

Lynton.

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY J. FINNEMORE.

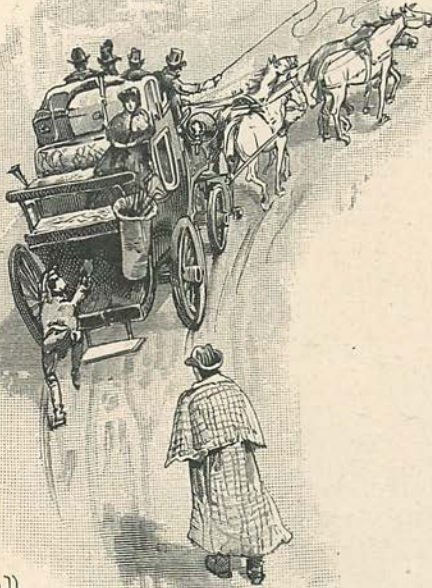


HE popularity of this gem among seaside resorts for the wanderings of the honeymoon pair, a visit will at once explain. Nature here is lavish in the grandeur and variety of her gifts—the wild, rock-bound coast, fraught with a thousand perils to the mariner; the sweeping moors, bare, bleak, solitary, sad; the mountainous cliffs and headlands; the

sweet and secluded valleys; the wild roaring of the open sea; and the gentle ripple of the fern-clad stream: such are some of the attractions which spread the fame of this veritable fairyland of the Lyn.

Of the several routes by road and water which lead to Lynmouth, the approach by water is truly a charming and impressive one. The traveller takes in, almost at a glance, the whole bay with its surrounding beauties





Up the Hill
to
Lynton.

R.J.F.

advantage of the breakers as they roll in, urge the craft slowly forward; but with a full complement of passengers, their utmost exertions will frequently fail to bring the burden nearer than some

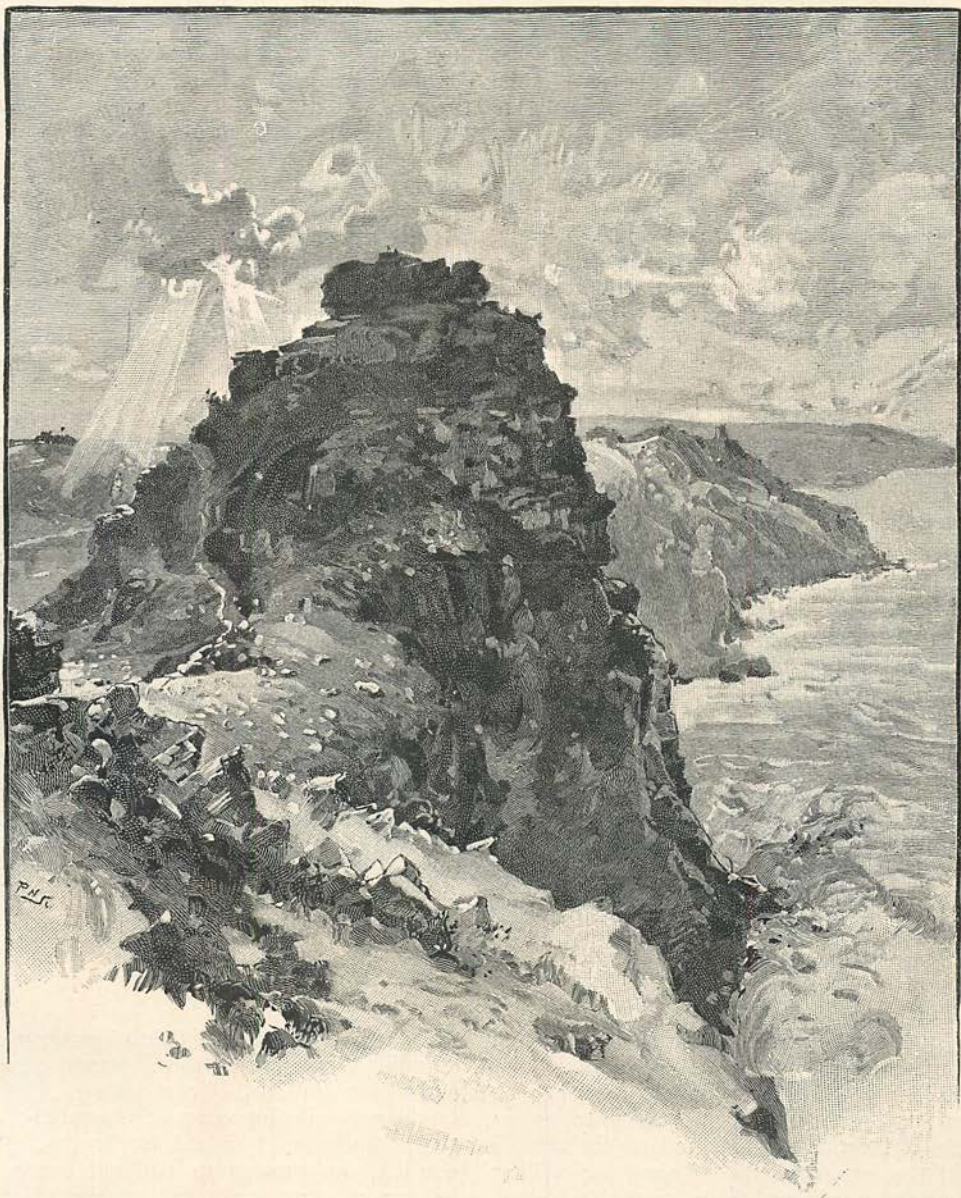
twenty feet of the beach. Then it is that our helplessness is so apparent, and we renew a far-away experience of childhood's days when the boatmen—in high boots, prepared for the emergency—take us in their arms, and, retaining the perpendicular with what grace the nature of the beach will allow, carry us ashore, placing us dryshod among the rocks. A scramble of ten or fifteen minutes, according to our agility, over these is necessary before we reach what we feel may be safely regarded as *terra firma*.

