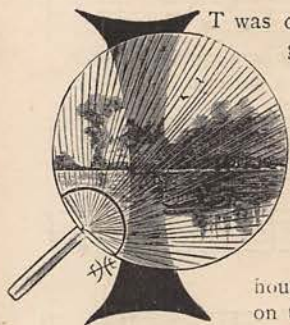


TORQUAY.

## A DEVON SKETCH.

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



T was on June 30th, in the year of grace 1522, that the Earl of Surrey, sailing with the English Fleet, "took a boat and went into Dartmouth"; and to his king he writes that he "never saw a goodlier haven after all our opinions; at the entry there is a blockhouse of stone with an old castle on the same side, and another old castle on the other side, beside another blockhouse and a chain ready to be laid. The town is not two arrows' shot hence, and the ships may lie two miles further into the haven. The only danger is if the enemy were to land at Torbay, only two miles from the place were the ships will ride, they might cast fire into them, or some fellow in the night might steal near them, and throw wild fire into them."

Although some three and a half centuries have

elapsed since these words were written, the description yet largely holds good; and whoever is privileged to stand upon a fair autumn day on the platform of the old castle at the back of the modern block-house, now mounted with modern cannon, will surely exclaim with the Earl of Surrey, a goodlier haven never have they seen.

There is a marvellous charm in the spot—the charm of beauty, of antiquity, of war, of sturdy deeds of valour, and the hallowed sanctity of prayer, for just beneath the castle rises the ancient tower of St. Petrox Church, surrounded by its calm little "God's acre."

The walk out to this spot from the town of Dartmouth is one of the pleasantest that any pedestrian could wish for, where fresh beauties at every turn lead him on, or make him linger in quiet enjoyment of the scene; and the walk is but a little one—a quarter of an hour is ample time for its accomplishment—and as soon as the rising ground lifts him above the narrow street of the town, he looks down upon peeps, between the foliage, of most lovely scenes.

As the turn in the road at Warfleet is gained, the

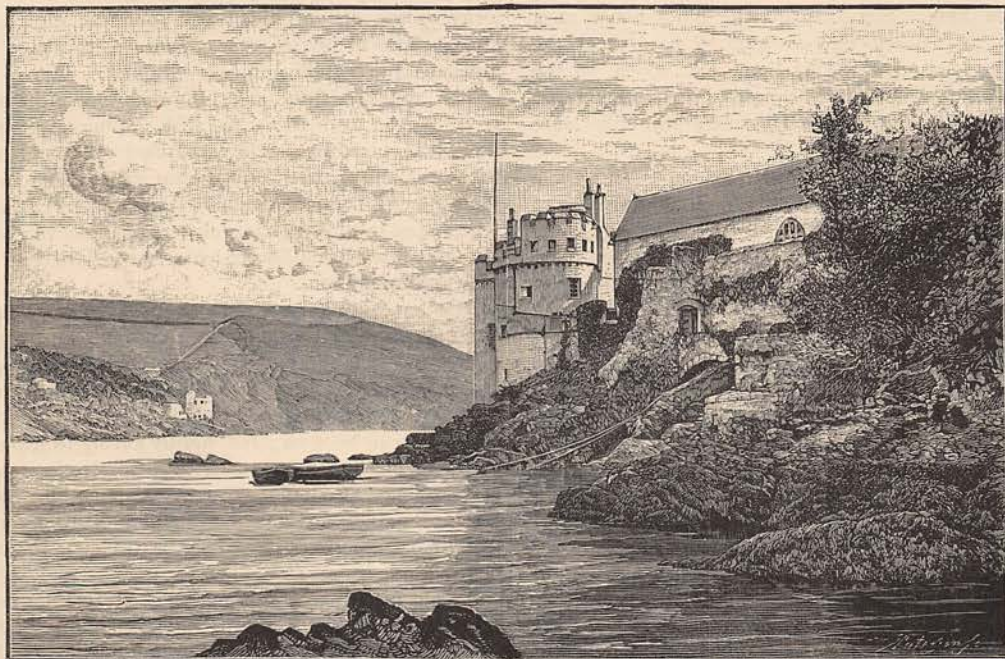
scene becomes yet more lovely, and the wanderer's eyes are filled with beauty until he enters the rich oak wood that leads him to the gate of the churchyard of St. Petrox. The church has, unfortunately, been "restored" out of all its antiquity, and on first entering a sense of disappointment comes over one at the new and barren, thin, modern appearance of its walls and windows; but there are one or two relics left of ages when soul was devoted to religious art, and these objects will repay one for some time given to their study. The font is a rounded basin mounted upon an early rounded pedestal, and is ornamented with an excellent foliage and arabesque design. The church is said to date from the fifth century, and this font to be of the same period; be that as it may, it is a good piece of work.

