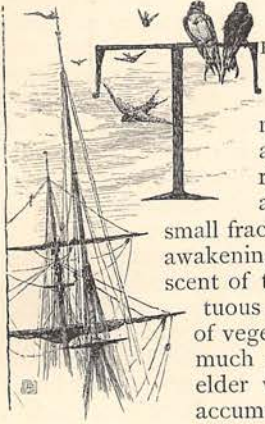


## NATURE IN ENGLAND.



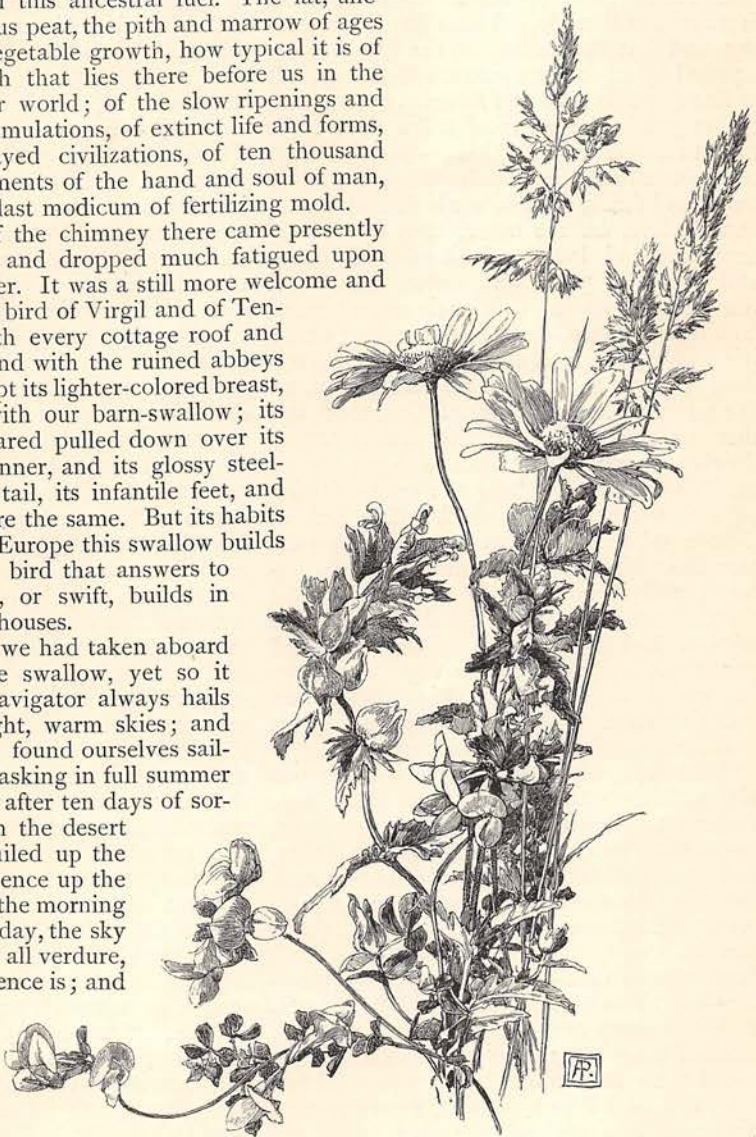
THE first whiff we got of transatlantic nature was the peaty breath of the peasant chimneys of Ireland while we were yet many miles at sea. What a home-like, fireside smell it was; it seemed to make something long forgotten stir within one. One recognizes it as a characteristic Old World odor, it savors so of the soil and of a ripe and mellow antiquity. I know no other fuel that yields so agreeable a perfume. Unless the Irishman in one has dwindled to a very

small fraction, he will be pretty sure to dilate his nostrils and feel some dim awakening of memory on catching the scent of this ancestral fuel. The fat, unctuous peat, the pith and marrow of ages of vegetable growth, how typical it is of much that lies there before us in the elder world; of the slow ripenings and accumulations, of extinct life and forms, decayed civilizations, of ten thousand

growths and achievements of the hand and soul of man, now reduced to their last modicum of fertilizing mold.

With the breath of the chimney there came presently the chimney-swallow, and dropped much fatigued upon the deck of the steamer. It was a still more welcome and suggestive token: the bird of Virgil and of Tennyson, acquainted with every cottage roof and chimney in Europe, and with the ruined abbeys and castle walls. Except its lighter-colored breast, it seemed identical with our barn-swallow; its little black cap appeared pulled down over its eyes in the same manner, and its glossy steel-blue coat, its forked tail, its infantile feet, and its cheerful twitter were the same. But its habits are different; for in Europe this swallow builds in chimneys, and the bird that answers to our chimney-swallow, or swift, builds in crevices in barns and houses.

We did not suspect we had taken aboard our pilot in the little swallow, yet so it proved; this light navigator always hails from the port of bright, warm skies; and the next morning we found ourselves sailing between shores basking in full summer sunshine. Those who after ten days of sorrowing and fasting in the desert of the ocean have sailed up the frith of Clyde, and thence up the Clyde to Glasgow, on the morning of a perfect mid-May day, the sky all sunshine, the earth all verdure, know what this experience is; and only those can know it. It takes a good many foul days in Scotland to breed one fair one; but when the fair day does come, it is



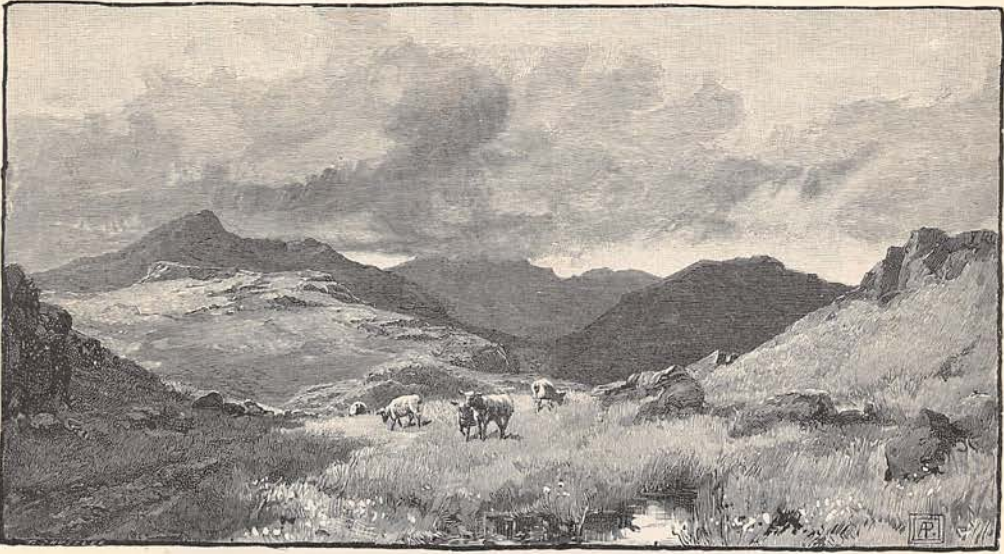
SOME MEADOW FLOWERS—LADIES' FINGERS, YELLOW RATTLE, MOON DAISIES, AND SOFT GRASS.

worth the price paid for it. The soul and sentiment of all fair weather is in it; it is the flowering of the meteorological influences, the rose on this thorn of rain and mist. These fair days, I was told, may be quite confidently looked for in May; we were so fortunate as to strike a series of them, and the day we entered port was such a one as you would select from a hundred.