By road, we have a choice of several different routes; but the coach drive from Minehead stands out distinctly in our experience as the first and best. It lies over a magnificent line of coast, and by this route, therefore, on this occasion, we will enter the charming seclusion of the twin-villages. The coach has accomplished the greater part of the long journey; we have long left flower-embossed Porlock, have climbed the long hill on foot, and have resumed our seats behind the eager steeds; have crossed a large part of Exmoor, and we are within easy reach of our destination.

of cliff and sands, deep embowered caves, and wealth of vegetation, with the harbour and its shipping, the quaint watch-tower and village of Lynmouth as the central attraction. From these houses and flower-covered cottages, dotted here and there on the face of Lyn Cliff, carry the eye upwards to the larger village of Lynton, 400ft. above.

There is neither pier nor landing-stage of any description; none of the usual means of arrival are possible here. At high tide, as at low tide, the passage from steamer to shore is accomplished by the means of small boats, manned by the native fishermen, who may be depended upon to bring us safely ashore, though not always by the most dignified method. For at very low tides some difficulty is experienced in getting the boats to shore—a long stretch of sea-weed covered boulders—progress can only be measured by inches. The boatmen, taking

The approach from Countisbury Foreland is probably unique. The scene which is suddenly unfolded is likely, when visited for the first time, to prove somewhat appalling, and the face of the young bride who, with a newly-fledged Benedict, is nearly certain to be numbered among the travellers, will pale as the expanse below meets her half-fearful gaze, and were it not for other eyes, no doubt an arm would steal round the slim waist, and a voice promise protection even though the coach with its living burden should be hurled into the depths below. From this giddy height we look sheer down the jagged



THE CASTLE ROCK.

face of the cliff and see the minute ripples of the sea shimmering at a depth of hundreds of feet below. On a distant hill in front of us we get a glimpse of the higher village of Lynton, with its many windows facing seawards. The old watch-tower of Lynmouth, too, shows dark on the surf of the incoming tide, and steamers outward and homeward bound leave their long, dark wreaths of smoke on the evening sky, and their ever-widening trails prove their progress on the pathless

deep. On the occasion of which we write the impressiveness of the scene was doubly enhanced by a brilliant rainbow with three attendant reflections, and together composed a picture never to be forgotten.

