IN ROMANTIC ENGLAND.

Edgar L. Wakeman's Trip Through the English Lake District.

SOME POINTS FOR THE TOURISTS.

Places Richest in Associative Interest ---Cumberland, the Home of the Unconquerable Brigantes of Long Ago ---Scenes Made Famous by Poets and Novelists.

Special Correspondence of the Intelligencer.

WINDERMERE, ENGLAND, May 12, 1891. —The conventional trip taken through the lake district is either after arrival by rail at its southern headquarters, Windermere, by coach north through the heart of the region to Keswick, or on arrival by rail at Keswick, over the same grand highway by coach south to Windermere. Thus tourists, and particularly American tourists, who wish to make the best use of their hours, are enabled to secure a very good general idea of the district, and certainly look upon that portion richest in associative interest—while viewing its finest lakes, loveliest vales and loftiest mountains—by an expenditure of but one day's time. An old traveler's word for it, seldom in a lifetime can a day be so exaltingly filled.

At the Keswick or Windermere you have daily the choice of a score of four-in-hand coaches. Some are of the old English and Concord patterns, but most are built high in air, open, seating at least twenty fares; are wonderfully constructed for strength and lightness; give a delightful sense of breezy altitude to passengers; and furnish in their cavernous "bodies" vast storeroom for parcels and luggage. Most of these coaches are provided with guards with musical horns and rosy noses, with taciturn drivers, who loiter about the stables of the nobility in winter, and exist in a defiant attitude of protest against questions in summers, and with the handsomest coach-horses to be found in all England. You can leave Windermere or Keswick, in either direction, at any hour of the day between seven and two; and the ride of twenty-one miles, through several of the deepest valleys and over two of the highest passes of the region, is usually accomplished in about five hours.

You are at Keswick. If you have "booked" at least three days in advance, have paid for two fares beside your own, and have privately consulted with stipendary modifications the driver and guard as to the most favorable measures for viewing the region, you can secure your seat on the box of the most popular "going out" coach, at nine in the morning, the envy and glares of the remainder of the "fares," whom you find represent almost every civilized nationality, Americans and Germans predominating. If you ask questions you will also secure the largest number of wide-winged "out-and-outers" with which your credence was ever assailed. Your own knowledge of the literature and topography of the Lake region is your sole amulet against these. But your coach is away with all the shouting, rattle and tooting necessary to remind you that at last you are the proud possessor, with its other monarchs, the guard and the driver, of the box of a genuine British Institution. The gentle thrill which accompanies this reflection has barely subsided when you have passed beautiful Greta bridge, and with a sudden turn to the right begin the long ascent of Castle Rigg—"the most windin' one for 'osses o' the stretch," the driver remarks in the single truthful statement you will receive all the way to Windermera. But in this long, slow climb you pass Chestnut Hill, a quaint little, crooked-roof house, with its historic sycamore, elm and cherry tree, where Shelly brought his school girl bride and where they chased each other like happy children about the flower beds until the stern Cumbrian landlord chased them both away. As the coach is halted at the top of Castle Rigg, 1,000 feet above Keswick, grand and beautiful indeed is that scene behind. The entire vale of Derwent is spread to view. Keswick gray and snug is half hidden in its bosom. To the west gleams the upper reaches of Derwentwater with the crags of Grassmoor beyond. Saddleback looms in the northeast. Beyond the tower of old Crossthwaite church, where Southey lies buried, shines the blue bed of Bassenthwaite Water. And across the whole lovely vale, where the farms spread in checkered patches of color to the sun, lofty Skiddaw stands monarch sublime of the Cumbrian North.

This dragging way over Castle Rigg is one of the two great heights you will attain by coach on your pleasant journey. The other is at Dunmail Raise, just before you pass into Westmoreland. You are in Cumberland now. This was the little Britain of long ago. It was the home of those fierce and unconquerable Brigantes who, from the time the region was known as Brigantia until it became Cumberland, beat back the Saxons from the east, the Welsh from the south and Picts from the north, and met every foe outside their mountain gate. Marvelously sweet and fragrant is the morning as you now smoothly spin along these noble heights. But it seems to have scarcely reached the deepest vales. To your right, the west—for your direction is nearly always due south from Keswick to Windermere—are the seemingly endless fells, odorous with the budding heath, and here and there a mass of color from banks of violets, the gentle breeze stirring the whole fell-side as if with wild and riotous motion and delight. In front, the wide, smooth mountain road winds between overhanging lichened rocks, spans shadodowy dingles, and its apparent end seems to drop sheer into a measureless sea of blue. But now to the left down, down, as if into some vast witch-cauldron the sight descends, and attempts to penetrate the films of mist. Morning is late in reaching St. John's Vale. Dense and dark in the vale's lowest depths, the mist breaks above in feathery rifts where the rays of the eastern sun filter through in filmy streams of gold. Half disclosed behind them are the dark gray outlines of the mighty crag, Castle Rock. You cannot see it clearly; but Scott has so nobly described it in "The Bridal of Triermain," with its

> "Wicket of oak, as iron hard,
> With iron studded, clenched and barred,
> And prong'd portcullis, join'd to guard
> The gloomy pass below—

that you need no better view.

