

man," that is, owners in fee of their tiny estates, are as a rule "house-proud." In years of wandering among the lowly of European countries I have never come upon any rustic folk the exteriors of whose habitations were more picturesque, or whose interiors were such shining examples of homely comfort and content. There are of course exceptions. Now and then you will find hamlets like Watendlath, hidden among the fells between Borrowdale and Thirlmere, where may be seen the sodden squalor occasionally met among the unfortunate Scottish west-coast crofters and in the Irish west-coast fishing villages. Their houses are dark and unwholesome, the floors uneven, the furniture crazy, the men clad in ragged fustian and the women in coarse wool and wooden clogs. These are sheepherders under a later sort of feudalism. In every such case the history is, their forefathers sold their little "estate" to encroaching land-grabbers, and their children are consequently today in a condition of petty serfdom.

Precisely as in Wordsworth's time you will find outside the Cumbrian villages' cottages the shade of great old sycamores and always "a tall fir through which the winds sing when other trees are leafless," in the rear a little orchard; an ample herb-bed; a nearrill or spring-spout with its ceaseless wimple; a comely garden; comfortable stone out-buildings for grain and for winter housing of the cows and tinea but hardy Cumbrian sheep; and always the shed for the hives of bees which distill from the mountain heath the darkest, but ever the sweetest, honey in the world.

These village home interiors are no less characteristic. The floors are usually of the same huge slates as those covering the roof. They are scrubbed and cleaned until they shine like dusky mirrors. Frequently you will find them, particularly near the door and fire-place, decorated with white, ochre and vermilion chalk in figures and scroll-work embodying strange fancies in rustic art. The living-room or "fire-house" as it is called is always very large for a cottage, often from eighteen to twenty-five feet square, low, but with the richest of old and polished oaken beams in the ceiling. Indeed old oak may be found in these Cumbrian village homes in profusion.

The long, solid table with benches at its sides where the "statesman," his family and laborers sit together at meals and of evenings in winter; the "long settle" or two-yards long seat at one side of the great fire-place, and the "sconce" on the other side, under which the night's fuel, called an "elden," is placed; the chairs, huge and high and requiring a strong arm to move them; the high, narrow, sprawling-legged bureaus; the many iron or brass bound chests; the beds huge and strong enough to hold giants, for these Cumbrians are often tremendous in stature;—are all of oak, curiously carved and wonderfully polished. All this is sometimes varied by pieces of mahogany almost as unique as can be found among the peasant-homes of Brittany. From this large, clean "fire-house" or living-room there are in all directions inviting vistas through wide, low doors and cosy stone "lean-tos," perhaps each one built in a different century, to tin-paned windows, splayed like turret windows, white with inner curtains, and in summer ablaze with outer bud and blossom. These villagers rooted to the land which

gave them birth not only by the sacred ties of heredity but by the, to them, more priceless heritage of ownership, neither emigrate nor flock to the congested towns. Here is rare rural England as it has for centuries been, among a type of independent, half defiant folk, whose simplicity, piety, hardihood and solidarity compel genuine admiration and respect.

Many of the comparatively modern villages of Yorkshire, Lancashire, Derbyshire and Staffordshire, the village homes of operatives in mines, mills and potteries, are far prettier and more comfortable than even many Englishmen would have us believe. A half dozen different religions fighting tooth and nail for their piety and pence, the vague unrest that comes through almost unlimited access to newspapers and books, and the changed standards of necessities and luxuries pressing sorely upon the highest limitations of even largely increased wages, have given the villagers of this type of hamlets an entirely different mental and material mold. I would not say they are happier for the change; but their homes, food, labor, wage and environment are, as we measure things, infinitely superior to those of the same class from a half century to a century ago.

Many of the hamlets are massed about by trees, have architecturally beautiful little churches, chapels, club-houses, libraries and the neatest of shops. Nearly all are tidy and clean. The potters' villages of Staffordshire are good illustrations of them all. Within a five-mile radius of Hanley, Burslem and Stoke, you can find 10,000 homes of potters, nearly all in pretty hamlets or in shady village lanes, and villages of long, single streets. The poorest potter of the district lives as snugly as did the master-potter manufacturer of forty and fifty years ago.

