

stamped leather. This art is very easy, especially to those who understand wood-carving; it is also most durable as it lasts for years, and so many useful articles can be made in it. I was afraid of having my drawing-room too light, so I covered the backs and seats of some black ebonised chairs with light oak-colour leather, on which I had stamped or moulded a pattern. I then painted the pattern with Indian ink, and covered it with three coats of ebonising varnish. The effect was very nice; and I covered an old arm-chair with leather treated in the same way.

Two little chairs make bright spots of colour in the room, for I have stained the raised-up leather pattern in red, and blue and gold.

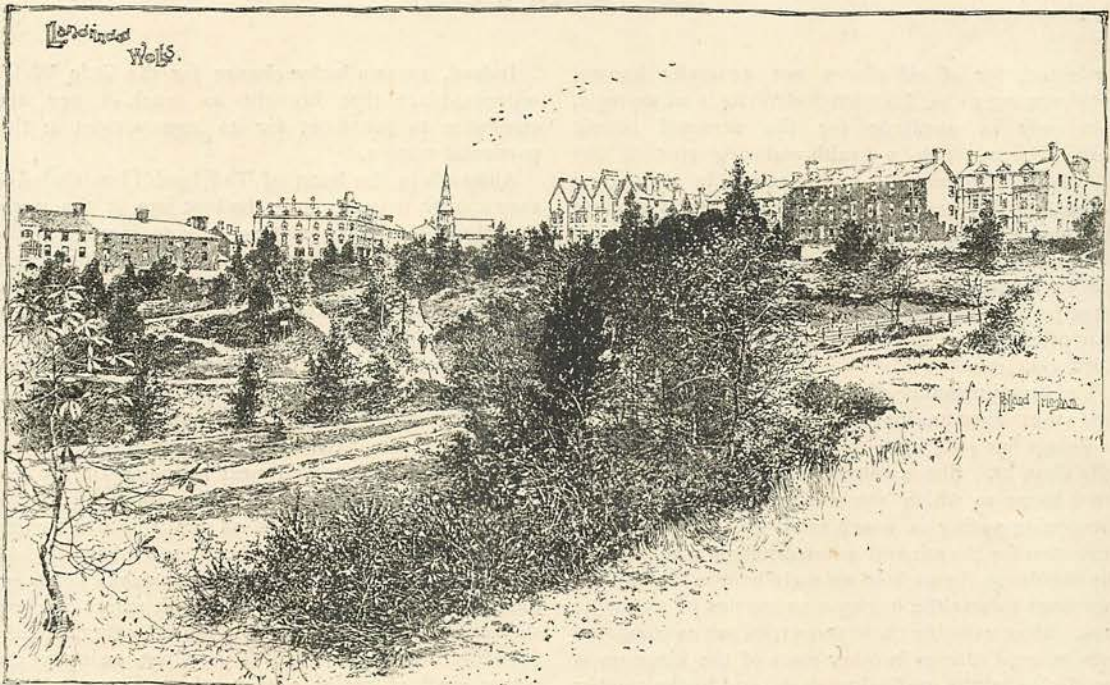
One little table I stained with green stain. This I like much better than paint, as all the grain of the wood shows through, and the stain simply becomes part of it; but it requires a great deal of care, as it dries directly, and unless a soft brush is used, and used very quickly, it will dry in lines. I found three coats necessary for my table, so I cannot say it

was a cheap stain, though a highly ornamental one. We worked very hard; we made an awful mess in the way of wood-shavings; and we talked—oh, how we did talk, to be sure! Our engagement had not been a bed of roses. We had had more quarrels than most people, and we spent a great deal of time in talking them over. Susan was sure they were all my fault, and I knew they were entirely hers.

In our engagement days we had repented and apologised—almost with tears—one to the other; but, married, we found that those apologies meant nothing. We were neither of us sorry, but we could afford to laugh now, and we did; and if Susan got at all vehement she cut herself with her carving tool, and had to attend to her business.

It was all the fun in the world, and we were really sorry when the day came when our things were all arranged, and the old charwoman gave place to strange, awe-inspiring servants, and our door-knocker began to work, our friends trooped in, and Mr. and Mrs. Jack Smith began the world.

