

United States—with us, it is, as flour, more used for puddings, and whole for poultry, horses, and cattle, which thrive famously upon it, as it contains much nourishing oil.

In the old days when bread was dearer and scarcer than it is now, many charitable persons left money to be spent in annual gifts or “doles” of bread for the poor. The Biddenden Dole, for instance, was the legacy of the twin sisters Preston. They left a piece of land long known as the “bread-and-cheese land;” all the rents derived from which were to be

spent in bread and cheese, to be given to the poor. Three thousand of these “Biddenden cakes,” bearing the impress of the donors—who, tradition averred, grew fixed side by side—were to be flung from the parish church roof every Easter Sunday, and they might be scrambled for by all who came. It was also the custom to fling loaves, to be scrambled for, from other churches, on the Thursday after Easter—a very curious fashion, which no doubt arose from the old “*largesse*” of the rich to their less fortunate neighbours.

A GLIMPSE OF NORWAY.

BY C. F. GORDON-CUMMING.



NORWEGIAN PEASANTS.

W E M P T E D by a cordial invitation from most pleasant friends, who for several years have rented a river in Norway, there to enjoy first-class salmon-fishing, we started from England in the early summer, and reached Bergen ere the snows had altogether melted on the higher levels.

Our drive across country

to Christiania was not an unmingled delight, for, though the sharp wind blowing across the snow was keen and cutting, the hot glare skinned our faces, and we voted the solitary drive in little carioles, each carrying only one person, decidedly dull.

As the season advanced, we revelled in the abundance of exquisite wild flowers, especially the fields of lily of the valley, which grows in rank profusion throughout Southern Norway. Its blossom is larger than that of the English lily, and its perfume is heavenly. It grows in masses in the crevices of almost bare rock, and scents the whole air, mingling with the fragrance of ground-orchids of various sorts. There were also quantities of yellow violets and gay anemones, and a great variety of beautiful ferns. But most exquisite, and to our eyes most rare, was the carpet of delicate *Linea Borealis*, that most fairy-like tiny pink bell, hanging from its light hair-like stem: the darling of these northern regions, of which a few rare plants have colonised in Scottish fir-woods, and there flourish year after year, always on the same

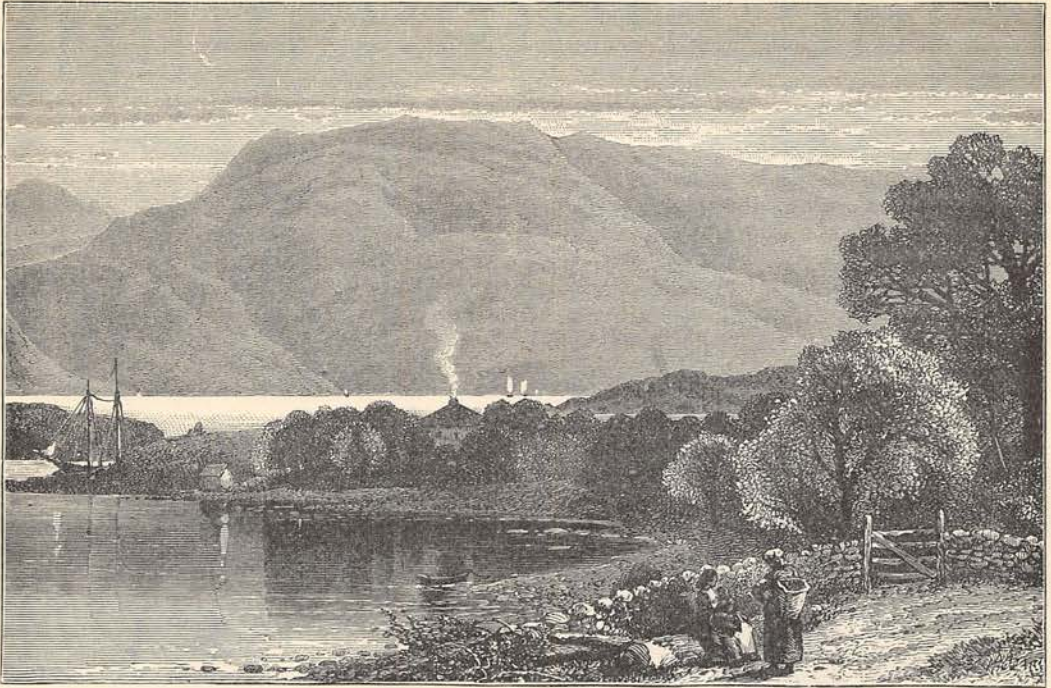
small patch of ground, never spreading, but happily never diminishing.

