone: "The Blessed Remains of Jacob Thomas."

"A gud few year ago theear wur lad i' village thaat wur allus a-dreamin' o' Lunnon; he kip taalkin' an' taalkin' o' whaat he'd dew fur Ings if he gat theear an' of all t'brass he'd bring back. He wur sa sartin thaat he'd mak gud

theear thaat arter a lang time t'village gev a few coppers apiece ta send him off wi' pack. Maybe it wur partly tew git rid o' him, fur it must a bin a bit bothersome hearin' him allus a' taalkin' an' a-longin' to be a-ga-in', an' partly becos he wur sart as gat what he wanted. Ennyways, he set off peddlin' his shoe-laces an' t'like, an' then—wud yew believe—his dream cum true, an' he med gud an' browt back brass tew Ings just like he said he wud."

"A rare lad."

"Ay, he wur; gainin' brass wi' some fawlks means loss of memory, but he wur a gud lad." He was now rubbing up his precious scythe with the long grass that grew over "The Blessed Remains of Jacob Thomas." "He did Ings proud . . . he had t'church restored wi' marble fra Italy ta mak it smart." He spat on his scythe and polished it as he jerked out his words. "Bought—farm—at—Grassgarth—built—them— fowershouses—an'—bonny—yans—they—be. Ay, he hed a head, did lad."

"And rare gratitude," I said.

"Well, arter aw he hed Ings ta thank fur ivverythin' thaat cum tew him."

"And now Ings has to thank him."

"Ings doan't furgit him—it caan't." He chuckled and winked. "Lad put oop his own monument i' they almshouses . . . better'n enny headstone i' yard."

He rose, and, standing on "The Blessed Remains of Jacob Thomas" said, "Well, scythe an' me mun be gettin' on. . . ."

I knew I was tactfully dismissed.

Nobody can avoid his neighbour in Ings, and nobody wants to. I met the man with the little scythe continually and each time he greeted me with increasing reproach: "Waalkin' oop tew see almshouses an' plaace wheear t'auld church used tew be?" and it was partly to keep his good opinion of my interest and energy, and partly to satisfy my own inclination, that I climbed the hill to Grassgarth.

The richest man in Ings sat on the low wall of the bridge which spanned the millstream. His appearance suggested a dirty Carlyle; he also shared that philosophic mind, though, unlike Carlyle, he was an unconvertible optimist. He might well have been a near relation to the "Beloved Vagabond," being completely satisfied and utterly contented. The stream he thought a good stream, Ings the centre of the universe, his neighbours rare and friendly; the

worst weather he thought promising, and life always pleasant. But the village did not appreciate him as he appreciated the village; they called him "Idle Joe," and often gave him the rough side of their tongue, but their approval or disapproval left him equally content, both showing, he insisted, that he was of interest to them. They certainly all greeted him as they passed, but it was equally certain that they did not approve his idle ways; listening to their greetings taught me the richness of Ings' vocabulary, but neither acidity nor abuse troubled Joe's content.

One morning I awoke to find I had a noisy cough and sniffling cold; relentless drenching rain was falling, my post was worrying and exacting, and the morning paper full of death and disaster, crash and cruelty. I cursed all newspapers, letters and germs, and went out to find if Joe's optimism still prevailed. He was sitting as usual on the bridge, wrapped in a disreputable ulster with a precautionary piece of old carpet beneath him. He acknowledged that the weather was "unsettled," but was loquacious about "the vartue o' change o' weather." "Enny sart of weather be gud; bad maks us welcome gud extry."

He paused for me to get over a paroxysm of sneezing and nose-blowing. "Even if thoo hev a bit o' cold, must hev bad health sumwhen or thoo'd nivver feel vartue o' good." His flow of words was interrupted by a sharp verbal thrust from a dour-faced man who was passing along the road. He threw his remarks at Joe without stopping, raising his voice as he walked on.

"Tongue waggin' cum usual, it's t'only part o' tha body ivver does a bit o' wark."

Joe chuckled and continued sucking his pipe contentedly.

"Thoo's bane idle. Thaat's what's t'matter wi' thee."

"Neeah," Joe called after him, "ah's nut idle. If ah fund ah hed a idle bane i' ma body ah'd hev 't oot."

"Thoo'd ha' ter be filleted then," was shouted back.

Joe laughed. "Farmer's gud friend o' mine, but he bain't allus right." He chuckled again and spat vigorously. "Ah warked terr'ble hard i' ma yung days. Ah wur apprenticed tew joiner; t'job wur forced on ma by ma faather, though ah hed nar gift fur t'work an' ah wasted menny gud 'eears ower't. It cum tew climax when boss giv me a windy frame t'mak an' durin' wearyin' process foreman cum alang an' said, 'Whativver dust tha think thoo's makin'?' 'It's windy frame as t'boss tell't ma t'mak,' ah said. 'Thoo's better nut let t'boss see that. Shuv it awa' an' start anither.' Ah did as he tell't me, an' presently t'boss cum along an' said, 'Call thaat windy frame? Why, ah nivver saw a warse attempt.' 'Well, *ah* hev,' ah said, an' browt oot t' first fra

undy t' bench. Thaat shawed him 'twere na use wearyin' me makin' windy frames." He knocked out his pipe and brought out a screw of tobacco. "Ah *cud* a dun clockmakin'. An' ah found ma aptitood accidental. 'Twur when Granny's clock i' cottage yonder stopped an' nabuddy cud find why. Ah cum t' have a leuk at it an' teuk't fra case when wi' na warnin' i' slipped fra ma hands an' when Granny cum ta pick it oop 'twere tickin', an' nivver na trouble sen. But, mind, aw clocks bain't alike. Ah cum ta leuk at anither an' when ah dropped thaat—'twurn't nowt like same." He paused and sighed, a remarkable show of feeling on his part.

He then took off his hat and shook the water from its brim.

"See this hat. Had it twenty 'eear an' it's better ta-day than 'twur then; hardened ta weather like messen."

A WESTMORLAND PHILOSOPHER

I waited while he relit his pipe. Granny came hurrying past with her skirt over her head. She called to us that she had to post a birthday-card to the youngest grandchild.

"It bain't fit fur cat tew be oot waalkin', much less settin' on waal, like yew tew feuls be a-dewin'," she remonstrated, shouting at us from under her skirt.

Joe chuckled.

“Tak na notice. Females means well but they mun worrit. Roof sarves sometimes, but when yew can git fra under it—git. Better oot than in enny day. Hooses be like boxes—boxes full o’ worrits. Theear’s allus somethin’ amiss ga-in’ on inside o’ they. Indoor wark bain’t healthy, na mair be coddlin’ ower t’fire.”

I was sharing his bit of carpet, and an overhanging bough served us as an inadequate umbrella; my cold could not well have been worse, and to any but Joe my company would have been an affliction. But to him I was an interested audience and he continued contentedly to discuss his lost career.

“Mind, ah still have a likin’ fur clocks, an’ if ah had a’wasted a bit of time wi’ they earlier ah might a dun somethin’ wi’ un. Ah doan’t regret it, mind—waaste o’ time, regrettin’—but often when fawlks see me smilin’, ah’m thinkin’ what ah might a dun gi’ oppotoonity. We all has a might-a’-been o’ sarts—mine’s clocks.”

Amidst the city’s hubbub, where souls are battered out by the bludgeonings of chance, where bodies weary amid its perplexing rush, where minds are confused by the disarray of its living, I shall think of Joe with envy—no regret, no grudges, no taxes. Good health and content—certainly the richest man in Ings.

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[3] Heaven down: make the heavens fall.

CHAPTER V

TRESPASSERS WILL BE TOSSED

A FEW hours in a district and I am aware of its bull; fear provokes knowledge. Africa has its lions—India its snakes—Westmorland, alas! its bulls; and they are not kept in a "coppy," as one has always been led to suppose. They wander at will in fields which, if crossed, gain the tarn or fell in half the time, and for many an extra weary mile have these bulls been responsible.

All my life I have suffered from a fear of horned cattle. I envy their bovinity; I can admire their quaint markings, their colour, their placidity,—from the other side of the wall. I admire, I envy, but I fear.

I cannot kill my fear of horns by employing the common adjective of disparagement, "silly cow." It has always seemed irony to me that the three animals to be connected with Christ—the cow, the sheep, and the ass—should share this adjective of derision. The cow was almost certainly the first creature to see Christ, the sheep was His constant symbol—"I am the Good Shepherd and know My sheep"—the ass bears on his back the markings of a cross, and he was chosen by Christ for his only triumphant entry.

The handsomest bull I ever met is the White Bull of Ings, or perhaps I should say the Musical Bull of Ings, for he is responsive to music and aware of time. The wall of his field adjoins a farmhouse, and a few minutes before they switch on their wireless his head appears over the wall—he is waiting. Directly the music starts he listens, stands very still, raises his head, rears his tail erect, stamps with his feet, and careers off round the field with spectacular leaps and bounds that a ballet-master might envy. I have observed all this with admiration, and listened to his snorts and bellowings —at a distance.

THE MUSICAL BULL OF INGS

My father was gored and his favourite horse killed by a bull as I was about to arrive into this world, and whether the shock my mother suffered at the time, or the apotheosis of a bull into a bogey by my nurse, or the knowledge that a bull laid my father on his back for eleven years, or a combination of all these facts, has transfused this fear into my blood I do not know, but I do know nothing can so freeze me with terror, or make my seated heart knock at my ribs, as the close proximity of horned animals. I have tried thinking of them as the meadows' picturesque properties, I have tried to see them poetically "athwart the hawthorn with tolerant, churning mouths," but what I actually see are intolerant mouths and forbidding horns. It is equally ineffective to picture them as walking maps—white countries on a brown sea, or black countries on a white sea. Asia and Africa refuse to move before me; instead, I see horns—and worse horns! I have employed all the varied strata of my mind against this fear. I have tried to look with the eye of Constable, Cooper, Crome, and Potter. I have tried to think what Grimaldi and Crock would have seen in these beasts and laugh at them, but I have come to the inevitable conclusion that, reinforced by the persistence of attack, fear grows.

Coming home one late afternoon, I met a girl who was as fearful of walking over the fell alone, as I am of walking through a field of cattle. Knowing the fell, I said I would walk with her until we reached the road, a supposed place of safety—certainly of reassurement. The shadows were growing long as we climbed up the rough track.

"Hi! Theear's a bull in yan o' thay fields ower yonder. Best not cross theear!" was a warning thrown at us from a man who passed on a prehistoric bicycle. Which field? In the vagueness of the warning lay its terror, but I felt I must not show my companion how much I wanted to turn back.

After we had been walking for over an hour, we saw her road lying beneath us. As it was growing dark, I decided to rest on the fell and watch the girl till she reached it. By the time I saw she was on the road evening was rapidly becoming night, the air was still, it was very hot, and I was glad to turn homeward; my small dog panted painfully. . . . Suddenly my heart jerked—a large bull, with ringed nose, distended red nostrils, and fiery eyes, looked over a hillock. He saw us, paused for an instant, and then charged, head down and tail flying. I picked up my dog and ran at the pace which gave me my school popularity. I could hear him thudding nearer—I looked round wildly for any escape from those ominous horns—I saw a break in the wall, threw my dog over, and hurled myself after him. We lay as we fell, huddled in a heap the other side. Would the bull come over or would he charge on? I could hear him panting. I knew his head was down, his tail extended, his eyes fierce. It had been a hot day and the flies tiresome, he had fighting blood; he wanted sport; he would like to destroy. The sweat poured off me; I felt I must suffocate; my breath came in gasps. I dared not move to look over the wall. I might meet his savage eyes and feel his cruel horns. I knew he was calculating whether it was worth while coming over; he snorted and hoofed at the wall. Then he stopped; again he was considering. My heart beat louder than ever and my dog's little pantings seemed amplified to bellows. I felt the bull must hear us. His indecision was torture. Then—with another fierce snort he thudded past. I knew his wild bloodshot eyes were still scanning the field for quarry. My dog and I lay crouched for a painful half-hour, then, cramped and drained of every ounce of vitality, I fearfully peeped over. He was not to be seen, but I knew he was somewhere very near. Keeping close against the wall, I crept round the field, only to find the one exit was a padlocked iron gate with spikes—unclimbable. Now my overwrought imagination became ghoulish. I could see my dog and myself lying in the corner of the field, trampled and torn, with hours to pass before morning. Desperation drove me to pull down the wall! It was heavy work, but at last we were on the other side. Then, in spite of my exhaustion and terror, being country-born, I knew I must build it up again. When this was done, I was utterly spent and threw myself down feeling I must die and fearing I shouldn't. My dog was now seriously worried for the first time; he sat on my chest and licked my face with vigour. I laughed and revived. Then two rams with curling horns and a fierce expression appeared and, staring

balefully at us, said quite distinctly: “We don’t like you, we don’t want you here, and if you stay here we shall brutally and forcibly evict you”; but I was beyond having a fear of rams. I threw my bag at them—they were welcome to it; it was something to carry, and the grasshopper had become a burden.

HIGH HOUSE FARM

Having told the rams they might do their worst, I felt comforted, and, looking round, saw across the field a gate; on the other side of the gate was a stream. I thanked God for that stream, and so did my dog. We drank, we wallowed in it, but I knew we had to get on, or stop out all night.

In the distance I saw a building. I was so amazed by its unusual appearance that I wondered for the moment if it were a distortion of my overwrought imagination or the magic of the moon. It was shaped like a cloister with one wall missing, and a beautifully kept garden in the middle.[4] It was late, and I must say that I knocked with misgivings, but I could not walk another yard.

A raw-boned, hefty young man came to the door; he regarded me very solemnly, said nothing, and went away. Then a second young man came along; he also regarded me for a long time, said nothing, and went away. Then there was a pause—I sat down on the doorstep and waited doggedly; at

last the young men came back with a man who was evidently their father. He also regarded me in silence. I felt too exhausted to explain further, and returned silence for silence. At any other time I should have remembered that this method of communication the fell people adopt and understand, and it is always more effectual with them than speech. The farmer's first words were significant:

"Yew hevn't bin sceeared be bull, hev yew? Ah've gitten a bull, o' cooarse, but t'bull that sceeared thoo wasna my bull."

"I don't care whose bull it was," I said, "but could you take me home?"

"Ay, ov cooarse."

It would have been a horse-trap twenty-five years ago. It was a motor to-night, or perhaps I should say a vehicle driven by machinery. The farmer drove me, but we never said a word till we got to the Mill House; then he said: "Ah ken weel that bull that sceeared yew. He gev ma young son a run yesterdar. He's not ma bull."

"Bulls should be kept in a bull coppy," I said with a martyred dignity.

"Maybe they shud."

He would not take even the price of his petrol. Perhaps it was the usual dalesman's generosity, or perhaps he was thinking it would have cost him more to bring my body home!

I was not only tired, but the bloom was off the fells and I had misgivings —there are no bulls in the streets of London—perhaps after all in a week or two . . .

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[4] High House Farm. Part of it had been an old Quaker meeting-house with a Quaker burial-ground, but this last had long since reverted to fellside.

CHAPTER VI

FARMS

IN this district practically every building on the fellside is a farm, however meagre the living it provides. With its owner will be found pride of land—pride of name; and unless the visitor respects this characteristic pride he will never find a welcome; money cannot buy a seat at the board or fireside of the fell folk.

They are intolerant of the invasion which creeps up their quiet valley, threatening that which has made it precious to them; when the motor hustles and sways round the sharp angles of the road, as the brakes rasp and its burden disgorged, the fell people draw back from their open door, change their personality, and put on their mask.

However small the farm, it has its own particular character; some present the character of their surroundings, some the character of those who live within their walls.

An old farm which lies above Troutbeck is perhaps the most remarkable example of personality in building that I have met with. An old man I knew well in Troutbeck had urged me "to be sure an' hev a see of un. Yew waalk past un oft enuff, yew'll miss summat if yew doan't see inside of un as well as outside; not even Windermere caan't beat whaat's inside of un; teuk hundreds of 'eears tew git aw them things tagither, an' na theear's none, save t'auld lady left, an' what'll happen t'plaace an' aw they things when she's gone none but the Lord Hissen kna's. Ay, an' we i' Troutbeck owe West's neear ivverythin' gud, but we miss un fur theearsen as well as fur what tha dun fur us. We wur proud of un; gran' fawlk tha wur. Tha wur glad wi' us an' sad wi' us, tha knaawed when tew cum alang an' when nat tew cum alang. Tha patted us on t'back when we dun well an' was nivver afeared tew gi' us sum hard hittin' when we dun bad. We shaan't nivver see theear like agen—gintlemen tha wur."

"You give them a fine epitaph," I said.

"It be aw us can gi' un na—tha be aw garn—aw i' yard."

He told me how the last John West and his friend Thomas Sands went once "oop ta Lunnon; but nivver saw nowt o' town, tha wur taakin' sheep

t'show, an' tha wud nivver leave un even at neet-time. Nowt cud mak praper faarmer like West leave sheep i' stranger's hands."

I passed through Troutbeck very often; it was impossible to pass through Troutbeck without meeting this old man, and one could not meet him without hearing more of this farm. I found not only Troutbeck, but the district for miles round, felt a personal pride in its possession and the fine yeoman farmers it had bred for generations.

Why my inclinations had not carried me to its door before I cannot say. Perhaps it was that I always happened to pass it on a sunny day; a shadow had lain over it, and the shadow drove me down the hill back on to the fell, into the sunshine. Nevertheless, as the importunate widow of the Scriptures prevailed, so the old man's persistence persuaded, and I found myself knocking at the door—the first farmhouse door I had found shut.

I knocked and waited. The place was very silent, yet one felt it to be scrupulously guarded. There was an anxious expectancy about it, as if it were waiting for someone to come back. It was very still. I looked around and thought how well sheltered from the wind it stood; it was "nested" on the fellside. The exterior was beautiful and it had grand rounded Westmorland chimneys. The barns and fine old spinning-gallery stood the other side of the road.

Before I knocked a second time I hesitated. An unexplained desire to retreat down the hill took possession of me. I suddenly became conscious that I was an intruder; I seemed to hear whispering; I felt there was that within which resented the stranger's entry, with its cold interest or peeping curiosity; whoever and whatever they were the other side of the door, they wanted to keep it shut against the visitor. Nevertheless, I forced myself to a third knock, which was answered by a small but dominant voice telling me to come in.

I stepped from the bright sunlight into the half-light of the kitchen; there, facing me, sitting close to the fire, was the last of the fine yeoman race. I recognised personality in the frail little woman who sat huddled there, seeming to want but warmth and rest. I forced myself to say that I had come hoping I might be allowed to see the interior of this beautiful farm.

She remained silent.

I remembered hearing that certain famous dealers and persistent Americans had found their way here, drawn by stories of the wonderful oak. I had heard they had been so foolish as to imagine they could buy. I assured her that I was neither of these—only a tramp with hunger and thirst for the beautiful.

She still remained austerely silent. As I looked at her I wondered how they ever had dared to make an offer for her possessions. Pride of race and pride of house were here plain, even to the casual glance. I knew now why it was that the door had remained shut against me—I was mistrusted.

As I stood there, embarrassed by her cold silence, I wished I had never listened to the old man in Troutbeck. My pride resented her thoughts; I felt their cold scorn; it forced me to make another effort. I told her how I should treasure in my memory the beauty of her home.

Still she remained silent.

It was humiliating. I should have to tell the old man that I had seen no further than the kitchen. I hesitated a second longer to glance at it. I always felt these north country kitchens to be the most perfect living-rooms, and I said so as I wished that dignified old lady good-bye. I congratulated her on possessing one of the finest I had seen. I had won. She smiled—she spoke—she told me to open all the doors and take a look round if it gave me pleasure. I expressed my pleasure. I looked at the long bow window, the large open fireplace, the fine oak cupboards, tables, and chairs, the oak ledges suspended from the ceiling where the Sunday boots stood in magnificent array, and stores of all sorts that must be kept dry.

The grey stone floors were everywhere scrupulously clean; throughout the farm there was no speck of dust, smear, or mark, and this was as remarkable as any treasure the house could show; everything was perfectly in order, devoid of any trace of the earth around it, emptied of sound; it could mean but one thing—a farm without life.

Rounded grey stone steps led from the kitchen to the dining-room. I had never seen steps so shaped in any other farmhouse. I walked up and opened the door into the dining-room. Here was oak at its best. The remarkable inset cupboards were built into the wall itself, merged into the oak panelling, unobtrusive, beautiful, unique.

Wherever my eye rested it was satisfied; everything in this room had been chosen with care and placed with thought. I felt each piece had been a cherished possession and now remained a rich heritage. . . . For many hundred years the fire must have smouldered on the open hearth, but to-day it was swept clean; the logs were carefully laid over the dried brushwood and fern—waiting; an array of pots hung from the hooks; everything was ready for use, but none to use it. I was tempted to light a match and hear the flames crackling up the chimney, to create a warm glow and make the shadows dance. The fine old refectory table was, to me, wasted in its splendour; I wanted people round it. I am always oppressed by the aspect of things unused—things as well as people give me the sense they want to be

of service, want the touch of hands and eyes. Here they were wrapped in silence—set aside.

Built into an alcove by the fireplace was an oak writing-desk; over the top of it, looking as if it were carved yesterday, was the name and date: "John West, 1672." I sat down in his chair, for I felt unreasonably tired. Things seemed pressing in upon me—shadows, maybe—driving me back over the years, following this long line of yeoman farmers that passed—in, about, and around the house. They showed me their land and said, "Have we not served it well? Was not our work good?" They showed me their home, and I saw how each generation had brought to it that which made it more beautiful. . . .

I was with them at their christening feasts, when the fine refectory table was loaded and the room full of talk and laughter. . . . A new John West was carried in, and blinked at the room for the first time, this room he would soon grow to love with a possessive passion. . . . I watched him grow in stature as he grew in character. . . . I was with him at his wedding feast. He had learned something of responsibility, adventure, passion.

There were nights when the room echoed with hunting-songs and the sheep-shearing songs—the sea-chanties of the fell country. Gay nights they were. John West could talk well, sing well, drink well, and love well. He loved his wife, his children, his sheep, and his dog. I was sitting in his chair. I saw his dog stretched before the fire, faithful in service to the house as his master, with an equally passionate love for it. . . . There was laughter in this room, there was action, determination, prosperity. . . . I followed him to the end.

He faced death as he had faced life—with a philosophy the earth he loved teaches. . . . I saw his last passing through the old farm. They were carrying him from his room, down the circular steps, through the old kitchen, out of the porch, and down the fellside to the little church below—the dead must be buried deep, the mourners get back to their work. But first the funeral feast was spread; the grand old table was laden in his honour for the last time. Now they have all gone. The last John West is dead. "Death stept tacitly and took them where they never see the sun."

The room was very still. I cannot have the good company of John West to-day; I cannot tell him what I feel about the beauty of his home; I cannot praise his land or his taste in oak. Instead, I walk alone through his farm and remark on the fine order of it; I let my hand pass over the arm of his oak chair and exclaim at its superb condition.

I left his chair. I walked out of the shadows. I opened the door. My hand on the latch and the click that it made told me I was alive. It was to-day, not

yesterday.

I found each room possessed an individual beauty and made separate appeal. The panelled passages, the fine staircase, the bedrooms with their interesting old four-posters, all offered me the rich beauty of their oak. . . .

Opening one of the doors, I found the parlour. Here, to my astonishment, the furniture was Chippendale and there was no oak panelling. It was entirely different in character from the rest of the house; so different that it gave me the impression it had been created by some dearly loved woman. It was essentially a woman's creation in a man's house. Tenderness lingered in the still beauty of the room, which held light, breathed spring, and suggested romance. She had filled the beautiful empty bowls with sweet scented flowers; she had opened the windows and let the fresh soft air drift in and stir the still curtains. But she had also passed down the hill and lay in the little churchyard, and the room was empty of life. It held gentle ghosts, tender memories, but there were none left to treasure or remember either ghosts or their memories. The atmosphere of the room was strong in appeal. It clung tenaciously, as a child that fears to be left alone. But I was the stranger within the gates, and the stranger must neither covet nor interfere with his neighbour's child, nor his ghost, nor anything that is his. So I shut the door and tried to forget the parlour. . . .

There was an anxious waiting behind all these doors. Each time the latch lifted, hope roused in the things within, but as the stranger entered and they again suffered criticism and envy—either the cold touch of the dealer, the peer of the collector, or the exclamation of the fool—their still impotence grew upon them; soon they would become untroubled of hope. . . .

I knew that actually I was walking alone through this farm. Yet I felt myself pressed upon on every side by shadows of the past—anxious shadows that asked me to serve them. I tried to think I had not understood their message because I was impotent. They were thick upon me as I opened the last door—their library.

They drifted in with me, silent, sad ghosts. Here were their books, books they had collected with thought and care. Now these lay in perfect order on the shelves—too perfect an order, for books must be taken off the shelves, read and enjoyed, or they shrivel and crack with dry-eyed grief. I understood the ghosts' unrest. These books they had loved now knew but the touch of the duster and the brush, or an occasional collector's curious handling. It was torture—hard to be still and suffer. They might turn the leaves with

ghostly fingers, but to what end? Their books were collected to serve the living.

All that repute said about the beauty and wonder of this farm was true, but to me it was as dead as a museum. With the exception of the dominant though frail lady, the last of her race, who sat huddled beside the fire in the kitchen, and a cat on the wall outside, there was no life, and even the cat was playing with death—a half-eaten mouse was in her claws.

The beautiful panels, the old cupboards, the furniture, the stone-flagged floors, wanted humanity. There was a dumb, tortured grief about the place that hurt.

The long generations of the Wests must have been fine men, to surround themselves with such a home and keep its beauty fresh, but now they lay helplessly in their graves they could not keep it living, and their impotent ghosts hurt me. Their bodies lie in the little churchyard in Troutbeck, but their spirits wander in and around their farm. They had kept me long, they had told me what they wanted—life for the old farm.

Alas! helpless as they, I crept out through the porch. . . .

Miss West had fallen asleep. The cat was asleep on the wall. The mouse was dead. A certain text came to me: "Where no oxen are, the crib is clean."[5]

I was glad to get out on the road and feel myself surrounded by living things. I was grateful for the moor, where the tearing wind whistled through the grasses, for the smell of the heather and the glory of the scarlet rowan berries, for the beauty of the hills and the shadows which passed over them. Here was life, movement, colour—and, alas, litter! Must it be ever life and litter . . . death and darkness?

As a complete contrast to this farm of shadows I think of another above Ullswater. The first time I saw it, it was sleepy midday; the farm lay stretched in the sun, but it had an ear cocked and one eye open. Though it lay at apparent ease, I felt it was very much awake. Life was vibrant in and about the farm. The farmer and his son were sawing wood in the yard; they gave me "Gud day" and went on with their work and their whistling. A score or so of hens alternately clucked and pecked, suffering my approach without curiosity or resentment. A couple of dogs walked out of the porch and looked at me. I felt I was neither an interest, trouble, nor pleasure.

The farm is a quarter of a mile from Ullswater; near enough to enjoy the beauty of the lake and far enough away to avoid the tourist, car, and motor-coach. Only those who care for the hills will trouble to climb the track to this farm. It is a long white building with round stone chimney-stacks, solid massive oak doors, wrought-iron strap hinges, and old wooden drop-latches.

I opened the gate and walked into the yard, basking in the sun and enjoying the farm's content.

The farmer had another look at me. He lifted an imaginary glass, and jerked his thumb towards the door. The boy understood and, without a word, he went into the house and brought me out a glass of milk, saying: "Will yew na tak' a lal' sup o' thin?"[6]

I enjoyed the milk, sitting on the usual slate slab outside the door. The boy came and sat one side of me and a dog the other. They both observed me curiously.

"Spot's a fine dog, yew kna—fine wi' sheep tew. Faather give him me fur ma own, tew 'eear back. Ah wur but six then; ah'm goin' on eight 'eear na, an' ma name's John, like faather."

After he had enquired what I did and where I came from, he decided that I was not going to be of any particular interest, so he first fidgeted, and then found an excuse to leave me.

"Weel, ah mun ga na. It doan't do—faarmer's son wastin' time, 'specially dippin' season. Ah mun git back t'wark—git sheep in. Flies is bad noo."

I was in no hurry to move; I felt that everything here was very good. Presently the farmer's wife came out and asked me if I would like to come and have a look at the kitchen. "You won't see the like of this old fireplace often," she said. I told her that we did not find the like of this sun often. She laughed.

"Yer right. We git our share o' rain 'ereabarts, but sun woan't run away to-day, an' ye'll git plenty o't inside t'kitchen as well as art there. Keepin' door an' windows open invites all weathers, but I can't abear 'em closed. Always 'avin' fire burnin', it would be stiflin' if we wur shut up, 'specially wi' all animals on top."

A cat was sitting on the table, some kittens were curled in a basket by the fire, impudent hens strolled in and out for bits, and the dogs alternately nosed about the room or chased their tails.

"I can't keep it clean, no matter 'ow I try. Me man 'ates to shut anythin' out. Animals makes more dirt, but as long as 'e's pleased, an' the creatures

are pleased, what does it matter? It's only passin' dirt after all." It was very evident that she saw to it that it passed quickly.

I told her I thought it a miracle to have so clean a kitchen at twelve o'clock in the day, when most of the work was in full swing. She laughed.

"Not so much of a miracle. It's gettin' oop when most folk are abed, an' lookin' slippy."

"Slippy? You are not from this district?" I said.

"No, I'm fra' Manchester. Coom 'ere to spend 'oliday ten years since an' never went back. I found me man an' thought 'im too good to leave. So I stop' an' keep 'im." She laughed and tasted the stew. "Too many onions, I expect, but we likes 'em powerful. . . . Yes, courted and married I wur inside a month. Quick work, 'specially fur these paarts, but I never could abide 'angin' abart waitin'. I've always been smart an' slippy in pickin' oop things, an' I soon learned the ways of 'ereabouts. Me man lost 'is muther two years back, an' I've 'ad to take 'er place as well as me own; I mean with work—nobody can't, not in 'is 'eart. They looved one anoother sumthin' wunderful. She wur a terrible miss for all of us." She sighed. "But there, life's got to go on, an' we're wunderful 'appy, considerin'."

