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Title: Lynton and Lynmouth: A Pageant of Cliff & Moorland

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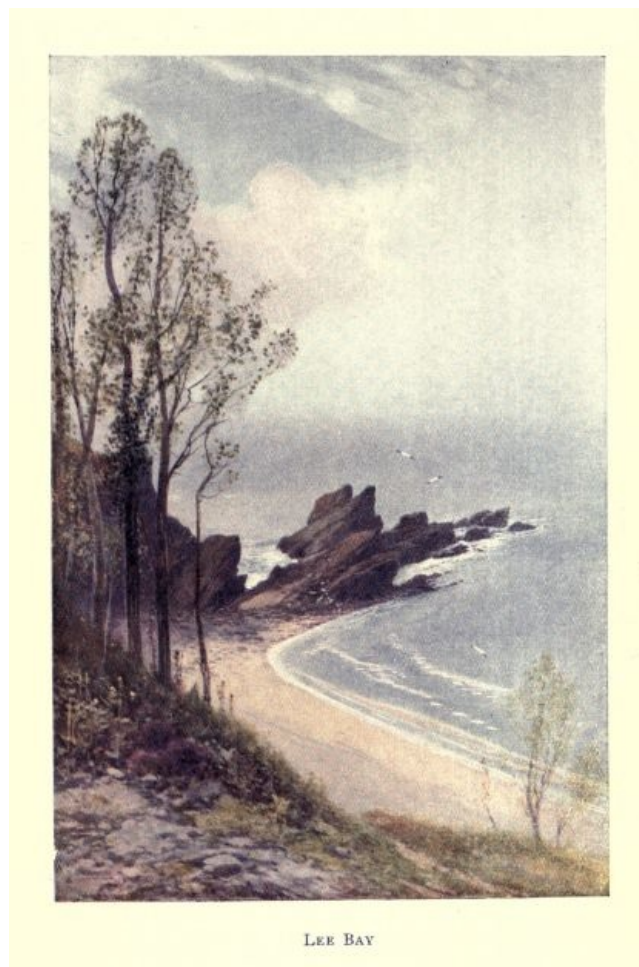
Illustrator: F. J. Widgery

Release date: September 25, 2007 [eBook #22765]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Al Haines

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK LYNTON AND LYNMOUTH: A PAGEANT OF CLIFF
& MOORLAND ***



Lee Bay

LYNTON AND LYNMOUTH A PAGEANT OF CLIFF & MOORLAND

BY

JOHN PRESLAND

**ILLUSTRATED BY
F. J. WIDGERY**

**LONDON
CHATTO & WINDUS
MCMXVII**

CONTENTS

CHAPTER

- I. [DEVONSHIRE](#)
- II. [SOME LITERARY ASSOCIATIONS](#)
- III. [BARNSTAPLE](#)
- IV. [LYNTON](#)
- V. [LYNTON \(*continued*\), COUNTISBERRY, AND NORTHWARD](#)
- VI. [PORLOCK AND EXMOOR](#)
- VII. [IN SOMERSET](#)
- VIII. [LUNDY](#)
- IX. [THE LAST STRONGHOLDS OF TRADITION](#)

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

[LEE BAY *frontispiece*](#)

[BOSSINGTON HILL](#)

[DUNKERY BEACON](#)

[THE DOONE VALLEY](#)

[WOODY BAY AND DUTY POINT, WEST LYNTON](#)

[THE SHEPHERD'S COTTAGE: DOONE VALLEY](#)

[LYNMOUTH BAY AND FORELAND](#)

[THE VALLEY OF ROCKS](#)

[HEDDON'S MOUTH, NEAR LYNTON](#)

[CASTLE ROCK, LYNTON](#)

[DUTY POINT](#)

[THE MOORS NEAR BRENDON TWO GATES](#)

[HARVEST MOON, EXMOOR](#)

[THE DOONE VALLEY IN WINTER](#)

[LYNTON: THE DEVIL'S CHEESERING](#)

[DUNKERY BEACON FROM HORNER WOODS](#)

LYNTON AND LYNMOUTH

CHAPTER I

DEVONSHIRE

The original Celtic name for Devonshire, the name used by the Britons whom Caesar found here when he landed, was probably "Dyfnaint," for a Latinized form of it, "Dumnonia" or "Damnonia," was used by Diodorus Siculus when writing of the province of Devon and Cornwall in the third century A.D. So that the name by which the men of Devon call their country is the name by which those ancient men called it who erected the stone menhirs on Dartmoor, and built the great earth-camp of Clovelly Dykes, or the smaller bold stronghold of Countisbury. At least, conjecturally this is so, and it is pleasant to believe it, for it links the Devon of our own day, the Devon of rich valleys and windy moors, the land of streams and orchards, of bleak, magnificent cliff and rock-guarded bay, of shaded combe and suave, fair villages, in an unbroken tradition of name and habitation with the men of that silent and vanished race.

Up and down the length of England, from the Land's End to the Northumbrian dales, lie the traces of these far-off peoples whose very names are faint guesses preserved only in the traditions of local speech. Strangely and suddenly we come upon the evidence of their life and death: here a circle of stones on a barren moor or bleak hilltop, there a handful of potsherds or a flint arrowhead; sometimes, indeed, though rarely, the bones of their very bodies, laid aside in earth-barrows or stone coffins for this unknown length of years. And there the most unreflective among us feels a sudden awe and wonder at the momentary vision of the profound antiquity of this land in which we live, and for a few moments all desires and aims seem futile in face of this immemorial past.

Only for a few moments, though, and then we step from the "Druid Circle," or turn away from the barrow, and the current of our everyday life takes us up once more.

Myself, I agree with Westcote. Westcote is a charming old gentleman of King James the First's time, who wrote a book called "A View of Devonshire in 1630." In Chapter I he discusses the ancient name of Devonshire much as I have done, but because in the seventeenth century you must have a Latin or a Greek at your elbow to give you respectability as a writer, he brings forward a formidable array of authorities—Ptolemaeus, Solinus Pylyhistor, and Diodorus Siculus. But, having had them make their bow before the reader, he remarks that all these gentlemen lived "far remoted" from Devonshire, and were therefore liable to error in the transmission of names; "for, in my opinion," says he, "those that declare the first names of strange countries far remoted are as the poor which wear their garments all bepatched and pieced, whereof the pieces that are added are much more in quantity of cloth than the garment before, when it was first made."

As an example of this error he instances the name of Peru. "When the Spaniards had conquered Mexico, and were purposing to proceed farther, their commander, in his manner, demanded of one of the natives he met withal what the country was named, who answered, 'Peru,' by which name it is known unto this day, which in his language was, 'I know not what you say.'"

Even more fantastic is the etymological origin of Andaluzia, for the poor countryman of this story, when addressed by the conquering Moor, merely remarked surlily to his ass, "gee-up Luzia!" or, in his own tongue, "Ando Luzia!" which was taken by the Moor in remarkable good faith, and has ever after been the name of that province.

Westcote himself inclines to the origin De (or Di) Avon, "the country of waters," "diu" being the Celtic for God, and "avon" the word for river (which it certainly is), and the whole name agreeing with the character of the country, which is a land of many waters, both great rivers and small streams. But

he goes on to observe tolerantly that each man may think as he chooses, even to deriving the word Devonshire from Dane-shire, the shire of the Danes, though it is known to have had its name before ever the first Dane landed in England, and there seems to be little likelihood, therefore, but only "a sympathie in letters." He concludes his discussion by the couplet:

"To no man am I so much thrall
To swear he speaketh truth in all."

And with this tolerant and unpedantic frame of mind I am in hearty accord.

But if Caesar and the Romans, who for several centuries had a station at Exeter, their great "camp on the Exe," called the wide province of Devon and Cornwall "Damnonia," what did the Phoenicians call it when they traded Cornish tin along the Mediterranean, and even, it is said, into remote Africa, and ran their galleys into the little bay of Combe Martin, to lade with the silver and lead which can still be mined there, and which they may have carried to the old buried palaces of Knossos, to be fashioned into amulets and trinkets by those Cretans who built the dancing-floor of Ariadne and the maze of the Minotaur? That is a question that we cannot answer; all the busy speech of all those peoples is silent; only the old mine-workings remain, and the sacked and buried palaces of Crete, and a Phoenician ingot-mould fished up in Plymouth Harbour, and fitting, so 'tis said, an ingot which has been found in Central Africa.

With the coming of the Romans comes, as always, a little light, for they were a shrewd and mighty people, who liked their house set in order, and tabulated and recorded and organized, and have left traces of their orderliness on the face of the land, and the speech of the people, and the laws of the nations in three continents. They subdued Damnonia, and held it from their armed camp at Exeter, where Roman coins, pottery, brick, and inscriptions are found abundantly. Perhaps also they held and transformed several of the great earth-camps for their own uses, such as the Clovelly Dykes or the escarpments at Ilfracombe, built by the Britons or some earlier people. But the Romans do not appear to have settled in Devonshire as they did in East Anglia and the Midlands; I believe there are few traces of their dwellings, villas, roads, or baths, beyond Exeter in the West.

When their rule weakened and declined in the fifth century, certainly Damnonia would be one of the first provinces over which their jurisdiction waned, because of its inaccessibility, its deep wooded valleys, the wastes of Exmoor and Dartmoor, and the danger of its coasts; and we may well suppose that the old Celtic traditions and customs continued here but little modified by the Roman occupation.

Then at some time in the fifth and sixth centuries the Saxons came, but they seem to have come to Devonshire more peaceably than in their fierce raids on the south and east coasts; they came as Christians to the Christian British, and though they conquered them, they did not drive them out, nor compel them into mountain fastnesses, as the earlier Saxon conquerors drove the British into Wales. So that in Devon, though to a lesser degree than in Cornwall, and still less than in Wales, there is a larger admixture of original Celtic blood than in Kent, Sussex, Essex, and the counties of the Saxon heptarchy. But, according to Westcote—who is, for all his discursiveness, no bad authority—the Britons and the Saxons came to loggerheads; for the government being Saxon, and the laws and the language, the poor Britons could neither hear nor make themselves understood, and so took arms against the settlers, and were by them driven "beyond the river now called Taw-meer" (*i.e.*, Tamar), and so out of Devon into Cornwall. This was done by King Athelstan, after he had beaten the Welsh at Hereford and subdued the Picts and Scots.

From this time forth, says Westcote, the Britons began to be called "Corn-Welshmen or Cornishmen," and he gives an elaborate etymology of the name, but adds that he need speak no further of Cornwall, "being eased of that labour by the industrious labours of the right worthy and worshipful gentleman Richard Carew, who ... hath very eloquently described it."

The Saxons, as we know, led a struggling and turbulent existence for five or six centuries in contest with the Danes. Probably the full total of the misery inflicted on this country by the Danish raids can never be reckoned, but that they crippled and exhausted Saxon England by their frequency and the great duration of time over which they extended is apparent by the advance made in civilization in the short period between the breaking of their power and the coming of the Normans. Devonshire was not spared by them, and the cliffs of Teignmouth are said to be blood-red since a great slaughter of the Danes in 970. Certainly the Saxon Chronicle records contests bloody and pitiless enough, and tradition lingers still in many places where history has no record. In Devon, for instance, wherever the dwarf-elder grows folk say that Danish blood has been spilt, and that a group of these trees marks the site of an old battlefield; indeed, the dwarf-elder is still called "Danes-elder" in the West Country.

Between Bideford and Appledore, on this northern coast of Devon, stands Kenwith Castle—long called Hennaborough or Henry Hill—under whose walls the great Alfred and his son met the Danes under Hubba, and defeated them with great slaughter about the year 877. The English captured the famous standard of the Danes, the Raven, which was "wrought in needlework by the daughters of Lothbroc," and which had magical properties—clapping its wings when defeat was at hand. The remnant of the Danish force, carrying their wounded leader with them, retreated to their ships, and Hubba died there on the beach, and was buried by his followers before they fled aboard, under a great rock called Hubba's Stone, and now in corrupt form Hubblestone, a name which still clings near the spot, though probably the rock of Hubba is now swept by the sea. But under this rock he lies, with his weapons and trophies about him and his crown of gold on his head, until the last trump shall rouse him.



BOSSINGTON HILL FROM PORLOCK HILL

Bossington Hill from Porlock Hill

The grave of Hubba lies under the sea, like King Arthur's lost country of Lyonesse, where the fisher-folk say they can hear the bells ring from the drowned churches as they sail over them on still summer mornings; but near Porlock the sea has yielded the strip of land it has stolen from Bideford, and the Danish long-ships rode what are now the green fields around Porlock.

That it was so the very name Porlock shows, for Port-locan means an enclosed place for ships, under which name it is mentioned twice in the Saxon Chronicle. So the sea has retreated a mile and a half since the Danish raid of A.D. 918, when they entered the Severn, harried Wales, and landed at Porlock, only to be beaten back to their ships again by the Saxons.

Harold, the great English Harold who was slain at the Battle of Hastings, made a raid from Ireland in 1052. He ran into Porlock with nine ships, landed and went several miles inland, killing and looting, and returned in safety. But this filibustering expedition, so greatly to his discredit, and so unworthy to find a place among all his other acts, was almost certainly done in anger and dictated by personal revenge. For Porlock, which was plainly an important harbour and one of the seats of the Saxon Kings—at least, it is mentioned as having a "King's house" there—was the property of Algar, the son of Leofric, Earl of Mercia. But Harold was the son of Godwin, Earl of Kent, and Kent and Mercia were old and bitter enemies, and it was due to the intrigues of Mercia that Earl Godwin was banished, and Harold went with him to Ireland. Then, fourteen years later, William came to an England weakened by internal strife, and Harold was slain at Hastings and the Saxon lords dispossessed of their lands and goods, which were given to the foreigner. Here the Domesday Book, with its plain bare statements, gives us a grim record of the Conquest. All, or almost all, the Saxon names of the overlords disappear, and the Norman take their place, continuing down to our own day. This same Porlock was taken from Algar, son of Leofric, and given to Baldwin Redvers. Countisbury was taken from Ailmer, and held by William himself. Lynton was taken from Ailward Touchstone—it is interesting to find the name of Shakespeare's fool in Domesday Book—and held by William. Combe Martin (then called "Comba") was taken from Aluric and held by Jubel. Bideford and Clovelly were taken from Brihtric and given to Queen Matilda.

There is a curious and romantic story about this Brihtric, son of Aelfgar. He was one of the most powerful of the Saxon Thanes, and seems to have owned lands not only in Devon, but in Dorset, Somerset, and even in Gloucester, though the latter entries in Domesday may refer to another Brihtric, who was not the son of Aelfgar. When he was a young man, and before the marriage of Matilda to William of Normandy, Brihtric was sent by King Edward on a diplomatic mission to the Count of Flanders, Matilda's father, and there he met Matilda, who fell in love with him and offered herself in marriage. He refused her, and she married William; but later, when the cycle of events put her old lover in the power of her husband, she sued for and obtained the grant of many of his lands. Brihtric himself was seized at his house at Hanley, in Worcestershire, on the very day that Wulfstan had hallowed his chapel, and sent to Winchester, where he died in prison.

This story, which would have made a stirring theme for Sir Walter Scott, is found in the chronicles of Tewkesbury, in the Anglo-Norman chronicles, and in Wace, the old rhyming historian of the twelfth century. Here are a few lines of the old French version:

"Laquele jadsî, quant fu pucele,
 Ama un conte dangleterre,
 Brictrich Mau le oi nomer
 Apres le rois ki fu riche ber;
 A lui la pucele enuera messenger
 Pur sa amour a lui procurer;

Meis Brictrich Maude refusa,
Dune ele m'lt se coruca,
Hastivement mer passa
E a Willam bastard se maria.

which we may put into English so:

"Who formerly, as a maiden,
Loved an English count,
Brihtric Maude heard him named;
And who, save the King, than he was richer?
To him the maiden sent a messenger
To obtain his love;
But Brihtric refused Matilda,
Whereat she waxed very angry,
Hastily passed over the sea
And married William the bastard."

But if this is one of the stories which is preserved to us, with its fierce love, and its fierce hate, and its unsparing revenge, and all the human hopes and acts and motives of which it gives but a bare hint—the pride of Brihtric perhaps, or perhaps his love for another woman, for an alliance with the Count of Flanders might satisfy an ambitious man—how many tragic dramas, how many stories of cruelty and oppression and exile and mourning, lie behind the bare short records of the Domesday Book? All these sunny towns of North Devon and Somerset—Lynton, Crinton, Porlock, Countisbury, Paracombe, Challacombe, and north to Dunster, and south to Barnstaple and Bideford—all these wooded or wind-swept spots, which look as if they could have had no history, save of market-days and fairs, had their individual drama in that fierce annexation.

Sometimes, perhaps, they suffered hardly at all. Their Saxon lord lived elsewhere; he was slain or banished, and they came imperceptibly under the Norman rule. But more often, I imagine, particularly on the smaller estates, the lord dwelt in patriarchal intercourse with his tenants, with that freedom of speech and right of judgment, which, in "Ivanhoe," Scott draws in the household and retinue of Cedric; and the eviction was bitter, and the rule of the new lord oppressive and hateful.

Domesday Book was compiled in 1086, twenty years after the landing of William, so that a new generation was already growing up, and the old scars were beginning to heal. Here is a translation of the entry on Lynton:

"William has a manor called Lintona, which Ailward Touchstone held on the day on which King Edward was alive and dead, and with this manor was added formerly another called Incrintona, which Algar held. These are held by William for one manor, and they rendered geld for one hide.... Lintona is worth four pounds and Incrintona three pounds. When William received them Lintona was worth 20 shillings and Incrintona 15...."

It is interesting to note how all property throughout England had advanced in value since "the day that King Edward was alive and dead"; in the old English, "on pam timan pe Eadward cing was cucu and dead"—*i.e.*, on the fifth of January 1066—which is a clear intimation that the firm rule of the Conqueror had increased the material prosperity of the country in one generation.

After the Conquest there was peace in Devonshire for many years, though Exeter was besieged by Stephen for three months in 1137, when he and Matilda, the mother of Henry II, rent England with a war of succession; but the young Henry came to the throne in 1152, and ruled wisely and strongly for thirty-five years. Under him Devon prospered, as did all England, and the cloth-making industry, which in Westcote's time, in the seventeenth century, was so notable a part of the wealth of Devon, probably had its first considerable beginnings in this reign.

But Henry II is remembered less for his wise laws and far-sighted government than for the murder of Thomas à Becket, which clouded his latter years and brought his enemies—his wife and his son among them—swarming about his ears. This northern coast of Devon is linked with that dark crypt in Canterbury where Becket fell in the sacerdotal robes of High Mass; for it was a Tracy who was one of the four knights who spurred from London to rid Henry "of this turbulent priest," and the Tracys owned Lynton, Countisbury, and Morthoe. It is to Morthoe that Tracy is supposed to have come after the murder, with the curse upon him which descended to his family—that, wherever they went,

"the Tracys
Have always the wind and the rain in their faces"—

and to have lived out the bitter end of his life with the horror of sacrilege in his heart. There is a monument in the church of Morthoe of William de Tracy, but it is of early fourteenth-century date, and belongs to a descendant of King Henry's knight, who was rector of the parish. A later Tracy was Baron of Barnstaple, and was appointed Governor of the island of Lundy in the reign of Henry III.

Nearly a century later Edward II, flying from the armies of his Queen and the turbulent barons, took ship for Lundy, but was driven back to Wales by contrary winds. And of this event a poem was made in the reign of James I, which is quoted by Westcote as written by a "modern poet," though he does not give us the name. The verse still retains a smack of the Elizabethan diction—not the Shakespeare magic, indeed, but the euphuistic, antithetical, fantastic balance of phrases:

"To Lundy which in Sabrin's mouth doth stand,
Carried with hope (still hoping to find ease),
Imagining it were his native land,
England itself; Severn, the narrow seas;
With this conceit, poor soul, himself doth please.
And sith his rule is over-ruled by men,
On birds and beasts he'll king it once again."

Devon took its unhappy share in the Wars of the Roses, and Perkin Warbeck besieged Exeter in 1497, but unsuccessfully, like most other exploits of that unlucky adventurer. Fifty years later the West rose in arms against Henry VIII, in support of the "old religion," and to protest against the dissolution of the monasteries; but the rising was put down, and Henry took and subdued Exeter, and carried through his bold and often ruthless policy.

But it is in the reign of Elizabeth that Devon takes on the special glamour with which it is still associated in most minds. For it was the sixteenth century which gave to England such men as Richard and John Hawkins, Adrien and Humphrey Gilbert, John Davies—that sailor friend of Adrien Gilbert's who, inspired by him, made the first dark voyage into the Polar regions, and traded with the Esquimaux, as told in Hakluyt's "Voyages"—and Sir Richard Grenville, with his "men of Bideford in Devon," with whom he fought the *Revenge* single-handed against the fifty and three Spanish galleons in that last, greatest fight of all; and Sir Walter Raleigh, a philosopher among courtiers, a poet among princes, statesman, dreamer, adventurer, who planned nobly and executed daringly, and failed more greatly than other men succeed. Millais has drawn him for us, in his boyhood, sitting on the beach at Budleigh Salterton, with the wind blowing his hair round his sensitive, eager face, hugging his knees as he listens to the stories of the sailor with the bright parrot-feathers in his hat, one of the men, perhaps, who sailed with Frobisher or terrible John Hawkins, round the world to the far-off coasts of adventure, the lands of gold and spices. It is to Raleigh, and to his half-brother, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, that we owe the first colony of America, "Virginia," called so by Raleigh from the Virgin Queen, in the compliment of his day—to them is due the praise of having seen that "colonization, trade, and the enlargement of Empire, were all more important for the welfare of England than the acquisition of gold," and this in an age which was dazzled by the facilities of wealth lying ready to the greedy hand in that "New World."

And this mind, so daring, so original, so diverse, which could turn a sonnet or design a battleship (for the *Ark Raleigh*, built after his plans, was admittedly the best ship of our fleet that met the Armada), which had experienced the favour and disfavour of princes in the fullest degree, which had known triumph and discouragement beyond the ordinary measure of humanity, turned in the last dark years of imprisonment to a steady contemplation of human activity, and, largely conceiving here, as in all else, planned a "History of the World." Let his own noble words be his epitaph:

"O eloquent, just, and mighty Death! whom none could advise, thou hast persuaded; what none have dared, thou hast done; and whom all the world have flattered, thou only hast cast out of the world and despised; thou hast drawn together all the far-stretched greatness, all the pride, cruelty and ambition of man, and covered it all over with these two narrow words, 'Hic jacet.'"

And then there was Drake—Drake, whose name perhaps overshadows all other names in Devon; Drake, who

"was playing a rubber of bowls
When the great Armada came;"

but, being told of the sighting of the fleet, remarked that "they must wait their turn, good souls," and continued his game; Drake, who, the year before the sailing of the Armada, "singed the King of Spain's beard" most mightily, going up and down the coasts of Spain and Portugal, plundering and burning the ships in their very harbours; who sailed round the world, with the sun for "fellow traveller," as an epitaph under his portrait in the Guildhall says of him; who, on the first independent expedition which he led to America, received a dangerous wound in his attack on Nombre de Dios, but concealed it from his men, and led them to the public treasury, telling them "that he had brought them to the mouth of the treasury of the world," and then fainted over the great bars of silver and gold, and when they took him up he was losing "so much blood as filled his very footsteps in the sand;" Drake, who has become a legend and a myth in Devon, so that the country-people say that he brought water from Dartmoor to Plymouth, by compelling a stream to follow his horse's heels all the way into the town; who, like King Arthur and Barbarossa, is not dead, but will return again to his country if his people in their need strike on his drum and call him.

But beyond and behind all these great names, which ring in our ears like martial music, are the nameless crowd of Devon men who sailed with them, and fought with them, and worked with them, and loved them. Men from Bideford and Appledore and Barnstaple, from Teignmouth and Budleigh and Dartmouth, from every little harbour along the bold north coast, from every creek and bay of the south, from the sheltered villages among their trees, from the wind-swept, hilly little towns, from the busy quayside or the lonely farm, came the men whose courage and whose will, whose love of profit and greater love of adventure, gave a lustre to England in the "golden days of Elizabeth."

Those days passed, and were followed presently by the unhappy years of the great Civil Wars. It was perhaps not unfitting that a Grenville—Sir Bevil Grenville—led an army against the Parliamentary troops in the Battle of Lansdown Hill, though it was an army of Cornishmen he led, and not of Devonshire men, for the Grenvilles were then living at their Cornish home of Stowe. Sir Bevil was killed in battle, but Anthony Payne, his servant, a great giant of a man, and a true friend to his

master, set Sir Bevil's young son upon his father's horse, and bade him lead his father's men to victory, as, had he lived, his father would have done. Afterwards Anthony Payne brought Sir Bevil's body back to Stowe, and he wrote to Lady Grenville a letter which deserves to be recorded for its true and simple dignity:

"HONOURED MADAM,—

"Ill news flieth apace: the heavy tidings hath no doubt already travelled to Stowe that we have lost our blessed master by the enemies' advantage. You must not, dear lady, grieve too much for your noble spouse. You know, as we all believe, that his soul was in heaven before his bones were cold. He fell, as he did often tell us he wished to die, for the good Stewart cause, for his country and his King. He delivered to me his last commands, and with such tender words for you and for his children as are not to be set down with my poor pen, but must come to your ears upon my best heart's breath.... I am coming down with the mournfullest burden that ever a poor servant did bear, to bring the great heart that is cold to Kilkhampton vault. Oh, my lady, how shall I ever brook your weeping face?..."

This perhaps, is Cornish history and not Devonshire, except that the name of Grenville is so inseparably linked in our minds with Devon.

During the Royalist wars from 1642-1650 Exeter was twice besieged by the Parliamentarians; Ilfracombe twice changed hands, in 1644 being taken by Doddington for the Royalists, and two years later falling to Fairfax after his capture of Barnstaple; Tiverton also was besieged by the Royalists, though it seems to have held within itself the two irreconcilable factions. But it was not in Devon that the fiercest battles of that time were fought, nor the greatest and bitterest disunion prevailed. Of the subsequent history of Devon I shall say little. The unhappy expedition of the Duke of Monmouth landed at Lyme Regis, just on the borders of Dorset and Devon, and he himself was joyfully received in Exeter; but it was in Somerset that the battle of Sedgemoor was lost, and Somerset that suffered chiefly from the Bloody Assizes.

Let us rather turn to the Devon of to-day, realizing with thankfulness that the traditions of Drake and Frobisher, of Grenville and Hawkins, still hold; that the heirs of the men who put out in their frail ships for the New World, now buffet round our wild coasts in minesweeper or trawler, destroyer or old cargo tubs, on a far more grim adventure. Without the hope of gain, without the spur of glory, from every port and harbour, from every creek and bay and inlet of our coasts comes the patient, silent, heroic service of the men of the sea.

And on many a hasty grave, in the shot-riddled mud of Flanders, or on the barren beaches of Gallipoli or the ruined lands of Babylon, might that poem of Sir Henry Newbolt's which he calls "April on Waggon Hill" be set up as a fitting epitaph:

"Lad, and can you rest now,
There beneath your hill?
Your hands are on your breast now,
But is your heart so still?
'Twas the right death to die, lad,
A gift without regret,
But unless truth's a lie, lad,
You dream of Devon yet.