Early in July we made our way northward by fjord steamers and railway to Trondhjem, where we secured our passages in a coasting steamer which carried us north to Vefsen, which was the nearest point to our friends' fishing quarters. The two days' voyage was not unpleasant, and afforded us an opportunity of fraternising with some kindly Norwegians. The service of the table afforded us some amusement, each person being provided with a dozen little dishes containing various dainties—little bits of kippered salmon, a few sardines, slices of Bologna sausage, and divers other *entre-mets*.

At Vefsen we were met by our friends' boats, which took us twelve miles up the river, through very pretty, quiet scenery. The foot-path along the river was not inviting, being rough and swampy. The only road in the district where a wheeled conveyance could possibly travel is a short bit near the house; and the only vehicle which travels over it is a rough-and-ready cart of the simplest construction, being merely a platform on two wheels!

The river is very rapid and very blue—its waters exquisitely crystalline. It flows through fine fir-forest extending over a vast tract of country, beast-haunted. As yet these forests continue beautiful, but, alas! they are being rapidly felled, and that, too, in a manner which seemed to us wickedly wasteful, for, as the trees are felled in winter, it follows that they are cut on a level with the snow—that is, at least two feet above the ground. Shorn of their boughs, and reduced to mere prosaic logs, they are each branded with the name of their owner and thrown into the river, to find their own way sea-ward. Below the rapids they are collected and tied together so as to form rafts, and are then guided to their destination.

Leaving the boats, we ascended the river-bank by a steep zig-zag path, and soon were welcomed to our friends' fishing home, recently built by themselves, as they had hitherto lived in a little brick-floored Norwegian farmhouse. Now they rejoiced in a two-storeyed house, with a verandah at one end, built of wood, as all houses are in that part of the world.



THE STAVANGER FJORD.

They are built of roughly-squared wooden blocks, the interstices being well stuffed with moss to keep out the piercing cold of winter, and a house of a superior type is generally planked, both inside and out. In lieu of thatch or slates, it is customary to use the bark of the silvery birch, which has seven distinct skins. Three, or even four, of these can be removed without injury to the tree, the remaining skins sufficing to carry up the sap. The bark is taken off in large sheets, and the tree may be subjected to the flaying process every second year.

It seemed strange to learn that the excellent food provided by our hosts was almost all of foreign growth. Ducks and chickens were imported from Hull, and tinned meats from America. Vefsen, however, furnished bread, and flour and general groceries came from Trondhjem. Of course the river afforded a never-failing supply of excellent salmon, crisp and curdy, as only fish eaten on the spot, and almost at the moment of capture, can be. Milk was likewise abundant, and also rich cream; but it was strange indeed to learn that so poor is the rocky soil, and so precious to the peasants each little patch among the rocks which they can possibly cultivate, that they literally grow grass-crops on the thatch of all their houses and barns, and cut it periodically for fodder!

Speaking of the little fields, we were very much interested in hearing of the method adopted by the Norwegian farmers for drying their crops in harvest time. The wettest season does not greatly afflict them, so we thought the hint might be worth bestowing on the farmers in our own rainy isles.

