

strong table, with huge legs, cross-pieces and braces, worn and polished from use; and its great age was plainly told in one-half its length being provided, as I have found entire tables in the peasant-homes of Brittany, with square, oval and circular depressions, in which the food of the children and hinds was served perhaps a hundred years ago, when even pottery was a luxury, and only the peasant master, his wife and the elder sons and daughters knew the use of the rudest delft.

More curious than all else was the entire side of the "fire-room" containing the fireplace, in which, though our visit was in midsummer, there was a cheery, comforting blaze. A huge arch sustained the bowed cottage wall. This stone arch was really the base of the chimney. In its center was the open fireplace hung about with chains, hooks and cranes, and at each side was a narrow splayed window, like those of a castle turret—tiny outlooks from this peasant fortalice of a snuggerly; and the dark mouth of the chimney above must have been nearly six feet across. I have found the same odd arrangement in the cottages of old *clachans* in the Hebrides, in the Scottish Highlands, and in the ancient half-deserted weavers' village of Gattonside, near Melrose, beside the Tweed. The slates of the floor in front of this fireplace were decorated with grotesque figures and designs, one of Noah's dove, and scroll-work in ochre and vermilion chalk, a universal homeside custom among the lake district peasantry.

The chairs were huge and high and of oak. The bureaus and dressers, quaintly decorated with shining pewter and strange old bits of chinaware, were high, narrow and sprawling-legged, and all of mahogany. The beds—for one for the house master occupied a corner of the room—were high, huge and strong enough for the repose of giants and were of strangely carved oak. Out from this ample living-room extended inviting vistas through low-ceilinged "lean-tos," each one doubtless built in a different century, and each provided with many tiny windows with deep casements, through which could be caught a glint of blossom, a spray of foliage, or the lichened gray of some ancient structure; the whole a dream of sweet old age, centuries-old rooting to the very rocks of the hills, endless content and unbroken repose. No wonder is it that the heart of the wanderer, when coming upon scenes like this, for the moment thrills with longing to end his pilgrimings, and hide for aye where the bitter struggle of life may no more come within such winsome, storm-defying walls!

This picture of a single peasant home at ancient Bowness-on-Solway is one of even tone with thousands of others, from the Scottish border down through the mountain dales and passes to the grand lake district, across Cumberland and Westmoreland, past Morecambe Bay, almost to the River Lune, in Lancashire. Its peasant owner was a "statesman." That one word is the key to his splendid self-poise, his simple, strong nature, and to the ample comfort and fixedness of his environment. It is true of them all. These "statesmen" are peasants absolutely possessing the soil which they till. There is no tuft-pulling, head-ducking or knee-cringing among such as these in England or any

other country. In the ancient feudal times the barons were often in sore stress to repel the Scottish border incursions, or to make equally barbarous forays of their own. To provide retainers who would fight to the death for these barons as well as for their own mountain-side, rock-hewn cabins, it was found a wise thing to parcel out the lands in tiny bits to hirelings; and these villein retainers were in time enfranchised. They were only bound to their liege lords for military service in defense. When feudalism passed away the villein land-owners remained free-men and possessors in fee of the little "estates," hence "statesmen," the noblest peasantry of all Europe, and a wondrous though singularly unheeded example to the remainder of Britain in its endlessly perplexing agrarian problems.

In no other portion of England, unless it be in the quaint old stone-built villages among the Malvern and Cotswold Hills, has there been so little change as in this English Alpine region. But two faint arteries of travel thread through it. One is a railway from ancient Penrth to Workington on the Irish Sea. The other is the most picturesque coach road in Britain. It leads from Keswick where the shrine of Southey is found, past lordly Helvellyn the mountain-monarch of the region, and mystic Dunmail Raise, through Grasmere where DeQuincy lived and Hartley, Coleridge and Wordsworth sleep side by side, on past Rydal Mount and quaint old Ambleside with its cherished memories of Haryet Martineau, Christopher North and Dr. Arnold, to Windermere and the little Bowness of Westmoreland, where the kindly face of Mrs. Hemans seems pressed against every rose-embowered window-pane. So, but a little walk through any mountain-pass away from these thoroughfares and you will come to the ancient stone-built "statesmen's" homes, and nearly the same manner of peasant mountain life as existed hundreds of years ago. Wordsworth was born among this folk. He engagingly speaks in this wise of their mountain-side habitations: "Hence buildings, which in their very form call to mind the processes of nature, do thus, clothed in part with a vegetable garb, appear to be received into the bosom of the living principle of things, as it acts and exists among the woods and fields."