"Ay, ay, the year's awaking,
The fire's among the ling,
The beechen hedge is breaking,
The curlew's on the wing;
Primroses are out, lad,
On the high banks of Lee,
And the sun stirs the trout, lad,
From Brendon to the sea.

"I know what's in your heart, lad—
The mare he used to hunt,
And her blue market-cart, lad,
With posies tied in front.
We miss them from the moor road,
They're getting old to roam,
The road they're on's a sure road
And nearer, lad, to home.

"Your name, the name they cherish?
'Twill fade, lad, 'tis true:
But stone and all may perish
With little loss to you.
While fame's fame you're Devon, lad,
The Glory of the West;
Till the roll's called in heaven, lad,
You may well take your rest."

CHAPTER II

SOME LITERARY ASSOCIATIONS

From Barnstaple to Dunster, and from Tiverton to Lynton, this beautiful piece of country is peculiarly rich in literary associations. Nor is this to be wondered at when we consider the variety and the loveliness of the scenery, the great open, heathery wastes of Exmoor, the wind-swept cliffs and highlands, the fair and luxuriant valleys where the pure bright waters of these hill-fed streams flow through a green tunnel of overarching trees, making a fertile paradise of flower and fern in their course. And the magnificent bold rocks and forelands of the coast, the streams broken into feathery spray falling down the precipitous face of the cliffs, creek and gully and cave, the wave-washed golden sands of the bays, or the line of foam fretting ever at the foot of these granite crags. And beyond is the sea; from every hilltop the eye turns to it, in the sheltered orchards the air is salt with it, the thunder of its great breakers on the coast can be heard far inland, an undercurrent beneath the singing of birds and the hum of bees; it is never far from the eyes or from the mind, blue as faery under a June sun, when the wheeling gulls are dazzling white flashes above it, broken into greys and greens and purples by the sudden hail of quick spring squalls, a heaving grey waste of waters under steady rain, or a wild and elemental force, terrible and splendid, under the fury of a gale.

It is a land for poets and dreamers, a land to touch the fancy and stir the imagination of men, a land of beauty and of adventure.

It will not, therefore, be without interest to pick up thread after thread by which the ports and hamlets, woods and waterfalls, are woven into the history of our literature.



Dunkerry Beacon

We find a trace, firstly, of the chief of poets and greatest name of all—Shakespeare—in the municipal records of Barnstaple, where under the date 1605 an entry records: "Geven to the Kynges players being in the town this year xs." That is all, and Shakespeare is not named; but we know that he was associated with the Kynges Players for many years, and Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps, who is a well-known authority on this subject, asserts that at this date Shakespeare was still one of the company. It is a shadowy trace enough, but in view of the bare outlines of the life and death of this man, whose name is almost universal and whose history is almost completely obscure, we seize on any tiny fact that may help to bring before us so wonderful a personality. That Shakespeare was in Barnstaple, went up and down Boutport Street, the old street that half encircles the town, running "about the port," that he acted here, lodged here, if only for a week or two, talked in the tavern and walked in the old town, with that observant inner eye which noted the veriest detail of life, the swing of a flower, the swallow under the eaves, the idiosyncrasy of dress or gesture in the passers-by, and at the same time comprehended and recorded the springs of action, the fumbling thoughts, the consciences, the strivings, and the pretences, of the world of men and women that moved around him—that Shakespeare was, once in his short and wonderful life, actually in Barnstaple gives even to the most unreflective an interest and a romance to this town.

It was near Barnstaple, also, and during Shakespeare's lifetime, that Thomas Westcote, gentleman,

was born at Westcote, in the parish of Marwood, in 1567. He wrote, towards the end of his life, a description of the country called "A View of Devon," and a genealogy of the principal families. It was not published until 1845, but is well worthy of being preserved, not only for its antiquarian interest, as being the earliest account of Devonshire, its agriculture and its industries, but also for the pleasure of its quaint turns of phrase, the ponderous classic authorities which he marshals to support a simple fact—and there are indeed some strange wild-fowl among his authorities—and above all for a gentle and unobtrusive humour which seasons all the narrative. Westcote gives a list of the fish afforded by the Devon seas (a very imperfect list by modern computation), and adds:

"It might be much more enlarged, but your server shall stand no longer at the dresser, lest the first dish be stale ere the last come to the table. Yet, notwithstanding, I will here confess that had you supped with Aulus Gellius, the Roman Emperor, you might say my bill came much too short; yea! by 1800; for as Suetonius, in lib. 9, and Josephus, lib. 5, alledge, he was served at one meal with 2,000; (if you please to believe there are so many species of fish;) but he had indeed a large country to make his provision in, the whole then known world.... But for the other supper of 7,000 divers kinds of fowls, I will not undertake to name them here, nor in Africa, and Asia, with all the assistance that Gesnerus can afford me."

This is a style without hurry, indeed, in a peaceable rambling world, and one can imagine Westcote, with his pointed beard and his tall hat of the fashion of James I., taking a little walk in the afternoon sun after having spent the morning with his quill-pen and his calf-bound, close-printed classics—Suetonius, and Gesnerus, and Diodorus Siculus. His book is interspersed with little rhymes, couplets or longer verses, in the style of the "Arabian Nights" stories, and which George Meredith in the "Shaving of Shagpat" has used with such quaint effect; on every subject and for every statement Westcote has an authority and an aphorism, whether it is of "Day labourers in Tin-works, and Hirelings in Husbandry," of fishermen or merchantmen, of trade or agriculture—"for, as Horace speaketh," says he,

"Who much do crave, of much have need;
But well is he whom God indeed,
Though with a sparing hand, doth feed."

Or again, speaking of "the commodities this country yields":

"England hath store of bridges, hills, and wool,
Of churches, wells, and women beautiful."

He is no mere antiquarian, however, and quotes Chaucer and Robert of Gloucester as well as Theocritus and Horace; he is seriously perturbed at the decline of agriculture in Devonshire; in spite of the fertility of the soil, he says, it yields insufficiency of bread, beer, and victual, to feed itself, for which the country has to have recourse to Wales or Ireland, so much so that in 1610 there was 60,000 pounds of corn brought into one harbour alone. The reason for this is the increase in trades, so that ... "the meanest sort of people will now rather place their children to some of these mechanical trades than to husbandry"; in spite, also, of the almost sacred character of husbandry, which was clearly recognized in "elder times," so that even the rudest and most savage peoples respected ploughmen and tillers of the soil in time of war. He then quotes some melancholy verses of Virgil, and gives the whole chapter a twist of humour by ending up with—"But not a word of this in any case, especially that I told you so; and we will proceed to the next and speak of mines."

I will also "proceed to the next," and speak of Bishop Jewel, a fellow-countryman of Westcote's, and one about whom he speaks in the highest praise: "a perfect rich gem and true jewel indeed ... so that if anywhere the observation of Chrysostom be true, that there lies a great hidden treasure in names, surely it may rightly be said to be here: grace in John, and eminent perfection in jewel."

John Jewel was born at Berrynarbor, near Ilfracombe, in 1522; he went to Merton College, Oxford, where he had for tutor John Parkhurst, under whom he early acquired a bent towards Protestantism. After the accession of Mary he allowed himself, in a moment of weakness, to sign an adherence to the Romish faith, but his recantation weighed upon his conscience, he fled to the Continent, and there publicly withdrew it. In the reign of Elizabeth he returned to England, and was one of the Protestant doctors chosen to dispute before her at Westminster with a like number of Catholic divines. He became Bishop of Salisbury in 1560, and held that office till his death in 1571. His chief work was an "Apology for the Anglican Church"; and his chief opponent was Thomas Harding, who was born at Comb Martin, the next parish, and who, like Jewel, went to the grammar-school at Barnstaple in his early boyhood, so that they were near neighbours and dear enemies. "As I cannot well take a hair from your lying beard, so I wish I could pluck malice from your blasphemous heart," says Harding to Jewel, in that savage personal invective that religious controversialists have permitted themselves in all ages. Jewel does not seem ever to have answered in this unworthy strain, and the singular purity of his life, the sincerity of his opinions, and a certain lovable quality to which all his contemporaries bear witness, gave even his political adversaries a personal attachment to him. "I should love thee, Jewel, wert thou not a Zwinglian," cries one. "In thy faith thou art a heretic, but sure in the life thou art an angel"—surely the most splendid tribute that a man can have, when we consider the bitterness and animosity bred by a difference of religious belief. To all who loved him—and it seems to have been his whole generation—his name gave the opportunity of affectionate puns, quips, and little epigrams; to Queen Elizabeth he was "my Jewel," and the epitaph Westcote makes upon him is that of St. Gregory upon St. Basil: "His words were thunder, and his life lightning," and his memory "a fragrant sweet-smelling odour, blown abroad ... throughout the whole kingdom."

We may find a lingering trace at Barnstaple, also, before going farther north, of another eager

spirit and earnest reformer, Shelley, whose gift of poetry we accept, and whose quick courage we profit by, in a world of thought where we breathe a little freer because of his efforts and ideals, while we still despise or half shamefacedly apologize for the strivings and struggles of his life. He prevailed upon Syle, a printer of Barnstaple, to publish his "Letter to Lord Ellenborough," which was in effect a violent and heated attack upon this Judge for the sentence he had passed on the publisher of Tom Paine's "Age of Reason," which was considered by Lord Ellenborough and that generation as a dangerous and revolutionary document, subversive of the political morals of the world. Those were the days of the French Revolution, and it seemed to many, as honest as Shelley, that the whole social fabric was threatening to crumble before the rising flood of anarchy, bloodshed, and disorder. Syle was prevailed upon to withdraw the greater number of copies—it speaks much for his courage and convictions that he ever published it—and Shelley found it advisable to leave Devon.

For Shelley had been living at Lynton during the early days of his ill-fated first marriage with the Harriet; the cottage where they lived can still be seen, though much altered and modernized since the unhappy young man and woman tried to work out together a means of right living and mutual happiness, and made so tragic a failure of it.

It was to Lynton, too, that Wordsworth, his sister Dorothy, and Coleridge, came on a visit, and were so ravished by the beauty of the place that they were nearly decided to settle here, and might have founded a school of Devon poets instead of Lake poets. It was at Lynton, also, that "The Ancient Mariner" was planned, to pay for the expenses of the holiday, and was begun by Wordsworth and Coleridge together, though there is actually very little of Wordsworth's work in it, and the spirit of it, the air of mystery and the sense of brooding elemental forces with which its simplest lines are somehow invested, belongs to Coleridge alone, and to that strange genius of his, which only twice or thrice in his life—in "Christabel," "The Ancient Mariner," and "Kubla Khan"—produced poetry of inimitable, strange beauty and wonder.

If Lynton is beautiful now, with its new houses and hotels, and that air of snugness that prosperity gives to places and persons, the poetic appeal of its loveliness to Wordsworth and Coleridge can be well imagined when only the low-browed, thatched little cottages clung to the steep cliff-paths and clustered round the small harbour, and from the surrounding heights and hills one looked down upon nothing but green valleys, and from the valleys one looked up to the bare cliffs and crags.

Southey also was drawn to this corner of England by the fame of its beauty; on one occasion, when walking across Exmoor, he was driven to take refuge at Porlock from the heavy rain, and visitors to the Ship Inn are still shown the corner by the wide old fireplace where the poet, presumably, dried his knees and wrote the ode which begins with the following inadequate description:

"Porlock, thy verdant vale, so fair to sight,
Thy lofty hills, with fern and furze so brown,
Thy waters that so musical roll down
Thy woody glens, the traveller with delight
Recalls to memory, and the channel grey
Circling it, surging in thy level bay."

Then, George Eliot and Lewes discovered this north-west coast, and came to Ilfracombe, with which they were delighted; and the unconventional lady, with her broad-brimmed straw hat tied under her chin (in the days when people wore bonnets), was soon a familiar enough figure, to be seen scrambling over the rocks of the bay which is haunted by the spirit of Tracy, or looking for seaweed and anemones in the clear rock-pools at low-tide. Ilfracombe then, in the middle of the last century, kept much of its original character as a seaport of importance, which in its day had sent representatives to a shipping council in the fourteenth century, had contributed six ships towards the Siege of Calais—at a time when Liverpool was only of sufficient size to send one—and had had enough strategical value to be the scene of a projected French invasion under Napoleon. Already Ilfracombe was beginning to be, however, what it now is pre-eminently, a "holiday resort." It was patronized by royalty, and, following royalty, by "the aristocracy and military," who came to enjoy the "overwhelming charms" Nature poured forth here "with a tremendous and prolific grandeur which we shall not pretend to describe," as Mr. Cornish mellifluously exclaims in his "Rise and Progress of the Towns in North Devon." In the seventies the present German Emperor, then Prince William of Prussia, was sent here with his tutors; and there is a story, preserved with great pride, of a fight on the beach between him and a bathing-machine boy, at whose father's property the Prince was throwing stones. An account of this historic battle is preserved in a doggerel ballad, printed and sold locally, and composed Heaven knows where, which is called "Tapping the War-Lord's Claret: Why Kaiser Bill hates England."

"When Kaiser Will'um was a y'uth
He com'd t' Combe one day,
And at the big hotel out there
He stopped on holiday. . . ."

He went bathing in Rapparee Cove, and when his tutors were out of sight began blazing at the numbers on the boxes, though warned by "young Alfie Price" not to; and after a wordy altercation the Kaiser knocked down Alfie, who got up and went for him "just like a Devon bull."

"He knacked the Kaiser on the nose,
And tapped the ry'al blid. . . ."

The tutors came up and intervened, and Alf was given thirty shillings to keep the matter quiet; but

Kaiser Bill swore implacable hate of the English, because of the affront, built his Dreadnoughts and drilled his army to avenge the insult of Rapparee Cove upon the English nation.

Local publications are always, I think, of some interest, even when they are as rough and simple a doggerel as the above; and there are two magazines, printed and published at Barnstaple in the early years of the nineteenth century, and which may be seen in the Athenaeum Library of the town. They are the *Lundy Review* and *The Cave*, and they contain stories, poetry, puns, epigrams, acrostics, all with the mild, faint flavour of a curate's tea-party in a cathedral town, and yet invested with a kind of charm by the old-fashioned type, the yellowing paper, and a small, dim picture—like the images of ourselves and our furniture which we see in those old, round, diminishing mirrors—of the life of a century ago. There is poetry of the Lake School fashion, exhortations to Bideford and Woody Bay, to Lynton or "The Beauties of Devon"; there is more poetry of the Byronic fashion, fierce and satiric invective (yet never, be it understood, transgressing the bounds of decency or good manners!) against the lady of the poet's affection; there are stories, in which love and virtue triumph over temptation and evil-doing; there is, of course, at least one story of a blind girl, and one of a consumptive; there is much harmless punning, and in the acrostics which the ladies of 1820 so much loved are fantastically woven the names of the handsome young women of Barnstaple whose only other record is now upon a tombstone.

There is a strong tone of "patriotism," if by that we mean a dignified contempt for foreign manners and customs, foreign thought and foreign speech. I call to mind one article, where the writer is good-humouredly but supremely contemptuous of the French, because of their manner of pronouncing classical names. What can you expect of a nation, says he, for whom Titus Livy is no better than a "tom-tit-liv-ing" in a hedge, and Marcus Aurelius, the Emperor philosopher, becomes "Mark O'Rail," a mere beggerly, abusive Irishman?

This insularity of ours, which appears in a comic aspect in this article in *The Cave*, continued throughout the nineteenth century, and withstood the shock of the Crimea and the Indian Mutiny without apparently being in any way shaken; it is breaking now, indeed, under the humiliations of the South African War, when we were made to feel our isolation in Europe, and under the stress of this greatest war of all, when at last we feel and say that we are proud to stand with the nations of the Continent in a common cause.

But, in the nineteenth century, not only was our insular prejudice extreme, but there was a pride in our very prejudice, which made it seem hopelessly fixed and stultified. There is a trail of it through all but the greatest writings of that time, Tennyson was not without it, Charles Kingsley, Froude.... To the novel it became actually a stock-in-trade, and as such it was used by Henry Kingsley in his novel of "Ravenshoe." He was a younger brother of Charles, and his life was as restless and adventurous as a novel. He was, besides being an author, an explorer to the Australian goldfields—from which he came back rich in observation of men and manners, but without having made a pecuniary fortune—the editor of a paper, the *Edinburgh Daily Review*, and a correspondent in the Franco-Prussian War. He was a prolific and too hasty writer, but his novel of "Ravenshoe," whose scene is principally laid on the northern strip of Somerset coast, bordering the Bristol Channel, and which was his own favourite among his works, is considered by many critics to reach a high level, and to stand comparison with the work of his more famous brother. In the *Academy* of 1901 the following tribute to the book appeared under the initials C.K.B.: "I first read 'Ravenshoe' at that period when absolute romance and absolute fact have to live together; and very turbulent partners they make. The appeal of the book was instant and permanent. Even now, after a dozen years I cannot read the story unmoved.... Each point holds me of old, by sheer force of its human presentation, its resourceful dialogue, its unwearied vitality."

I first read "Ravenshoe" in this year of 1917, and to me the world seems to have travelled so far since its publication in 1862, that its aims, its ideals, and its point of view, are hardly credible. Through it all runs that facile spirit of optimism which seems to me to have distinguished much of the thought of the mid-Victorian era, that air of "All is for the best in this best of all possible worlds," that insular pride of which I have been speaking, but which to us now appears the narrowest and worst form of parochialism, a certainty that English beef, English beer, English morals, and English standards, were the ultimate excellence towards which a world of misguided foreigners might ultimately aspire, that self-satisfaction, different from pride, that glorying in prejudice, and wilful blindness to all features of national life which do not bear out the theory of an earthly paradise. "Tell me one thing, Lord Saltire; you have travelled in many countries. Is there any land, east or west, that can give us what this dear old England does—settled order, in which each man knows his place and his duties? It is so easy to be good in England."

"Well, no. It is the first country in the world. A few bad harvests would make a hell of it, though."

This was written at a time, remember, when the invention of machinery, the rapid growth of industrialism, and the increasing mobility of the population of the world, had broken down the old order of things, had created large fortunes and reduced thousands to destitution; when men poured into cities and lived crowded and unhealthy in slums, when the opening phase of the grim battle between employer and employed was fought, when trade-unionism was wrested from an unwilling Government, when housing regulations, health regulations, and poor-laws, were incapable of dealing with the wars of misery, poverty, and sickness, they were designed to meet, when little by little vested interests and class prejudices were brought before the judgment of reason and found wanting—it was in such a period of our national history that Harry Kingsley could write of "settled order, in which each one knows his place and his duties."

This attitude of mind is characteristic of a whole school of mid-Victorian novelists, and George Meredith—whose earliest novel, "Richard Feverel," was published about this date—broke many a lance against it, and scolded us and laughed at us, and upset our dignified conception of ourselves, and sometimes, in his irritable affection for his countrymen, took a bludgeon to us, and broke our heads.

I find it also in another and much greater novel, to attack which in a book dealing with this corner of Devon and Somerset is indeed a sort of *lèse-majesté*—for, to most people, who says "Exmoor" says "Lorna Doone."

Yet rereading the book in these present days—and even amid the scenes whose beauty and whose character Blackmore has so firmly reproduced—I find the parochialism, the self-satisfaction, and the prejudice, which lumps the whole un-English world, with its revolutions, and ideals, and racial problems, under one heading, as "dam-furriners." John Ridd is English, therefore he despises what is not English; he is rather stupid, therefore he despises intellect. "She was born next day with more mind than body—the worst thing that can befall a man," he says of his sister Eliza. He is a man, so, at the last stage of self-satisfaction, he despises what is not man—woman. "Now I spoke gently to Lorna, seeing how much she had been tried; and I praised her for her courage, in not having run away, when she was so unable; and my darling was pleased with this.... But you may take this as a general rule, that a woman likes praise from the man she loves, and cannot stop always to balance it." "But he led me aside in the course of the evening, and told me all about it; saying that I knew, as well as he did, that it was not women's business.... Herein I quite agreed with him, because I always think that women, of whatever mind, are best when least they meddle with things that appertain to men." As the matter under discussion was a question of their all having their throats cut by the Doones, and the farm being burnt over their heads, it seems to us to have been, at least in some slight degree, the women's business.

The hero of "Ravenshoe," Charles, is of the same type, though not drawn with the firmness of touch with which Blackmore depicts John Ridd, and which makes him indeed a living personality to us, even if one to quarrel with.

Charles Ravenshoe is of the type which for many years we have striven to present to the contemplation of the outside world as the perfect Englishman. He is a bluff, hearty fellow, without serious vices, without, also, serious virtues; he has, of course, a perfect self-satisfaction, and a deep and unconscious selfishness, tempered by an easy good-nature and a superficial benevolence, of wishing to get on well with everybody, and to see everybody round him comfortable. He is without ideals or spiritual aims, and has a contemptuous tolerance for them, as in the case of his brother Cuthbert, who is deeply religious and desirous of entering a monastery, and yet is held by the temptations of the world, so that his mind is a continual striving and renunciation. Charles's relationship with the lady of his choice may be gauged by the following: "How is Adelaide?" asks his adopted sister. "Adelaide is all that the fondest lover could desire," he answers. Did the Englishmen of the nineteenth century really talk like that about their dearest and most intimate affairs?

And yet here is John Ridd, the accepted lover of Lorna, an honest, clumsy, self-satisfied couple of yards of a man, for whom she has to be properly grateful in a world of villains, and yet, for my part, I can never look upon her marriage with him as other than a *mésalliance*.

Of course, it must be understood, even by those who most violently disagree with me, that these strictures are passed, not upon Blackmore's novel, but upon the spirit of the age which made John Ridd the hero of such a novel, the spirit which in the dress of "John Bull" has insistently presented our less attractive qualities to the outside world as the true Englishman, and which has been, by the outside world, adopted and disliked; while such admirable traits as sincerity, disinterestedness, and self-criticism, have been neglected by us and ignored by them.

For the novel itself it is difficult to have anything but praise. The admirable sense of locality, and the art with which Blackmore has so identified his persons of fiction with actual places till we no longer disassociate them, but in the church of Oare, or the Doone Valley, or Porlock, or Badgeworthy Water, think and speak of Lorna and John Kidd as if they had had an actual existence; the firm and lively drawing of the lesser characters, the charming pastoral scenes of the life on the Ridds' farm, the really magnificent descriptions of the scenery of Exmoor, and a particular gift of narrative, all place this novel of Blackmore's on a high level in the literature of the nineteenth century. His other novel, of which the scene is laid on this coast, is "The Maid of Sker," less well known and of less artistic weight, but of interest to anyone visiting the country between Barnstaple and Lynton, and containing a particularly vivid account of old Barnstaple Fair.



The Doone Valley

I have spoken of Henry Kingsley's novel "Ravenshoe," and it is impossible to write of the literary associations of this district without mention of his elder and more famous brother; for though "Westward Ho!" deals with Bideford and its adjacent villages of Appledore and Northam—it was at the latter village that Amyas Leigh lived with his mother—and this book elects to deal only with the country from Barnstaple northwards and westwards, yet Charles Kingsley is the presiding local deity and guardian spirit, who has loved and lived in and written in praise of the many beautiful spots, cliff and cove, or valley and orchard, from the boundaries of Cornwall to Somerset.

The family of Kingsley, also, is intimately connected with many of the families of these villages. The Rev. J. R. Chanter, Vicar of Parracombe, married a Miss Kingsley. He himself is the author of a short monograph on Lundy, a book which is now very scarce, but which can be seen at the London Library, at the Bideford Public Library, and at the Athenaeum at Barnstaple. The Kingsleys and the Chanters are closely connected through two generations, and the strain of authorship seems to persist in them, one member after another displaying an exceptional talent. Miss Vallings, the young author of a quickly celebrated novel, "Bindweed," is a granddaughter of Mr. Chanter, and a grandniece of Kingsley's; and the bold and original writer "Lucas Mallet" is Canon Kingsley's daughter, and a niece of Henry Kingsley.

CHAPTER III

BARNSTAPLE

Barnstaple is a pleasant English country town, with that air of cleanliness and quiet prosperity, of excellent sanitation and odd historic corners, side by side with big new modern buildings and exquisite green gardens where the old gnarled apple-trees are afroth with blossom in the spring, which is the peculiar flavour of an English country town. The incongruity is the charm; you step from a modern drapery store, with a respectable display of plate-glass, on to the clean narrow pavement, and find yourself looking down a small dark passage opposite, into a sunny paved court, where the houses are cream-washed, and the roofs are atilt in odd delicious angles, and the casement windows have still the old diamond panes of Elizabeth's day, and the sun lies slanting across the pots of wallflower, and the small boys play marbles as they played marbles there when the Armada sailed. Barnstaple is a thriving little modern town, but it has many such charming scenes to the visitor with an observant eye—a narrow cobbled street, with an irregular sag of gabled houses either side, the cream and rose-coloured walls mellow and sunny in the late afternoon, or a cluster of really beautiful half-timbered houses of the sixteenth century, with carved oak doorposts and beam-ends, such as those which are known as Church Row, and stand back from the road, between Boutport Street, and the High Street, by St. Peter's Church and St. Anne's Chapel. St. Peter's Church, which stands between these two main streets in the very centre of the town, is of the fourteenth century, and has a fine leaded spire, considered to be one of the finest in Europe, which the nineteenth century was anxious to abolish, and replace by a western tower of the more ordinary type. Fortunately Sir Gilbert Scott was called in to restore the church, and refused to have a hand in destroying the spire, so the old parish church stands as it was built, but with its spire drawn curiously out of the perpendicular by the action of the sun's rays on the lead.

Within a few yards of St. Peter's stands the grammar-school, where Bishop Jewel and his neighbour and enemy, Thomas Harding, went to school in the early sixteenth century, and the poet Gay in the beginning of the eighteenth. It was originally a chapel of St. Anne, and became a grammar-school on the suppression of the chantries by Henry VIII. The upper part of the building dates from 1450, but the crypt is much older, and it is conjectured to be a Saxon foundation. The beauty of these buildings—the church, the grammar-school, and the old houses—consists so greatly in their surroundings, in the green of the grass and the unfolding chestnut-trees against the old grey stone, the twinkle of blossom by the angle of a house, and the soft sky of Devon above, that it is difficult to reproduce; it is a beauty of atmosphere rather than of outline, of sentiment and association.

I like, too, this lack of the "picturesque cult" which one finds in these English towns; the beautiful is allowed always to be the useful, and the family washing hangs on a line outside many a Tudor house as easily as in a London slum. In Boutport Street—that old street that runs more than halfway round Barnstaple, "about the port"—stands the Golden Lion Hotel, which was formerly the town house of the Earl of Bath, and was enriched in the seventeenth century by most beautiful moulded plaster ceilings and fireplaces, made by Italian craftsmen who were brought over from Italy. The front of the building has been altogether modernized, but much of the beautiful decorated interior work remains, to enrich the rooms where the many unseeing visitors take their meals. The Trevelyan Hotel, in the High Street, which presents to the street a most unpretentious exterior, and where, indeed, the principal rooms are the Victorian of Dickens, with ugly curtains and carpets, wall-papers and furniture, Victorian pictures, and Victorian bronzes on the coffee-room mantelpiece, has treasures hidden away up its dark staircases and in its cheaper and more modest bedrooms—defaced and disregarded, alas!—an Italian ceiling of fine scroll-work cut in half by a partition boarding, and a fine mantelpiece, with figures in relief, being built half over, and gas-jets thrust through the moulding. They showed me a great open hearth, with decorated mantle, which must have been that of the dining-room; at present the room is used for lumber. Half of it has been pulled down to build a staircase, and the low casement windows are blocked by a lean-to coalshed, making the room so dark that I could barely see the plaster modelling of the wall.