Above this almost on a level with your coach, which is just beginning the long southern descent of Castle Rigg, lies a huge moving cloud. It is slowly passing down the valley. Suddenly you realize you are above the clouds, for "See the Striding Edge!" is chorused by many of your companions. There it lies, this grim, yellow-black and curved ridge of Helvellyn, majestic monarch of all this grand lake region. It seems across that cloud to be the mighty mural walls of some weird isle, unattainable beyond a sea of mountainous waves. A curve in the road for a few moments hides cloud and mountain-top. When Helvellyn again appears the cloud has been lost in and over the Vale of St. John, and there stands the grand old mountain, forest-hung at its base, cleft and scarred above, still higher striped here and there with far-descending torrents, like mighty plumes in white, and its broken summit and "Striding Edge" showing thousands of blackened almost vertical furrows in the eternal stone of its peaks and ridges.

But you now have something to do besides gaze on Helvellyn. Your coach is descending the mountain at tremendous speed. The wheel horses are at their best pace, in a trot, and the leaders are fairly at canter. The skids smoke at the wheels. Many a "God bless me!" is ejaculated by old travelers. The ladies stifle little shrieks in vain, and have recourse to occasional alarming "Ouches!" The guard blows his horn furiously. And in a series of bounds, lurches and ricochets, over a good two miles descent, done in less than seven minutes, the foaming horses, the creaky, beclouded coach and gasping passengers, come to a grateful standstill at the King's Head Inn, Thirlspot, hard by the shores of Thirlmere lake.

The inn is for those who wish to stretch their legs and wash the mountain dust from their throats with mountain dew. You remain in your high seat there, for this valley and its mountain-sides have hosts of memory-wraiths for the few minutes in which they may appear. Just before you is Dalehead Hall, once full of Southey's mirth and Wordsworth quiet wisdom. Beside it, Dalehead Meadows, in which once stood the famous inn-of-call for packers and dalesmen, "Willie How." Across Thirlmere is ancient, haunted Armboth Hall. You passed in your mad gallop down the mountain side Fisher Place where Rossetti, at death's door, read the last proofs of his wild, melodious sonnets. To the right is the pony-path leading over to outlandish Watendlath; and you can any time go over its weird wild course with Forster and Matthew Arnold, by reading the latter's exquisite poem, "Resignation." All this valley was Wordsworth's and Coleridge's daily meeting ground. Down there in Thirlmere is the "Rock of Names," where the name of William Wordsworth, Dorothy, his faithful sister, Mary Hutchinson, afterwards his noble wife, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Wordsworth and Sarah Hutchinson, were chiseled by their own hands. At the valley's edge to the north is all that is left of the Cherry Tree Inn, forever famous because Wordsworth stopped his peasant "Waggoner" there, and at the "village merry night" gave him two or three hours of rousing fun. Under Bull Crags is the ancient "Justice Stone" where in olden times the law was administered. Almost clinging to the crags in spots like chamois, around the noble valley's rim are flocks of the black-faced Herdwick sheep of Umbria, which tradition says the Armada brought here 300 years ago. Not only here but on many a mountain side in Cumberland you will see circular green bits of pasture on the hillsides. They are walled with stone, and are the earliest enclosures by civilized people in the north of England. In ancient times the cows were herded within them at milking time. Here and there on highest crags can be seen the "maens" or cairns of old. These and countless other objects will lead you into the mazes of antiquity, while in the very names of the inn and valley of Thirlspot, and of Thirlmere set like twin sapphires in the bosom of the vale, tell of the Viking Thorold who dwelt here and bequeathed the spot his name forever.

"Time's up!" from the guard, breaks in upon all your dreamful musings. In a trice your now cherry companions are in their places. The notes of the coach-horn flood the valley. On, on you speed, scaring the sandpipers into the rushes and reeds; and the ring-ousels skim scamperingly to the farther shadowy shore;—through the valley, past sleeping Thrilmere; up past little Wytheburn church, not as big as your own parlor, and the second smallest house of God in Britain; and then up, up again, as over Castle Rigg, to weird old Dunmail Raise. Here a parting look is had at grim Helvellyn, and the eye lingers lovingly on the pale blue of St. John's Vale below the deeper blue of far Blencathra; the whole a miniature image of the pass of Lauterbrunnen. Here, too, is that northern curio of the antiquarians, the Raise itself. It is a huge cairn of pebbles. Tradition says the cairn was made over 1,000 years ago, on the defeat and slaughter of Dunmail, King of Cumbria, in the year 945. Dunmail's dominions were given to King Malcolm, of Scotland, and the cairn was left to mark the boundary of the two kingdoms, as it to-day forms the boundary of the shires of Cumberland and Westmoreland. Into the latter and another noble mountain-flunked valley your coach now plunges with smoking horses and wheels. Faster and faster speeds the coach, and faster and thicker crowd objects and scenes hallowed by the lives and graves of men and the immortal glamor of song.

