

HOME READERS IN VACATION.

BY THE MASTER OF DOWNING COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.



RYDAL WATER AND BOAT-HOUSE.

(From a photograph by Poulton & Son, Lee, S.E.)

LAST year's summer assemblies of the National Home Reading Union broke up on Saturday, July 2nd. Would the public, despite the absorbing interests of the General Election, gather at Windermere and Weston, abjure fashions and flirting, and take for its holiday the intellectual feast which the National Home

Reading Union annually provides? Even our friends were doubtful; the enemy indulged in sarcasm. Events proved that the charms of sea and lake are best understood when mind as well as muscle are in motion: that they are doubly appreciated when studied under competent guidance: that their exploration in congenial company is most sure to reveal their worth.

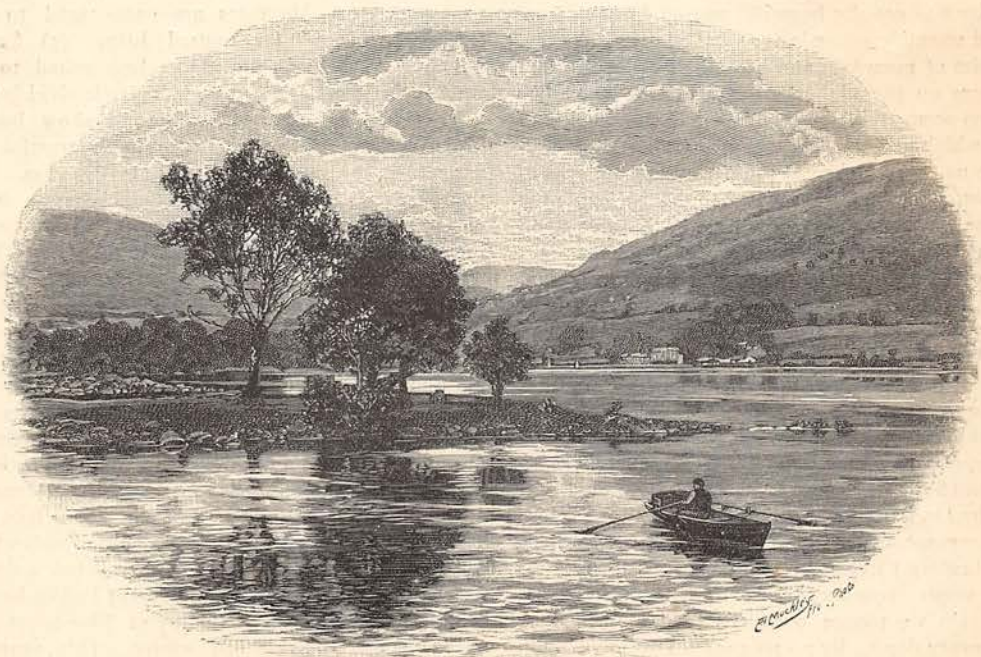
Both meetings were successful beyond the antici-

pation of their promoters. At Weston-super-Mare our members collected by hundreds, filling the hall to its utmost corners. The programme of this meeting was the fuller and more ambitious. Its fame travelled farther. Owing, however, to the unavoidable coincidence of the meetings and the necessity for the presence of all our staff at Weston, it seemed desirable that I, as chairman of the Executive Committee, should take charge of the smaller meeting at Bowness-on-Windermere, and therefore I propose to give a short sketch of this meeting only.

The place was admirably adapted for our purpose. An excellent Hydropathic Establishment, at which some sixty of our members stayed, is situate on high ground immediately above the Institute, with its large lecture-room and reading-room, which we had secured for the use of our members. A few minutes' walk took us to the steamboat pier. Boats and coaches could carry us in any numbers to the points about which our interest centred.

Our holiday was to last for four full and two half days. Many of our members had Sunday work; they must have time to reach us on the Monday and to return to their homes on Saturday: in those cases, at any rate, in which their homes were within a half day's journey. Some came from Ireland, others from Scotland or Wales, from Devonshire or Essex, and could only reach us at the cost of a whole day's travelling.

About one hundred and twenty of our own members



HEAD OF WINDERMERE, FROM BEALBY PARK.

(From a photograph by Poulton & Son, Lee, S.E.)



BOWNESS, FROM BELLE ISLAND.