When the fields are being reaped, carts laden with tall, strong poles follow in the wake of the reapers, and as fast as the sheaves are bound they are stuck on to a pole, which runs right through each sheaf, so as to spit it. First one is thus transfixed, the butt of the sheaf resting on the ground; then a second is pierced, and stuck on at right angles to the first; then a third and a fourth—till the pole carries as many as it can bear, the lowest sheaf resting on the ground, the highest raised some eight or ten feet in the air, which thus has free circulation, so that every breeze helps to dry the crop, and though rain may fall, it quickly drains off.

But as every tiny patch of ground is cultivated, no matter how inaccessible its situation, it stands to reason that a multitude of these can never be reached by the harvest cart; and to carry the sheaves on pack-ponies would be a slow toil, so the farmers have devised an exceedingly ingenious method of bringing home their crops, whether of hay or corn. They attach a strong wire to some projecting rock far up the steep hill-side and lead it down to the valley, and, by slinging each sheaf to the top of this wire, they run the whole crop down to the level ground, whence it is easily carried home.

Our hosts had established such friendly relations with their poorer neighbours, that we were always sure of a kind welcome in any cottage we chanced to pass in the course of our long walks; though the large, fierce-looking dogs are too vigilant watchers to allow any stranger to approach in peace, till the master or mistress, responding to their summons,

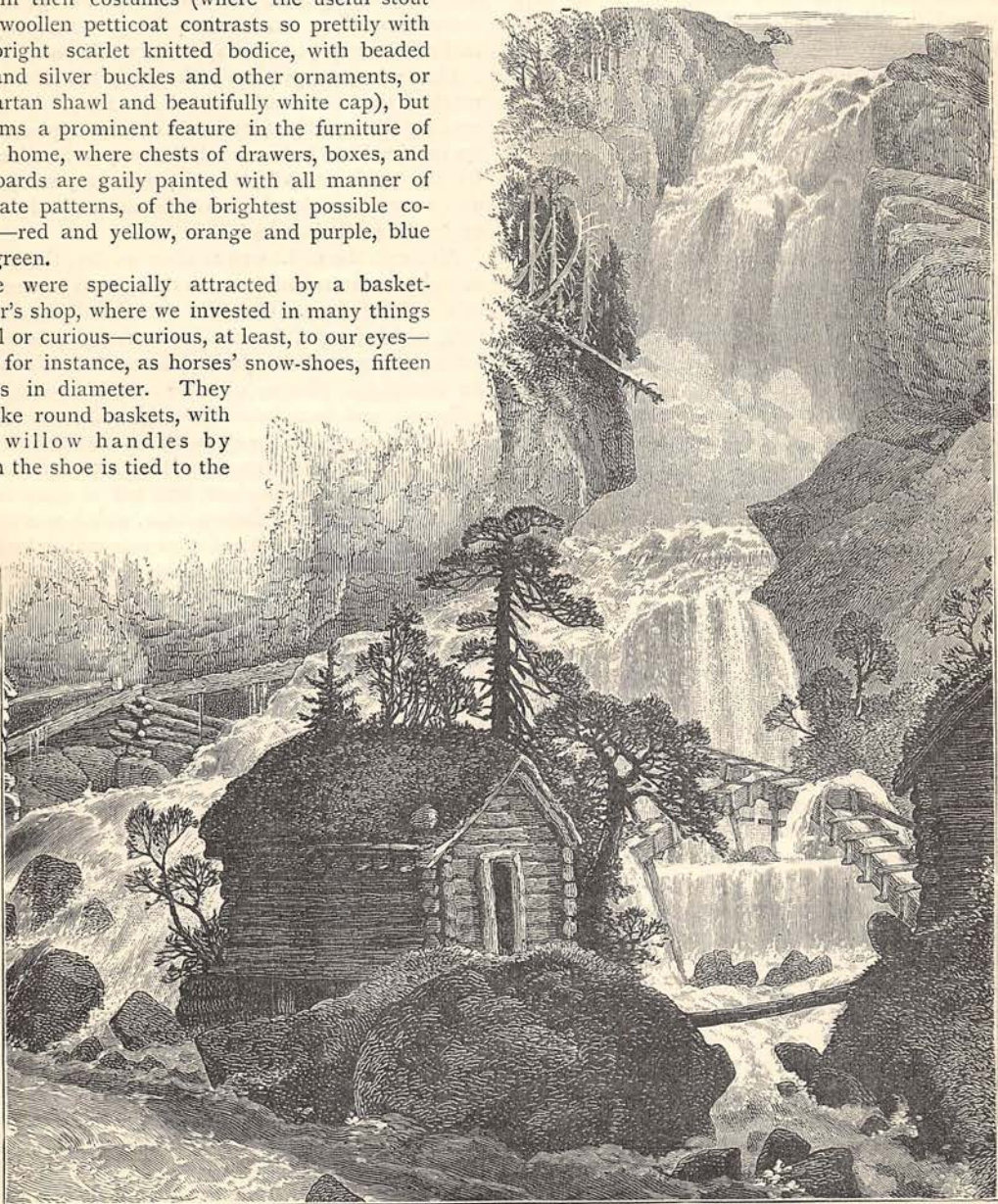
comes out to reassure them as to their respectability. They are something like overgrown Pomeranians, and are excellent sheep-dogs, but very unsatisfactory companions to sportsmen, as they point indiscriminately at every sort of living creature, whether bird or animal. However, there is no alternative between working with one of these or none at all, as the Norwegians will not allow the importation of foreign dogs, for fear, they say, of introducing hydrophobia.