The traveler is in a mood to be pleased after clearing that Atlantic gulf, the eye in its exuberance is full of caresses and flattery, and the deck of a steamer is a rare vantage-ground on any occasion of sight-seeing; it affords just the isolation and elevation needed. Yet fully discounting these favorable conditions, the fact remains that Scotch sunshine is bewitching, and that the scenery of the Clyde is unequalled by any other approach to Europe. It is Europe, abridged and assorted and passed before you in the space of a few hours: the highlands and lochs and castle-crowned crags on the one hand; and the lowlands, with their parks and farms, their manor halls and matchless verdure, on the other. The eye is conservative, and loves a look of permanence and order, of peace and contentment; and these Scotch shores, with their stone houses, compact masonry, clean fields, grazing herds, ivied walls, massive foliage, perfect roads, verdant mountains, etc., fill all the conditions. We pause an hour in front of Greenock, and then, on the crest of the tide, make our way slowly upward. The landscape closes around us. We can almost hear the cattle ripping off the lush grass in the fields. One feels as if he could eat grass himself. It is a pastoral paradise. We can see the daisies and buttercups; and from above a meadow on the right, a part of the song of a sky-lark reaches my ear. Indeed, not a little of the charm and novelty of this part of the voyage was the impression it made as of going afield in an ocean steamer. We had suddenly passed from a wilderness of waters into a verdurous, sunlit landscape, where scarcely any water was visible. The Clyde, soon after you leave Greenock, becomes little more than a large, deep canal, inclosed between meadow banks, and from the deck of the great steamer only the most charming rural sights and sounds greet you. You are at sea amid verdant parks and fields of clover and grain. You behold farm occupations—sowing, planting, plowing—as from the middle of the Atlantic. Playful heifers and skipping lambs take the place of the leaping dolphins and the basking sword-fish. The ship steers her way amid turnip-fields and broad acres of newly planted potatoes. You are not surprised that she needs piloting. A little tug with a rope at her

bow pulls her first this way and then that, while one at her stern nudges her right flank and then her left. Presently we come to the ship-building yards of the Clyde, where rural, pastoral scenes are strangely mingled with those of quite another sort. "First a cow and then an iron ship," as one of the voyagers observed. Here a pasture, or a meadow, or a field of wheat or oats, and close beside it, without an inch of waste or neutral ground between, rise the skeletons of innumerable ships, like a forest of slender growths of iron, with the workmen hammering amid it like so many noisy woodpeckers. It is doubtful if such a scene can be witnessed anywhere else in the world—an enormous mechanical, commercial, and architectural interest, alternating with the quiet and simplicity of inland farms and occupations. You could leap from the deck of a half-finished ocean steamer into a field of waving wheat or Winchester beans. These vast ship-yards are set down here upon the banks of the Clyde with as little interference with the scene as possible; one would say the vessels had come up out of the water like seals to sun themselves here on the grassy bank.

Of the factories and founderies that put this iron in shape you get no hint; here the ships rise as if they sprouted from the soil, without waste or litter, but with an incessant din. They stand as thickly as a row of cattle in stanchions, almost touching each other, and in all stages of development. Now and then a stall will be vacant, the ship having just been launched, and others will be standing with flags flying and timbers greased or soaped, ready to take to the water at the word. Two such, both large ocean steamers, waited for us to pass. We looked back, saw the last block or wedge knocked away from one of them, and the monster ship sauntered down to the water and glided out into the current in the most gentle, nonchalant way imaginable. I wondered at her slow pace, and at the grace and composure with which she took to the water; the problem nicely studied and solved—just power enough, and not an ounce to spare. The vessels are launched diagonally up or down stream, on account of the narrowness of the channel. But to see such a brood of ships, the largest in the world, hatched upon the banks of such a placid little river, amid such quiet country scenes, is a novel experience. But this is Britain: a little island, with little lakes, little rivers, quiet, bosky fields, but mighty interests and power that reach round the world. I was conscious that the same scene at home would have been less pleasing. It would not have been so compact and tidy. There



GRASSY MOUNTAINS.

would not have been a garden of ships and a garden of turnips side by side; hay-makers and ship-builders in adjoining fields; milch-cows and iron steamers seeking the water within sight of each other. We leave wide margins and ragged edges in this country, and both man and nature sprawl about at greater lengths than in the Old World.

I was perhaps least prepared for the utter tranquillity, and shall I say domesticity, of the mountains. At a distance they appear to be covered with a tender green mold that one could brush away with his hand. On nearer approach it is seen to be grass. They look nearly as rural and pastoral as the fields. Goat Fell is steep and stony, but even it does not have a wild and barren look. At home, one thinks of a mountain as either a vast pile of barren, frowning rocks and precipices, or else a steep acclivity covered with a tangle of primitive forest timber. But here, the mountains are high, grassy sheep-walks, smooth, treeless, rounded, and as green as if dipped in a fountain of perpetual spring. I did not wish my Catskills any different; but I wondered what would need to be done to them to make them look like these Scotch highlands. Cut away their forests, rub down all inequalities in their surfaces, pulverizing their loose bowlders, turf them over, leaving the rock to show through here and there; then, with a few large black patches to represent the heather, and the softening and ameliorating effect of a mild, humid climate, they might in time come to bear some resemblance to these shepherd mountains. Then over all the landscape is that new look—that mellow,

legendary, half-human expression which nature wears in these ancestral lands, an expression familiar in pictures and in literature, but which a native of this side of the Atlantic has never before seen in gross, material objects and open-air spaces,—the added charm of the sentiment of time and human history, the ripening and ameliorating influence of long ages of close and loving occupation of the soil,—naturally a deep, fertile soil under a mild, very humid climate.

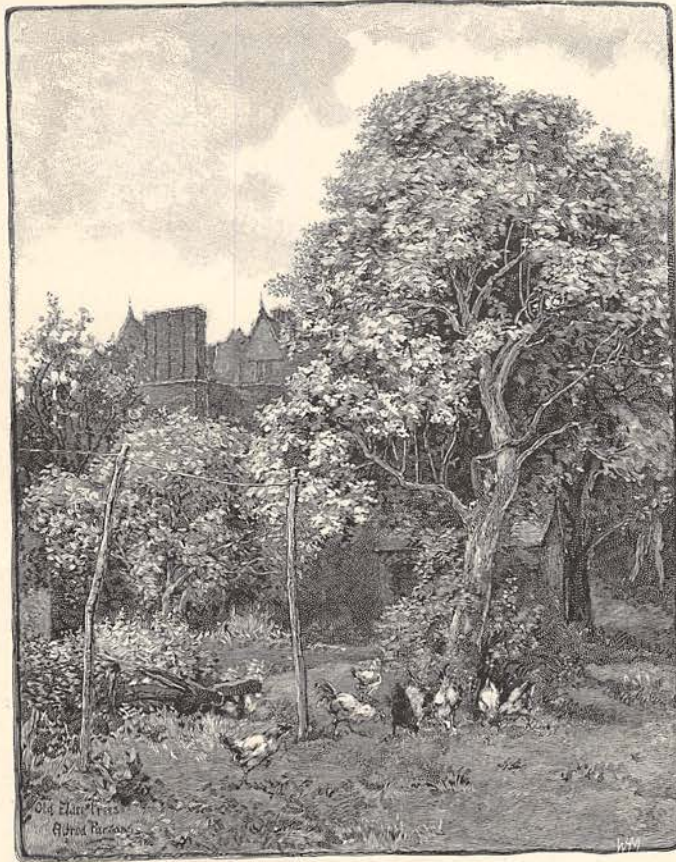
There is an unexpected, an unexplained lure and attraction in the landscape, a pensive, reminiscent feeling in the air itself. Nature has grown mellow under these humid skies, as in our fiercer climate she grows harsh and severe. One sees at once why this fragrant Old World has so dominated the affections and the imagination of our artists and poets: it is saturated with human qualities; it is unctuous with the ripeness of ages, the very marrow-fat of time.

