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A HOLIDAY IN THE LAKE-COUNTRY

Let those who have not as yet made up their minds how or where to spend their summer holiday, turn their steps towards Lakeland. There, beauty ever changing and ever charming in all her multiform varieties, lies in wait for them at every turn. Life too among the hills has a free hearty zest, born of the invigorating mountain breezes, which you search for in vain elsewhere. The wind, as it sweeps along the hill-side, recalls, as it fans the weary brow, the quick glad feeling of existence, the exuberance of gay animal spirits, which were natural and unprized in careless boyhood, but which are too often extinguished by the cares assumed with advancing years.

The steep roads, the green hill-slopes, the peaceful mossy boulders, the picturesque nooks, in which nestle quaint little homesteads, and the broad calm lake stretching out like a great embossed silver shield at your feet, with the deep shadows of the hills shading into purple gloom in its shining ripples – who that has once seen such a picture, particularly in sunshine, can ever forget it?

In winter evenings, when the curtains are snugly drawn, and the howling storm shut out, and the firelight tinges all around with its warm ruddy glow, pleasant visions of the breezy fells, and the great hills with their changeful lights and shadows, and the leafy copses running down to the edge of the water, recur to the memory. You are again in the swiftly gliding boat; you lean over to gather the water-lilies, or to gaze into the clear pebbly-bottomed abysses of that softly yielding flood. Again you see mirrored in its crystal depths the straggling rifts of vapour, or the long rippling beaches of cloud. The sweet do-nothingness of the hour, its gay insouciance, or its vanished romance, are with you once more, and charm you as of old. It is with a feeling of half-sad tenderness that you turn away from the mental photograph, and leaving it safe in memory's keeping, go back to your busy commonplace world.

Mr Payn, in his beautiful volume entitled *The Lakes in Sunshine* (Windermere: J. Garnett), gives us a sparkling description of Lakeland. He begins with Windermere, because, as he says, 'the scenery of the northern lakes is unquestionably grander and wilder, and they should therefore be seen after their southern sisters.' Almost every one has seen Windermere, the queen of English lakes. Many have seen it as Mr Payn says it is best seen – by a

Fair couple linked in happy nuptial league
Alone.

To such, a magic charm clings ever afterwards to each tree and shrub, investing those never-to-be-forgotten days of delicious idling on its pleasant shores with a glory peculiarly their own.

Among the distinguished people who have done Windermere and climbed Orrest Head, to gaze from thence upon the panorama of lake and mountain and wooded hill and sea which stretch around, was Beau Brummel, who was, however, much too fine a gentleman to get up any unfashionable enthusiasm upon the subject. 'Charles,' he would drawl out to his valet, when he was asked which of the lakes was his favourite – 'Charles, which lake was it we liked best?'

Immediately beneath the tourist, as he stands on Orrest Head, is Elleray, where 'Christopher North' spent so much of his time. He loved the mountains around, and might be met upon them in all weathers, in shine or shower; the shower of course, as is the case all throughout Lakeland,

predominating greatly. As a rule the weather is moist and often wet, although the dalesmen do not like to have it called so, or to have any exceptions taken to the lack of sunshine. They are as irritable upon the subject as a certain Parsee grandee was, who when his venerable ecclesiastical host, finding a dearth of topics of conversation, fell back upon that standing British theme the weather, and blandly observed: 'We have not seen the sun, Sir Jamsetjee, for many a day,' shut him up abruptly with a stern: 'And what is that to you, sir? The sun is my god.'

In like manner mist and rain, the tutelary genii of Lakeland, are under the special protection of the aborigines. There are a number of pretty houses in the vicinity of Windermere, and land for building purposes is in great demand, and very difficult to be had; for a dalesman, although seldom caring a straw about the beauty of the scenery, is passionately attached to the little bit of land he has inherited from his father, and tenaciously determined, as he will tell you, 'to hand it forat,' that his son may be no worse off than he was himself. Unfortunately, he has no ambition to make him better; and the authoress of the *Cottagers of Glenburnie*, could she revisit the earth, might find work enough and to spare amid the untidy and half-ruinous homesteads of the Lake country.