You will seldom find a detached and isolated habitation. From a half dozen to a score will croodle together in some pockety dell, huddle beneath the frowning height of a dreary scaw, nestle along the side of foaming ghyll, crouch closely together in the tangled verdure of some narrow pass, or stand like a clump of mossy rocks beside some shadowy upland turn. Wherever found, many of their peculiarities are common to all. You will always find them beneath the shade of lofty sycamore trees; and when the leaves of these are gone, there is always near the cottage the green of the fir-tree to gladden the eyes in winter. I do not believe there is a peasant's home in the entire lake district where the wimpling sound of near running water is not endlessly heard. The ordhards are large and bountiful. The stout-walled gardens are splendidly kept and fruitful. There are always comfortable stone outbuildings for cattle; walled and covered sheep

folds to withstand the most pitiless mountain tempests; invariably a tidy stone shed for the many hives of bees which distil from the mountain heath the sweetest "hinny", in England; and in summer time every cottage wall is a mass of flaming roses. Everyone of these habitations is a museum of ancient house utensils. The oldest one known to man, the queen, is here; all implements of the hand weaver and spinner are here; the antique "fulling" boards were here; and I have as often found in these habitations the *methers*, that most ancient of Gaelic and Celtic drinking vessels, as I have come upon them in the cabins of the Hebrides or the west of Ireland.

When folk have stood still so long and have so steadily fended all change, they usually furnish most interesting studies in their daily lives, customs and folk-lore; and yet these people are singularly lacking in any strongly-marked picturesqueness aside from that found in their unyielding tenacity to the home and actual ownership of the soil, their universal thrift and integrity, and their almost soddenness of calm and repose. They were never a boisterous, roystering folk, and to this day the dalesmen of one valley may have no acquaintance with or knowledge of those of another valley, unless the huddled homes of the latter happen to lie along the mountain road leading to the nearest market town. Partly accounting for this is the unbroken custom of never "hiving off." People of the same blood and family name occupy entire districts, and are sufficient unto themselves. This occasions grotesque nomenclature of identification. One is known as Jock o' t' Rigg; another, Myles o' t' Beck, another, Barrow-back't (bentbacked) Boab; another, Fratchin (quarrelsome) Ned; and still another, Byspel (mischievous) Billy. These are all likely to be heads of families and grave old men. The names came along with them from boyhood and every one accepts his neighborhood designation, as he does his increase of children or flocks and herds, in dignified though prideful content.

Some other distinctive ancient customs are still found in the remoter districts. The "watching" of the dead, almost identical in manner with the Irish wake, is universal. Courting is facilitated by the household retiring, after putting out the lights, and leaving the "font" or lovesick couple upon the "long-settle" of the "fire-room" to their hearts content, at which modern delicacy may stand aghast; but this manner of matings proves sturdy and true. Funerals furnish heroic feasts. At a few of the mountain towns "hirin'" still survives, when the maidens who wish to engage at service stand in groups at the market-place; but they will no longer hold in their hands the wisp of straw, which was the olden badge of servitude. On Shrove Tuesday the boys still ferociously play "Beggary Scot," a game based on the forays of the old-time borderers. "Shaking-bottle," containing a decoction of licorice and water, is common with all children on May day. Kurn-winning, or the Harvest Home festivity, continues general. Youthful "pace-egggers" appear a fortnight before Easter, sometimes, in grotesque costumes, and carol demands for colored eggs, which are never refused. The smiths of the districts will