## II.

I HAD come to Great Britain less to see the noted sights and places, than to observe the general face of nature. I wanted to steep myself long and well in that mellow, benign landscape, and put to further tests the impressions I had got of it during a hasty visit one autumn, eleven years before. Hence I was mainly intent on roaming about the country, it mattered little where. Like an attic stored with relics and heir-looms, there is no place in England where you cannot instantly turn from nature to scenes and

places of deep historical or legendary or artistic interest. With a suitable companion, I should probably have made many long pedestrian tours. As it was, I took many short but delightful walks both in England

ment to the smell. When I plucked the flowers, which seemed precisely like our own, the odor was rank and disagreeable; but at the distance of a few yards it floated upon the moist air, a spicy and pleasing perfume. The



OLD ELDER-TREES.

and Scotland, with a half day's walk in the north of Ireland about Moville. 'Tis an admirable country to walk in,—the roads are so dry and smooth and of such easy grade, the foot-paths so numerous and so bold, and the climate so cool and tonic. One night, with a friend, I walked from Rochester to Maidstone, part of the way in a slow rain and part of the way in the darkness. We had proposed to put up at some one of the little inns on the road, and get a view of the weald of Kent in the morning; but the inns refused us entertainment, and we were compelled to do the eight miles at night, stepping off very lively the last four in order to reach Maidstone before the hotels were shut up, which takes place at eleven o'clock. I learned this night how fragrant the English elder is while in bloom, and that distance lends enchant-

ment to the smell. When I plucked the flowers, which seemed precisely like our own, the odor was rank and disagreeable; but at the distance of a few yards it floated upon the moist air, a spicy and pleasing perfume. The elder here grows to be a veritable tree: I saw specimens seven or eight inches in diameter and twenty feet high. In the morning we walked back by a different route, taking in Boxley Church, where the pilgrims used to pause on their way to Canterbury, and getting many good views of Kent grain-fields and hop-yards. Sometimes the road wound through the landscape like a foot-path, with nothing between it and the rank growing crops. An occasional newly plowed field presented a curious appearance. The soil is upon the chalk formation, and is full of large fragments of flint. These work out upon the surface, and, being white and full of articulations and processes, give to the ground the appearance of being thickly strewn with bones—with thigh-bones greatly foreshortened. Yet these old bones in skillful hands

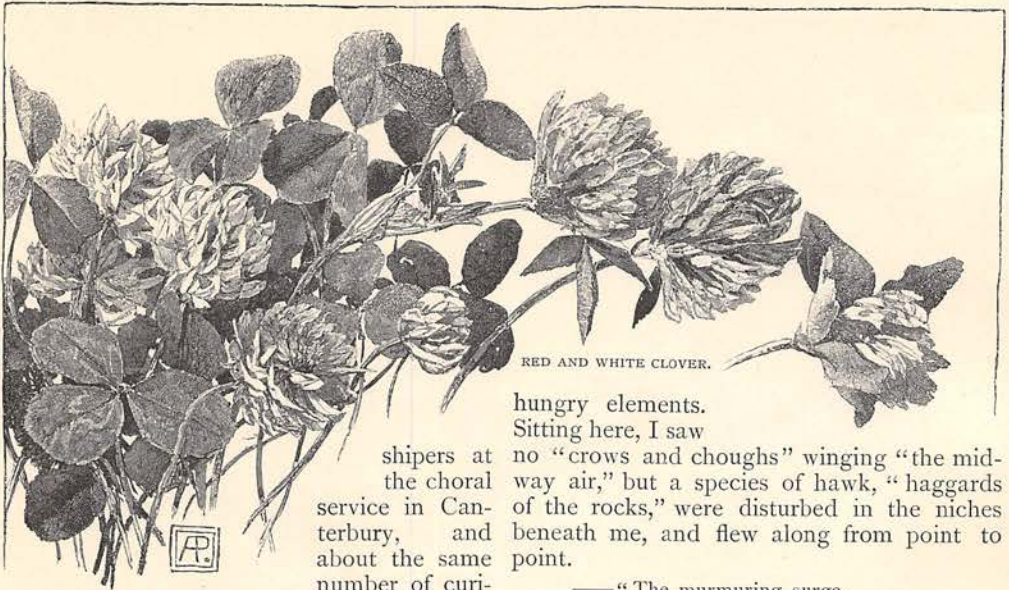


make a most effective building material. They appear in all the old churches and ancient buildings in the south of England. Broken squarely off, the flint shows a fine semi-transparent surface that, in combination with coarser material, has a remarkable crystalline effect. One of the most delicious bits of architectural decoration I saw in England was produced, in the front wall of one of the old buildings attached to the cathedral at Canterbury, by little squares of these flints in brick panel-work. The cool, pellucid, illuminating effect of the flint was just the proper foil to the warm, glowing, livid brick.

From Rochester we walked to Gravesend, over Gad's Hill; the day soft and warm, half sunshine, half shadow; the air full of the songs of sky-larks; a rich, fertile landscape all about us; the waving wheat just in bloom, dashed with scarlet poppies; and presently, on the right, the Thames in view dotted with vessels. Seldom any cattle or grazing herds in Kent; the ground is too valuable; it is all given up to wheat, oats, barley, hops, fruit, and various garden-produce.