As we dash down over the steep incline, for a medium pace is scarcely possible, the view is lost in the thick foliage of the trees between which we rush, and our journey is ended as the coach with its steaming horses pulls up on the bridge which spans the Lyn.

For once, even in steam-driven England, we get an ideal ending to an ideal journey, such as might soothe the spirit of Ruskin himself. We are landed in the very bosom of the most romantic scenery, free from the shrill confusion of the modern railway station. Flowers of every hue, creepers of every form of trailing loveliness, covering old-fashioned cottages from doorway to chimney, delight the eye with their colour and careless beauty. A few yards to our right the West Lyn merges with the sister stream, and together, almost before mingling, they glide beyond the old Rhine Tower, and become one with the great sea.

In marked contrast to the crowded greenery of the streams is the breadth and freedom of the cliff-side, which is traversed by a winding path cut in the very ribs of the rocky wall. It is called the North Walk, and leads directly to the Valley of Rocks.

Approaching the valley from Lynton we enter it at its most eastern point, and absorb its beauties by degrees. Starting, however, from Lynmouth, we take the cliff-railway already referred to, and alight at the North Walk. This is by far the more interesting and picturesque route, and, introducing us into the valley somewhat unexpectedly, adds to the pleasure we derive from the charming



A ROUGH MORNING.

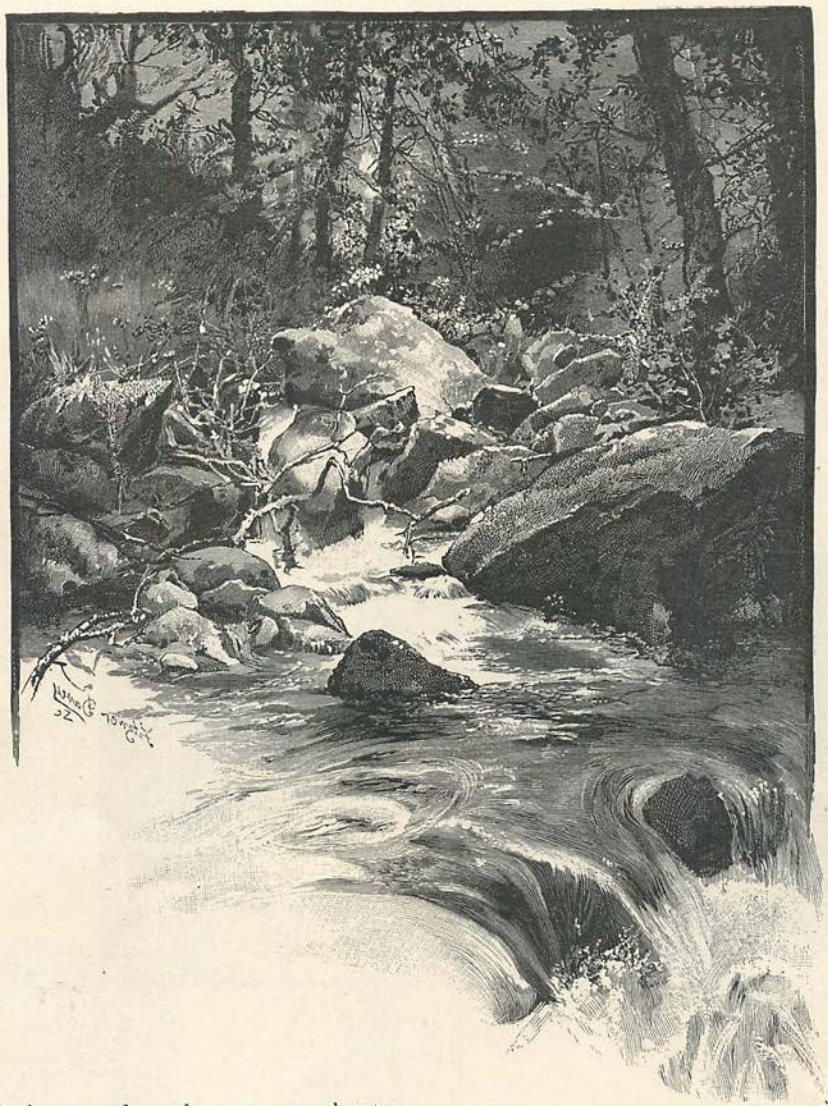
One of the most formidable tasks that presented itself to the visitor, formerly, was the journey from Lynmouth to Lynton. To accomplish this it was necessary to undertake a most fatiguing climb up the terrible hill that separates the villages. A vehicle could be hired, but if one were able-bodied, compassion would force one to alight, rather than weight the poor horse unnecessarily; but a beneficent company has changed all that, and though at first lovers of these villages were somewhat shocked at the idea of a cliff-railway, the site was so well chosen, and the benefits derived from it so great, that the innovation is hailed with considerable satisfaction.