"THE WELL IN THE CUCKOO'S GROVE."



LLANDRINDOD WELLS.
(From a photograph by Hudson.)

"**W**HERE shall I go for a change?" I asked myself this spring, for my whole system seemed out of tone and wanted bracing up and renovating after a particularly vicious attack of that uncompromising enemy "la Grippe." Where should I go? I was not long

in deciding. A certain picturesque little spot in wild Wales rose up before my eyes, and I had good reason to remember it, for only two years ago I was there, breathing its pure air, and drinking of its famous mineral waters during a prolonged visit of several months. Famous, but by no means



THE LAKE, LLANDRINDOD.
(From a photograph by Hudson.)

far-famed, for of all places not generally known, yet deserving to be, Llandrindod-Wells is an example. Not only in gratitude for the personal benefit derived from such a health-restoring spot is one induced to recommend it to others, but in sheer good nature towards one's fellow-creatures. It is a place that ought to be known, both for its own good and the good of the public; and many a sufferer, especially the victim to gout or rheumatism, who has sought relief in vain elsewhere may be thankful for the hint that prompts him to pay a visit to the "Well in the Cuckoo's Grove."

The literal meaning of the old Welsh name is of the past: the cuckoo has long since deserted the grove itself, and sings her song instead from the beautifully wooded hills close by. She is a shy bird, and the once sequestered haunt to which she was wont to return in each succeeding spring is now a busy spot—the centre of attraction for the mineral water-drinkers, who flock to the old Pump-Room from an early hour in the summer mornings to test the hygienic properties of its magic taps. How valuable those properties are as compared with mineral springs in other parts of the kingdom is testified to by the medical analysis, and by the number of "hopeless cases" who have "taken up their beds and walked" out of the place.

And what a fine handsome hotel has sprung from the foundations of the old "Pump-House"—formerly nothing but a tumble-down farm—now a palatial mansion, beautifully furnished, with every modern improvement, and surrounded by well-laid-out pleasure-grounds, tennis courts and bowling-greens, all giving evidence of unstinted outlay.

Indeed, it was a lucky chance for the little Welsh watering-place that brought so much money and enterprise to the front for its improvement in this particular respect.

Although in the heart of Taffyland Llandrindod is easy enough to get at since the best line in the world runs through it, and you have only to jump into the mid-day express from Euston to find yourself amongst the mountains by sunset, in time for a "wash and brush up" before dinner at 7.30. Such was my case on arriving for my renewed visit, and though I found the place rather cold at this early season (for it stands 700 feet above sea-level) yet the air has not that dagger-point piercingness which seems to greet you at every street corner of our east wind-beleaguered metropolis.