Cerberus being pacified, we were invariably invited to enter, which, of course, curiosity prompted us to do; and thus we were introduced to some very picturesque household groups, enlivened by the gay colouring so dear to the Norse peasantry. It is shown not only in their costumes (where the useful stout blue woollen petticoat contrasts so prettily with the bright scarlet knitted bodice, with beaded belt and silver buckles and other ornaments, or the tartan shawl and beautifully white cap), but it forms a prominent feature in the furniture of every home, where chests of drawers, boxes, and cupboards are gaily painted with all manner of intricate patterns, of the brightest possible colours—red and yellow, orange and purple, blue and green.

We were specially attracted by a basket-maker's shop, where we invested in many things useful or curious—curious, at least, to our eyes—such, for instance, as horses' snow-shoes, fifteen inches in diameter. They are like round baskets, with four willow handles by which the shoe is tied to the

horse's leg by means of a wisp of hay or straw. These are worn on all four feet in winter. They are, however, only in use up in the north. We were also so fortunate as to obtain some curious old Apostle's Spoons, and some quaint silver ornaments, heart-shaped, surmounted with a cross, which had been the betrothal gifts of some ancestral pairs.

Speaking of betrothals, we had the good luck to witness a very interesting ceremonial—namely, a village wedding, when about fifty persons assembled, all in holiday costume—the women in bright-coloured petticoats and bodices with beautifully white chemisettes. They were a very pleasant-looking group—the



A NORWEGIAN WATERFALL.

men strong, well-knit fellows, but all alike fair-skinned, with flaxen hair and kind blue eyes. The bride was a demure young woman, somewhat overweighted with necklaces and bracelets (which we understood to be heirlooms), but more especially by an immense gilt crown running up in tall points to a height of about eight inches, and studded with many-coloured crystals. It is a most gorgeous headdress, and belongs to the village.

Every village is supposed to have one, which is hired for the occasion by the parents of the bride. But, like the plain ribbon or snood of the Scottish Highland maid, no Norwegian bride is entitled to wear this crown of honour unless her character is above suspicion; and this, unhappily, is so very exceptional, that the hiring of the crown is now considered almost invidious on the part of the few who may certainly claim it; so the custom is dying out, and we esteemed ourselves fortunate in having witnessed a nuptial ceremony in which this picturesque bridal decoration was worn.