The coach still climbs the hill, and our drawing, "Up the Hill to Lynton," gives some idea of the steep slope of this hill-side road.

view. It is, indeed, a delightful promenade, affording uninterrupted views along the coast and across the sea. Great masses of rock, bright with clinging vegetation, overhang the stony beach two hundred feet below. To our left, the precipitous cliff-wall continues its upward stretch; jagged masses of rock threaten immediate descent, and here and there, adding a touch of life to the scene:—

Up scour the startling stragglers of the flock,
That on green plots o'er precipices browse;

at each turn of the path as it winds with the formation of the face of the cliffs, disclosing more and more extended views of the coast, until in its final turn we get the first view of the Castle Rock, a grandly picturesque mass of limestone. A gap in the cliffs at this point provides as foreground a level stretch of grass, from which the south side of the rock rises; the



THE EAST LYN.

north side, hoary and weather-worn, reaches to its full height of four hundred feet perpendicularly from the sea. The landward side, covered with bracken and bramble, has a rugged path which leads with little difficulty to the summit, and we remember that it was here, on this exalted platform, that, with a sheep and a goat as combatants, a vigorous battle raged, watched with sympathetic interest from the valley below by John Ridd, when, love-sick, he visited the Devil's Cheeswring to obtain the potent advice of Mother Melldrum. Roused by the unequal contest, he bounded up the rocky crag, only, as we know, to see the inoffensive sheep succumb to the wild onslaught of his antagonist, who tossed it headlong into the

sea below. Remembering, too, how speedily the goat followed his vanquished foe, we venture near the edge and take a half-fearful glance into the hazy depths, and instinctively recoil to safer vantage ground.

Looking westward we see a glorious stretch of rocky coast with Lee Abbey firm based and pinnacled on the nearer headland in the middle distance, each succeeding headland becoming less insistent in detail, broadening in effects of purple and of gold.

But these beauties may not always be explored under the beneficent rays of the sun.

Dame Nature is not always propitious; she varies the sunshine with the shower, and, as in the drawing, "A Rough Morning," provides a scene of wild grandeur as interesting as the gentler mood. We walk through the beautiful Valley of Rocks to Lynton, and go down the cliff-railway once again to Lynmouth. Fishermen clad in oil-skin coats and sou'-westers keep watch at the sea-wall; visitors in waterproofs seek sanctuary in any sheltered nook which permits a view of the in-

The streams grow in turbulence, in keeping with the spirit of the coast, and the angler's hopes rise, as he notes the swelling of the pools and the dimming of their pebbly bed.