All the time she talked, she worked, for the midday meal was in preparation. I felt that the wife from Manchester did not let the elder John sleep his life away. Neither, I felt, would she change him for the townsman's agility.

As I listened to her, I had been looking at the wonderful old fireplace with its chimney-corners and armchairs on the open hearth. Above the hearth hung the cranes, holding an array of kettles and pots.

"Coom an' look oop," she said. "I doan't suppose you've seen many like o' this."

I looked up the great wide chimney, open through two floors to the sky. She pointed upwards again. "See the sides o' baacon bein' smoaked," she said. "Wunderful good baacon, it is; we cure mutton too, o' cooarse. Me 'usband's muther used to tell me in her muther's day they sent chimney-boys oop there to keep it all sweet, but noa we cleans it all right with brooms an' like." Then she turned to me and said, "'Ave you ever used soot for cleanin' yer teeth? S'wunderful good; near as good as sage-leaf, but not so pleasant, noa, not by a long way."

I told her that her teeth were a good advertisement for soot and sage, but that I should leave soot to the sweeps; we swallow enough dirt in London without cleaning our teeth with it.

I asked her how they managed to get such a huge bough on the fire. It was almost the size of a tree-trunk.

"I suppose it's surprisin' to taansfolk. Noah—that's t'old 'orse, you kna—drags such-like big boughs to door, then anybody 'oo's 'andy 'elps carry 't in, an' we lays one end of't on t'embers an' pushes it on gradual-like as fire comes along."

She told me that the fire had not been allowed to die out for generations.

"If you like ole things, cast your eye oop at them beams; 'undreds of years has been occupied in the darkenin' of they."

As I peered up again and saw the work of the smoke of centuries I thought . . . but I looked at the lady from Manchester, and I knew that I had better not dream. I told her that her fireplace could not be equalled as far as my knowledge of the district went. She was pleased.

"I daresay you'd knaw as well as most. Them as walks sees t' place pretty thorough." She was now busy getting the meal ready. My eyes, watching her, rested with admiration on the Jacobean table and its massive legs. I think she thought I was hungry, for she invited me to share the meal with them. I assured her that mine was in my knapsack, and, delicious as her stew smelt, I must get on over the hills.

I met the farmer at the door. "I should like to live here," I said.

"Ay, ah wudna change it, in spite o' its age; 1600 carved over door; more nor thaat, though, unless ah'm mistaken. Ay, it's a gud faarm."

I felt it must be "gud" to live here, work hard, laugh often, grow tired, and so to bed, up the fine old staircase with its spindle balustrade. It was far enough away from dust, noise, and smell, yet within a mile of Patterdale. I think he read my thoughts, for after he'd wiped the sweat off his brow and knocked the worst of the mud off his boots he continued:

"Ay, it's weel plaaced, is faarm; theear's na dust oop here. Dust ruins Patterdale noo. Ah'm thinkin' motor-caars wur nivver thowt on when t'hooses wur built theear, but we doan't see much o' t'rooad. Aw stretch o' fellside yew sees belongs to us'n." He lifted his hand to shade his eyes and I saw he was searching for something. "Ay, theear 'ee be makin' hissen busy. That's John, ma son; he's a gud lad an' he'll mak a gud faarmer." John was applying the fester-lotion with more vigour than tenderness. "He does't thorough aw reet—doan't 'ee?" There was no mistaking the pride in his voice as he spoke.

My eyes had wandered to a stretch of golden corn that now hung heavy and sad beneath its weight of waters. . . . It was the first sunny day for two weeks.

"Ay, wedder's raather ower wet, but it's na gud a-grummellin'; doan't mak t'rain stop sooner. Bit o' rain physics corn—sooart o' maks 't mair hardy. If it's reasonable, them fields'll soon pick oop theear heeds."

"But if it's unreasonable?"

"Weel, theear's sheep."

"How much rain spoils a harvest?"

"A fortneet or three weeks' stiddy rain. Thaat taks heart oot o' corn—breaks theear necks fur un. We'm sorry fur un then, aw that time a growin' tew; they allus leuks as if they knas they've growed oop fur nowt. We suffers, tew; howsumever theear's anither chance next 'eear fur us'n, while they'm dun wi'."

"Well, I don't like this wet weather," I said. "I can feel the damp creeping into my joints in a very uncomfortable manner."

"Ah, is't rheumatics?" he said sympathetically. "Ah was laid oop six months last 'eear—nivver had a wink of sleep fur six week. At last ah towd doctor. Ah said, 'Ah've had thirty bottles of physic—theear they stand leukin' thee in t'countenance tew shame 'ee—an' nivver a yan of'em did a bit o' gud, sa ah doan't have no thirty-yan. If tha canna do nowt mair, turn me till t'waal an' leave me be. Ah'd sooner dee than be worrited wi' physics an' rubbin's.'"

"And after you parted with the doctor, did you get better?"

"Well, t'spring cum, an' that allus maks deeference—thoo canna lie abed spring-time; it's mair na man can do as knas t'smell o' t'earth. Day as spring cum an' finds me layin' in, it wunna be above-ground."

I told him that his sentiments were mine. Spring is God's loveliest conception; fresh, vital, pure, gay.

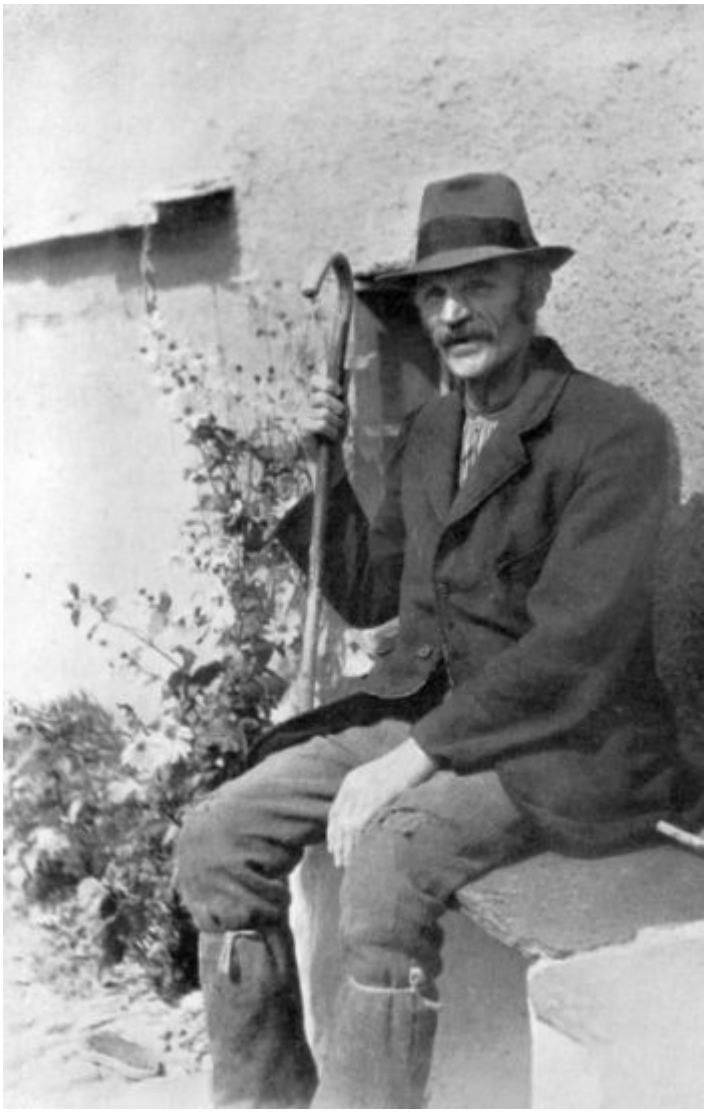
The farmer gave me "Gud-day" and directed me on my way up a track that possessed "a girt garden o' foxgloves wi' honeysuckle hedge above they, better'n any chemist's shop o' scent."

I turned at the end of the lane. Though his back was towards me, I knew he was smiling as he lifted his face to the sun, for "Behold, it was very good."

It was evening when I leant over the wall of a farm above Grassgarth: I had been walking all day on the fells and the weather was hot. I passed the time of day with the farmer and his wife, who were sitting on the usual slate slab outside their door; they must have both been well over seventy. She was

very round and her face very rosy; wherever she went I felt there must immediately be comfort and repose. He was loosely built and tall, and had the bluest eyes I'd ever seen; his face was full of good humour; it suggested a continual state of well-being and of pleasure in most things. He stooped slightly, as do many of these farmers, both young and old; perhaps this is caused by the nature of their work—continual bending over the land creates a habit. They made room for me on the slab.

"Sit 'ee down an' rest 'ee; it's waarm."



A FELL FARMER

I thanked him and sat down. We sat in silence for a few minutes while he puffed at his pipe and she sat quietly with folded arms and an expression of absolute content, enjoying the luxury of rest. I told him that I was very interested to hear his farm had been the old Ings Church. He pointed to a trace of the old arch over the door: "That's aw ye'll find of t'auld church. Theear's nowt else. Ah kna ivvery stane i'plaace an' ma faather an' grandfaather afoor me. The field at back o' faarm wur t'old yard, but theear's na sign theear neither. Yew'r welcome t'ga an' leuk, but yew'll find nowt—theear's nathin' left o' church but yard."

Again he puffed quietly at his pipe: perhaps he was thinking, as I was, that the names laid there mattered little; their dust had become part of the earth's breast that they had loved and kept fertile; they had worked upon these fells, now they were part of them; happier they than

Imperious Cæsar, dead and turned to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away.

The grass now grows over these forgotten fell dwellers and the sheep crop it.

"I believe it's only a matter of time before all graves disappear," I said.

"Ay, maybe; yew caan't expect 'em tew be kipt proper mor' na generation o' tew at mooast. When t'dead be buried we hev tew laive un be; it's wi' Almighty tha be then; ah doan't suppose they'm concarned whether tha git tombstones o' na. Ah doan't hold wi' thinkin' tew much o' graaves an' them things; it doan't make fur cheerfulness an' gud health."

He again relapsed into silence. Then suddenly he broke into a chuckle and pointed.

"Leuk at aw them chickens settin' in a raw on t'railin's, an' ivvery yan o' them cocks—parvarsity! Ah'll shaw yew summat; five on un kna theear nummers. Yan!" The first flew down, and was given a piece of bread.

"Tew!" The second flew down and had the same reward, and so on up to the fifth.

"Amazing!" I said. "I never knew fowls could be so intelligent."

"Ay, they'm nat fowls; they'm cocks!"

"The Serbians have a proverb: 'It is better to be a cock for a day than a hen for a year'!" I said.

The farmer chuckled. "Ah! Moother woan't agree aboot thaat, will tha, moother?"

The lady paused for a moment, as if considering the question, then shook her head.

We all three relapsed into a comfortable silence; it had been a hot day and we were all tired; thoughts came quicker than speech.

Again the farmer spoke first—I think he had an idea that he must make an effort to entertain me.

"Been oop heear afoor?"

"Twenty years ago," I said.

"See chaanges?"

"Not many."

"Ay, chaange doan't git oop heear." He took a long puff at his pipe. "We wudna like 't if tha did."

At this the lady laughed quietly, comfortably swaying to and fro. He looked at her with possessive pride.

"Doan't leuk much t'matter wid her, dost tha? This faarm saved her life. They sed she wur deein' when ah sa' her at Kendal. Thaat wur twenty-five 'eear back. Doctors doan't kna ivverythin'. They doan't kna fells! Nivver ailed nowt sen ah wedded yew, hev yew, moother?"

She shook her head.

"She caan do owt, fra' makin' yewr poddish ta weavin' yewr coat. Shaw her sum o' yewr clowt, moother! An' t'woo' be fra t'bonny lile Herdwicks. Mind yew," he went on, "Herdwick woo' be cooarse, but ooar sheep be hardy; they faace t'storm, sa as nat ta git snawed oop. Wastdale wur first ta tak notice on't, an' they hed an understandin' thaat faarmers wur ta sell na mair na five ewe lambs in yan 'eear. Have yew ivver heeard wheear oor sheep cum fra i' first plaace? It wur i' time of Armada. A Mr. an' Mrs. Noah amang they Herdwicks git washed ashoor an' staarted t'whole raace of um i' this country!" He laughed heartily; she rocked to and fro in comfortable chorus and rose to fetch the clowt.

I told him that I understood the Herdwick sheep were found originally by the Norsemen off the north coast of Scotland on the Faroe Islands, or the Sheep Islands, as they are sometimes called.

"Na—na—thaat's taalk. Herdwick sheep cum wi' Armada."

At this point "moother" came down with a fine piece of homespun. "Ay, ye ken John Peel wi' his coat sa gray, doan't yew? Weel, his coaat wur home woven fra' Herdwick woo' yew kna. An' aw ooar blankets are med fra ooar awn woo'."

"I like to hear that," I said.

"Fetch yew' twiltin' down, moother! Auld customs'll soon be gone. Yung fawlks naadays mun see life; na time fur weavin' na twiltin'. But ah wudna chaange, fur ah'm thinkin' t'laads woant hev t'gran' times we auld uns hed, an' they woant last sa lang, ower mooch tinned stuff an' forrin food. Nabuddy caan ba-ak like moother! She's ba-aked tew-day. Fetch oot sum o' yew'r bread an' a bit o' cheese, laass!" he called after her.

My little toast-rack with its three thin pieces of dried bread rose before me. Nine o'clock at night—new bread and cheese. What would be the result? But I knew it would offend deeply if I refused. Although a cat has nine lives, we are told a woman can only die once and I should not be the first or the last to pay the death-penalty from over-feeding; and so, when the bread and cheese arrived, with a large mug of beer, I finished the lot, and, though I sighed for a dose of bi-carbonate of soda, I prayed that my walk home would serve. The bread was certainly worth the suffering I knew it would bring, but I felt I had better go quickly, for I realised by this the unbounded hospitality of the old man, and his pride in his lass might lead—heaven knew to where or what.

"It has been a grand evening," I said, "but you are sending me unsteadily down the hill, you know!"

He laughed. "T'fellside has borne menny a deal unsteadier than thoo."

His lady rose and smiled, and they both came to watch me out of sight. I turned at the corner; he was still talking, and my heart swelled with pride, for I heard him say, "A stranger, ay, but na sa mooch of a stranger as sum."

I hurried down the fellside in case he should qualify this precious praise, which—with the excellent beer—filled my heart with a glow of complaisant satisfaction. After I arrived home I thought again of the farmer and his wife, and I realised that she had not spoken one word, although with understanding smiles and nods she had increased the feeling of good company.

I have known but one other woman who talked as little—Alice Meynell, surely one of the loveliest poets of our age. And her husband was equally proud of her, and just as anxious to exploit the treasure that was his. The first time I ever met Alice Meynell we sat together for three hours under an apple-tree in full bloom. We never actually uttered a word that May afternoon, yet we talked incessantly. I knew she was feeling and seeing the beauty of the spring, and she knew that I was. Our spirits companioned; we were happy in mutual understanding, and when we parted she said to her husband, "We have so enjoyed our time together, and my new friend is coming over soon again before the petals fall." She possessed the quality that makes the perfect friend—complete understanding—and she also had

the power completely to shut herself in from her surroundings when she so desired, and keep her spirit unassailed by trivial nothings and wearying worries. If those about her wastefully gossiped or foolishly quarrelled, she did not know; her spirit was away in her secret orchard. I found later that she often thought that she had put into words her spirit thoughts which poured in and upon her, but she did better than this—she gave them to us as poems. Some day the beauty of Alice Meynell's poetry will be appreciated; when we have eliminated time and space with our inventions, and conquered all continents, hills, seas, and currents of the air, we may pause and find time to read some of the beautiful things our poets have written. We may see through their eyes the beauty and wonder of the earth that we desire to set a girdle round in forty minutes.

There is a farm above Ings which had for me a peculiar attraction. Every morning after breakfast I walked as far as its porch, looked at its closed door, picked a buttonhole of monkey-musk from the stream which runs beside it, marvelled at the vivid blue of the forget-me-nots—and returned.

This stream's flowers gave to me something of the character of the farm itself. I found beauty here, but with an eerie quality. I felt that both good and bad fairies had sown this stream's edge with flowers, for I am sure that musk is a witch-flower; it attracts me, yet I know that it is evil and that I should pass it by. I had often passed this farm, walking over the fell to Crook, which is a very favourite track of mine, and I had looked longingly through its porch at the comfortable kitchen within; but I had never seen anyone there save, one day, a man plucking a couple of ducks in the barn; but fortune favoured me at last by sending the farm dog a fine litter of puppies, and, as I was playing with them, a woman came out of the porch and asked me if I would like a "soop o' milk," which I accepted. I was asked if I would care to step into the kitchen, and sit down for a rest, as it must be warm walking. This was the friendly courtesy I met everywhere just off the beaten track. Alas, where the tourist passes he despoils not only the quiet of the fells, but the courtesy of its people.

The kitchen had fine oak rafters which were used as shelves. They were full of every conceivable thing; hams and dried herbs hung from them. There was the usual low long window, and on the sill a mass of treasured geraniums. All fell and dale folk love flowers. There was a very beautiful inset oak cupboard built into the wall, and fine old oak doors. An amazing mixture was here: guns, caps, coats, a sewing-machine, everything that any

part of the family used. The centre table had a jar of flowers—forget-me-not and monkey-musk—but the real interest of this farm lay in its woman. She was probably in the early twenties; what had given her that utter resignation? What had given her face that peculiar emptied look, as though life were finished for her? Her figure was provocative, yet something told me she took no real living interest in the life around her. He who loved her would suffer; he might hammer at the door of her heart, but it was shut and sealed; how and why, was another secret of the fellside. She looked as though she knew neither joy nor sorrow; as if she were passing through life doing what was required of her without interest. I felt that her spirit was no longer with her, but that it watched with ironic supremacy the beautiful emptied case it had left. Her thick, black hair was parted in the middle, and carefully brushed and shining, fell in waves below her waist. I could not prevent myself remarking upon it.

"My man likes it flawin', sa ah leave 't free."

My interest and amazement grew. I can see her now, with her beautiful cold face and wonderful hair, standing in the porch, and I shall always think of her as the first fellside troll I met, for she was surely but half human; some creature hidden in the great hills held her soul.

On the fells one meets the imp, the elf, the dryad, the troll, the witch, and assuredly the gods, but rarely the clown. Loud laughter echoes vilely on the hills—as it echoes it changes from good humour to sardonic scorn, and so it dies. Laughter comes with ease, and there is little ease for those who scrape the hills for a living. Laughter has an easy birth in the fertile valleys whose breasts swell with the ebb and flow of it; it gurgles in the streams, and ripples towards us sometimes from the sea. But the hills breed hard. The children it gives are some of the earth's best, but they are bred with torture—their names are Struggle, Courage, Strength, Resignation, Peace, Death. Yet there are those who use the grim sides of the hills for their frolic, those whose bodies and spirits combine in a non-stop gambol—the lambs. They know not, as yet, the meaning of mutton, but we who watch them cannot catch their gaiety, for we know that those ribs that shake with mischief and those legs that move unceasingly will soon lie very still upon our platter. *Oh, God, why didst Thou create the stomach?* If Thou hadst but ordained otherwise, what a vast sea of suffering would have been saved!

There is a farm near Coniston which has a diamond and onyx setting—mountains and streams. The farm probably owes its present name to the row

of yew-trees planted by a forgotten farmer of the past. The story goes that he planted one for each of his sons and daughters—he evidently had a large family! There is no record so far as I know as to what the farm was called before the yews were planted, but there is no doubt that, ancient as these yews are, the farm was built long before they existed. In recent years one of the old yews was blown down in a fierce gale that swept up the valley, but, in order that the old farmer's child should not be utterly destroyed, the great hollow trunk is used as an occasional dining-room.

The farmer's wife was inclined for a gossip, and her gossip was my interest, though unfortunately she confined herself chiefly to criticism of visitors; these appeared to be mainly walkers and climbers. She told me that the motor-coaches left them alone, as these were in much too big a hurry to get to Coniston to trouble with "oor faarm."

"Fawlks ridin' i' motor-coach wuddent hev na interest in us'n; they'm tew occupied i' rushin' aboot an' hevna time fur sich-like. Theear's na gainsayin' as sum modern things hev advantages, but chiefly fawlks lives i' hurry, an' we doan't. Still, theear's na denyin' new end o' faarm be a deal more convenient than t'auld. T'new wing is na near s'interestin' ta leuk at, o' coorse, an' ah doan't like it sa mooch m'sen, an' none on us doan't think mooch o't."

I felt quite sorry for the new wing, especially when I found that its date was 1743. I thought that the young centenarian might have received a little more consideration and regard.

The house is interesting in shape, and its walls are about one yard thick, which is amazing even for these parts. It must be one of the oldest farms existing in the district. The farm buildings are not only picturesque; they are all in use, and there is a very fine spinning-gallery, but only in one farm did I find a farmer's wife who continued to weave the cloth.[7] The old galleries seem to plead for a revival of the art of weaving. They ask us whether we can buy anything better or more attractive than the hand-woven material made on their looms. They ask if our mechanised garments give the individuality and beauty of something made by hand. We answer that our cities move rapidly, and that for economic reasons we must be machine driven. Time is money, and money runs the world to-day, and the spinning-galleries must go. The few that remain have become a dumping-place for rubbish. In their heyday, they not only served to weave and dry the cloth, but they sheltered the family as they peered out over the balustrade at the alarm when the Border raiders were sighted. The helpless group, huddled together, anxiously scanned the hills and the dark shadows of the valley, and, if the danger proved true, they would hurry down the stairs, some to rush the cattle

in and some to fetch the guns from their hiding-places in the chimney or in the underdrawings of the roof.[8] The farmer and his folk knew well enough that it was little use, as they were at the mercy of these harrying raiders, who stole their cattle and pillaged their farms, leaving desolation behind them as they rode on.

Each farm I saw left a particular picture in my mind. At Yew Tree it is the whole, no particular part, that I remember, and, as every picture is made a natural circle by the eye, so here I have a patchwork circle of interest and beauty—mountain, stream, bridge, farm, spinning-gallery, yard, ricks, dogs, and people. But here it was the farmer's memory that impressed me most, for at sight of me he shouted a greeting. He remembered that I had stayed with his father and mother at their farm at Seatoller for one night twenty years ago. I hope that he did not realise that I had forgotten him, but that he did realise my delight that he remembered me, for he could have been little more than a youth then, and I—well, twenty years make a difference to a woman. He felt the difference, and bluntly said so.

"Yew leuks a deal aulder, but t'saame aw t'saame. Waalks t'saame an' taalks t'saame. Ah'd kna yew wi' ma eyes shut or open. A different dog though, ah see. Ay, it's sad as they doan't wear as well as us'n, fur they give a deal better sarvice than moast fawlks."

Twenty years and remembered. I wagged an imaginary tail.

There is a farm above Brotherswater which is probably the best known of any in the district to the American and the tramp, its front door in Patterdale and its back door in Rydal. The American seeks the unique as well as the beautiful and historical, and this farm is unique because there is a right of way through the house; the tramp has little curiosity or interest in the unique, it is his perversity which takes him to the door. I did not ask to see this farm, having pity on its patient owners, but I was so interested in this curious right of way, and the philosophical manner in which it was accepted, I decided to eat my sandwiches on the fell near by and watch any who might take advantage of this right. I waited through the best part of a golden afternoon; its visitors were: four Americans in a party with guide-book and chatter, one quacking duck, three barking dogs, and a clucking hen with attendant brood.

The traveller is usually directed here by way of Brotherswater: "Pass Brotherswater on your right"—"Leave Brotherswater on your left." Brotherswater—before I saw it my mind conjured up a grand stretch of lake,

with the fell majestically uprising from it, but in reality it is a piece of water that looks like a flooded field. It lies purposeless and ugly, one of the few indeterminate things Westmorland holds, and yet it remains clearly in my mind, obtrusively individual, when many of the fine things that surround it have merged into a whole. It is like the awkward child of a beautiful family that one always remembers. I see it now, black, sullen, sprawling, and I see the path leading from it to the farm; an old tramp is making his way somewhat maliciously to the door.

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[5] Proverbs xiv. 4.

[6] "A lal' sup o' thin." Anything in the form of liquid, usually milk.

[7] The Ruskin School of Weaving near Langdale is reviving interest in this art.

[8] One of these guns was found recently in the chimney of Wood Farm, Troutbeck.

CHAPTER VII

THE BIT BY BIT

JUST as every day I was tempted to set out for Troutbeck, so every day I tried to avoid a return to Grasmere, not because this lake is not beautiful—for that it certainly is—or that Troutbeck in itself is more attractive. Perhaps it is because I dislike pilgrimages, or visiting the places where great men lie, and Grasmere to-day seems to me full of the death, not the life, of Wordsworth. There are three ways of entering Grasmere, and Dr. Arnold has well named them—Radical Reform, Old Corruption, and Bit by Bit. I have entered by each of them. Probably not only Dr. Arnold, but Wordsworth, Coleridge, and De Quincey preferred to enter by way of the Bit by Bit, and so do I.

A grey pool at the bottom of a green bowl—that was my first picture of Grasmere; and so it will remain. To my mind its vitality has passed into the graves of its great ones. Its reputation is based on its dead. "Finis" is writ on each little wave that laps unobtrusively to its shores. My opinion about this lake is unchanged, and my return was accident rather than choice.

Dove Cottage is empty now, not only of Wordsworth and De Quincey, but also of Mrs. Dixon. She was the only one of her generation I ever heard speak of Dora; other than in apologetic undertone. She said she always thought of her "particular" at daffodil time, because Wordsworth had named that golden patch on the shores of Rydal, Dora's Field. I am glad she never lived to hear this field was threatened by the County Council's proposals to cut through it for road-widening purposes.[9] Mrs. Dixon was twenty-one when Wordsworth died. She guardianed his cottage through a long life. She lived in it and loved it, and she gave me the feeling that he was actually there—the other side of a door—or in the garden—near—alive. Everything that she told of him held life. She guarded the place, guarded it from the curious and displayed it with pride to the interested. There is nothing here now but a mechanical guide. . . . I watched the sightseers filing in, a jaded group from a motor-bus. They whispered among themselves as though they were entering a crypt, and I heard one of them muttering, "It smells very musty." She was right; life has been driven from the cottage. It stands stripped and helpless; from nine to six it has to suffer the cold eye of the

stranger. It has become a museum; mustiness pervades it. Mechanical duty conducts while the curious eye. The little cottage has become all shell; there is no inside to it. I longed to sweep the tourist and his sandwich out of the place; I longed to destroy the vampire buildings which shut the cottage from the lake. It is calling aloud for someone to buy up the buildings which press upon it—to raze them and let in air and beauty.

The old road which ran in front of it is, of modern necessity, a thing of the past. Along the new road the traffic roars continuously. Wordsworth's "Seat of Solitude" has become an irony; his own reputation has killed that solitude. "Farewell, ghosts. . . . Hail, trippers."

There are more than three ways of entering Troutbeck, and each to me is a favourite—a Bit by Bit. I have found more than once that to start out for Troutbeck meant to find the undiscovered country from whose bourne the traveller returns late, for on the way to Troutbeck is metal most attractive. My feet jib at the hard road, and I always hesitate at the first grassy lane I see. There are hedges from which foxgloves beckon; there is always fruit for the seeking, and these lanes are bordered by wild raspberry-bushes from which the fruit hangs heavy and ripe. There are pounds of raspberry jam here for the picking. The blackberry-bushes are also laden, ready to follow on; the berries are so large they look almost like mulberries, and masses of bilberries grow on the banks. Yet I have never tasted bilberry pudding in the district, to my mind the most delicious of fruit puddings. Perhaps the country-folk leave these berries because they are so ready to hand. A prophet has no honour in his own country, neither has a fruit-berry!

To follow such a lane I again turned off the Troutbeck road. The lane, as usual, faded into a track and the track dissolved into rough fell. The sound of running water is an almost invariable accompaniment here, and now it gurgled and chuckled as it gambolled down the fellside. I thought I would follow this stream. It was a joyous guide. It sang a prelude to the warm bosom of the dark earth which had fed it. It sang a dirge as it fell over the rock's hard face, grieving at its rigid fate. Then it sang softly through the peat and heather, horned-moss and sundew; it sang of the curlews and plovers who sipped and the mountain cattle who drank from it. Its song grew deeper as the stream widened by the rock boulders covered with gold moss in full flare. A giant boulder turned its course, and behold! another stream. They had lain together in the womb of the earth, and now, reunited, they had much to talk of, for the sister stream had seen fierce rams with three twists in

their horns, wild ponies, marshland with yellow musk, ferns, and bulrushes. They grew gayer—I heard a fugue, a *toccato*—forte, fortissimo, cantabile. . . . A *tarn*—a little tarn, crystal clear: the loveliest tarn the fells had yet shown me. . . . And here I forgot the music of the waters—their singing, their play, and their gossip—and was possessed solely by a physical desire for contact with them. The sun was hot, the tarn sparkling and translucent. It was encircled by a bank of the softest moss I ever touched, with clusters of little yellow flowers growing at the water's edge; its mosaic flooring was patterned with pebbles, grey, green, yellow, and white, with bunches of tiny scarlet leaves growing between. A matter of seconds and I was in a bath an empress might envy. . . .

Suddenly, from the heather on the fellside, rose a cloud of gulls. As they passed I saw them—a field of feather, blowing upwards. The peace of the place was rent with their piercing cries. On the opposite bank hundreds of rabbits were sitting at their front doors listening for the wind's relay of to-morrow's weather forecast. An attractive young rabbit, with a particularly well-groomed tail, whispered audibly that the ferns were showing their pale green underclothes, the sure sign of rough weather. "And here's another piece of bad news," said her long-eared, white-whiskered neighbour. "There was a crushed beetle on my doorstep this morning—one of the monster world has been about." I felt guilty. Had I crushed a beetle?

Young curlews were standing at the edge of the tarn, and they gazed curiously at me as I dressed. Quaint, frieze-like creatures, with their long beaks and spindly legs. Their walk was still unsteady: as soon as they gained assurance they would be off to the estuaries and mud flats.