Towards the southern end of the lake is Storrs Hall, where once upon a time a brilliant company were wont to assemble, Canning, Sir Walter Scott, Wordsworth, Southey, and Christopher North. Intellectual Titans! All that of yore awoke your admiration is here, but not one of your number lingers to admire! There still are the wooded coombs and knolls rich in myriad shifting lights of beauty, the might of the silent hills, the placid loveliness of the romantic lake; but ye have gone, and the place that knows you no more preaches to the musing stranger an eloquent homily upon the transitoriness of life, and even of that fame which we fondly call immortal.

There is not in all Lakeland a more picturesque town than Ambleside. Here, as most people know, is the Knoll, the pretty little villa in which Miss Martineau spent the long tranquil autumn of her life. She built it for herself, and was commended for the wisdom of her choice by Wordsworth, who did not break into any poetic raptures over the lovely scenery; but taking a commonplace view of the case, said shrewdly: 'You have made a capital investment; it will double its value in ten years.' He also gave her a piece of advice about her housekeeping, which had more of calculating frugality in it than a superficial observer would have expected from the poetic temperament. 'You will have many visitors,' quoth the prudent bard of Lakeland. 'You must do as we do. You must say to them: "If you will have some tea with us, you are welcome; but if you want any meat along with it, you must pay for it as boarders do."'

Rydal Mount, Wordsworth's home, is in the close vicinity of Ambleside, a sanctuary which Mr Payn would have closed against all pilgrims except those who can understand Wordsworth's works as well as quote them – a too severe ordeal, which would well nigh make a solitude of this classic spot. 'This intellectual winnowing-machine,' he says, 'would exclude about ninety out of a hundred of the well-meaning but really inexcusable folks who now request admittance at that sacred gate.'

Opposite the principal hotel at Grasmere, upon the roadside that leads to the Wishing Gate, is the white cottage in which Wordsworth spent his early married life, and where De Quincey lived after him, and filled the little drawing-room with his library of five thousand books. Here, invigorated by the mountain breezes, or absorbed in his books and the beautiful scenery, the far-famed Opium-eater made a sudden descent from three hundred and twenty grains (eight thousand drops) per diem of his favourite drug to forty grains, and found himself, Mr Payn says, in the novel position of a man with opium to give away.

One day when he was lounging among the June roses, a tawny stranger beturbaned and travel-stained asked an alms of him in the Malay tongue. Of this half-barbarous vernacular De Quincey was profoundly ignorant, as indeed he was of all Eastern languages, the only two Asiatic words he knew being the Arabic word for barley, and the Turkish name for opium. So he tried the dusky suppliant with Greek, which he replied to glibly in Malay. The end of the strange colloquy being that De Quincey, divining from the stranger's aspect that he also was an opium-eater, bestowed upon him

a large cake of the precious drug; enough, he calculated, to serve him a fortnight. The Malay took it, and without more ado, swallowed it outright, leaving his benefactor transfixed with horror, staring dumbly after him as he went upon his way.

For some days afterwards De Quincey was not unnaturally much exercised in mind, and very curious to learn from all passers-by if a man with a turban had been found dead on the road between Grasmere and Whitehaven. He was not; but he might as well have been, as far as De Quincey was concerned; for no shade returning from the ghostly shores of Avernus to haunt a living foe ever exacted a more terrible vengeance for unintentional wrong than did the Grasmere Malay. For months he haunted with persistent animus the opium dreams of De Quincey, and was not exorcised until he had run the gantlet of every unimaginable horror, far transcending any atrocity of which a Malay in the flesh could have been capable.

