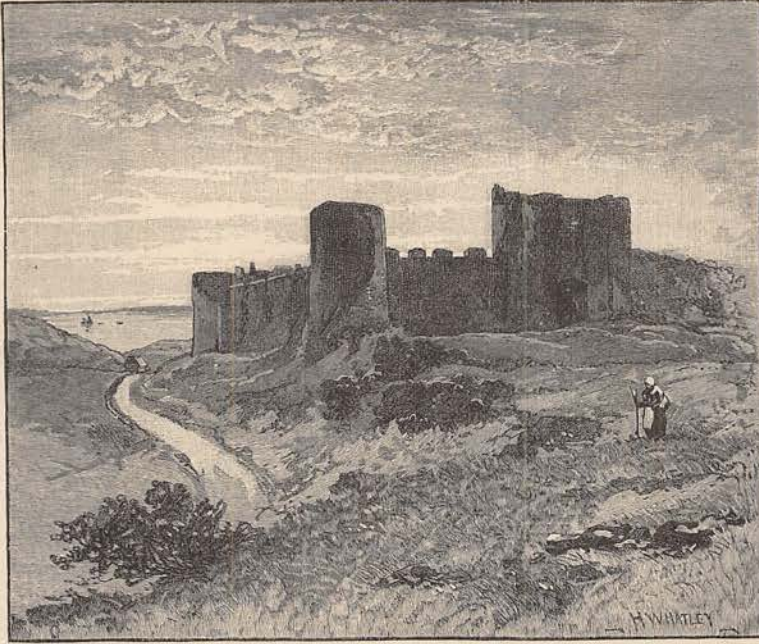


ROUND THE BRISTOL CHANNEL CIRCUIT.

BY JAMES BAKER, AUTHOR OF "JOHN WESTACOTT," ETC.



MANORBEER CASTLE, PEMBROKESHIRE.



EW playgrounds and pleasure-haunts for the "intelligent tourist" are continually being suggested; but to hint at the Bristol Channel as a playground full of deep interest and wondrous sights, will be to many, who perhaps have travelled far and wide in Europe and

in Oceana, but an offering of the "bare imagination of a feast" to those whose appetites are cloyed and surfeited with richer banquets. But where in Europe, at least, can such a combination of pleasures be found as the circuit of this Channel affords to the thoughtful traveller?

The circuit here referred to but embraces the shores of the Bristol Channel, from the mouths of the Avon and Usk to a line which shall be drawn from Hartland Point across Lundy Island to St. David's Head.

From the mouth of the Avon where the "yellow Severn sea" overwhelms the lesser Avon flood, the first spot that excites the interest of the traveller is that "haven under the hill" where in a quaint late Norman church lies the body of him whose love enriched our language with "In Memoriam." The absence of beauty in the sea at this little town of Clevedon, and the muddy and forlorn appearance of the black rocks that form its shores, make one feel surprised that such a spot should have inspired the "Break, break, break, on thy cold grey stones, oh, sea!"

and yet here also lived he who wrote the "Ancient Mariner." But the poor nature of the coast-line soon gives place to bolder headlands, as the Severn sea gradually loses that tint and body that made an Irish stewardess speak of it as "pay-soop," and becomes first of all a thin grey, and then slowly develops from a light grey-green into a deep blue; and so with the increase of beauty in the sea, the coast-line increases in grandeur.

The first rocks that give a hint of the mighty headlands that soon will rise from clear, pellucid waters, are the alabaster rocks at Blue Anchor; and here, too, the idyllic charm of the scenery begins to assert a sway that ever increases until the extreme point of our circuit is reached. But a short distance inland from this bay of Blue Anchor, a pleasant stroll betwixt the lanes, lies the Abbey of Cleeve amid the "Vale of Flowers." A lovely spot, and full of interest to historian and archæologist. Enough of the work is left to prove its former grandeur; the day-room with two central pillars, and the refectory with its fine carved roof, and figures on corbel stones, proving its importance in by-gone days.

At the end of Blue Anchor Bay, just a short stroll inland, rise the wooded heights of castle-crowned Dunster; and to those who dislike the mud shores and pretensions of Minehead and its uncomfortable hotels, Dunster is a haven of rest and beauty to fly to, and an additional spot of interest to those who

have already lingered over Cleeve Abbey ; for there are church, castle, and camps wherewith to occupy the mind.