At the east end of the church are three brasses, not very early, but in good preservation. One to the wife of Plomleigh has two quaint little brasses at its feet, with portraits of her four daughters and three sons, each with joined and uplifted hands. Another brass to Mrs. Dorothy Roves, dated 1617, is an excellent portrait of a well-featured, somewhat stern dame in Marie Stuart bonnet, the exact shape of the caps now worn by the peasantry in the neighbourhood of Poitiers, and being adopted by our own countrywomen. The open stomacher and ruffles of this good dame are well delineated, and the brass is a good picture of a well-to-do lady of that date. The third brass is peculiarly interesting for its quaint and lengthy epitaph. It is to a certain John Roope Marchant, and his epitaph runs thus:—

"'Twas not a winded nor a withered Face,  
Nor long gray Hares, nor dimnes in the eyes,  
Nor feble limbs, nor uncouth trembling pace,  
Presadg his death that here intombd lies.  
His tyme was come, his Maker was not Bovnde  
To let him live till all these markes were fovnde;  
His tyme was come; that time he did imbrace  
With sence and feelinge, with a joyfvll harte,  
As his best passage to a better place,  
Where all his cares are ended and his smarte.  
Th'is Roope was blest that Trvsted in God alone,  
He lives twoe lives where others live but one."

A philosophical and religious stanza that gives matter for thought, as one quits the church and passes through the humbler tombs that dot the little churchyard that lies on the slope of the hillside, capped by the old works of the castle above, and defended by the new works of the fort below.

From a seat facing the sunny south, beneath the shelter of the picturesque embattled tower, is a charming view. The land-locked bay with its varied foliage; on the opposite shore the pretty grey ruins of Kingswear Castle, hardly distinguishable from the grey rock on which they stand; out to seaward some twenty to thirty sail are in sight; away to the right rises a high hill, rich in colour, the green sward brilliant between the rich autumn foliage, the brown new-turned earth shading off with the lighter brown of the fading bracken. A white-sailed schooner is standing in full sail for the harbour, her sails are gently filled with the soft breeze; but has she way enough on her to carry her past the bar? Onward she comes, a lovely sight; but as she gains the lee of the southern sheltering hill, she loses the wind, the current



DARTMOUTH CASTLE. (From a Photograph by Messrs. Frith and Co., Reigate.)

overpowers her quickly-drooping sails, she swings round helpless to the tide, and in a few minutes her stern is upon a hidden rock-reef, and were the sea other than but as a summer lake, she would be in imminent danger. Two boats put out from the harbour and soon get her off the rocks, but the sight as we watch it tells of the danger in past days, when steam was not, and when this harbour was the great port for our English Fleet.

Many a goodly line of sail has put in over this bar in rough and fair weather, and frequent entries in State papers prove the importance of the port. Back into the twelfth century it was a noted port, when Liverpool and Manchester were marshland and forest, and its revenues are frequently referred to. In June, 1509, a certain Walter Hende, fletcher, is appointed "To be keeper during pleasure of the arrows in the Tower of London, with fees from the Customs of Exeter and Dartmouth;" but this does by no means imply that Walter Hende was lucky enough to receive the whole of these fees, as continual entries occur wherein persons are to be paid from Dartmouth fees; one being that Robert Brikenden be paid "12d. a day for himself, and 6d. a day for his clerk"—the said clerk being probably better off with his six pennies than a modern one would be with sixty degenerate pennies of Victoria's reign.