As a matter of course, in Lakeland there is, for those who like it, climbing enough and to spare; but there are not a few sagacious individuals who have no relish for this exercise, and are ready to exclaim with Mr Payn: 'Of what use are photographs if they do not convey so accurate an idea of the locality as to save us the trouble and exertion of conveying ourselves thither! For what is the effect of the barbarism of walking uphill until the human frame becomes somewhat inured to it, just as it becomes inured to taking arsenic or any other deleterious habit? Why, a trembling of the legs, excessive pain in the knee-joints, determination of blood to the head, ringing in the ears, inordinate perspiration, and a desperate desire for liquids.' Let all holiday wanderers, not being members of the Alpine Club, take note of this. Leaving climbing to those adventurous spirits who love it, there is no lack of beautiful walks for more humble-minded pedestrians, only they must beware not of the dog, but of the bull. These formidable quadrupeds abound or did abound; and to find yourself face to face in a bowery glade with a huge bellowing brute, pawing the ground, distending his nostrils, glaring at you with his fierce red eyes, and otherwise unnecessarily exciting himself, is, to say the least, a situation in which it would be very difficult even for a Sir Charles Grandison to preserve an equable dignity of demeanour.

At Coniston you can, if a member of the Alpine Club, or qualifying for that honour, do the Old Man of Coniston; 'but to recommend the ascent of such a monster is altogether,' Mr Payn says, 'contrary to his principles.' He rather recommends the ascent of Black Coomb, a sombre but majestic hill, from which, said Wordsworth, 'there is the most extensive sea-view in Britain.'

Perhaps, however, O weary tourist, your head may not be of the steadiest at giddy heights, and it may be as well to pause in lowly but safe obscurity at its base, and there solace yourself with a description of its glories:

Close to the sea, lone sentinel,
Black Coomb his forward station keeps;
He breaks the waves' tumultuous swell,
And ponders o'er the level deeps;
He listens to the bugle-horn
Where Eskdale's lovely valley bends;
Eyes Walney's early fields of corn;
Sea-birds to Holker's woods he sends.
Beneath his feet the sunk ship rests
In Duddon sands, with black masts bare.

Opposite Wallabarrow Crag is the hamlet of Newfield, where lived in days gone by a worthy clergyman, who was known far and near throughout the little world of the Dales by the name of Wonderful Walker. In a worldly sense, less blest than he of whom the poet sings, 'that he was passing rich with forty pounds a year,' for he had but eighteen, he yet with the help of this slender income

maintained and educated a family of twelve, and died at the age of ninety worth two thousand pounds! This of course was not all saved out of the eighteen pounds a year. He acted as doctor, schoolmaster, and lawyer for his parishioners, and lent a hand besides at sheep-shearing and hay-harvest; for all which diverse services he exacted and obtained a modest fee.

Furness Abbey, with its vast piles of splendid ruins, with its lonely aisles, and roofless dormitories deserted and time-stricken, appeals to the gazer with a sense of beauty so full and exquisite in its calm decay, that content with the loveliness that remains, he scarcely cares to recall the glories that have gone by. Dire have been the alternations of fate through which this magnificent house of Our Lady of Furness has passed. In the spacious building which is now used as the railway hotel, Rogerus Pele, the last abbot, held his state. Here he was so unwise as to countenance a local rising against Henry VIII.; and here, when that Defender of the Faith had triumphed over all his enemies, he received from the ecclesiastical commission a list of questions, one or two of which bothered him not a little. Had not he, vowed as he was to the stern Cistercian rule, two wives? Had not one of his monks one, and another five? – an excess of blessing which Henry perhaps wisely thought ought to be included in the special rights of kings only. How did Abbot Rogerus answer these questions? Did St Bernard aid in his hour of need this degenerate son? It is to be feared not; for from this splendid house – and sure never was poor Cistercian more richly housed – the abbot and his monks, obeying the monarch's stern decree, went forth for ever.

Hawes-water, a lonely secluded lake, with no good inn accommodation near it, is visited by but few tourists, which is rather a pity, as it is one of the grandest of the sisterhood of meres, although inferior in picturesque beauty to Ullswater, of which Mr Payn says, contrasting it with Windermere, 'that Windermere is very homelike, and makes one wish to live for ever (or even die) in one of its many pleasant dwellings; but for grandeur, it is certainly not to be compared to its northern sister.'