I decided to try and find the track over Garburn, but soon strayed from it, for I caught sight of two or three spit-pills of fur and bone, then I began to search, for I knew I was on the track of a kestrel. His quest led me to awkward places, till my legs refused to be stimulated further by his inciting cries of "Excelsior." No human being can play the game of hide-and-seek with the provoking efficiency of a bird. The kestrel is a vagabond; he has always intrigued me in spite of his casual habits. He knows how to take life easily and pleasantly. He is not house proud, for he carelessly scratches a hole in the ground and the lady drops her eggs in true gipsy fashion; but he is fastidious about his food, for he skins his mice, and shells his beetles before he eats them, and, like the human, he leaves the debris of his meal behind him.

I lost sight of my kestrel, but suddenly I heard a harsh croaking. I climbed higher, hoping that at last I might see a raven.

Many birds have entertained and companioned me in the fell district, but, in spite of many adventurous climbs, I have never seen a raven and have only once before heard his hard croak over the craggy heights. He has been chased to the recesses of the mountains and has to fight tenaciously to survive, and is therefore the most wary of British birds. As I gripped a ledge to pull myself higher my hand touched feathers. *At last, a raven!*—but cold and stiff. Even as I touch it I again hear a mourning croak; somewhere a distracted hen raven is calling her lifeless mate. Gently I pick him up and lay him in a crevice of the rocks where he passed his vibrant life. Sore at heart and impotently raging against all vandals, I began my descent.

The invasion of solitude has meant the disappearance of the eagle, and almost certainly the raven will follow. As civilised life spreads, wild life is driven forth; civilisation means the arrival of trap, gun, cage. The creatures sense danger; most of them are wise in their generation; they don't wait to learn how the trap works, the cage door shuts, or the man loads his gun.

As usual, I found that I had wandered further than was wise, and I was glad when I found the beginning of a track which, after a slithering descent, widened to a lane, and not far down a barn half full of bracken. It was not the first time I had slept on a fern bed and found it more desirable than a Vi-spring mattress. Bodily tired and mentally at rest, I was soon asleep. When I woke it was dark. I think the moon woke me. I looked up at the complacent white face and, feeling rather lonely and very stiff, I set off on the track again. The moon, in spite of its detachment, is a good lantern. Just before I reached the Troutbeck road I passed a cottage. The window was uncurtained and the lamp shone through it, lighting up the path to the gate. In the porch stood a little lady of about seventy. Her hair was white, but I could see she was very alert. She called a "Gud evenin'" and walked down to her gate.

"Ah always tek a leuk at t'neet afore goin' t'bed," she said. "Hills never leuk as grand as when t'moon is at t'full, an' its light be streamin' ower un."

"I've been up there to-day."

"Well, ah'm ower seventy an' ah walk ower un ivvery day. Oor auld farm was oop theear—Troutbeck way. If yew likes tew cum inside ah'll shaw yew a pictur o' it."

I went in and saw the picture of a fine old farm with rounded chimneys and spacious out-buildings.

"Last 'eear we had tew let it gaw. Scarce anythin' left t'live on—wi' taxes and na market fur faarm stuff." She sighed. "New fawlk'll nivver kna

real worth o' plaace. They buy land, faarm, an' cattle, but theear are na memories fur un i' polished hand-rail, oak cupboard, chimney carner, auld seat; na shadows live fur 'em under apple-tree round by barn. It's ter'ble t'have tew sell . . . but strangers caan't tek ivverythin' arter aw. They caan't buy hills or tracks and aw gran' things that gaws wi' 'em."

She took out of her drawer a shiny black exercise-book and held it tightly in her hand.

"It be sale book," she said. "Ivverything be here, wi' all sale prices marked alangside. Ah likes t'read it an' ah sees ivverythin' back in' t'auld plaaces."

I looked over her shoulder as she turned the leaves slowly and tenderly. I read:

"Winter Eatage, Little Lowther, 25th April—£6.10.0" and I wondered what it meant.

"Ragged Bible—2*d*."

"Ay, us tried to get that baack. It wur only worn, but yanst yew say things are ta be sold yew caan't git un back."

A heart-break for tuppence.

I read on:

"Oak chest date 1612—£1.10.0."

"We've had un fur ower three hundred year. It's held grandfather's swallow-tails an' father's broadcloth an' now moast like it's holdin' chicken-fewd and feelin' lack o' linseed oil."

"Thirteen and a half good oak chairs—£3.0.9."

"Haalf indeed—t'wur as whole as t'others, it wur only sawn down fur Billy Bray, his legs wur sa lang they wuddent ga under table."

"Two yallow jugs from the dairy—1/-."

She sighed. "Ah wish ah cud have filling o' they again—but nowt cums back an' theear's na sense i' bidin' on past. It doan't help wi' present livin'." She shut the book up. "It's as easy to part wi' auld friends as wi' things yew've hed all yew life. Well, it's a gran' thing tew have this un," she said, putting the book back in the drawer. "It be full o' wonnerful memories. Ah've enjoyed oor bit ov a talk, an' if ivver yew'm passin' ah'll be verra glad t'see yew. Few fawlk cum down this lane."

I was pleased to hear the rumble of a cart, for it was late.

"That be Joe Bigge fra Troutbeck; he'll moast like gi' yew a lift if yew be goin' thaat rooad."

We waited till he came alongside, then he stopped and handed out a box. “Browt yew sum eggs.”

“Thank ’ee, Joe; just wait while ah fetch ’ee t’bottle of stooff ah promised tha fur tha moother’s rheumatiks.” She ran in and came back with a bottle.

They then indulged in a conversation I failed to follow but it was principally about Flossie. Whether Flossie was a woman, cow, cat, or hen I shall never know, but I gathered she was fruitful. He was informed that I wanted a lift; not having noticed me before, he now turned to me with a welcome smile.

“Certainly, git tha sen oop,” he said, throwing a sack for me to sit on, and, shouting a parting message, we started off. His load was barley—and never did emperor employ more effectual tickler! I had an empty stomach and no desire for an emetic, but the barley’s tickler had no mercy; I was tickled incessantly, and my whole journey was spent in trying to control a ridiculous desire to giggle. At whatever angle I rested the barley ears continued to tickle me.

“Bin tekking advantage o’ harvest meun ta git in ma barley crop. Theear’s bad weather brewin’. Ah want t’kip ma bit o’ grain dry. Barley’s fetchin’ a gud price. It doan’t allus pay ta cut, much less carry, becos o’ imported grain. It be ter’ble when gud grain be tipped inta sea t’keep oop price. Fancy aw thaat gud grain New York’s drownded an’ aw tons o’ coffee Brazil burnt, an’ them yaller races starvin’! Summat ’ull happen; haalf t’woorld bain’t ga-in t’staarve contented while t’other haalf thraws gud feud away. A wicked waaste o’ thaat sooart’ll be punished, an’ then tha’ve gat faace t’pray Almighty fur raain!”

There was much I should like to have said on this subject myself, but all the time I was battling to repress my absurd giggling, for as the cart swayed and lurched the barley tickled me unmercifully.

“Are yew visitin’?”

“Alas, only that,” I giggled.

“Hev yew seen John West’s farm at Troutbeck?”

“I have indeed!” I managed to gasp.

“Ay, a graand plaace. Aw t’Troutbeck fawlk be proud o’ t’Wests. An’ hev yew met Mrs. Heelis?[10] She wreeat a beuk about a duck o’ summat.”

My thoughts flew to Jemima Puddleduck.

“It’s a gey girt farm an’ aw, fifteen hunded sheep wi’ it, an’ she has anither lile farm at Sawrey, t’ither side o’ laake Windermere. Ma son warks

for Mrs. Heelis, an' he wur tellin' thaat t'ither day she wur drivin' a flock o' geese down t'rooad, her clogs on an' a bucket o' feedin' stuff i' her hand. It wur rainin' ter'ble heavy, an' she passed a tramp on rooad. 'It's bad weather,' she says tew him, passin' time o' day as 'twur. 'Ay,' says t'tramp, 'it's bad weather fur likes o' me an' thee!'" He laughed heartily at the recollection. "If he'd a knooad her—who she wur—but she wuddent tak it amiss; she's yan o' reet sooart. Ah cud name menny faarms she's guv tew National Trust affair sa as beauty o' plaace woan't be mucked oop."

We had come to the crest of the hill, and, looking down, I saw one of the most beautiful sights I have ever seen, but I thought I had best say nothing about it, as my driver was still chuckling and murmuring, "'Me an' thee'!" I pitied his blindness, that he did not see the beauty of the mist which lay over the valley like down on a swan's breast. Suddenly he pulled up and pointed with his whip.

"Leuks like tarry woo', doan't it?" he said, scoring a bull's-eye. I shall never again imagine my neighbour blind while I see.

The church steeple and the tops of the farm buildings showed clear above the mist.

"Ay, neets be rare things, when yew cum t' see un."

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[9] I am glad to know that Gordon Wordsworth, the poet's grandson, has recently made a gift of Dora's Field to the nation.

[10] Beatrix Potter.

CHAPTER VIII

TARRY WOO'

WILLIAM GREENHOW was one of the shepherds Westmorland will long remember. He was shepherd to Hugh Holme, the last king of Mardale.[11] At Greenhow's funeral all the shepherds came from far and wide; they dug his grave, tolled the bell, and carried him to his last resting-place. Instead of a funeral hymn, they sang his own sheep-shearing song, "Tarry Woo'."[12]

Tarry woo', oh! tarry woo',
Tarry woo' is ill to spin;
Card it well, oh! card it well,
Card it well ere ye begin.

At every sheep-clipping he had sung "Tarry Woo!" sometimes to the old Scottish tune, sometimes to the tune of the Old Hundredth but usually without accompaniment, for he preferred "singing it pewer."

Sheep-shearing songs have no special tune; the singer chooses any favourite air that fits the lilt of the verse. These vocal efforts are not remarkable for their technique, but there is a swing, a lustiness, and a sense of good cheer that many a more ambitious chorus might envy.

At Mardale I was shown Greenhow's second Bible:

A SHEPHERD'S GUIDE
WOOL AND EAR MARKS

I opened the book at random; it contained the names of places each one of which has given me pleasure: Askham and Helton, Applethwaite and Troutbeck, Ambleside and Rydal, Barton, Bampton, Grasmere, Hawkshead, Kentmere, Long Sleddle, Patterdale, Measand and Mardale, Over Staveley, Rosgill and Shap, Swindale and Wet Sleddle.

The matter reads quaintly to the uninitiated:

JOHN THOMSON, Coathows.

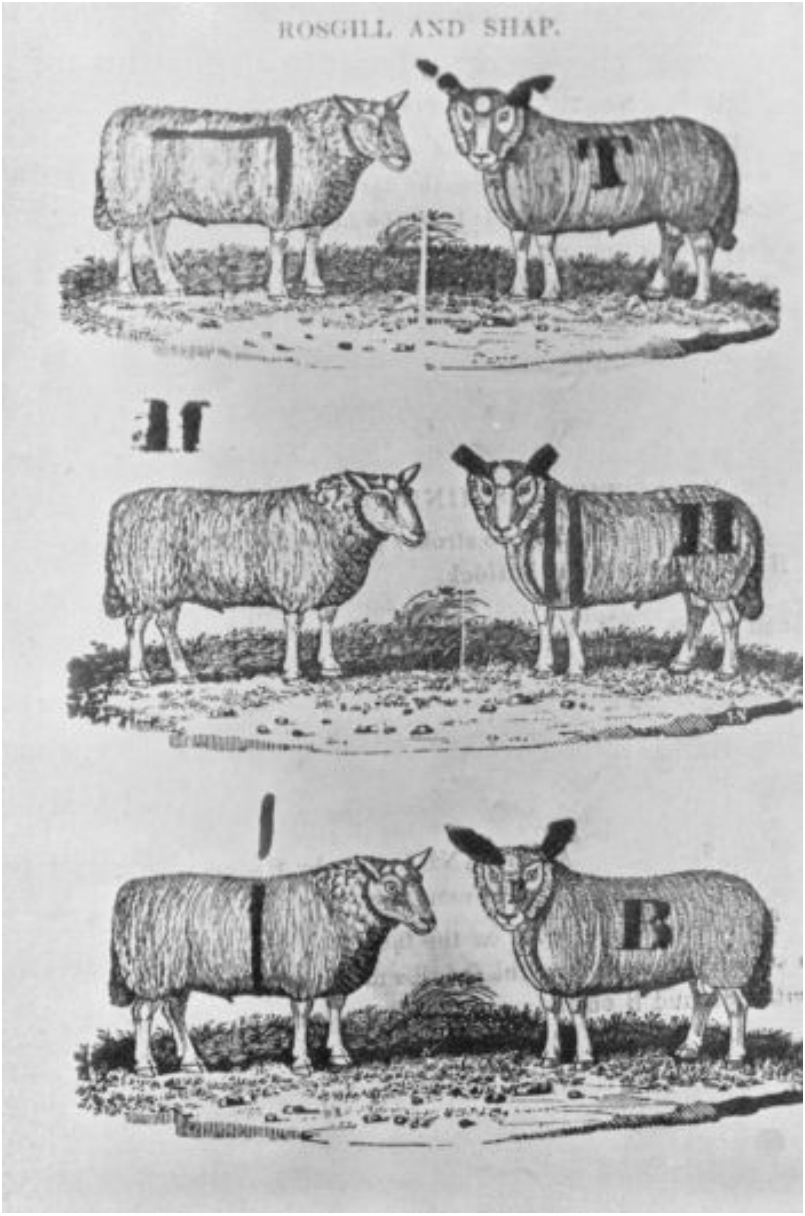
Cropped near ear and a square bottom fork far, a red pop on the near huck bone, T on the far side. A double fork near ear, sometimes under bitted stump.

JOHN MOUNSEY, Askham.

Cropped and holed far ear. I.M. on the far side. I on the face and a red pop on the near shoulder.

WILLIAM KIRKBRIDE, Skelton.

Cropped near ear, a red pop on the tail head, and a pop near side; hogs popped on the head.



WOOL AND EAR MARKS

The simplest "wool and ear" marking in the book is Margaret Walker's of Tailbert: "A stroke down near side." I was entertained to find it was a woman who practised elimination.

"Pops," "bitted stump," "tail head," roused my curiosity, but I never dared display my ignorance.

Every farm has a separate ear-mark, which belongs to it for ever and can never be used elsewhere, any more than the sheep from one farm can be moved to another. These markings are useful in many ways; in the mist they serve as a guide to the native; they also prevent sheep-stealing and locate straying sheep; no Herdwick can go far on the jaunt, even if he wills, for, like a Scotland Yard "suspect," he is a marked man, and the sheep themselves will fight any trespasser from another flock.

When a farm is sold it is the usual practice for the purchaser to take all the sheep with it, but he does not pay for them. They are looked at by two valuers on the owner's behalf and two others on the tenant's behalf; the valuers are again called in when the tenant leaves the farm, and if the sheep have decreased in value he is made to pay the difference; if they have increased in value he is compensated accordingly.

I found that there were various methods of numbering sheep. I learnt an old one that had been used in the Borrowdale valley:

1	score	Yan
2	"	Tyan
3	"	Tethera
4	"	Nethera
5	"	Pimp
6	"	Sethera
7	"	Lethera
8	"	Hovera
9	"	Dovera
10	"	Dick
11	"	Yan-a-dick
12	"	Tyan-a-dick
13	"	Tethera-dick
14	"	Nethera-dick
15	"	Bumfit
16	"	Yan-a-bumfit
17	"	Tyan-a-bumfit
18	"	Tethera-bumfit
19	"	Nethera-bumfit
20	"	Giggot

Sufferers from insomnia will find this method of counting sheep much more efficacious than the one used in the south, particularly if they try the "bumfit" amplification.

I soon found I might be ignorant of anything in this district but sheep. As I was ignorant, it was necessary to show interest or I realised I should be regarded as having neither worth nor intelligence—dismissed as "nowt but tourist." Shepherds and their sheep belong to these fells as surely as clerks and their ledgers to the city.

Sheep only interest me from the moment they cease to be a flock and become individual, and Herdwick sheep are individual. The rams, or "tups" as they are called, even possess names of their own. I have heard the shepherds calling them by such names as "Wonder," "White Top," "Blue Top," "Crag," "Pillar," "Hard Nut," "Blue Cup"; most of these names were given for a peculiar characteristic. "Hard Nut" was a difficult fellow to manage; "Crag" when he got a chance was invariably found wandering on his namesake; "Wonder" was the poet of the flock, a dreamer, a spirit aloof. I was much impressed by "Wonder's" individuality but disappointed to learn from the shepherd that he was considered "saft"—fits were expected of him, to be followed by eventual annihilation. We are told that genius is akin to madness in men, and apparently originality is akin to idiocy in sheep. The moral of "Wonder" and his like is obviously "Be conventional; it's safer."

There has been much conjecture as to the origin of these Herdwick sheep. The theory that they were brought off an Armada wreck is laughed at by the dalesmen; they think it likely they are of Icelandic origin; but to me their origin matters little. They have their own characteristics and are a breed apart. They are small, independent, hardy (for none but the hardy could endure the severe fell winters), active, and full of sense, very unlike the fat slow-moving sheep of the south.

You will rarely see a Herdwick leader on the fells with a "cradle" round its neck. The cradle, or "bow" as it is called in Cumberland, is reserved for his brothers nearer Cockermouth. But you can easily pick out a leader by his jaunty air of independence. I watched one carry out his ideas for the best part of one day. He was an odd-looking fellow; half his face was black and half white. When I first noticed him he was busy telling an elderly lamb, who should have known better, that if he intended to be a Herdwick sheep he must sharpen his wits. This lamb had got himself marooned the wrong side of a tarn and was baaing foolishly for his mama. This he did for some time until his baas so irritated my piebald friend that he let fly a flow of startling language and then went reluctantly to the rescue. As he led the foolish fellow to safety he admonished him thus: "Dogsbody-and-foot-rot! Shut up! Don't baa when you've nothing to say. Baa a Herdwick! Baa a Herdwick!" And the elderly lamb, trotting behind, looked as pleased as if Napoleon had pinched his ear.

I once watched a leader making a track; he called together some fifty sheep and, after talking about the advisability of a new road, the pioneer started ahead, the whole flock following closely at his heels, and the new road was laid out by the tramping of some two hundred feet.

A Herdwick sheep would certainly be bored to death if he had to live the life of a Southdown: for he has an exciting and adventurous existence. As lambs they are brought down into the dales from November to March and boarded out, for there is not enough pasture to nourish them on the fells. Yet, in spite of the excellent larder in the dales, Herdwick lambs possess a soul above their stomach, and they will get back to the hills if they can. . . . When they arrive at years of discretion they develop a strong sense of locality. A shepherd once told me that when sheep are taken out of a flock to a distant farm, they frequently make their way back. He had known them make their way from Keswick to Ennerdale and from Wastwater to Ennerdale.

The sheep are first lambs, then "shearlings," then "two-shears," then ewes or rams, so that at four years they have passed through their four stages of sheep-life. They are shaved but three times in their lives, and only submit to a bath twice a year!

Sheep-shearing is quite a big occasion in these dales. All the neighbours come with their shears, their wives, and their daughters. Twenty or thirty of the men sit round on stools in a semi-circle while others are busy catching. About every hour the wives and daughters come round with jugs, containing rum, beer, or milk—whichever is preferred—for the shearers and catchers grow exceedingly hot and thirsty. In the evening there is generally some wrestling, which is followed by dancing to a fiddle; this is kept up until the moon fades. I have enjoyed many sheep-clipping days in these dales, and I am sorry that the jollity of it is not as general as it used to be.

For hundreds of years the dalesman has trained his dog to be co-shepherd with himself. He could not manage his flock without his dog's co-operation; the dog understands every variation of his master's whistle, and the order it conveys carries a good mile over the fellside. I have watched with unbounded amazement and admiration the dogs rounding up sheep; these tireless dogs and knowing sheep seem an inseparable part of the fells.

The shepherds told me that "ennybuddy who enjoyed watchin' dogs wark sheep shud gang tew Rydal and Troutbeck Sheep-Dog Trials—partic'lar Troutbeck." So to Troutbeck I went first, and to Troutbeck I shall always return. Here the course is laid on the Applethwaite Fell, high up on

the eastern side of the valley, and the dogs work on the type of ground to which they are accustomed all the year round. The fellside is steep, the grass is coarse; there is bracken, heather, and rough rocky ground. This is certainly the place to see the dogs working the sheep to the best advantage; their patience and intelligence have a fairer showing.

Some assert that Rydal is more popular, and vox populi is supposedly vox dei, but it is not vox scribendi. The course is laid over parkland, and the crowd is more concentrated, less native, and it is in such close proximity it must to some extent distract both dog and sheep. The judges evidently appreciate this fact, for in their programme there is a request "that there shall be no applause during a trial"; but apparently the public cannot be prevented from giving an outlet to their enthusiasm, for incessant applause is accompanied by long-drawn "Oh's" and "Ah's." I saw a set of sheep become so confused by these distractions that they rushed among the spectators, one ram having to be carried back with difficulty on to the course. I have no doubt that in the sheep's mind the other silly sheep that sat in rows and bleated incessantly became unendurable.

Troutbeck is the local "Derby." The district is swept for the event. The occasion means good company and good sport. Only those unfortunates who have to carry on with the actual necessities of life are left behind, and they take their turn the following year.

I walked along a track which was a hullabaloo of noise and kaleidoscopic transport. For the rest of the year this track is deserted, the only sounds to be heard, the bleating of sheep, the cry of a bird, or the distant barking of a sheep-dog; but on Troutbeck Derby Day it is a seething mass of traffic—motors of all sizes and ages, from the oldest Ford to the newest Rolls-Royce; motor-buses, motor-cycles, push-bikes, wagonettes, traps, even a coach, and many, like myself, were walking. The whole countryside had one objective—Troutbeck Sheep-Dog Trials. . . .

Multitudinous barking! We had arrived. I had never seen so many dogs gathered together in a small area—Sealyhams, Aberdeens, Schipperkes, Pomeranians, Dachshunds, Alsatians, Irish terriers, Fox terriers, Airedales, and my own proud Peke. This conglomeration of dogs was surprising in view of Rule No. 3, which stated that "no dogs except those competing will be allowed on the ground."

I found a grand spirit of *camaraderie* prevailing; everybody was willing to lend field-glasses, to give information, to share enthusiasm. During my

bout of the popular but non-thirst-quenching drink of ginger-pop, I met an argumentative Irish lady from the Free State, but she soon drowned her politics in ginger-pop and talked instead of the fells. She told me that every year she determined to take her holiday "somewhere else for a change," but that in the end she decided it was wiser for her to enjoy "many happy returns." She had been to every Troutbeck Sheep-Dog Trials for the last twenty years, and each one had given her a new thrill; she told me that very often the trials were ruined by bad weather, rain and mist obscuring altogether the sheep-penning, and that one year the trials had to be abandoned at noon as the judges could see nothing.

As I sat on the fellside to-day, every crag, crevice, and track showed clear. It was one of those days the gods give as a prize. I longed to be a David and write a song of praise to the running brooks, the glory of the hills, and all that on them is. I could see Great Gable, Great End, Bow Fell, Coniston Old Man, Scafell, the Langdales, Red Screes; nearer, the grand Troutbeck valley: while, opposite, the little dogs worked and two thousand people watched them and forgot the great hills.

Just below me sat a platinum blonde of about fifty, perfectly dressed, with an elaborate *coiffure* of multiple curls; on this was perched a very small and coy hat. What might have passed in Bond Street as attractive was grotesque and artificial on the fellside. In the grey and gaud of the town fifty may camouflage as twenty, but in the open country fifty is fifty and no mistaking. This lady had two distinguished-looking men with her; they had evidently suffered in her service for a good many hours, and each was trying diplomatically but repeatedly to leave her with the other, but she refused to be left by either. They wanted to see the dogs; they wanted to climb for a better view; they wanted to get a programme; they wanted local ginger-pop from the tent; they wanted anything that would take them away from her; but to all suggestions she had an answer of three words—"Couldn't be bothered!" There were a good many things she couldn't be bothered to do, but the one thing she could do was to keep two men chained to within an inch of her side for the whole of a day. She wasn't a platinum blonde for nothing!

Next to this trio was a farmer with a face scarred as the fell but full of humour. His voice rang clear, and none could help hearing his conversation:

"A jolly neet, last neet; theer's neeah mistak but we owerdone it a bit, Joe! Hoo did 'ee git on efter ah left tha?"

"Ay, man, ah did badly. Ah gat locked oop. Hoo did tha git on?"

"Nay, ah did warse. Ah gat yam!"[13]

His companion chuckled. "An' t'missus mell'd[14] on tha, I suppoase."

"She did thaat, an' she's na light weight!"

I have heard it said that the Westmorland farmer is only distinguishable from his flock because he wears a hat—an unwarranted gibe, for these sheep have no more a herd face than the farmer; both are individual and full of character. I looked round at the farmers' hats and thought they would tax the resources of any hatter, but none of these men realise their headwear is anything but conventional; they are used to seeing a particular hat worn for a lifetime. Anything strange to them immediately attracts their criticism; they regard it as eccentric, ludicrous, and to be deplored. Because they saw a certain farmer wearing a hat to which they were not accustomed their laughter was uproarious.

"He's bowt a new hat, an' it be as queer as Dick's," I heard one of them say.

I have always been curious about this Dick; his queer wardrobe is not exclusively native to Westmorland, for I've heard it said in Berkshire that "Dick's hat-band went round three times and then wouldn't meet," and in Wales that "Dick's hat-band, made of pea-straws, went nine times round and then didn't tie." In Westmorland I've also heard the expressions "as queer as Dick's shirt" or "as queer as Dick's jacket," but who Dick actually was is buried in the forgotten past. He companions Beau Nash and Beau Brummell, living for us through the reputation of a wardrobe.

The trials begin at 9.30 a.m. both at Troutbeck and Rydal. Points are awarded the dogs for style, promptitude, and obedience to orders, for command over the sheep and show of initiative and intelligence. At Troutbeck the time allowed from the start to the penning is eight minutes, at Rydal eleven minutes. At Troutbeck two sheep and a ram are released, at Rydal four sheep and a ram.

The scale of points I found interesting:

Gathering (Outrun 5, Lifting 5, Bringing 10) - - - - 20

(In outrun dog may be directed on either side. Straight fetch through gate met midway. A second attempt at the gate will not be allowed.)

Driving - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 10

(From pole where shepherd will stand in triangular direction through two gates. Failure to negotiate the gates will involve a loss of points at the Judges' discretion, *according to circumstances*, and a second attempt at either gate will NOT be allowed.)

Penning - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 5

(Square pen, 6 feet with gate. On completion of No. 2, competitors must proceed to pen, leaving dog to bring sheep to pen. Competitors are forbidden to assist dog to drive sheep to pen. Competitors to stand at gate holding rope (3 feet) while dog works sheep into pen. A competitor who leaves the gate end before being ordered to do so by the Judges will lose points at the Judges' discretion.)

Single - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 5

(From the five marked *single* will be shed off and worn to the Judges' satisfaction. Immediately on the "single" being shed off, dog must be brought in to wear it. Competitors are forbidden to assist the dog by driving off the single any distance.)

Style - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 5

Command (Handler 5, Dog 10) - - - - - - - - - 15

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60

I was very interested to find from what wide areas the entrants came. There were entrants from Scotland and several from Yorkshire. It seemed to me, as a novice, that there should be a handicap put upon the resident dog in fairness to the visiting dog, because the visitor has not only had a journey but the fells are strange to him. The sheep used are strange to all the dogs. At Rydal each set of sheep includes two Herdwicks and three Swaledales. I wondered why only five points were given for the "single," for here the dog has to separate from the others the sheep that has a white tape around her neck and keep her apart in the marked circle, which seems nothing short of a

miracle to those who are ignorant of the sheep-dog's sensitive intelligence. The shepherd is allowed to assist the dog in this "singling," but only so far as pointing to the taped sheep—he may not touch it.

At Troutbeck, the farmer or shepherd stands on a hill a hundred and fifty yards below the sheep; he is not allowed to use his hands or give directions; he can only whistle to the dog, who understands perfectly the pitch of the whistle and the order conveyed by it. Nothing could show so certainly as these trials a dog's sagacity and endurance; the way of a man with a maid is no wiser than the way of these dogs with their sheep! The sheep are often obscured from the shepherd by "knots" on the fellside, or by the long bracken, and the dog has to work on his own initiative. His greatest difficulty is in penning the three sheep in so short a time; and here his work is amazing. Immediately the sheep get near the pen the dog lies down on the grass, very much in the manner of a fine stalker. He is watching his opportunity to press them into the pen; instinctively he knows the wise thing is not to disturb or hustle the sheep. At this point the shepherd is allowed to come down and help his dog by standing one side of the pen, but he must not take on too much of the work, otherwise the dog loses marks. It seems easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than to drive three obstinate sheep into a little pen. At the very point of going in they will decide to rush one side or the other; one may go in while the other two stand obstinately just outside the pen, then they suddenly decide to trot down the fellside. While the dog is getting these two back the one already in the pen trots out. Then the dog swears, the sheep chuckle, and the crowd "Ba-a-a."

The age of punning died with Elia, so I dare to quote what Lamb wrote of sheep:

> A mob of men is better than a flock of sheep, and a crowd of happy faces jostling in to the play-house at the hour of six is a more beautiful spectacle to man than the shepherd driving his "silly" sheep to fold.