This, I confess, is a vandalism, but I still consider it as the necessary penalty we pay for not putting all the treasures of our past into museums, labelling them neatly—and never looking at them.

The Penrose Almshouses in Litchdon Street, a beautiful small quadrangle, with a low colonnade surmounted by an ornamented lead gutter and steep dormer windows in a red-tiled roof, are still kept to their old uses. They stand the wear and tear of time as well as its mellowing, and, like language, if they are here and there vulgarized by the usage of every day, without it they would be a dead language.

Queen Anne's Walk, overlooking the river, and close to the town station, is a small colonnade of the Renaissance style, which is most familiar to us in the architecture of Bath; it has an outlandish look, with its classical lines seen against the background of the smooth river and green Devonshire country, and has not the homely charm of Elizabethan or Stuart building.

It has, however, its peculiar beauty; it is suggestive of red-heeled shoes and powder, and an artificial world of beaux and belles. It must have been a pleasant enough place to walk in, until the railway came between it and the river, and its earlier name of the Merchants' Walk (or the Exchange) gives more of its character than its present name.

One must beware, however, in the present popular quest for the "antique," of overlooking the beauty of modern things; the market, for instance, which is a vast rectangular building standing on the High Street, has a strange and individual charm when you come into it out of the glare of the white street. The windows are fitted with light green glass, which gives a sort of ghostly twilight to its bare spaciousness, with heavy masses of gloom among the pillars of the flanking colonnade. It has no pretence to artistic ornament of any kind; it was built for a specific purpose, which it answers admirably, and when it is crowded with stalls on market-days, and noisy with buyers and sellers, it is a scene of bustle and movement which would arouse the enthusiasm of a traveller if he came upon it in some distant city of the East, though the difference of language and costume is all there is between the two. But when it is empty, with its bare walls and bare floor and high dark roof, sun and shadow make from it a beauty which it is worth a moment's pause and stepping aside to see.

The Athenaeum, also, which stands in the open space at the head of the Long Bridge, which is a noble structure of the thirteenth century, is a modern building, endowed by the late Mr. Rock, and possessing one of the best libraries in Devonshire. It is a plain, unpretentious building; on the ground-floor a geological museum, very useful for a student—for it contains a complete collection of Devonian rocks and fossils—and the library upstairs. Sitting there on a summer afternoon, and seeing through the open windows the smooth sunlit curve of the river below, and the gentle slope of wooded hills beyond, the Athenaeum has a charm—that charm of weather and daily custom—which architectural description fails to convey for any building, whether it is the Parthenon or a farm-house. Without it, places lack their intimate personality, as photographs lack the personality of men and women. My memory of the Athenaeum Library is of the familiar, slightly musty smell of books, of the faint creaking of the librarian's boots, and the hum of bees and the whirr of a mowing machine, of the smell of an early summer afternoon, the white glare of the North Walk stretching beside the river, and the reflection of anchored boats, very perfect on the still water.

Barnstaple is a very ancient borough; it is spoken of in the Devonshire Domesday as one of the four "burghs" of Devon, and as early as the reign of Henry I, before the election of Mayors had become part of English municipal life, it was entitled to elect a chief magistrate for its own government. It was a

fortified place under the Saxon Kings, and a large grass-grown mound in the centre of the town (near the town station) marks the site of Athelstan's castle. Athelstan is supposed to have come to Barnstaple in the early tenth century, when he was engaged in driving the British out of Devonshire, beyond the River Tamar, which marks the boundary between Devon and Cornwall for the greater part; and this was only done by him, Westcote affirms, after he had exhausted every means of gentleness and clemency. The Taw, the Torridge, the Tamar, and the Tavy, all comprise some form of the same syllable, "Taw"; and "Tamar" is a corruption of "Taw-meer," which Westcote takes to mean the river-boundary, "Taw" occurring in the names of the four principal rivers "of these parts."

There was a Saxon church at Barnstaple, probably on the site of the present parish church of St. Peter's, and the tithes were given to the Abbey of Malmesbury. The original ecclesiastic seal bore the seated figure of King Athelstan. After the Conquest the barony of Barnstaple (which comprised the church) was given to Judhael of Totnes; from him it passed to the famous family of Tracy, from them to the Martins (whose name remains in the little village of Martinshoe, near Lynton), and from them, again, to the Audleys.

It was a Lord Audley who distinguished himself so greatly in the Battle of Poitiers, and, as his family were then in possession of Barnstaple, it appears that the town changed hands frequently in the first three hundred years after the Conquest. The story told of Lord Audley is that he had made a vow that he would strike the first stroke in a battle for Edward III or for his son, and that at Poitiers he fought with such desperate courage in the forefront of the battle that he was carried off the field severely wounded. After the battle the Black Prince inquired after him, and was told that he lay wounded in a litter. "Go and know if he may be brought hither, or else I will go and see him where he is," said the Prince; so Audley had his litter taken up by eight of his servants, who carried him to the Prince's tent. The Prince took him in his arms, and kissed him, and praised him for the best and most valiant Knight of all that had fought that day, nor, though the wounded Knight disclaimed it, would he admit of any refusal, but gave him a yearly grant of 500 marks out of his own inheritance. Lord Audley, being carried back to his own tent, summoned his four esquires and divided the gift among them. The Black Prince, presently hearing of this, had Sir James once more brought before him, and asked if he did not consider the gift worthy of his acceptance, or for what other reason he had so disposed of it.

"Sire," said the Knight, "these four esquires have a long time well and truly served me in many great dangers, and at this present especially, in such wise that, if they had never done anything else, I was bound unto them, and ere this time they had never anything of me in reward; and, Sire, you know I was but one man alone, but by the courage, aid, and comfort of them I took on me to accomplish my vow; and certainly I had been dead in the battle had they not holpen me and endured the brunt of the day. Wherefore, whenas nature and duty did oblige me to consider the love they bear me, I should have showed myself too much ungrateful if I had not rewarded them ... but whereas I have done this without your licence, I humbly crave pardon...."

The Black Prince once more embraced him, praised him for his generosity as much as for his valour, and granted him a further 600 marks in place of what he had given away.

I have transcribed this episode because it seems to me a pretty tale of chivalry, of valour and courtesy, of generosity and noble, if fantastic, ideals.

Under King Athelstan's rule Barnstaple was governed by two Bailiffs, "one for the King to collect his duties, the other for the town to receive their customs." Under Henry I it was granted a charter, which was confirmed by John and enlarged by Elizabeth.

The earliest industries of the town seem to have been pottery and weaving; the pottery has always been of the cheaper, coarser kind, and although some attempt was made at the close of the last century, when the industry was revived, to bring it to a higher artistic level of colour and glaze, it still, to my mind, continues mediocre, and has neither the highly finished beauty of such work as the Ruskin pottery, nor the genuinely simple lines or colouring of "peasant pottery," such as that from Quimperle in Brittany. The Barum ware has a sort of bourgeois mediocrity between these two different types, and there is room for a bold innovator to reform the present models and methods. It is a pity, perhaps, that he has not yet arisen, for a local industry of this kind adds greatly to the vitality of a town.

Of the weaving industry, what Westcote calls "lanificium," "the skill and knowledge of making cloth, under which genus are contained the species of spinning, knitting, weaving, tucking, pressing, dyeing, carding, combing and such-like," we have records from the twelfth century; though until the reign of Edward IV only friezes and plain coarse cloth were made. In Edward's reign an Italian, "Anthony Bonvise," is reputed to have taught Barnstaple the making of fine "kersies," and spinning with a distaff; doubtless this was looked upon by the older generation of conservatives as a deterioration to luxury and soft living; they would hark back to the standards of a simpler age, when a King's breeches cost him no more than three shillings, and "friezes" would be good enough for the noblest. For Robert of Gloucester, in his Chronicle, tells us of King William Rufus:

"As his chamberlain him brought, as he rose a day,
A morrow for to wear, a pair hose of say,
He asked what they costned; three shillings said the other.
'Fie, a devil,' quoth the King, 'who say so vile deed?'
King to wear any cloth, but it costned more:
Buy a pair of a mark, or thou shalt be acorye sore.'
A worse pair of ynou the other sith him brought,
And said they were for a mark, and unnethe so he bought.

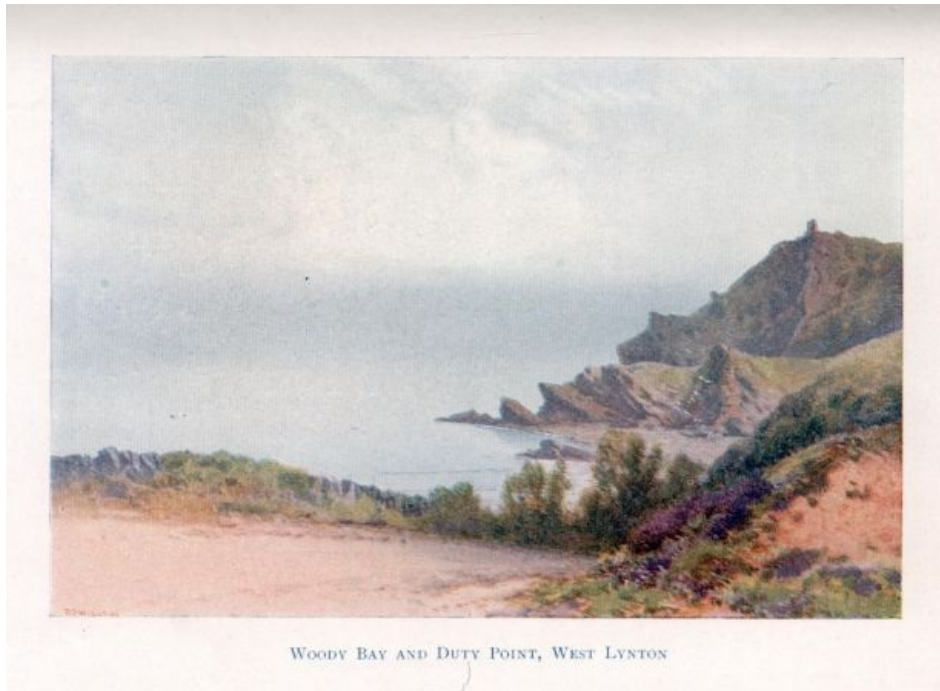
'Yea, bel ami,' quoth the King, 'they be well bought;
In this way serve me, or thou ne shalt serve me not.'

It was King Stephen, I believe,

"who was a luckless clown;
His breeches cost him half a crown;"

but King Stephen had to contend with rebellion and civil war the whole of his unhappy reign, so doubtless popular sentiment would assign him a smaller share of the world's goods than King William Rufus.

In Westcote's time, in the early seventeenth century, the wool that was worked here in Devon was brought from all over England—Dorset, Gloucester, Wales, London, and also Ireland; and clothmaking had become so large an industry that agriculture had suffered considerably. "And every rumour of war or contagious sickness ... makes a multitude of the poorer sort chargeable to their neighbours, who are bound to maintain them ... the meanest sort of people also will now rather place their children to some of these mechanical trades than to husbandry, whereby husbandry-labourers are more scarce, and hirelings more dear than in former times."



Woody Bay and Duty Point, West Lynton

This little passage in Westcote is, I think, of great interest, as showing the difficulties which had already arisen in the time of James I, with the extension of industry, which must always flourish at the expense of agriculture, and which seems to tend, nevertheless, both to personal and to national prosperity.

It is a problem for which we have not yet found a solution, and at the present time it comes before us with especial vividness and force. Westcote gives a list of the various fabrics that are made in Devon; some of them seem to be materials no longer in use, from the unfamiliarity of the names. Exeter manufactured serges, both fine and coarse; Crediton (the famous locality of the burning of Crediton Barns, in the Middle Ages) made kersies; and Totnes a stuff called "narrow pin-whites," which is, I believe, a coarse, loosely woven white material; Barnstaple and Torrington were noted for "bays," single and double (perhaps of the same texture as our modern baize), and for "frizados"; and Pilton, adjacent to Barnstaple, was notorious rather than celebrated for the making of cotton linings, so cheap and coarse a stuff that a popular "vae" or "woe" was locally pronounced against them. "Woe unto you, Piltonians, that make cloth without wool!"

It was in the woollen trade that the family of De Wichehalse, afterwards so intimately connected with Lynton, made the fortune that enabled them to become one of the leading houses of Barnstaple, and to acquire the beautiful estate near Lynton, which is now known as Lee Abbey. It may, perhaps, be of interest to the "curious-minded" to give an inventory of his shop, taken in 1607 at the death of Nicholas de Wichehalse, who had married Lettice, the daughter of the Mayor of Barnstaple.

The following are the chief items of the inventory, collected from manuscript records by Mr. Chanter for the Devonshire Association:

182 yds. of coloured bays at 1s. 4d. a yd.
49 " kersey at 2s. 4d. "
broadcloth 8s. 0d. "
147 yds. of coarse grey ffrize at . . . 11d. "
buffyns in remnants (whatever
they may be!) L1 9s. 4d.

Also lace, silk, black velvet, broad taffeta, leaven taffeta
. . . and 5 small boxes of marmalade.

Mr. Chanter conjectures that this last item is marmalade, and can read it as nothing else, though he was not aware that it was a preserve of Queen Elizabeth's time, nor why, even if it were, it should be in De Wichehalse's shop.

It was the prosperity of the De Wichehalses, the Salisburys, the Deamonds, and other enterprising merchants, which beautified the town with public buildings, almshouses, and their private residences—for the enrichment of which, as I have already stated, Italian workmen were brought over—and the seventeenth century was the time of the town's greatest importance and prosperity, when Barnstaple traded with Virginia and the West Indies, the Spaniards in South America and on the Continent. The Customs receipts show a very great import of tobacco, and there was a considerable manufacture of pipes, as a branch of local pottery. "The Exchange," or "the Merchants' Walk," as Queen Anne's Walk was then called, before it was rebuilt, must have witnessed the inception of many a venture, been paced by many an anxious foot when the weather was bad and the returning ship was long overdue, and seen many a bargain struck by richly dressed merchants, with pointed beards lying over their ruffs, gravely smoking their pipe of "Virginny" over the deal.

That picturesqueness of dress and custom has passed away, but Barnstaple is still a prosperous and pleasant city, lying on the sleek curve of the River Taw, and surrounded by low smooth hills. Seen from the opposite side of the river on a spring afternoon, from the steep road that leads to Bishop's Tawton over Codden Hill, it has a fair aspect. The tall modern Gothic tower of Holy Trinity stands out commandingly above the clustered roofs by the river, and beyond the town, which is small enough, seen from this height, to come within a single glance, lie the green and fertile fields, and gentle, wooded hills. The road to Bishop's Tawton—which was formerly an episcopal seat of the Bishops of Exeter—is a typical Devonshire road, steep and stony, with high green banks and hedges, which, on such an afternoon in spring, are starred with primroses and clumps of dog-violets, celandines and wild-anemones, and wonderfully green. It climbs from the London and South-Western Station, after crossing the great thirteenth-century bridge from the Square, and within a few minutes all signs of a town have dropped away, and we are in the country of fields and farms. In less than a mile, indeed, we come upon an old fortified farm; the massive whitewashed wall, three feet thick, rises steeply from the hilly road. At one corner a giant yew has thrust out part of the wall with its knotted roots, which are so huge that some recent owner of the farm has cut a little summer house out of them, with a thatched roof. The dwelling part of the farm faces this way, and, being built on the hillside above the road, I catch only a glimpse of steep gables and tall brick chimneys; but I looked in the open gateway of the cobbled yard, and saw the great thatched barns, and the massive white walls which surrounded them. The rear of the farm presented an almost blank surface, save for one small door, which was open, a sudden black oblong of shadow in the mellow whiteness. A cat sat cleaning itself in the mild sunshine; otherwise there was no life nor movement. It looked an enchanted place.

Farther on I came to a fork of the road, where a little stream ran swiftly past the thatched and whitewashed cottages, their tiny gardens profusely bright with flowers—hyacinths, daffodils, forget-me-nots, and the deep red of climbing japonica. In one of them an old woman in a pink sunbonnet was leaning on a stick gossiping with a neighbour, while two or three sunburned children with yellow hair were dabbling in a brook. It was idyllically and typically English, that ideal England of artists which is dreamed of and loved by the sons and daughters of the Colonies, who, thinking of "home" which they have never seen, think of such a scene of verdant and homely peace.

Just beyond was a great barrow, a steep green mound perhaps twenty feet high, with a little cottage beside it, and the small garden encroaching on its green sides. I asked a child what she knew about it, wondering if some local legend still lingered round the spot; but she told me "they had dug a pond, beyond there, and this was the earth they had thrown up." I did not explain to her the unlikeliness of such a heavy undertaking, with a clear stream running by, but went on, wondering what British chieftain or marauding Dane lay buried under that great mound, awaiting the last trump.

Bishop's Tawton is said to have been the seat of the Saxon Bishops of Devon, established here in the tenth century; a farm now occupies the site of the old episcopal palace, but the church is Perpendicular, and the only Saxon remains I could discover was the base of a stone Saxon cross in the churchyard. On the opposite bank of the river is Tawstock church, standing in the grounds of Sir Bouchier Wrey, and close to his house. The church is built on rising ground, and set round by trees in which rooks have built; clamorous and noisy, they fly round and round the old grey tower morning and evening. When the October gales are tossing the trees, and the rain-clouds are gathering on the hills their cawing has a sound of ill-omen, which makes them seem the unresting and malignant spirits of those fierce lords of the Dark Ages, evil-doers and unrepentant.

From Barnstaple to Lynton there are several methods of travel. Either one may take train to Ilfracombe, and there take coach, following the coast-road through Watermouth, Lydford, Combe Martin, Trentishoe, and the Hunter's Inn, twenty miles of the most magnificent coast scenery in England; or, if one has the courage to take pack on back, one may walk it, past Watermouth Castle, and the tiny land-locked harbour beneath, which was said by Kingsley to be the safest harbour on this coast, smooth and sheltered always, however high the seas are running outside; past the tiny village of Lydford, which bears the same name and reminds one of the seventeenth-century poem of "Lydford Law," though the poem was written of the town on the Lyd, near Tavistock. But here are a couple of verses:

"Oft have I heard of Lydford law,
How in the morn they hang and draw,
And sit in judgment after.
At first I wondered at it much,
But since I find the matter such
As it deserves no laughter.

"They have a castle on a hill;
I took it for some old wind-mill
The vanes blown off by weather.
To lie therein one night 'tis guessed
'Twere better to be stoned or pressed
Or hanged, ere you come thither."

"Lydford law" and "Jedburgh justice" seem equally to have been synonyms for arbitrary and summary punishment.

But, leaving this digression, we proceed on our way, past Berrynarbor and the old farm of Bowden, where Bishop Jewel was born, and the beautiful church where he was baptized, with its great Perpendicular tower, built of red and grey sandstone, rising above the wooded combe, and its old lich-gate, set in the thickness of the churchyard wall, and almost hidden by the luxuriant summer foliage; past Combe Martin, famous for its ancient silver-mines rather than its beauty, yet with a very beautiful church, with a Perpendicular tower even higher than that of Berrynarbor, soaring above the sheltering elms, and throwing its long shadow across the stream which curves round the church-yard among the old yew-bushes—a church worth stepping aside to see, with a fine carved oak screen in the interior, of the fifteenth century, the doors of the screen made in such a way that they will not entirely close, in order to show plainly forth to all sinners that the gates of heaven are always open; past Martinhoe village, which was the scene of one of the most cruel and cold-blooded of all the Doone murders, when they carried off the wife of Christopher Badcock, a small tenant farmer, and, in rage at finding nothing in the poor home but a little bacon and cheese, murdered her baby in a fit of senseless brutality, reciting over it this couplet:

"If any man asketh who killed thee,
Say 'twas the Doones of Bagworthy."

And so we come to Heddon's Mouth, and of the seven miles from there to Lynton I shall speak in the next chapter.



The Shepherd's Cottage, Doone Valley

But the twenty miles of hilly road may prove too much even for good walkers, and as the coach service between Ilfracombe and Lynton is suspended at present, owing to the war, it is best to take the little narrow-gauge railway that runs from Barnstaple to Lynton. There might be many more unfavourable ways, too, of seeing this stretch of country. The narrow line twists and winds across the hills, seeming to hang, sometimes, on a tiny viaduct, while many feet below a mountain stream pours down its rocky bed, and, owing to the narrowness of the gauge and the steepness of the gradients, the train progresses hardly quicker than a horse-drawn carriage, and one has leisure and opportunity to observe all that one is passing.

From Barnstaple to Chelfham the railway runs along the valley of the Yeo, through the woodyards and past the whitewashed cottages of the town, and then alongside of the river itself. This valley is most beautiful. I came through it on a hot afternoon in spring. Just beside me ran the clear brown water, breaking into swirls and eddies over the white stones; on my right hand the hills rose, steeply

wooded, with the lovely and various colours of many trees, the rich brown of the yet unopened beech-buds, the black buds of the ash, the twisted grey of alders, the green of hawthorn, and yet more vivid green of early larches, the delicate silver of palm, the bare branches of oak; on my left hand lay the rich green pasture of the valley, and beyond the bare hills, brown in the afternoon sunshine. Ten minutes away from Barnstaple Station, and I saw a hawk hovering above the hillside, so quickly do the signs of habitation drop away among these hills and valleys.

We leave the valley of the Yeo, and climb the steep gradients to Bratton Fleming and Blackmoor Gate, across the wind-swept open moors, bare and brown in the afternoon sunshine. Fold behind fold lies the countryside in great brown curves, here a cluster of trees in a sheltered valley, there a lonely farm; sometimes a group of whitewashed buildings under thatched roofs, more often a bleak granite building, built to withstand the buffeting of winter storms, grey amid its setting of bare grey ash-trees or twisted grey alders, with the brown hills behind and the brilliant blue of the sky overhead. The air here is keen and brilliant; there is an edge to all outlines, and a keenness to all colours, which the softer and more humid air of sheltered country does not give. The yellow of the primroses which cluster thickly in hollow and on bank has a brilliance and delicacy which I have never seen in valley primroses, and I cannot describe the exquisite clear rose of apple-blossom, above the gnarled and twisted grey trunk, seen against this background of sombre brown and dun, and the penetrating blue of moorland sky.

CHAPTER IV

LYNTON

And so, round a spur of the hills, and high above the wooded gorges of the West Lyn, we come to Lynton.

It lies upon the north-western slope of a hill, deep among trees; the few houses and hotels—which is all that it consists of—seem to have their roots stuck deep into the ground, while their tall chimneys soar above the tree-tops. If you are freakish-minded, indeed, you may pitch cherry-stones down your neighbour's chimneys, for the houses stand one atop of each other, clustering along the North Walk, which is cut round the side of the cliff; some built high above the road, with steep green banks of laurel and glossy dark myrtle; some built below it, so that as you walk the chimney-pots and tall pointed gables lie within touching distance of your hand. It is curiously unfamiliar to see houses from such an angle, a perspective of the roofs, with the windows and doors become unimportant; it is an aeroplane view of the world, or perhaps, more properly, a bird's view, for you may pause and poise to look down on Lynton and Lynmouth as no aeroplane at present can.



Lynmouth Bay and Foreland

The stony white road from the station and from Lynmouth struggles up the hill to a small open space—what in any Italian hill-town would be called a piazza, though it is only a few score feet in extent—opposite the church and the Valley of Rocks Hotel. This, I believe, is the only level spot in the village, save a club tennis-ground, which has been levelled out of the hillside, for the few shops or houses run precipitately down the little side-streets, or up towards the top of Hollerday Hill. It is also the original

site of the old village of Lynton, when it had no fame as a holiday resort, and barely a history, being left alone on its lofty cliff, as of no special value to anyone; for, although the present parish church is partly Perpendicular and partly of a later date, while the chancel is modern, it stands upon the foundations of a small earlier church, which, surrounded by a few poor cottages, with walls of cob and roof of thatch, a rough ladder leading to a sort of loft, which was the sleeping apartment of all the family, and a little patch of herb garden in front of each, comprised the village of Lynton when we find it first, in the thirteenth century, mentioned as a parish in the "valor" of Pope Nicholas.

Below it, then as now, lay the small fishing village of Lynmouth—or Leymouth, as it was formerly called—a similar group of rude small cottages, clustered in isolation, with the sea before and the great moors behind, the people subsisting chiefly on coarse bread, salted meat, and fish—often stale fish, for fish was the one thing of value that Lynmouth yielded, and that would go to some representative of Ford Abbey, under whose rule Lynton and Lynmouth came. Yet it should surely have been easy, with a little help and instruction, to have grown many varieties of vegetable food, for flowers grow in abundance, and evergreens grow to a great size and beauty, while the variety of trees is remarkable—larch, chestnut, sycamore, oak, ash and birch, elm and beech, showing the fertility of the soil and the temperateness of the climate, in spite of the seaward position of the village.

But it is not the history of Lynton, nor its old associations, which calls us to it, but its beauty entirely. Stand upon one of the terraces of Lynton on a still summer evening, looking east to Countisbury Foreland, and see the water of the bay still and gleaming in the evening light, the great headlands ruddy and golden above it. The steep sides of the gorge of the East Lyn are warm and sunlit, they glow richly with purple and russet; over the rocks of the valley a faint flicker of grey mist begins to hang above the stream. From the trees around and below comes a great cawing of rooks, drowning the rush of the water below; they settle into their nests in the great green elms, then suddenly there is a caw, a scurry, a rush, and they fly up as if shot out of the tree-tops. There is a flapping of wings, and much angry sound; they circle once or twice, and then sink back to their homes again. It is a beautiful sight to watch a rook volplaning down to a tree as you can watch them from the terraces at Lynton; moving on a level with your eye, you can see the detail of each movement of their wings, see them let themselves drop through the air, yet with muscles taut and legs and claws stretched ready for a foothold on the particular slender branch which is home.

As you watch, amused and interested, as this protracted nightly programme is enacted—and never yet, throughout England, have any rooks gone to bed quietly—the colour fades from the headland and the sea, the mist has gained on the valley, drawing its grey wisps and streamers higher and higher up the sides of the gorge; the tide has gone out, very smooth and still, leaving a broad flat stretch of wet shore in the little bay, which shines with the last of the daylight like a clear mirror; the lights of the houses in Lynmouth begin to show through the trees, pale yellow in the twilight, patches of soft colour, rather than light; and the rushing of the river sounds very loud because of the silence of the birds. Inland the hills lie, fold behind fold, in gentle, misty curves; it is that exquisite hour which only northern summers give, when the slowly-fading twilight and the slowly brightening moon hold earth and sky in a faint pellucid light.

Or take a walk, on a bright May morning, from Lynton to Heddon's Mouth, along the cliffs, and see open before you, step by step, seven miles of the loveliest coast scenery, perhaps, in England.