(From a photograph by Poulton & Son, Lee, S.E.)

assembled, and these, being joined by residents in the district, made a party of one hundred and eighty. For the time being a small university was established on the shores of Windermere. Would that Oxford and Cambridge had equally beautiful surroundings! Lectures and scientific excursions absorbed the whole day. The glories of mountain and lake, the freshness of the atmosphere on the higher ground towards which our excursions seemed inevitably to tend, the wealth of interest which every rock, every copse and bog, presented to us as we looked at them through the eyes of our guides, whom nothing seemed to escape, made the long June days too short to gather the harvest upon which we were to feed for many months to come.

But, first of all: who are the Home Reading Union, and why do they assemble in holiday resorts? There may be people who live in ignorance of the provision for intellectual enjoyment which such an association affords. If we are to give any account of its summer assemblies of 1892, however, we must touch upon the objects and methods of the Union in the briefest possible way, referring those who wish to know more to the General Secretary, Surrey House, Strand. Founded in 1888 by Dr. Paton, of Nottingham, it is an imitation, with improvements, we venture to think, of the Chautauqua Reading Circles of America. Its membership exceeds seven thousand, and shows every sign of growth. Do we pledge ourselves to read for thirty minutes every day? By no means! Do we examine our students, and give prizes for feats of intellectual juggling? Still less! How, then, do we make ourselves

useful to the reading public? Limiting our answers to single sentences, we may explain our methods in the following terms. (1) Lists of books in several subjects are drawn up by the most competent of judges. (2) Three separate magazines give each month hints in reading. (3) Questions concerning difficulties are answered. (4) Members are encouraged to form "reading circles" for mutual help. (5) Summer holidays are held in the places best suited to illustrate the reading of the year, and give it vivid interest.

To take the last point only, and show how the Union works. A merry and mutually trustful party assembled, as already stated, at Bowness. The members were mutually trustful, because it was clear at the start that we had a common ground of interests and culture from which to start. It was once my fate for a single night—not for any benefit of climate or scenery would I run such a risk again—to dine in an imposing Buxton hotel. My voice seemed to lose its way in the sombre room. The mute-like waiters shifted uneasily at the prospect that the solemn rites of which they were the priests might be disturbed by frivolous conversation. My neighbour on my right asked *me* if I had the gout! The lady on my left continued to talk about the salmon through all succeeding courses long drawn out. The face of my *vis-à-vis* grew blanker than a dead brick wall when he found me seeking refuge in him. What a different picture did our dining-room present! We had been reading Geology and the Botany of Flowerless Plants in our Science course last winter. This year those who take the course in English Literature will study the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nine-

teenth centuries. Where better than on Windermere could we observe the effects of the agencies by which the face of the country has been sculptured? Where else could we find so many moisture-loving plants? What other district in England is so rich in associations of Wordsworth, Southey, Coleridge, and other writers of this period?

Our days commenced at half-past nine with a short lecture on Geology by Mr. Marr, followed at once by a second discourse of half an hour on Botany by Mr. Masee. At eleven we started on foot or in steamboat or coach, as the case might be, to explore the neighbourhood, our lecturers pointing out every object of interest, or calling us to halt where the rocks made a convenient resting ground, while they explained the larger features of the district. Of course our rambles carried us by Rydal Water and Grasmere, and despite the little check which the custodian gave to our devotion when she pointed out the seats by the fire-place where "him and Dick Wincey used to sit after dinner," we realised as we stood in the little garden of Dove Cottage the conditions under which Wordsworth did his best work, the surroundings by which his thoughts were shaped.

"There's been a main of folk here to-day," said the old guardian to one of the last of our party. "Who are they all?"

"Members of the Home Reading Union."

"What's that for?"

"To teach people to read."

"They'd much better teach them to wark; they've spoilt my washing."

Ay, dame! we need to work as well as read, but the shadow of the clouds upon the deep blue lake, the luscious green of grass and wood, the mysterious summits of the hills as we saw them that day, will give our spirits peace amid the anxieties of city life, will form a frame for every verse we read of the nature-loving poet who distilled the sweet soothing essence of that scene for the relief of the hot head and shaking hand of nervous toilers in study and street.

Our last excursion was the most ambitious, for the majority of our party succeeded in reaching the summit of Red Screes. Here was a platform from which to teach geology! No need of model or map; volcanic basin, glacier bed; cap of limestone, water-worn hills of slate; chasms cut by the ice-plough, moraines which fell from its flanks; mountains riven by the earthquakes, ravines eroded by the never-resting brook; the naked crags of Helvellyn, whose wounds time cannot heal, and the soft deltas on the shores of Windermere, clothed with rich meadow-grass which revels in the ichor that oozes from the giant's side: few words were needed to make us feel as if one long



KIRKSTONE PASS.