If he had seen these sheep-dog trials he would not have quoted the adjective "silly" of sheep: obstinate, stubborn, irritating, may be, but not "silly." They do not see why they should go between hurdles when there is a large open space on either side. They do not want to be penned, and have no intention of being penned if they can avoid it. I like any animal to show character, and it pleases me that a sheep can, and does. At Rydal I actually saw a set of sheep stand before the pen and stamp their feet obstinately at the dog. Another set of sheep refused to budge; the dog became so exasperated he went up to the leader and gave him a gentle nip on the leg, as much as to

say, “Do get on; we only have eleven minutes!” This, under Rule 5, presumably disqualified the dog.[15]

“Mischievous fawlk’s sheep when tha’ like,” said a farmer to me as we watched. He told me that old Tom Martindale of Benson Hall, an outstanding character at these trials and a noted Westmorland farmer, was once running his dog at Troutbeck Sheep-Dog Trials. Two were already penned in record time, when the third dropped just as it appeared to be going into the pen and everyone thought it was dead. Tom bent over the sheep, shook his fist at it, and said, “ ‘Ah’d ken thoo oot o’ thousands; thoo’s done thaat on ma afoor. Now lie theear an’ doan’t thoo git thassel’ oop an’ gang in pen, whativver tha do!’ Old Tom kna’d sheep reet enuff, fur oop sheep gat an’ waalked inter pen.”

Tom Martindale’s son is as much in evidence at both trials to-day as his father was yesterday. His dog, Snip, is a clever lady, and full of wiles, but, though she has won the Troutbeck trials, when I watched her she was unfortunate in having one intractable sheep, and one can be as fatal as three. Even though the pen had been reached in the amazingly short space of three minutes, it took another three minutes and forty-seven seconds before this troublesome sheep was folded.

The best round of the day was made by Bell, a three-year-old black-and-white bitch; she did not lose a mark in a faultless course of five minutes and twenty-two seconds.

Spot from Goosnargh probably did the best work of the day. Though he failed to get his sheep folded, he earned continual praise from the crowd. He had to tackle the three most exasperating sheep of the day, and, though he untiringly manœuvred them back to the pen after five consecutive rushes on their part, he penned them just too late! I hope Spot did not realise how bitter a thing it is to be so near success yet not achieve it.

The way of the man with his dog was as enlightening as the way of the dog with his sheep. Some took their dogs aside and talked to them before they started, whispering instructions or encouragement. These were the men whose dogs were something more than hired servants. Other men whistled their orders and some bellowed incessantly. It seemed this inarticulate shouting was not successful, for often the dog was confused and the sheep frightened. The dogs’ methods with the sheep are equally varied; some round the sheep up giving them a wide berth, others keep close to the sheep all the time. There is no doubt the dog that harries least succeeds best.

After witnessing these sheep-dog trials, age must take heart of grace. I saw a ten-year-old sheep-dog, Jed, whose work could not well be improved.

A young man who was standing next to me said, “If only that old dog had the pace of youth nothing could touch him.” There’s the snag for dog and man! Sometimes nature is fair. I have an idea that she has a certain kindly feeling for age, and that she throws it a crust of consolation when she can. . . .

The fierce excitement of the hound trail is the big event of the afternoon at both Troutbeck and Rydal. The course at Troutbeck is indescribably gruelling; the hounds must have amazing endurance, for they must run twelve miles over every type of ground and jump countless stone walls. At Rydal the hounds run well in sight of the spectator, along the ridge of Rough Sides, beyond Sweden Bridge,[16] over Low Pike and Heron’s Crag, and across the Rydal valley, a distance of ten miles.

The two brothers George and Braithwaite Black still lay the trail at Rydal as they have done for many years. They volunteered that they had been “trailin’ sen we wur seben ’eear auld, an’ we looks furrard t’it all t’eear round.” They are not in their first youth, but are still full of energy; it takes them only an hour and a quarter to trail the course. They start at the foot of High Pike, which is about the centre of the course, and trail backwards. The hounds are tightly held by their owners until the brothers return, otherwise there might be catastrophe. A dozen wool stockings soaked in a mixture of train-oil, turpentine, paraffin, and aniseed[17] lay the trail. Why this should be so irresistible to the hound is a mystery. Perhaps it bears relationship to the scent of a fox. It may be that the train-oil is for his speed, the aniseed for his bark, and the turpentine for his brush; if so, the fox is a dealer in art as well as craft.

It has been said that every man has his hour; the Blacks certainly have their crowded five minutes. They make their picturesque and unashamed return with an empty bottle in one hand and a bundle of wool stockings in the other and are immediately surrounded by eager questioners. Some they ignore, some they answer with the good-natured tolerance shown to half-wits.

“Woo’ stockings are used becos they hawlds t’mixtur’ better’n owt else, an’ bottle we carry is fur mixtur’.” Guffaws and knowing winks followed this information, which caused the brothers to show virtuous indignation. “We dawn’t carry seck precious stuff as yew hev i’ mind climmin’ ower them crags; it ’ud be sinfu’ waste, but thaat baint sayin’ as hounds be awnly yans as be ready fur a taste o’ summat liquid at t’end!”

According to the Rules of the Hound Trailing Association, a minimum of twenty-five minutes and a maximum of forty-five minutes is allowed. If a hound comes in before the minimum time, he is disqualified, as it is not possible to cover the whole course in less. This regulation had to be formed not only because of occasional tampering with the hounds, but because the hounds themselves are canny. They even watch their fellow-runners mount a crag laid with the trail and then, taking a short cut, save their wind and steal a march on the honest ones. There are dogs *and* dogs.

Betting is not allowed at Rydal, but at Troutbeck the bookies voice their importunate clamour. They look much the same whatever part of the country they come from, but there was one thing I particularly noticed about them here—they were the only members present of the Make-Litter Brigade. Is there a bookie living who respects the beauty of the fell or downside where he pitches and shouts?

The competing hounds, like the sheep, are given no food for twenty-four hours prior to the trail. I wondered why they were never tempted to stop and drink at the various brooks they pass over when the sun is scorching. I was told this was one of the secrets of training, but I did learn they were given rose-water to allay their thirst, and sometimes sherry to strengthen them and give them long wind.

Lined up for the start, the hounds strained forward, quivering with excitement. Scarred, diverse and angular, neither they nor the fell foxhounds have the well-groomed appearance of south country hounds, but they are hardier and fleeter of foot.

The onlookers pressed round, asking innumerable questions of the preoccupied owners, who were busy alternately encouraging and soothing their dogs. I wondered which of the eager line of dogs would win. I chose the smallest as most likely, because he seemed to have himself completely under control. He stood quietly with his master, neither mouthing nor straining. He gave the impression of deliberately conserving his energy. I asked his name, and was told "Macduff." I might have aptly quoted Shakespeare to him, but there is a superstition about quoting from the play in which Macduff appears and as he was my choice as winner I held my tongue. I watched this small hound with increasing interest. He kept his eyes on his master, and from time to time he gave his hand a reassuring lick; as if to say, "I am just as keen as the others but I think it best to keep quiet." I don't know how he practised this control when dog, owner, and crowd were keyed to the highest pitch. It was with difficulty that I held my own excited Peke, for, although very small, he is a great hunter, and when the hounds gave mouth he joined shrilly in the chorus.

THE START OF THE HOUND TRAIL

The noise and excitement grew; hearts of both dog and man were thumping; then suddenly a silence—"They're off."

My Peke, who was now wild with excitement, leapt out of my arms and rushed down the course. Amazement—consternation—then concerted action. The crowd surged forward, and there was a rush down the fellside to stop him, but this was no easy matter and it was with difficulty that he was brought back struggling and in a fury, his language vituperative. Undoubtedly he was saying, "Damn it! Damn it! Let me to the course, and I'll show these bony dogs!"

"If he's gat t'skin of a Chinaman he's gat Westmorland spirit," said the man who handed him back to me—a wriggling, indignant, and furious bundle.

The hounds had gone like a flash of lightning, down the fell, over the first wall, over the second wall, and up over the crags, a wild rush to the summit, down again through stream and wood, up again over field, heather, and fell. It was soon only possible to see them with the aid of glasses, but a blind man could have told when they were in sight by the roar which rose from the crowd like waves of the sea; when they were hidden there was complete silence. The shouts told me that Macduff was leading. . . .

There was a wild rush from the crowd—the hounds were returning. Slipping and scrambling with the rest, the years dropping from me as I ran, I was soon alongside the anxious owners. These were lined up as at the start, but instead of their hounds they now held bandages and restoratives. The whole crowd had reassembled almost on the instant.

As Macduff jumped the last wall, he turned like a human runner to look at the hound immediately behind him. Was he judging the pace required for his final spurt, or was he seized with a sudden fear that he might yet be beaten? . . . The babble of sound increased—the owners shouted to their hounds to spur them forward—the crowd called the name of their fancied dog—then all sounds merged into a roar—Macduff had won![18] He had completed the ten-mile course in thirty-four minutes.

HE WHO RAN AND "ALSO RAN"

I watched the hounds brought in. The necessity for bandages was obvious; they rush over jagged crag and wall oblivious to wound and bruise, but directly the race is over they realise their discomfort and begin licking and limping. They pay for their sport, as dog and man ever must, yet both are eager to be up and at it again!

The winning hounds are as keenly besieged by photographers as any film star, but only a few minutes are allowed for this public adulation, as the

owners are insistent on immediate attention to physical needs.

There seemed a variety of opinion as to the feeding of the hounds; several of them were given something that looked like a large penny bun, and I was told it contained a mixture of tripe, meat, and fish. One man gave his hound sponge cake and raw eggs. I saw Macduff polishing off almost a pound of raw meat out of a jam-jar. As this fine little hound was able to conserve his energy and control his nerves, remaining at the end of his gruelling course fresher and less cut and bruised than his fellows, I came reluctantly to the conclusion that for hounds the Shavian diet must bow to the Chestertonian.

I carried away from these trials three pictures, one of sheep, one of dogs, and one of the old Westmorland farmers. They are an integral part of the trials; they know all the dogs and most of the sheep; they watch each event with lively interest, and their running commentary puts the B.B.C. to bed. A little group of these old farmers were having a few parting words as I passed them at the end of the day; they gave me "Gud evenin'" and asked me if I'd enjoyed the trials. My enthusiasm satisfied them.

"That's reet; can't beat trials. Tak a leuk at yon shepherd a-taalkin' tew judges afoor tha gaas; a fine arld sportsman he be, wunnerful wi' sheep, an' a mighty gud singer tew."

"I've seen him before," I said. "He sang Mardale Sheep-Shearing Song last year at Mardale clipping."

They all chuckled, and the one who had the largest hat and gayest waistcoat continued, "He sings it at ivvery clippin'; this 'eear he an' his lad set off back ter Lang Sleddale at fower i' marnin'. His lad tell't me that when they wur nearly yam, he says: 'Jack! Ah think ah've fergitten summat. Ah've just remembered, did ah sing me sang?'

" 'Neeah, faather, thoo diddent,' Jack ses. 'Well, then ah mun ga back an' sing it.' An' t'arld chap went aw t'way back ta Mardale ta sing his sang! He waant give in though he be nearer eighty than seventy, but he be gud company fur aw that, an' if ennybuddy wur tew say, 'Joe Rigg, what has been tha greatest pleasurin'?' ah'd say, 'Gud company.'" There was a chorus of agreement. "An' sheep trials tak' a sight o' beatin' fur gud company."

As I went down the track I turned and waved to them; there was an answering wave of sticks, and then a shout: "Cum back next 'eear."

Next year—shall I be in such good company? All life is company of sorts, whether it be farmer, dog, fellside, or night-club, but pleasurin'—that is *good* company.

The shadows were growing rapidly over the hills. I hurried on to be out of their reach, for to me they hold menace and affright . . . they grow ever longer and nearer; none may escape their enfolding. . . . I will put fear out of my heart, for maybe shadow-company is good company.

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[11] Hugh Holme traced his descent in unbroken line to the time of King John.

[12] Tarry woo' is the wool left by the sheep on the hedges, trees, and walls, collected by the shepherds. See Appendix for entire song.

[13] Home.

[14] "Mell": a large wooden mallet.

[15] Rule 5: If a dog injures any sheep the owner shall pay the value thereof and the dog will be disqualified.

[16] An old bridge which formed part of a pack-horse route.

[17] The *Sunday Chronicle* of August 19th, 1934, published a story of misfortune which dogged a man after he knocked a quart bottle of aniseed off a shelf in the Manchester chemist's shop where he worked. He didn't know then—but he knows now—that dogs love aniseed. Within two minutes of leaving the shop he had two dogs at his heels. A few hundred yards later he found himself being trailed by a pack. He dashed for a tram with the pack at his heels, but two jumped aboard at the next stop. The conductor said he must pay for the dogs, so he got off the tram and dashed into a 'phone-box. While all the dogs of the district waited outside, he rang for a friend to bring a car round. He got home safely. Petrol removed the aniseed from his trousers, but his boots were another matter. He left them in the open for a week. Even then three dogs followed him. To crown all, his friend with the car called to say that he'd been pushing dogs off and out of his car for the whole week. So that decided him. He burnt his boots.

[18] Troutbeck 1933. Rydal 1933, he held joint championship with Tibetan. Rydal 1934, I saw him beaten by Nigger, his defeat a matter of inches. Nigger's time for the ten-mile Rydal course was thirty-four minutes fifteen seconds.

CHAPTER IX

THE OLD BACHELOR

I WANDERED aimlessly down Kendal Street, glancing down the numerous alley-ways which dived behind shops, trafficless and free from the hooter's incessant bray. The chief feature of Kendal's streets are these "yards"; some are quaint, some dingy, some beautiful, but they all fire the imagination. I walked down one called Peppercorn Place, and if I had only known at which house to call I felt sure I should have found Peter Piper picking his peck of pickled peppercorns. I looked down another and saw a little square of minute houses, with gardens about the size of a large pocket-handkerchief. They gave the impression of little boxes tidily packed away, containing things that were no longer of use but that the owner had not the heart to destroy.

An austere lady filled one of the doorways—silent, spare, forbidding. She surveyed me up and down with scant approval: I knew that I found no favour in her eyes. Nevertheless, my obvious curiosity provoked acquaintance.

"Never seen houses afore?"

"Not like these. They're like dolls' houses."

"They're small, but they're not for dolls."

I looked at her. "I can see that," I said.

"Every one of these houses has a widow in it!"

"Really?"

"Yes. An' every widow must ha' lived a blameless life." She hurled the sentence at me in the manner of one who would say, "That prohibits you!"

"I am glad to find that Kendal gives virtue a house reward."

"Ay," she said stonily. "If you've never had the chance to enjoy a good man you might go 'igher up and benefit by Dowker's Charity. That's for spinsters, but—it's respectable lives again. They won't look at you without you're respectable." I felt she wanted to add, "And that's something you will never be."

"I shall certainly apply for one or the other when I come to live in Kendal," I said. "It is the only town in England where I have found virtue given a prior claim to decay."

I walked on, as she had directed, to the virtuous spinsters' quarter. It was practically a replica of the virtuous widows', but here every door was shut and the curtains stiff with starch. There was no sign of life, but I felt there were eyes behind the curtains—a little square of watching eyes—and the eyes belonged to faded little women with shrivelled faces and shrivelled hearts.

Dowker's Charity?

Kendal is an old bachelor, with antiques, collections, anecdotes, and a quaint sense of humour; he is slightly taciturn, a little reticent, but if he receives you at all he will entertain you royally, though it is quite possible he may keep you waiting in one of his yards and never take you further. He is not a dandy, but neither is he a sloven, and if you drop litter on his step, he will point the way to Woolworths—Melias—or one of the three new cinemas. He will tell you Kendal is looking up and advancing with the times, that building is in rapid progress—then, he will leave you—to leave Kendal. But if you can persuade him of your interest, then he may invite you in and show you his collection, particularly if you assure him that you haven't a guide-book or a time-table in your knapsack. As I had neither, and there was no doubt about my interest, he invited me in and handed me a packet of Kendal mint-cake—made by his cook—and proudly told me that it is carried on all the Antarctic and Himalayan expeditions, that it is freshly made though flavoured with the past. Even he could not remember when his cook first concocted the mixture.

Then the old bachelor opened his cabinet. On the first shelf was the castle. "At what time, or by whom, this castle was built, we cannot find in history, but it may be presumed that it was the mansion of the ancient barons of Kendal." Then it passed into the hands of Thomas Parr, and I saw the capable figure of Catherine Parr walk along the battlements. "I ordered her to draw her mantle of Kendal Green close round her," said the bachelor, "for a turbulent monarch was sitting on the throne; he had cast an eye toward my Catherine. Two of his wives had made the acquaintance of the headsman; I was anxious for her, but she obeyed me like a true Kendal wench and kept her head."

It appeared that in those days the women of Kendal had not only to occupy themselves at the spinning-wheel; they must refrain from nagging their lords and masters or they made the acquaintance of the scold's bridle—a neat apparatus with a firm iron tongue which stilled the unruly member, a hole for the nose, a ring for the neck, a hasp for the padlock; neither might a woman strike her husband or she would wear the iron girdle and her hands be kept still with chains from the wrist to the belt. In Kendal's opinion, a woman should have no time to nag or bully—there was plenty of work in his house and none might make excuse.

Pannus mihi panis is the motto of the burgh—"Wool is my bread."

He showed me the charter Elizabeth granted him; then he introduced me to his first mayor and aldermen and bade me read the inscription on the gilt weight clock in his Mayor's Parlour:

Geo. Pool S. Ans Lane Fecit
The gift of James Cock
Maior in Kendal 1654
To the Maiors of the same
Sucksesively
Time runeth
Your work is before you

Then he showed me the inscription on a tombstone, that I might realise his family bred not only craftsmen but men of letters.

Hereunder lieth the body of Mr. Ralph Tirer
Late Vicar of Kendal, Bachelor of Divinity who
died on the 4th day of June Ano. Dm. 1627.
London bredd me, Westminster fedd me,
Cambridge spedd me, my sister wedd me.
Study taught me, living sought me,
Learning brought me, Kendal caught me.
Labour pressed me, sickness distrest me.
God just gave me, Christ did save me.
Earth did crave me, and Heaven would have me.

Now Kendal summoned a guild procession for my entertainment, with his woolcombers at the head. They were followed by one hundred and fifty "taylors," preceded by Adam and Eve in "proper dresses," eighty shear-men dyers, three hundred weavers dressed in their own manufacture, followed by Minerva, Juno, Ariadne, and Paris; then the ironmongers and metal-men,

sixty farmers, a hundred builders, a model of the temple, King David playing his harp, Solomon, Absalom, and Ahab; seventy glovers, and skinners in shamoy; ten mercers and their wardens, drums and pipes and viols, and the Mayor and Aldermen. Those who had no sash or cockade were given one on application to the clerk. It was generous of Kendal to show me one of these ceremonies, for they are only held once every twenty-one years; they continue for three days, but only on the third day are the womenfolk permitted to join in. I asked him if they resented this.

"In my young days women thought on the scold's bridle and said nothing. I told the menfolk of my family they made a great mistake when they set this by."

This nearly provoked me to retort that it was quite possible from such distinction and scold's bridles may have leapt the sparks of discontent which fired sex-war, but he was my host and I held my tongue.

The master of the brushmakers at the sign of the Black Pig stood and watched the procession, slapping his leather apron to the rhythm of the tabor; the half-starved apprentices had been given an afternoon's holiday. They lost no pay for they had no wages.

"If you look through the window to-day," said the bachelor, "you'll see the same procession with different members of my family, but changes are about. The brushmakers must work elsewhere, the shop's too small to hold them; but the Black Pig, his hair bristling, still stands and smiles over my High Street. He has laughed through the centuries. Nothing but the hammer and the scrap-heap will kill his joke.

"My next shelf is dated 1737. The *Kendal Weekly Courant* will give you the news."

The single-sheet journal gave "the most material advices both foreign and domestic." Its leader was a fable of Æsop. I noticed yesterday's public were served for sixpence very much the same fare as it is to-day for a penny: fires, robberies, drowning, murders, and catch-penny advertisements. "The good sale of Dr. Daffey's elixir hath met with in these parts and the great cures it hath done in most of the principal towns, this may inform the public that a large and fresh parcel of this right sort of elixir is come down from the printing office fish-market, Kendal, Mrs. Prescott of Preston and Mrs. Corney in Penrith. 2/6*d*. the half pint with printed directions for taking it."

"Now I'll show you little Romney," said the bachelor with a certain pleasure.

Romney's round, pugnacious face was aglow, his ungovernable hair was blowing in the wind. "Look at him again a little later; he is now apprenticed

to Steele the artist, and is very proud of his sealed indenture. Prouder if he knew it was to hang on the wall of the Mayor's Parlour, with the postmaster's signboard he painted—a hand holding a coin on a letter; that was his first commission. Now see him twenty years later painting the portrait of one Wilson, and receiving eight guineas for it. The wonder of Shakespeare then caught his imagination, and he seized his brush to re-create the thunder of Lear in a vision of storm and fire. That picture hung in the house of Marie Corelli, but later it found its way back to me and now hangs in my Mayor's Parlour. Then he painted his own portrait, they say he looks very like young Beethoven." He sighed reminiscently. "I think I gave him his happiest days, certainly his most contented. He left me and drank deep from the cup of life, enjoyed its full flavour. Then he came back to us tired and worn, but he was still my child, and I was well pleased to fold him again in my arms at the last."

Then Kendal drew out another shelf, marked the nineteenth century—the spinning-jenny had arrived. The hand-looms are threatened; through the town the railway sears its way like a smoke-breathing dragon on its triumphant progress from Lancaster. There are six trains a day—a magnificent service. Euston is ten hours away. Woe betide him who travels third class: his carriage is open to the winds and rains of heaven, his seat springless, and his plight desperate. Smoking forbidden, and what did they all do then, poor things?

The London train steamed in at 7.50 p.m. to the sound of the sanctus bell. Kendal showed me this bell with some pride. On its rim is its birthmark: "Cast 1537." It was unhung and taken to the Grammar School, where it was rechristened "The Tinkler." Kendal told me that in 1587 he had three bells. He took a particular pride in one of these, which weighed 35 cwt. and required three men for its ringing. He showed me the inscriptions on his various bells; the one I liked best was engraved on the sixth bell:

> *Ye ringers all that prize your health and happiness*
> *Be sober, merry, wise, and you'll the same possess.*

He talked at some length about his bells, and finished by saying that in 1788 he had a long series of rhyming orders drawn up "for the better regulation and encouragement of the Art of Ringing."

From Easter Sunday until New Mayor's Day
At ten the ringers shall appear alway;
I' th'afternoon by half-past two again,
This rule unaltered ever shall remain.

From New Mayor's Day still Ten shall be the hour
For Forenoon service, as expressed before;
The Afternoon Service from thence must altered be
Until the clock commence the hour of three.

Whoe'er till bells are raised is absent hence
The forfeit for the fault is just threepence;
If he neglect till service it be o'er,
For every peal he forfeit twopence more.

Whoe'er presumed a bell to pull off here
Without consent, or does get drunk, or swear,
Sixpence for each offence he sure shall stake,
Ere he his peace with us for it shall make;
Likewise he fourpence pays, besides all that,
Who here appears with either spurs or hat. . . .

He then showed me a report of the General Meeting of Churchwardens in 1664: "which doeth Order that George Wilkinson shall keep the clocke and chyme in better order, and shall keep swine out of the Churchyard, and whip ye doggs out of ye Church in times of Divine Service and Sermon, and remove the dunghill from the stable door which opens into ye Churchyard and reform all abuses." . . . And another entry in 1679: "It is ordered that, touching ye Vermin-heads, such prices shall be paid as is hereafter set down, viz.: a fox head 12*d*.; a brocke[19] 6*d*.; an otter 6*d*., etc., etc. Such Vermin-heads to be brought in with the haire or downe on, and the said heads to be brused and carryed to the Kent-side, and thrown into the middle of the water."

Kendal told me otters can be found in the Kent to-day, and after he had assured himself that I was not bent on their destruction he showed me their haunt on the bank. This river looks far too sluggish to have ever been harmful, but I saw that it swept over the churchyard wall in 1671, "and itt left much ffish."

I sat down on the church steps.

"Not tired already? I'm not half through yet. That's the worst of woman; just as a man gets going she always gets tired."

He turned on his heels, and I watched his tall leggy figure with his grey age-worn coat flapping behind him, fade into the distance.

As I walked towards the Westmorland Himalayas, fortified by Kendal's mint-cake, I thought how generously the old bachelor had paid my curious interest with the bounty of his mint.

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[19] A badger.

CHAPTER X

SHADOWS ON THE HILLS

THE rough track to Haweswater rises high over the rim of the lesser hills; the giants are beyond. I could see their silver shoes and green stockings, some knit with shrill jade grass, others with a heather mixture, their brown leathern trousers, plum-coloured velvet jackets with yellow buttons, and grey rock gauntlets. Their faces were enshrouded, as sometimes is the custom with the brothers of this order, and then it is not meet for man to peer at them, or tempt a breaking of their silence.

The valley regiments were in full regalia, brass buttons, cockades, sabretashes. I saw the gold regiment, the blue, the purple, and that "a-wearing o' the green." I could not have had a better view of the giants and their regiments than from Grassgarth's Roof Garden,[20] and there I waited for some sound of movement to break the silence that encompassed. Suddenly a bird started up, then another—spread wings, whirr, swirl, and swoop. I became conscious of sound; bees and insects were humming. There was a distant bleating of sheep. I heard a whistled instruction and knew that somewhere near a sheep-dog was working; then came a thudding of hooves; these whistled directions were not for sheep, but a herd of mountain ponies.

I watched while the dogs worked, the farmer and his boy helping. The little ponies galloped wildly to and fro from the dogs' driving. At last they were forced into an angle of the wall; the steam rose from their flanks; their eyes were dilated with terror. The boy had a cap full of tempting corn, and the man swung a Judas rope. The piebald was caught. The little wild thing battered his flanks against the wall and hoofed out a bar of the gate in an effort to be free. He butted impotently with his head, his eyes wild and bloodshot.

"How many are you taking away?" I asked.

"Piebald an' yan mole-coloured."

I watched with a lump in my throat the capture of the mole-coloured.

The others galloped off to freedom, the dog dropped quietly to heel, the boy took an apple out of his pocket and munched it unconcernedly, the man unhitched the rope and led away the two captured ponies. They were

bridled, but their spirit was not broken yet. I wondered where they were going—a circus perhaps; a canvas stable, sawdust underfoot, hay from a bag, blinding footlights, the smell of humanity, the blare of brass band or panatrope and amplifiers. I wondered how long they would be tortured by remembrance of the sharp tang of the mountain air, the mountain stream, and all their gay freedom.

I watched them out of sight and then sat down trying to forget fear, bridle, and capture. My rock seat was padded with moss. I like this contact with the bones of the fell and its soft skin. My eye was satisfied with infinite variety; everywhere I saw edge, angle, zigzag, spot, splash; even the walls make a patchwork pattern over hill and dale. I marvel at these walls; they are an outstanding feature of the fells, sprawling over them and along the tracks which men have cut over their sides. They are a reassuring sign of man's presence, but a disconcerting sign that he must be limited and protected.

No part of this walled map that stretched before me was built in man's living memory. Some will tell you they were built two hundred years back; others say, "Lang afoor then," and that the men who built them earned a shilling a day and had to find their own stones; to-day many a farmer has had to mortgage his farm for the upkeep of them.

The stones hold firmly together with no cement, yet the fierce storm buffets them in vain. No one knows who was responsible for these unending stone walls. It is said that the Devil himself built that which runs from Dunmail Raise to Helm Crag. No doubt the Devil would have completed the walling of the district had he not tripped on his apron-strings and fallen into Grasmere Lake, which apparently damped his enthusiasm for the job. If he had not succeeded in clawing his way out, what would have happened to Westmorland? Liberty, Equality, Fraternity—and God bored. . . . Not having the Devil's trick, man's method of walling is to build so that the stones slope outward and downward, in order to prevent damp being harboured, or a sudden rush of water bringing it down.

WOOL AND WALL

Women can wall as well as men when they have a mind. At Measand Beck, my friends Jane and Isabella Kitching told me that when a bit of extra walling was necessary round the farm, and experts arrived from Lowther to patch it up, their grandmother, Jane Kitching, cast a disapproving eye at their dilatory methods. She bore it for the space of an hour, and then started in at it herself. The men from Lowther gazed at her sheepishly as her capable hands worked quickly and surely, building up the wall. "Ah'll sha' yew—girt paupies," she said. "Fawlk fra big cities kna lile or nowt worth knain'. Tha nivver wur browt oop to do nowt thorough. When thoo cums there's nobbut a mess, an' theear's nowt us caan't mak oorsen if oor mind be set." She stopped and looked at them, her eyes twinkling, for the rough side of her tongue never lasted long. "Now ah'm goin' ta git yew a mug o' beer, an' when ah cum back yew best shaw me what a man can dew. Woman likes ta tease him into pruven thaat he's a sight better'n she be."

When she returned the walling was completed!

Immediately below me was a sheep with a freckled face. I watched him chewing gently, and from time to time he gave me a friendly nod. Then he

came nearer and bleated in a reproving fashion: "How can you go back to spit swank swizzel, dirty pasture, and no grazing?"

A picture of Edgware Road and patches of the Strand rose before me. "How can I?" I replied. "Then don't," he bleated.

What is this life if, full of care
We have no time to stand and stare?

No time to stand beneath the boughs,
And stare as long as sheep or cows.

Below me on the fellside, at a perilous angle, was a cart loaded with bracken. A boy was sitting on the shaft. He had hair like the sun and eyes the colour of ink. I called out the "Good Day" which is customary everywhere but in cities, where it is regarded as accosting and costs ten shillings. The man leading the horse uttered a strange word: "Ooo-oop." The horse stopped. I asked if "The Monument" was hereabouts.

"Ay, thaat heap o' stones oop theear, thaat's Monument. Who 'twur erected tew ah doan't kna, but it shaws fawlk view fine. 'Twur put oop afoor ma day. 'Twur sumbuddy who fancied t'fellside, mawst like." He scratched his head. "Waait a bit, ah think ah've heeard tell o' t'name of Williamson. Ay, thaat wur name, Williamson."

Nothing now remains of Williamson but the uncertain memory of his name; his glory or shame is hidden in the book of the dead which is locked in the big box of oblivion. The heap of stones lies scattered, neglected. Nothing beside remains; the lone and silent hills stretch far and wide.

The man with the cart-load of bracken shaded his eyes, and looked up the fell. "Ah shuddent trouble t'gang oop theear; nowt ta see theear, 'less yew've cum ta waaste time sight-seein'. Yew be aw reet wheear yew be, ah'm thinkin'."

