Wakeman's Wanderings.

ODD INCIDENTS OF FOREIGN TRAVEL AND . . . OBSERVATION. . . .

ECCLEFECHAN, SCOTLAND, Sept. 14, 1893.—Some English tramps were singing for their breakfasts before the doors of the grave Scottish villagers of Ecclefechan when I tramped into the hamlet behind them. There were five of them, great, bulking fellows, and their heavy and aggressive bellowing was the only sound indicative of human life in the village, even at this late hour of the morning. They stood beside a melancholy barn which dazed flies under a covered way and crowed on through the village street.

At one side of the stream was an ancient wall. On the other were straggling houses, and the one before which the vagabonds lifted up their harrowing voices was one of the plainest and quaintest in Ecclefechan. From its appearance it might have been an often stable, an abandoned lodge at the entrance to some gentleman's establishment formerly located behind it, or the ancient jail of the village, now smartly whitewashed and transformed into a lowly habitation. It was a mite of a thing with an archway through it occupying one-third of the lower story.

At each side was a narrow oaken door, and nearer each end, a tiny window. In the second story another little window above each lower one looked into the street, and over the centre of the archway were two still more diminutive windows, side by side. It was a double house of the dwarf variety, and the one at the north end, where the strong lunged singers sang, was the birth-place of Thomas Carlyle.

The bellowing had brought much-tousled goodwives to various windows and alley entrances, at late distances answered near enough to hear them do. I lie the main-song of the tramps so easy in the house and its owner well off.

occupant needing fath (trouble) the lects

"Fare there," croaked one old dame the sing-Lyle swaying of her head be-with a gen conscional vein of remark. tukening a h much-rear thereels black "They're like are they o'er wrang blood t' the lass, she (trangly)"

Into that neighbourhood a still older old woman, "one of some, the recent side of Carlyles' ancestors."

How Carlyle's hosts of admirers would have gloated to hear these his old neighbors go on. One hinted at their pride with, "Hey there! Thomas's son sleep-outhere." Another, of their thrift with, "They're sell't their sons on a raley day." Another, of miserliness with, "Ay gae their bones to nae dogs." Another, of their austerity with, "Ma gold to neebor wi'!" And another old body summed up the feeling of many of the tony villagers with the sharp epithame "They were ai to chear" [illegible] it, it was hard to get along with the Carlyles. And it is historic that others besides those the old souls, some who lived in too some boasts as with them, usually just that way.

The tramps got nothing for their oblatory, and, after a few vigorous kicks at the door, departed, giving me opportunity to reach the house just as the boys Scots and red, serious face of Mrs. John Crosby, caretaker, appeared at the door. Making a due bonigam after the vanishing vagrants she relieved her indignation with: "Hooch! I'm a weary day for auld Scotland when there's too mils i' ilkaa house like this frae the low frae his beggars!" and then, in radical conversancy of low English "was-pennies," bade me enter.

I doubt if there ever lived a writer about whom more has been written by little and great writers than has been penned in criticism or praise of Thomas Carlyle. And I am just as much in doubt whether any one or all of these, from passing critqui to stately biography, have really visited the birthplace of this rare and vividly rampant genius. Yet that should have been every serious biographer's first duty. Interesting as may be every little detail in the mulcrer career of the man of genius, when we have learned each one by heart, and have been given standards by which to find his place, measure his personality and weigh his influence, so are still unanchored. What made the man what he was? What were the potent forces which sent him on his way, so which were overcome, in his unbuilding? Out of what manner of mold did he come? What was the actual environment of his home, his child, the world? We wish to be shown the minute perspectives. It is not to be found in any biography of Carlyle.

And so I thus there is an unusual fascination in coming to this hard little hamlet and seeking with open eyes for pretty nearly the same sort of talk and precisely the same scenes as those the boy Carlyle knew, hard as it is to believe from his biographers he ever was a boy, and, in sympathy and feeling, getting as far as possible into the mind of a young man who, in his early years, framing and veiling as those through which he even had their earliest outlook upon the dim material and spiritual horizons about him. No more fun of all that can could be given than to that morning incident of the grim old dames and their tongue wagging about the singing beggars and the house before which they sang. It was in the [illegible] and Carlyle's family's time. I almost felt the Carlyle talk were "glowerin' ahint the door." It is but two years more than one hundred since Thomas Carlyle was born in that little stone cottage. There is no place in Britain where was change has come in that period than in stern and tight Ecclefechan.