The steep hill-sides at whose foot the East Lyn rushes noisily along for many a mile through scenes of fairyland form what we



coming sea; the holiday aspect has given way; Nature seems to have real business on hand, and serious its results are likely to prove to any craft caught unprepared on this cavernous coast. Fortunately, our backs are to the south-west, and the wild wind carries the spray back to the sea. So dense is the spray that the headland of Countisbury is hidden from view, and the mist of it drives white against the grey sky.

will style our "Honeymoon Valley," where we meet the various types of them that seek seclusion. Let us note their occupations. We see the pair who, with sketch-book,

WATERSMEET.

are intent on securing in colour some lasting impression of the river's charms; the bridegroom who, with rod and line, would tempt the wary trout he never catches, while his bride, ensconced between two lichened boulders, and cushioned with the stringy moss, is mingling with her present joy the sweet love story, now two centuries old, which has invested the locality with perennial interest. We have the happy pair who, strolling arm-locked, unconscious

fying: the photographer must needs go far afield, and one's sympathies for the poor bride are continually enlisted, whether our excursions take us east, west, north, or south, far or near. The two flying figures are always in view, the modern Orpheus with camera in front, perspiring Eurydice behind!

But, happily, the landscape survives, and we will take that portion of Honeymoon Valley where the East Lyn has its course, and wander along the rugged path by its



DEVONSHIRE CREAM.

of the glory that surrounds them, have, for the moment, eyes and thoughts for nothing but each other. The "demon" photographer, of course, is here, also in the character of a Benedict; but now, as ever, he is a photographer first, with tripod on shoulder and cloth of velvet flying at its head, rushing from point to point, as though the morrow would find all things changed. Meanwhile, the new-made wife, mindful of promises so recent, strives, as in duty bound, to keep pace with her enthusiastic spouse, doomed, even in these early days of married bliss, to carry a weighty box of plates. The charms that lie near at hand prove unsatis-

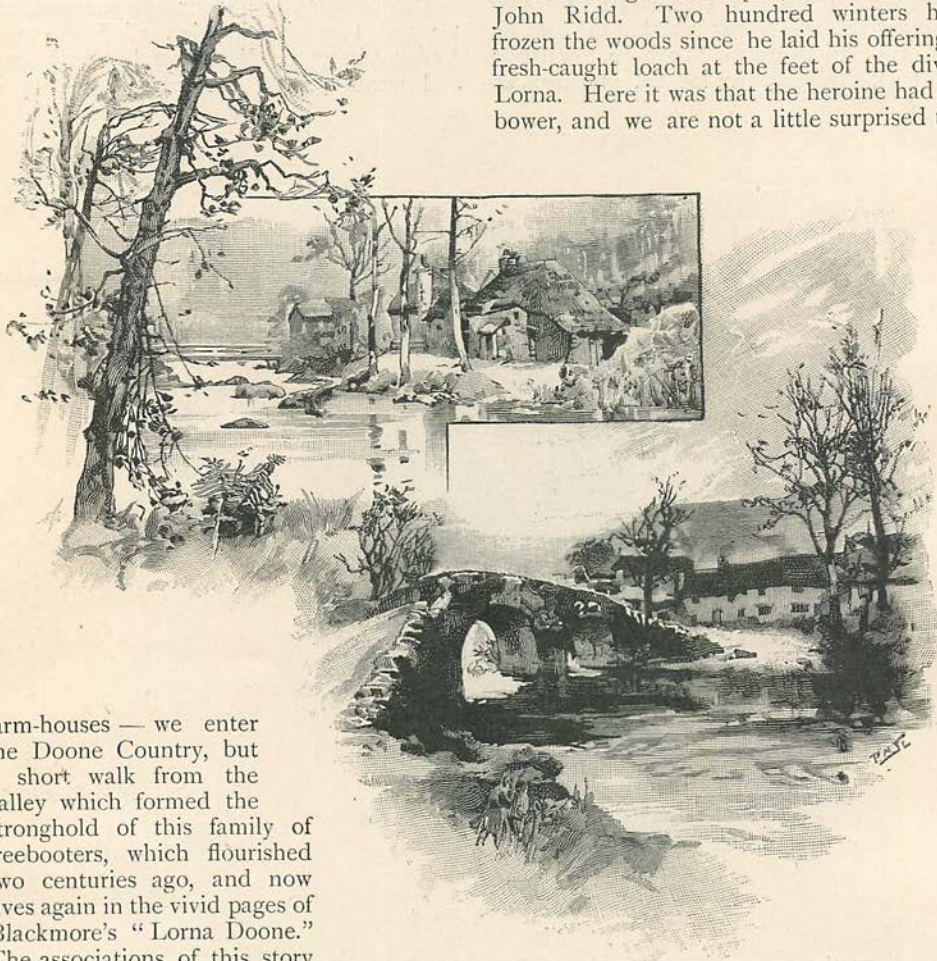
side, which leads us now up the far-famed Watersmeet Valley.

