

## A PILGRIMAGE TO HOLY ISLAND.

BY ONE OF THE PILGRIMS.



ON the north coast of England there is a spot little frequented, because perhaps little known.

This is Bamboorough, a grand, secluded, solitary place, surrounded by the hills rich in Northumberland tradition and story on one side, and the ocean on the other, and far enough from the rattling of engines and from

unpoetical railways to satisfy the most ardent followers of the great art critics' theories.

A grey Norman castle stands over-looking the sea, and the village street straggles up to it on its landward side. Entering the village at one end, the visitor comes upon the parish churchyard, holding within its stone enclosures the grave of Grace Darling, which is surrounded by many other mementoes of lives lost on that treacherous coast—lives that had no Grace Darling near to bring succour and deliverance from the angry waters. Half-way down the village street is a little shop, containing most things which go to make up the necessities of life in a simple sea-side existence; and any one caring much about Grace Darling's history, after obtaining the permission of the kind lady who stands behind the counter, may mount the stairs, and see the room—ay, even the bed—where the girl, at the early age of twenty-six, ebbled out the life she had sacrificed to the rescue of a drowning crew.

In a pretty house on the other side of the village still dwells Grace Darling's elder sister—an old lady now of over seventy, who likes to talk of the days so long gone by, of her parents' life in the Longstone Light-house on the Farne Islands; and exhibits, with much pride, the presents and testimonials which showered in upon her heroic sister from high and low, from prince and peasant, after the wreck of the *Forfarshire* in 1838.

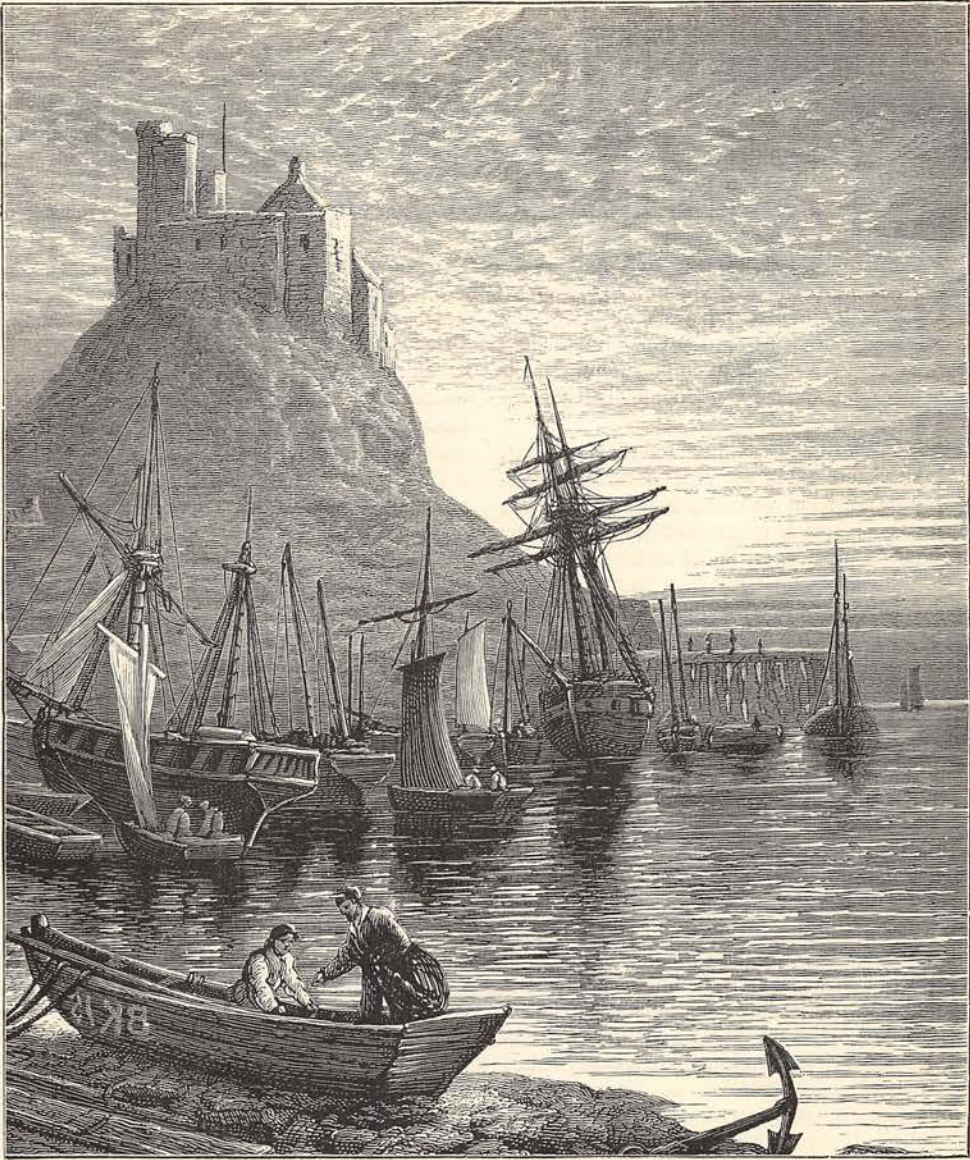
Grace Darling's name is inscribed on that banner which floats over our island, bidding those who dwell beneath it to look upward, and gather strength from the reminder of the golden deeds inscribed upon it, to fight a good fight while yet it lies in their power. The fishermen on the coast are prone to speak disparagingly of the village maiden's heroism, and say that the accounts of it are much exaggerated; but it is possible they are jealous of the fame that a woman has earned, especially as the quality she exercised is one of those that men claim as their particular property.