A few days later we walked from Feversham to Canterbury, and from the top of Harbledown hill saw the magnificent cathedral suddenly break upon us as it did upon the foot-sore and worshipful pilgrims centuries ago. At this point, it is said, they knelt down, which seems quite probable, the view is so imposing. The cathedral stands out from and

above the city, as if the latter were the foundation upon which it rested. On this walk we passed several of the famous cherry orchards of Kent—the thriftiest trees and the finest fruit I ever saw; not stung by insects, as with us. About the best glimpses I had of the cathedral—after the first view from Harbledown hill—were obtained while lying upon my back on the grass, under the shadow of its walls, and gazing up at the jackdaws flying about the central tower and going out and in weather-worn openings three hundred feet above me. There seemed to be some wild, pinnacled mountain peak or rocky ledge up there toward the sky, where the fowls of the air had made their nests, secure from molestation. The way the birds make themselves at home about these vast architectural piles is very pleasing. Doves, starlings, jackdaws, swallows, sparrows take to them as to a wood or to a cliff. If there were only something to give a corresponding touch of nature or a throb of life inside! But their interiors are only impressive sepulchers—tombs within a tomb. Your own footfalls seem like the echo of past ages. These cathedrals belong to the pleistocene period of man's religious history—the period of gigantic forms. How vast, how monstrous, how terrible in beauty and power! but as empty and dead as the shells upon the shore. The cold, thin ecclesiasticism that now masquerades in them hardly disturbs the dust in their central aisles. I saw five wor-



RED AND WHITE CLOVER.

ous spectators. For my part, I could not take my eyes off the remnants of some of the old stained windows up aloft. If I worshiped at all, it was my devout admiration of those superb relics. There could be no doubt about the faith that inspired those. Below them were some gorgeous modern memorial windows: stained glass, indeed! loud, garish, thin, painty; while these were like a combination of precious stones and gems, full of depth and richness of tone, and, above all, serious, not courting your attention. My eye was not much taken with them at first, and not till after it had recoiled from the hard, thin glare in my immediate front.

From Canterbury I went to Dover, and spent part of a day walking along the cliffs to Folkestone. There is a good foot-path that skirts the edge of the cliffs, and it is much frequented. It is characteristic of the compactness and neatness of this little island that there is not an inch of waste land along this sea margin; the fertile rolling landscape, waving with wheat and barley, and with grass just ready for the scythe, is cut squarely off by the sea; the plow and the reaper come to the very brink of the chalky cliffs. As you sit down on Shakspeare's Cliff, with your feet dangling in the air at a height of three hundred and fifty feet, you can reach back and pluck the grain heads and the scarlet poppies. Never have I seen such quiet pastoral beauty take such a sudden leap into space. Yet the scene is tame, in one sense: there is no hint of the wild and the savage; the rock is soft and friable, a kind of chalky bread, which the sea devours readily; the hills are like freshly cut loaves; slice after slice has been eaten away by the

hungry elements.

Sitting here, I saw

no "crows and choughs" winging "the mid-way air," but a species of hawk, "haggards of the rocks," were disturbed in the niches beneath me, and flew along from point to point.

—"The murmuring surge,  
That on the unnumber'd idle pebbles chafes,  
Cannot be heard so high."

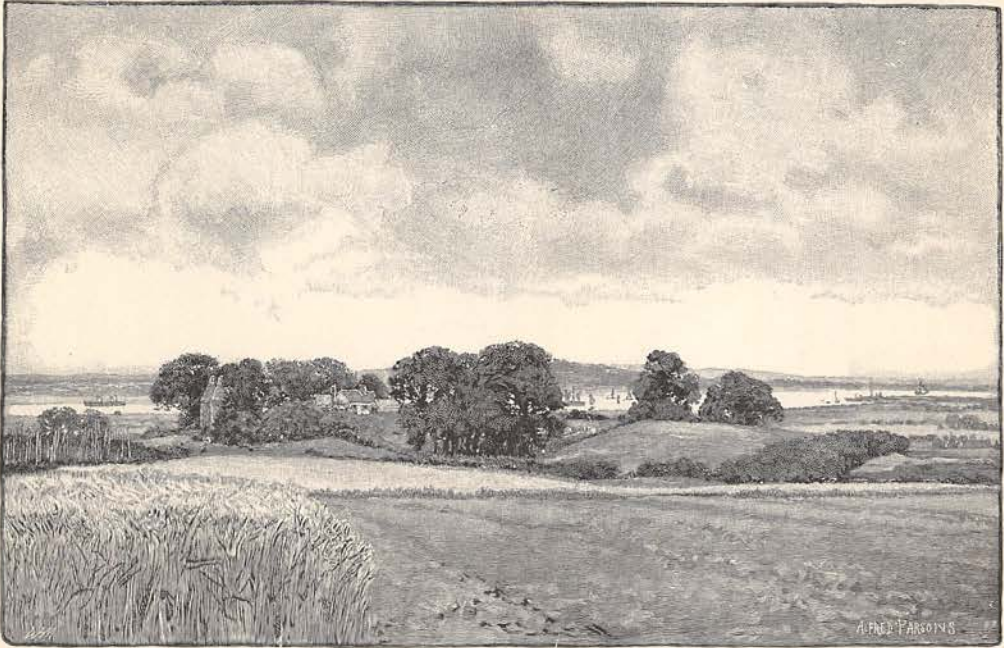
I had wondered why Shakspeare had made his sea-shores pebbly instead of sandy, and now I saw why: they are pebbly, with not a grain of sand to be found. This chalk formation, as I have already said, is full of flint nodules; and as the shore is eaten away by the sea, these rounded masses remain. They soon become worn into smooth pebbles, that beneath the pounding of the surf give out a strange rattling, clinking sound. Across the Channel, on the French side, there is more sand, but it is of the hue of mud and not pleasing to look upon.

Of other walks I had in England, I recall with pleasure a Sunday up the Thames toward Windsor: the day perfect, the river alive with row-boats, the shore swarming with pedestrians and picnickers; young athletic London, male and female, rushing forth as hungry for the open air and the water as young mountain herds for salt. One shore of the Thames, sometimes the right, sometimes the left, it seems, belongs to the public. No private grounds, however lordly, are allowed to monopolize both sides.

Another salutary walk was along the borders of Surrey and Sussex, and through Gilbert White's country, in quest of the night-ingale. I was everywhere a day or a half day, or else a few hours, too late to hear the famous bird in full song, so sharply and abruptly does their musical period end. Another walk was about Winchester and Salisbury, with more cathedral viewing. One of the most human things to be seen

in the great cathedrals is the carven image of some old knight or warrior prince resting above his tomb, with his feet upon his faithful dog. I was touched by this remembrance of the dog. In all cases he looked alert and watchful, as if guarding his master while he slept. I noticed that Cromwell's soldiers were less apt to batter off the nose and ears of the dog than they were those of the knight.

the yellow-hammer, two or three being within ear-shot. The song is much like certain sparrow songs, only inferior: *Sip, sip, sip, see-e-e-e*; or, *If, if, if, you pleas-e-e-e*. Honey-bees on the white clover. Turf very thick and springy, supporting two or three kinds of grass resembling redtop and bearded rye-grass. Narrow-leaved plantain, a few buttercups, a small yellow flower unknown to me (probably ladies' fingers), also a species of dan-



IN KENT—NEAR GRAVESEND.