We pass through the rustic street of Brendon, where through an open door we catch a glimpse of an old dame busy in the most interesting occupation of this district—the making of the far-famed Devonshire cream. Our drawing, "Making Cream," illustrates the old-fashioned method of "raising the cream," which is being rapidly superseded by the more modern system of the store, not to mention the use of steam, the service of which valuable and universal agent is called upon for the more wholesale production of this popular addition to our lighter meals.

Leaving Brendon, the course of the river is less secluded, and there are occasional stretches of bare hill-side, a foretaste of the higher reaches of the stream. At Malmsmead—we give a sketch of the old bridge and

mystery of our surroundings, we almost feel that the "girt Jan Ridd" is only a little in advance of us, and that the huge form may at any moment appear to our mortal eyes, and so present us with a lasting impression of his build and bearing.

We complete our climb of the weird stream and gain the open, but there is no John Ridd. Two hundred winters have frozen the woods since he laid his offering of fresh-caught loach at the feet of the divine Lorna. Here it was that the heroine had her bower, and we are not a little surprised that



farm-houses — we enter the Doone Country, but a short walk from the valley which formed the stronghold of this family of freebooters, which flourished two centuries ago, and now lives again in the vivid pages of Blackmore's "Lorna Doone." The associations of this story pervade the whole district. The nature of the scenery has entirely changed; the banks of the stream—here called Badgeworthy Water—are for the most part treeless, and the bare slopes of Exmoor, in purple and brown, stretch before us. Here the trout increase in numbers, and here is the famous water-slide where the wonderful loach were forked, and the climbing of which led to such momentous developments in the simple life of the owner of Plover's Barrows, inseparable from these moors and streams. So full of this romance are we that, in the gloom and

we have reached the trysting-place with so small an amount of trouble; but times since then are changed, and we feel that the water-slide, somehow, must have changed with them.

Returning by the river as far as Malmsmead, we prepare ourselves for a long, up-hill climb across the moors to Countisbury. We have left the solitary streams and woodlands for the open wilderness of bracken and heather, and a wild tangle of undergrowth. We are impressed with a sense of solitariness;

MALMSMEAD.