There was no architectural beauty in the very plain, barn-like church, which had no pretence at decoration. The Lutheran service, which, of course, was conducted in Norwegian, seemed to us like that of the Scotch Presbyterian Church. All the men sat on one side and the women on the other, according to the usual custom. The parson (whose garb is a black gown, with a very large white fluted collar, encircling his throat like a Queen Elizabeth ruff) performed the simple service, in which a wedding-ring shaped like a double heart did duty in place of our plain circlet. He then ascended the pulpit and delivered a very long exhortation, which, being beyond our comprehension, was to us only suggestive of Longfellow's charming lines:—

"Long was the good man's sermon,
Yet it seemed not long to me,
For he spake of Ruth the beautiful,
And still I thought of thee."

There was one feature in the ceremony which we noted with especial interest, therein recognising a lingering trace of pre-Christian days. The pulpit stands in the centre of a large chancel, and, at a pause in the service, all the wedding-party walked solemnly thrice round it, *in sidewise procession*—a pretty survival of old Norse paganism.

We learnt, however, that here, as elsewhere, the work of the schoolmaster is fast driving out all such special characteristics, and that there are now few of the Norwegian peasants who cannot read and write. The educational department in the more remote districts is, however, delightfully primitive—being carried on by itinerant teachers, who travel from house to house, each in turn being required to feed him for so many days, and to provide a temporary schoolroom for the use of all the scholars who can be mustered in the district.

After a few days spent in exploring the various points of interest in the immediate neighbourhood, it was generally voted that we should make a further expedition to visit a party of Laplanders who had

encamped in the upper forest. In order to avoid the noonday heat, which was positively sickening, we started at 9 p.m., by broad daylight, for in these far northern latitudes there is practically no night in summer, though we must have travelled still further towards the Arctic zone ere we could actually have done homage to the midnight sun from any moderate elevation. Some of our party did indeed accomplish a most toilsome expedition to a high snowy ridge, at no very great distance from Vefsen, and were rewarded by a sight of the sun in his midnight glory. On the present occasion we had to be satisfied with a simpler excursion. So, after a cheery dinner, we set off—the ladies riding unshod ponies; the Norwegians, who acted as our guides, on foot; and the gentlemen sometimes riding, sometimes walking. One pony was told off to carry provisions for the whole party.

First we zig-zagged down the steep hill-side till we reached the river, and crossed the ferry. Then ascending the equally steep bank on the opposite side, we regained our former level, but only to lose it again, for the track was all up and down very steep hills, and sometimes—low be it whispered—we had to hold on by the ponies' necks!

Although the night was as clear as day, there was a strange, unnatural stillness, as though all nature were in a waking sleep. Only the occasional cry of some bird, which fancied itself a bird of night, broke the solemn silence of the dark pine-woods. We caught an occasional glimpse of a fox or a lynx—the latter yellowish and brindled. We might, had we been so fortunate, have met an elk, with fine, wide, palmated horns, of the same character as the moose of America. That good fortune, however, was not in store for us, neither did we see a brown bear, which was also on the cards, and was held out to us as a reason for keeping unbroken silence, as indeed we all felt inclined to do.

Towards midnight we reached a carpenter's house, and our hostess, who was not upheld by the novelty of the scene (which several years' residence had made familiar to her), announced that she was tired and would go no further. She did not awaken any one, but tied up her pony, and, finding a sledge in the carpenter's shop, she filled it with shavings, which lay thickly strewn around, and rolling herself up in her plaid, announced her intention of sleeping quietly in this novel cradle till the rest of the party returned; so there she slept in peace, till at early dawn the carpenter's family awoke, and marvelled much to find what guest they were harbouring unawares, and warm was the welcome accorded to her.

Meanwhile we proceeded on our steep ascent of several miles over very rough ground, till we reached the Lapp encampment—huts constructed of sticks and mud, with a covering of large sheets of silvery birch bark, and the fire in the middle, as in the huts of the Digger Indians of California, and the primitive (but now almost non-existent) bothies in the isles and Highlands of Scotland.