At Stratford I did more walking. After a row on the river, we strolled through the low, grassy field in front of the church, redolent of cattle and clover, and sat for an hour on the margin of the stream and enjoyed the pastoral beauty and the sunshine. In the afternoon (it was Sunday) I walked across the fields to Shottery, and then followed the road as it wound amid the quaint little thatched cottages till it ended at a stile from which a foot-path led across broad, sunny fields to a stately highway. To give a more minute account of English country scenes and sounds in midsummer, I will here copy some jottings in my note-book, made then and there:

“July 16. In the fields beyond Shottery. Bright and breezy, with appearance of slight showers in the distance. Thermometer probably 66 or 68 degrees; a good working temperature. Clover—white, red, and yellow (white predominating)—in the fields all about me. The only noticeable bird voice that of

delion and prunella. The land thrown into marked swells twenty feet broad. Two Sunday-school girls lying on the grass in the other end of the field. A number of young men playing some game, perhaps cards, seated on the ground in an adjoining field. Scarcely any signs of midsummer to me; no ripeness or maturity in Nature yet. The grass very tender and succulent, the streams full and roily. Yarrow and cinque-foil also in the grass where I sit. The plantain in bloom and fragrant. Along the Avon, the meadow-sweet in full bloom, with a fine cinnamon odor. A wild rose here and there in the hedge-rows. The wild clematis nearly ready to bloom. The wheat and oats full-grown, but not yet turning. The clouds soft and fleecy. Prunella dark purple. The red clover very ruddy; the white large. A few paces farther on I enter a highway, one of the broadest I have seen, the road-bed hard and smooth as usual, about sixteen feet wide, with grassy margins

twelve feet wide, redolent with white and red clover. A rich farming landscape spreads around me, with blue hills in the far west. Cool and fresh like June. Bumble-bees here and there, more hairy than at home. A plow

islands of shade in a sea of grass. Drovers of sheep grazing, and herds of cattle reposing in the succulent fields. Now the just felt breeze brings me the rattle of a mowing machine, a rare sound here. The great motion-



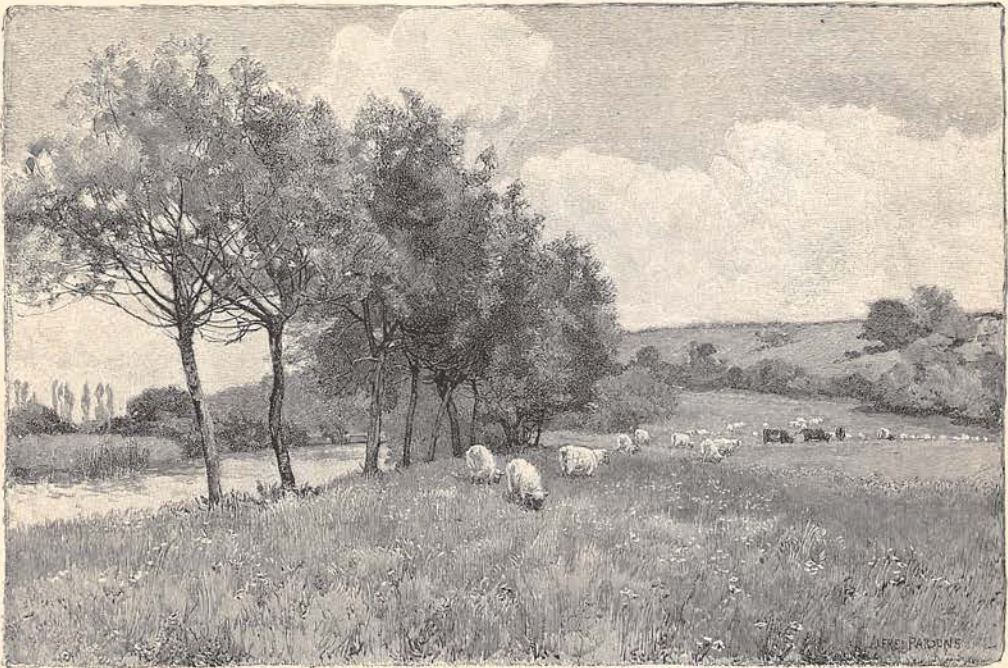
COTTAGES AT SHOTTERY.

in a field by the road-side is so heavy I can barely move it—at least three times as heavy as an American plow; beam very long, tails four inches square, the mold-board a thick plank. The soil like putty; where it dries crumbling into small, hard lumps, but sticky and tough when damp,—Shakspeare's soil, the finest and most versatile wit of the world, the product of a sticky, stubborn clay-bank. Here is a field where every alternate swell is small. The large swells heave up in a very molten-like way—real turfy billows, crested with white clover-blossoms."

"July 17. On the road to Warwick, two miles from Stratford. Morning bright, with sky full of white, soft, high-piled thunderheads. Plenty of pink blackberry blossoms along the road; herb Robert in bloom, and a kind of Solomon's-seal as at home, and what appears to be a species of golden-rod with a midsummery smell. The note of the yellow-hammer and the wren here and there. Beech-trees loaded with mast and humming with bumble-bees, probably gathering honeydew, which seems to be more abundant here than with us. The landscape like a well-kept park dotted with great trees, which make

less arms of a windmill rising here and there above the horizon. A gentleman's turn-out goes by, with glittering wheels and spanking team; the footman in livery behind, the gentleman driving. I hear his brake scrape as he puts it on down the gentle descent. Now a lark goes off. Then the mellow horn of a cow or heifer is heard. Then the bleat of sheep. The crows caw hoarsely. Few houses by the road-side, but here and there behind the trees in the distance. I hear the greenfinch, stronger and sharper than our goldfinch, but less pleasing. The matured look of some fields of grass alone suggests midsummer. Several species of mint by the road-side, also certain white umbelliferous plants. Everywhere that royal weed of Britain, the nettle. Shapely piles of road material and pounded stone at regular distances, every fragment of which will go through a two-inch ring. The roads are mended only in winter, and are kept as smooth and hard as a rock. No swells or 'thank-y'-ma'ms' in them to turn the water; they shed the water like a rounded pavement. On the hill, three miles from Stratford, where a finger-post points you to Hampton Lucy, I turn and see the spire of Shak-





MEADOW BY AVON.

spere's church between the trees. It lies in a broad, gentle valley, and rises above many trees. 'I hope and praise God it will keep foine,' said the old woman at whose little cottage I stopped for ginger-beer, attracted by a sign in the window. 'One penny, sir, if you please. I made it myself, sir. I do not leave the front door unfastened' (undoing it to let me out) 'when I am down in the garden.' A weasel runs across the road in front of me, and is scolded by a little bird. The body of a dead hedgehog festering beside the hedge. A species of St. Johnswort in bloom, teasels, and a small convolvulus. Also a species of plantain with a head large as my finger, purple tinged with white. Road margins wide, grassy, and fragrant with clover. Privet in bloom in the hedges, panicles of small white flowers faintly sweet-scented. 'As clean and white as privet when it flowers,' says Tennyson in 'Walking to the Mail.' The road an avenue between noble trees, beech, ash, elm, and oak. All the fields are bounded by lines of stately trees; the distance is black with them. A large thistle by the road-side, with homeless bumble-bees on the heads as at home, some of them white-faced and stingless. Thistles rare in this country. Weeds of all kinds rare except the nettle. The place to see the Scotch thistle is not in Scotland or England, but in America."