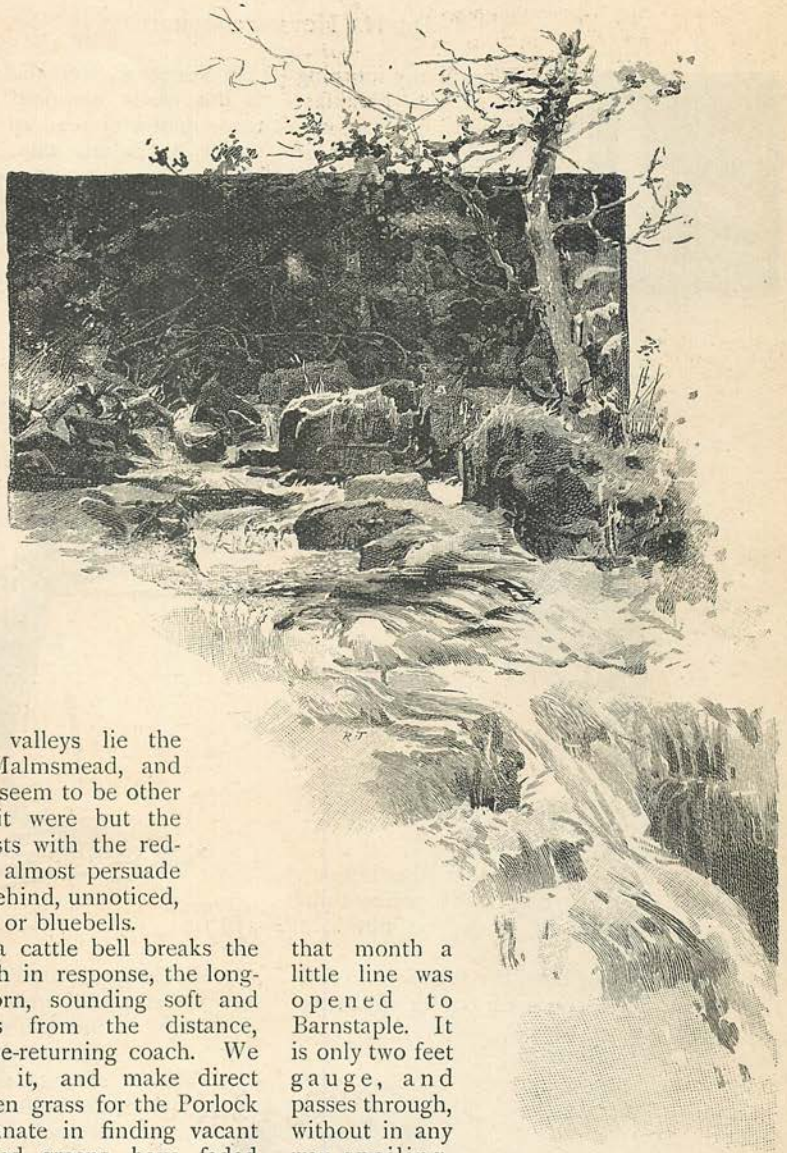
not a single cottage lends its influence to banish the loneliness of the sweeping moors. As we climb and reach the higher lands a magnificent panorama stretches before us, hill beyond hill, in ever-varying light and shade; hills, brown with dying bracken, become lustrous gold in the evening light, strengthened in effect by the gloom of the hills behind; they in turn discarding their purple robes for gold and crimson, as the low clouds yield them sight of the westering sun. Deep in the gloom of the valleys lie the villages of Oare, Malmsmead, and Brendon, and things seem to be other than they are. If it were but the season, the blue mists with the reddening foliage would almost persuade us that we had left behind, unnoticed, broad beds of violets or bluebells.

The clanging of a cattle bell breaks the silence, and as though in response, the long-drawn note of a horn, sounding soft and musical, reaches us from the distance, announcing the home-returning coach. We decide to intercept it, and make direct through the dew-laden grass for the Porlock Road, and are fortunate in finding vacant seats. The reds and greens have faded from the west; the Hollerday Hill tells back against the sky as we cross the Foreland, and the electric light twinkles brilliantly through the foliage and down the winding village street when, for the second time, we alight on the Lyn Bridge.

Until May of this year Lynton was twenty miles from any railway station, but during

that month a little line was opened to Barnstaple. It is only two feet gauge, and passes through, without in any way spoiling, some very beautiful scenery.

The directors determined that neither Lynton nor Lynmouth should in any way suffer from the unsightly requirements of a station, and so have kept it outside the place, and it cannot be seen from either of the two villages.



THE WATER-SLIDE.