So I did not climb the few extra yards to the "Monument," but I knew upon its stones were graven other names than Williamson's. "Emily and James," "Harold and Kitty." No stone can rest upon another secure from the ravage of pen-knife and human vanity. If man cannot grave his name upon the mind or heart of his fellows he will do it upon a stone.

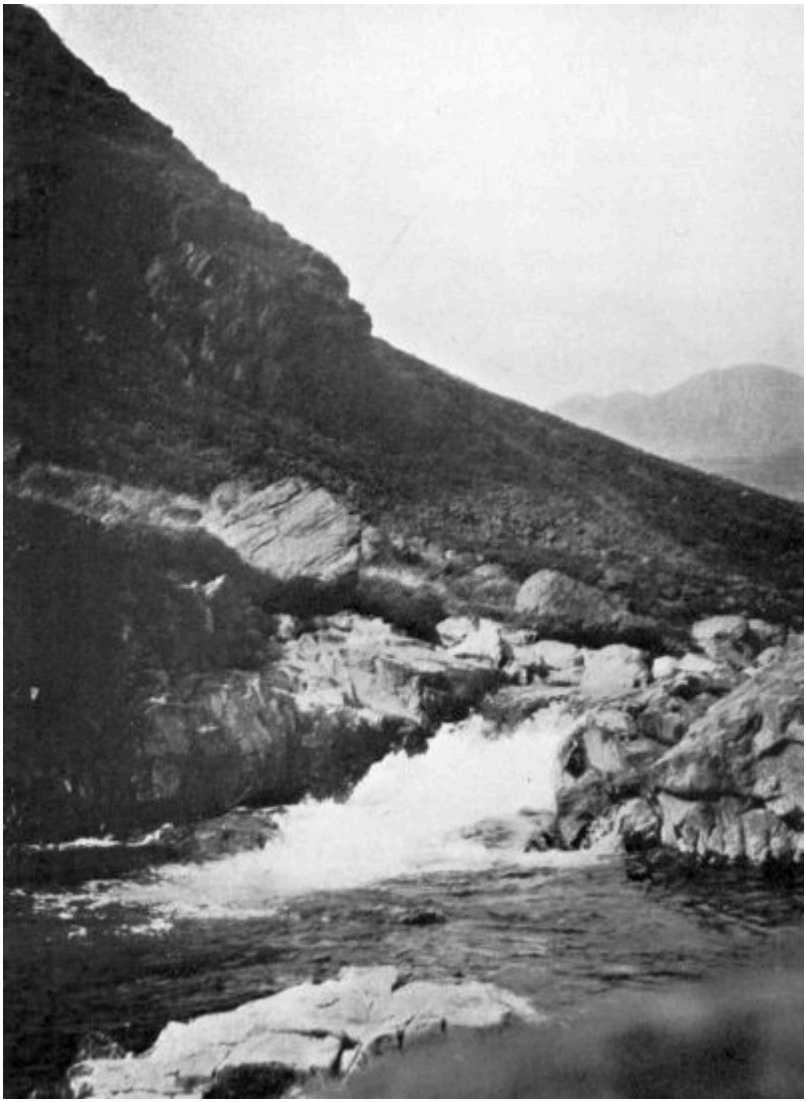
The man with the cart stayed for quite a long time looking at me. I was so embarrassed that I became sheepishly engrossed in his horse, which had remarkable turquoise eyes. I remarked upon these.

He exhibited the other side of the horse's face for me to admire. "An' tew on 'em. Ah've seen yan afoor this, but nivver tew."

If for nothing else, this day would be memorable to me as the one on which I met the horse with turquoise eyes. I watched it slithering down the steep slope with its spreading load of bracken. I was startled by a sudden shout from the man. I stood up and looked over the edge. Putting his hands to his mouth, he called lustily:

"Tha might be interested ta kna this horse brings tha butter twice a week. Tha'll see him i'marnin'."

I tried to call back: "To-night I shall sleep with two knobs of sugar under my pillow, and dream of the horse with the turquoise eyes," but the wind blew my voice back to me. . . .



THE BECK CLUB

I had been sitting alongside a beck, the free house that always tempts with its refreshment. There was plenty going on in its bar. I drank its crystal brew and looked about me. I saw a school of long-fingered trout. I clapped my hands—consternation, embarrassment, discovery—EYES! I clapped again—flap fins, wriggle tail, puff gills, press, flurry, cleave, HIDE. Was this a public-house or a youth hostel? Neither; a Beck Club—"Only Members Two Weeks and Under Admitted." I watched them for over an hour. Their habits are not unlike those practised in the clubs of Pall Mall and St. James's Street

—they passed from the smoke-room to the dining-room and returned from the dining-room to the smoke-room—*ad infinitum*.

Their dining-room was supplied with this year's new green curtains and a particularly restful lighting scheme. Their larder was cool and full of the most delectable food. They were quite indifferent to the choice fat gnats that quivered and hummed over the crystal roof, for their speckled sides bulged with delicacies.

I began to count them—a hopeless task it seemed, though I felt it to be unusual and worthy of congratulation that I reached two hundred and ninety-nine without seeming to draw breath. Then one young trout jumped out of the water—the three hundredth. I was a little surprised when it remained suspended in the air, gills disappeared, fins softened into feathers; it grew wings—and even as I marvelled at this wondrous trout it turned into a gigantic crane. Then I became aware that I too was suspended in air and was swaying to and fro; on the seventh sway I landed on the crane's back. It turned and looked at me. I saw it had turquoise eyes; suddenly its wings began flapping, and we rose into space, higher and higher. We passed two red-faced women seated on a cloud, playing poker; they were community singing, and the chorus was:

"*Eh, she's that wicked, a-flying on the Sabbath*."

I clung desperately to my crane's neck. "Where are we going?" I shouted as loud as I could, but I realised with horror that my voice was soundless.

"Take her to Long Sleddale," the red-faced women sang. My steed shook his head and sang even louder than they:

"*Next stop*
Spain-and-China,
Asia-Minor.

Spain-and-China
Asia-Minor."

I looked down at the fells floating away beneath me and realised for the first time our immense height. I felt sick and giddy; below me the stone walls were spread out like the markings on a Gordon plaid. Here and there purple patches showed like wine dropped from giants' goblets. A flock of sheep flew by, singing in toneless voice "Tarry Woo'," and one, lagging behind, chanted in a grumbling Lancashire, "I likes it pewer." The face grew

larger. I saw its eyes—pitiless, piercing, turquoise eyes, like twin harvest moons. They shone on a glittering goblin crop no man would dare sickle.

Clinging in terror to my crane for fear I might fall into goblin hands, I tried to stop him, but he flew faster and the face loomed larger. "Who are you?" I cried. Then I saw, to my relief, the corners of the face's great mouth turned up and in a kindly bass the mouth intoned: "I am a Coniston Old Man." The face vanished, and all the time my crane steed was shouting:

"*Next stop*
Spain-and-China,
Asia-Minor."

but they seemed as distant as the caverns of Kubla Khan.

My steed knew my thoughts, for, turning his head, he said: "I am Kubla Khan—and perhaps you would like to know we are on our way to Rock Bottom, where all the Second things go, where all people over forty-one line up for their second breath and one or two drop in for a second chance—while as for trade in second love—we've had to open a new department."

Then in turquoise letters screwed on to the sky I read CORNER HOUSE and at the door stood Mrs. Marks-and-Spencer.

"Please drop me anywhere but there," I cried, but the crane swooped and stopped; my feet touched sand.

"Yew must have yan o' t'latest," said Mrs. M. & S., and, opening a little blue bag, she took from it a skein of "tarry woo'," dozens of bottles of ink, a packet of forked lightning, a factory chimney, a twopenny tram ticket, and a bunch of Belisha bubbles. I protested that I didn't want the latest, but she persisted, towering over me till she was taller than the sun and moon, and, shaking her finger, chanted threateningly, "Yew-must-have-yan-o' t'latest."

I seized her bag and threw it with all my might; it landed in the midst of a herd of sheep with freckled faces: all but the ink-bottles; they crashed on a macadamised road and a hundred road drills immediately came into action, the grind of a thousand motor-brakes and the blast of ten thousand motor-horns—it was Piccadilly Circus. The ink turned into an unlighted subway. I made a dive down it, and there stood Beelzebub wiping ink off himself with a Woolworth towel and looking every inch a gentleman. He was patting a bull in a silver halter; on catching sight of me it lowered its horns and bellowed fiercely. I ran from it as hard as I could, yet for all my pace I knew my feet were not covering an inch of ground. Its horns were just about to pierce me. I turned to face it, but there was nothing but the horse with the turquoise eyes plodding along a little track drawing a burning haystack on a

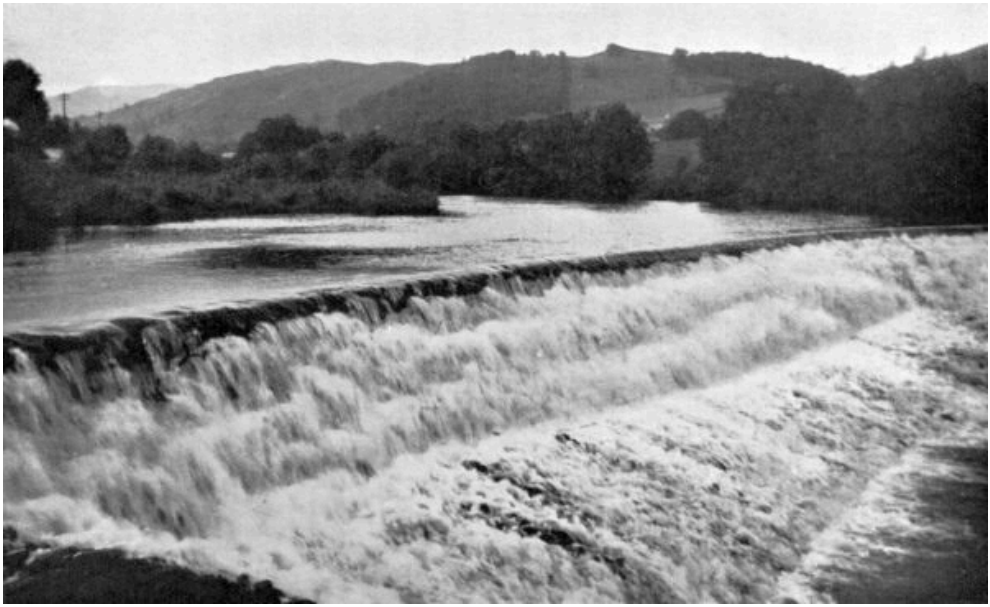
float made of gingerbreads borne on two dripping mill-wheels. I now felt ink trickling down my fingers.

"She's must find her way home in the dark," said the Devil. "It's a test. The prize is a box of Kendal mint-cake."

The Devil flicked his wet towel in my face—my dog was licking my cheek to wake me; I had rolled over and lay perilously near the water.

I scrambled quickly down the rough side of the beck through the bracken and the heather, as I wanted to reach Kentmere in daylight. There is an alertness in the first great hill which stands like a sentinel on guard at the entrance to the valley; it seems almost menacing in its watchfulness. I saw a rock—or was it a frog? I thought it might be the pet frog of the sentinel on guard, and deciding it was best to try and make friends with him I stroked his mossy coat. The frog allowed the caress; the sentinel unbent and I was admitted into the presence of the mighty.

I looked down at Kentmere, and thought of its lake, which was captured a century ago, carried up to the high hills, and there held slave to Kendal. All that is now left to remind the valley of the lake is her satin sash,[21] shot with brown, green, blue, silver, and white. It was dropped by the lake when she was borne away, and now lies untidily, creased and crinkled, its satin rustling and swishing in a restless effort to be tied again to the lake's waist. One frilled edge falls at Scrogg's Bridge and the other at Barley Bridge.



THE FRILLED EDGE OF THE LAKE'S SASH: SCROGGS FALLS

Not long ago clay was discovered in the bed of the lake which, mixed with other clays, has proved of great service to the potter. It is as though the captured lake had left behind her child, from whom may spring prosperity for the valley, but I fear that the child's foster-parents think only of its bank balance; they have no regret for that lost beauty which was part of the lake-mother.

Little traffic moves along the Kentmere valley; wheels can only enter and exit at the northern end. The craggy Nan Bield end—now a paradisial route for climber and geologist—was once a glacier bed, and in my imagination I travel back over those æons of time when man's creation was but a germ in the mind of God.

Did He think then how stupendous would be His conception of the mind of man, that it would girdle the earth in a second, encompass time and space in the twinkling of an eye, that with it man could be in any age and any place at any time, that it would command water and light and harness them to serve? When this is but of the mind of His creature, what an inconceivable imagining must be the mind of God.

My eye wandered to the silent and deserted slate-quarries, and I thought of Tom Kitching of Measand, who once owned them and who never entered them without raising his hat.

"Ah respecs un same way as ah respecs Church an' ah treat un same way," was his explanation of this unusual practice.

Kentmere valley now shelters few living dales folk, but their shadows remain. Here comes . . . Bernard Gilpin,[22] tall, spare, of aquiline countenance, the Apostle of the North. He is wearing the grey gown of a pilgrim. I see his grey hair, his determined mouth, and his hollow eyes burning with the zeal of the reformer. Even as a child this remarkable man had shown intense religious fervour, which budded and blossomed with the years and withstood pitiless persecution.

I could well believe that his few possessions had required no lock and key, for no thief would break in and steal that which was Bernard Gilpin's, for even the Devil would have seized such loot and returned it to the apostle. As I looked at him I wondered why his followers regarded him with so much respect and reverence but so little love. John Gilpin will always be remembered with more affection than Bernard Gilpin. What was it that Bernard lacked? Was it humour, or the stimulus of a dark lady with a bonnet? It is a hard fact that a man may be wholly honourable and acquire followers, but if he is without that companionable quality, humour, he will lack friends.

The wild Borderers hailed him as a prophet, but the Popish clergy regarded him as a heretic, and they considered it prudent to remove heretics and but righteous zeal to use them as faggots to feed the flame of their purpose.

As soon as Gilpin heard he was in danger of the stake, he commanded Wyn Airey of Kentmere to prepare him a long white garment, that he might "go forward to his death the more comely," and when the summons came he borrowed a horse and, with his head high, set his face towards London. But both Gilpins had horses with minds of their own, and Bernard's horse had no mind to bear him to the stake; before he had gone many miles the Apostle of the North in his white robe lay by the roadside, his leg broken. He was thus saved from a martyr's death, for while he lay helpless and groaning the news blazed through the country, "The Queen is dead! Long live the Queen!" A Protestant virgin had succeeded a Catholic vampire; England had sucked blood till she vomited, now she might stretch herself otherwise than on the rack; caps spun in the air. *Floreat Gloriana!*—Gilpin was saved.

Elizabeth would have made him a bishop, but, having no taste for office, he refused the bishopric; he was too individual to allow himself to be pigeon-holed. It was well for Gilpin that Elizabeth favoured and fostered character and courage, for she ever resented a rejection of her favours.

I lost sight of the apostle in the shadows which now spread thick and fast over the valley; instead I saw a long line of Kentmere yeomen. I tried to stay one of them.

"I didn't know you were a Kentmere man," I said.

The tall shadow chuckled. "You're not the first that's mistaken me for Gladstone and I'm well enough pleased, for we were resembled in more than face. I'm James Airey of Kentmere, and many's the time I've walked twenty-five mile from Kentmere to Appleby to vote for him, and many's the bludgeoning I've had for my pains—from the other party. There was plenty going on polling-time then; nine or ten days with meat and free beer for all; but I will tell you something of greater matter than politics. Let us bide for a bit at Low Bridge Inn."

His tall shadow moved beside me. It was all I could do to keep pace with him.

"Now what do you think about this for an inn?"

I saw old oak and pewter and smelt good cheer.

"Always generous fare and a warm welcome here. Many's the time we've crowded you out after a grand day's sport, haven't we, landlord?"

A smile spread over the landlord's jovial face, and he poured the most desirable-looking dark brown ale into a couple of tankards.

"That's a good sound when you've legged it twenty-five miles i' the day after fox, and you have had the ale funnelled into your mug through the fox's head—that's the grand way."

"T'way yew likes best, Mister Airey," said the landlord.

"But not the way I like best," I said.

"Oh, womenfolk are always a bit squeamish, though I like 'em none the less for that." He and the landlord exchanged winks.

"D'yew mind t'day, Mister Airey, yew climmed Red Screes three time arter t'fox?"

I gaped. Three times! I minded the day I climbed it once.

"Ay—there's scarce a Westmorland fox in the last eighty years I didn't view, but the best day I mind was when the hounds unkennelled a fox near Birket Houses, ran him to Windermere, doubled again by Ings over Staveley Head, through Kentmere and over into Long Sleddale, where they still had an hour's hunt round the dale and even then the fellow evaded us—good luck to him. You can't beat our foxes nor our hounds neither, they know the huntin' season as well as we do, and return to the pack of their own accord."

He saw I was puzzled.

"Perhaps you don't know the way of our hounds. When the season's over they land themselves on some farmer or other for their keep, but nothing can hold 'em from the pack at right time, no more'n it could hold me. Here's Watson coming up the road; he's whipper-in to the great Joe Bowman."

"I shall like to meet him," I said.

"I don't know that you will. I don't suppose he's ever seen the inside of a tub and he hasn't slept in a bed for eighteen years."

"Sleeps i' bracken i' summer an' a hay-moo[23] in winter," said the landlord.

James Airey called for another tankard of ale and shouted a welcome to Watson. "This lady's on her way to Mardale. Come in and have a chat with her; she's a mind to have a word with one or two of us."

Watson had a face like a russet apple, china-blue eyes, and a stock of tousled chestnut hair.

"Yew be i' gud company wi' Mister Airey," he said. "Ah'll lay he's second but t' Joe Bowman, an' here's tew 'em boath an' un's like." He raised

his mug and drank it at a draught. Then to my surprise the three men burst into song:

"*When the fire's on the hearth and good cheer abounds,*
We'll drink to Joe Bowman and the Ullswater hounds."

"Ah, 'twur me as giv 'em chaps a' Mardale idea fur song un cud sing 'bout Joe," said Watson. "Goas thissun way:

There's verra few like Joe in Heaven,
Oh, oh, oh.
They've mebbe gitten six or seben,
Oh, oh, oh.
Good spworts who gev auld Nick the slip,
Oh, oh, oh.
An' kep' 'im off wid hounds an' whip,
Oh, oh, oh."

"Let us have a hunting-song," said a voice. We all turned, and I saw a cleric, looking the embodiment of health and jollity. "If we're too old to hunt, we're not too old to sing."

"Too old be damned!" said Airey. "I'm always game for a song. Let it be 'Mardale Meet.'[24] It can't be a true hunting-song without Joe in't."

Watson began without hesitation and continued for the whole fifteen verses; there was a chorus after each, in which they all joined lustily, beating their feet and swaying their bodies in time, and nothing strange there seemed to me in this rollicking ghostly company!

"I only looked in for a moment to give you good day," said the cleric. "I must get back to Windermere to-night."

It is good to know ghosts are busy, I thought.

"Of course we are, dear lady," he answered knowing my thoughts. "That is the grand part of being a ghost. Now we can do all the things we were never able to find time for in life."

He left us the richer for his gay fellowship.

"Yew'd never think he wur an ecclesiastical," said the landlord.

"Ay, always glad to see him. Never misses a meet and knows the fells end to end," said Airey. "Though he is a parson he is a grand walker and a good sportsman. You'd never guess to look at him that he's eighty-four. But age isn't a matter of years; it's a matter of spirit. When you met me I was on

my way to meet a cousin of mine.[25] Last time we met he drove over the Garburn Pass to see me at Brockstone. He was eighty-four and I was ninety, neither of us so young as we are now," he chuckled. "I've asked another relative of mine to join us in Kentmere to-day. You might be interested to meet him; he was a bit further back than us, close on four hundred years, but neither time nor distance count with us now. George was Provost of Queen's College, Oxford—a fine-lookin' fellow, though a scholar. He never forgot Kentmere, when he left it he founded a scholarship for Westmorland youths, and in his will he left a bequest of 40*s*. a year for a monthly sermon to be preached in Kentmere chapel. It's only natural he likes to look us up now and again."

"I am glad to have met you, Mr. Airey, and I shall like to meet your cousin," I said, putting out my hand, but it grasped only the sharp edge of the rock I was sitting on after my scramble down the beck side. My eyes searched in vain for him and his company, but others passed before me—first came the kings of Mardale, then followed a long line of shepherds with their dogs and their sheep. Over the Nan Bield they vanished, ghosts all—shadows on the hills.

I spent the night in Kentmere. Next morning, the mist which had stolen over the hills like a giant white cat with soft padding paws and settled for its sleep in the valley now rose, and, stretching itself, stole upward to join the flock of other great beasts that herd in space.

I did not desire its companionship, and waited until the tip of its tail was out of sight, then I stretched myself and climbed the few hundred feet to the High Street; there are no trams, no buses, no cars, no traffic—unless it be shadow traffic. This High Street does not take such a heavy toll of life as the ceaseless wheels of the city High Street. Man may tread this finest street in Britain without fear; his feet will be grateful for the springy surface, and wherever his eye rests it will be satisfied, for all it beholds is very good.

Woe unto them that report false tidings! that the fell-country is overrun, a back number in the holiday world. Let them shout of what they know, the best hotel, the most efficient petrol station, the fine view to be seen through the windscreen, the excellence of the granite tracks and macadamised roads.

Those who would know the fells should lock the garage door and throw the key into the nearest lake, forget the guide-book, shoulder a knapsack, lodge at the farmhouse on the fell. So, and not otherwise, will the hills

unfold and reveal their beauty; "even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

I looked round again at the splendid curve of the hills before I turned off the High Street towards Mardale. I was entering it by way of the Nan Bield Pass. My dog and I were very tired when at last we looked down towards it —we still had some hours' heavy walking, and hurried forward, my anxiety to see Mardale again grew with every step—I had heard of the doom passed upon it by the sons of men. I passed a gaunt figure leaning over a fence; as he turned I saw his face was grim, dejected, deeply furrowed, and his attitude suggested lack of purpose.

"Cummin' tew haave a leuk at Mardale? T'waarn't be here much langer; we'm derelict, as gud as ghosts. Na further repairs are tew be done nowheeres." He pointed with his stick. "Theear's ma faarm, but it's na use workin' it. Ah'm awaitin' invelope wi' eviction order ivvery day."

"Who's your landlord?" I asked.

His face twisted into a wry smile.

"Theear's na landlord ta-day, an' theear's nabuddy i' partic'lar as yew can tell whaat yew be thinkin' an' feelin' o' plaace."

As I looked at his farm, at the old church with its yews, and felt the quiet peace that lay over them, here seemed a sanctuary that must remain untouched by the hand of man or the ravage of time, yet I knew its life was ebbing.

It seemed the trees uplifted supplicating arms; quivering fingers reached up from the grasses; the grey stones of the old farms made mute appeal. Surely from the old church below came a voice: "Cursed be he who moveth his neighbour's landmark"; and all the people cry "Amen." Yet again a voice piercing upward, "Save us, O Lord, from the ravage of the sons of men," and from the great circle of the quiet hills is gathered an answering voice: "Fear not, little flock . . . let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. . . ."

The farmer broke the silence that had fallen upon us. "Doan't seem like bein' tenants or owt now. Puttin' ma rint inta invelope an' sendin' tew Corporation seems aw wrang. Company—Corporation—State—thaat's what moast invelopes be t'postman brings an' taks these days. Almighty be only landlord as we can leuk tew naw, an' He seems tew ha' lost interest i' Haweswater—if He wud but cast eye ower them plans as Manchester Corporation ha' drafted He'd nivver pass un. See a' them huts? Scabs, ah call un—scabs; an' left they'll be, theear, till they rots. Ah hev heeard when native fawk i' Mexico an' sich-like wild parts strikes camp, they strikes

sweet, an' yew cudna tell as they've iwer bin camps; them savages dawn't leave a sign o' theirsen, but eddicated men allus seems tew leave theer bit o' mess behind un. Maybe it's heedless, maybe it's a sooart of conceit—like t'fewls as'll carve letters on trees."

The city's tentacles are stretching up the dale—Mardale is doomed. Manchester is thirsty; there is no sanctuary from its ravaging desire. Haweswater will be forced to serve the city's purpose, forced to destroy its own children. It is not only Measand and Mardale the city will submerge, but that individuality which was part of every man, woman, and child. In the world of to-day individuality must be submerged into mass formation. In the growing cities model dwellings rise like volumes in the library of the new rich. They stand in sets new and glaring, and robot man turns on robot music. Modern man certainly does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the loudspeaker. The corkscrew, the tin-opener, and the gramophone-needle are his necessities. We no longer draw water from the well, neither do we drink spring water, for we are taught such may contain the modern bogey bacteria; to-day our water must be filtered, distilled, doctored, and iodised, and when it is considered fit to put on the table—it is left in the bottle; we drink chemical beer instead! But Manchester wants more water, partly to drink, chiefly to wash. Haweswater can supply it, hence the hillside's new visitor, the pipe and cement man—the forerunner of the tap and switch man; and by the work of their hands Mardale will be destroyed. Creating and destroying, destroying and creating for ever and ever, amen.

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[20] The Heights.

[21] River Kent.

[22] Bernard Gilpin, 1525-1600. Born at Kentmere Hall. He had a degree in medicine, and it is possible that a certain skill in surgery increased his reputation as a holy man.

[23] Stacks of hay in a barn.

[24] See Appendix.

[25] Sir George Biddell Airey, Astronomer Royal.

CHAPTER XI

ROSES AND RUE

I HURRY on to Measand, fear knocking at my heart. What should I find there?

The shadows that come towards me from Measand are Isabella and Janie Kitching. I see these old ladies opening their gate. Isabella is saying: "Leuk wot we've gat in oor pocket." They show me a little owlet. "We're tekkin' it back tew t'barn. Gud job it fell on t'hay. Cats be aboot. T'moother took oor sleep this last tew neets, callin' fur 't."

Some weeks later they waved good-bye to me as I set my face to the city and turned my back on the great hills and their shadows. The time I spent at Measand brought me a knowledge, not only of Haweswater, but of these Haweswater Sisters. As girls they were famous for their beauty, and their father guarded them close from all the young bloods of the neighbourhood. He had "no mind ter part wi' naather on 'em." But he could not succeed in keeping the young men altogether at a distance. The vicar's son at Shap was a persistent lover. He would be over at Measand Beck while some of the other lads were thinking about it, though as often as not he had to return without seeing either of the girls. Isabella told me that, peeping from behind her curtain, she often saw her father flourish his big stick and say, "Well, whaat's thoo cum't fur?" "Ah've cum ta see Isabella," would be the reply. "Oh, well, t'exercise'll dew yew neeah harm; naw yew've cum yew can gar back agen."

I soon learned that the sisters thought and spoke of themselves as one person. I never met two people as dependent one upon the other, and so contented in that dependence. They lived together, worked together, quarrelled together, but that was "now an' agen tew relieve oor monotony." I gathered, from the stories I heard of and from them, that, as girls, Janie was the more beautiful, and Isabella the more sought after. Janie said Isabella "wur gud cumpany an' ter'ble gud at imitatin' fawk." Janie, Isabella said, "hed little patience wi' feuls, an' wur sometimes a bit sharp wi' her tongue, an' t'lads wur sceeared an' gat sheepish like."

Janie had blue twinkling eyes and looked altogether like a piece of Dresden china. Isabella was a little taller than Janie and had soft brown eyes.

I found, during my stay with them, the family album was a continual source of anecdote and entertainment. In the evening, when the peat was burning on the hearth and the lamp was alight, the album was unclasped and we three would gather round it. As we turned its leaves the past unfolded and we were immediately in the company of vibrant ghosts. They figured in a wedding group, when Janie was eighteen and Isabella sixteen. Janie's dress was black cashmere; Isabella told me, "Black wur chawsen by moother, because it wud sarve aw' occasions. Those baws down t'front wur yeller an' wonnerful takin'—Moother allowed un wi' a bit o' pother—an' theear wur white frillin' round t'hem at bottom."

"An' thaat leghorn hat wur trimmed wi' big yeller buttercups tew match baws," said Janie dreamily.

"Her dress fitted her like a gluv' an' wur wonnerfu' strikin'!" Isabella went on. "I wore Kendal Green mesen."

"Green allus set Isabella's black hair off t'best."

Isabella smiled, well content, then she sighed.

"Ah hed tew wear a black silk mantle, though. Moother chose thaat tew—but it wur wonnerfu' rich."

"Ay," said Janie, "she hed it trimmed wi' green ruches. An' she wur t'belle o' t'wedding-party. Eeh! She wur bonny!"

They both paused and gazed long at the old photograph, seeing again their youth.

"We wur med a ter'ble fuss on—an' t'bride's moother gat wild, but it passed ower."

"Ay, an' theear wur mair kissin' than theear should ha' bin!" said Isabella.

"Theear wur dancin' in evenin', an' Isabella wur belle o' thaat tew!"

"No! Janie wur."

"Weel, mebbe a bit o' bayoth," said Janie.

"Thoo needn't blush," said Isabella. "Remember thoo's weearing a laace cap noo."

Janie was chuckling to herself. "An' dust ta' remember them tew undergraduates, friends o' t'bridegroom, Isabella?"

They both indulged in rippling laughter.

"They danced wi' us ah dawn't kna hoo menny times, an' then wanted tew tek us back afterwards. We wurn't hevin' thaat. Fancy facing faather, wi' them tew dandies! We slippit away, hawpin' they waddent see, but we heddent gitten fur afoor we knew they wur followin'."

"Impidence," said Janie.

"Ay. We determined tew punish un fur bein' sa forrard," Isabella went on. "Sa we ran an' they ran. But we knew t'fells; they diddent. Fells are rough an' t'neet wur dark."

"Ay," said Janie, "an' t'lads fell ower an' ower agen; but laughin' at un med us lose breath an' they wur gainin' on us, sa we started stonin' un!"