Thus one by one the sweet smiling lakes pass by, the bright summer days fade away, and the pleasant holiday season comes to an end. The long shadows lengthen lovingly over Lakeland; the giant hills, like sleepy Titans, nod a last adieu; the darkling copsewood grows shadowy and indistinct; the sweet sunny mere in the hollow glimmers in the distance; the purple haze creeps up the well-known glens, golden with happy memories; and the lofty mountains we have or have not climbed, gloom with deeper shadows. What thanks do we not owe to all, lake, river, forest, and mountain, for many delightful hours and pleasant memories! Again would we recommend our holiday-making friends to point their route to Lakeland, commencing say at Windermere.

THE LAST OF THE HADDONS

CHAPTER XXVIII. – CONGRATULATIONS

I walked slowly back towards the cottage, taking myself to task for the foolish doubts and fears which had so oppressed me. How could I have been so disloyal as to have a moment's doubt? Philip was right: it was not fair to him! As though the love of a man such as he was, would depend upon a woman looking more or less blooming!

No doubt I had looked my very worst, standing there in the wood, pale and fagged and travel-stained, in my shabby old bonnet and mean-looking cloak; a great contrast to Lilian, in her fresh white pique dress, and with her delicately beautiful colouring of eyes and hair and complexion. Of course it was perfectly natural that he should be sorry to see me looking so worn and faded; all the more sorry because he loved me. Should not I have felt pained to see him looking in any way worse than I had expected to see him; and so forth; until I had argued myself into a state of perfect content again, quite convinced that I was the happiest of women.

Lilian met me at the gate with outstretched arms. 'Dear, darling, naughty Mary; if this were a night when scolding were possible! Why did you not tell us?'

'Dear Lilian, it was wrong, I know. But in truth I was longing to tell you, only – many things prevented my doing so.'

'But the wonder is how in the world you could contrive to avoid talking about him! So grand, and noble, and good; I am sure he is good.'

'Yes, dear, he is good;' beginning at last to find it pleasant to talk about him.

'The idea of your having such a lover hidden up in your thoughts all the time we were worrying your life out with our troubles! How could you have so much patience and sympathy with us – with me?'

'Perhaps, Lilian, for the very reason that he *was* hidden up in my thoughts.'

'Well, perhaps it was: yes; I can understand that, Mary;' adding with a little sigh, 'and I think I can guess now why you did not like talking about your happiness to me, dear kind sister that you are!'

'I am glad that you like Philip, Lilian.'

'Like him! Of course I do; though there is not much credit in liking one so nice as he is, I suppose. He knows how to pay compliments too. Do you know he paid me such a nice one, Mary? He said that I reminded him of you, and that he could trace the influence of your mind upon mine. I stupidly all the while never guessing the truth! The idea of your having been engaged for ten years, and once so nearly married, without your sister knowing anything about it!'

Afterwards there were dear old Mrs Tipper's congratulations to listen to. But although she was quite as ready as Lilian to say kind things, and evidently wished to make me understand that she was pleased for my sake, there was the shadow of a regret in her eyes, and I thought I knew the reason why.

Pleasant as it all was, it was even pleasanter to be once more alone with my thoughts. I sat by the open window half through the summer night, my elbows on the sill and my chin in my hands, trying to get used to my happiness. 'Tired nature sunk into repose, scarce told of life;' but a light breath of sound – the faint twitter of a bird – the whispering of the air amongst the roses clustering round the window – or the soft rustle of a leaf, seemed to hint that it was dreaming musically, as befitted a world watched over by the 'silent sentinels of the night.' It was early dawn before I was sufficiently sobered to betake myself to bed and attempt to sleep.

