

dred miles would still necessarily be traversed in the countless row-boats (roe-baade) and little steamers of the fiords.

These fiords are therefore almost first in combined attractiveness to the traveler. They possess three distinct phases of interest. They are the chief national highways; the greatest possible diversity in peasant and village life is found upon their shores and in the adjacent valleys; and with few exceptions, as with the glacier-fields and upper waterfalls, crags and dales of the fiercely-desolate fields or mountain reaches, they certainly provide culminations and combinations of the most impressive scenery to be found in Norway.

Of late years Norway has almost out-rivalled Switzerland as a resort for indefatigable lovers of the sublime in nature's aspects. This is largely because of this very commingling of the Alpine, the marine and the human elements. In our own amazing Yosemite there are immensity, sublimity, and a silence that is appalling. Here are all these in infinite variety and expression—endless sea-reach, measureless water-depths, sheer walls from 2,000 to 4,000 feet in height, majestic snow-clad peaks twice this altitude, tremendous torrents and waterfalls thousands of feet from leap to pool, glacier-fields hundreds of square miles in area—and, toning and softening all from an endless panorama of sublimity unbearable, that tender threading of human color, in never-failing sight of valley or eerie nests of love and effort where hardy, honest yeomen dwell.

The most noted of these Norwegian fiords are the Hardanger, the Sogne, the Trondhjem and the Geiranger. From the first three extend more than a score of lesser fiords. Most of these are marvels of beauty and grandeur as individual types. All are mountain-walled and nearly land-locked. Their protection by the outer skerries and islets and the unceasing tremendous counterforce of mountain torrents from the ice-fields prevent a tidal rise of their natural surfaces of more than three feet. Of the four named, the Geiranger is the narrowest, the Hardanger the most beautiful, the Trondhjem the most interestingly diversified, and the Sogne and its divergent arms the longest and most savage and often appalling in its grandeur.

Through its accessibility from Bergen the Hardanger fiord is likely to be the first Norwegian fiord seen by the tourist. It is about seventy miles in length. Two classes of steamers ply upon it, as well as upon the other fiords named, the swift, capacious and elegant mail steamers which touch at few landings, called "stations," and the local passenger and freight boat, which take no head of time, even from its loss. The latter should always be chosen. They are very comfortable, scrupulously clean, and the incidents of the voyage are more varied and charming. Besides, the magnificent scenery of the fiords is thus more leisurely enjoyed.

More than a hundred calls for passengers or freight are made on the voyage to Odde at the head of the fiord. This brings you in closer contact with the life along its numberless valley stations; and along the Hardanger fiord this is of much account, as the peasantry of the Hardanger district are perhaps the most characteristic in dress and customs yet remaining in Norway. The human interest along the Hardanger is continuous.

Groups of the peasantry, especially where setting out for or returning from funerals, weddings or summer-time festivities are always as picturesque as may be seen in Brittany or Normandy. The men are all clad in dark garments and the women are gay with glint and color. The Hardanger female costume in the field often consists of one garment displaying the outlines of the form with considerable freedom, though there will always be a bit of color in kerchief about the neck or head. But when these Hardanger matrons and lasses bedeck themselves for sad or merry occasions there are certain old and gaudily painted pine chests in every household to be safely drawn upon for requisite finery.

It is then their black, blue or brown woolen skirts reach the plenitude and immeasurable foldings of the Newhaven fishwife or the Connemara knitter on market day. Their waists and sleeves are snowy white, and never were elsewhere seen such vast, spotless and flowing aprons as they possess. Their bright bodices, which are always open for display through a square yoke of snowy plaits, bits of embroidery and monstrous silver broaches, are quaintly wrought with silk, with beads, or with silver and gilt, while the tremendous white caps of the married women, winged and blaring and wide, are held in place over light wooden frames. The girls often wear only the flaxen head-dress which nature gave them, braided with bright ribbons, although some will be seen with tiny beaded caps perched jauntily upon their heads. As the Irish country lasses often carry their shoes and stockings to the edge of the village on market-day, and innocently put their pretty feet and legs into them at convenient halting-places by the roadside, so these thrifty Hardanger peasant women make parcels of their most precious garments and finery, and complete their amazing toilets near the place of merry-making or before entering the village church, unconscious of observation and innocent of alarm.