"Ay," agreed Isabella, "an' it saard 'em reet. We beat un an' gat in an' locked t'door."

"Dust remember, Isabella, how fierce oor hearts beat?"

"Ay," said Isabella.

Janie tucked the shawl round Isabella's knees "because oor rheumatism is awful bad at times." Janie sat down again and Isabella continued:

"Of cooarse, we daresn't say owt aboot aw' this tew faather."

"Naw, an' wud yew believe it"—her head bent forward and she tapped with her stick—"next day Mr. Noble cem ower frae Kentmer' tew dinner an' let it aw' oot. . . ." She pointed with her thin wrinkled finger. "Thaat's Mr. Noble; he wur well respected."

I saw a man in a broad hat, with mutton-chop whiskers and broadcloth, standing by a velvet curtain.

Looped about a massy pillar,
And the corner of a table
Of a rose-wood dining-table.
He would hold a scroll of something,
Hold it firmly in his left hand.
He would contemplate the distance
With a look of pensive meaning
As of ducks that die in tempests.
Grand, heroic, was the notion,
But the picture failed entirely
Failed because he moved a little,
Moved because he couldn't help it.[26]

"Ay," said Janie, "an' nowt wud stop Mr. Noble. Dust mind, Isabella, how we kicked him under ta-able? He kep on sayin', 'Wheear's dog?'"

Janie sighed. "Them wur excitin' days!"

"Ay," said Isabella, and both looked into the fire.

I knew they were seeing more pictures there. There was a long pause, and Isabella sighed and then bent towards me.

"We've bin wonnerin' if yew knew o' real good fa-ace cream an' a nice sooap fur t'complexion?" she whispered. "We be ga-in' tew start tekking a bit o' pains wi' oorsen."

"She'll dee weshing hersen!" said Janie. "Spends at least tew 'oors at neet afoor she gaas tew bed, an' goodness kna's whaat 'oor i' marning she rises tew be at it agen."

Isabella smiled. "Ay, it tak's a deal o' time kippin' clean—outside fur man, inside fur God."

Even as old ladies they had the most beautiful complexions I have ever seen, and I told them so. They nodded and gave their tinkling laugh. "T'lads used tew say thaat, but faather wud say it wur Measand Beck watter!"

"Ay, we diddent lack t'lads cooartin', but they cuddent wed tew on us an' yan cuddent be wed wi'oot t'ither. So we cum tew be as yew see, jist auld maids," said Isabella.

"But we needn't ha' bin, if we heddent wanted!" added Janie quickly.

"Must be early mated i' Westmorland or nat at aw," said Isabella emphatically. "Ah wur pretty sure when we passed seventeen we wur in fur bein' auld maids."

"Thaat's moother," said Isabella, pointing to one of the loveliest girls I have ever seen. Both their heads were now over the album.

The old photograph showed a gay passionate, audacious girl, but there was a something which told that she was circumspect and right.

"Bain't she bonny?" said Janie. "An' thaat dawn't shaw haalf o' whaat she wur. She hed violet eyes even when she wur oor age, shinin' black hair, dimples, an' a mouth thaat wur allus laughin'."

"Thaat's faather."

I saw a tall, slim, well-knit man, clean-shaven, with chin whiskers. He was dressed in a tweed suit, one hand holding a gun and the other resting on his dog. "Tom Kitching and Spot" was written underneath it.

"He wur varra han'some, wur faather. He hed auburn hair an' t'brownest ees yew ivver see. Them ees cud see through yew," Janie told me.

"He wur afraid someyan else wud git moother, sa he married her when she wur but fifteen. She wur married i' a shooart frock an' a pinafor' an' clogs, an' t'ceremony wur performed by t'Vicar o' Kentmer'. Theear he be—he leuks vurra praper-like theear—but he was'na aw parson, I can tell 'ee. He wur faather's best friend an' moother's brother-i'-law, an', reet or wrang, he helped un tew kip t'weddin' secret ower twelve months. Moother cem yam arter she wur wed, an' nabuddy knew owt aboot it. She just went on as

if t'weddin' wur nowt. See thaat lile china tea-set i' t'cabinet? She won thaat playin' marbles wi' t'village children arter she wur wed. Ay, she wur t'champion marble player," said Janie.

"Faather wur crazy aboot her, an' he cuddent kep away, an' yan day he called oop at her, when she was sittin' in t'apple-tree, 'Thoo shuddent clim' trees when yew be wife.' Thaat's hoo it aw' cem oot; theear's allus saebuddy listenin'; but faather wur weel enuff pleased, an' they bayoth cem tew settle here i' Measand arter that."

"An' thaat's how we cum tew be here," said Isabella.

We turned over.

"Thaat's moother agen," said Janie.

It was the same face, but mellowed—a face that had borne responsibility easily and from whom life had taken little and given much; it was a gracious, capable face. She was sitting looking up at her husband, who was standing with his hand on the back of her chair. I feel sure that the pose had not pleased the cameraman of that day, who invariably wanted the full face of all sitters.

"Rek'lect haytime at Measand, when a carriage an' pair drawve oop, an' thaat loud-voiced straanger strayed inta oor kitchen?"

"Ay, an' his wife an' tew bairns an' aw."

"They exed moother wheer they cud git tea. Moother told him thaat t'Dunn Bull wur faarther oop t'valley. Then, nivver bein' able tew resist children, an' seein' un leukin' ter'ble tired an' thirsty—fur it wur a varra hot day—moother said, 'Yew'd best stop here, if yew dawn't mind hevin' it i' t'kitchen. Theere's neeah time tew git it yew i' t'parlour, becos t'men cum in aboot noo and we caan't kip 'em waitin'. The gentleman, or sa I suppose he called hissen, turned tew his wife an' exed her if she minded t'kitchen fur yance! She said she thowt it wud be an amusin' experience. . . . We allus hed twa ta-ables i' kitchen, yan fur family an' other fur sarvants; she gev un tea at ooar ta-able—a real gud Westmorland tea, yew kna—ham an' eggs an pasty—an' they enjoyed it, ah can tell 'ee. But yew should ha' sin moother's fa-ace when they exed hoo mich it wur! 'We cuddent think a chargin' owt,' Moother said; 'yew be varra welcome tew ennythin' we hed.' At that he gat verra red i' fa-ace. 'Weel, me gud woman,' he said, 'I'm sure it's verra unexpected, but yew woan't find me ungrateful. If either o' yew dowters ivver waant tew ga' i' sarvice, we shall be delighted tew hev un. Moother thanked un varra polite, though we kna she war blazin', an' said if either o' her dowters ivver waanted sarvice, she'd rayther tha went tew a gintleman's family."

As I looked at her face I wondered how any man could have repaid her hospitality with condescension.

We turned over another page.

"Thaat's cousin Tom, fra Kentmer'," said Janie; "he hed tew stoop his heed tew cum int' kitchen door."

"He's attractive," I said.

"Yes, he wur aw' reet; not a girl round aboot but what wur i' love wi' 'im. He wur full o' laughter an' monkey-tricks."

I saw a man who looked rather like Ronald Colman, balanced precariously, one leg on a rock, the other on the studio carpet. He had the bad taste to be photographed with a pipe. Janie looked at it and said:

"Ay, he wur a fine feller, as fine as Lord Kitchener, but t'pipe spoils picture. He fell i' love wi' a fifteen-'eear-auld girl."

I asked them to tell me more about Tom.

"Weel, her parents wur rich an' diddent fancy Tom, she wur sent t'boarding-school. Nabuddy i' district wur told wheear't wur, but Tom wur a praper lover. He left his faarm, bought a pack, an' peddled buttons an' laces length an' breadth o' district. At last he found lass."

"She wa' leukin' oot o' a windy i' Penrith," broke in Janie.

"I kna, I kna, I hevn't furgitten," said Isabella. "He writ a nawt an' wrapped un round a stone an' threw it tew her; nawt said he would cum oop fur her thaat neet."

"He wasna wicked exactly, but raather bold," said Janie.

"He wur as gud as his word, an' climmed oop pipe."

"Neeah, it wur ivy," interrupted Janie. "Ah remember partic'lar he said ivy."

"Weel, ah think it wur mair likely pipe, but, ennyway, he carried her doon, an' tuk her off tew Gretna Green, wheear tha gat married. An' they lived happily ivver arter, an' Tom won t'heart o' his faather-i'-law, who left him a wealthy man."

"I think it's a grand story," I said.

"It's na use shutting beuk Isabella! Yew've gat ta cum tew't," said Janie, turning over the page. I saw a picture, under which was written:

"Elijah and Nathaniel Rawlinson."

Two men stood side by side, both short, dark, and stocky, shaggy eyebrows and hawk-like eyes. There was determination on both their faces. The hand

of one was lying on a case of cups, obviously his possession, and the other holding a magnificent pike. They were both ugly, but they had strong and kindly faces.

"Who are they?" I asked.

"They lived at Bampton," said Isabella, shutting the book and fastening the clasp.

"Only Li," said Janie. "Nathaniel's dead. Li's bin in luv wi' Isabella sin' she wur at school."

"Weel, ah'm not ga-in' tew taalk o' him!"

I had to wait for the rare occasion when I had Janie to myself before I heard more about him.

"Wud yew believe it," she said. "He cums reg'lar ivvery Frida' fur us t' buy honey, though he's neeah need o' t'brass, fur he lives i' a fine pla-ace, wi' ivver sa menny bedrooms, cabinet wi' china, inlaid ta-able i' parlour, an' ivverythin' yew cud wish, an' he kips a gud housekeeper tew!"

Friday came, and I was standing with Janie and Isabella at the gate when suddenly Isabella rushed from us and ran into the house with amazing agility.

"That'll be Elijah," said Janie; "she can see him afoor ah can. Now ah'll hev tew tell a lot o' lies t'get rid o' him. It doan't matter wheear she is, she hides—behint t'hedge or ennywheears. Ah've sin her jump ower a wa' or clim' a tree—t' git clear o' him."

A lover who could be so importunate that he reduced an old lady of over seventy to climbing trees and jumping walls roused my immediate interest.

"He woan't nawtice yew," said Janie. "His ees only hawld yan object, an' thaat's Isabella!"

"Ah've cum wi' ma honey, an' ah've browt me cousin. He's a Professor frae Oxford o' some sart o' t'ither."

Janie went indoors to get the money. "She must have been a good-looking woman in her young days, Elijah!" said the Professor.

"Ah!" said Elijah, "but yew shud see t'ither un. She's ma fancy. Ay man she wur bonny—an' still is!" he added quickly; "she gat an ee in her heed as wud dra' a duck off a pond!"

I am sure Elijah must have heard the whispers of the sisters through the locked dairy door, but he refused to take the hint, and Janie returned with the money and some of her elderberry wine. Elijah asked if they still had their store of parsnip and burnet wine.

"Ay," said Janie, "it's gud fur anither twelve months, if t'likes o' yew didna cum sa frequent."

"Weel, yew can expec' me yance a week reg'lar fur sartin," responded Elijah firmly.

There was a great deal of hanging about and much farm talk, as to how the hay was doing and the price of sheep and how three storks had flown over that day and were even now eating the grain with the hens at the barn door. Janie was not so hospitable as she might have been, thinking of poor Isabella in the dairy. Finally, with an air of sure dismissal, she said:

"Weel, ah must be gittin' on wi' things. Gud day tew yew bayoth, an' mind yew hev a leuk a' them storks on yew way. It'll be summat fur yew're cousin ta taalk aboot when he gits back tew Oxford."

"It's Miss Kitching I shall be talking about when I get back to Oxford," said the cousin gallantly.

As Elijah and his Professor went down the lane Janie turned to me indignantly. "Thaat's town taalk fur yew—impidence!" But she was well pleased. I have yet to meet the woman who is too old to appreciate a compliment.

"Thaat's hoo Isabella allus runs away an' leaves ma tew dew dirty work fur un, but it's ter'ble way he runs arter us!"

Isabella popped her lace-capped head round the dairy door. "Be he gone?"

"Yes, an' small thanks tew 'ee! Ah'm allus gettin' rid o' yew men fur yew."

Isabella laughed complacently. "Weel, let's have Elijah's honey fur tea," she said.

"Yew desarve earache, an' yew've spoilt yew afterneean frock sittin' on t'flour barrel," said Janie.

Next day Isabella and I were shopping in Bampton, when suddenly round a corner came Elijah. There was no escape for Isabella this time, and there we stood for at least fifteen minutes while he talked, with his eyes riveted upon Isabella. Nothing else existed for him.

"Weel, Isabella, hoo are yew?"

"Ah'm weel, thank yew, but it's bad fur me rheumatism standin' aboot though," she said, trying to pull her hand away, but Elijah ignored the hint.

"Hev yew hed a visit frae Lloyd George's young man?"

"No, we've hed nabuddy—and ah must be sayin' gud-bye tew yew, Li. Ah'll be seein' yew mebbe next week."

She tried to edge past him, but his burly form blocked the way.

"Ah must give yew news first, then yew can tell Janie."

Isabella stood resignedly, realising that for the moment there was no escape.

"Tew fellers cem t' oor hoose t'ither daay, Deborah shawed un in, an' yan feller sed, taalkin' fine like, 'Sorry tew trouble yew, Maister Rawlinson, but we'm cum tew leuk ower hoose.' Ah ses tew him, 'Ma hoose, yew kna', isna on shaw.' 'Maister Rawlinson,' he ses tew me, 'we'm tew see through ivvery hoose.' I ses, 'Why?' 'It's a scheme o' Lloyd George,' he ses, 'tew see if yew' ower-sleeping.'[27] So ah ses tew him, 'Weel, we hev seben or eight bedrooms, an' nabbut Deborah an' me tew fill un, if thaat's ower-sleeping.' 'Sorry,' he ses, still grand-like, 'but ah must see fur missen, an' report on't.' Ah wasna ga-in tew shaw him round; ah'm nabuddy's sarvant. So ah ses tew Deborah, 'Leave yew ba-akin', Deborah, an' shaw him roond t'hoose.' So oop he gaes, an' while they wur oopsteears—ah wur thaat mad ah weshed mesen an' put on ma better-ma-jacket, an' ah sat doon i' ma big arm-cheear—brant oop—till tha cum doon. 'Well, we'm seen aw' we want tew see, Maister Rawlinson,' he said, 'an' it's quite aw' reet.' 'Oh, is it?' Ah said. 'Are yew sewer yew mezzered ivverthin'?' 'Oh, yes,' he said. 'Are yew sewer yew wadna like tew mezzar Deborah an' aw'?' ah said. He gev ma seck a leuk. He kna wot ah wur thinkin' o' him. Ah tell yew wot, Isabella, thaay'll cum yan o' these days an' drar yew'r hassel teeth."[28]

Walking home, I found that Isabella was unusually silent. I knew that she was thinking about Elijah. I also guessed that Elijah's devotion lent spice to her life: and I realised that Janie had cause for anxiety. I felt that if they could have lived another twenty years, he would have won her. I felt that even now she belonged to him, though she refused to acknowledge it even to herself; but, unlike Tom Martindale, Elijah was too blind to climb up the ivy and take that which was his.

When we arrived home from the excitement of Elijah and shopping at Bampton, we sat down to one of the teas that were responsible for my putting on a stone while I stayed at Measand Beck—oatcake, home-made bread, parkin, duffy, gingerbread, jams! When I told the sisters that my London tea consisted of one cup of weak tea and a biscuit, they both raised their hands in astonishment, saying one to the other, "Naw wonder she leuked pinched an' ordinary when she first cem to Measand."

The shadows of yesterday have faded. It is to-day; I am again on my way to Measand. I hardly dare look up the track towards the gate because of that which I may not see. Shall I find the sisters standing at their gate, a little

greyer, a little more bent, but with the same welcome, or will there only be shadows?—and an agent's board, "TO BE LET, OR SOLD"?

There is no one at the gate, but there is no board. I go very slowly up the path to the door, and through the window I see Isabella sitting very upright in her high chair by the fire—Isabella alone! Her face looks like a wax flower. I know at once that Janie is dead. I know also that she will not wish me to speak of her grief or to recognise her loneliness. She enquires about my journey, how I came, how I am getting back, and sees that a meal is prepared at once for my refreshment. I notice that she is short of breath; she holds her side and wheezes a little. I feel impotent—I know she wishes to talk of Janie, but cannot bring herself to begin.

A long silence falls between us. It is a relief to hear her soft voice. It falls as gently as snow into a chasm.

"She's left me arter aw—this 'eear we bawth fell ill tagither, in same room. Bawth on us lay deein', sa t'doctor said. Janie decided she must make her will, an' t'lawyer wur sent fur, an', when he arrived, ah decided ah'd best mak mine. Janie left aw her estate tew me an' ah left aw mine tew Janie. Yan neet ah wur carried awa frae her inta t'next room. It wur neeah use sayin' 'Nay.' Ah knew Janie wur nigh upon seein' ither pastur's than Measand. Then ah heeard nurse shawin' t'doctor oot o' dooar an' ah judged ah cud jist manage tew reach Janie's dooar afoor nurse cem back agen. Ah stood at t'dooar an' leuked at her." She pauses and looks into the fire. "Ah can think o' nowt ah had ivver seen which wur so white. There wur a fiery red patch on ayther cheek-bone, which seemed tew burn ma. Ah said tew her, 'Are yew enny better, Janie?' but Janie shook her head. Ah cud scarcely hear wot she said, but ah med oot 'Gud-bye, Isabella, yew'd best leeuv ma'; an' then, in a varra lile whisper, 'Ah must dew this thing by missen.' When they cem ter tell ma she wur dead, ah felt"—then she hesitated for a word —"varra—disappointed that Janie should dee wi'oot ma. Ah dawn't kna hoo ivver she cem tew do seck a thing." There is a long pause.

"It wur her shawl she thowt on last, they towld ma. She thowt ah wur beside her, an' she said, 'Isabella, be sure yew tek caare o' oor Scotch shawl. Shek it weel an' lay it oot i' sun. Kip it free frae moth'; an' ah've done wot she said. It's a gran' shawl." Her lip trembles. "Ah'd like tew shaw it yew. We'd like yew tew see't."

I cannot prevent her, though I know it means going upstairs. She rises with some difficulty from her chair; she would resent any offer to help her, so I sit and wait. I hear her going slowly upstairs, one step at a time, then I hear the drawer opening.

I am left thinking—thinking of the tragedy of parting, the grotesque of death. How amazing that the last clutching of the conscious mind should be towards Scotch shawls and the like when we are about to pass from all things tangible. I believe it to be true that at the moment of death no great thoughts pour from our minds; we do not contemplate high things, we do not create noble phrases—and this is surely because we can no longer control our mind. Death spreads slowly over us—paralysing, hypnotising, stupefying—so we ask feebly that our Scotch shawl shall be carefully tended, though we are passing "where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through and steal."

Isabella returns with the shawl. It is beautiful, some four yards long and three wide, orange and black with a purple thread running through it; it has a sheen of velvet and is as soft as silk, though it is of wool; I have never seen its like. She lays it gently on Janie's chair.

"Hates bein' oop i' thaat drawer. Likes fire. We'll leeuv it oot fur a bit on oor cheear." She lays it singly. "We nivver cud abide it double, even i' winter." She lays it across the arm of the rocking-chair with care and tenderness, as if Janie were there.

"Ah will nivver believe but she's aboot sumwheears, an' t'most like plaace is oor cheear."

She stands for a moment, then sits down again in her own chair. We both sit looking at the orange plaid shawl with the purple sheen, that would outlive both of us. She continues, as though she had never gone to get the shawl:

"Ah nivver saw her agen after thaat time till she lay in her coffin—beautiful, like when she wur a girl. She leuked just like bride she shud ha' been."

Her head sinks a little lower and she seems to shrivel under the burden of her grief. Now she continues in a dull level tone: "It seemed a ter'ble waste tew shut oop ennythin' leukin' like thaat i' box, though it wur o' best Measand oak. We saw tew thaat. Seben o' oor fawlk carried her doon t'fellside. It be only way they can carry us doon—not thaat we'd ha' bin tekken any ither way if we cud——" There is a long pause. "I watched Janie oot o' view."

She sits up a little straighter in the chair, and grips the arms tighter.

"But they med a ter'ble mistaak puttin' seventy-eight on her coffin. She cuddent ha' bin ennythin' near thaat. Why, she wur only tew 'eear arlder than me. They must ha' put doon t'first thing they thowt on."

I have a feeling that when Isabella is laid beside Janie in the shade of the yews, Mardale will be submerged—as, in the flood of years, we must all be submerged. Living memory can endure but three generations. When Isabella lies under the yews, who will know Elijah Rawlinson?

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[26] Lewis Carroll.

[27] Overcrowded.

[28] Wisdom teeth.

CHAPTER XII

A TROLL

I SPENT a lazy afternoon at Grange, with great enjoyment after strenuous days on the fells. It's a grand place for a loll, and both body and mind need one now and then, though there is plenty of rough walking and climbing to be had, if you want it, just outside Grange, on the Newby Bridge Road. The fell here was covered with trees a few years ago; now I find they are all cut down. I think I like better its bare ruggedness. There are still many rare birds and flowers in these rocks,[29] which surprised me, as they now have but little shelter.

I had often heard of Grange and its miles of sand—the bed of four rivers. I had heard much of the danger of these sands, and now I saw them stretching their brown carpet away into the distance. They looked smooth, hard, and safe, but there are many places where the water eats its way unseen and the unwary may easily be engulfed. There is a guide who is compelled to lead you over the sands if you desire it. I believe his yearly salary is £40 and a house. In the old days men seldom made their way from Cartmel to Lancaster unless led by a guide; and it was his business to test these sands each day before leading over the traveller. These guides were paid, not by the traveller, but by the Abbot of Cartmel.

When time and tide allowed, the stage coach also crossed the sands, for this route was vastly quicker than taking the road round the bay. Parents were often baffled by these sands, and lovers lived to bless or curse them, for eloping couples, making for Gretna Green,[30] took this route if the tide favoured, while their pursuers, probably finding the sands covered, would have to spend some hours encircling the bay, by which time the marriage ceremony would be over and the lovers enabled to live happily ever after—or not, as temperament allowed.

These sands sometimes laid a carpet of romance for their visitors, but sometimes it was their sport to wrap them in a shroud, for the churchyard at Cartmel contains graves of over a hundred people who lost their lives in crossing them. In the bay there is a small island with the ruins of a church, in which there was stationed a holy man whose duty it was in monastic times to pray for the safety of those who travelled across the sands.

There is no doubt that hereabouts must have been exciting and adventurous living, for there were not only the hazardous sands, but dangers from the high seas and the ceaseless harrying from the Borderers which devastated the countryside. The harrying was responsible for the peel tower[31] across the bay at Wraysholme. Facing Holme Island is the cliff originally called Atterpile (The Spider's Heap). I read that here, in the fourteenth century, rose one of the first manor houses built in the north—with it rose the desire for ease. For much good and ill is that first manor house responsible.

Grange suggested to me a modern well-kept villa in Suburbia. It is healthy, clean, bright, respectable, and well ordered. There is a spring here, and when Grange went dry it supplied it all with water, but save for using it when the town is thirsty it appears to be neglected. I rather wonder why the local authorities do not try to discover all its curative properties; it is certainly good for eyes, it may also be good for other things. Now the residents neglect it, and the ducks in the park gardens paddle in it, growing fat and healthy. Town Councillors, look at your ducks and consider your spring, foster it, use it! To exploit the spring as a twin attraction with the bathing-pool might pay.

Grange has laid out gay attractions for its visitors—delightful gardens and a swimming-pool. Outside the barrier of this swimming-pool I heard a man say to his companion: "You can't look at anything in this district unless you pay!" I very nearly called aloud, "Lift up your eyes unto the hills!" but, having eyes, they saw not.

Grange is infinitely more attractive than the usual English seaside place. I liked the trees and gardens that border the little promenade. In these gardens the visitor can play bowls, tennis, and golf. I saw indifferent players enjoying themselves—as only indifferent players can.

A particular type of visitor haunts each holiday resort. The visitor to Grange is short and thick-set, but the place spares us certain lamentable excrescences which habitually haunt the seaside. I saw no heated young women looking like trousered lobsters, and most of the youth here appeared still to retain the outward semblance of their own particular sex. Many people, when they take their holidays, remind me of a dog chasing his own tail, they exert themselves a great deal and accomplish nothing. Fruitless tail-chasings do not exist in this district; those who work have a definite job

and those who play have a definite sport. Here the swimming-pool and the sands supply the sport, with an occasional dash at tennis and bowls.

Grange will be remembered by me not so much for its vast sands as for the troll I met there. I was sunning myself on the seat at the end of the little promenade when she walked slowly past me. Her black eyes had a rapier-like dart—they pierced. She was hideous, short, thick-set. She had a pale, yellowish face, and around it grew a black growth of hair like a Newgate frill. She could easily have shaved it, but probably on some lonely hillside this was the vogue. She wore a hideous mustard-coloured garment which had no particular shape. She had large hands and carried a stick. I knew at once that here was a troll. Her face was cruel and powerful. She possessed a certain dignity. I felt sure she was a troll of repute.

Heaven knows what had brought her down from her hills. I should never have seen her save that she stayed a short time looking out to sea over those miles of amazing sand where hundreds of gulls were sporting themselves. I should never have known her for what she was had she not turned and looked at me for a few moments; those moments seemed hours, her eyes fastened upon me with steel rivets. My head began to swim and swell; I felt it was only a matter of seconds before she would possess my soul, yet I was helpless to prevent it. My dog growled and lowered his tail. She took a step towards me, and he gave vent to a defiant snarl; leaping on to my lap he faced the troll, his little teeth gleaming. The troll's face relaxed; I could not say that she smiled, but something in the nature of amusement seized her, then her eyes left me and she passed on. I never saw her again, but I am quite sure that she is even now taking part in some evil rite in the dark shadows of the wild hills.

Perhaps it was the troll which carried my thoughts back five hundred years, when the hills of the Lake District were actual barriers to all the country outside it, for she had also known these days. Perhaps it was she who made me look towards Humphrey Head,[32] where, five hundred years ago, the last wolf was killed, the king having set a price on its head. The story goes that Sir Edward Harrington swore to give his daughter's hand and half his lands to him who would kill the wolf.

Many ballads have been written of this chase. The wolf led over Kirkhead, Holker, Newby Bridge, through the Leven, down glen and over hill, till he found short shelter in the rocks on Coniston Old Man; then away again to Esthwaite and Windermere; then across the lake to Gummers How and on to

Witherslack,
Where Winster's Waters range,
And thence to shingley Aggerslack,
And sand-surveying Grange,

where he cast himself over Humphrey Head, and on the shingle below died, the last English wolf.

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[29] There is a Quaker burial-ground on the Heights of Cartmel Fell and another at Hawkshead. This was largely the Quaker country.

[30] Stanley Weyman opens his novel, *Starvecrow Farm*, which has a local setting, with an elopement across the sands.

[31] This part of the country is full of Scandinavian words, and "peel" is one of them. There are other peel towers at Arnside and Hazelsack.

[32] The descent is so steep that rabbits running down lose foothold and lie broken-necked at the base.

CHAPTER XIII

THE LAKE WITH THE FLOOR OF GOLD

I SHOULD like to have known Windermere when it was a sprawling village clutching the fellside; then it was known as Birthwaite, and its lake as Winandermere; but now there is no time for the employment of two names if one will serve; leisured yesterday has had to give place to rushing to-day; hustle was admitted to the valley with its change of name and has remained a well-paying guest. Windermere to-day is full of big hotels and luxurious residences, and its water-front is swept by a prosperous trade wind.

Alas for Birthwaite and its Lake Winandermere! The tourist army has passed through it, despoiled, ravaged, vivisected, leaving it violated. It has an excellent train service, good bus connection, plenty of taxis, and a large landing-stage; but fell-lovers pass on with a bare show of interest, regarding it mainly as a convenient entrance and exit. For many years Windermere meant little more to me than station, bus, hotel, landing-stage. I, too, arrived at its station, shouldered my knapsack, and passed on. Windermere's excellent servants screen the beauty of its lake, its fellside, and the heart of its friendly people from the heedless visitor.

WINDERMERE IN ROUGH WEATHER

I have often been for a short sail on this lake, but I now determined to know it more intimately. It was a grey still day and the lake lay like a pearl in a platinum setting. No one more truly appreciated the effect of such a day than Dorothy Wordsworth when she wrote, "It calls home the heart to quietness." I prefer the fell and the lake in grey weather, though grey is not their general wear. The fell, hedgerow, and lakeside would not yield the mass of flowers they do if there were not plenty of sun. Whether rain, storm, or shine, I have always found here a renewal of vitality. I once walked for three weeks on these fells in wet weather and experienced continual exhilaration, and never slept better. On this grey day the great hills with their trickling streams gleamed like the inside of giant oyster-shells. Above Ambleside they towered, majestic, aloof, mysterious, Wansfell, Red Screes, High Street, Fairfield, Nab Scar, Loughrigg, the Langdales, Bowfell, Wetherlam, Wrynose Pass, Crinkle Craggs, Ill Bell, and Coniston Old Man; but even as I lifted my eyes to the hills they were drawn back to the ruffled lake's breast—an approaching steamer with the jangling notes of an indifferent jazz band—and the beauty and peace of the lake were destroyed. The waters do not submit willingly to this shameful indignity; angry and humiliated, they protest impotently. It is one thing to be torn asunder and lashed to splendid fury, driven this way and that, riven and reunited, roused

and swept by the great storms that beat relentlessly over their surface, but another thing to be churned up by filthy steamers, to have orange peel, sandwich papers, and empty bottles thrown upon their face. . . . These crowded pleasure-steamers look like so many hedgehogs crawling along the water; it seems incredible that this swarm of humanity—beating its feet, waving its arms, sweating freely, and shrieking with delight—should actually find enjoyment in being packed so close that none can sit or even turn. This form of amusement would be torture to me, but one man's meat is another man's poison. Christmas for us is Good Friday for the turkey.

The steamer's wash almost swamped my small craft as its noisy passage swamped the silence.