Indeed the changelessness of all these ancient border towns and hamlets is one of their most impressive characteristics. From Yetholm to Dumfries along the Scottish border, and from Berwick to Carlyle along the English border it is just the same. They are all as they were, only a little more asleep. The railway stations are about all the structures in them that have large windows or smell of paint. They remain chiefly as they stood when the border raids were ended. They are gray, lonely-secured, ancient. They were built in fighting times and they same their records in their hard faces. To wander among them is like being whisked back two or three centuries and set down face to face with the grimness and crudities of bygone times; and I sometimes think that the name of the lonely hills, beaten to savage hardness in these sorry times, is in his borderland of both kingdoms a long time taking on the greater touch of our time. Scotland is richest in these weird old border relics of a sorry age. The Scotch crowded close to the border, built more and stronger places of safety, even the tiniest of hamlets having fortresses in sturdiness and strength to the larger towns, and then, being the hottest of the bags, "harried" the English in such a brisk and scrapping way, that they had little time on their hands, after shaking the raiders home, for building important border towns.

The quaint hamlet stands in a little hollow of the champaign land of southeastern Annandale. The same old pass-road which leads north from England through Carlisle and greensome Gretna Green passes through it, forming its principal and almost its only street. From the south this highway lead through a pleasant country, well watered and wooded and charmingly broken by clumps of ancient trees, or sewer plantations that could not fill the belts. Beyond the hamlet the road winds upward for a mile or more to a bleak, suggestively dreary and hopeless horizon as you will often come upon in Normandy, or as are seen in the mist-grimes of Brittany by the easter land of Millet. To the northeast there are low outliers of the Hartfell and other mountain ranges. Away to the southwest are the misty vales of lovely Annandale and to the southwest, but some miles distant, the legend-haunted hill of Brunswark, where the boy Carlyle often wandered, into its Roman-capped head into the fierce, vagrant clouds.

Ecclefechan has great age but little history, aside from having produced this one famous man. At about the centre of the village, where a highway leaves the old Carlisle and Glasgow pass-road to wander through the valley of Annan to the Solway, on the turn of that range, a little cross-street, formed by this road, runs a few rods with it and stops down to an ancient grave yard. In this lies Carlyle, his father and mother and other members of the family. It has a few hundreds of nameless graves, for back thousand years before the Carlyle line had crossed the border into Scotland from Carlisle, with the exception of returning Kings David II. and Robert of a third Scottish chapel built by the A. Fosbrooke, prior of St. Fortins, which was as little about of the seventh century from him, who was canonized, by day being the saint of history. Hence the curious name of Ecclefechan.

Scotland brought the modern church in ruins. The spice of the covenanters then stirred what remained. But the chapel-yard of a thousand years ago is Ecclefechan's grave-yard of today, and it is a strange place for those who are prone to "ponderous the extinction of poetry, physics, superstition, history, science, prolegomena etc.," who have departed life in little Ecclefechan, are lying here in "consecrated ground." In Carlyle's boyhood time there were many hand-loom weavers here. There stone cottages stood along the highway interspersed with a few shops and inns. The cottages remain, housing folk of the same social order, comfortable laborers among the surrounding farms. At least three of the inns are still standing. Two have been transformed into humble habitations. One, the Bush Hotel—a little, long, low, rambling structure jutting out into the highway lovingly, and presided over by a fresh, matron landlady, Minnie Kilpatrick, who is not afraid to tell you her age—has no loss for "Yankee" pilgrims and their searching ways—contains most of the life of the sleepy hamlet, and, with ministering tricyclers on their northern tours, modern coaching parties and occasional pilgrims to Carlyle's birthplace and grave, is almost as brisk and bustling as in the times of the packers and carriers, when the oldest past coaches changed their steaming horses, after a long haul from Gretna, before its hospitable door.

So this was the spot and these the physical surroundings of Thomas Carlyle from his birth in 1795, until his nine-mission father, James Carlyle, who commenced on an Ecclefechan farm, "the year one," removed to the bleak farmstead of Mainhill, near Cockerbie, about ten miles north of his native hamlet and still alongside the old Carlisle and Glasgow post road. He remained there for two years of his life. During this time all the boyhood, boyhood home and some surroundings he ever knew were his, for he had already left the scenes of schoolboy life at Annan, and has also left behind his boyhood home, and he was sent away to Edinburgh to the University, walking the whole distance, through Moffat, in company with a senior student in the University named Tom Smith.