The Lapps seemed to consider the interior of their houses somewhat stuffy on a summer night, for they

were all lying in the open air, wrapped in their rugs of reindeer-skin—men, women, and children, and the old grandmother of all the Lapps. The men wear tight trousers and jackets of untanned leather, as do also the children, and the women have a sort of loose blouse of the same material, stopping above the knees; their legs being swathed in cloth, bound with long strips of leather.

They are a very unprepossessing race of quaint, elfish-looking little creatures, with straight, sandy-coloured hair, and small grey eyes. The men have stubby moustaches, suggestive of a retired tooth-brush. They are all undersized, the average height of the men being five feet, and the women four and a half. When the others had departed to seek the reindeer, we made friends with a woman who was by herself in a small grass hut, and who very proudly exhibited her new-born baby—a queer little creature,

with a yellow, leathery-looking face. The babies are strapped on to boards, and so carried on the maternal back, after the manner of the Indian papoose.

The crisp mountain air had sharpened our appetites, so with hearty good-will we proceeded to unpack the luncheon baskets, and very soon the little Lapp milk-maids brought us offerings of reindeer-milk in large bowls of birch-wood—an excellent addition to our feast.

Then we started homewards to retrace our steps over the difficult rocky path, through the thickets of feathery birch and the dark pine-forest. Only when here and there we passed little patches of sweet meadow grass, strewn with lovely flowers, we halted and allowed the ponies to snatch a delicious morsel while we gathered the bright blossoms; and so, laden with fragrant posies from these higher levels, we returned to the hospitable lodge, to the full enjoyment of a well-earned sleep.



LIVIA'S MISTAKE.

BY CATHARINE CHILDAK, AUTHOR OF "A MAID CALLED BARBARA," ETC.



It was an exquisite day in January—but then it was Rome!—a crisp little breeze, with just the faintest suspicion of frost in it, a flood of sunlight steeping everything in warmth and colour, beautiful buildings standing out sharply from a background of intensest blue—in short, a day in which it

was a pleasure to be alive. It was early, and the steps leading from the Piazza di Spagna to the Church of the Trinità were dotted about with groups of models, who stand there to be hired. They were full of fun and chatter, all thoroughly enjoying the sun-bath which Mother Nature was showering upon them. Presently a tall girl, simply dressed, began to ascend the steps.

"Good day, Livia," resounded on all sides as she approached.

She smiled and nodded, and was about to pass by.

"How proud we are!" cried one. "Now that we no longer go out as a model we can't stop to exchange a word."

"She is afraid of Tonio," jeered another.

"And Tonio is afraid of the tall Englishman."

"Poor Livia!—instead of earning money as easy as swallowing, she has to lug a great basket to the market! How nice it must be to be engaged to Antonio!"

The object of these scoffing remarks took no notice

at first, but even pin-pricks, if judiciously administered, can produce a painful wound; so Livia winced at last under the repeated taunts of her former comrades.

Until the last few weeks she had formed one of the merry group on the steps, dressed as a *contadina*. She had met with great success as a model—too much so for the peace of mind of a certain Antonio Lessi, who had been in love with her for years. He was a fine, handsome fellow, much sought after as a model himself, especially by sculptors, who valued his fine form. This Tonio had finally won the pretty girl whom he had wooed so long, and when she had consented to marry him, he had begged her, as a favour, not to go out as a model any more.

"See, Livieta mia," said the ardent young man: "I do not like these strangers to stare at you all day, and paint your picture so—and then so. I will earn enough for both. Stay at home like a good girl, and make the soup. That's what you will do when we are married. You will not sit as a model then."

"Of course not," said Livia heartily; "and I will do whatever you like, Tonio mio."

But that was weeks ago, and, the first flush and excitement over, Livia began to find it dull to stop at home and make the soup. The mother was always kind, but the brothers and sisters were tiresome, and the grandmother grumbled all day. It was far pleasanter on the steps, hearing the news and seeing the passers-by.