First there is a wooded strip of road, called the North Walk, which runs round the side of Hollerday Hill. The shadows are dewy in the early morning, and birds are singing from the green mass of the trees on either hand; there is a faint smell of wood-fires from the houses below, acrid and very pleasant; the chestnut leaves are just opening, and the sycamores have still the early flush of red on their tiny leaves; it is very cool and fresh under the trees. Then the wood stops abruptly, and the road runs out on the bare hillside and winds round the great headland to the Valley of Rocks. Behind, the wall of cliff rises steeply, great boulders and outcrop of rock, fantastic in the sunlight; below it falls sheer to the sea, where the misty blue turns green at the base of the cliff. Looking down the sheer slope, which is dull brown with last year's heather, and grey with the wiry grey grass that grows on moors and mountains, I could see the grey backs of the gulls, flying far below me. It was a very still morning, but I saw a fishing-smack, which had been lying motionless, catch a sudden rise of wind and come about, leaving a white circle of foam in her wake. From the height where I walked she looked infinitely little, like a ship in a fairy-tale, no bigger than a walnut shell; I could see the clear small reflection of her tiny hull in the smooth water, her sails rosy-tinted in the morning sunlight, very beautiful and magical. There was no fleck of cloud in all the wide blue of the sky, but the horizon was hidden by a faint haze, sunlit but impenetrable, and from somewhere in the mist came the reiterated wails of a siren, from some ship groping its way up the Bristol Channel.

I rounded a corner from shadow into sun, and below me lay a tiny creek, a churn of foam round its rocks, the blue water running green and sandy in the shallows, and a flock of wheeling gulls to possess it; before me rose the great crag of the Castle Rock, each plane and angle of its twisted slate pile cut sharply in light and shadow, and against this sullen grey background a newly flowered gorse bush blazed in the sunlight.



The Valley of Rocks

The Castle Rock stands at the mouth of the Valley of Rocks, about which so much has been written, which has been compared to an amphitheatre of giants, or the scene of some titanic conflict, where the huge granite crags and boulders have been torn up and tossed about by supernatural and terrific forces. In honesty I must admit that this seems to me an exaggeration. Any walker who goes with this in his mind must, I think, be disappointed; the place is wild enough, and barren enough, a bleak, bare, waterless brown dip in the high lands, without tree or stream to soften it, except in a stone fold, a winter shelter for sheep, where a few twisted and stunted alders exist stubbornly; but the outcrops of rock from the brown grass are not specially remarkable to anyone familiar with cliff scenery, and there are many gorges within twenty miles of Lynton which are, to my mind, wilder and grander. There are hut-circles of the neolithic age in the valley, though many of them have been destroyed by the people who live round, to build the walls of their own cottages; but the often-repeated fantasy of this valley as the haunt of Druid rites seems to me, not only unsupported by evidence, but without justification, in the formation of the valley or the wildness of the rocks.

Brown under the sunlight, shadeless and glaring, when a blustering north-easter is blowing down it, the Valley of Rocks is a bitter and inhospitable spot; I have been glad to go into the sheep-fold and crouch under the lee of the stone wall for a moment's respite from the wind and the stinging particles of sharp dust that it flung in my face as I battled up the road. Once, in such a wind, I climbed the Castle Rock, and squeezed myself between two great boulders looking seaward over the choppy water—it was a land wind, which does not send the waves rolling in great breakers, very splendid to see, but worries it and dirties it, leaving broken cross waves of muddy grey water—and I startled a pair of ravens who had built a nest on a sharp ledge of rock, just beyond where I sat, and had not heard me coming, because of the noise of the wind. They startled me also, as one of them flapped out, close to my face, and flew screaming away, as I pulled myself up into shelter, but the other stood on its jut of rock, almost within arm's length, and looked at me. I saw its ugly long head as it turned, its great beak and its neck of a bird of prey, and then it flew off; and though I sat very still for a long time, hoping they might return, they only flew round me and past me, showing me the great black sweep of their wings as they went. But as I sat there, on that wild crag and that wild morning, I noticed a tuft of dog-violets, growing out of a fissure in the grey rock, and shaken and pounded by the bitter wind. How wonderful is the tenacity of nature. A few grains of dust blown into a crack of barren rock, a few seeds wind-carried also, and then germination in the rain and sun, and when the spring comes, this little clump of flowers in its due season, part of the intricate and mighty forces of renewal throughout the fertile world.

When I was walking from Lynton to Heddon's Mouth, however, I crossed the mouth of the Valley of Rocks, just behind the Castle Crag, and kept the road to Lee Bay. Here it runs a few hundred yards inland, through the grounds of Lee Abbey, a green and fertile fold of ground between a sea-headland, and gently wooded ground that rises inland. The abbey, which is beautifully situated, with a hump of cliff sheltering it seaward, and a great smooth slope of green sward running down to a tiny bay, and set among a fine group of sheltering pine-cedars, was built about 1850, and somewhat too much "after the Gothic style." Parts of the house are of pleasant red brick, overgrown with glossy ivy, but a portion of the building—dining-room or library, I do not know which—is like an east window of the Perpendicular period, fitted with sun-blinds! There was never an Abbey here, either, and the name is as new as the Gothic, but there is history here, and tradition as well, for the house stands on the site of the old Grange Farm of Lee, which was a large, rambling, plain building, with gabled ends and thick walls, thatched roof and tall chimneys, to which Hugh de Wichehalse sent his family when the plague ravaged Barnstaple in 1627.

After that the de Wichehalses were for nearly a century the chief family of Lynton, and the last of them, Mary, to whom her father left this estate, is said to have returned here, after the ruin of her

family and her betrayal by a faithless lover, and to have lived here with a faithful servant until she was drowned off Duty Point, either by an accident, or, as tradition asserts, by throwing herself down from the cliff, which is the southern point of the little bay. Her body was never found, and the mixture of fact and legend which has gathered round her forms the basis of the tragic tale of Jennifred de Wichehalse which is given by the Reverend Mundy.

After leaving the grounds of Lee Abbey the road climbs steeply up the opposite headland. Up this hot and stony road I went, leaving Lee Bay below me, the tiniest of bays, a little blue rockgirt pool, guarded with great shags of rock, into which runs a rivulet, down the greenest and shadiest of gorges, where the trees meet overhead, and the clear water runs between narrow banks of primroses, and the bright grass and flowers follow the stream right down to the wave-smoothed stones of the beach.

The sun beat on me as I climbed the hill, and the dust rose as I walked from the loose, stony road. I came gladly into the shelter of trees, ash and oak chiefly, not yet out in leaf on this exposed slope, though the celandines and wild anemone were in flower, and the ground and the banks were green with new growth, ground-ivy and columbine, with its heart-shaped glossy leaves, wild parsley, and the beautiful serrated little leaves of the wild strawberry. On the left-hand side of the road, on the higher slopes, the trees had all been cut (one of the sad exigencies, I fear, of war), and they were burning the ground as I came past; the smell of burning wood followed me, and the thin wreaths of blue smoke, curling up the hillside, looked faint but ominous in the morning sunshine like a warning beacon, indeed, of the approach of some raider.

As I paused for breath, and stood looking down at the exquisite blue glimmer of the sea through the grey stems of the ash and the delicate thin tassels of the larches, a drama of hunting passed before me. There was a thin squeak of terror and a scurry of wings, and some swallows fled past with a hawk in pursuit. He was almost upon the hindmost, when he crossed the path of a rook, who rose at him, cawing angrily, and was immediately joined by two or three others, who rose from the trees. The hawk turned with incredible swiftness; I saw the great white bars of his underwings as he "banked" steeply, and went off. The swallows had escaped and the rooks sank back into the green tree-tops. All this happened within a yard or two of me; I saw it in detail, terror in the movements of the swallows, and the eager stretch of the hawk's head and the gleam of his eyes.

This is to me one of the charms of walking along these lonely high cliffs: you must go quietly, and if not alone, then with a companion who will stop often and stand quietly, and you will see birds from beautiful and unfamiliar angles; below you, showing the broad stretch of their wings and the markings of their backs, or on the level of your eye, so that you can see the distinctive shape of their head and beak, their flight and their movements. To see two buzzard hawks above a blue sea, circling below you, and then rising higher and higher in a great sweeping spiral, their wings taut till they have the upward curve of a bow, and motionless as they ascend, save for an occasional broad beat as they come, perhaps, to what airmen call a "pocket" in the air, and so up until they are two specks against the dazzling brightness of the sky, and you can no longer look at them—this is to me pleasure and occupation enough for a long summer's morning. Or to watch the gulls, hanging motionless head on to a brisk wind, or swooping and diving for fish, black and white and grey changing swiftly across them as they turn different angles of back and breast and wing to the sun; or to sit on a high moorland as the evening falls, and hear the melancholy call of the plover across the brown heather, and watch their strange, broken flight as they fly low, and waver, and seem to fall as if you had winged them—sitting there quietly with your hands before you and intending no harm to any bird on God's earth—and then with a sudden turn, which shows you all the white underpart of their wings, rising again and flying strongly, their broad black wings dark against the evening sky. All this may be had by anyone who will walk solitarily and with seeing eyes.

How beautiful are birds in flight!—the dart of a kingfisher, the sweep of a hawk, the dip and turn of a swallow, the tremulous beat of a rising lark, even the scurry of a park sparrow for the little bit of bread you throw him, all different and all beautiful; and what tiny, ineffectual, maimed creatures they are when they are dead, and their wings folded! What pitiful little structures of flesh and bones and tiny heart and brain to be so bright and swift in the wide air!

The road rounds a headland and dips again to Woody Bay. The sweep of the cliffs here is bold and beautiful, the bay is quite a wide sweeping curve for this land of creek and gorge, and the slopes of the cliffs are heavily wooded (which has probably led to the present corruption of the name from the earlier form of Wooda Bay); but there has been an outbreak of new houses and a new sanded road, which alarmed me, being in the mind for birds and solitude, and I kept the high white road which goes round the summit of the cliffs. Woody Bay is beginning to be popular in the summer months among those less conventional folk who like to live off the beaten track during their holidays, and are not frightened by long distances or difficulties of access, but it is still quite a tiny place and has not yet suffered that exploitation of the picturesque which has overtaken Ilfracombe and Torquay, and many beautiful spots in Devon. Seen from the high road that runs round the cup of the hills its sprinkle of new little pink houses below look like toys, and their dainty chalet-villa architecture fits the illusion; so also does its smoothed green terrace of fields, which seem no bigger than the nursery tablecloth, with Noah's ark animals, cows and horses, feeding on them.

The road crosses the stream which runs into the bay, and I rested here, sitting on the parapet of the bridge, before I took to the unshaded, stony white upper road. There was a pleasant sound of falling water, and the stream ran below me, between banks that were very green with moss and beautifully shaded by sycamores.

From Woody Bay the scene grows wilder and grander. Seaward tower the rocky cliffs, falling sheer to their base, jagged slate rocks which are the home of gulls and ravens, with precipitous slopes of short and slippery grass, where the mountain sheep feed; inland the brown moor stretches, bare and open to the sky, with a cluster of little cottages and a grey church hidden and sheltered in a dip of the ground.

From Woody Bay the road strikes inland to Martinhoe, which takes its name from the same overlords of the district whose appellation is found in Combe Martin (which in Domesday is written simply as Comba or Combe) and across the moors to Parracombe, which has been the home of the yeoman family of Blackmore since 1683. The little grey twelfth-century tower which William de Tracy is said to have built, as he built many churches in expiation of the murder of Thomas à Becket, stands just above the railway line from Lynton to Barnstaple, but the church used by the small population of the village—and this and Trentishoe only number together three hundred souls—stands lower down the combe. As one passes these villages, isolated on the wide moors and guarded each by its lonely small church, rising squarely and almost without ornament against the background of the hills, one thinks often of those beautiful lines of Kipling's in the poem he calls "Sussex":

"Here through the strong unhampered days
The twinkling silence thrills;
Or little, lost, Down churches praise
The Lord who made the hills."

I crossed a wild and desolate gorge, barren, rocky and windswept; the tinkle of clear water ran down over the grey boulders out of sight and dropped down the face of the cliff into the sea; brown and grey lay the hillsides and rocks under the glaring noonday sun; there was no living soul in sight, no movement, save far below the flight of a pair of ravens or the white flick of a gull's wings out to sea. Gorge beyond gorge lay the land, still and colourless in the circle of a sea and sky widely and splendidly blue. I felt that I walked on a younger earth, just emerged from its fierce chaos of whirling molten matter, and as yet unsoftened by luxuriant vegetable growth, an earth of stark rocks and hot mud, teeming with potential life, of dry thin air and blazing sunshine, very harsh and desolate and beautiful.



Heddon's Mouth, near Lynton

Then a great cleft runs inland, fenced by a bold headland on either hand, and I have rounded Highveer Point and am looking down Heddon's Mouth. Heddon is the corruption of the Celtic word "etin," which means a giant, and the Celtic spirit which so named this wild valley had indeed a sense of the poetry and grandeur of places. Sheer either side rise the slate hills, bare, waterless, and treeless. The southern hill is one steep slope of scree; the northern hill, Highveer Point, on which I stand, is covered with dead gorse and heather, which they have been burning in the spring, and the sharp smell lingers still. A thousand feet below runs the river, shut narrowly between these great cliffs, with hardly foothold for a sparse sprinkle of trees between these dark walls, and for the ribbon of white road that runs from the sea to Hunter's Inn, a mile inland. There two streams meet, and the place is as green as a little paradise, and bright with running waters, but it lies round the bend of the hill on which I stand, and what I see before me is this shadowless great gorge, without tree or shrub or flower, the magnificent shoulders of cliff lifted against the hot and cloudless sky; inland the heat shimmering on the rounded surface of hill behind hill, and out to sea a little froth of white where the blue water breaks into foam on the point of some just submerged jag of rock. A vast silence holds the place, save for the deep undertone of the rushing water far below, so deep and so distant that it is rather like a dull vibration in my brain than a sound in my ears. The heavy buzzing of a fly and the rattle of the wind in the brim of my straw hat do not break this impression of great silence; they seem to lie on it rather, like feathers on the surface of a deep pool. The shadow of a hawk goes slowly past me on the dusty white road and across the bare hillside, on an outcrop of rock, bleak and grey in this brilliant light, a

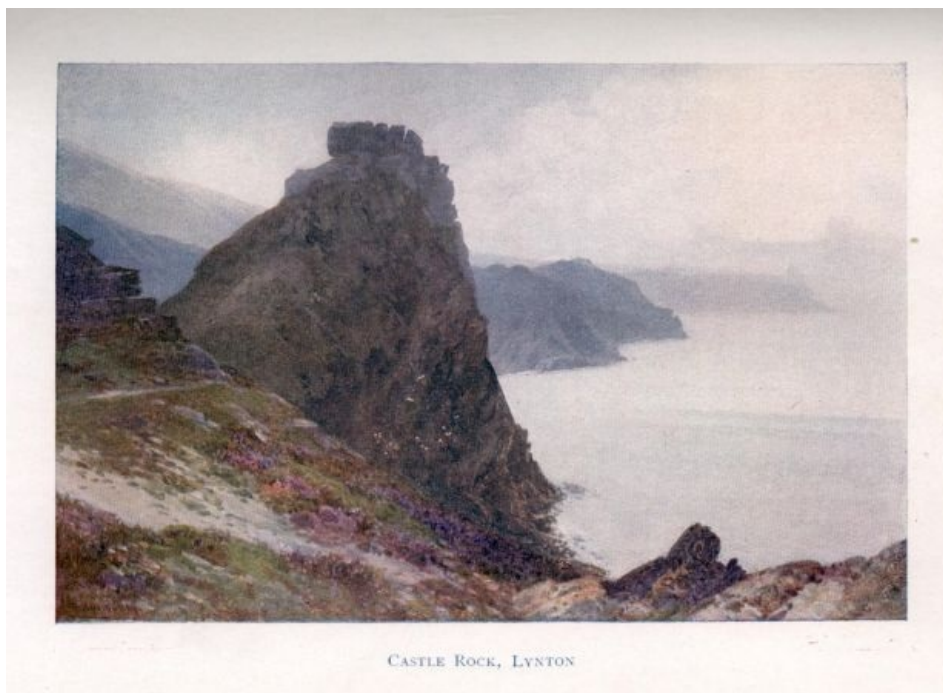
butterfly, a red admiral, stands motionless, his wonderful wings of crimson and iridescent blue stretched wide, and shining in the sunlight with incredible colour.

There are scenes of a different beauty at Lynton from that of these few miles of cliff—and to me lacking something of the spaciousness and splendour of Heddon's Mouth—but beautiful none the less. Go into Lynmouth, down the steep and stony road—a true Devonshire road, still the same as Celia Fiennes described them in her tour through England in 1695: "Ye lanes are full of stones and dirt for ye most part, because they are so close ye sun and wind cannot come at them"—among the steep, tree-embowered, whitewashed houses, which with the sun blazing on their flat white walls suggest rather a little village of the Pyrenees or Northern Italy than Devonshire cottages, that and the luxuriance of the trees through which the East Lyn and the West Lyn foam down to the little beach, and the prodigal flowering of bushes and shrubs. Follow the East Lyn up to Watersmeet, which is about two miles from Lynmouth through one of the most beautiful wooded gorges in England. Past the hotels you go, and a little straggle of small modern houses, past the untidy little patch which would be the suburb of a larger community, with upturned boats and washing drying in the sun, and within five minutes a turn of the road hides Lynmouth and the sea from your backward look, and you stand in the heart of a valley and beyond signs of habitation. The southern slope is beautifully wooded, showing every range and variety of green, from the light vivid green of larches to the dull brownish tone of the oaks. The northern slope rises brown and rocky, the edges clear-cut against the brilliant sky; there is a great sound of birds, and always the noise of water running over stones.

As you ascend the river the gorge becomes narrow and more thickly wooded; the path winding along it is hot and close and still; the water is clear brown in its depths, and green in the shallows and where it slides over a mossy stone; it bubbles into foam in its tiny waterfalls and cataracts and miniature whirlpools; it is deliciously sweet and cool. The green moss grows to the very edge of its white stones, and ferns and hart's-tongues and lilies-of-the-valley clothe the sides of the hill; there are celandines and primroses and wild strawberry in flower, and the lovely white cup of the ivy-leaved bell-flower. Nowhere, perhaps, save in the west of England (I do not speak only of Devon, for I know of little valleys in Cornwall which are as fertile as the Garden of Eden, held in the rocky jaws of some bleak cliff), but in what we call "the West," is there such peculiar beauty of contrast, bold outlines of cliff and cove, great stretches of moor lying open to the sky, and wooded combe and valley or small green sheltered hollow of such blossoming fertility.

The Watersmeet, the point where the Hoar oak Water joins the East Lyn, breaking down over a thunderous small white waterfall, and a beautiful spot enough, is vulgarized by notices embodying the commercial rivalry of two different tea-houses. By one you are invited to walk on the right bank of the river, as being the only public footpath (given in the official guide of the Lynton Urban District Council); by the other you are invited to a "unique view" of the Watersmeet, and assured you will be solicited for patronage in no way.

On the loneliest, loveliest day in early summer this smacks of tourist parties, and I made haste to leave the river path and the sheltering trees and climb the road to Brendon, a road as steep and hot, as stony and glaring, as I have ever climbed. Up and up I went for half an hour, seeing nothing but the banks and hedges on either hand; every turn in the road I thought was the last span that would bring me out on the hill-tops, and every turn of the road showed me another. But at last I stood above Brendon, and before me spread the moors, brown and purple in the sunlight, and the little old grey church of Brendon just below me, in a slight dip of the high ground.



Castle Rock, Lynton

The woods of the Lyn Valley climbed to my feet, and I sat down in the shade of the outermost fringe

of trees to eat my lunch, and dream and muse, and doze away the first hot hours of the afternoon. I sat looking down over the valley; below me and to right and left the green spikes of the larches were aflutter in the wind; before me rose a great bare shoulder of hill, outlined sharply against the blue. Overhead the sun was blazing, but in the wood the sunlight hung mistily among the trunks and branches of oak and birch; it looked as if the wood were filled with tremulous sunlit water, rather than with air and sun. The air from off the moors was keen and very sweet. I lay on the dry, clean turf and moss, looking up at the cloudless sky; a solitary swallow hawking far up seemed no bigger than a fly, and a brilliant green fly on a leaf above me, buzzing turbulently, seemed portentously big and important. I lost my sense of space and time and of the world in relation to men, set, as it were, as the background to men, and I slipped into a world which belongs to the birds and the mice and the moles, and the fish in the clear stream below; I watched the chaffinches and thrushes, and a little grey ash-tree near me which was full of linnets, delicious, sleek, grey, sweet-piping, busy little birds, sliding and skimming in and out of the tree, a little home of song and love-making, of intimate and familiar life. I heard a cuckoo calling from the thick woods of the valley below, like the note of a bell, very far away. I noticed the unopened buds of the ash shining like silver against the flawless blue sky; it seemed to me I had lain there a hundred years looking at them, and hearing the thin song of the linnets, in a world entranced from movement or the passing of time. And then I fell asleep.

CHAPTER V

LYNTON (*continued*), COUNTISBURY, AND NORTHWARD

The word "Lynton," Mr. Chanter tells us in his interesting monograph on the village, means the town on the lyn, and "lyn" is the Celtic word, not for river, but for pool, and occurs in this meaning all over England, in Northumberland, Yorkshire, Kent, Herefordshire. It is strange, perhaps, that this rushing mountain stream should have been named from its very rarely occurring pools, but the authority is indubitable.

The Celtic folk who named it, the "early Britons," as our childish history books used to call them, were not, of course, the first inhabitants of this wild and wooded spot; there are neolithic remains—hut circles and burial-places—fairly thickly scattered along this coast, and a certain number of flint implements have been found. The hut circles in the Valley of Rocks, of which traces still remain, though many of them have been destroyed quite recently, within the last two hundred years or so, belong to this period, and it is probable that the earth-camps of Lynton and Countisbury, of Parracombe, Martinhoe, and Ilfracombe, were built by the immense labour of this vanished people. Remains of the early Bronze period show that there was a moderate population in this district before the Roman Conquest. Of Roman remains there are none, save a few coins of doubtful authenticity found at Countisbury, which are supposed to have been scattered and buried by a resident clergyman at the close of the last century, with the avowed intention of "fogging" later antiquarians—surely the strangest "fourberie" ever indulged in by a reverend gentleman. All other evidence points to the fact that the Romans never occupied North Devon, though they may have held in temporary garrison one or other of the existing camps of the district.

These camps open up most interesting avenues of speculation; many of them were undoubtedly built as defences, some few—such as the small earthwork on the din's edge at Martinhoe—as beacons or signalling stations, and some are conjectured to have been built for burial purposes, not the mere barrows for single internment, but in connection with sepulchral ceremonies and rites of the worship of the dead. Such, perhaps, is the small camp at Parracombe, which is built with a strong double fosse, but the inner fosse deeper than the outer, which does not seem to have been the case with camps built only for defence. There are two other camps at Parracombe, one on the common and one on a high hill; near Lynton there are two simple earth enclosures, called popularly Roborough Castle and Stock Castle, and seven miles south of Lynton there is a square enclosure called High Bray Castle, which commands a view of the fortified camps of the district from Barnstaple to Braunton and Martinhoe. Tradition has it that Alfred held this camp against the Danes, not that he built it, for even in his day its foundation had become legendary and was ascribed to "men of old time."

The Saxons do not seem to have built earth-camps, but stone fortifications on hills, like Athelstan's castle at Barnstaple, or Kenwith Castle, though they used the barrow-camps at their need. The Romans, we know, were mighty engineers, and their roads and buildings bear witness to the endurance of their handiwork, but many of these camps are indisputably not Roman, and their names bear witness to their Celtic origin. Such is the camp at Countisbury, which name is almost certainly the same as Canterbury—"Kant-ys-bury," the "camp on the headland," and which is one of the most perfect in Devonshire. It stands on a hill a thousand feet above the sea, commanding a view of the coast from Porlock to Heddon's Mouth, with the line of the Welsh coast opposite; it consists of a triple rampart and fosse, rising boldly one within the other, with a gate cut in the northern face of the rampart, and with a small mound exactly in the centre of the inner camp. How did these peoples of the Celtic speech build a work of such engineering magnitude, without the tools and appliances of the Roman civilization, with implements of flint, or at best of bronze, a work of such strategical foresight, of such nicety of proportion, and of such enduring strength, that now after the lapse of probably twenty-five centuries its

bold proportions can be traced by the most casual glance of the passer-by of the road that runs past, now that the sheep clamber and feed in its deep fosses, and daisies sprinkle the grass of its ramparts?

The Saxons seem to have come more or less peaceably to the Britons of North Devon, who had taken little impress, probably, of the alien Roman civilization, except Christianity, for many of the churches round still carry the name of a Celtic saint, showing that the Saxons did not come devastating villages and destroying the little churches (in which case, of course, the churches would carry the name of a Saxon saint of their later Christianity), but settled with the inhabitants, intermarried, and probably adopted their worship. There is the church of St. Culbone, St. Brendon—that tiny village of Brendon, near Lynton, which must have been a village, with a rude little church of its own, before Hengist and Horsa landed—of St. Dubricius at Porlock, of St. Brannock at Braunton, near Barnstaple.

St. Brannock ought to have been an Irish saint; the legends of him have a levity, and a fantastic and humorous twist, that we do not find in the stories of the Teutonic saints. He was the son of the King of Calabria, and came to North Devon somewhere about A.D. 300. He searched the hearts of the inhabitants by various miracles, among them by having a cow killed, cut in pieces, and boiled in a cauldron, and then, calling the cow by name, out it walked, alive and whole, and never a penn'orth the worse. The story of this is carved on one of the bench-ends of the pews in the present fourteenth-century church of St. Brannock, and there is a large carved boss of the roof representing a sow and her litter, because St. Brannock is said to have been commanded in a dream to build a church on the spot where he should first meet a sow. He pressed the deer into the service of God, and yoked them, making them draw timber from the woods to build the church. This is how the rhyme goes—a fairly modern version of a much older doggerel:

"He had nor horse, nor ox, nor ass, but the deer so little
and limber;
They ran in the forest to please themselves, why shouldn't
they draw his timber?"

There is also another rhyme which seems to show that a bond of affection sprang up between him and the cow which had had to serve his miracle:

"St. Brannock fed on venison when he sat down to table;
Behind him stood his favourite cow, and his
valet-de-chambre Abel!"

I do not know why his servant should have been called Abel.

The Norman Conquest also came peaceably to this beautiful and remote place; the census of the population of Lynton and Countisbury given in Domesday, which was compiled in 1086, twenty years after the Conquest, gives the numbers for the two villages as 425. In 1801 the population numbered no more than 601, these numbers being as many as the district could support until the modern distribution of supplies; and the comparatively small increase in seven hundred years shows that in William the Conqueror's reign sobriety of government and security of the life of the individual gave these localities freedom to develop to the limit of their capacity. Countisbury had been held by Ailmar "on the day on which King Edward was alive and dead," and it "rendered geld for half a hide." A "hide" was the unit of assessment on which the Danegeld was paid in Saxon times—

1 virgate = 1/4 of a hide.

1 fering = 1/4 of a virgate (also identified with sixteen acres).

1 ploughland = as much land as 8 oxen could cultivate.

(In Devonshire 1 ploughland was equivalent to 4 ferlings.)