## III.

ENGLAND is like the margin of a spring-run, near its source—always green, always cool, always moist, comparatively free from frost in winter and from drought in summer. The spring-run to which it owes this character is the Gulf stream, which brings out of the pit of the southern ocean what the fountain brings out of the bowels of the earth—a uniform temperature, low but constant; a fog in winter, a cloud in summer. The spirit of gentle, fertilizing summer rain perhaps never took such tangible and topographical shape before. Cloud-evolved, cloud-enveloped, cloud-protected, it fills the eye of the American traveler with a vision of greenness such as he has never before dreamed of; a greenness born of perpetual May, tender, untarnished, ever renewed, and as uniform and all-pervading as the rain-drops that fall, covering mountain, cliff, and vale alike. The softened, rounded, full outlines given to our landscape by a deep fall of snow is given to the English by this depth of vegetable mold and this all-prevailing verdure which it supports. Indeed, it is caught upon the shelves and projections of the rocks as if it fell from the clouds,—a kind of green snow,—and it clings to their rough or slanting sides like moist flakes. In the little valleys and chasms it appears to lie deepest. Only the peaks and broken rocky crests of the highest Scotch



SOME HEDGE-ROW FLOWERS—PRIVET, DOGROSE, BRAMBLE, HONEYSUCKLE.

sides the moist, fresh greenness fairly drips. Grass, grass, grass, and evermore grass. Is there another country under the sun so be-cushioned, becarpeted, and becurtained with grass? Even the woods are full of grass, and I have seen them mowing in a forest. Grass grows upon the rocks, upon the walls, on the tops of the old castles, on the roofs of the houses. Turf used as capping to a stone fence thrives and blooms as if upon the ground. There seems to be a deposit from the atmosphere,—a slow but steady accumulation of a black, peaty mold upon all reposed surfaces,—that by and by supports some of the lower or cryptogamous forms of vegetation. These decay and add to the soil, till thus in time grass and other plants will grow. The walls of the old castles and cathedrals support a variety of plant life. On Rochester Castle I saw two or three species of large wild flowers growing one hundred feet from the ground, and tempting the tourist to perilous reachings and climbings to get them. The very stones seem to sprout. My companion made a sketch of a striking group of red and white flowers blooming far up on one of the buttresses of Rochester Cathedral. The soil will climb to any height. Indeed, there seems to be a kind of finer soil floating in the air. How else can one account for the general smut of the human face and hands in this country, and the impossibility of keeping his own

and Cumber-land mount-ains are bare. Adown their treeless

clean? The unwashed hand here quickly leaves a deposit on whatever it touches. A prolonged neglect of soap and water, and I think one would be presently covered with a fine green mold, like that upon the boles of the trees in the woods. If the rains were not occasionally heavy enough to clean them off, I have no doubt that the roofs of all buildings in England would in a few years be covered with turf, and that daisies and but-tercups would bloom upon them. How quickly all new buildings take on the pre-ailing look of age and mellowness. One needs to have seen the great architectural piles and monuments of Britain to appreciate Shakspeare's line—

“That unswept stone, besmeared with sluttish Time.”

He must also have seen those Scotch or Cumberland mountains to appreciate the descriptive force of this other line—

“The turfy mountains where live the nibbling sheep.”

The turfy mountains are the unswept stones that have held and utilized their ever increasing capital of dirt. These vast rocky eminences are stuffed and padded with peat; it is the sooty soil of the house-tops and of the grimy human hand, deepened and accumulated till it nourishes the finest, sweetest grass.

It was this turfy and grassy character of these mountains—I am tempted to say their cushiony character—that no reading or picture viewing of mine had prepared me for. In the cut or on canvas they appeared like hard and frowning rocks; and here I beheld them as

green and succulent as any meadow-bank in April or May,—vast, elevated sheep-walks and rabbit-warrens, treeless, shrubless, generally without loose bowlders, shelving rocks, or sheer precipices; often rounded, feminine, dimpled, or impressing one as if the rock had been thrust up beneath an immense stretch of the finest lawn, and had carried the turf with it heavenward, rending it here and there, but preserving acres of it intact.

larklike tail. No sound of wind in the trees; there were no trees, no seared branches and trunks that so enhance and set off the wildness of our mountain-tops. On the summit the wind whistled around the outcropping rocks and hummed among the heather, but the great mountain did not purr or roar like one covered with forests.

I lingered for an hour or more, and gazed upon the stretch of mountain and vale

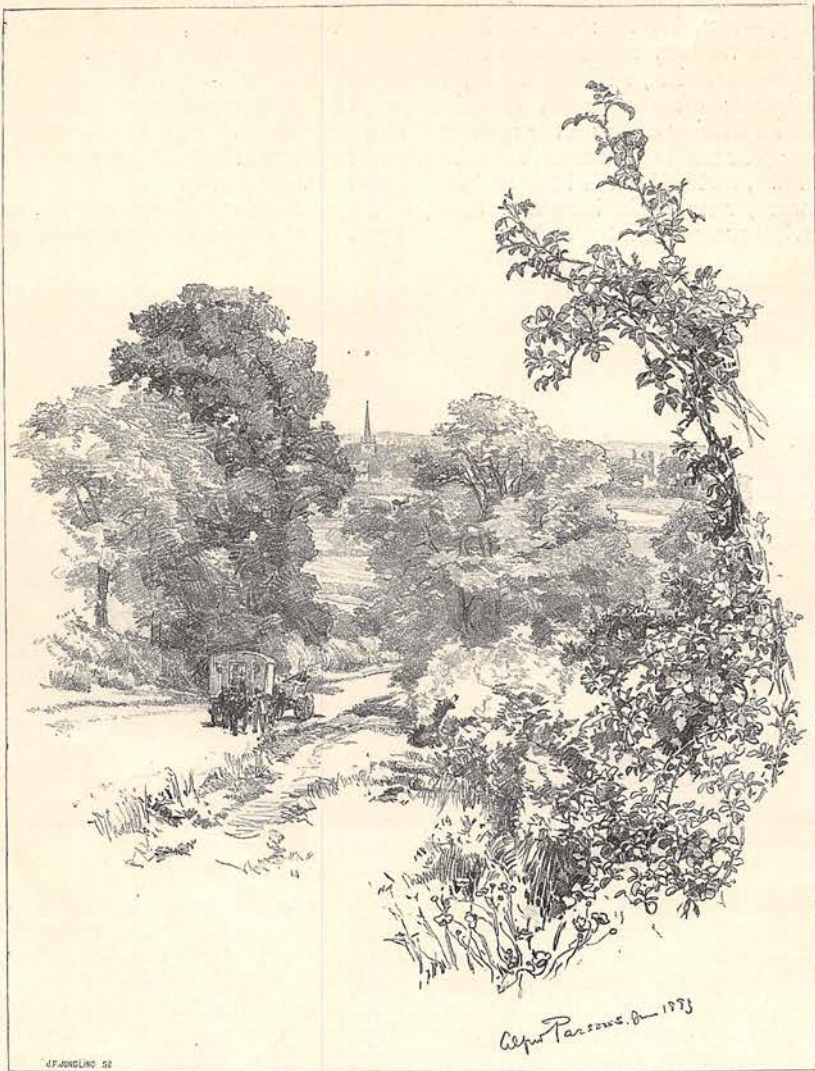


OLD BRIDGE ON AVON.