Then there are the oncoming and debarking of passengers; the curious forms of freight landed and received; the continuous crossing and recrossing of the waters by peasant parties from valley to valley and hamlet to hamlet; the tourist crowds rushing for inns or engaging carriages for mountain tours; amiable collections of Stolkiaeres drives with their patient ponies and their lumbering carts; deans and parsons en-route to distant parishes; American and English hunters and fishers with their marvelous outfits and belongings, comprising everything save evidences of game taken, setting out for the fields or being rowed to more promising fields of sport; grave old bonders from upland gaarde, silent, important, wise, but rotund from good digestion and calm and benign from measureless content, making you feel that there is something substantial about Norway aside from her crags and ice; lumber owners from the cities visiting the mills and seeking and sorting their logs; engineering parties at work upon the endless task of bringing the valleys and fiords nearer together; geologists and naturalists innumerable, with impoverished stores of specimens but so enthusiastically exuding with theories and conjectures about the glacier age and the moraines, that no peace shall come until their discoveries, in book form, finally to drift the terminal moraines of literature,

the great libraries' cob-webbed shelves; and everywhere the frenzied amateur photographer, pale with energy and loss of sleep, and the lean, lank, lone, lorn cyclist, bent with rheumatism, humped from bronchitis and in his scant attire as incongruous a spectacle as a skirtless ballet-dancer dropped among Himalayan heights.

Through the entire length of the Hardanger fiord and its lesser outreaching upper fiords, here are the most extraordinary variety of scenery possible to find in an equal distance. Every station has its glen or chasm or wider dal. Each of these pours its river or tumultuous torrent into the fiord. Where the mountains widen out into amphitheatres; there are the circling vales fringed at the top by a horizon-line of polished or jagged rock, with a lesser circle of savage debris below; then a feathery rim of pine; below this the emerald of the farms, with their clusters of softened gray old structures; and then the foaming river shooting from the depths of the vale, with the whitish yellow line of the mountain road beside it and following all its tortuous windings; and finally, the hamlet, brown and gray, at the very edge of the blue waters of the fiord.

Such valley scenes give a sky as blue as Italy's; suggestions of inaccessible and frozen heights; the misty pearline tints that lay in Tuscan vales like the rime of ripened grape; a soft and languorous luxuriance such as half-shrouds and half reveals the valleys of Cuba; and all the mellow quaintness of Netherland hamlets, at one glance. Where the "station" cluster of mossy structures sets at the mouth of shadowy gorge, there are cliffs not hundreds but thousands of feet above; a glitter of foam like a cameo setting to the black background; and now and then, far up the purpling gorge a shaft of glittering light, as if the focused beauty of some half-hid upland dale shot for an instant between weird, cloud reaching walls.

Now for miles we sail between precipices from 3,000 to 5,000 feet in height. The silence here is painful. From water to sky there is neither branch of tree nor blade of grass. Not even wild fowl scream and circle here; and we are told the water beneath us is deeper—deeper far than the noisy sea outside the skerries—as the crags are lofty above. Suddenly we turn and face a vale of almost tropical beauty. Scarcely is this contemplated before our course carries our sight to a shore of crags with a valley line above; beyond this a feathery line of forest; then an edge of rock touched by the bright sunlight into masses of burnished bronze; and far and high beyond is a glittering line of quivering sapphire blue where the trackless ice fields of the Folgefond seem throbbing and pulsing their yet fadeless fires in the ghostly upper light.

And so on and on, to Odde—"the tongue of land; where you seem to have come to the edge of chaos-world; and where the brown hamlet, low lying and backed by gorge and crag and foss and height, looks lazily out from its slumberous inns and shops back along the blue way you came upon one of the finest blended scenes of wave and mount and sky to be found in all our good old globe. What is true of this grandest of all Norway's fiords is true, in particular, or in more intense and impressive type, of Trondhjem, of Geiranger, of Sogne, and of all the lesser fiords.