The "manor" consisted of the "demesne," which was the lord's home-farm, attached to his dwelling, and the villagers' land, which was held by the villeins for their own use, on the condition of the cultivation of their lord's ground. Hence it will be seen that the condition of the peasantry in the eleventh century, while actually serfdom, with enforced labour, and no right of moving from the dominion of the lord under which they were born, was virtually better than the conditions of the agricultural population at the beginning of the nineteenth century (and some would say, even, at the present day) in that they practically owned smallholdings and were in a position where industry and enterprise could be better rewarded than many a labourer of our own time could expect, whose prospects—so long as he remained an agricultural labourer, and in England—were inalterably bounded by eighteen shillings a week.

The manor of Countisbury rendered geld for half a hide, of which the lord held one virgate and four ploughs, and the villeins held one virgate and six ploughs. Here is a list of the possessions of the overlord in 1086:

"There William has 12 villeins, and 6 bordars, and 15 serfs, and 1 swineherd (who renders 10 swine by the year), and 1 packhorse, and 32 head of cattle, and 24 swine, and 300 sheep less 13, and 35 goats, and 50 acres of wood, and 2 acres of meadow, 1 leuga in length and 1 furlong in breadth; and it is worth by the year 4 pounds, and it was worth 20 shillings when William received it."

The Danish raids also, though they were frequent up and down this coast, seem to have passed by

Lynton; the narrowness of the landing beach, the steep rise of the cliffs immediately from the shore, the rocky bed of the river and the thick woods which fence the valley, all made it difficult of attack, while Porlock and Ilfracombe lay within a few miles, offering smoother harbours and easier access. There are several notices in the Saxon Chronicle of Danish raids on the coasts of the Severn Sea, in A.D. 845 and in A.D. 917, when the Lidwiccas, under Ohtor and Rhoald, landed and devastated a great portion of this north-west country, but they probably came to Watchet, near Minehead, and even then all that Lynton saw of the fierce raid was the smoke of the beacon fires from Dunkery Beacon to Martinhoe Beacon, near Heddon's Mouth.

In the twelfth century the manors of Lynton and Countisbury were in the possession of Henry de Tracy, Becket's murderer, and by him were given to the Abbey of Ford, in whose right they remained until the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII. Ford Abbey was a foundation of Cistercian monks, an order which was always engaged in matters of practical value, and under their rule something was done to improve the breed of mountain sheep round this district and produce wool of greater market value; they also attempted some development of agriculture and the fishery of Lynmouth. They had, indeed, extensive rights of fishery by land and sea—a very valuable asset, it must be remembered, in the Middle Ages, when the mass of the population lived almost exclusively on salt fish, and meat was scarce, except on the tables of the noble. Their rights extended over Lynmouth, Martinhoe, Countisbury, and the coast of Wales, and the monopoly of deep-sea fishing along the Severn Sea. This went beyond the old manorial claim, which was "from the shore so far seaward as a horsed knight could, at low water-springs, reach with his spear." Beyond was the King's, and was free and open to all his subjects, though a claim for deep-sea rights was allowed if it could be proved to be of very ancient usage, as in the case of Ford Abbey. Lynmouth was a noted resort for herrings all through the Middle Ages, and curing-houses stood on the beach for many years until 1607, when nearly all were swept away by a great storm, and never after properly reconstructed. The herrings also at some time in the seventeenth century left these coasts completely—tradition says because of the avarice of a parson of Lynton, a hard man and greedy, who cared rather to fleece his flock than feed them, and who imposed such heavy tithes on his poor parishioners, that, in spite of the prosperity of their fishing, they were unable to pay them. So the herrings left the district, and the parson could whistle for them, until he mended his ways and reduced his tithes, when they magically returned.

At the dissolution of the monasteries very little difference in the daily routine of their lives can have been felt by the country people round Lynton and Countisbury. John Chidley, who had been bailiff for Ford Abbey, applied to the King for continuation in his office, which was granted to him, and he administered the property for Henry VIII, Edward VI, and, Elizabeth, as he had administered it for the Abbey of Ford.

Nor did the Civil Wars touch it nearly. Barnstaple and Dunster were taken and retaken by the Parliamentary troops, and armies marched from Dunster west to Bideford across Exmoor and the great commons, but no armed troops came down into Lynton; perhaps hardly even a straggler found his way there. In the tragic rebellion of 1685 a bloody little drama was enacted here indeed, but that is connected with the history of the de Wichehalses, the family of chief interest and importance who have lived at Lynton. They did not come to Lynton before the early seventeenth century; their home was a small hamlet called Wych, near Chudleigh in Devonshire, though Blackmore invents for them a romantic Dutch pedigree, and asserts that they fled to England to escape from Spanish persecution in the Netherlands; this story, however, has been proved entirely without foundation by the careful researches of Mr. Chanter. In the time of Elizabeth, he says, these de Wichehalses had overflowed all over the country; we find them at Exeter, Chudleigh, Ashcombe, and Powderham. In 1530 one, Nicholas de Wichehalse, settled at Barnstaple and started in the woollen trade; he married into the Salisbury family, who were in the same business; and when he died he decreed by will that his nephew John should marry his stepdaughter, Katherine Salisbury. The next Nicholas de Wichehalse married Lettice Deamond, the daughter of the Mayor of Barnstaple, and it is an inventory of his shop, taken in 1607, that I have quoted in a previous chapter.

His son Hugh married in due course, and continued to live at his family mansion in Crock Street, until, in 1627, the fear of the plague which ravaged Barnstaple and Bideford (it was supposed to have been brought into the towns by an infected mattress which had been thrown overboard by a plague-stricken ship, and was fished out of the river just below Barnstaple by four children who were fishing) drove the de Wichehalses out of the city.

Hugh de Wichehalse decided to send his family to the purer air of the old Grange Farm of Lee, near Lynton. One can picture the removal: his wife, his children, his servants, and a whole string of packhorses (carriages were still rare as a means of transport), coming down Boutport Street, and across Pilton Causeway, up the beautiful and fertile valley of the Yeo, to Westland Pound on the edge of Blackmoor, and its inn, where in all probability they slept. The next day they would be on the high barren moors, where the air was too sweet and keen for infection, and so would come across Parracombe Common, Martinhoe Common, Lynton Common, and down the Valley of Rocks to Lee (what is now called Lee Abbey).

The farm stood about a mile and a half or two miles from Lynton, and after the busy life of the town their solitude must have seemed to them excessive, for their near neighbours would live half a dozen miles away, and were inaccessible in winter. There were the Berrys from Crosscombe, a branch of the Berrynarbor family into which Hugh's sister had married; the Knights at West Lyn; the Pophams, who came from Porlock.

The family lived there for the next eighty years. Hugh was buried in the parish church at Lynton,

and his monument can be seen there; it is he to whom Blackmore refers in "Lorna Doone" as Baron Hugh, who was somewhat too much hand-in-glove with the Doones; but the "young Squire Marwood," who rode too frequently past the Ridds' farm and kissed Annie Ridd, is a character of fiction, for Hugh de Wichehalse's son was called John, and not Marwood, there was never one of that name.

John was a strong Parliamentarian, and married into the Venner family; but very soon they were in opposite camps, and there was great distrust and anger between them. Colonel Venner commanded a regiment in Monmouth's haphazard and ill-fated army in 1685. Wade, a renegade lawyer from Holland, with a captain's commission, served in his regiment, and after the defeat of Monmouth at Sedgemoor, Wade and Ferguson (a notorious factious Scotchman, and the father of all plots) escaped to Bridgewater and from thence got passage down to Ilfracombe. There they hired a small ship and worked their way up the coast, hoping to rescue other refugees; they were sighted and chased by one of the King's frigates, and were forced to run ashore, when Lynton became the scene of one of those grim and terrible rebel hunts which made the West Country tragic and bloody during that summer of 1685. Wade was discovered at Brendon by John de Wichehalse; he made a run for it, and was shot by de Wichehalse's servant, John Babb. The Babbs were said never to have prospered afterwards; their crops failed, the fisheries failed, and they became extinct in the second generation. The last of them, Ursula Babb, the grand-daughter of John, was to be seen wandering up and down the little beach of Lynmouth, a half-crazed old crone, cursed with the evil-eye, and babbling disjointed and incoherent stories of the ruin of the de Wichehalses.

Partly because of discord between him and the Venner family, partly because of the strong feeling which was aroused locally by the action of de Wichehalse, who had the body of a rebel who was shot in Bonham Wood quartered and hung on the paled gate opposite Lee, he left Lynton and went to live in London. The simple Devonshire estates could not support the expenses of living in London; bit after bit his property was mortgaged and frittered away, and when he died he possessed East Leymouth (now Lynmouth) only, which he left to his daughter Mary. She it was who became the heroine of all the stories of the "last of the de Wichehalses," which, indeed, she was. She met a sudden and unexplained death off Duty Point, and the White Lady of Castle Rock—a phenomenon caused by a small aperture, bearing a slight resemblance to a woman's figure, among the dark masses of the rock—is popularly supposed to be connected with her fate. Of her brothers, Charles, the younger, was killed at the Battle of Almanza in 1707, when the English, under Lord Galway, lost 18,000 men and all their transport, and the elder brother, John, died at Port Mahon, in Minorca, in 1721, while on garrison duty, and this branch of the family became extinct.



DUTY POINT

Duty Point

And this is positively all the history of Lynton, until, in the time of the French Revolution, when the turbulent state of the Continent made it inadvisable to spend a holiday abroad, its beauty was discovered by those eager to find in England that enjoyment of the picturesque which before they had looked for in Italy and Southern France. We use "picturesque" now in a slightly derogatory sense, or we use it patronizingly, because it is old-fashioned and belongs to the nineteenth century, and Ruskin and Wordsworth, and even Horace Walpole and his "Gothic" ruin on Strawberry Hill; and we are of the twentieth century, and have discovered the beauty of docks and harbours and tall factory chimneys and railway stations, under the guidance of Whistler and Brangwyn and such folk, and we do not fret at laying a railway through Perthshire or the Lake District, because railways are fast becoming almost as romantic and old-fashioned to us as stage-coaches (in these days of aeroplanes and automobiles); but at least let us remember that it is to the nineteenth century that we owe that acute appreciation, not only of the visible beauty of the world, but of the spirit that lies behind it, that personal and intimate character of places which is one of our dear possessions. Mountains and woods, cliff and cove, have become to us a truism of beauty, but let us at least be grateful to the generation which first dared to

see more in the boundless Scotch hills and moors than "savage and disgusting country," or to compare the pinnacles of the Alps to human handiwork—greatly to their disadvantage. And the small absurdities, the "ruins" that they loved, the "abbeys" they erected, were only part of that general half-conscious striving to apprehend and express the spirit of romance with which we are still moved in our own day, which Kipling expresses in his own fashion and Conrad in his, down to the small-change of literature which struggles for expression in our magazines and periodicals.

So when Shelley and Coleridge and Wordsworth came to Lynton, and found it beautiful, and nearly decided to live there and be the poets of Devon instead of the poets of the Lake District, it was because they found in it that quality of beauty which they needed; and when, a little later, Lynton was "discovered" by one or more people of wealth—notably by Mr. Coutts, the banker, who built houses there and hotels, and began to noise its beauty up and down the London world—it was just the outermost ripple of the vast disturbance of the French Revolution which touched the little spot, part of the free new eager spirit which sent men questing for a loveliness they could neither make nor control, and of which they must be humble and passive spectators, and part also of vast causes and changes, which drove Englishmen to seek their holidays within their own shores.

Before closing this second chapter on Lynton, I cannot forbear to speak yet further of the beautiful scenery in which it lies. There is Summerhouse Hill, or Lyn Cleave, as it is more charmingly and appropriately called, the great rocky height, a thousand feet above Lynmouth, which looks down on the two villages and which divides the valleys of the East and West Lyn. Lying on the short dry springy turf, in the mellow sunlight of late afternoon, you can look along the velvety wooded valley of the East Lyn, where the stream is hidden by the tufted banks of the trees, and by shifting ever so slightly on your elbows as you lie at ease you can look into the bare brown rocky valley of the West Lyn, and see the gleam of the river foaming over its rocks a thousand feet below. All round is the cawing of rooks, as they sail majestically back to their nests, grave and cheerful with their abundance of food and their security of tenure. England belongs to the rooks, says a friend of mine. We English may live here, we may build houses and farms, we may plough and sow and reap, we may make revolutions or wars, sending our armies marching through the countryside in creeping dusty columns, but we are only illusions on the page of history, shadows flitting across the face of the land; the rooks are perpetual, ineradicable, and possessive. They feed behind our plough; they flock in our green trees; they build in our valleys and in the shelter of our houses; summer and winter they are seen flying under our English skies; they mate and nest and bicker round our cathedrals and our cottages; they are noisy and turbulent and unrestrained before us, as if we were no more than the hedges we plant and prune; they are irrepressible as street-arabs, and arrogant as monarchs. If all human life were by some unimagined catastrophe swept from the length and breadth of England, the cawing of the rooks would sound as certainly, and they would fly forth to their morning meal and back across the evening sky to their tall green elm-trees as if they had never sailed over the heads of men who looked up and saw in them the symbol of peace, security, and comfort, which they loved to call England.

For a good walker the road that lies between Lynmouth and Porlock is an adventure worth taking, though it gives a taste of the steep and shadeless roads which lead up and down these moors, pitilessly sun-scorched in summer, and pitilessly bleak and windswept in winter, when the rain and sleet comes stinging and driving in your face, and yet somehow, at all times of the year, worth adventuring for the splendid, open, untamed beauty they show you.

If you take carriage (in which case you will walk the greater part of the way!), you will start from Lynmouth, and ascend the steep hill that leads right up the cliff to Countisbury Foreland—I should have said the steepest two miles of carriage road in England, had I not also climbed Porlock Hill, twelve miles northward. The surface of the road is loose, and scoured by winter rains, and on a windy day the dust comes swirling down it like a miniature sandstorm. I have, indeed, seen even a car obliged to draw up to let the blinding red swirl go by; and from Lynton, on the opposite side of the valley, the whole headland has been blurred and obliterated by the dust, as if it were a fog.

If you are not driving, you may go up the East Lyn Valley, past the Watersmeet, till you strike the path for Brendon, a more sheltered way on a hot morning, but steep also, for the hills are not to be avoided, and you have somehow to climb 1,300 feet from the sea to Countisbury. Countisbury itself is a tiny, bare, white-washed hamlet, with a small bare white inn with the sign of the Blue Ball; it stands on the borders of Devon and Somerset, and hence some have supposed the name to mean the "county's boundary"—but this, I think, is a case of false analogy, and the Celtic origin of the "camp on the headland" is far more likely.



THE MOORS NEAR BRENDON TWO GATES

The Moors near Brendon Two Gates

The Foreland is a great bold promontory looking towards the Welsh coast, which hangs on the horizon like a low silver cloud above the faint haze of the summer sea. Below lie Sillery Sands, and the caves of the beach; beyond, the opening heights of Exmoor, in long flat curves, featureless, spacious, and beautiful, purple and sombre under the wrack of rain-clouds, grey and arid in the fierce blaze of the midsummer sun, most lovely of all on crisp September mornings, when the heather is abloom in miles on miles of changing purples and the air has a keen, clean edge, as if it were blown off the top of the world. The air of Exmoor has always this sharp sweetness, however much the sun may blaze, as John Ridd knew; and looking over the wide-stretching countryside, one sees many a farm that might have been his, a sturdy, whitewashed affair, flanked generously with out-buildings, and standing high, but sheltered, in a hollow of the ground, cut off from its neighbours by the rising hills, and even more isolated in winter by the deep ruts of the roads, muddy and impassable, that wind from valley to valley.

A mile beyond County Gate is the village of Oare, where John Kidd and Lorna were married; and as we follow the Porlock road across the moors we see on our right the dip of the Doone Valley, where Lorna's bower was, and a few scattered remains of stone huts show the habitations of the outlaws. It is a scene of wildness and grandeur; on the left lies the blue sea, on the right the dun-coloured moors. There are no trees, save for a few withered and stunted alders, covered with lichen till they are the colour of stone, and look like petrified remains of an earlier age; they are grown all to one side under the stress of the prevailing wind. The only signs of life are the scattered sheep, their grey backs scarcely visible among the heather and close furze, a great buzzard hawk poised far up in the blue, and, when his shadow has passed, sailing slowly over the shadeless ground, the sweet, monotonous song of mounting larks.

CHAPTER VI

PORLOCK AND EXMOOR

The road now lies in Somerset; we pass Glenthorne, lying five hundred feet below, among its beautiful green woods and stretches of vivid green turf, and separated by some five miles of barren brown moors from the village of Porlock. The road that leads from Exmoor down to Porlock is incredibly steep, the steepest coach-road in England. It twists dangerously in sharp right-angle turns, the surface is loose and stony, worn by the dragging of brakes and the scouring of winter rains, and on a summer afternoon it is so hot, so dusty and glaring, and so steep, that it seems impossible for man or beast to climb. As soon as you are at the top, however, the fresh air of Exmoor fills your lungs and freshens your face, so let nobody be dissuaded from it.

Porlock itself was a port in Saxon times and in the reign of William the Conqueror (I have told elsewhere how not only the Danes, but Saxon Earl Harold, drove his ships into the harbour on a fierce raiding expedition), but it is now an inland village, and between it and the sea lie two miles of flat land of the most wonderful luxuriance. *De gustibus* indeed, and to me Porlock is one of the most beautiful spots in all England. It lies in a green bay—what was a bay eight centuries ago—between two towering headlands. On three sides of it rise the heights of Exmoor, barren, beautiful, and windswept; before it stretch the lands over which the Danes sailed, running out to a thin strip of marshland, and then a

silvery flat beach, and then the tremulous silver curve of the sea, not like the line of wave that breaks at the foot of cliffs, but a true marshland sea, seeming to come from nowhere, infinitely smooth and faint and distant from the level shore to the dim horizon.

There are many kinds of beauty in the world: beauty of hot suns and delicate mists, of sea and shore, mountain and lake and city; there is the beauty of barren moors and of green orchards, and of flat fertile marshlands where streams run amid a luxuriance of tangled growth, kingcups and meadowsweet and loose-strife and forget-me-nots, and feathery willows and rushes where the reed-warblers sing. And at Porlock there is such a gathering up of these different beauties that it is difficult to describe the pleasure that one has in it. I have told you how it is fenced by Exmoor, and lies within sight of Dunkery Beacon, the highest point of the moors; but it is impossible to convey adequately the peculiar beauty of those great smooth dipping curves, the satisfying breadth and harmony of their line, the way the sunlight lies upon them, and the rich deep shadows that slide into their folds. And below, round Porlock, lie the orchards. I came there once in the spring, and as we turned the last angle of the stony road I saw before me such a sweep of blossom, such a foam of cherry and pear, white above the luxuriant grass, and of that delicate flushed rose of the apple-blossom, so exquisite a range of green, the hazy green of willows and the bright clear green of hawthorn, that it seemed impossible it should lie just under those miles on miles of moor where nothing bloomed but furze and heather.

The green fields that stretched away to the sea were just such fields as in the "Romaunt of the Rose" or the poems of the troubadours, fields verdantly green, and starred with daisies and golden with buttercups—the "enamelled meads" of Chaucer and the little illumined pictures of the fourteenth-century manuscripts; and the hedges were just such hedges, incredibly green, with here and there a break for the misty silver of the blackthorn. Wherever flowers could bloom they bloomed, in the gardens, in the hedges, by the roadside, in the crannies of the walls.

Porlock village itself is a quiet, charming spot which, in spite of the temptation of visitors who come here in considerable numbers in the autumn, when stag-hunting on Exmoor is in season, keeps most of its old-world simplicity, and has not much "modernized" itself. It is rambling, calm, and whitewashed; the bank itself is a long, low, cream building with a thatched roof, and a lovely note of colour from a climbing japonica. The Ship Inn also is a pleasant old building, with a dark, cool coffee-room and heavy, timbered roof. "Southey's corner," where he is said to have written his poem, "Porlock, thy verdant vale ...," on being detained at the Ship by the heavy moorland rain, is by an old open fireplace, and has been cut off from a larger room by thin partitioning walls. It is a pleasant homely place, with its sound of horses from the stable-yard, and the clink of its old pewter pots from the bar, with its low raftered ceiling and brick floor, and the sunlight seen from its open doors.

Porlock Church has a square tower, with a heavy, octagonal, truncated spire, which gives the little church an over-weighted appearance, but very distinctive in this country, of tall Perpendicular towers. It is dedicated to St. Dubricius, who is a Celtic saint of the sixth century, who crowned and anointed Arthur of the Round Table; in the twelfth century he became a very famous saint once more, after having been nearly forgotten for several hundred years. Many miracles were worked at his tomb, and churches were dedicated to him. The present church at Porlock was built about the thirteenth century by Sir Simon Fitz-Roges, who was a crusader, but I am inclined to think that the dedication to St. Dubric belonged to the early simple church (probably a thatched and whitewashed barn) which was there at the time of the Conquest, and which, like the neighbouring churches of St. Culbone and St. Brendon, harks back to Celtic Christianity of pre-Saxon times. The church was altered in the fifteenth century, and the Harington Chantry, which now contains the tomb of Baron Harington and his wife, was added, and the present spire, in place of the old one, which was blown down in a gale. It is a little, quiet, grey English church, set peacefully in its green churchyard, shaded by a huge ancient yew, perhaps as old as itself. In the winter rain and wind beat round its solid grey walls, in spring the daffodils bloom in the churchyard, and on summer days the bees are busy among the clover and daisies over the graves. There are thousands of such small, sober, beautiful churches in England; they are the monument on which a fragment of the history of the race is inscribed; they are the nucleus of the village life; the beginning and the end of its activities have their sanction within its walls; they are rich with the continued service of men's lives, generation from generation taking up the duty and its privilege; they rise above the clustering roofs of the village, tower or spire, as the visible landmark of faith—not of a creed that can change and ebb and flow, but of a faith in the spiritual core that lies at the heart of material life, like the village church among the homes of its village.

We who pass casually, and pause, and step in and look, with a curious and antiquarian eye, for a bit of old brasswork or carved screen, miss the intimate beauty of these churches as much, perhaps, as if we read them in a catalogue: "St. Dubric; 12th cent.; fine marble monument of 15th cent...., and so on." The plainest and simplest holds within its whitewashed walls the beauty of continuous tradition; you must see it in all its aspects of daylight and evening light, summer and winter, the rainy, tumultuous November afternoons and the long, golden, mellow evenings of June, to realize what it offers, of peace and order, tenderness and calm.

Inside Porlock Church, which is light and white and simple, there is a beautiful canopied tomb of the fifteenth century, with the recumbent figures of Baron Harington and his wife Elizabeth Courteny, carved in alabaster. Whoever made these marble figures was an artist; not only is the detail of the dress intricately and beautifully carved, the foliated wreath of his helmet, the elaborate decoration of her girdle, and the curved "horns" of her head-dress rolled either side of her face, but the whole pose and outline of the figures is firm and gracious.

I find that this tomb is quite famous among virtuosi, though I was unaware of it when I came upon

the monument in the quiet of a workaday afternoon; but its beauty at once claimed my eye, presenting something so different from the average mediaeval tomb, of interest chiefly for its age. These figures are slightly defaced, the sharp edges worn smooth by time, and scores of initials have been scratched roughly on the surface of his armour or her mantle; but there is a certainty of line, a sharpness, and at the same time a suavity of angle, a way of disposing the head and hands and body, all within the stiff convention of rigid tomb carving, that to any lover of sculpture reveals the sure hand of a master, whether he were a nameless stonemason, working in a secluded village, or a renowned man, invited from far.

Standing by this beautiful tomb I can see the sunlight through the open door, with a black splash across the gold, of the great yews beyond; I hear the crowing of cocks and the voice of children, the creak of a passing cart and the song of birds, all the simple, jolly sounds of that everyday life which is the plain fabric on which all history, of nations and empires and monarchs, is (if you like) the embroidery.

From Porlock to the little port of Porlock Weir is a walk of two miles along a narrow lane between high green hedges. The road leads nowhere else but there and back; it is a kind of enchanted road which goes to an enchanted village, a village at the world's end, beyond the circle of mere reality. Every cottage in Porlock Weir is just such a little cottage as J. M. Barrie's fairies might build, low-browed under a steep thatch, with great tall chimneys, in which are cut just such little windows as would frame a fairy's head, looking out and laughing and nodding at you; whitewashed, half-timbered cottages, grouped together in a jumble of delicious curves and angles, with dusky, deep oak doorways, and stone steps hollowed by the feet that have gone in and out, and long leaded windows, softly yellow with lamplight in the mellow twilight of summer evenings, and gardens—oh, gardens that are small, and walled with stone, and running over with colour and bloom as no other gardens in the world could ever be! Hydrangeas, geranium, larkspur and evening primrose, columbine, forget-me-not, roses—and, indeed, the roses have gone wild with freedom, and threaten to overflow and drown the village, trailing over the wall, running up the tall chimneys, thrusting in at the open windows—nor are there names for all the flowers that bloom here, for all the mellow gold and crimson and blue and yellow and purple that glow in the sunlight, and fade gently into shadows of themselves as night falls. Beyond is the sea, all round the flowering meadows of the marsh, behind the moors; to anyone who has had the fortune to see Porlock Weir on such a day in May as this I recall, when this England of ours seems, to our fancy, to gather up all beauties of colour and sound and scent and sunlight of which the long winter and the chill, reluctant spring have starved us, and offer them all at once in immeasurable bounty, this village will seem to them to have the loveliness of magic.

The beauty of Exmoor is a stranger beauty and more remote than that of these lovely villages. It is the beauty of space, I suppose, and the great open arch of the sky; it is the clouds and cloud shadows, the changing light from dawn to evening through the blazing colourless hours of midsummer noon to the tender light of the falling day, when the land lies in long, suave, misty curves; it is the swirl of mist down its hillsides, and the solemn banking of great heavy rain-clouds, purple and black, above it, that gives it so rich and varied a beauty: for it is like a great open canvas, on which an artist's hand makes wonderful pictures of a myriad changes of sun and shadow. Anyone who has seen Exmoor, as Mr. Widgery has seen and loved and painted it, on a still September night, under the mellow splendour of the harvest moon, high above the infinite shadowy blue of the horizon and the misty moor, has seen a rare loveliness he must travel far to match.



Harvest Moon, Exmoor

The "forest" of Exmoor is about thirty-five miles in extent from east to west, and twenty from north to south, running from the valley of Crowcombe, near the Quantocks, to Hangman Point, near Combe

Martin. It is a stretch of country which makes its appeal to the sportsman, the antiquarian, the artist, and the mere idle, happy walker; it is a little country within a country, having many peculiarities of scenery and structure, plant life and animal life, history and custom, peculiar to itself.

And, firstly, though from Saxon times until 1818 it ranked as a "royal forest," it is not a forest at all. Trees will hardly live on Exmoor, not even the black fir, the hardiest tree of all; only here and there a few twisted and stunted alders planted along the shelter of a wall, and degenerated into "scrub." As soon as you descend from the heights, indeed, the country becomes luxuriantly wooded, as at Glenthorne and Lynton and Horner Woods; but the great expanse of Exmoor is bare brown land, covered with short tussocky grass and grey furze. Why, then, was it called a "forest" in Saxon times? Did "forest" mean also moorland, wild and unarable land? This opinion has been held by many authorities, but there is the contrary one put forward, that Exmoor was at some time a forest, and that all the land from Crowcombe to Combe Martin was clothed with oak and beech. We know, indeed, that in early times, certainly, England was much more densely wooded than now; the rocky foundation on which Exmoor lies is covered with a peaty deposit which is formed of decayed vegetable substance—the myriad leaves, perhaps, of many hundred autumns—and near the Chains, which are a series of dangerous bogs near Dunkery Beacon, stumps and roots of bog-oak have been pulled out of the ground. This last fact does not seem to me in any way conclusive, for Exmoor may have had wooded thickets, without being a forest covering half a county, like the New Forest.

