

## WAKEMAN'S WANDERINGS.

LONDON, Jan. 16, 1893. It has been pretty well settled by literary ferrets that Gray actually composed a portion if not the whole of his immortal *Elegy*, while sitting in the south porch of the old Stoke Poges Church, beneath the "yew-tree's shade."

It is one of my favorite tramps from London to this spot in sunny weather, as there is hardly a sweeter or more restful place in all England; and I love to sit where Gray sat, beneath the yew-tree's shade, and muse on the quiet and hallowed surroundings. In this way the famous yew-tree of Stoke Poges churchyard has come to possess for me a most loving and precious interest. There is no record of its age; but as it was already a tree of mature growth when Gray wrote, in a churchyard between 400 and 500 years old, its antiquity must be considerable even for the yew, which in England attains to most venerable age.

It stands fifty feet south of the old stone south porch of the church. Its top has been repeatedly cut away to preserve the tree, which is still about thirty feet in height. The girth of the trunk is a trifle over twelve feet; and its huge spreading branches, reaching to the north, almost touch the roof tiling of the church above the porch, while towards the south and southeast fully a dozen branches, from fifty to sixty feet long, sweep to the ground or softly tap the headstones of the ancient graves. I should think that from 300 to 400 persons could stand beneath its gentle shade.

If you were wandering north on the main coach road from Windermere to Keswick, in the county of Westmoreland, England, a steep, wide roadway turning to the right and east would attract your attention. From the enclosures on either side huge beech trees and sycamores push tremendous arms across the walls and completely cover the way. It is as shadowy as twilight here. You will not have passed a score of rods up this high arched nature's aisle until the sounds from the highway—the rumbling of the stages, the laughter of gay tourists, and even the notes of the coach horns—are stilled. In summer the place is thronged with birds. Even these irreverent choristers seem as if subdued and ruminative here. In autumn your feet sink in feathery masses of pale golden leaves. It seems a long time that you have been traversing these few rods, all is so hushed and still.

Ascending a little farther, there is a break in the foliage to your right. Some huge gates are seen. A lodge stands just beyond, and suddenly the splendid facades of Rydal Hall, the seat of the Le Flemings, appear above the luxuriant shrubbery of its splendid park. Higher still you climb, and where the dark road-way seems to make a final circle over the brow of the hill to the left, you pause to listen. Something like low and hesitant organ notes is murmuring in minor chords, while a gay and joyous treble plays in exultant tones above. Ah! you remember. These are the voices of the two cascades of Rydal. Their songs were sung to the poet Wordsworth for forty happy years.

Between the Littledale falls and the Westmoreland hills, in the Lune valley of Lancashire, England, in one of my recent wanderings in the lake district I came upon an interesting British govern-

ment official. This official was a woman. You could not, and she would not, tell whether she was forty or eighty years of age. In other respects she was exceedingly chatty and friendly. She was nearly six feet tall. Her frame was like a man's, and so was her face. She could outwalk any yeoman of the hills, and was firm and hard as iron. She wore hob-nailed boots, a short heavy woolen skirt of home spinning and weaving, an under-jacket of corduroy and the grotesque short-skirted, red-striped blue coat and regulation cap of the British postman.

I have pride in my own achievements as a walker, but I could not keep in pace with this woman for a half mile. Before I had, puffing and panting, fallen behind her for rest and rumination I had learned that this faithful body had carried the British mails, often being laden with from fifty to eighty pounds of post parcels for delivery, over twenty miles every week-day for the past twenty-one years. As I sat on a rock by the roadside thinking the matter over, as she disappeared with a fine strong stride that I envied, I could not help figuring out with my stick in the chalky dust of the stony road that she had already walked nearly the distance of five times the earth's circumference for the pittance of ten shillings per week, or but \$546 for the entire term of twenty-one year's drudgery!