There are some good things here or hereabout you who know Thomas Carlyle as a boy, but I found very many old, old women whose parents were his playfellow companions, or his parents' "weebairn," and who, on account of Carlyle's subsequent fame, felt a pride in the fact that they had been intimate with their children, from their standpoint of view, on his home surroundings and boyhood life. It is all a great, gray picture, so to speak, of shadows, with the sunlight of a boy's life seen through it—a brave, loyal mother's anxious care and love of a home so little and such that no room in it permitted the faithful minds to be given up all its members at once, which moved young Carlyle to marry, lest he should be left crumbs behind to pull to be eaten on the "roping of the wall" when the lad gazed at the dense mountains of a future inaccessible to honest, unremunerative, sturdy, minerly ones in the days of his every need of a mother, with the far great virtue, a gentleness of a character proof against all mechanical unfolding, and in accord with her unremitting and very exacting creed; the stern moral and religious environment in which she was made to live, and the boy's early, yearning, thought, hard and for her happiness and worldness than about the other members of the American Chesterfield of Scots.

It is plain that the Carlyles were not such very hard, but that they were the laird with that brutal sort of rancorousness in ignorant neighborhoods. The father was the best workman of the community. He had no pretensions to a serious temper and a hard fist, to go with it, and he was drawn into the belief, he was feared rather than liked or respected. The mother was held by her neighbors to be a "canniny" and "wise enough," or pompous, in manner and language, as well as "mickle auldmoud," or sagacious and crafty in the course. The imperious dominancy of the father, so marked a characteristic of the son, rather than just pride in intelligence for its own sake, determined him on making the boy a scholar, and this again widened the breach between the stonemason's family and the carping villagers. The latter stood in awe of the first, but stung the brave wife's spirit mortally with their crafty gossip and raillery. The first was double upon the boy's defenseless head. The parents in their prayers illustrated to the last what a debt of gratitude was being piled up against him by the Almighty that he was permitted to live, and by themselves that they had sustained continuity and sacrifice to give him those mighty adventures, while though his plaintiffs, on account of the disposition of their parents, he was made the victim of every conceivable species of savagery and contempt.

From those old tales it is easy to learn that as a babe Thomas Carlyle drew in the very milk of misapprehension and rancor from his mother's breast. He was a weaverwoi, this, uncanny boy, "unlikeanything" in infancy, mortified, mocking and hardening through the "carry-gone" period, not into kills before he had learned the unspeakable terrors of an sinlathood where every other child about him showed only the face of innocent joy, or in childhood a benevolent born sex upon and scrouged by bullying brats; and all his youth-tide the quarry of every ill-natured little human beast of the Ecclefechan gutters or by-lane cullies. Why, it seems to me that right here is found the key to his whole afterlime nature. The royal protests, the often almost imbecile cavilings, the Titanic sentences that rumble and grumble and thunder throughout his mighty work were, after all, largely an endless if unconscious cry for mercy, heart against the barbarities of his one childhood.

In the little stone cottage where they lived there is but one room below stairs. In the upper story there is a room the same size as that on the first floor. This is retained as a sort of showroom, and in well savings tried to be in-furnishing with Carlyle relics, including his famous coffee pot in which he was wont to make his coffee and stir the equally famous tobacco-water—handfuls of his Chapter Row, Cadogan, Innamann and inseparable companions of wakefulness and dreaming. Off this little chamber and sitting-room, in which the boy Carlyle sat by the fire place, is a little long bedroom over the stone entry and in this Thomas Carlyle was born. Throughout the place is minutely, meagre, kind, unsoiled.

Overlooking the spot Thomas Carlyle first trodden the earth, and the little garden room to one spot made warm, rather and growing for his young feet is part of it. From the dreary and bleak land where he lies, but a few days from where he was born, through the [illegible] of the years, the spirit of the boy and his young feet, in his [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] There they lie side by side and in all the round where he was born and reared, who stroke the family name with being kindness and [illegible] [illegible] The boy Carlyle, the [illegible] the Carlyle home and heard to be to be guarded with sympathy and tender. The very graveyard is permanence and [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]