And, if it were, what causes led to its deforestation? The climate of Britain was not, we know, more sheltered and temperate in old days than now, so it seems necessary to suppose human agency to account for so great a change. There is one theory, ingenious but fantastic, which asserts that the whole forest was felled to provide timber props for the mine-workings of Devon and Cornwall. Whether this took place in Celtic times, when the trade with Phoenicia was at its height, or subsequently—in which case it is strange there is no historical record of so remarkable a fact—or whether those prehistoric peoples who built huge camps and erected mighty monoliths were yet capable of so stupendous a feat as felling the timber of sixty thousand acres, and carting it over roadless country, is at least open to question. There is another theory, that the Romans in their struggle to subdue the Britons, who took refuge in these wooded fastnesses, fired the forest, and burned them out, as they are supposed to have done with Hatfield Moor in Yorkshire, which, now a peaty moor, was 12,000 acres of forest land until Ostorius, having slain many Britons, drove the remnant into the forest and destroyed it. An ingenious gentleman, in support of this theory, instances Cow Castle (or Cae Castle), near Simonsbath, which is a large British camp in the centre of Exmoor, and juxtaposes with it Showlsborough Castle, a few miles away, just beyond the limits of Exmoor, which is held to be a Roman camp, and where certainly two Roman swords have been found within recent years, advancing this as proof that a serious campaign between Romans and Britons was fought across Exmoor.

All these are interesting speculations; one hesitates to dismiss a theory because of its apparent unlikeliness, until it has been proved wrong, for in this unrecorded past of ours so many things are possible; nevertheless, it seems to me difficult to believe that the Romans would have or could have burnt forty to sixty thousand acres of woodland—above all, in a climate so humid and a country so well watered as ours.

Exmoor is not generally heather-covered, but its tors and hillsides are clothed with a wiry colourless grass and the hardy, prickly furze. Heather grows abundantly on its boundaries, and above all on the common lands, such as Brendon Common, Lynton, and Parracombe Common, which surround it, and which are distinguished from the moorland proper. Native agriculturists say, I believe, that the heather grows to its finest on land which has been turned up by man's labour—like nettles, which grow so wildly in deserted gardens and ruined villages—and that this common land on the edge of the moor bears evidence of having once been cultivated. With the break-up of the feudal system, certainly, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, much land in England went out of cultivation with the abolition of forced labour, and became pasturage or mere rough common. The people around here say that, if you turn up a strip of land on Exmoor, where nothing grows but grass and furze, and leave it, in a year or so the heather will come. But that heather, unlike nettles, does not grow only where the land has been turned by the plough is proved enough by the heather which grows on steep hillsides, such as the Scotch mountains or Dunkery Beacon, which can never have been brought under cultivation.

To all who live in the West Country, who says Exmoor says "the red deer." This is the last corner in England where the red deer, an ancient and native inhabitant of these islands, lives in his natural state, and where he can be hunted with the freedom, and yet with the traditional pomps and usages, with which our Saxon and Norman nobles hunted him. The hunting passion of the Norman Kings is familiar to us in our history; how William the Conqueror "loved the tall red deer as his father," and how he laid waste hamlets and villages in Hampshire, and the little crops of the toiling villagers, to plant the New Forest for his pleasure in the deer; and how his son William Rufus met his death there, while hunting, by an untraced arrow piercing his eye, and retribution for William's act was made plain to all men. The Saxon Kings, doubtless, hunted with less pomp, but with an equal passion. There was a Saxon palace at Porlock, and also at Dulverton, from which they might hunt on Exmoor, and it may very well be that Alfred the Great came to Porlock for rest and refreshment among the labours of his life, his lawgiving and his translating of Latin books into the Anglo-Saxon tongue for his people's good, and his bitter and incessant struggle with the Danes.

The laws by which the Kings protected their sport were among the most cruel and oppressive ever made in England. They were not, so far as I can find, imposed by the Saxon Kings upon their countrymen, but by the conquering Norman and Plantagenets. Canute, the Danish King, is said first to have made death or mutilation the penalties for poaching; but throughout the Middle Ages the game

laws were intricate, rigid, and of incredible cruelty. To cut off a man's thumbs so that he could not hold his tools, to lame him, to hang him, for snaring a hare or shooting a deer in a land abounding with game, while he tilled another man's ground and went hungry on his salt fish and coarse bread, while all around him bred and ran the flesh food his stomach craved, and the King who owned it lived far away, and neither hunted it nor ate it from spring to winter—this seems one of the stupid and anomalous cruelties of which the human race is so amazingly capable. It was a concession, granted by Henry II, for men to be allowed to keep dogs at all, even for the guarding of their homes and their small flocks; but even so the animals had to be brought before some magistrate every three years, and maimed, by cutting off the three claws of the fore-feet, to prevent them from pursuing or seizing game.

There is a description of stag-hunting in Chaucer's "Book of the Duchess," which dates somewhere from the end of the fourteenth century, which is substantially the same, I suppose, as a modern hunt on Exmoor; a few of the terms are different. The stag is "embossed," meaning "hidden in a thicket," and Chaucer says he is "rechased" when he means he is headed back, while the note which the huntsman sounds to recall the hounds when the stag is lost is a "forloyn." But stag-hunting elsewhere than on Exmoor is virtually an archaic imitation of a sport. The beast is carted to the meet, loosed, chased, and when brought to bay is recaptured and carted back to captivity. Here it is a natural affair, and rendered necessary by the depredations which the deer commit on the farmers' crops; it also contains an element of danger to the hunters, and calls for coolness, decision, and endurance: for the pace is killing, the going rough, the hills tremendously steep, there are rocky combes down which the rider has to plunge, streams to ford, bogs which make the going unsafe, if not actually dangerous—and a rider, unfamiliar with Exmoor, who finds himself caught in an October mist had better jog quietly home before worse befall him—and, at the last, the chance of losing the stag, or having him, as happens occasionally, plunge desperately off the rocks into the sea.

The red deer is the most beautiful of all wild creatures in England; seen in his native setting on these high, windy moors, the brown grass and patches of purple heather all round him, the clear brown and white streams of the combes where he waters, the blue shadows of hill behind hill, and the grey billows of mist and cloud the wind sends rolling down the hillsides, he is a noble beast indeed.

Wild-horses also run on Exmoor. Mr. Page, in his "Exploration of Exmoor," advances the theory that they are not native ponies, like those of the New Forest or parts of Scotland, but the descendants of horses which the Phoenicians brought in their galleys when they traded with Cornwall and Devon; for their bones are smaller and lighter than those of our native ponies, and beautifully white and polished like ivory, as are the bones of the Arab horses of the north coast of Africa. This is an entertaining theory, with its romantic conjectures: the picture of the Phoenician oared galleys pulling into Combe Martin or Porlock Bay; the scenes on the beach, with the swarthy, beak-nosed sailors, the Celts, eager for trade and curious to look at any foreigners come from beyond the sea; the heaps of tin and silver, the ivory and gold and Eastern gauds with which the Phoenicians bartered; the plunging, high-spirited little horses, wild with release from the galleys. But though the Phoenicians certainly came, it is very likely the horses did not; for Mr. Snell, another authority on Exmoor, thinks that the ponies are indigenous, like the red deer, and are at least as old as the first human inhabitants of this north-west corner.

They are small creatures, as active as cats, and at Bampton Fair, where many hundreds are driven in for the last Thursday in October, and the narrow streets are packed with them from end to end, there are scenes of great liveliness and disorder. Dulverton, which is the centre of Exmoor, used also to have a fair, which consisted mainly of Exmoor ponies and sheep; but it has passed out of existence by reason of railways and shops, and the greater facility for commercial exchange of our era, and the charming cobbled, whitewashed town—which was quite an important town, remember, when John Ridd's cousin Rachael lived there—now dozes undisturbed among the brown hills.

The sheep of Exmoor are of a horned variety; we all know what excellent mutton they make from its praises in "Lorna Doone," and John Fry's lyrical outburst over the saddle of mutton "six year old, and without a tooth in mun head," and sure to eat as soft as cream. John Fry was referring to the custom among the farmers of not killing their sheep until the teeth begin to go. Their coats are exceedingly thick, and their wool a very valuable asset to the whole county; it was more particularly so in the Middle Ages, when cloth-making was the staple industry of England. There is a woolpack in the coat-of-arms of Minehead, and the most striking feature of the little mediaeval town of Dunster is the yarn-market in the centre of the main street.

Wolves were plentiful on Exmoor at that time, and doubtless did much damage among the sheep; in hard winters, even, they would have come down into the little villages of Simonsbath and Parracombe, but the last of them was killed in the reign of Elizabeth. In her reign, also, wild-pigs could be hunted here, while the existence of such names as Crane Tor, Lynx Tor, Bear Down, is evidence of an even greater variety of game in Saxon times than now. Yet there is abundance still, hares and foxes, badger and otter; the otter, indeed, makes grievous depredations among the salmon that come up the river to spawn, for, like a dingo among sheep, he slays promiscuously what he does not eat. It is, I suppose, a lingering tradition of our old stern game laws that imposes a severe penalty for poaching when a man picks up a salmon which an otter has killed and left.

Birds abound on Exmoor; snipe and woodcock, partridge and black-game, plover and wild-duck. Nothing could more exactly express the loneliness and wildness of this great open country than, when you are walking solitary, to hear the harsh, melancholy cry of the bittern from the reedy, desolate bogs, or in the falling daylight of a cloudy February afternoon to see the plover rise from the tussocks of brown grass at your feet, and go flying and wailing above you, in that broken-winged, broken-hearted

way of theirs, or to watch the duck flying home across the sunset, with their strange honk-honk!

For all that I have said about the barrenness of these great moors, Exmoor is the land of sweet waters. The Exe, the Barle, the Quarine, rising near Dunkery Beacon, the Haddes from the Brendon Hills, the Lyn, the Wear Water, the Badgeworthy (up which little John Ridd fished for loach), the Parley Water, the Horner, which runs into Porlock Bay, the East Water, all these beautiful clear, clean streams abound with fish, and have the freshness and the sparkle of this sparkling upland air. Wherever there is a fold in the ground there is running water—though geographically one should put it in the opposite way, that wherever the water runs there is a fold in the ground—and wherever it runs flowers and ferns and trees grow in beautiful abundance. I have already described the luxuriant green of the wooded gorges of the Lyn, the variety of trees and the luxuriance of ferns and mosses; the Horner Woods, near Porlock, have the same green loveliness, though a sharper air blows through them, as they stand nearer the Exmoor heights and less sheltered by steep rocks than those that overshadowed the Lyn, and on a summer afternoon there is a sharp smell of resin from the sun-warmed pines, and the keen air stirs even in the depths of the wood.

And besides these rivers there are numberless little unnamed streams, everywhere the tinkle and chatter of water, breaking over stones, slipping through the peaty earth, falling in a thin spray down the face of the cliffs, spreading out across the white rocks of an encircled cove, incessant movement and change of colour and light, a ceaseless ripple and gleam of reflected water across the lichened trunk of some old tree, sweet and incessant sound.

CHAPTER VII

IN SOMERSET

"In Somerset," says Miss Celia Fiennes with considerable severity, "they are likewise as careless when they make cider; they press all sorts of Apples together, else they might have as good sider as in any other parts, even as good as the Herriforshire."

This young lady, with her keen criticisms, her spirit of intrepidity, and her variable spelling, betook herself on a tour on horseback through England in the reign of William and Mary, and kept a diary of her travel, noting with equal solemnity the state of agriculture or the quality of pastry which she encounters in her journey. She was the daughter of Colonel Fiennes, a Parliamentary soldier, and being a delicate girl, was recommended fresh air and exercise by her doctor. "My journeys, as they were begun to regain my health by variety and change of air and exercise, so whatever promoted, that was pursued ...," she says, rather elliptically, in her preface, and admonishes Ladies and Gentlemen to follow her example, and profit by the spectacle of their own country—advice which we of this generation have taken *au sérieux*, and of which the present book and those akin to it are sufficient witness!

Her remarks on Somerset are not all strictures, for it is here, she tells us, that she had the best tarts and "clouted cream" that she ever had in her life; and this although Devon has given its name to this excellent dainty, while Cornwall fiercely asserts that it is a Celtic recipe, and stolen from them by the Saxons of Devon, after they were driven over the Tamar.

With Somerset, however, we are not dealing in the limits of this book, neither with its characteristics of scenery or of speech—which, to the observant eye and ear, make every county in England rich in individuality and infinitely various, so that Hampshire can never be confounded with Sussex, nor Somerset with Dorset—but only with that small strip of it between Porlock and Dunster which lies on the borders of Exmoor, and belongs to it geographically. After leaving Porlock, however, the six miles of road that runs across the moor to Minehead is on a lower level, and (as the aesthetic writers would say), in a lower key than the magnificent barren stretch of uplands from Lynton to Porlock. The way still lies across Exmoor, but the "forest" lands are beginning to lose their wildness; they run down to about five hundred feet above the sea, while the summit of Dunkery Beacon is fifteen hundred, though rising but little above the moors that surround it; for the road between Countisbury and Porlock is over twelve hundred feet above the beach it overhangs. From Porlock the wooded valleys are more frequent and more thickly wooded, and the villages lie nestled more sleekly; the winds are less keen and strong, the sun itself seems more tempered than when it blazes upon Heddon's Mouth; a more suave and temperate beauty begins gradually to take the place of the wild open spaces and grey cliffs.

The villages indeed are beautiful: Selworthy, Luccombe, and Wootton Courtney, each with its lovely grey church, embowered in trees, its street of whitewashed houses, its angles of light and shadow, and gardens filled with colour. Luccombe, which is said to contain the same Anglo-Saxon word *locan*, to enclose, as Porlock, lies under one of the spurs of Dunkery on a little stream which falls into the Horner Water, and is, indeed, enclosed in a steep wooded combe. The church stands behind a tall row of cypresses, which, though planted only seventy years ago, have grown as tall as the church-tower, and bear witness to the fertility of the soil and the mildness of the climate; they give the churchyard a foreign and outlandish look, I think, and harmonize less perfectly with the characteristically English

architecture of the church than their neighbour, the old yew. The tower is battlemented, and has some individual gargoyle heads around its gutter, and the barrel roof of the interior has richly carved wooden bosses, with the remains of painting upon them.

The church at Selworthy has also a carved and painted wooden roof, though of finer workmanship than Luccombe; the church itself was originally built of red stone, but the tower is the only part remaining, and this has been covered with stucco. The window and tracery of the south aisle is of the lightest and most delicate Perpendicular, but the interior has been a good deal restored. The church is beautifully situated. It lies high above Selworthy, and before it stretch the long flat curves of Exmoor; below, Luccombe Church tower can just be seen above its surrounding trees; to the south-east, beyond the green luxuriance of Horner Woods, rises the outline of Dunkery. From it a path leads down to Selworthy Green, which is rather a famous beauty-spot, lying on the slope of a hill, neatly surrounded by trees—and the woods here are very beautiful by virtue of the great variety of the trees, beech, oak, chestnut and very fine walnut, and of the fair growth and dignity of the individual tree—amid a little circle of seven cottages which form Sir Thomas Acland's almshouses. The cottages are old and whitewashed, and the thatched roofs sink into beautiful curves and hollows where the shadows lie smoothly; in the summer, when visitors from Minehead mostly see them, the windows stand open to the warm air, and in the shade of the porches, sweet-scented with climbing roses, they can be given tea by the old pensioners.

It is beautiful indeed, and yet to me it has lost something of the appeal of those lovely and desolate little villages—of Brendon, or Parracombe, or Oare—more bleak and windswept, more sun-scorched and barren, thrusting each into some cleft or hollow of the high brown lands, with the wide sky over each, and each its small square church to witness to the fear of God. Some quality of freedom and individuality which is their charm is not in Selworthy.

This is a mere question of taste; we are all apt to look at a place with the eye of extraneous opinion. The beauty of Selworthy is not, indeed, except fancifully, affected by its being a landowner's village, a swept-and-garnished village where the roofs are repaired by Sir Thomas Acland's thatcher, for fear they should fall into the evil ways of slate, and spoil the lovely contours of the village. A landlord has as much right to preserve the beauty of his property as he has to the upkeep of his fences, and we are indeed fortunate to live in an age when the mellowed beauty of ancient buildings has become almost a religion. But to me there is a smugness about such a village, which has become the hobby, the by no means selfish or unenlightened hobby, of a single man, which does much to temper my enjoyment. Selworthy, with its thatch and cob, its neat old pensioners, its suavity, its absence of what is unsightly, is an anomaly; it can only be preserved against the growing pressure of the twentieth century by the artificial barriers erected by wealth. Parracombe, smaller, lonelier, with its white farms and outbuildings and cottages, is the natural outcome of a small and scattered population, who are not rich enough to build newer houses, and who live as their forefathers did because their isolation on Exmoor, and the barren land on which they live, has not induced men from other districts to come and "expand."

The little village of Culbone, near Porlock—if one may call half a dozen cottages a village—is not an anomaly; indeed, it is a kind of geographical whim. The cleft in which it lies faces towards the north, and it is so deep and so deeply wooded that for four of the winter months there is no direct ray of sunlight in the gorge, only the sky or the light high up on the summits to remind the score of folk who live there that they are not shut in a green prison. Even at midsummer their sunrise is several hours later than for the rest of the world. Among the darkest part of the green thickets stands the church, which is probably the smallest parish church in England, or shares that distinction with the church of Lullington in Sussex or St. Lawrence's in the Isle of Wight. One or two of the tiny churches in Cornwall are smaller. There is St. Piran's, but that is now a ruin on a beach, with only the low walls of the very early building remaining; and there is the church of St. Enodoc, near Wadebridge, which the saint must have forgotten and the world overlooked, for it got lost among the low sandhills and the sand drifted over, and it is only fifty years since it has been found again, a delight to the few who ever see it, with its squat grey tower barely seen over a tall hedge of tamarisk, and before it the short grass rich with thyme, giving place to the sand-hills which run out to the long level stretch of the beach, and behind it the sand-hills yielding to the clean dry grass of the downs.

But these charming small buildings are mostly of very simple and primitive construction, and St. Culbone has the construction of a perfect parish church within the limits of its thirty-four feet from east window to west door, with a nave, and a tiny chancel thirteen feet long, and a small truncated spire, similar to that of Porlock Church. Its patron saint is the Celtic St. Columban—Culbone is a simple corruption of his name—who lived about the same time that St. Dubricius crowned Arthur at Caerleon, about A.D. 517; of how this tiny church came to be built (for the present fifteenth-century building stands on the site of a pre-Saxon foundation, which was dedicated to the Celtic saint), or what refuge or sanctuary it was, there is no historical record; doubtless a remnant of the British, harassed by Saxon raids on Porlock, hid themselves in this dark gorge, and there built and dedicated a church to their own saint of the dove's name, in the hope that he would save them from the claws of the invaders.

Of Minehead as it is now, no greater contrast can be imagined with Porlock and St. Culbone, except that of Ilfracombe, with the grand desolation of Heddon's Mouth and the solitariness of Trentishoe or Morthoe. For both Ilfracombe and Minehead have become so popular for summer visiting that most of their original character is lost under a flood of new houses, trim streets and shops, which have grown to meet the requirements of a large but fluctuating population. Unduly to deplore this is, I suppose, a form of intellectual snobbery. Both Minehead and Ilfracombe are still undoubtedly beautiful in their setting of sea and moorland, the one upon lofty cliffs, the other among gently rounded and wooded hills; and it is fitting that more people than the favoured and aristocratically-minded few, who

elect to stay in cottages and shun their fellow-men, should be given opportunity to enjoy them.

Minehead is a place with a history; its position on the Bristol Channel made it a port of considerable value, and throughout the Middle Ages it did a large trade with Ireland, and a foreign trade with France and Spain, only second to that of Bristol from the West of England. In the seventeenth century, like Bristol also, it had an extensive trade with Virginia and the West Indies, and it exported annually forty thousand barrels of herrings to the Mediterranean. But the herrings left these coasts, as I have already had occasion to state in speaking of Lynton, and an Act passed in the reign of Charles II, forbidding the import of Irish cattle, though passed with the intention of protecting the English farmers against Irish competition, had the usual result of such short-sighted policy, and, while it crippled the Irish trade and ruined the prosperity of such ports as Minehead, it ultimately benefited nobody. Any ship smuggling cattle, that was captured, was sold, and a part of the proceeds went to charity and a part to the Crown. The "Cow Charity" is a fund which is still administered in Minehead.

Minehead was a "manor" in Domesday Book, and was given along with Dunster by the Conqueror to William de Mohun, who was one of the first of his nobles to support his English expedition, and who brought to the standard of Duke William fifty-seven knights in his retinue, with their esquires and their men-at-arms. The name Minehead is a corruption of the Norman lord's name with the Anglo-Saxon word *heved*, a head; it used to be written "Manheved."

The Mohuns held it until the time of Henry IV, when, there being only daughters, it passed out of the direct line, and was sold by Lady Mohun to the Luttrells, who have held it until the present time. It was incorporated by Queen Elizabeth, and governed by a "port-reeve," and later by two constables. The place was then of a size to consist of a Lower, Middle and Upper Town; the Lower Town, now called Quay Town, is the oldest remaining part. It lies under the high hill of Culver Cliff, around the harbour, and has more of the look of a Devon or Cornwall fishing village—the steep, narrow streets, the whitewashed cottages with their large chimney-stacks and leaded windows—than the aspect of modern Minehead would lead one to expect. It was here, indeed, that the sea broke in the great gale of 1860, when the shipping in the harbour tore from its moorings, and was driven literally upon the houses of Quay Town, as the sea-wall gave way under the pounding of the waves, and the *Royal Charter*, getting clear from Culver Cliff, was driven on to the rocks off Anglesea, and lost with all hands.

Thirty years later, in 1891, the Minehead shipping was again wrecked by one of the fiercest storms that has ever been recorded over England. It began on March 9, and raged for four days, chiefly over Somerset, Devon, and Cornwall. Shipping was driven on to the rocks from Land's End to Bristol; at Plymouth the solid iron seats on the Hoe were torn up and hurled about by the force of the wind; the heavy snowdrifts stopped all communication, even by train; some unfortunate people were practically buried in their houses; and along with the tragedies and devastation the strangest and most fantastic adventures happened, such as an old woman, struggling back from market, having her basket of provisions blown bodily out of her hand, and picking it up four days later, with every article in it unharmed, not even a burst packet of tea! Where the roads were not blocked with snowdrifts, they were mostly impassable from fallen trees, for the force of the wind was greater than anything which has been experienced in England, partaking more of the character of a cyclone, with the wind varying from N.E. to S.E. and with very rapid changes, but of greater duration than an average cyclone, for it raged from the 9th to the 13th.

Many fine and historic old trees were lost, and at Edgcumbe Park alone, near Plymouth, it was estimated that at least two thousand were blown down, and the damage was so extensive that it took two years to clear the park; while at Cotehele, near the little town of Calstock, the damage was beyond description. One hundred thousand feet of timber, it was calculated, suffered in this one small district; and Cotehele House, which before had lain behind a screen of trees, was afterwards open to view from the town by this violent deforestation. Here is one of the most interesting descriptions of the storm, written by Mr. Coulter, the steward at Cotehele:

"The wind, having blown a gale the whole day, continued to increase in violence as evening approached, and from seven till nine p.m. accomplished, if not all, the greater part of the devastation to house and woods. The noise of the storm resembled the frantic yells and fiendish laughter of millions of maniacs, broken, at frequent intervals, by what sounded like deafening and rapid volleys of heavy artillery, and, as these died away, louder and louder again rose the appalling screams of the storm, with slight intervals of lull and perfect calm, only to return with tenfold violence, which made the whole house tremble and vibrate.... Several of the windows facing east were swept in as easily as a spider's web; lead and glass scattered all over the rooms, leaving only the shattered frames, through which rushed the resistless wind and blinding snow.... Through the joints of doors and windows, the cracks and crevices, before unknown to the eye, the drifting snow penetrated and piled up in ridges, so that rooms and passages had to be cleared like the pavement in the streets.... On an examination of Cotehele Woods, the scene presented gives one the idea of an earthquake rather than that of a storm. The majority of the trees are from two to three hundred years old, torn up by the roots, and tearing up like so much turf yards of macadamized road and huge blocks of strong stone walls."

The violent storm in the South of England in February, 1916, gives one only a faint idea of this famous blizzard of 1891; for, great though the damage was, it was more local, and the storm was of shorter duration and did not interrupt the train and telegraph services over many scores of miles, as the earlier storm did, travellers in the West being out of touch with their friends for as much as four days or a week, snow-bound in some small village until the railway line was cleared and the postal service re-established.



The Doone Valley in Winter

The fury of such a storm across these always windy Exmoor heights can hardly be imagined; only Conrad could convey in words some adequate idea of the fury and the force, as he has done in "Typhoon." Anyone who was in Exmoor during these three days would have been fortunate to have reached shelter alive, and not to have been lost, as were so many unfortunate sheep and ponies, in the deep snowdrifts. There is a scene in "Lorna Doone," where John Ridd and his servant Fry go out on a bleak stormy morning to rescue their sheep from the snow, which gives a vivid picture of what must have been many times enacted in the Exmoor valleys during those wild March days. Of the loveliness of the scene when the snow had fallen, and after the fury of the wind had abated, when the March sun shone on the smooth upland curves and beautiful rounded hollows of the moors, stainlessly white and wonderful under the clearing sky, Mr. Widgery's picture of Lorna's Bower under snow gives a beautiful impression.

Apart from its cattle industry and its herrings, Minehead was noted in the seventeenth century for its alabaster mines, "harder than ye Darbshire alabaster," says Thomas Gerard in his "Particular Description of Somerset," written in 1633; "but for variety of mixture and colours it surpasseth any, I dare say, of this kingdom." The mines are said to have been discovered by a Dutchman, but I cannot find that they were much worked, or were very abundant; for there is no record of them a century and a half later. They were not like the Combe Martin silver-mines, which were worked for centuries—some say in the time of the Phoenicians, when the mines of Cornwall furnished tin for half the bronze in Europe—which helped Henry V to pay for his wars in France, and were reopened by Adrien Gilbert in Queen Elizabeth's time, and a great cup and cover, fashioned from the silver, was presented by him to the City of London, and may still be seen among the city plate. The water got into the workings, and they were running poor after so many centuries, and were finally abandoned in the seventeenth century; for which Combe Martin is the more picturesque, according to our modern standards, if less prosperous.

There is another industry of Minehead, or, more properly, a curiosity; for there are no traces of the most enterprising approaching the matter from a commercial standpoint. "There is on the rocks at low-water a species of limpet which contains a liquor very curious for marking fine linen," says our seventeenth-century authority, and he gives directions for breaking the mollusc "with one sharp blow," and taking out "by a bodkin" the little white vein that lies transversely by the head—a somewhat delicate operation. "The letters and figures made with this liquor on linen," he continues, "will appear of a light green colour, and, if placed in the sun, will change into the following colours: if in winter about noon, if in summer an hour or two after sun-rising and so much before setting, for in the heat of the day in summer it will come on so fast that the succession of each colour will scarcely be distinguished.