A few mornings since I heard some prideful conversation between "cherry" London costermongers and Convent Garden porters, which I afterward found to be true, showing that two of the most famous singers London has ever known, reached fame through the peculiar and hard training originally secured among the lowly of their ilk. Albert Chevalier, now the greatest of living character impersonators, practically lived among the costers for years, and the marvelous fidelity of his songs and impersonations to coster life and character were wholly gained in this manner. Sims Reeves, the one tenor who for nearly half a century held all the song lovers of Britain enslaved, once "carried the knot," that is, the head-pad, of a Convent Garden porter, and got his start as a singer in the former foul dens within the sound of Bow bells.

When your tourist fancy leads you into Scotland, go further. It is but a little sea-journey from Aberdeen, Peterhead or Wick to the Shetland Islands. Their people are very hospitable, possessing many pleasant ancient customs, and there is no end to modern historic and pagan monuments of strange and curious interest. Not the least of your pleasures there will be witnessing a "drive o' ca'ing whales," which you are almost certain to do, if your visit to the islands happen in May or June.

The Peterhead and other whaling ships formerly completed their crews at Lerwick, and these times were always periods of great activity. Of late years Shetland's interest in whaling has been principally confined to driving the monsters ashore. This exciting work is often tremendously profitable. In 1845 a great shoal of 1540 "ca'ing" whales were driven ashore in Quendale Bay, the southeasternmost bay of Shetland, lying between Sumberg and fitful Heads; and in June, two years ago, a shoal of several hundred was successfully landed on the east coast.

Until quite recently these shore wha-

lers were illy requited for their captures. The financially omnivorous landlord, called the "laird" here, true to his octopus instincts, claimed the right, up to 1839, to tax the poor Shetlanders one-half of the entire proceeds of all whales driven into shoal water opposite, or upon the shores of, their domains, "a sort of riparian right on the Almighty for what was sent to save men from starvation on account of rents and other burdens imposed by the 'laird' himself," an old Shetlander explained to me.

As the value of the blubber will average \$30 per ton, the "laird" often thus secured from \$2,000 to \$5,000 as his "right" in a single catch. From 1839 to 1888 the "lairds" were considerate enough to rob the whalers of but one-third. In September of that year the claim was resisted in the courts, the whalers won their cause, and the "lairds" have since been compelled to content themselves with the meager enjoyment of witnessing, rather than profiting by, the hazardous work.

When a drove of "ca'ing" whales appear on the coast, the news spreads like oil-drops on marble. As the whole town of St. Ives, Cornwall, goes mad when a shoal of pilchers is sighted, so does every live Shetlander, desert every other vocation, even to a wedding, to join in the "drive." A rush is made by the men for the boats, while women and children wildly collect guns, ammunition, harpoons, scythes, lances, knives and even bags of stone, indeed anything portable which may assist in the hoped-for destruction.

The whalers make all haste and splendid cunning in getting between the whales and the open sea. Their fleet of all manner of craft then gradually closes in upon the "pack" or "drove," directing by the splendid maneuvers of the different boats the course of the whales to a shallow bay. So expert are these Shetland whalers in driving that a shoal of whales is seldom lost, if time is given for forming the "drive" well outside the "drove." If the whales once enter the chosen bay, their pursuers come to close quarters, and then the conflict begins.

Finding the water becoming shallow the terrified whales endeavor to make for the open sea, but are met at every point by a perfect wall of boats, altogether filled with hundreds and sometimes thousands of men seemingly desperate in their efforts at capture, and the howling, shouting, screaming, lashing of the water, discharging of fire-arms, stone-throwing, and rushing to and fro of the equally desperate whales, form as exciting a scene as one ever witnessed outside a genuine field of battle. Occasionally a few break through the line and escape. As a rule the school is doomed. Once driven into shoal water where they can only flounder in mighty struggles, or high and dry on land, where they often toss themselves in their mad efforts to escape, their butchery, which is always a savage and sickening sight, proceeds with wonderful dispatch. In their bloody work the hardy and powerful Shetland women take a gleeful and almost frenzied part.

The dripping thing they call a river, the Manzanares, at Madrid, Spain, comes down from the cold, gray heights to the north, and winds half way around the city from the northwest to the southwest. What water flows through it, breaks in sandy shallows, forming innumerable