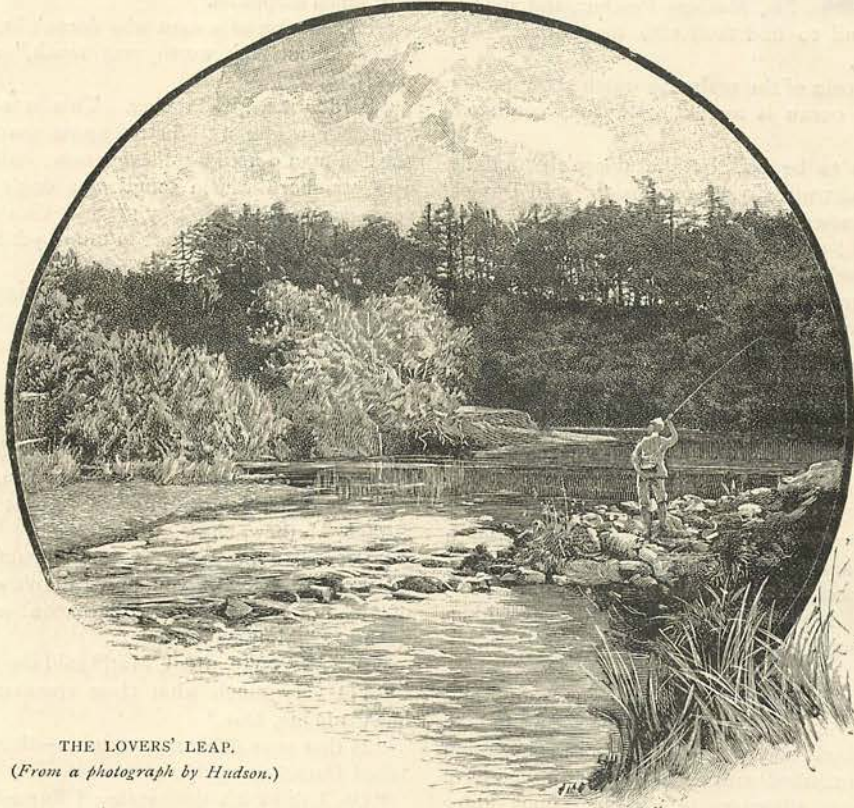
When I rose at seven next morning for my prescribed course of sulphur and saline, and took a constitutional climb afterwards on the hills overlooking the pretty coot-haunted lake, I saw that Radnor Forest on the one hand and the Breconshire peaks on the other were no longer covered with ridges of snow, showing winter lingering in the lap of spring, as they generally are at this time of year, but, owing to the recent spell of genial sunshine, had almost assumed their summer aspect. And all around there were other signs in plenty of the softer season—in the budding verdure—in the air—in the presence of the birds themselves. I hear a wild plaintive note high up in the sky—a familiar note to me—the voice of my old friends the curlews, of whom I presently discern a pair wheeling gracefully down towards the hill-tops. Then at my feet as I walk along over the dead heather and withered peat-grass

rise the green plovers—also in pairs—flapping and scolding around my head and uttering their mournful cries with variations, something like the screaming of a soft quill pen at intervals. And scattered about are other evidences of spring in the brave little Welsh lambs just beginning their early gambols.

The long merciless winter, which had kept back everything in the shape of vegetation, and caused floral nature up to a fortnight ago to be all behind her time, has given way at last to the balmy breath of

the old grey heron fishing sedately from a rock in the centre of the stream, who sinks his dignity on catching sight of me and flaps hurriedly away, keeping along the course of the river till he finds another rock to suit him further on. At the next bend a mallard rises with a nervous “quack! quack!” followed by his wife, who flies round and round in a wide circle overhead, telling me, what I have little difficulty in guessing, that she has made her nest somewhere hereabouts.

Ha! what is that lying on the shingle over there?



THE LOVERS' LEAP.
(From a photograph by Hudson.)

spring, with welcome results as I observe in passing through the woods.

On coming out of the lightly-clad woods, whose green-growing branches are now musical with the chirp and twitter and rapturous song of the love-stricken birds, and cresting the next breezy hill, I catch sight of another old friend in the distance, the winding Ithon, whose waters are gleaming in the early morning sun, as the river twists and turns in its serpent-like course through the valley. I cannot resist old associations, and in another half-hour have dropped down from the hills and am walking once more along the banks of that wild pretty river in which I have taken so many pleasant swims, throughout both the summer and the winter months. At every turn I see something to remind me of my former visits—that bubbling rapid so favoured by the trout—the still deep salmon-pool beyond, pretty sure “holt” for some twenty-pounder—the little water-ousels flitting from boulder to boulder—

Pah! I thought so! the carcase of a salmon—a murdered salmon—not spared by some Welsh miscreant, be it understood—no, or the best part would not be left to bleach on the river-shore—but killed by another sort of salmon-poacher—as confirmed a poacher on four legs as ever crossed a pool—who, let us hope, may pay the penalty of his depredations by and by when Major Hill brings his otter hounds this way.

Presently I come in sight of “The Lovers’ Leap” beyond a bank of steep rocks which pulls me up in my walk by the water’s edge, and wending my way through the Rock-House Park Grounds I return to the “Pump” by 9.30, and discuss a well-earned breakfast with an appetite such as one seldom knows in Piccadilly.

Already I feel another man; but it is not due to the Welsh waters (though they may help to effect the cure) but to the pure air and change of habits, which contribute more than anything else towards the setting up of a London-racked constitution.

T. A. T.