"Them sart of fawlks allus have t'shout an' scream, 'an when ah'm among um ah does likewise," said my boatman, known locally as Gloomy John. I had reluctantly to agree with him that I should probably do the same; there is a contagious excitement about a crowd, a germ which infects the reluctant and makes of the part a whole. "Mind, ah'm not saying ah like them sart of fawlk, fur they spile t'plaace. They caarn't seem ever ta feel they'm enjoyin' theer sen wi' out makin' a din. Ah mind when t'laak wur froze, it might as well a' bin streets of Lunnon wi' noise o' sich fawlk an' of traffic tew."

"When was the last time the lake was frozen?"

"Ah have seen't a gud few; it's nowt unusual fur laaks ta be froze. Rydal is in general first, but when Windermere laak is froze then ivvery seat i' Lake Express be full, visitors pour fra station tew laak an' a fine trade be done wi' sledge drives on ice at a shillun a time. Forty 'eears ago, when t'laak were froze ower, ice wur twelve inch thick; wagon loads o' coal wur carted across ta save laang journey round t'laak. Then it wur froze fur ten or twelve week, an' theear wur carriages an' pairs drove fra end t'end, an' as much horse traffic on laak as on rooad. When thaw cum, sound of crackin' ice wur like machine guns firin'; it cud be heeard fur miles, whilst noise made by ice jammin' agen buttresses of bridges an' strikin' other things it cum across on way t'sea wur fearsome ta hear. Theear wur menny a fine salmon met death knockin' agen ice-blocks, an' them fish wur a sore temptation fur likes of us, but we kna'd thaat dead or alive, they meant t'lock-oop, sa we laaved 'un be."

I remarked on the multitude of mountain streams that poured into the lake.

"Ay, that's why Windermere laak be partic'lar fresh an' why fawlks likes livin' on banks. It be that fresh an' changefu' it runs sea mighty close. Ah suppose yew kna it's ten an' haalf mile laang—some say laanger. It be yan

an' quarter mile across at widest an' tew hunnard an' nineteen foot deep i' places—a nasty drop fur a man if he falls owerboard, an' if he be drownded he doan't kna what man be ga-in' ta sit ower him at inquest."

He went on to explain that if a man is dead when he is brought ashore, the enquiry is conducted by the Westmorland coroner, because the bed of the lake is in Westmorland; but if there is so much as a heart-beat left in him when he is brought to the Lancashire foreshore, then the Lancashire coroner presides.

I told him that I had heard it said that the people of Windermere and Ambleside were sometimes careless in allowing pieces of wood to drift in the lake, and that one of these was responsible for Segrave's death. He was very indignant at this criticism.

"Yew can tak' it fra me that driftin' wood hed nowt tew dew wi' Segrave's death." He told me a repair was found necessary to the speedboat which, to make satisfactorily, would have delayed Segrave's attempt to break the record by a day and a half; that he would not hear of this and said a quicker way must be found. "'A day an' a haalf—I mun be somewheres else by thaat time'—thaat's what he said to us'n who wur standin' by him i' yaard. An' sumwheears else he wur. Better be five minits laate than nivver ta git theear at a', that's my advice t'fawlks, an' ah told Segrave as much, but he only laughed an' said his success depended on bein' five minits early. Maybe he wud raather dee quick than cum ta hobblin' wi' a stick; it wud be a bitter thing fur sich as he tew become a 'looker-on.'"

I asked him to tell me what he knew of the accident.

"Ah'm na engineer an' ah'm thinkin' naathur be thoo, but ah can tell thoo pretty near."

It seemed a repair was necessary to the step; three holes were drilled, two on the port side and one on the starboard, the repair carried out, and brass plates screwed over the holes, but such meagre protection could not stand the strain of a hundred and twenty miles an hour—a speed that takes shavings off wood. The step was ripped off and Segrave and his mechanic lost their lives.

"There's sum as said it wur a tragedy, but ah'm na sa sure he'd think sa; them as be wary an' canny nivver dew nowt as be worth ennythin'; none o' they big fawlk tak heed o' 'safety first' notices. A fine sportsman allus tak's a chance; he's nivver med o' caution."

I landed first at Belle Isle. I have always been attracted by its unique round house, locally called the Tea-Caddy. It rivals any modern labour-saving building in its absence of dusty corners. It has character and experience, yet I was told that its owners are often disgruntled because of the glare of publicity that surrounds them; it seems they find the lake a gossipy neighbour, everything and everybody that comes to and fro is marked, talked of, discussed, and weighed up for good or ill—the lake checks their movements relentlessly. Yet in spite of the lake's keen eye many are said to have found secure hiding there. "Ah, but nabuddy nivver played hide-and-seek sa successful as King Charles, an' some fawks say as he played it fine round Belle Isle," said John when we were talking about the house. "Escapin' sa continual, he must ha' found it difficult ta beleev when he wur caught final by death.

"Ah! Belle Isle wasna allus sa peaceful as it be tew-day. They'm a queer mixtur' what lived hereabouts. Bishop Watson o' Calgarth wur yan o' them as we caan't furgit; he wud pair well wi' Importunate Widow i' Book. He varra near hed hissen med Archbishop o' York, 'cos he kep' askin' continual. He wud ha' browt it off, but Archbishop wur tougher than expected an' it tuk sumbuddy a sight mair powerful than Watson ta hurry him off. From all accounts Bishop Watson wuddent nivver hurry hissen, leastways not when it cum ta leavin' Calgarth, fur he nivver went but yance in thirty year near them as he wur paid tew leuk arter. It seems his pay diddent cum amiss ta him but his dooties did; aw t'same he tickled oop t'other clerics, tellin' un continual as they mun attend ta business, he even wrote tellin' un as theear wur nowt wurse than not bein' on t'spot—his idea wur as ivverybuddy shud kip close alangside them as they be supposed ta cater fur—an' he wur reet theear, mind; a boatman shud be i' his boat. But when it cum ta his own sen it wur trees fur him; he wur allus tew busy plantin' un ta find time fur sarmons. He warn't much o' cleric but from what we hear tell he wur a decent enuff feller an' gud comp'ny, none the warse fur preferrin' trees ta preachin'; he wur responsible fur most o' plantin' hereabouts, Yes, ah allus thowt he wur a man ah shud ha' well liked; he kna'd as preachin' rarely yields, trees does; he's the sart as ah cud ha' spent ma time wi' very cumf'tble.

"But it's the Phillipsons o' Calgarth and Belle Isle what we taalks on most; nabuddy cud furgit un an' theear wild antics. As a family they wud brook na manner o' obstacle tew theear will. Theear wur Myles Phillipson; he woan't be furgit easy. He wanted a piece o' land adjoinin' Calgarth thaat wur home o' old couple who wuddent hear o' partin' wi't. He thowt on all manner o' ways, an' cum eventual tew Ahab's dodge—usin' false

accusation, an'—sa arter a deal o' trouble an' lyin' taalk it cum t'pass as old couple wur convicted an' hanged fur a murder they nivver committed. Then he wur able tew seize their land cumf'tble, but he wur na left i' peaceful possession. T'bodies wur gev rough buryin' on shore o' laak near Hall, an' ivvery night them tew indignant souls cem back, drew oop theear tew skulls fra earth an' trundled 'em oop t'hill tew disturb Phillipson's peace an' bang on's door. Havin' made his guilty soul quake, they wur trundled back agen an' allowed tew rest cumf'tble i' earth by these watters until t'wur time fur 'em tew be oop an' at it agen. Ah'm thinkin' they must 'a found thaat soul-birchin' mighty satisfyin'.

"When the Cavaliers an' Roundheads cum alang, theear wur tew Phillipson brothers boath busy fightin' fur Charles. Colonel Phillipson the elder, as owned Belle Isle, wur kep' fightin' pretty continual at Carlisle. The younger brother is best known to us'n—Major Robert. He wur by all accounts a mighty gud soldier but he wurn't nicknamed 'Robin the Devil' fur nowt; menny tales be towld of him an' they bain't all delicate. Durin' a rare spell o' quiet i' fightin' he cum to Belle Isle fur a bit o' rest. Then yan o' Roundheads, Colonel Briggs o' Kendal, a magistrate o' thaat town in his spare time, hearin' that Robin wur by hissen wi' but a handful o' men, teuk oppotoonity o' besiegin' isle. Theear mun ha' bin a rare bit o' fightin' by all accounts, but though magistrate hed men, he heddent brains nar luck o' Robin. Briggs cuddent beat un, but their empty bellies might ha' done, if Colonel Phillipson heddent cum alang fra Carlisle i' nick o' time. Then Briggs found mighty quick as he wur wanted i' Kendal."

John went on to tell me that the following Sunday Robin rode to Kendal in search of his enemy. He was told that Briggs was in church, so through the church door and down the aisle rode Robin, scanning the pews, swearing fierce oaths and ignoring the parson's entreaties. But the Roundhead was not to be so easily trapped; rumour had reached him that Robin and his company were in pursuit; he had taken more thought for his skin than his soul that day, and gave Kendal a wide berth. Robin, angry and frustrated, swung his horse round at the altar steps, galloped down the aisle, striking his iron helmet against the lintel of the door as he passed out; the blow lost him his helmet and caused him to turn again in a fury. He left the congregation in no doubt as to why he was surnamed "The Devil"; he and his handful of troops left behind them amazement, consternation, and a score of bleeding noses. Kendal still holds Robin's helmet, which is locally called "The Rebel's Cap" and the minstrels made a ballad of the adventure. "Dick and the Devil"[33] is a poem well known in Windermere. It was probably this Robin Phillipson who wrote his own epitaph, which is in the parish church.

"The Author's Epitaph upon his selfe made in the tyme of his sickness.

A man I was, wormes' meat I am,
To earth returned from whence I came:
Many removes on Earth I had
In Earth at last my bed is made:
A bed which Christ did not disdaine,
Altho it could not him retaine.
His deadlie foes might plainlie see,
Over Sinne and Death, his Victorie
Here must I rest till Christ shall let me see
His promised Jerusalem and her Faelicitie.
Robt. Phillipson. Gent. 13 Oct. 1631."

How reluctantly and hopefully he must have written his epitaph—reluctant to lie in his bed and hopefully looking forward to an active resurrection. One day perhaps someone will write a Phillipson Saga; it should be vastly entertaining though certainly not delicate.

I told John that among the shadows of these hills I one day hope to meet this Robin the Devil. He smiled indulgently and muttered with a certain envy, "Females allus has a weakness fur a bold bad man; thaat's wheear ah'm lackin', ah've allus been dispiritin' respectable.

"Ay! Theear's fine enuff buildin's laakside an' theear's a menny as gives me a belly-ache wi' longing, but auld age pension woan't run t'livin' i' the likes o' they[34]; yew've tew pay rates t'Lancashire an' moreover if yew've ennythin' i' laak, be it sa much as stake, lave alone pier or buoy, then yew've tew pay rint t'Lord Lonsdale likewise; he owns bed o' laak, an' ah'm thinkin' his lordship might call it 'Laak wi' Floor of Gold.' It's his rightfu' due, mind; ah heeard it wur Charles the Second as giv' laak t'Lonsdales fur a debt he owed un; seemingly Charles wur allus pretty tight fur money an' he had t'giv a laak or ennythin' as happened to be his'n fur payment."

We left the island and sailed on towards Finsthwaite. John was reluctant for me to land there.

"Hereabouts it be views thaat be worth the leukin' at an' theear's nowt o' that sart at Finsthwaite, nowt but Finsthwaite Tower, an' yew doan't want t'see waar memorial o' they past times. If yew waants t'see waar memorials best ga tew Edinboro'; thaat's worth ennybuddy's visitin'—nowt an' nabuddy be furgit i' thaat monument theear, nat even bird na' beast. If it's towers yew waant yew can visit a sight of watch-towers hereabouts an' yew doan't hev tew land at Finsthwaite fur they. Watch-towers wur reet enuff

when t'waars wi' Bonyparte wur on, wi' bonfires an' t'like ta mak' un a bit gay, but theear's nowt tew see theear now an' a gud job tew; they caan hev gud auld days fur me; them Scots were allus raidin' us. Hevn't yew noticed how few auld buildin's theear be? Whether it wur church or cottage diddent mak na difference tew they Borderers when they'd a mind to raid."

I deplored the border raiders, but I told him I still wanted to be landed at Finsthwaite.

"Well, yew can tek it fra me yew'll be but waastin' time; theear's tower an' church an' thaat's aw theear be, unless yew've a mind t'climb oop High Dam an' Bortree Tarn."

I told him I had a mind.

"Well, if yew ga theear best pay me off an' stay in village, fur yew'll be seein' nowt else this day."

I agreed with him there was no time for the tarn, but I insisted on landing at Finsthwaite in spite of his repeated assertions that it lacked interest, and I was soon walking up the lane which led to its little church. I smelt cut grass and saw an old man wielding a scythe in the churchyard. He stopped for a moment, gave me a long look, and then went on with his work. His face was solemn; I wondered what were his thoughts; to my surprise, he told me when he next paused to wipe his scythe, for pointing to a corner of the churchyard he said:

"See ower theear? That's wheear ah've chose me plaace; yew can see a bit o' laak theear an' ah've ordered ma stone sa as theear caarn't be na mistaak, an' ma faavourite text is ta be writ on t'stone—'All flesh is grass.'"

He lifted his scythe and continued his work, every now and then giving a half-whistle; the swish of the scythe evidently compelled from him this accompanying sound of enjoyment. I watched in silence till he again paused. ". . . is as grass—that's just aboaat what it be."

I looked round at the mounds rising like protesting ridges on the sands of time, at the tombstones with their inscriptions half obliterated by the years' ravage. How foolish seems this impotent clutching at remembrance! But man craves earthly immortality, and he will ever struggle to keep himself alive in memory. I felt depressed and oppressed; it was as if the dead by which I was surrounded were vainly stretching upwards, crying with soundless voices that would be heard. I tried to gather peaceful thoughts to smother these importunate ghosts. I told myself this was God's acre, a holy place, a garden of sleep, but I could not force my thoughts to tranquillity.

It seemed the old man read something of my mind, for during another pause in his scything he said, "Ah'm thinkin' as they woan't stand much

langer fur churchyards. Ah hear tell as menny yards i' big towns am becom' playin'-fields an' sich-like. . . . Theear's a bit o' courtin' i' thissuns Saturday neets."

I told him I lived near a churchyard which has been turned into two tennis-courts and a playground for children, with seesaws and swings, the tombstones serving as a border.

"Ay, quick mun jostle dead these days i' big cities. Theear's na room fur sich as they"—he jerked his thumb towards the graves around us. "Theear's na riverence ter-day, na time t'waste ower dead; they be na use na more; best tew furgit un." He paused. "Ah'm thinkin' fawlks be happier when theear's na rememberin'."

The Finsthwaite philosopher! The dead are history, curiosity, or dust, no more. Here and there a great king lies in a glass case in some museum, or a criminal skull is preserved; for the rest—dust and ashes.

Dear dead women, with such hair, too—what's become of all the gold
Used to hang and brush their bosoms? Ifeel chilly and grown old.

The man with the scythe sat down on a flat tombstone and took out some bread and cheese. I wandered round to the other side of the little church, and there my attention was arrested by an old man and woman going out of the lychgate. In spite of their years they were both upright; I saw they had dressed with scrupulous care as for a ceremony. I watched them down the lane; something about them suggested the tattered glory of a lost kingdom. Should I have curtseyed? . . . I walked round the churchyard, wondering which mound had brought them there. I noticed some freshly gathered bluebells and heather arranged by sensitive hands. . . .

"Can you tell me who is buried here?" I called to the old man who was still eating his bread and cheese. He rose and came towards me, then he scratched his head, mopped his brow, and spat.

"Well, t'sayin' be she wur Princess Clementina, t'dawter o' Bonny Prince Charlie, but whoivver t'wur they'm well remembered. Fresh flowers be put on grave tew o' three times a week, an' i' winter ivvergreens an' berries. Ah be glad as sum remembers; maks t'yard seem nat sa cawld-like."

As I walked back to the boat I was thinking of the lost Jacobite cause and all the brave lost causes which lack even the remembrance of a bunch of fell flowers. . . .

"Well, what did ah say? Yew've hed na pleasurin' theear," said John on my return. "Ah can see that much in tha face. Ah telled yew theear wur nowt t'see at Finsthwaite but t'church."

"Church—and shadows."

"Ay, shadows lie ower Finsthwaite i' late aternoon. Now ah'll shaw yer wheear yan of t'most interestin' things taks plaace on laak. Race ta Gummers How fra laakside at laakside spooarts. T'fell racers start fra field just hereabouts, then they board boat, row haaf a mile acrost laak t'foot of Gummers How,[35] clim up't, cum back, board boat agen, row ower laak agen, git oot o' boat agen—t'wur accomplished last 'eear i' twenty-three minits!"

I insisted that I should land and follow in the track of these human fell-hounds, not because I wanted to experience their gruelling test, but for the grand sight of the hills I knew I should have. Puffing and panting I climbed up the fellside. The native suggests that the visitor should climb Gummers How if he wants to see a good map of the district, and he is right, for the full glory of fell and lake is there for the beholder. I was held by the wonder and beauty of it, and thanked God for sight and the capacity for seeing. It was two and a half hours before I returned to the boat; I found John dozing and a pipe hanging out of his mouth.

"Ah thowt ah shud hev time fur art'noon nap afore yew wur back," he said. "It's tuk yew more'n seben times as laang as oor Westmorland lads." He looked at me with a certain amount of condescension and amusement. "Puffed, tew, yew be. Ay, it's none but Westmorland lads what can do such'n." He paused and continued in an aggrieved voice: "Well, thoo's lost Newby Bridge an' Swan now by tha dawdlin' at Finsthwaite; caan't touch either o' they now."

I told him that I had already stayed at the Swan, met its rare hostess, and been entertained with good fare and a gracious display of its interesting possessions.

"Yan stay bain't nowt. Ah ga ower an' ower agen; we allus calls Mrs. Revill t'Duchess, an' I'm thinkin' menny a duchess bain't haalf as like yan as she be." He sighed heavily. "Theear bain't menny like her." He suddenly pulled himself up. "Well, it be na use dwellin' on differences."

A vision of John's wife rose before me—and I felt all was not well in the house of John. He lapsed into silence, shook his head several times, and then continued:

"Theear's na understandin' nar pleasin' sum females. . . . Well, ah'm tellin' 'ee, ennybuddy wantin' a day's rest fra fell climmin', an' a gud bit o'

fishin' thrown in, cuddent dew better'n bide at Swan."

"I am no good at fishing."

"That doan't matter; yew cud pick oop char fur t'leukin' at un."

I told him I could quite believe it, for I had never eaten so many char as I had in Windermere.

"Well, it be mighty gud fish baaked an' seasoned; cums nigh trout; nat quite alangside, maybe, but pretty nigh." He hesitated and chuckled, "An' takken wi' Gummers How sauce it be equal gud. Theear bain't menny pernickety stomachs hereabouts; t'appetite an na particular fish maks fewd gud. If tha doan't waant ta fish thoo can tak booat, moor it wheear thoo fancies, an' hev a dip or waalk wheear thoo've t'mind. Thoo's likely larned by this as trespassers bain't prosecuted sa laang as they acts sensible."

I told him I had scrambled along the banks of the stream that flows from Newby Bridge to the sea, and that at Grange I had met a troll. He looked at me with an uncomprehending eye, and as I went on to tell him that the fell and the track had my heart rather than the river or even the lake, his eye became almost baleful. I knew that he thought the day wasted because we had not reached the Swan. I did not tell him that I mistrusted him at the Swan just as certainly as he mistrusted me at High Dam and Bortree Tarn; both these refreshing springs had their irresistible allure, and neither party was to be trusted with either call.

As he put me ashore rain was falling—beautiful, soft, reviving; a diamond-decked earth. The leaves held clusters of crystal balls; this was their glittering moment of life, soon would come the sharp hot needle of the sun and then oblivion. A million jewels were hanging from the grasses tacked with silver threads; the birds rejoiced, the earth breathed out a rare fragrance. I thought of London in the rain and shuddered.

As I walked up the lane the scent of briar-bushes and the wild thyme was sweet; at the end of the lane was the fellside farmhouse and in my room a peat fire.

On the east bank of Windermere lake is a paradisial road as broad as the way that leadeth to destruction, perfectly macadamised, and as hard as nails, but I turn with relief and pleasure to the old road on the west bank, one of the arteries that carried life to Birthwaite in bygone days. Such a road conjures up a picture of the past, and fills the present with interest and beauty. It is alive with birds, flowers, and fragrance. Here the lake bank is wooded and sheltered. In spring it is splashed with purple, blue, and yellow,

and if you walk along it you will tread upon carpets of violets, primroses, bluebells, and daffodils.

Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

In the autumn these wooded slopes riot in their display of gorgeous dye. All the colours of the woodland spectrum are here when autumn the voluptuary holds feast—larch, oak, silver birch, fir, ash, sycamore, poplar, display their court dresses with full orders, but, when winter comes, spring's smile, summer's laughter, and autumn's riot are forgotten. The earth grows hard; the mountains stand aloof; white-robed priests guard their holy of holies, and man is not allowed beyond the altar rails. . . . There is magic on the lake bank; in the space of an hour it is hung with jewels which deck a myriad bridal dresses.

Watching the lakeside birds has always been a joy to me, and in spring ten thousand of these watch me a few yards off the old road round the margin of the lake. They start up at the slightest sound, leaving their families at the merest suspicion of a footfall and, perching among the swaying reeds, they await the departure of the intruder—all but the reed bunting, who will sit on her nest till the foot touches it. In the sedge Papa Bunting sings loudly the only melody known to that very unmusical family.

It is now late summer and the undergrowth around the lake is at its thickest; the dabchicks and moorhens wheel in close formation some yards from the bank. At this season they take their exercise seriously, as something the doctors ordered, unaccompanied by chatter, it has the regularity of duty, not pleasure. They are probably worried at parting with their old clothes and leaving their old house, but the sun is moving south and they must follow.

Of all lakeside birds perhaps the drake mallards amuse me most; their behaviour has the superior air of the upper form schoolboy and their green and blue striped wings suggest the old school tie. . . .

Scrambling up the wooded slopes alongside a beck to the fell, I find all varieties of tits; they are so busy feeding they don't notice my approach. They are democratic and collect in a mixed flock, chattering together with more gusto than any sewing-party, busily examining every twig for insects. Hither and thither they dart, like dandelion seed on the wing of the breeze. The tit has a problem of house-room to solve, for his tail is much longer than his body and his house is very small—almost as small as the wren's; but resourcefully he solves his problem by doubling his tail back over his head and hanging the tip out of his front door.

High in a beech sings a thrush, and, looking up to see the gallant who delights me with his song, my eye lights on a blue wood-pigeon, puffing out his chest. As soon as he sees me, he struts to the other end of the branch, and cocks an eye towards me, which seems to say, "Trespassers are not prosecuted, but neither are they welcomed in our wood!"

I hear a footfall; now it is I who resent the trespasser, but I give him good day, for as he comes nearer I see it is a gamekeeper.

"I'm not trespassing, am I?"

"Naw," he said. "Leastways, ah'm not leukin' fur t'likes of yew, marm. It's craws ah'm oot fur; pests they be, an' bad fur t'sheep." He stopped to light his pipe but his eye was restlessly seeking the unfortunate crow.

I asked him if it were true that they often attack the sheep.

"Ay, tha do thaat, an' peck oot ees of weakly lambs an' t'ewes. Magpies be as bad, an' if yew doan't destroy eggs sheep'll pay fur't."

The gamekeeper told me proudly that he had plunged his stick through hundreds of magpies' nests and scattered their eggs abroad. I felt he was probably doing useful work, though I knew I could never bring myself to destroy those little dark green portmanteaux of bird life.

"It's na sa easy," he said. "Nests is allus reet at top o' tree, an' t'branches sway, an' yew be like tew hev a fall. Ay, but they'm clever. It ud tak yan o' us a gud few weeks tew build a nest like they. Yew'd na untwine they thorns in a girt hurry, though yew've ten fingers; an', what's mair, it ud tek aw yew time collectin' woo' fur linin'."

The magpie is certainly wise and wonderful, however much of a thief he may be. Rossini saw the twinkle in his eye and wrote an opera in his honour, and, though the score lies on dusty shelves, upon rare occasions we still hear the overture of *La Gazza Ladra*. I spent the next hour lying on my back half asleep, trying to recall some of its airs. I never quite succeeded, for the song of the living birds ever changed the air to their own liking.

On or off the track the eye is delighted and the ear filled with the crowded silence of that other world where man is a stranger—the world of the stream, the hedge, the moor, the field, the lake, the mountain, the quiet glen. These are places crowded with life other than our own, and if we sit for a space and watch the creatures, we may learn something of their ordered life, their industry, their unquestioning acceptance of life and death. We can teach them little though we are their masters mechanically. The complete supremacy which machines and weapons have given us is mainly due to our powerful thumb. Artistically, animals are sometimes our superior; their dwellings are never blots on the beautiful earth and they spread no litter.

Man is the only animal that creates litter, and when he thus destroys beauty and makes of the earth a dustbin he is no longer "a little lower than the angels"; he is in danger of becoming a little lower than the animals. In this respect the Englishman is the worst offender; constructive and orderly as an individual, in the mass he becomes disorderly and destructive. I was once in the market-place of a small town in Germany when my companion, who was eating cherries, spat out the stones. Immediately an official clapped him on the shoulder and, handing him the receipt for a fine, told him that he must not distribute litter in the streets. Heil, Hitler! If I had the power I would make litter a punishable offence in England as it is in Germany.

This lovely patch of England should be kept clear of litter. I was once walking through Windermere when a gentleman in a large car dropped his cigarette carton on the pavement. A man quickly picked it up and returned it to him. "I don't want it," said the man in the car. "Neither does Windermere," was the retort. This town has pride of place, pride of lake, pride of road, particularly that fine east bank road that I always avoid; only accident brings me along it; but at the end of a long day, when both body and mind are physically exhausted, even the macadam road is welcomed because there is often a chance of a lift. It was on such an occasion that I first came to this road. I had started the day with a visit to Cartmell Priory Church, where I was surprised to find myself the only visitor. Those who stay in Windermere and miss this priory miss much; for it is full of interest —historical and architectural. As far as my knowledge goes, the tower is unique in its diagonal design; it reminded me of the brick tower I used to build as a child when I wanted my tower with a difference.

I was told the earliest existing part of the building dated from 1188 and that it was the only priory church in Lancashire now in use as a parish church. But among all its wonders of architecture and history the vision I carried away was of a splendid umbrella—two hundred years ago it used to shelter the priest at the priory funerals; there are many priests to-day who must envy as they behold it.

When I left the church it was raining, and as I scrambled up Cartmell Fell I again thought of that grand umbrella; then my eyes wandered to the Newby Bridge road which leads to Grange and I thought of my troll; did she ever, as she approached the high mountains in stormy weather, long for an umbrella; did she then decrease her size and creep under a mushroom; did she tear up a young leafy tree for shelter; or did she steal into the priory church and borrow the priest's umbrella? Only she would dare.

I was tired and very glad to drop down to the broad road in the valley, and I looked round hopefully for the occasional cart that travels along it. I

knew I should find a kindly response from its driver and interesting entertainment with my journeying. My lift-luck was a baker's cart; the driver was native to Windermere and full of its praises, but I soon gathered he preferred the Windermere of yesterday.

"Ah!" he said, "rooad na fit fur horses these days. Ah mind when coach horn wud echo along t'arld rooad, but we shaan't hear thaat nivver na more. We'm said gud-bye t'orses though i' my opinion motors doan't serve Windermere sa well; they carries fawlk reet through laaks in a couple o' days. In ma yung days visitors wur shawn somethin' of laaks; driver used t'stop naw an' agen ta give horses a breather an' give fawlk a chance of leukin' round, but they doan't want t'leuk around un these days; tha doan't want t'kna names o' hills na nowt like tha used tew. Fawlks wants tew git on wi' things these days, an' they wants tew git on wi' un quick. Seems even time slips away quicker than't used, an' afore yew knas it yew'm grown auld. Well, ah seen sum wonnerful inventions i' ma time, but ah'm na sa sure as man diddent create his destruction wi' his machines; ah doan't altogither hold wi' un, an' all t'craze fur rushin' an' tearin'. Ma moother used t'waalk fra Crook ta Windermere wi' washin', carryin' it tew an' fra—fancy ennybuddy waalkin' aw they miles naw wi' washin' these days; it be but tramps an' likes o' yew as waalks ter-day. It be said man lost his tail sum time back becos he diddent use it." He paused to chuckle. "Strikes me he'll soon be losin' his hands an' his feet becos he has na use for they."

I asked him if he had lived in Windermere all his life.

"Moastly. Ah did ga as a yung man tew Manchester fur a bit, but ah hed t'cum back; na Westmorland man cud bide awa' lang wi' na grass an' na watter fur a buddy t'clap his ees on. Manchester's burnt oop wi' chemicals. O' course, it be na waarse than moast ither big plaaces; smoake lies sa thick ower un it chokes yew. Ah seen fog hereabout like smoke followin' length o' laak an' then blowin' up fellside, but when fog lifts, laak an' fell seem sweeter an' cleaner than ivver, but t'cities' fog be smoke an' doan't nivver seem tew lift.

"Ay! It's spring what be gran'est i' Windermere, thoo caan't beat Windermere an' Grasmere fur flowers. Summer's month fur Ennerdale, Buttermere, Crummock Water, autumn's time fur Tarn Hows, yew gits sich colours then as yew wuddent dream of. Winter ivverywheer's gran', partic'lar Wastwater, but theear be sum fawlks as maybe doan't think it sa gran', fur snawed oop menny farms be, an' nabuddy caan't git through passes hard winters, sa unless faarms be self-supportin' fawlks staarve.

"Ah doubt beatin' laaks ennywhen or ennywheear. Theear bain't menny visitors spring-time, when it be best hereabouts, ivverywheears smellin'

sweet. Yew can wade thra' daff'dils knee-deep a' Cartmell an' laakside's gold wi' un, an' around Belle Isle yew can pick lilies as thick as bluebells. Yew caan't see these summer-time, but yew caan see Rush-Bearin' if yew waants at Ambleside; doan't miss thaat whativver tha does."