"Next to the first light green it will appear of a deep green, and in a few minutes change to a full sea-green; after which it will alter to a blue, then to a purplish-red; after which, lying an hour or two (if the sun shines) it will be of a deep purple-red, beyond which the sun does no more. But this last beautiful colour, after washing in scalding soap and water, will, on being laid out to dry, be a fair bright crimson which will abide all future washing."

Is this indeed the "murex," as Browning calls it, of the Tyrian purple, which can be found on the Minehead rocks at low-tide by the holiday-makers of our day?—that "purple dye" for which, the weary Roman usurper said,

"We'll stain the robe again from clasp to hem
With blood of friends and kinsmen . . ."

and yet which is only

"Crushed from a shellfish, that the fisherman
Brings up in hundreds, yet rejects as food."

In coming to Dunster we come to the last of the many beautiful places that lie within the compass of this fifty miles of England, places with so varied a loveliness that nowhere else, I think, can you match with them.

There is Barnstaple, suave and clean and sunny, with its well-kept streets and smooth, broad river, and its air of all prosperity and peace, the very type and pattern of a decent English country-town; and almost within stone's throw of it the moors begin, lying widely under the expanse of the sky, with the perpetual running of waters, and the lonely farms, from which the smoke curls up, blue against the brown hillside. There are the sombre and unpretending small villages, Parracombe, Brendon, Bratton-Fleming, each with its history and its little church, and the homesteads from which the young men have gone, in their humble twos and threes, to take their part in this war of millions. There is the grand solitude of Heddon's Mouth and the raven-haunted cliffs to Lynton; there is Lynton itself, drowned in the green woods that surge up the steep hillside; there is the West Lyn Gorge, shadeless and sultry even on a spring day, and the East Lyn Valley, where ferns and lilies of the valley grow, and every green thing that loves moisture and shade; and the Watersmeet, where there is a perpetual rushing of waters which drowns the song of the birds; there is Porlock, between the moors and the marshes, and the drowned forest of Porlock Bay; there is the green magnificence of Horner Woods or Bossington, and the cloud-wreaths that gather and lift on the summit of Dunkery; and here, easternmost of our journey, is Dunster, the castle on its wooded hill rising above the long street of the village, and the edge of Exmoor beyond, dipping now from its bleak heights in gentle wooded undulations to the shores of the Bristol Channel. The Tower on the Hill, that is the meaning of the word "Dunster," and the name fittingly describes it; for it dominates many miles of beautiful and fertile country, and stands feudally above the village, perceptible from every angle of the street, at once a guardian and a menace. It has stood so for a thousand years, for it was a stronghold of the Saxon Kings before William the Conqueror gave it to William de Mohun, and he built his gloomy Norman fortress, with its massive, windowless walls, and squat strong towers, of which nothing now remains save a bowling-green which marks the site of the old keep.

The main part of the present building dates from "the spacious days of great Elizabeth," when her nobles needed rather magnificent country-houses than fortresses for defence; but the gatehouse, with its four flanking towers, was built in the time of Henry V, and the oldest part of the castle is the gateway by the side of the main entrance, which was built by Reginald de Mohun in the time of Henry III, while Henry Luttrell added the south front in the "antique taste" of a hundred years ago. Yet, like so many cathedrals, and not a few of the castles and great houses of England, like Hampton Court or Ely Cathedral, the varying styles of architecture do not give an appearance of patchiness or incongruity, but rather a feeling as of the vitality of the old building, and the continuity of life within it, that century after century adapts and adds to the uses of the present the habitation of their ancestors. The sun and rain mellow all, and the ivy makes all green; stone urn and Roman column grow old and gracious beside steep Elizabethan gables and fantastic chimneys, and the grey pointed arches of the fifteenth-century gateway are as good to ride under to the meet on crisp September mornings as a Renaissance doorway or an eighteenth-century portico. Much of the charm of these old buildings cannot be reproduced by brush or camera; it lies in their intimate association with the scene around them, sunshine and cloud, summer and winter, their hills and their streams; it is the sense of age which they convey, of long-continued tradition and a certain mellow security.

It was in 1376 that the Luttrells bought the castle from the Mohuns; and they hold it still; the old receipt for the purchase-money is still preserved in the castle hall, with various ancient and yellowing title-deeds, and a list of the "muniments" of the castle, made by William Prynne, who was sent there as a prisoner by Cromwell in 1650, after having suffered branding and the loss of his ears at Royalist hands for his "seditious teachings," and who, firebrand and fanatic as he was, beguiled his imprisonment with this curiously peaceable occupation.

The village is as beautiful as the castle; in the long, irregular street every house is three to four hundred years old. The projecting upper stories are supported on great timber balks, often with the ends grotesquely carved. Under the projecting eaves the swallows build, and twitter about the diamond-paned windows which reflect so richly the sunset light. In the steep roofs there are dormer-windows, and the old tiles have mellowed to a deep rose-red, stained yellow with lichen, and sink into irregular planes and angles of beautiful, varied colour. There are tall brick chimneys and steep gables, and all manner of odd delicious scraps and jags of architecture, where one building has crowded upon its neighbour in its growth, like trees in a forest. There are old gardens also, long sunny walls with old fruit-trees that look like hoary serpents writhing up them, until the spring comes and the delicate, exquisite forms of plum or peach blossom break out of the gnarled boughs; there are wallflowers and lavender and rosemary, for the sweet scent and the "remembrance" of them, and tall hollyhocks to nod over high brick walls; creepers, green or flowering, to grow over the whitewashed spaces, and great trees for shade on summer afternoons.

In the centre of the long main street is the yarn-market, a beautiful wooden building of the seventeenth century, built by Sir George Luttrell when Dunster was still a centre of the wool industry. It is built with wide overhanging eaves, pierced by eight little dormer-windows, with a lantern at the apex of the roof, and is a unique little building whose characteristic features have been sketched and photographed many scores of times, and is comparable, perhaps, only with the butter-market at Bingley

in Yorkshire. Opposite is the Luttrell Arms, a quiet, comfortable, harmonious stone building of the eighteenth century, but with part of the older building still preserved inside—a wall that overlooks a paved court, with windows set in frames of beautiful carved oak, and a gabled roof, a moulded plaster over-mantle also, and yet with that general air of disregard for these treasures, amid a hurrying to and fro with plates and bottles, which, to me, is one of the special charms of these long-established country inns.

To anyone who loves England, and that beauty which is so characteristically English, where the life of the present day is visibly linked with the life of the past through long centuries of security, where age has ripened all, the great old trees, the colours of old oak and weather-beaten tiles and warm brick, has gently undulated straight lines, and softened all sharp angles, where the very sunlight has the mellowness of old wine, to a mind perceptive of this peculiar and intimate charm of England, Dunster makes a special call, set amid the suave curves of its rich country, crowned by its ancient castle, dignified by its old, beautiful church (grown, like the castle, through Norman and Early English and Perpendicular styles of architecture), yet intimate and familiar, and beautiful most of all because of the use and wont of daily life within its walls.

CHAPTER VIII

LUNDY

It is curious in this twentieth century of ours, when every corner of the habitable globe is docketed, measured, mapped, and surveyed, when a railroad runs across "darkest Africa," and the great ice-wall of the Antarctic cannot keep its inviolability from the feet of those resolute and heroic explorers who go with camera, microscope, and theodolite, against such forces of Nature as would daunt anything but the resolute human heart—it is curious to come across small corners of the world where the law of nations seemingly does not run, and the current of the modern world sweeps by, leaving them in a backwater, strangely aloof and undisturbed.

Such is the island of Herm, in the Channel Isles; such are one or two volcanic rocks in the Greek Archipelago, which you may purchase for a song, and live on if you can, though their barren waterlessness under the midsummer suns will compel you to put out to sea again for all the dangers of swift currents and black crags; such, too, I imagine, are some of those enchanted small islands in the South Seas of which Conrad writes: "It was as if the earth had gone on spinning, and had left that crumb of its surface alone in space"; such, too, is Lundy.

But Lundy is only fourteen miles from the English coast, this populous and organized England, and in the mouth of the Bristol Channel, in the direct track of all the shipping of the West—sighted, it is estimated, by at least a million vessels a year in their business up and down the world—and yet, to within the last generation, it was almost as inaccessible as in the days when the de Mariscos built their castle there and defied the King and all his armies.

Even now, though in the summer pleasure steamers run from Ilfracombe and Minehead, and land their noisy crowds on the south-eastern corner of the island, the narrow peninsula of Lametor, it is during barely three months of the year; they have ceased before the coming of the October gales, and the island goes back to its solitude, and the wild clamour of its innumerable sea-birds, while its few inhabitants wait their bi-weekly post, and the coming of the Trinity boat on the 1st and 15th of the month, for news of the outside world.

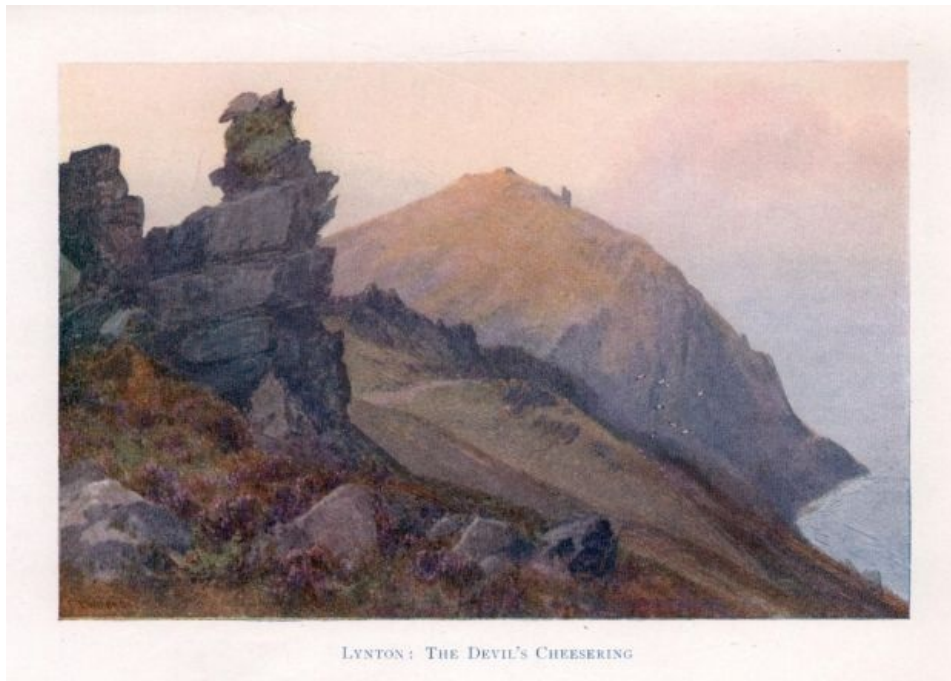
For Lundy is a great rock, about three and a half miles long, and averaging half a mile in depth, cutting the strong tidal stream which runs round the south coast of Wales and up the Bristol Channel, with steep cliffs and outlying crags and peaks of rock over which the surf is flung ceaselessly, even on still summer days, and with a dangerous tidal race at its northern end and the south-west and south-east angles. It stands, too, in the highway of the winds as well as of the waters, and is so scored and buffeted by gales that hardly any trees, except the stunted dwarf-elder, can survive the winter fury on its open slopes. When a westerly gale is blowing, many ships run in under its lee-shore for shelter; but its only landing-place is at the south-east angle by Rat Island, and that becomes dangerous in an easterly wind, so that boats have to be beached on the south or west side, though with difficulty and some danger. Add to this that the road from the landing-stage is so narrow and steep that it could be held by two men, and its suitability as a robber stronghold becomes clear.

It is a land of romance, singular in every aspect: in the formation of its rocks, in the birds that haunt its cliffs and the beasts that haunt its caves, in its antiquities, and the whole course of its adventurous history. It is a granite rock, with here and there patches of clay-shale, notably at the south-eastern corner; but the granite is differentiated from the granite of Devon, to which it is so proximate, and of so marked a character that it can be traced in many buildings along the northern coasts of Devon and Cornwall, principally in towers and churches, proving that quarries must have been worked on Lundy at some time during the Middle Ages, and before the fifteenth century; for there is comparatively little building of churches after that date. A company was formed in 1863 to work the Lundy granite-quarries, and it was intended to use this stone in the building of the Thames

Embankment; but the difficulty of shipment from so inaccessible a spot proving insuperable, the enterprise was abandoned.

But apart from the height and boldness of these granite cliffs, rising in places almost sheer to a height of more than seven hundred feet, with outlying reefs and insular rocks bristling black and jagged through the foaming waters, with gully, creek, and cave, worn by the action of rain and sea, there is a further wildness given to the island by a great series of clefts or fissures, running for a considerable distance in a line irregularly parallel to the cliff, sometimes from ten to twenty feet across, and as much as eighty feet deep, where they can be measured; at other places too narrow for sounding, but seeming to strike right down into the bowels of the earth. Locally this phenomenon is called the "earthquake," and the popular tradition of the island ascribes its appearance to the great earthquake at Lisbon in 1755; but it is certainly older than that date. However, the shock of that great disturbance may have further rent the granite and displaced the mighty boulders. It extends for about two miles from the southern coast, running in a northerly direction, and where the slate formation meets the granite it is fractured in the same sharp manner. Some upheaval of the earth's crust in far-off prehistoric times must have cracked the granite and made these mighty chasms; the wildness and singularity of their appearance, and the confined locality in which they occur—for there is no trace of such disturbance elsewhere in the island—make one wonder if it were no imprisoned demon or angry god, chained in the blackness under Lundy, who, stretching his mighty sinews to be free, so contorted and rent the solid granite above him. The absence of legend or ancient tradition (for the tradition of the Lisbon earthquake is comparatively recent) about so arresting a spectacle I ascribe to the condition of Lundy's history; there has been no continued habitation of the simple people of the land to pass on, from generation to generation, the ancient names and the ancient stories of their dwelling-place, untouched by the changes of rule and ownership which go over them.

For this reason another strange phenomenon of Lundy, about which the imagination of an earlier people must have lingered, passes barely remarked. There is a great promontory on the coast, opposite the reef called the Hen and Chickens, which is pierced by a sort of tunnel about eight hundred feet in length and sixty feet in height, through which a boat can sail on calm days at high-water; and in the centre of the tunnel, bubbling up through the sea, rises a perpetual spring of fresh water. This is called the Virgin's Well, and I can discover no story or legend with which it is connected, though the name may possibly contain some earlier myth, not based upon Christian worship.



Lynton: The Devil's Cheesering

The names of other remarkable features of the island, the great rocks which are piled along its coasts, are all descriptive and not legendary names—the Devil's Chimney, the Cheeses, the Templar's Rock, the Gannett Rock, the Mousehole. These names will have been given in comparatively recent times, at least since the Saxon invasion, for they show a different mentality from the Celtic names which are found widely in Cornwall, Devon, Wales, and Northumberland, and which have a poetic and imaginative quality. Such is the difference between Heddon's Mouth, "the Giant's Mouth," or Dunster, "the Tower on the Hill," and such names as I have quoted above. The very name of Lundy itself, which is "Lund-ei," the island of Lund, as Cald is "Cald-ei," the island of Cald, show a Teutonic origin, perhaps Scandinavian, but not named so by the Celts of Britain or Ireland.

But "there were great men before Agamemnon"; certainly there were great men on this island before the adventurer Lund landed upon it and gave it his name.

In 1850, in digging foundations near a farmhouse in the southern part of the island, a great grave, or series of graves, was discovered. There were two stone coffins, made of hewn blocks of granite, just deep enough to contain a body, and with the covers sloped and cut each from a single block. One was

ten feet in length, and contained the huge skeleton of a man, over eight feet high; the other was eight feet long, and contained a skeleton well over six feet, which "was imagined to be that of a woman," but on what grounds I cannot discover, as it does not seem to have been carefully examined, and is therefore probably mere conjecture, based upon its juxtaposition to the larger coffin. In the account of the excavation a "macabre" incident is recorded. One of the workmen, seizing the shin-bone of the giant, placed it against his own leg, and found that it reached halfway up his thigh; whereupon, taking up the lower jawbone, he fitted it easily over his own lower jaw, though he was a burly man and bearded.

"To what base uses a man may return, Horatio! . . ."

"Imperious Caesar, dead and turned to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away:
O that that earth, which kept the world in awe,
Should patch a wall to expel the winter's flaw."

For that these were the bones of a man mighty in his day the workmanship of his coffin goes to prove. For he lay with a stone rest for his head and feet, made each of a cubic block of fine granite, and a deep depression hollowed in his pillow to take his head, resting sideways towards his shoulder. As these great blocks were cut and squared and hollowed with stone tools, the labour which they betoken may be imagined; and none, I suppose, but an imperious Caesar could have exacted it. The skeleton was covered and surrounded by a mass of limpet-shells. There were seven other skeletons buried in a line with these two, but without coffins, and they were not of the race of giants; and then, at a little distance, there was a great pit, filled with the bones of men, women, and children, as if a slaughtered multitude had been flung into a common grave. In this pit were found some beads, light blue in colour, some sherds of red glazed pottery, and a few fragments of bronze. Over all was scattered a vast heap of limpet-shells.

Here is one of the fascinating problems of archaeology, which comes with the touch of romance to the dry study of minutiae: When were these burials made? Are they of two different dates? The giant of the stone coffin perhaps belonged to the far-off Stone Age, already grown dim and legendary to these later peoples, who knew of the working of metal and the making of glass. And were they sacrificed to him, as a dark hero or demi-god of the past, to propitiate him against plague or conquest? And what is the magical significance of the limpet-shells, which cover them and him alike? These questions, and many others, will, I am convinced, be answered by the patient research of archaeology within comparatively few years. The suggestion that this interment is Danish, and is the remnant of the force defeated by Alfred the Great outside Kenwith Castle, is, I think, untenable; the bones of women and children being found with those of men alone disproves it, apart from the inaccessibility of Lundy and the very great antiquity of the stone coffins.

But whoever they may be who left their bones here, it is certain the story of their lying there is a tragedy, of bloody sacrifice or more bloody massacre, like all the histories of wild animals and of primitive peoples.

Not far from the Giant's Grave, as this site is locally called, is another relic of hoary antiquity, in the shape of a tumulus, which, when opened, laid bare a kistvaen, or sepulchral chamber, formed of a great block of granite, weighing nearly five tons, resting on two upright granite slabs, and enclosing a space about six feet square. This method of burial is well known throughout the old world; such burial chambers have been found in Greece, and in considerable numbers in Ireland, where they are primitive Celtic. In the Lundy kistvaen no skeleton was found, nor anything, indeed, save a small fragment of pottery, though "there was a rank odour in the cavity, very different from that of newly turned earth."

There is a logan-stone on the eastern side of the island, which, within the memory of Mr. Heaven, the last owner of the island, was a true logan-stone, and could be rocked with the hands, but has now slipped from its socket. But the whole question of these logan-stones is controversial, some claiming them as relics of antiquity of whose use and meaning we are ignorant, and others as the chance product of the natural forces of rain and weather.

The same also may be said of the "rock-basins," of which a very perfect example may be found in the Punchbowl Valley, being a granite basin of four feet in diameter, with a uniform thickness of six inches, with both the concave and convex surfaces segments of a perfect sphere. Later opinion inclines to a human, and not a chance, origin for these interesting phenomena.

But, leaving the dim and still conjectural paths of archaeology, let us turn to the history of Lundy. Here again we are confronted with facts which a conscientious historian would hesitate to assert, save as legend. For this singular land, where the King's writ does not run, which is not assimilated even yet to municipal government, was for centuries, even down to the eighteenth century, a robber stronghold, from which, as from those castles on the Rhine, and still earlier and more powerful castles of the Aegean lords, built athwart the peninsulas of the trade-routes, the garrison swooped marauding upon the peaceful occupations of unprotected folk.

Lundy is supposed, not upon very certain authority, to have been called "Herculea" in Roman times; and there is no record, nor even tradition, of how it came by its present name, only a vague conjecture of a Scandinavian origin, of which I have already spoken. But there are evidences of a much earlier occupation than the Roman—indeed, so far as I know, there have been no Roman remains found yet upon the island—and it is no unlikely supposition that the great skeleton of the Giant's Grave was some such feared and piratical chieftain as the first recorded lord of the island, the fierce de Marisco.

These Mariscos were a branch of the great family of Montmorency, and they were ever a thorn in the side of their liege-lord, whether in England, Ireland, or Lundy. They must have owned Lundy since the days of the Norman Conquest, if they had not seized it before; for the great castle Marisco, built upon the extreme verge of the cliffs, commanding the bay and the landing-place, and overlooking in a wide sweep all the southern coast of the island, was already built in the eleventh century. From this impregnable fortress, with its massive walls nine feet in thickness, its squat, strong Norman turrets, its encircling fosse, and the perpendicular cliffs by which its seaward wall was made unscalable, Sir Jordan de Marisco used to sally with his retainers, making war on all alike, levying toll—*blackmail*, if ever there was, in the true meaning of the word—disobeying the laws of the land, and outraging the dictates of common humanity. So that, though he had married a Plantagenet, a blood relation of the King's, Henry II declared his estate of Lundy forfeited, and granted it to the Knights-Templars. Whether peace was made between Sir Jordan and Henry, or whether Henry was not strong enough to enforce his edict (though he was a powerful and determined monarch), I do not know; but in 1199, in the reign of King John, Sir Jordan's son William following in his father's evil ways, the grant of Lundy was confirmed to the Templars.

But this fortress was a hard nut to crack. The only approach is from the south-eastern corner, by a steep and narrow path commanded by the castle, and held by Marisco's men, and it was no light undertaking for the invaders to beach their boats and effect a landing against wind, weather, and attack. So that, although a tax was levied upon Devon and Cornwall to support an undertaking for the siege of Lundy, it does not appear to have been taken; for it was granted to Henry de Tracy (of the famous family of Tracy, cursed since the murder of Becket), and a few years later to one Robert Walerand. Then for some years de Marisco seems to have found even its mighty walls and granite cliffs too insecure, for he is found fighting among the French, and in 1217 was taken prisoner in a sea-fight, when Eustace the Monk, the pilot of the French fleet, was slain. Yet a few months later, in November of the same year, he was reinstated in possession of Lundy, and his wife, his sons and daughters, who had been seized by Henry III as hostages, were restored to him. Now favoured, now disgraced, but turbulent to the last, he died in possession of Lundy, but in the very year of his death having paid ransom to Henry of 300 marks.

His grandson, also William de Marisco, filled up the tale of violence and ill-doing, and forfeited at length the family inheritance, by his share in the attempted murder of the King at Woodstock. This is Westcote's account of the plot, given in his "View of Devonshire":... "Only Matthew Paris speaketh of one William de Marisco who, conspiring the death of Henry III, persuaded a Knight sometime of his Court to murder him, and with that intent got at night by a window into the King's bedchamber; but He, in whose protection the lives of princes are, disappointed him, for the King lay elsewhere. He seeking from chamber to chamber with a naked weapon in his hand, Mrs. Bysset, one of the Queen's women, sitting late up at her devotions, shrieking at the fearful sight of him, awakened the King's guard, who presently took him."

The unhappy and probably demented youth was put to death, and de Marisco fled to his island, which he further fortified, and there, attaching to himself a band of outlaws and malefactors, lived by piracy. Retribution came in its due course, for, having made himself detested by all decent men, many knights and nobles joined against him, and contrived to take him by strategem. He was brought to London, tried, and condemned to death with sixteen accomplices, dragged from Westminster to the Tower, and there hanged. "When he had there breathed out his wretched soul," he was drawn and quartered—a literal account of which, as given in Matthew Paris, I forbear to set down—and the quarters of his body sent to the four principal cities of England. His father, Geoffrey, fled to France, and the island came under the government of Henry de Tracy for the Crown.

Yet in the reign of Edward I, one of the Irish branch of the Marisco family was reinstated in possession for a few years, though Edward II gave it to his favourite and his worst enemy, Hugh Spencer. It was there also, be it remembered, that he purposed taking refuge from his Barons, but was driven to Wales by contrary winds. In the time of Edward III the island came to the Luttrells, the great family that owned Dunster, Minehead, and many manors on the North Somerset coast; in the time of Westcote, in the reign of James I, it was in the possession of the Grenvilles.

It is difficult, and perhaps tedious, to attempt to follow in detail the many families who had, or laid claim to, possession of Lundy throughout the course of history; it is clear that it was a stronghold of importance, from the frequent references to it in our records. It was claimed and loaned and bought and held in fee from the eleventh to the nineteenth century. It was the scene of a wild and fantastic adventure in the reign of Charles I, when three Turkish pirate-ships swooped upon it, and made slave-raids into Devon and Cornwall, taking sixty men out of a church one Sunday morning, and carrying them away prisoner. "Egypt was never more infested with caterpillars," wrote the captain of a ship of war in 1630, "than the Channel with Biscayers."

The Turks sailed south with their human booty, but the Channel and the Devon coast became the prey of an English buccaneer, the famous Admiral Nutt, who was more boldly and splendidly piratical even than the buccaneers of "Treasure Isle," and who faced the King's navy and got clear to his stronghold of Lundy, though they dropped thirty great shot among his fleet, of which Nutt received ten through his own ship. What became of the Admiral I do not know; he was not captured and hanged, and so may have sailed away to the Barbadoes or the Mediterranean, and there have met his death and scuttled his ship in a last fight against odds, or perhaps been marooned by a mutinous crew, or set adrift in an open boat to die of hunger and thirst, or been stabbed in a drunken scuffle over a bottle of rum.

He passes away from the history of Lundy, but now a French man-o'-war and now a Spanish made raids up the Bristol Channel and upon Lundy, until Thomas Bushel held it for Charles I and established some measure of order. It was claimed from Bushel by Lord Say and Sele as his "inheritance," and he wrote to the King for permission to deliver it up, but proposing:

". . . If your Majesty shall require my longer stay here, be confident, sir, I shall sacrifice both life and fortune before the loyalty of

"Your obedient humble servant,
"THOMAS BUSHEL."

Bushel received the following letter from Charles, which I transcribe because of the light which it throws on the King's character, a letter written in answer to a faithful and disinterested servant in a mood of petulant self-pity. "...Now, since the place is inconsiderable in itself, and yet may be of great advantages to you in respect of your mines, we do hereby give you leave to use your discretion in it, with this caution, that you do take example from ourselves, and be not over-credulous of vain promises, which hath made us great only in our sufferings and will not discharge our debts." This letter, more than any single document I know, shows the hopeless weakness of the Stuart character, and the unhappiness of serving the Stuart cause; this letter might have been written by Mary, Queen of Scots, or by James II, or by the Old Pretender, or by the Young Pretender; in all alike we find what this letter shows, a certain gracious melancholy, a lack of moral courage, a great self-pity, and a great selfishness.

Thomas Bushel gave up the island into the hands of Colonel Fiennes, a Parliamentarian soldier, and the father of the intrepid young lady, Celia Fiennes, who, a few years later, travelled through the length and breadth of England on horseback, and wrote an account of her journeyings. Lord Say and Sele, who claimed the island, was her grandfather on the mother's side.