But the coach does not run through Dunster, and the tourist who has landed at Watchet, if he would get back again into the old coaching days, must run on to Minehead and mount the four-in-hand that now will take him down the whole of the western shore. From the sea, the coast now exceeds in beauty the more widely known Kyles of Bute. Precipitous headlands of beautiful formation and of lovely hues jut out and shelter bays where no landing can be effected, and where the grass-grown heights tower up above grey and ruddy rocks some thousand or fifteen hundred feet. The sea now rolls in against these rocks in purest blue when the sky overhead is unclouded ; and the white foam leaps high on to the multi-coloured rocks, and increases their beauty as it leaves them glittering in the sunlight. No foot of man ever trod many of these precipitous heights ; but the green slopes are specked with feeding sheep that seem to cling to the hill-side.

This beauty can only be seen from the deck of yacht or steamer ; but the inland beauty through which the four-in-hand coach rolls on is equal to it, and added to by the human interest of the calm village life and the relics of former days.

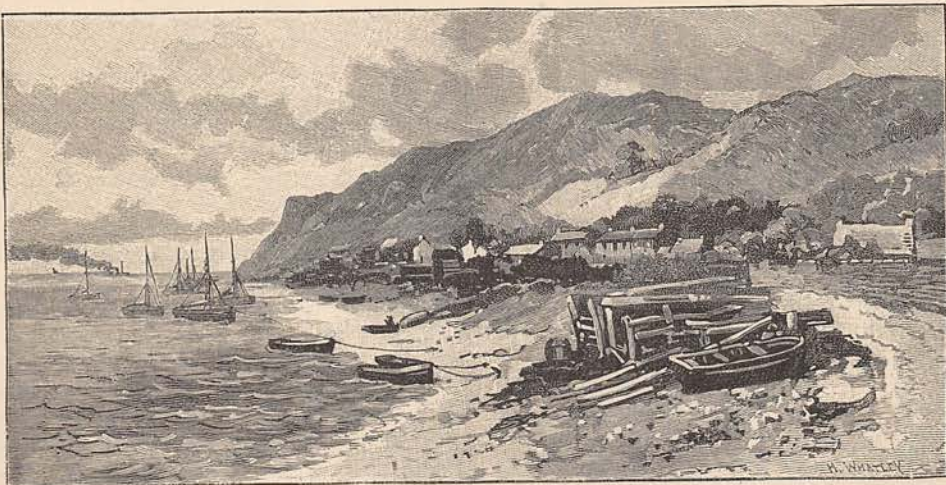
Even the *diligence* ride from, say, Airolo to Lugano does not surpass in variety and charm the coach ride from Minehead to Lynmouth ; and there is the spice of danger and excitement here present that adds to the pleasure of gaining safely valley or hill-top. The villages are the picture of quiet ease, cleanliness, and comfort. The shady avenues and wooded lanes alternate with the barren moorland, where no tree will grow, and where the Atlantic winds sweep over in unchecked fury. The churches will greatly interest the antiquarian, and the seeker of epitaphs may add many a quaint verse to his collection, as the one in Porlock Churchyard that runs exactly thus :—

“ He first departed, she for one day try'd
To live without him, lik'd it not and dy'd.”

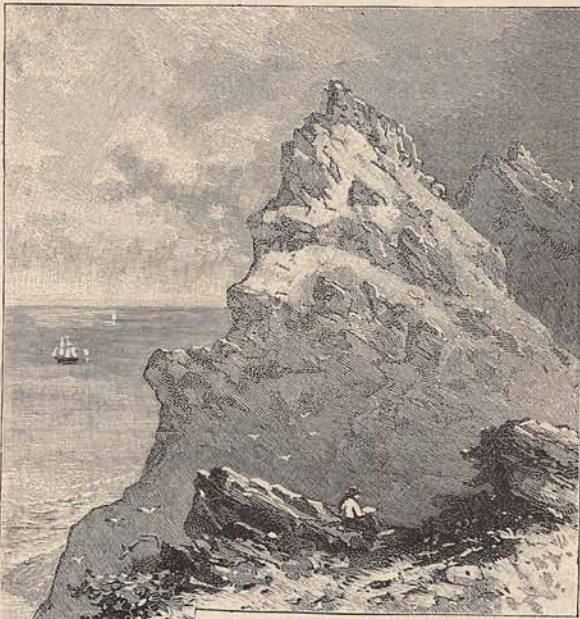
But this district is by no means wholly given up to the gentle and melancholy. The trampling of horses' hoofs quickly tells one that this is the centre of the stag-hunting district ; and Whyte Melville's “ Katerfelto ” comes into the head, and the tourist takes an interest in warrantable stags, and learns the meaning of “ brow, bray, and tray, and three on the top.” Dunkerry Beacon looms up behind Porlock, and onward Badgworthy Water is followed up to Oare Oak Hill : a name entirely awkward to cockney visitors, who deem the aspirate a troublesome consonant.