He was pleased when I told him I should certainly go to see it.

When he put me down he pointed out the Ambleside bus. Three buses were lined up, and on one I read the notice: "Passengers are requested not to stand in front of the bus when it is in motion."

I looked at him expecting a chuckle, but here he failed me; there was no twinkle in his eye; instead he said very seriously:

"Ay, tha caan't be careful enuff wi' they motors, an' it's na safe to ride in yan of un wi'out thoo insure thoo sen."

I felt if I lingered I might become involved in a discussion on the purpose of insurance, so I hastily wished him good-bye, thanking him for my lift and his company.

"Not at all, ma'am," he said gallantly. "Tha's bin gud cump'ny tha-sen."

But he had done all the talking!

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[33] See Appendix.

[34] Land on the lakeside usually costs 5*s*. per square yard, or even more. Two miles north and south of Bowness Pier it costs £5 per foot frontage; this includes 20 yards depth from the water. A boathouse requires about 25 feet frontage, so the price is £125 per site.

[35] 1,010 feet high.

CHAPTER XIV

RUSH-BEARING

I ALWAYS think of Ambleside as the town that lost itself. I think it flounced away from Windermere in a pet and then, growing tired, dropped in an untidy heap at the head of the lake. It has never recovered itself sufficiently to return, or perhaps it realised that it had strayed into a pleasant vale and preferred to remain—lost, but well guardianed. This was far back in the days of Elizabeth. To-day a little house built of giant boulders stands on the hill by the church. It has withstood the storms and tempests for nearly four hundred years. On its oak door is an iron plate upon which is graved the date, 1675, so the door is nearly as old as the four-foot thick walls. The genteel yellow lace curtains in its windows and the glaring yellow doormat look out of place, as incongruous as a yellow wig on an old face; these decorations belong to the new cottages opposite. Two hundred and sixty rush-bearing processions the old cottage has seen, and the new cottages will see—how many?

I had come for the Rush-Bearing Festival and I was early at the market cross, but I found it already filled with people; it was easy to distinguish visitors from residents by their eager expectancy and curiosity.

I soon realised that one of Ambleside's oldest inhabitants was eyeing me up and down. After a long pause, he spat three times with great deliberation, then he indicated the seat beside him and I knew he was considering whether to speak or not. It was a hot day, I had been told the rush-bearers were not due for another hour, the market cross was a pleasant seat, and I sat down beside him.

"Cum fur t'Rush-Bearin'?" he said at last. I nodded. "Cum fra Lunnon?" I acknowledged the shortcoming. "Ah've bin tew Lunnon," he said, "tew Law Courts.

"It aw cum alang o' Fleming's trustees closin' a reet o' way; they padlocked Hawes' footpath on us'n. But yew doan't kip a Westmorlander oot wi' sich-like. Theear's bin a footpath ever sin' ah rec'lect an' a sight few 'eear afore ma time, so yan or tew went an' pulled un off. They browt it oop 'fore council, but council warn't standin' fur closin' oop paths an' monkey-tricks like thaat. 'Hey!' says chairman, 'call oop th' blacksmith.' So

blacksmith wur called an' giv' his orders, an' he started off oop fellside, we all follerin' like a lot o' fewl sheep tew watch un saw off padlock. Sa Fleming's trustees tuk oop action an' sa tew Lunnon sum on us hed tew ga. When we wur in court ah told judge, Hawes' footpath wur reet o' way ivver sen' ah cud remember. 'Oh,' said t'judge, 'how can yew pruve thaat?' Ah told un ah allus did ma courtin' theear an' t'missus cud stand fur't. Thaat seemed tew move him considerable; ah wur glad ah called it ta mind.

"We didna see nowt o' Lunnon but Law Courts an' railway station, an' we wur glad enuff tew git back as soon as 'twur alreet wi' footpath. Seems a plaace wid na hills, na water an' a mighty lot o' dirt. . . . See ower yon—thaat street lamp, thaat wur anither case ah hed ta dew wid—Johnson lamp case. A street lamp wur put oop an' t'doctor said it wur on his land, an' sued t'council, sa oop we gaes ta Law Courts agen. Ah told judge ah rec'lected a lamp theear ivver sen ah wur a lad, and thaat menny wur time ah climbed oop an' put it out, an' hed watchman arter ma. 'An' how dew yew rec'lect thaat,' he says. 'Why, becos t'watchman give me a doase o' this kind,' an' ah waved ma stick i' the air—this yan it wur. Judge wur praper moved, an' doctor lost his case an' sarve un reet. Judge showed un oop praper after ah give ma evidence, shawin' as he nivver bought oop na rooad; nabuddy caan't buy King's highway . . . an' how cud us read oor noospaper if they tuk lamp-poast awa'?"

To a city dweller this was an altogether new purpose for a street lamp. He lapsed into silence for a few moments and then added: "He wur only doctor i' Ambleside an' fawlk kep' remarkable healthy fur a lang time arter thaat."

Suddenly up the sun-scorched street came a murmur; my companion pointed with his stick. "Here they cum; better stan' wheear yew've ben settin'," he said.

Up the street came four hundred children, each bearing flowers. At the head, four girls in green bore lilies and rushes, followed by various representations of the Parable of the Sower, Moses in the Bulrushes, and David's Harp. There were rushes in triangles and spires, fine bouquets from the local nurseries, and little nosegays from the fields. For thousands of years man had used rushes for covering his floors and lighting his home. Here, by the lakeside, rushes were free and plentiful as well as sweet-smelling, and when their fragrance left them they were easily changed; to-

day tiled floors are all-sufficient, so the Rush-Bearing has become but a thanksgiving for the hay-harvest.

"*Our fathers to the house of God,*
As yet a building rude,
Bore offerings from the flowery sod
And fragrant rushes strewed."[36]

Sweetly their voices rose in the sultry air, and as the last echo was lost in the fells they turned and wended their way up the hill towards the church, to lay their offerings in the grey and purple chequered light of St. Mary's.

The children of Ambleside no longer strew the sweet-smelling rushes on the floor of the church; they bring instead posies from the hedgerow and fellside, and each child receives a gingerbread cake. As I joined in the procession I felt myself hemmed about with song and flowers, and I understood the feeling of fanatics—a sensual frenzy; sense and sensibility fade and the heart leaps beyond the prescribed bounds of material life.

We laid our offerings in the chancel; we sang our thanks, and prayed for more blessings. The air was full of the fragrance of the flowers of the field and the cottage garden.

It was some hours after—late in the afternoon—that I reluctantly became aware of myself as I was; middle-aged and rather overtired.

In the churchwarden's accounts of 1680 there is an entry, "For ale bestowed on those who brought rushes and repaired the church, one shilling," but later this custom was changed and I read that "all who carry a burden of rushes at the Ambleside Festival shall receive a good big cake of gingerbread made by old Mickey the baker."

The rush-bearing over, I walked down by the Bridge House—a queer little edifice built over the millstream. I looked upon the glory of the Langdales and felt that God was near. It is an easy thing to know this among the great hills.

"Far off like a perfect pearl one can see the city of God . . . a child could reach it on a summer's day. And so a child could. But with me and such as me it is different. One can realise a thing in a single moment, but one loses it in the long hours that follow with leaden feet."[37]

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[36] Written at the suggestion of Hartley Coleridge by the Rev. Owen Lloyd, friend of Charles Lamb. Lloyd was curate at Langdale a hundred years ago.

[37] Oscar Wilde.

CHAPTER XV

A RETURN

I PAID my return visit to Tarn Hows by way of the Drunken Duck Inn—the sign now reads "Barngates Inn," but it will never be changed in the local mind, and the stranger is still directed up the grim fellside by way of the Drunken Duck—and here I enjoyed a tankard of most excellent ale and the cheese and home-made bread that went with it could not have been bettered.

I have always wanted to come to this inn and find out the origin of its name. Since my first acquaintance with the immortal Jemima Puddleduck I have considered a duck from every aspect with delight. I think a duck's body, a duck's speech, and a duck's habits a sure antidote to depression, and a proof that the Almighty has a sense of humour. What melancholy can endure the dabbling and quivering, waddling and quacking, the ups-a-daisy in the pond, the rheumatic movement over the farmyard, and the side-eye stare? Some of the prettiest young in the world are ducklings, and it is as easy to make a duck a pet as any other bird. A friend of mine had a pet duck, Sam, whom he had nursed with patience through a bad attack of paralysis when he was little more than a duckling, and thereafter Sam gave him the faithful affection of a dog.

He followed his master the half mile to the station every morning, then waddled back home and became an ordinary duck until it was the right time to meet the train again in the evening. The stationmaster and the porters were proud of him, and showed him an active consideration. A bowl of water was placed for his refreshment, and he was allowed to wait on the platform until the train came in, when he greeted his master, belimping round him with much quacking and flapping. Then he waddled back home with him, quacking all the gossip of the day. Arrived home, he would flop down and sleep comfortably in front of the fire.

My curiosity as to the name Drunken Duck was received with amused tolerance. I was told that the true story was very dull, but I asked the hostess to start with truth and go on to fiction. This was her story:

A stiff hill leads up to the inn, and one day, when the horses were struggling up it with a load of beer, a barrel slipped off the dray and burst, the beer flowing all over the road. The ducks have always wandered about

here as they please, and when they saw the beer pouring over the road they paddled about in the new pond, and after they took a sip they took a sup, and found it so much to their taste that they fell over each other in their desire for more, quacking and flapping until they lay in the road hopelessly drunk. When the landlady went out to gather the eggs, she looked down the road and saw the ducks lying in a huddled heap. She naturally thought they were all dead, and she picked them up, took them in, and plucked them. As she was plucking the last one it gave so loud a quacking that it roused the others. They were soon all waddling about very unsteadily, more alive than ever, but looking very forlorn and naked. Fearing they would catch their deaths of cold, and not wanting to lose them, she made each duck a flannel jacket! And that's all there is to the true story. "If yew waant to hear sum of t'fairy stories . . ." I assured the hostess that I could not desire any embroidery of the "true story" and that it satisfied me as completely as her excellent fare.

The Drunken Duck is a great centre for hunting; close by it is Iron Keld, called by the natives Fox Sanctuary, for when the fox reaches it the hounds are helpless.

Having refreshed myself at the inn, I felt an irresistible desire to look again on Tarn Hows. I wanted to assure myself that it still held the beauty and peace that I remembered. When I first came here I lay on the margin of the tarn marvelling at the beauty and peace of the place; there was no sound but the ripple of the water at my feet and the cry of a bird overhead.

I now came to it from a different angle and one that gave an even finer picture than my memory had stored. I stood above Tarn Hows and looked at the stupendous unfolding of the hills, the marching of the great shadows and the glory of colour that lay about it. The place fills the eye and the mind; it possesses beauty and grandeur; it provokes and intrigues; it compels interest and inspires new energy and an irresistible desire to adventure forward. But though Tarn Hows has kept its beauty it has lost something of its peace and a part of its wonder. The city has spewed life on the banks—and why not? They come, even as I, to enjoy that draught which only beauty and peace can mix; but there will ever be a jealous grudging in the love most of us have for the solitary places. We would have them as our private preserve and erect a barrier with a notice-board, SCROOGE RAMPANT.

Standing to-day looking over Tarn Hows I saw again its three giant graves—gods of the mountains lie here; after many thousand years of watching they grew weary and chose to sleep for ever on the site of their kingdom. . . . Pavey Ark still bares his teeth and snarls. Traveller, beware!—he is savage and ruthless. Then my eyes turn to the Langdales. None of the hills have greater personality than these two Pikes; they can be recognised

immediately from any angle, they have a magnetic allure. When I look at them I am reminded of tragedy—the Greens' tragedy in particular.

Easedale Farm, the Greens' home on the fellside, was isolated, but it was easy enough for them to walk over to Langdale on a clear day, knowing as they did every inch of the way. No dalesman will ever miss a sale if he can help it. It is still regarded as an occasion and something of an adventure to anyone living in these lonely places; much more so in the early part of the nineteenth century. On this particular day there was to be a sale at Langdale and the Greens set out from their little farm to attend it. The sun was shining and the fellside full of a quiet peace. Snow fell while the Greens were at the sale, which meant that all trace of mountain track or familiar landmark was obliterated. The thought of their children left alone in the isolated cottage outweighed prudent thoughts: snow might now lie for a long period and their children were young. Knowing the fells so well, they probably thought that they could struggle back to their farm, and so they started on the homeward journey. They must have become exhausted as the storm increased, and, staggering on blindly, night falling, the wife's strength gave out and in the raging of the storm Green never heard her cry. She was found with her hand outstretched as if trying to reach him and he but a few yards in front. But a little farther and they were home.

The great hills cannot concern themselves with so transient a thing as man.

CHAPTER XVI

THE SHADOWED VALLEY

IT was while staggering through a blizzard from the Sty Head Pass that I first came to Dungeon Ghyll, and my return visit, by way of the Neddy Boggle Stone, was again in rough weather. A shepherd was standing by the stone; he whistled his dog and they both regarded me silently. I passed the time of day and asked how the stone came by the name of Neddy Boggle. Shepherds and dogs do not respond at once, and I had to undergo the usual searching scrutiny. His dog sniffed round my wet Burberry, and I was relieved when at last he wagged his tail and allowed me to pat his dripping coat; my dog made a similar inspection of the shepherd, whose eyes had wandered to the Langdales; it was evident that his thoughts were far away from me. I felt suddenly exceedingly wet and foolish and began to walk on, when he spoke.

"'Tis rough weather; t'wind hits yew full on this track; yew wull be pretty weel soaked by time yew gits down t'Dungeon Ghyll an' yew lile dawg tew. Theear's na shelter nigher nor Stool End Farm."

"It would be as far to go back as to go on and my energy always serves me best when I am going forward."

The shepherd's face relaxed. "Shepherding ud suit yew; it be allus movin' forrad—roundin' oop. Maybe yew think it queer us standin' aboot weather like this, but Neddy Boggle be gud fur viewin' an' sheep's below, we've just rounded un. Yew wur askin' how stone cem by its naame. It wur on account o' Maister Balme's horse. Yew'll 'a heeard o' Maister Balme—he put a stone heear fur a sart o' sign-post; yan side shaws rooad t'Elterwater an' t'ither Chapel Stile. Weel—first time Maister Balme's horse saw stone he cudna understan' what it wur, bein' somethin' fresh, sa horse what we calls 'boggled' it—wudna ga on! Sa Maister Balme gev stone naame o' Neddy Boggle. Yance ennythin' be gev naame i' these paarts it sticks, an' nabuddy caan't alter un." He paused. "Ah be thinkin' as it's bad day fur stranger to see valley."

"I am not a stranger. I have seen this grand valley many times, in all seasons."

"Moast fawlk think it be a bit awesome an' theear's nowt particular fur visitors unless they'm anxious t'clim hills—if yew be set on makin' Dungeon Ghyll yew'd best be gettin' on; t'lile dawg's none sa used t'storms as mine by leuk o' him."

"My little dog and I have weathered a fair amount of storms together, but we shall neither of us be sorry to get under a roof all the same. Well, we'll meet again some day, perhaps."

"Maybe." He turned towards Elterwater and I towards the valley of Dungeon Ghyll. I had no fear that I should find fungoid bungaloid growths; I knew that there would be no scabs on the body of the fair earth here, for Dungeon Ghyll is now an outpost of the National Trust; but no trust could save me from other forebodings. The tragedy of return lies in the shut door, the stranger at the gate, the unfamiliar face; and in our rebellious ignorance we cry out against the toll the years take. I knew I should meet memories, not men. Yet surely William Martindale must still stride around Stool End Farm; quaint generous Thompson must haunt Walthwaite, walking about with his hands clasped behind him and his shoes unlaced.

His doublet all unbraced,
No hat upon his head, his stockings fell
Ungartered and downgyved to his ancle.

Had Shakespeare known Thompson he would have gone on to say that his purse was always open, his words kindly and his face cheery. . . .

Ghosts—the Thompsons, the Stables, the Martindales, all gone, almost forgotten. Man has small place in this valley; it is the dwelling-place of the gods.

The shadowed valley is unchanged—as it was it is, as it is it will be, and as long as the earth endures so long will its wall guard the valley. As I stood there the rain ceased, a silver ray pierced through the stormy clouds and fell over the great mountain wall, the barren strength of which had haunted me for so long. The shepherd was right in calling it awesome; if it does not bring the traveller a sense of wonder and amazement he must be insensitive indeed. The grim barrier amazes and confounds the human herd, and drives it back to easier and lighter playgrounds; here is dread in the beholding, here is majesty too high for ease and contentment, here is something which makes the little human think, and thought is regarded as an alien holiday companion, and so the casual tourist looks and climbs—back into his motor,

and drives away; but those who have once climbed the mountain wall and known its magic must return, for its memory will persecute the mind with continual desire. The urge for return is overwhelming, persistent, importunate. Man will never find happiness here, for dread must enter the heart; but the petty things that gnaw and rot the body and soul of him are swept away; he is filled with wonder, amazement, worship. To be brought near to the holy of holies does not bring happiness, but something higher—something rarer. Here man must pray and worship, and if his eye wanders it will behold the marvellous works of God.

I kneel, lift up mine eyes, and behold God! I marvel but I am not afraid. "Behold and know that I am God." At first I am silent, for the awe and majesty of God are about me. Then I speak: "O God, Thou knowest that I praise and glorify the wonderful works of Thy hands. Remember, O God, I beseech Thee, that I also am Thy work. Suffer and preserve me for the time that is mine, and gather me at the last to Thyself. O God, I know that I am an infinitesimal atom in Thy great universe, but Thou knowest even the dust in the crannies of the rock. Consider my frailty—condemn not. When in my ignorance I question Thy purpose, I cry for an answer, but no answer cometh. Thou givest and takest, and none can gainsay. Thou smitest us sore. Thou givest abundantly. Thy favours are wondrous and rich, but Thy frown is fearful. Thy hand smitest, Thou departest, and there is desolation! Yet we are dumb and helpless in Thy hands. Remember, O God! Remember we are the work of Thy hand, remember and forbear. Lift us up, gather us to Thy mighty heart, protect and succour us, and take away our fear; and when the hour cometh which Thou hast ordained, give us courage to pass along the narrow unknown track which, to our dimmed eyes, looks very dark and fraught with fear. Help us—give us the hand-rail of Thy power and the light of Thyself."

I rise comforted. It is good sometimes to voice that which broods in the heart. I felt uplifted; I had left my fears with God, and joy in the life that was mine surged again within me as I walked on.

I looked up at Harrison Stickle and Pike o' Stickle. The last time I was here I looked down from them. I could feel again my pride of body as I stood upon the summit of Wrynose and encircled its "Three Shire Stone"; with a stretch of my arms I encompassed Cumberland, Westmorland, and Lancashire; with my spirit I encompassed the earth.

To stand on a high mountain is to experience exhilaration and exaltation in the highest form; it is to find a new heaven and a new earth. Climbing, of all sports, demands most of the individual both in character and physique,

but to those who adventure is given an indescribable and pregnant thrill. As the eye encompasses, the spirit possesses and gathers to itself the universe.

Yesterday my body accomplished the Styhead and Stake Passes in so many sweating hours; to-day it "boggles" at them; but though my body can no longer climb and achieve the summit my spirit climbs and achieves immensity.

AND NOW—*for the steel track, the iron horse, and the lights o' London*. Back to the clamour and clang— to the grime and grit. Don't step off the kerb—look sharp to the right and left—remember the traffic—don't look up to the stars; it's dangerous—"Safety First"—don't adventure—the ambulance waits round the corner and the appointment book is full. . . . Beyond massed humanity, beyond the sea of houses, beyond the hoardings' glare, there are quiet waters, great hills, trafficless tracks, open doors, peat fires, "good company"—and my spirit can ever enjoy all these, be there and back in the space of a second—this is sorcery worth while.

THE EXIT

APPENDIX

TARRY WOO'

Tarry woo', oh, Tarry woo',
Tarry woo' is ill to spin
Card it well, oh, card it well,
Card it well ere ye begin.
But when carded, rolled and spun,
Then your work is but half done,
When it's woven, dressed and clean,
It may become clothing fit for a queen.
(*Repeat two last lines in each verse*).

It's baa, ye bonny, harmless sheep,
Feeding on yon mountain steep,
Bleating sweetly as ye go
Through cold winter's frost and snow.
Neither hart nor hind, nor fallow deer
Are half so useful as they are.
From kings to him that holds the plough,
We're all indebted to Tarry woo'.

Up, you shepherds, dance and skip,
Over those hills and valleys trip.
Sing to the praise of Tarry woo',
Sing to the sheep that bears it too.
Oh! harmless creatures, without blame,
That clothes the back and crams the wane,
That keeps us warm and hearty too,
So these are sheep with Tarry woo'.

How happy is the shepherd's life,
Far from Court and free from strife.
Whilst the gimmers bleat and baa,
And the lambkins answer maa,
Oh! while such music's in his ear,
Of thief or fox he has no fear.
There's sturdy "Kent" and "Collie" true,
They will defend the Tarry woo'.

So he lives content and he envies none,
Not even the King upon his throne.
The King that great Royal Sceptre sways,
Has no sweeter holy days.

Who would then be a king? None here can tell
When a shepherd lives so well,
Lives so well and pays his due
With an honest heart and "Tarry Woo'."

THE MARTINDALE SHEEP-SHEARING SONG

Cold winter is over, how charming the Spring,
As we view our sheep with delight;
Our lambs frisk and play, and the birds sweetly sing,
And all Nature looks jocund and bright.
Here's a health to each shepherd that tends our exchange,
With intent for to do public good;
He collects all stray sheep for their owners to claim,
And all things go right as they should.

(*Chorus*.)

To our clippings we'll invite each good merry soul,
And the master be joyful and say,
"Be hearty and cheerful o'er a good flowing bowl,
And we'll drink till the dawn of the day."

In the month of July, of all months in the year,
As the shepherd will oftentimes say,
When we gather our flocks in, their fleeces to shear,
Oh, that is the joy of the day!
Our hearts do rejoice to see them full of fleece,
And the bell wether leading the way;
With a good stock of lambs our flocks to increase,
Then let us be joyful and gay!

(*Chorus*.)

The sheep-shearing's over, around the gay board
With hearts full of pleasure and glee,
We partake with delight of a plentiful hoard.
Who so blithe and so happy as we?
From our flocks and our herds all our consequence springs
For the Wool-Sack is next to the Throne;
It freedom confers both on peasant and king,
Such as in no other country is known.

(*Chorus*.)

Black winter sweeps over our hills with a frown,
Frost and snow clog the ditch and the stile;
But knowing alike both the squire and clown

Wrapped in wool, we look round us and smile.
We'll sing of its praise from even till morn,
Could our gratitude only increase;
From the dying old man to the infant unborn,
Are all kept alive in the fleece.

(*Chorus*.)

No words are sufficient whate'er can be said,
To describe all its uses aloud;
It never forsakes us, even after we are dead,
For it furnishes even our shroud.
And more—for the sheep whilst it ranges our fields.
Both our wants and our comforts supplies;
And faithful its burden it constantly yields,
And oft for our maintenance dies.

(*Chorus*.)

Success to the loom, may it constantly nourish
The heart of the weaver with food;
And thus may the wool-grower's interest still flourish,
And all work together for good.
Our clothing is made from the staple of wool,
And abroad it is oftentimes sent;
And our ships thus return both replenished and full,
For our commerce to aid we're intent.

(*Chorus*.)

But now to conclude, for my song is near ended,
And I hope it has given no offence;
If any find fault, why I hope they may mend it,
And increase both its spirit and sense.
But when at the Star in a right merry strain,
We meet to divide all stray sheep,
On the twentieth of July we'll have't o'er again,
And at Exchange all our customs we'll keep.

(*Chorus*.)

To our clippings we'll invite each good merry soul,
And the master be joyful and say,
"Be hearty and cheerful o'er a good flowing bowl,
And we'll drink till the dawn of the day."

MARDALE MEET HUNTING-SONG

Now, listen, my lads, and let the roof ring,
For a song of the chase I'm going to sing,
To Joe Bowman, the huntsman, hearty and hale,
And his far famous pack—the Hounds of Mardale.

(*Chorus*.)

Tally Ho! Tally Ho! Tally Ho! with a ding,
Let the wilds of old Mardale with "Tally Ho!" ring,
If for hunting and song you try Mardale's meet,
Than thu's lucky, me lads, ta git yame on thi feet.

Come, join the glad chorus and off with a swing,
Let the wilds of old Mardale with "Tally Ho!" ring,
Tho' the flowers of the forest are withered and gone,
Old Joe's on the mountains, so, boys, follow on,
Tho' storms sweep the mountains and thunder resounds,
Joe Bowman, despite them, will follow the hounds.

(*Chorus*.)

Now we're on Reynard's track with the hounds in full cry,
O'er hill and down dale, and then up to the sky,
To the bold beetling crags of the mist and the storm,
Where Reynard seeks earth, Hark away! 'Tis the horn.
Joe Bowman is calling, draw deeper your breath,
And let every good hunter be in at the death.

(*Chorus*.)

Now list' to the wail of that wild "Tally Ho!"
Poor Reynard has given his brush to the foe.
No more he will roam these lone mountain glens,
Or steal off at night with the farmer's old hens.
The rover is dead, the chase now is o'er,
So let us return to the Dun Bull once more.

(*Chorus*.)

We return to the Inn as the shades of night fall,
The Landlord and Molly are there in the hall,

The rafters re-echo with wild hunting lays,
And Mardale's old Inn is all in a blaze.
Old farmers, young shepherds, keen hunters—drink deep!
For to-night we are met, Mardale's revels to keep.

(*Chorus*.)

Now some take to singing and some take to cards,
While others recite rash rhymes of the bards,
Old Joe and his cronies oft meet in the snug,
Where they drink, spin their yarns, and give Molly a hug,
Then all take to washing down supper with ale,
And toasting long life to the maids of Mardale.

(*Chorus*.)

Dark and wild grows the night, and louder the din,
'Till you'd think that the Devil had taken the Inn.
With laughter and song, and calling for more,
Confused and combined in one glorious uproar,
Each neighbour, a brother, companion and friend,
What a pity this jollification must end.

(*Chorus*.)

As the flush of the dawn illumines the sky,
The roar of the travellers is starting to die.
A dozen, contented, sleep under a table,
While a few go to bed—when they find they are able.
Old Joe ever talking, unsteady yet steadfast,
Plays cards with the heroes and sits up for breakfast.

(*Chorus*.)

When breakfast is over, old Joe with a smile,
Goes off to the church in gay hunting style,
And holds up his head like one of the best,
As he walks up the aisle with the horn in his vest.
The parson looks pleased, and blurts out "What ho!"
For the parson—God bless him—is fond of old Joe.

(*Chorus*.)

(*Chorus.*)

The service now ended—all slip from the pews
And gather round Joe under Mardale's old yews,
Where they laugh at his fun as he spins them a tale,
For they're all very proud to have Joe in the dale.
The parson, all smiles, giving our hero a dig,
Sets him back to the Inn as far as the brig.

(*Chorus.*)

The day being fine and the hunters alive,
The Landlord takes Joe and his pals for a drive
By the shores of the lake to the castle o'er the ford,
Described by old Joe as "The house of the Lord,"
'Tis a castle where dwells the prince of all sport,
For Lowther's gay Earl is the very best sort.

(*Chorus.*)

They swing through the gates, past the lodge with a roar,
And drive for an hour before finding the door.
Joe hammers it hard till it flies open wide,
And remarks to the flunkey "Keep his Lordship inside,"
Then they roll through the park where the bold blustering Kaiser
After hunting one day gave old Joe a fiver.

(*Chorus.*)

They return by the long, lonesome road in the night,
By the church the yews creak and give Joseph a fright.
The fire glows as they dine on roast duck and green peas,
And the breath of the mountains deeply moans in the trees.
Then they drink till their eyes grow as heavy as lead,
Wish each other good-night and go early to bed.

(*Chorus.*)

So here's to old Joe and his rattling pack,
May we meet them next year when we hope to come back;
For of north-country hunters destined to fame
Here's another like Peel, but Bowman's his name

Here's another like Peel, but Bowman's his name,
For in life and in death where'er hunting abounds,
His spirit will ever go after the hounds.

(*Chorus*.)

When death has o'erta'en us and we are laid low
'Neath the green waving grasses, in spite of the foe
Should we hear the horn calling, we'll whisper "Hurray!"
And dream of the hunting we had in our day.
So here's to all hunters now under the sod,
For the life of a hunter's the life of a god.

(*Chorus*.)

Tally Ho! Tally Ho! Tally Ho! with a ding,
Let the wilds of old Mardale with "Tally Ho!" ring,
If for hunting and song you try Mardale's meet,
Than thu's lucky, me lads, ta git yame on thi feet.

DICK AND THE DEVIL

(*From an old ballad recovered from tradition*)

Robin, a devil, he swore a vow—
He swore by the sticks in Hell—
By the elding that crackles to mak' the glow
That warms his namesake well.

He leaped on his beast, and he rode with haste,
To mak his black oath good—
'Twas the Lord's day, and the folks did pray,
And the priest in chancel stood.

The door was wide, and in does he ride
In his clanking gear so gay;
A long keen brand he held in his hand,
Our Dickon[38] for to slay.

But Dickon, good hap, he was not there—
And Robin he rode in vain—
And the men got up, that were kneeling in prayer,
To take him by might and main.

Rob swung his sword, his steed he spurred,
He plunged right through the throng,
But the stout smith, Jock, with his old mother's crook
He gave him a woundy bang.

So hard they smote the iron pot[39]
It came down plume and all—
Then with bare head away Robin sped
And himself was fit to fall.

Robin, a devil, he way'd him home
And if for his foes he search
I think that again he will not come
To late[40] them in Kendal Church.

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[38] Colonel Richard Briggs.

[39] His helmet.

[40] Search.

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

Some illustrations were moved to facilitate page layout.

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[The end of *Shadows on the Hills*, by Nancy Price (ps. of Lilian Nancy Bache Price).]