Just to the right of the modern block-house is a lovely little cove, guarded by round rock-pillars on either side, rich with foliage, and softened with moss, with the delicate green sea between them; above us on a slope is a bit of the old castle wall, some six feet thick, and the ruins of a round tower, on the top of which, half hidden by luxuriant ivy, is a seat from whence a wider view both seaward and riverward is to be had. Just beneath the block-house, on a rock, a ring is left that is said to have held the chain that defended the harbour. A winch in the fort wound up this chain in time of danger, or lowered it in time of peace, when all was safe and ships were entering the port.

On the opposite shore is a picturesque bit of square ruin with a tree growing in its centre, the remains of Gomerock castle; and just beneath, on a grey slope of rock, is a spot of green turf that is spoken of as the "Unknown's Grave." Some former earth pilgrim has had this spot allotted to him for his last resting-place, and surely a sweet spot it is; no view of vaunted Rhine can surpass it in idyllic beauty, shut in above Kingswear Castle as it is by a hill that is now lovely with the varied tints of heath, and gorse, and bracken.

Let him who would enjoy a glorious walk take boat, and cross over to that heather-clad hill, and skirt the coast to the fishing village of Brixham; and then on over the high downs, descending into the quickly-risen modern watering-place of Paignton, where, for him who looks beyond modern piers and sea promenades, there is much of interest and antiquity, and from whence a little steam-launch will quickly run him across to the terraced height of Torquay.

The rounded bight of Torbay has frequently been compared with that of Naples; but as one is running across from Paignton, looking up at the dotted houses and intermingling trees rising group above group, the entrance into Genoa is forcibly brought to the mind. The great beauty of Torquay lies in its luxuriant foliage, hidden away amidst which are its pleasant villas and terraced houses. The town itself is quickly seen; in fact, one *coup-d'œil* from the boat, as we approach the quay-head, takes most of it in: the Strand stretching on into Union Street, the wide sweep of the bay, round which runs the road along which those who enter Torquay by rail approach the town—and few entrances to any town can compare with this drive from station to hotel—but a little morning's walk and row will best give an idea of what constitutes the great charm of Torquay and its surroundings.

Starting from our hotel on a bright morning in late October, we took a turn out on to the pier-head to watch a fleet of brown-sailed fishing-boats that were just coming into the harbour, and to linger for awhile over the lines of a yacht or two that lay at anchor beside the lifeboat, that was already launched and floating at her winter's berth, ready for any life-saving errand; then, turning up past the baths, we quickly climbed the hill above them, and unheeding the various signs that directed us to Daddy Hole Plain, Kent's Cavern, and Anstey's Cove, made our way straight onwards for the village of Babbicombe. On every hand the houses standing in their own pleasant lawns, and nearly hid by trees yet full of leaf, spoke of comfort, luxury, and calm; but ere long the picturesque villas were left behind, and open country gained, with rich pasture and arable land stretching away to the distant hills; and soon the dull, dusty, straight line of houses that constitutes the very ugly entrance into Babbicombe was reached.

The red sandstone cliffs jut out above the white bays, capped and alternated with sloping green meadows, on which are thickly sprinkled groups of trees, with here and there a country-seat half hidden amidst their foliage. Immediately beneath, grey and red headlands close in the still, clear waters of the cove; whilst far away stretches a line of coast most varied in contour and in colour.

The morning mist has hardly yet cleared, but a coastguardsmen, who is running up a flag on the mast that stands on the high point of the Downs, assures us one can see to Portland on a fine day. At present only the red headlands and little bays as far as Exmouth can be seen; but, hardly caring to leave the view, we just for the moment turn our backs upon it, and descend the shady, steep road, down into Babbicombe Bay, half envying the inhabitants of the terrace (that faces the Downs), who always have this view before them.