Few sensations are more tinged with excitement than sitting on the off side of a coach, and descending Countisbury Hill into Lynmouth. The sea lies some five hundred feet beneath, with nothing to stay the fall into it if but an off-wheel breaks down or the coach sways over.

But at the foot of the hill are idyllic joys innumerable : of rippling streams that leap and tumble over boulders and shallows ; for no more picturesque water bits can be discovered in the three kingdoms than the varied courses of the two Lys, where the fisherman and the artist will find ample work for their craft. But still the coach bears the traveller onwards, away from this paradise of hill and rock, sea and inland stream, where one can enjoy the mere fact of being alive in the soft southern air : onwards through a lovely country, past the one spot to be shunned by those who care not for bands, crowded promenades, and crammed hotels ; past Ilfracombe, again out into the uplands on to Barnstaple, and Bideford, and so down through Hobby Drive to famous Clovelly : this unique retreat of fisherfolk, who express their surprise where all the people come from day after day to see their lovely home. Not far from here is the ending point of the eastern shore of the Bristol Channel ; but between Clovelly and Hartland Point are some wondrous bits of coast scenery, and the churches of



THE BEACH AT THE MUMBLES.



CASTLE ROCK, LYNTON.

the district, and the camp of Clovelly Dykes and traces of other defences, will occupy many a pleasant day.

To cross from the eastern to the western shore of the Channel is a difficult matter. A smack may be obtained at Hartland perchance to get on to Lundy, and from there a stray steamer may call *en route* for Tenby; but the point in the line of Lundy, St. David's Head, can be reached only by the aid of a fishing-boat, or by doubling back from Tenby.

But, safely landed upon the extreme point of St. David's Head, how great is the change in scene, in interest, and in people! Here all is barren and savagely wild. No luxuriant foliage lends charm and beauty to valley and upland; scarcely a blade of grass grows upon the headland, round which surge and rush the fierce currents of the meeting waters of the north and western oceans. But if nature is less beautiful and wilder in her aspect, the human interest increases; for here, and around this headland, are traces, and no vague traces, of man back into prehistoric days; and at the village city of St. David's are glorious relics, and yet intact mighty monuments, of our Norman forefathers and their successors.

Along the eastern coast of the Channel, castles are by no means plenteous, but on its western shores they abound; and between St. David's and Tenby perhaps half a dozen Norman and Tudor castles may be visited, each of which would give enjoyment for a day to even the least interested in historic monuments. To name Pembroke or Carew, Manorbier or St. Roch, calls up memories of some of the finest military and domestic architecture to be met with in Britain; and

within this district, at a little village high up on the waters of Milford Haven, are a people whom the ethnologist will find an interesting study. Here, at Langum, are seen the women who wear the short, budy petticoats, the flat hats and lace head-dresses, that are met with in the streets of Antwerp. Living amongst a Welsh-speaking people, they only speak good English, and without even the peculiar accent that nearly all residing in the district soon acquire: of different mien and expression from their neighbours, and living and intermarrying but amongst their own people: descendants of Flemings, and Flemings, to this day in appearance and customs, though not in speech.

Although a great part of this district is poor and barren, yet natural beauties, especially along the coast, are in profusion. The coral-like rocks and worn pillars, haunted by thousands of sea-birds, and the marvellously beautiful caverns as at Lydstep, are, if anything, more enticing than the rich headlands and rocks of the opposite coast; and above these beauteous rocks the archaeologist will linger, and debate whether the numerous camps that speck the whole of the coast be Gaelic or British, Roman or Danish; and the Shakespearian student will haunt the caves from whence the sea has receded (perhaps for miles) and strive to prove which was the cave that is described in *Cymbeline*.