After the Restoration, and under the corrupt administration of Charles, the Dutch ravaged the shipping of the Channel, as the French did in the reign of William and Mary and Queen Anne, and as pirates did at all times, whenever a body of desperate men could establish themselves on Lundy, and from there make raids on the coastal traffic. The last and worst pirate of all, the most inhuman, as the meanest, a trafficker in human misery for the sake of gold, false even to the partners in his base contract, was Benson, a rich man by inheritance, and belonging to one of the oldest Bideford families, the leading citizen of Bideford and Appledore, and a member of Parliament for Barnstaple.

In 1747 he entered into a contract with the Government for the exportation of convicts, and gave bond to the Sheriff to transport them to Virginia or Maryland, which was the horrible method of treating criminals then in common use. But in 1748 he leased Lundy Island from Lord Gower, and, transporting the convicts there, began building walls and cultivating the island with this slave-labour. The great wall, called the Quarter Wall, on Lundy was built by these unhappy convicts. After a few years, however, Benson was discovered in smuggling, and a large quantity of tobacco and other goods was found in caves and chambers cut out of the rock. For this he was fined 5,000 pounds; but when his importation of convicts was discovered, and he was taxed with it, he excused himself by declaring that to send them to Lundy was the same as sending them to America, so long as they were transported anywhere out of England. The termination of his villainous career in England was owing to a conspiracy to defraud an insurance company, a vulgar and inglorious crime without the element of danger and adventure which in some slight degree may be said to have invested the exploits of the other pirates who have infested Lundy.

Benson, having laded a vessel called the *Nightingale* with a valuable cargo of pewter, linen, and salt, insured her heavily before she sailed, ostensibly, for Maryland. But he had arranged with her master, Lancey, to put back at night and land the cargo at Lundy, and then to burn and scuttle the *Nightingale*. This was accordingly done, and the crew took to the boats and were picked up by a homeward-bound ship; but, as usual in these circumstances, one of the crew, animated by some personal pique, "blew the gaff," in the parlance of roguery. Lancey was taken, tried, and hanged, and Benson escaped to Portugal.

Little more remains to be said of the history of Lundy. In 1834 it was purchased by Mr. Heaven, and remained the property of his family for over sixty years, till 1906, when it once again came on the market, and was bid for by Germans, but was withdrawn from sale, and remains in English possession.

But I cannot close this short account of the island without a brief reference to the wild life which abounds on the pinnacles of its inaccessible rocks, on the fern-covered, steep slopes, and in its numberless sea-washed caves, which are haunted by seals, or were until within the last few years; for the brutality and selfish carelessness of chance visitors allowed to land by the courtesy of the owner have driven away much of the timid wild life which had taken refuge against the advancing tide of civilization. Seals used to be observed in fair numbers, particularly at the southern end in a great cave called Seal Cave, and walruses were occasional visitors. But lobsters and crabs are still caught in very great numbers, and, together with the innumerable conies which breed on the island, form the staple industry of the island.

Lundy is also the last stronghold of the original old English "black rat," which has been invaded and

destroyed throughout England and Scotland by the common Scandinavian brown rat; Rat Island, at the south-eastern corner by the landing-stage, commemorates in its name this last fortress of a dying race.

But it is for its birds that Lundy is perhaps most notable. To those who first approach its mighty cliffs it might appear to be the haunt of all the birds in creation. There are gulls of many varieties, falcons, kestrels, ravens, crows, cormorants, kittiwakes, puffins; there is the razor-billed auk, and that now extinct bird, the Great Auk, was seen on the island no later than the last century.

But, indeed, it was no surprise to me to hear of this extinct species lingering on Lundy; the strangeness and wildness of the place might lead one to expect it to be the haunt of the Dodo, or that monstrous and fabulous bird of the "Arabian Nights," the Giant Roc.

The hoopoe, the pretty little Southern bird which haunts the gardens of Greece, sings its "tio, tio, tio, tio, tix" of Aristophanes' comedy on this wind-swept Northern isle; the rose-coloured starling, that rare and beautiful bird of a warmer clime, has been seen here in the spring; the eagle and the golden eagle hover above its crags; the sparrow-hawk and the great gyrfalcon prey upon the small birds and little rodents; even the wild and shy osprey was known to build its eyrie upon Lundy to within the last half-century.

Many of these birds are visitors only, and do not breed here; for in the spring and the autumn, when the great tides of migration set north and south, Lundy lies in the track of their going, and here the birds alight, in their hundreds of thousands, to rest the wings tired with the going and coming from Africa or Asia across the miles of water.

But whether in winter or summer, spring or autumn, any bold walker who ventures round the cliffs and coves of Lundy will find himself surrounded with such a crowd of screaming sea-fowl, diving, swooping, poising, or darting, in such myriads as if the foot of man had never yet scared them from their breeding-places, as the sea-fowl swooped and screamed from their inviolate heights when the first Norsemen ran their beaked ship on to the desert beaches of Iceland.

CHAPTER IX

THE LAST STRONGHOLDS OF TRADITION

Schools, newspapers, and railways have gone far in the past hundred years to destroy the wealth of oral tradition which once satisfied the imagination and taxed the memories of the country-dwelling population of England. And do not let us too greatly deplore this; let us recognize that it is better for the general welfare of the world that a man who dwells three hundred miles from London should have some interest, however slight, in international politics, and some knowledge, however fragmentary, of natural forces, rather than a slipshod belief in ghosts, witches, and the omnipotence of "squire." It is not from such minds that empire is made or deserved, and if with the increase of cheap schooling, cheap printing, and cheap travelling much that is beautiful in language or in legend is swept aside and forgotten, we who have, by the fortune of training, been allowed to see the beauty of the old things must recognize that what the generation gains is more for its happiness than what it discards, as a new brass Birmingham bedstead is cleaner, healthier, and more desirable for a small crowded cottage than a worm-eaten old wooden four-poster.

This reminder I make to myself more than to any "gentle reader"; for I have a passionate attachment to antiquity and a curiosity in legend which leads me into remote paths of speculation and fancy. Some of the most interesting survivals of ancient tradition are those customs, far more common all over England than is supposed, which contain some very ancient religious rite, long ago forgotten by the people, who practise as a superstition, or sometimes as a pastime, what was once an act of worship. The Christian Church, indeed, embodies many of these survivals of paganism, not in its dogma or liturgy, but in its customs. Such, for instance, is the giving of eggs at Easter, the eating of hot cross buns on Good Friday, the games of All Hallowe'en, the harvest festival.

Such customs as "touching with a dead hand" as a cure for sickness, covering the mirrors in a house where one has just died, watching at the church door on Midsummer Night to see the souls of all the worshippers pass in, and those who will not live out the year remain behind and do not pass out—these are part of the common stock of beliefs, not confined to Devonshire or Scotland, nor directly traceable to Celt or Saxon or Latin, but surviving from the remote past of the human race, when the slowly emerging mind was struggling with its apprehensions of life and death. But there are other customs, surviving in the wilder and less accessible parts of our country, in Scotland, Northumberland, Devon, and Cornwall, which seem to throw a flash of light on the history of vanished peoples, by their resemblance—though worn and rubbed by time, like a defaced coin—to certain rites, well known to us in history, as practised by the Romans, or the Druid peoples, or the worshippers of Baal.

Of such kind is a ceremony, until a few years ago very common in Devonshire, where the first armful of corn that is cut is bound into a little sheaf, called "the nek," and set aside from the rest of the field. At the end of the first day's reaping the oldest man present takes the little sheaf and holds it aloft,

crying, "We ha' un!" (We have it!) The cry is repeated three times, and the rest of the reapers, standing round the old man with their reaping-hooks in their hands, bow down at each cry. The spokesman then cries out three times, "Thee Nek!" or, as it is stated by some witnesses of the scene, "Arnack, Arnack, Arnack!" and the little sheaf is carried off the field and hung up in the church. I do not know the meaning of the cries, but the whole ceremony is undoubtedly a dedication of the corn to the Corn-Spirit, and the little sheaf which is carried home and hung up is a rough image of the Corn-Maiden, like those plaited straw figures of Demeter and Persephone the Greek husbandmen used to make, and which the peasants of Sicily make still. Whether the observance of this rite in Devonshire is of Roman date, or whether it goes farther back, to a remoter tradition of preclassical times, it is difficult to say.

So it is, also, of the Devonshire custom of making an offering of wine and honey to bees on the day of their owner's death, and of reversing their hives until the corpse has been carried out of the house. The Greeks poured honey, but not wine, in their rites for the dead, and in all the ceremonies which had to do with the worship of the earth deities—the ancient autochthonic gods, older than the Olympians. But wine was strictly an offering to the gods of the heavens, not to the gods of the underworld, or of death.

There is another custom, still very common in North Devon and Somerset, for the young men of the countryside to climb the nearest hill-top to see the sunrise over the ridge of the Quantocks or the distant Mendips on Easter morning. They account for their action by saying it is "for luck"; but this custom, if connected popularly with Christian worship, has at its roots an older, sterner, and perhaps bloody origin. For, searching back into the mists of antiquity, we find that those early and mysterious peoples whose priests we call the "Druids," to whom the mistletoe was sacred (and with which we decorate our houses at Christmas, the festival of "peace and good-will"), offered human sacrifices to their dark gods on high mountains and at the hour of sunrise.

Whether the Britons whom Caesar describes as sacrificing human beings in vast wicker cages were the Druidical peoples who built Stonehenge and the great stone circles of Dartmoor and Cumberland, or whether with them the mode of worship was already traditional, preserved by a priestly oligarchy from a yet remoter age, and connected by I know not what strange links with the fierce Eastern worship of Baal or Melkarth, it is impossible to say with certainty at present, though the names by which the Cumberland men still call the peaks and valleys round the small Druid circle near Keswick contain the elements of those foreign Phoenician words.

But at least we may assume that the accurate astronomical arrangements of these Druid stones connected human sacrifice with the movements of the sun, and the tradition which sends the young men of the countryside up Dunkery Beacon on Easter morn is certainly older than the first Roman galley that beached in our bays.

Dunkery Beacon is the highest peak in the West of England; it rises above Exmoor black and bold above bog and heather, commanding a view from the Malvern Hills of Worcestershire on the north to the high lands of Plymouth on the south-west, two hundred miles distant the one from the other. The great sweep of the Bristol Channel shines below it on the west, and beyond that lie the blue hills of Monmouthshire and Pembrokeshire; eastward the counties of Somerset, Devon, and Dorset lie under the eyes, and on a clear day it has been computed that no fewer than fifteen counties can be seen from this one eminence.



Dunkery Beacon, from Horner Woods

So notable a height might well have been chosen by those Druid peoples as a fitting stage for the celebration of their worship, and the tradition which holds it "lucky" to climb the Beacon on a spring morning is just such a memory and faint superstition as lingers from an old and forgotten faith. The

country-folk round Keswick used to drive their cattle up to the Druid circle on the hill-top near on the first of May, light a fire within the circle, and drive their cattle through the smoke "for luck," unconscious that they were remembering the worship of the god Moloch, to whom beasts and human beings were sacrificed at his Asiatic shrines by passing them through the fire.

On Dunkery Beacon, so far as I can ascertain, there are no remains of a Druid circle, but only two stone platforms arranged for beacon fires. As a beacon it has been used for many hundred years. In the time of Alfred the Great it flamed a warning of the coming of the Danes; it was doubtless lighted at the coming of William the Conqueror into the West; when the Armada went beating up the Channel; time and again when the rumour ran that Napoleon had started for these shores; the country-folk lighted it several times as a warning that the Doones were out on one of their raids, till one night they climbed the beacon and threw the watchman on the fire, after which it was left black and silent for all the evil that the Doones did, until in due course retribution overtook them and their stronghold was seized. So that I conjecture that the circle of stones (if there were one) was pulled down to build the beacon fires.

But the "Hunting of the Earl of Rone" which takes place at Combe Martin on Ascension Day is probably the most interesting of all ancient survivals in North Devon. It is a curious ceremony, partaking something of the nature of a Guy Fawkes mummery, something, I consider, of a much older and traditional character.

The "Earl of Rone," actually, was the son of the Earl of Tyrone, the "Red Hand of Erin," who, in the reign of James I, fled from Ireland and landed at Combe Martin, wandered about the countryside with a band of companions, and was finally pursued and captured in Lady Wood, outside the village. In the Ascensontide sports the Earl wears a grotesque costume: a mask, and a smock padded with straw, and round his neck a chain of biscuits. He has with him a hobby-horse and buffoon covered with fantastic trappings, and carrying a small article called a "mapper" (which is conjectured to be a misreading for "snapper"), and representing the teeth and jaws of a horse. The Earl has also a donkey, decorated with flowers and with a necklace of biscuit, and the hunters wear a sort of fantastic grenadier costume. For a week before Ascension Day this strange cortege goes in procession round the neighbourhood. The ceremony on Ascension Day is as follows: The Earl of Rone hides in Lady Wood, and is there pursued by the soldiers, fired upon, and captured. He is then placed on the donkey, with his face towards the tail, and led into the village, accompanied by the fool with his hobby-horse. They make several halts, at each of which the Earl is again fired upon and falls wounded from his donkey, mourned by the fool, but amid the general rejoicing of the spectators. Finally he is replaced by the fool, and the affair becomes a mere matter of buffoonery without special significance. Contributions are levied from the public, and enforced by the "mapper," by which they are seized and held until they have paid. The fool also has a besom, which he dips in the gutter, and with which he sprinkles the recalcitrant.

But among much that is mere horseplay, and common to all popular celebrations which have no religious significance to keep in check a natural holiday exuberance, we can discover two distinct traditions. The one is the actual Guy Fawkes celebration of the capture of the rebel and outlaw Shane O'Neill; the other is much older, going back into the remote past of unwritten history, and connected with those strange religious ceremonies which a study of comparative religions has shown us to be a natural development of the mind of primitive peoples, struggling out of the darkness of mere barbarism. Over and over again we find, among the customs of savage tribes, or behind the elaborate ceremonial of such civilized nations as the Greeks and Romans, or lingering in strange and now meaningless ceremonies such as the one I have just described, this primitive idea of the individual who is harmful to the community. From being baleful he became sacred. They cast him out of their city, as the Jews did their scapegoat, to wander in desert places, and as the Greeks did in a city festival which was older than the Homeric gods among them, and which symbolized, in classical times, the days when they had literally stoned a man and a woman from their midst, bound, and with chaplets of flowers on their heads and necklaces of black figs around their necks. It is recorded, among the South Sea Islands, that a traveller once witnessed such a sacrifice as this memorized in the classic Greek festival. Then, by a queer but common inversion of idea, this baleful but sacred individual is fetched back into the community, as the outcast, hidden in Lady Wood, was brought back into Combe Martin, being beaten and reviled, and yet keeping his sacred character as a being set apart from the rest of men. His mask and traditional dress, his necklace of biscuit, and the decking of the donkey with flowers and bread, all point to the sacrificial character of this ceremony, though long ago forgotten and become the opportunity for frolic and holiday-making.

The custom of "beating the bounds," which was familiar enough in many country districts in the last century, is also a remains of primitive tribal rites; it is a summer festival, falling usually at Ascensontide, and is held with greater or less ceremony. Now, indeed, it has become just a holiday affair for children, who dress up and parade the town or village with a hobby-horse and a few vague ceremonies, now become shadowy and meaningless, as in the beating of the bounds which takes place in the older part of the town of Minehead.

There are many scores of superstitious practices, as distinguished from these remains of actual ritual of which I have spoken, still in use among country-folk. In Devonshire they still take a sick child, very early in the morning, and hold it over a stream which is running east, with a long thread tied to its finger, so that as the water carries the thread eastwards away from the child the sickness will also be carried away. This, which seems to us so incomprehensible a belief, is one of that very large class of primitive practices which imitate a certain desired condition, as in the rain-making of certain tribes of red Indians, when, having danced ceremonially round a large tub of water, one of the number takes a mouthful and spirts it into the air in imitation of rain. This is what they call a "charm"; there are charms for the stanching of blood, for making the cows yield well, for the cure of toothache, for averting evil

from a young child; when a Devonshire woman is asked to a christening, she still takes with her a saffron cake, and gives it to the first stranger that she meets on her way to church. But when the cattle are diseased, they have, or had as late as 1883, when the ceremony was witnessed and recorded, a rite which is more than a charm; for a sheep or calf is taken from the herd and sacrificed, and either burned, or buried in a corner of the field belonging to the farmer whose cattle are diseased.

But there is another practice in Devon and Cornwall which we may proclaim a superstition, but to which the tragedies of these wild coasts give but too grim an earnestness to those who practise it. When a ship is long overdue, and a woman can bear the suspense no longer, she goes down to the seashore and calls her husband by name. Over and over again she calls him, her neighbours standing by, until over the waters the voice of her drowned husband comes in answer. Then she turns and goes to her desolate cottage, with hope put out of her heart. How often these cries of sorrow and bereavement have gone out from these rocky coasts, calling the drowned men by their simple, homely names of field and cottage use from under the grey waters, how often the waiting women have been comforted or strengthened by a despairing certainty, we cannot know or realize who do not live and die by the sea.

Apart from those customs and practices, which contain the germ of some very ancient ritual or primitive belief, there is another class of tradition which is purely fantastic, such as ghosts, witches who change into rabbits and cats, fairies, dragons, and strange portents. Of such kind is the story of the Ghost of Porlock Weir, a buccaneer named Lucott, and no unlikely personage to haunt any of these seaside hamlets. He was a malicious and obstinate ghost who appeared boldly a week after his funeral—when the inhabitants might reasonably have supposed they had at last got rid of the bad old man—and though he was exorcised by no less than eleven clergymen he refused to be laid. At last the Vicar of Porlock tamed him with a consecrated wafer, compelled him to ride with him to Watchet, and there imprisoned him in a small box, which was straight-way thrown into the sea, and he was seen no more.

There are elements in this story like that of Anstey's novel, where a genie is imprisoned in a brass pot, which is fished up out of the sea and opened, with startling results to a quiet modern community; and it is to be hoped that nobody will bring Lucott ashore again, along with a catch of fish.

There is another strange tale, also, concerning one John Strange of Porlock, who, on August 23 of 1499, was hewing wood, and upon sitting down to his midday meal on a log at the edge of the clearing, and cutting a piece of bread, observed blood to flow from the incision. He went to his neighbours about it, and with them to his parish priest, and the matter became one of importance, for I find that a Commission was appointed and recorded in the Register of Wells, to inquire into this strange occurrence. Witnesses were called and examined, oaths taken, the learned Commission sat upon it as solemnly as if it had been a case of heresy. John Strange, summoned from his little cottage at Porlock, was, we can well imagine, a half-unwilling hero. Nobody seems to have arrived at any conclusion, and nobody seems to have suggested that perhaps John Strange had cut his finger!

There is an even stranger and more splendidly fantastic story in Westcote's "View of Devon," of fiery dragons seen flying about certain barrows or tumuli near Challacombe, and alighting on them, and how a certain labouring man, having bought a small plot of waste land near by, began depleting Broaken Bunow to build himself a house with the material. And how, digging into the hillock, he came upon "a little place, as it had been a large oven, fairly, strongly and closely walled up," and breaking into this he discovered an earthen pot, which, hoping it might contain some treasure, he stretched out his hand to seize, when, as he put his hand upon it he heard a noise as of a great trampling of horses coming towards him. So he rose and looked about him, but, seeing nothing, knelt again to secure the pot, when the same thing happened again, and so a third time also. Nevertheless he drew out the pot and took it home, and found it to contain no treasure, but only a few ashes and little bones. And a very little time after he lost his senses both of sight and hearing, and died within three months.

There is another barrow also, near the same place, where I am inclined to believe that a "mystical sciencer" worked a trick on two worthy fellows, whom he promised to enrich with silver and gold if they would dig into the hillock for him and find therein a great brass pan which contained the treasure. This they did, and came to the brass pan covered with a large stone, which the strongest of them tried to lift, and was taken with such a faintness "that he could neither work nor stand," and therefore called to the other to take his place. This the man did, and was also taken with faintness; and when they both recovered, which was in a very short space of time, the "mystical sciencer" told them that the birds were flown and the nest only left. And sure enough they found this true: the empty brass pan, with the bottom bright and clean, as if a treasure had lain there, and all the rest of it cankered with rust. Whether this sciencer was some obscure Roger Bacon, and had discovered the use of a volatile anaesthetic centuries ago, or whether he was enjoying a solitary practical joke at the expense of two simpletons, is impossible to say. "It is at your choice to believe either or neither," as Westcote says of the two foregoing stories. "I have offered them to the shrine of your judgment, and what truth soever there is in them, they are not unfit tales for winter nights, when you roast crabs by the fire, whereof this parish yields none, the climate is too cold, only the fine dainty fruits of whortles and blackberries."

One of the pleasantest of tales for winter nights is given by Westcote himself in his introductory chapters, where he speaks of the air of Devon as "very healthy, temperate, sweet, and pure," and giving long life to the inhabitants, more particularly in the good old times, when men were content to live temperately and frugally, and did not weaken themselves with delicacies, but subsisted on the bare sustenance afforded by the earth. Indeed, in the most ancient times they lived on bark and roots, and on a certain "confection," of which if they took a small quantity no larger than a bean they neither hungered nor thirsted for a long while afterwards—so, at least, Diodorus Siculus and Dio Nicaeus have

affirmed, and we can therefore only suppose, in the face of such authority, that the recipe is long since lost, and that the habits of Devonshire men have certainly changed since the days when they lived a hundred and twenty years.

But that must have been before the Phoenicians came to Britain, for they are certainly reputed to have brought the secret of clotted (or clouted) cream with them, and to have landed in Cornwall and Devon with their scald-pans with them, so that the degeneration of the Damnonii in the matter of delicacies is of very ancient date.

I cannot pass from an account of the wonders of Devon without repeating Miss Celia Fiennes's description of a "ffowle" (as she calls it) which lives on the island of Lundy, and which was formerly the property of her grandfather, Lord Saye and Sele, and "yt lives partly in the water and partly out, and soe may be called an amphibious Creature." She does not claim to have seen it herself, for all her wanderings up and down England a-horseback—which was, by the way, sufficient of an adventure for a young lady in the seventeenth century—but she is none the less detailed in her description. This queer bird has one foot like a turkey, and one like a goose, and its habit of laying its eggs is "in a place the sun shines on, and sets it soe exactly upright on the small end, and there it remains until taken up, and all the art and skill of persons cannot set it up soe again to abide."

She does not give the name of this strange "ffowle," but Lundy is no unfitting habitat for an amphibious creature which is at least as rare as the Dodo.

Stories of Henry de Tracy, who murdered Thomas à Becket, are numerous up and down the coast; for the Tracys owned a considerable amount of property here—Lynton, Crinton, Countisbury, and Parracombe—and, in spite of historical evidence of the family's continued prosperity, tradition asserts that the curse brought down by sacrilege was fulfilled, and that Henry de Tracy wanders up and down these desolate coves, condemned to weave ropes of sand that can never draw his wretched soul out of torment till the last trump shall sound. He has become, indeed, a figure of legend, merged with such strange persons as the Wandering Jew and all those restless and unreleased spirits who, like Sisyphus of Greek legend or Tregeagle of Cornish, for ever toil at a for ever unaccomplished task.

The legends which have sprung up round the name of Coppinger have been of quick growth, for "Cruel Coppinger" was a Danish sea-captain who was wrecked off Hartland at the end of the eighteenth century. He came naked ashore, the only survivor from the ship, having swum through the stormy waves. He staggered up the beach, seized the red cloak from an old woman's shoulders, wrapped himself in it, and leapt on the horse of a young girl who stood by, urged the horse into a gallop, and disappeared from the beach. That was a sufficiently striking entrance to the stage of Devon, and he filled his part adequately. The young girl with whom he had ridden off was Dinah Hamlyn; he was taken by her to her father's farm, where he was fed and clothed. He married Dinah, and after her father's death, within a year, he ill-treated shamefully her and her mother, though it was to them that he practically owed his life, ship-wrecked strangers in the eighteenth century being apt to disappear among an inhospitable people. Coppinger lived by smuggling and wrecking; he was brave, violent, and of great physical strength, and he terrorized the population of these little villages by acts of savagery and cruelty. A ganger who had had the boldness to interfere with him he seized, and beheaded on the gunnel of his own boat, and even for this no one dared to bring him to justice. He played violent practical jokes, by inviting to dinner with him unfortunate people who dared not refuse, and serving them up cats or offal for their meal.

He was in every way a scoundrel and a blackguard, and became such a pest that at last he earned retribution; and after many local attempts to convict him of smuggling or wrecking, the revenue officers came out from Bude to the Bristol Channel to hunt him down. He was seen last on the Gull Rock, off Hartland Point, signalling one evening to a ship which lay in the offing. He was taken off by a boat, but almost immediately a storm came up, the ship was blotted out from the sight of those watching from the cliffs, and when the squall passed she had totally disappeared. No one ever knew whether she had foundered with all hands, or had run out of sight behind Lundy, or whether she had become, by reason of the wicked wretch aboard her, a second *Flying Dutchman*, shaping an endless course through stormy seas.

There is a verse of rough doggerel which the children in these parts still repeat, and which embodies the story of this tyrant:

"Will you hear of cruel Coppinger?
He came from a foreign land;
He was brought to us by the salt water,
He was carried away by the wind."

Probably Coppinger's wild and picturesque rush from the beach, like a Centaur in a scarlet cloak, was an actual measure of prudence; for in those cruel times of wreckers and smugglers the survivors who landed from a wreck were often murdered by the people they were thrown amongst, because "dead men tell no tales," and the unfortunate seamen might otherwise give evidence of false lights which had seemed to promise safety and refuge, and had drawn them on to the rocks. Such was the case of a French ship which was drawn ashore at Hele by wreckers, and the only survivor was taken to Champernownsheshey (the old gabled farmhouse which was formerly the home of the well-known Devonshire family of Champernowne), and there murdered. There is a curious ghost-story told in connection with this: The farm in due time passed into other hands, and all memory of the wreck or the disappearance of the one unfortunate survivor was lost. But one evening, while the farmer who was

then living at Champernownesheyes was smoking his pipe in the garden, he fell to idly counting the windows, and, having done this several times, he discovered that there was one window unaccounted for. He called his wife, and then the servants, and, having made sure of this, they located the position of the strange window, and, going upstairs, they broke down the wall which they judged to be opposite, and found, indeed, that the window lighted a small room, furnished in sixteenth-century style, and containing a bed, hung with mouldering tapestry, on which lay a skeleton—the bones of the shipwrecked survivor who had been murdered. As they broke into the room, and went to fling open the long-closed window, they heard a great rushing noise, and cries and groans, and they declared that the garden was filled with evil spirits, rustling and whispering, mopping and mowing, for upwards of an hour afterwards.

There are, of course, many more tales, legends, and traditions, than I have been able to deal with in the space of one chapter; every village has them, every cove and creek, dark wooded hollow, or twisted and fantastic rock, and to collect and collate, to sift and inquire into all the wealth of folk-lore that our country still holds would be an attractive but a life-long work. All I have attempted to give in these few pages is some general idea of the intimate life of these country-folk, what beliefs and customs, inherited often from the days before Christianity, what charms and legends and lore, go to the fashioning of their minds, just as I have tried to give a general idea of the beauty and wildness, the peculiar and intimate quality, of the country in which they live.

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