In Scotland I ascended Ben Venue, not one of the highest or ruggedest of the Scotch mountains, but a fair sample of them, and my foot was seldom off the grass or bog, often sinking into them as into a saturated sponge. Where I expected a dry course, I found a wet one. The thick, springy turf was oozing with water. Instead of being balked by precipices, I was hindered by swamps. Where a tangle of brush or a chaos of bowlders should have detained me, I was picking my way as through a wet meadow-bottom tilted up at an angle of forty-five degrees. My feet became soaked when my shins should have been bruised. Occasionally, a large deposit of peat in some favored place had given way beneath the strain of much water, and left a black chasm a few yards wide and a yard or more deep. Cold spring-runs were abundant, wild flowers few, grass universal. A loping hare started up before me; a pair of ringed ousels took a hasty glance at me from behind a rock; sheep and lambs, gray as the outcropping rock, were scattered here and there; the wheat-ear uncovered its white rump as it flitted from rock to rock, and the mountain pipit displayed its

about me. The summit of Ben Lomond, eight or ten miles to the west, rose a few hundred feet above me. On four peaks I could see snow or miniature glaciers. Only four or five houses, mostly humble shepherd dwellings, were visible in that wide circuit. The sun shone out at intervals; the driving clouds floated low, their keels scraping the rocks of some of the higher summits. The atmosphere was filled with a curious white film, like water tinged with milk, an effect only produced at home by a fine mist. "A certain tameness in the view, after all," I recorded in my note-book on the spot, "perhaps because of the trim and grassy character of the mountain; not solemn and impressive; no sense of age or power. The rock crops out everywhere, but it can hardly look you in the face; it is crumbling and insignificant; shows no frowning walls, no tremendous cleavage; nothing overhanging and precipitous; no wrath and revel of the elder gods."

Even in rugged Scotland, nature is scarcely wilder than a mountain sheep, certainly a good way short of the ferocity of the moose and caribou. There is everywhere marked



STRATFORD—FROM BARDON HILL.

repose and moderation in the scenery, a kind of aboriginal Scotch canniness and propriety that gives one a new sensation. On and about Ben Nevis there is barrenness, cragginess, and desolation; but the characteristic feature of wild Scotch scenery is the moor, lifted up into mountains, covering low, broad hills, or stretching away in undulating plains, black, silent, melancholy, it may be, but never savage or especially wild. "The vast and yet not savage solitude," Carlyle says, referring to these moorlands. The soil is black and peaty, often boggy; the heather short and uniform as prairie grass; a shepherd's cottage or a sportsman's "box" stuck here and there amid the hills. The highland cattle are shaggy and picturesque, but the

moors and mountains are close cropped and uniform. The solitude is not that of a forest full of still forms and dim vistas, but of wide, open, somber spaces. Nature did not look alien or unfriendly to me; there must be barrenness or some savage threatening feature in the landscape to produce this impression; but the heather and whin are like a permanent shadow, and one longs to see the trees stand up and wave their branches. The torrents leaping down off the mountains are very welcome to both eye and ear. And the lakes—nothing can be prettier than Loch Lomond and Loch Katrine, though one wishes for some of the superfluous rocks of the New World to give their beauty a granite setting.

## IV

It is characteristic of nature in England that most of the stone with which the old bridges, churches, and cathedrals are built is so soft that people carve their initials in it with their jackknives, as we do in the bark of a tree or in a piece of pine timber. At Stratford they have posted a card upon the outside of the old church, imploring visitors to refrain from this barbarous practice. One sees names and dates there more than a century old. Often, in leaning over the parapets of the bridges along the highways, I would find them covered with letters and figures. Tourists have made such havoc chipping off fragments from the old Brig o' Doon in Burns's country, that the parapet has had to be repaired. One could cut out the key of the arch with his pocket-knife. And yet these old structures outlast empires. A few miles from Glasgow I saw the remains of an old Roman bridge, the arch apparently as perfect as when the first Roman chariot passed over it, probably fifteen centuries ago. No wheels but those of time pass over it in these later centuries, and these seem to be driven slowly and gently in this land, with but little wear and tear to the ancient highways.

England is not a country of granite and marble, but of chalk, marl, and clay. The old Plutonic gods do not assert themselves; they are buried and turned to dust, and the more modern humanistic divinities bear sway. The land is a green cemetery of extinct rude forces. Where the highway or the railway gashed the hills deeply, I could seldom tell where the soil ended and the rock began, as they gradually assimilated, blended, and became one.

And this is the key to nature in England: 'tis granite grown ripe and mellow and issuing in grass and verdure; 'tis aboriginal force and fecundity become docile and equable and mounting toward higher forms,—the harsh, bitter rind of the earth grown sweet and edible. There is such body and substance in the color and presence of things that one thinks the very roots of the grass must go deeper than usual. The crude, the raw, the discordant, where are they? It seems a comparatively short and easy step from nature to the canvas or to the poem in this cozy land. Nothing need be added; the idealization has already taken place. A much sterner problem confronts the artist in America: a greater gulf has to be bridged, a gulf like that between the animal and the mineral. Life is less picturesque, and nature less moral, less mindful of man. The Old World is deeply covered with a kind of human leaf-mold, while the New is for the most part yet raw, undigested hard-

pan. This is why these scenes haunt one like a memory. One seems to have youthful associations with every field and hill-top he looks upon. The complete humanization of nature has taken place. The soil has been mixed with human thought and substance. These fields have been alternately Celt, Roman, British, Norman, Saxon; they have moved and walked and talked and loved and suffered; hence one feels kindred to them and at home among them. The mother-land, indeed. Every foot of its soil has given birth to a human being and grown tender and conscious with time.

England is like a seat by the chimney-corner, and is as redolent of human occupancy and domesticity. It satisfies to the full one's utmost craving for the home-like and for the fruits of affectionate occupation of the soil. It does not satisfy one's craving for the wild, the savage, the aboriginal, what our poet describes as his

"Hungering, hungering, hungering, for primal energies and Nature's dauntlessness."

But probably in the matter of natural scenes we hunger most for that which we most do feed upon. At any rate, I can conceive that one might be easily contented with what the English landscape affords him.

Nature, with us, is a harsh, unloving step-mother. She has the continental swing and stride and the continental indifference. Things are on a large scale, and not so readily appropriated and domesticated as in England. Except here and there in New England, we have cropped and shorn the earth without taming her.

In the British island the whole physiognomy of the land bespeaks the action of slow, uniform, conservative agencies. There is an elemental composure and moderation in things that leave their mark everywhere,—a sort of aboriginal sweetness and docility that are a surprise and a charm. One does not forget that the evolution of man probably occurred in this hemisphere, and time would seem to have proved that there is something here more favorable to his perpetuity and longevity.