Onward from Tenby, north-eastward runs the land of Gower, the "little England below Wales," and here also are castles and churches to study, and again the peculiarity of an English-speaking people surrounded but untainted by a Welsh population; and in this district the churches, with their embattled and saddle-back towers, will be compared with those just left in Pembrokeshire. Out of Gowerland, making the picturesque district around the Mumbles a final rustic resting-place, the traveller leaves the land of romance and past ages, and plunges into this present age of steam, and iron furnaces, and coal.

Swansea and Merthyr, Cardiff and Newport will scarcely hold the tourist who has been loitering in wooded Devon, or amidst the prehistoric huts of St. David's Head; but at Newport, at the mouth of the Usk, where the Channel circuit ends, is Caerleon; and the sight of the earthworks there, over the swift but muddy Usk, will make him wish he had extended his journey from Hartland Point at least onward but a short distance to Tintagel by the western sea; that he might have embraced these two points in King Arthur's history in his journey.

Of runic crosses and submerged forests, or of all the wonders of the shore to be met with in this circuit, we have not spoken; but, perchance, enough has been said to prove that the traveller who is tied to Great Britain for his touring-time may make a not unsatisfactory journey in the named circuit of the Bristol

Channel. One thing he must bear with, and that is rough accommodation in the matter of steamboats; for in this western land they have not yet taken a

lesson from the Rhine or Clyde, or even Solent, in the management, cleanliness, speed, catering, or appointments of their steamers.



CLEVEDON CHURCH, SOMERSET.

A MAN'S THOUGHTS ABOUT WOMAN.

BY PROFESSOR J. STUART BLACKIE.

PART II.



CONFORMABLY to the delicacy of her frame, there is a beauty in the composition of a woman, a grace in her motions, a charm and a fascination peculiarly her own. This nature seems to have given her as a sort of compensation for her lack of strength and energy,

so that in her weakness, as Anacreon sings, she can conquer both fire and iron by the mere graciousness of her presence. Let her never forget this: and in all that she does, be assiduous to temper and to harmonise and to sweeten that society which she cannot always guide. Let her know also that by a gentle influence, indirectly applied at a convenient moment, she may secure greater victories in important social matters than by planting herself as an armed champion in the war. As personal beauty is her special dower from nature, so it is natural to expect that she should have a finer æsthetical instinct than the man, and that this should manifest itself in her habitual presentation and in the quality of her surroundings: she should delight in dress, in elegant articles of furniture, in tasteful decoration of all kinds, in flowers, in birds, and in everything, whether in life or nature, that appeals to a fine sense of the beautiful.

In a man's rough work, a very delicate appreciation of beauty, with its natural accompaniment of a horror for what is opposed to beauty, would in many cases rather be a hindrance: so, except in the special case of

the artist and the poet, nature has taken care in respect of the atmosphere in which he must move, to make him somewhat pachydermatous. Education and habit, of course, go far to strengthen this fine instinct in women; insomuch that a disorderly woman or a slut is justly as much an object of contempt as a coward is amongst men. The passion for dress and decoration in women is, of course, fostered by the admiration which their graces extort from the other sex; and, though there is a sense in which, as the poet has it, beauty when unadorned is adorned the most, in the general case elegant and tasteful, and sometimes even gorgeous, dress will perform the same service to a beautiful woman that a good frame does to a picture; and I for one should not feel inclined to have anything to do with a woman who had not the sense to know this. A magnificent picture always demands a somewhat costly frame; while, on the other hand, a plain woman, like a plain picture, though she should not affect a flaunting showiness in her apparel, will hardly fail to find a certain compensation for her meaner figure and features in a tasteful regard for her dress. Whether in reference to the desire to display themselves to advantage women are naturally more vain than men, is a question which I cannot answer; but the love of a spontaneous tribute of admiration from our fellows, which is principally concerned in vanity, seems to be natural to all creatures; and the only difference between the sexes in this regard will be that each sex will naturally seek to attract admiration, and to feed its vanity, where vanity is not altogether extinguished in subordination