An old fisherman shows us the way down the hill to the little cove, and surely it would be impossible to find a spot more suggestive of calm and peace. Four or five white and yellow thatched cottages look out into the calm little bay, where a boat or two is hauled

up on the beach ; high up on this are some solid timber capstan-like posts, round which the warps of the boats are wound.

We bargained with our old boatman to lend us a boat to pull round to Anstey's Cove. Only too glad was he in this late autumn time to let a boat but for an hour, and we were soon out upon the clear, glassy water, with just a suspicion of a groundswell coming in, telling of heavier seas to the westward.

This little row gave us a good peep at the rocks that guard Anstey's Cove, and form so picturesque a sight from the land ; but we were disappointed to find that their form was owing to the quarrying that was being carried on around them.

We soon pulled to the little cove, and climbing the hill amid the thickly-laden blackberry brambles, stood on the height, and looked again at the line of coast, that was now free from the morning mists. The white

chalk cliffs by Beer were now in sight, and the whole coast far on towards Portland.

Our way back into Torquay lay through a pleasant hedged road in a deep valley—along the heights of which a new road has lately been cut—a perfectly inland road at first, but ere long the whole range of Torbay bursts on the view ; and, as we reached the shore at Isham Manor, a fleet of fishing-boats was standing out to sea off Berry Head. The road now led along by the shore, the lapping music of the waves succeeding to the inland song of singing birds. Up the hill we went, on past the road that again invited us to Daddy Hole Plain, and, in a short space of time, we were descending the hill into the busier if less romantic part of Torquay. This walk gave us a glimpse only of the charms of this southern watering-spot, even as this sketch is but a tiny item of all that might be written upon the glories, and beauty, and history of idyllic Devon.

---



---

FOURTEEN.

---

**W**HAT ! five feet six ? How fast Time flies !  
Nor stays to dine or sup.

You came but yesterday, dear Fred,  
And, lo ! you're quite grown up.  
Oh, roaming Greybeard, with the scythe,  
Have you no spark of ruth,  
That, not content with plaguing age,  
You dog defenceless youth ?

Our little boy—our *little* boy !  
Oh, gradual change unblest !  
Into what land, pray, has he gone,  
Where futile seems all quest ?  
How shall we call you ? For to-day  
One looks at you to see  
Only a someone who just was,  
And someone yet to be.

In jacket-trim no more you hie ;  
A cap is gear that's past.  
You criticise, with anxious eye,  
The shoemaker's best last.  
Oh, shapely knickerbockered legs,  
That bicycle bestrode !  
I look at these with awe : they're decked  
In trousers, *à la mode* !

A dog-eared Cæsar haunts your dreams ;  
Your tailor's quite your chum.  
You wish your arms were not so long,  
Your fingers not all thumb.

Your voice has "caught the mannish crack,"  
Where high and low notes clash :  
While—just come here ; great goodness ! yes,  
The boy has—a *moustache* !

An introduction is a trial ;  
An evening call, much more.  
You'd like a Conversation Guide ;  
Of small talk have small store.  
Yet you have noticed Belle's grey eyes,  
And Cora's rippling curls,  
And somehow suddenly surmise  
There is a race called—girls !

But, oh ! what idle, scribbling friend,  
Or graver seer, shall breathe  
Of those dim outlooks—mist and dream—  
Where new-born fancies wreath  
And paint the future ?—day by day  
More riddle to thy breast—  
With questions only half made known,  
And answers not half guessed.

Ah, Fred ! dear fellow, not our hands  
Would check thee in that march  
Each mortal makes. Thou couldst not stand  
Long in the gateway arch.  
Up with your banner, boy friend mine !  
Step forward with good grace :  
Fortune's your friend ! She told me so  
The day she eyed your face.

EDWARD IRENÆUS STEVENSON.

---