The dominant impression of the English landscape is repose. Never was such a restful land to the eye, especially to the American eye, sated as it is very apt to be with the mingled squalor and splendor of its own landscape, its violent contrasts, and general spirit of unrest. But the completeness and composure of this outdoor nature is like a dream. It is like the poise of the tide at its full: every hurt of the world is healed, every shore

covered, every unsightly spot is hidden. The circle of the horizon is brimming with the green equable flood. (I did not see the fens of Lincolnshire nor the wolds of York.) This look of repose is partly the result of the maturity and ripeness brought about by time and ages of patient and thorough husbandry, and partly the result of the gentle, continent spirit of Nature herself. She is contented, she is happily wedded, she is well clothed and fed. Her offspring swarm about her, her paths have fallen in pleasant places. The foliage of the trees, how dense and massive! The turf of the fields, how thick and uniform! The streams and rivers, how placid and full, showing no devastated margins, no wide-spread sandy wastes and unsightly heaps of drift bowlders! To the returned traveler the foliage of the trees and groves of New England and New York looks thin and disheveled when compared with the foliage he has just left. This effect is probably owing to our cruder soil and sharper climate. In mid-summer the hair of our trees seems to stand on end; the woods have a wild, frightened look, or as if they were just recovering from a debauch. In our intense light and heat, the leaves, instead of spreading themselves full to the sun and crowding out upon the ends of the branches as they do in England, retreat, as it were, hide behind each other, stand edgewise, perpendicular, or at any angle, to avoid the direct rays. In Britain, from the slow, dripping rains and the excessive moisture, the leaves of the trees droop more, and the branches are more pendent. The rays of light are fewer and feebler, and the foliage disposes itself so as to catch them all, and thus presents a fuller and broader surface to the eye of the beholder. The leaves are massed upon the outer ends of the branches, while the interior of the tree is comparatively leafless. The European plane-tree is like a tent. The foliage is all on the outside. The bird voices in it reverberate as in a chamber.

"The pillar'd dusk of sounding sycamores,"

says Tennyson. At a little distance, it has the mass and solidity of a rock. A number of European maples growing in a park near me still keep up their foreign habit under our fierce skies, and sometimes get their leaves scorched. They spread the greatest possible leaf-surface to the light, and no ray penetrates their interiors. When their foliage begins to turn in the fall, the trees appear as if they had been lightly and hastily brushed with gold. The outer edges of the branches become a light yellow, while, a little deeper,

the body of the foliage is still green. It is this solid and sculpturesque character of the English foliage that so fills the eye of the artist. The feathery, formless, indefinite, not to say thin, aspect of our leafage is much less easy to paint, and much less pleasing when painted.

The same is true of the turf in the fields and upon the hills. The sward with us, even in the oldest meadows, will wear more or less a ragged, uneven aspect. The frost heaves it, the sun parches it; it is thin here and thick there, crabbed in one spot and fine and soft in another. Only by the frequent use of a heavy roller, copious waterings and top-dressings, can we produce sod that approaches in beauty even that of the elevated sheep ranges in England and Scotland.

The greater activity and abundance of the earth-worm, as disclosed by Darwin, probably has much to do with the smoothness and fatness of those fields when contrasted with our own. This little yet mighty engine is much less instrumental in leavening and leveling the soil in New England than in Old. The greater humidity of the mother-country, the deep clayey soil, its fattening for ages by human occupancy, the abundance of food, the milder climate, etc., are all favorable to the life and activity of the earth-worm. Indeed, according to Darwin, the gardener that has made England a garden is none other than this little obscure creature. It plows, drains, airs, pulverizes, fertilizes, and levels. It cannot transport rocks and stone, but it can bury them; it cannot remove the ancient walls and pavements, but it can undermine them and deposit its rich castings above them. On each acre of land, he says, "in many parts of England, a weight of more than ten tons of dry earth annually passes through their bodies and is brought to the surface." "When we behold a wide, turf-covered expanse," he further observes, "we should remember that its smoothness, on which so much of its beauty depends, is mainly due to all the inequalities having been slowly leveled by worms."

The small part which worms play in this direction in our landscape is, I am convinced, more than neutralized by our violent or disrupting climate; but England looks like the product of some such gentle, tireless, and beneficent agent. I have referred to that effect in the face of the landscape as if the soil had snowed down; it seems the snow came from the other direction, namely, from below, but was deposited with equal gentleness and uniformity.

The repose and equipoise of nature of which I have spoken appears in the fields

of grain no less than in the turf and foliage. One may see vast stretches of wheat, oats, barley, beans, etc., as uniform as the surface of a lake, every stalk of grain or bean the size and height of every other stalk. This, of course, means good husbandry; it means a mild, even-tempered nature back of it, also. Then the repose of the English landscape is enhanced, rather than marred, by the part man has played in it. How those old arched bridges rest above the placid streams; how easily they conduct the trim, perfect highways over them! Where the foot finds an easy way, the eye finds the same; where the body finds harmony, the mind finds harmony. Those ivy-covered walls and ruins, those finished fields, those rounded hedge-rows, those embowered cottages, and that gray, massive architecture, all contribute to the harmony and to the repose of the landscape. Perhaps in no other country are the grazing herds so much at ease. One's first impression, on seeing British fields in spring or summer, is that the cattle and sheep have all broken into the meadow and have not yet been discovered by the farmer; they have taken their fill, and are now reposing upon the grass or dreaming under the trees. But you presently perceive that it is all meadow or meadow-like, that there are no wild, weedy, or barren pastures about which the herds toil, but that they are in grass up to their eyes everywhere. Hence their contentment; hence another element of repose in the landscape.

The softness and humidity of the English

climate act in two ways in promoting that marvelous greenness of the land, namely, by growth and by decay. As the grass springs quickly, so its matured stalk or dry leaf decays quickly. No field growths are desiccated and preserved as with us; there are no dried stubble and seared leaves remaining over the winter to mar and obscure the verdancy of spring. Every dead thing is quickly converted back to vegetable mold. In the woods, in May, it is difficult to find any of the shed leaves of the previous autumn; in the fields and copses and along the highways, no stalk of weed or grass remains; while our wild, uplying pastures and mountain-tops always present a more or less brown and seared appearance from the dried and bleached stalks of the growth of the previous year, through which the fresh springing grass is scarcely visible. Where rain falls on nearly three hundred days in the year, as in the British islands, the conversion and reconversion of the mold into grass, and *vice versa*, take place very rapidly.

I have not been at all afraid of over-praising the beauty and the geniality of the face of the mother-country, and have not consciously exaggerated my impressions of any feature. 'Tis the old homestead; 'tis grandfather's and grandmother's land. Nature has been kind to it; man has been kind to it; 'tis the seat of the dominant race. The American feels at home there; the press of his foot to the soil, in Whitman's phrase, springs a hundred affections—affections and admirations he need not be ashamed to give free rein to.

*John Burroughs.*

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SEMITONES.

AH me, the subtle boundary between  
 What pleases and what pains! The difference  
 Between the word that thrills our every sense  
 With joy, and one which hurts, although it mean  
 No hurt! It is the things that are unseen,  
 Invisible, not things of violence,  
 For which the mightiest are without defense.  
 On kine most fair to see one may grow lean  
 With hunger. Many a snowy bread is doled  
 Which is far harder than the hardest stones.  
 'Tis but a narrow line divides the zones  
 Where suns are warm from those where suns are cold.  
 'Twixt harmonies divine as chords can hold  
 And torturing discords, lie but semitones!

*H. H.*