Comprehensively speaking, it is all the Vale of Rothay. To the east the eye scans the sides and heights of Fairfield, Red Screes, and Wansfell, with the far ridges of High street and Kirkstone behind. To the west, rise in weird and precipitous masses the savage Pikes of Langdale, and Crinkle Crags and Wetherlam with their sunshiny cones are seen in the far south. Beneath you is the fair and peaceful valley, with gray old Grasmere, by its square church-tower, asleep beside the peaceful waters of its beanteous lake—sublimity, beauty, peace, everywhere blended as if by a magic wand. See to the right that ancient millwheel. Above it rises mighty Helm Crag, its crowning majestic piles of stone every fairy woman, cowled priest, threatening demon, or myriad changing other forms from poets' days to Druid times of old. Stone Arthur,

"The last that parleys with the setting sun,"

frowns opposite. You rush by Swan Inn whence Wordsworth, Southey and Scott left on their ponies for Helvellyn's ascent, and where there are still delicious legends of how Scott came back of evenings, after Wordsworth was safely snoring at Grasmere, to mix the lake water with a few drops of John Barleycorn. As you crash across Rothay's bridge, your eye follows the spume and foam of Sour Milk Ghyll, and your thought leaps to the farthest depth of Easdale, which Wordsworth haunted and vowed was all his own. And here, just by the northern edge of Gasmere village, is Allen Bank. Volumes could be written upon its memories; for it is Allen Bank where Wordsworth wrote most of the "Excursion," where De Quincey and "Christopher North" first met, and where Coleridge wrote the "Friend."

But here is Grasmere; Grasmere of ancient "Rushbearing" fame; Grasmere, with perhaps the oldest and certainly the quaintest church in England; Grasmere, where the brave old dame soundly walloped the Prince of Wales for "harrying" her sheep; Grasmere, where De Quincey for thirty-seven years retained his Dove Cottage and its maze of books that all the other writers borrowed and never brought back, so absorbed and absorbing were they, and where the angel Margaret fought the demon opium and rescued that wondrous intellect and soul from inconceivable hells of torment; Grasmero, where in old St. Oswald's churchyard sleep Hartley Coleridge and William Wordsworth, and the beauteous Rothay, leaping from sequestering meadows, gives back along the old church wall deathless songs they sung.

The heart swells and the eyes fill quickly here; and you are glad the fresh relay of horses speeds you so swiftly away. The road lays along the shores of Grasmere. To the west are mountains, mountains everywhere. Half way around the base of bold White Moss, high above your head, is the 'Wishing Gate," famous in romance and song. Turning sharply to the left little Rydal Water, a speck of blue in a now almost level valley, is before you. In that cottage to the left lives a granddaughter of Wordsworth. Swingin into the north-and-south highway at spanking speed, you come alongside a tiny cottage embedded in ivy, its hedge and walls squarely upon the road, and a sweet bit of meadow sloping away from the place to the shore of Rydal Water. Nab Scar rises high behind it, like the fir-hung hill behind the Alcott cottage at Concord. It is Nab Cottage, and was built nearly 300 years ago. In it loyal Margaret Simpson, afterward wife of DeQuincey, was born, and under its slates and ivies Hartley Coleridge lived and breathed his last.

You can scarcely recall these things before you are passing Rydal. Just a glimpse of the little church is seen, so dense is the foliage here. But you know that up there at the end of that shadowy way, to the right is splendid Rydal Hall, to the left Rydal Mount, where Wordsworth lived for forty blissful years; and that the melodies of the Rydal waterfalls are just behind.

From Rydal through Ambleside to Windermere, is one mad rush of your coach, meeting and passing coach and vehicle of every description, tourists of every nationality in every pleasant means of going and coming, and altogether one wild whirl of entrancing associative interest. Here is Elleray, sentineled by its giant sycamore and rife with memories of Professor Wilson. There is Fox How, where lived noble Dr. Arnold. Behind that mass of beech and laurel lived Harriet Martineau, and the sun-dial on the fragrant terrace still bears the inscription echo of her lofty, life-long soul's desire, Come light, visit me!" Ambleside haunted by the wraiths of these folk and hidden in its mass of foliage and bloom is whisked behind. And then through an almost unbroken avenue of beeches and sycamore you are whirled along one of the grandest roads in England; with swift glimpses to right and left of mountain, vale, lake and stream; of cottage, hall and hostel old; until, with aching bones, whirling head, hungry stomach, and heart athrill for its royal stiring, your coach is brought up with a crash and a bang in front ot John Rigg's famous Windermere hostelry. The grateful odors of broiling char (almost as ravishing as those of Thompson's Gloucester "planked shad!") ascend to your eager nostrils; and before your eyes lies one of the sweetest scenes on earth—transcendent Windermere, queen of all the Umbrian lakes, dotted with dreamful sails; and from her silvery shores upleading the gladdening vision to measureless masses of mountains swathed in emerald and purple and crowned with sun-kissed glories, to the high, far horizon line, that hints of but repels the tempests of the thunderous Irish Sea.

EDGAR L. WAKEMAN.