When at length sleep came, it was no love-visions which visited me, only a miserable distortion of what had taken place, as though some evil spirit were mocking my hopes. I rose pale and

unrefreshed. The blooming process had certainly not commenced yet, I jestingly informed myself, as I tried to smile at the heavy lack-lustre eyes and white face which my glass reflected. I could afford no more star-gazing; requiring all the proverbial beauty-sleep I was able to compass. But I made the best of myself; and in my pretty fresh morning-dress was, I flattered myself, somewhat brighter and pleasanter to look upon than I had been the night before. Lilian came in before I had quite finished, to 'see after me,' she said, with a tender greeting.

'To begin with: I will not have that beautiful throat so muffled up; and I will have a bow in your hair and this flower in your dress. Now don't be obstreperous. Where is the use of being a sister, if I may not have such little privileges as this, I should like to know!' busily putting a little touch here and a little touch there to my toilet.

'Yes; that is certainly better – now you look kissable, my dear;' with a gay little laugh at my consciousness. 'It shews beautifully now!'

'What shews, goosy?'

'The love and happiness, and all the rest of it, child. Only look like that when he comes in, and I shall be *quite* satisfied. And remember, Mary, not that mean old bonnet again – not for the world! Did you order a new and fashionable one as I bade you, madam?'

I murmured something about a new bonnet being on its way, but could not speak positively as to its pleasing her.

'If you have ordered another old-fashioned-looking thing, it will have to be taken back to the place from whence it came; that's all, my dear. And until it comes, you must wear your garden-hat; it is twenty times more becoming than that old dowdy thing of a bonnet; and I have been up since five o'clock, if you please, making it pretty with new ribbon and a few poppies.'

'Dear Lilian – sister!'

'Tears! Good gracious, Mary, what *are* you thinking of? Pray, consider your nose; pray, do not spoil the effect! Yes; that's better; that will do, my dear;' with a grave little nod of approval, as I broke into a smile again.

It certainly was rather amusing. To judge by her tone, and without looking at her, she might have been supposed to be an elder sister admonishing and encouraging a shy young girl. Ah me! the diffidence I felt arose from a very different cause, and was of a very different kind from the diffidence of a young girl. It was nevertheless very delightful to have her hovering about me thus; her love so palpable in every word, and look, and tone. It was doubly precious to me just now; and perhaps she guessed that it was. By the time we were summoned to breakfast, she had succeeded in chasing away some of my morbid fancies; and she did not allow me to fall back again, keeping up a constant patter of merry speeches; at which her aunt and I were forced to smile.

Whether Lilian was beginning to see deeper into my mind than she had heretofore done, I know not; but one thing was evident: she could see the kind of treatment I required, and talked no sentiment. Mrs Tipper looked a little surprised at her unwonted gaiety, but very agreeably surprised. Lilian never appeared to greater advantage than in these playful moods.

'Of course you and I must be considerate when Mr Dallas is here, aunty; in the way of finding our presence required elsewhere, and making occasional discreet little disappearances, you know.'

'Nonsense! as though I would allow such a thing!' I replied laughingly.

'And as though such an experienced person as I did not know the right and proper thing to do!' She could even jest about her experience.

'Then I mean to shew you that the most experienced people may sometimes err in their notions as to what is right and proper,' I rejoined lightly.

But when, just as we had finished breakfast, Lilian descried Philip coming down the lane, she ran off with a gay look over her shoulder at me. Mrs Tipper was already in the kitchen, in solemn consultation with Becky over the contents of the larder, intent upon making Philip an honoured guest. Of course I very quickly had Lilian in with us, and allowed no more discreet disappearances. Indeed

in the first moments of my happiness it was sufficient to me to feel that Philip was present. There was even a kind of relief in having Lilian with us; and he soon found that anything which interested him and me might be freely discussed in her presence.

It was a glorious morning, and we betook ourselves to the 'drawing-room.' The windows were flung wide; and it was delightful to look from the cool shaded room to the lovely scene beyond, bathed in sunshine, the shadows of the light fleecy clouds sailing in the bright blue sky chasing each other up the hillside; whilst an occasional sound, the few-and-far-between strokes of the blacksmith's hammer, or the laugh of a child at play, floated lazily towards us from the village; even the proverbially busy bee seemed to hum drowsily in the perfume-laden air.

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