It was an autumn night when three travellers arrived at the little inn at Bamboorough, and by the light of a glorious harvest moon took an evening walk along the shore, watching the revolving lights from the light-houses on the Farne Islands, noting with special interest the one from the rock made historic by the Bamboorough girl's courage forty years ago. The sea-birds screamed wild cries as of human creatures in distress; the rocks looked unearthly and great in the moon-light; the sea, with its ceaseless roar, and wild monotonous break, lent a weird charm to the scene, and filled the hearts of the wanderers on the solitary shore with unutterable feelings of awe and wonder.

But the next day's sunshine dispelled any moon-light fancies. The sun shone out with all his autumn strength; the waves danced in his rays, when the three modern pilgrims set out on their pilgrimage to Holy Island. Like the monks of old, they bared their feet, and walked shoeless over the sand, and through the streams of water. One stream wider than the rest brought the party to a halt. With dismay they viewed the rapid current, the depth of water, and the distance from one side to the other; with still greater dismay they viewed the long jacks of sand they would have to traverse to avoid crossing the stream. At length two of the party summoned up courage, and plunged boldly into the water, but the strong current forced them to return. Nothing daunted, again they ventured, this time in company with the third and most timorous member of the pilgrim band; and though their experience much resembled the worthy Dr. Foster's, of Gloucester, they emerged without any very serious misadventure on the other side. Damped in body, but not in spirit, they gaily pursued their way, reaching, after several miles of journeying, the ferry-boat, by means of which the coast-guardsmen ferried them over to the island of their search.

There they found the ruins of the Norman abbey, built on the site of the wooden wicker church where St. Aidan, the monk from Iona, first planted the flag of Christianity. There they thought upon the life of the sainted Cuthbert, and in imagination saw him in his hermitage by the sea—now called Cuddie's Cove. Standing amongst the ruins, and looking out towards the sea, they almost saw the slow procession of chanting monks, bearing with them the body of their beloved master; and it did not require a great stretch of the imagination to fancy the torch-lights from the Farne Islands signalling the sad news to the brethren at Lindisfarne.

Waking from their reverie, the pilgrims passed through the church-yard, rich in records of those who had sunk "unknelled and uncoffined" into the depths, and then entered the little church. It was decorated for the harvest thanksgiving; and in addi-



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tion to the usual sheafs of corn, the simple-minded fisher-folk had hung herrings and nets upon the walls, as emblems of their thank-offering. It was a touching sight, especially with the known fact that the fisheries that year had barely yielded enough to keep the nets in repair, let alone anything to store away for the coming winter.

But the sun had signalled to the pilgrims to retrace their steps, and they were again ferried to the mainland, being borne to shore on a coast-guard's back. The return walk was wearying: the sand was soft, the tide was rapidly rushing in; the heavens,

before so bright and glad, had changed to gloom, and a high wind betokened storm.

The fordable stream of the morning had developed into a surging lake, and a man was waiting to row them over; then climbing the rocks—those rocks which have worked such fearful destruction to mariners and seafarers—worn and foot-sore, they reached their inn. But never will that day be effaced from their memories; and when things and places fade away into an indistinct maze, one of the pilgrims, at least, hopes that the pilgrimage to Holy Island may retain some feeling of individuality.

S. M. F.