His cottage is of brick. It has two stories, and the blessing of perfect drainage. On the ground floor are a parlor with a pretty fire-place, a large living-room provided with a huge grate, hobs and "jockey-bar" for swinging pots and kettles; and behind this is a scullery, with a fine little garden at the rear. The upper floor comprises two large sleeping-rooms.

This gives every family a five-roomed, completely detached house and garden. Ordinary workmen earn from twenty-five to thirty shillings weekly. If there happen to be daughters, one may be a "paintress," coloring the cheaper wares and earning eight shillings, and perhaps another a "burnisher," earning six shillings, per week. Many families thus secure from thirty-five to forty shillings per week while their rent and rates do not exceed five shillings per week for such a home.

Nearly all of these workmen's village homes have front-area flower-plats. In the gardens of all are mazes of flowers and vines and beds of vegetables in summer. Every parlor has its solemn-voiced "grandfather's clock." It also boasts chests of linen, drawers of comfortable clothing, and many cheap and pretty pieces of furniture; while on the mantle or bureau-top is always found some fanciful sketch, painting or curious model, the result of emulation to win prizes for invention in new processes, or for unique and original designs in modeling and decoration. The murderous "truck" system is unknown in Eng-

land, as it should be in America; and every penny due every man is paid him each Saturday noon. We are very fond, about election-time, of telling our workmen what lucky dogs they are. I wish they truly possessed the home comfort and pleasant environment that English workmen's villages almost universally disclose.

Another and most interesting type of villages and village life may be found in the region comprised in southwestern Warwickshire, northern Gloucestershire, eastern Herefordshire and southern Worcestershire, between the towns of Stratford-on-Avon, Hereford, Worcester and Gloucester. The antiquity of most of these villages is as great and their characteristics as those of the stone hamlets of Cumberland. Like the latter most are of stone and from 300 to 500 years old. Here is everything curious and ancient in old oak doors and hinges, fanciful chimney-pieces, massive oak lintels, doors and balustrades, mullioned windows and paneled rooms. When the habitations are not of stone they are the still more picturesque ancient Tudor half timbered houses. These in their gables with crowning pinnacles, their odd porches, small but massive doors, mullioned windows and huge chimneys, overhanging stories and jumbles of protecting windows, are no less quaint and curious than their interiors, with their spacious, low-ceilinged rooms paneled with oak of ebon blackness, often elaborately carved and ornamented, and with passages, nooks, niches, cupboards and presses, bewildering in arrangements and number.

Each stone farm-house and cotter's village home stands in its own orchard, brilliant with sprays of pink and white, or with balls of russet and gold, according to the season. Chaffinches and robins are among the mosses in all these orchards; blackbirds and thrushes everywhere in the thick garden shrubberies and in the tangled coppices and hedgerows. The stage-coaches are here just as of old. So are the carrier, the carter, the thatcher, the tiler, the drainer, the ploughman, the shepherd, the common field laborer, and even the poacher; all as heedless of reform as Cuban guajiros, and all with kindly faces and speech betokening sturdy pride in their vacations which were the toil of their fathers before them. There is no elbowing, no jostling no harrying or hurrying. Everybody saunters, dozes or labors as though content never paid penalty to want. An atmosphere of unconstrained amplitude broods over all. Hundreds of the olden English villages are surely here in a region that knows no change.

Unless one has really wandered in rock-buttressed old Cornwall it is hard to believe that outside the picturesque coastwise fishing hamlets there is such a thing as characteristic village life. To the casual observer from the railway train, the whole face of the land seems torn and scarred as if by tremendous elemental struggles. A myriad hissing fragments of exploded planets, hurled in awful upper rain upon its face could have left no more unsightly hurts. But it is full of entrancing hidden nooks, where, sloping from ragged moorlands are beauteous little valleys with ample farms, lessening into tinier checkers of hedge and and lane-broidered fields and these into mossy old hamlets, where the white Wesleyan chapel and the Norman-towered parish church, are the only two