(From a photograph by Poulton & Son, Lee, S.E.)

play were being rapidly rehearsed—a thousand years were but as yesterday—Creation seemed to groan and travail at our feet.

The cottage on Kirkstone Pass was unusually busy on that day. Its aged proprietor had never seen so many people there before, and when for a pulpit our lecturers mounted the top of a coach, he came to find out "what these fellows were talking about." Perhaps rumours of the General Election had even reached his ears in his home high above the bustle of political strife; but when a club-moss was held up—was described as the autocrat of the carboniferous period, which had lost its proud supremacy because it had not discovered the principle of the division of labour which is carried to such perfection among the flowering plants—he "couldn't stand such nonsense any longer," and expressed his sentiments to this effect somewhat loudly.

At half-past five each day we re-assembled in the lecture-room to listen to a tuneful lecture by Dr. Bailey (our three "course" lecturers belonged to the Cambridge, London, and Oxford Extension respectively) upon the Lake Poets. One evening was devoted to a conference; on another Mr. Horsfall, founder of the Ancoats Museum and the great Manchester movement for the artistic education of the people, showed us a large number of lantern slides painted by Albert Goodwin, R.W.S., as an experiment in colour effects. The sheet, flushed with aurora borealis or glimmering with phosphorescent light, gave pictures which throw the conventional coloured photograph usually exhibited by the magic-lantern deep into the shade. On the other three evenings we were favoured with entrancing lectures by the teachers and preachers of the district. Mr. Llewellyn Davies, vicar of Kirkby-Lonsdale, discoursed on Robert Browning; Mr. Rawnsley, the vicar of Crosthwaite and Lake Poet of this later age, upon the literary associations of the district; Mr. Collingwood, Ruskin's *fidus Achates*, upon

its artistic associations; and rich stores did these successors of the heroes whom we came to worship bring to our intellectual feast.

The sayings of drunken men are seldom edifying, although their unconscious humour may sometimes justify us in repeating them. At Mr. Rawnsley's lecture I found it necessary to assist a reporter—upon whom the day's excursion to Grasmere had produced an exhilaration, very different from that with which the members of the Union had returned—out of the room. On the head of the stairs he realised his position, and saw that to convince a medical man his excuse must be plausible, so grasping my arm, he said fiercely: "Doctor, you can't think what an effect that man has upon me; he *goes through me*, for he is talking about the men of the district." From a full heart Mr. Rawnsley was telling us of the favourite haunts of Wordsworth, of Bishop Watson, of Hartley Coleridge. "And I am one of them," he added, with vinous pathos, repeating the phrase over and over again.

As the last coach carried me down the appalling hill from Kirkstone Pass to Ambleside, I could hardly believe but that a broken skid or rebellious horse would be found to mar the record of a holiday which, thanks to the arrangements made by our local secretary, Mr. Brownson, had passed off without a hitch. But no; we re-assembled at our headquarters, to part next day in the best of health and spirits, none of us, I am firmly convinced, less benefited by our change on account of the mental work with which it had been accompanied, but all stronger for the intellectual tonic. The holiday is over, but we have not left this charming spot altogether behind; we carry the Lake District away with us—some, the geologists, in a very tangible and weighty form—and whether our souvenirs be packed away in cabinets or placed between the pages of the poets, they will refresh and strengthen us for many a month to come.

A ROMANCE OF MAN.

By C. E. C. WEIGALL, Author of "The Temptation of Dulce Carruthers," "A Lincolnshire Lass," etc.

["This little story is the true record of the sufferings of an Englishman in the last century."]

CHAPTER THE TWELFTH.



AS the weeks rolled away, and peace with England seemed still to be very far off, Alec grew desperate, and determined to have one last fling for life and liberty.

Life in Arras was all very well, and would have been pleasant if he had not been a prisoner. Free to come and go, he would have been in no hurry to leave the citadel, in which he had been kindly treated and had found many friends.

But chains are chains, even though they be forged in solid gold. And, in his case, "stone walls" made a prison so galling that he chafed day by day at the restraint, and grew more home-sick for his beloved island.

He had not seen so much lately of the Barrères. After the reality of the unfortunate love of Lisette for him had forced itself upon his mind, he had avoided any *tête-à-têtes* with the girl, and there had been a sudden chilling of the friendly intercourse between them.

Madame Barrère had noticed nothing; she had only fancied that Alec had more to do and less time