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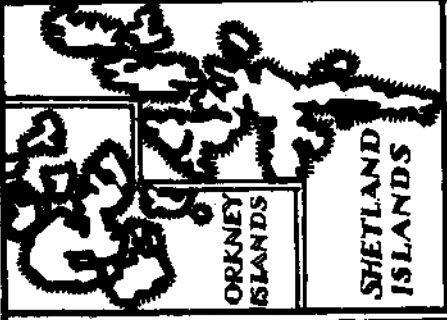
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HERE'S
ENGLAND
DOROTHY
HARTLEY

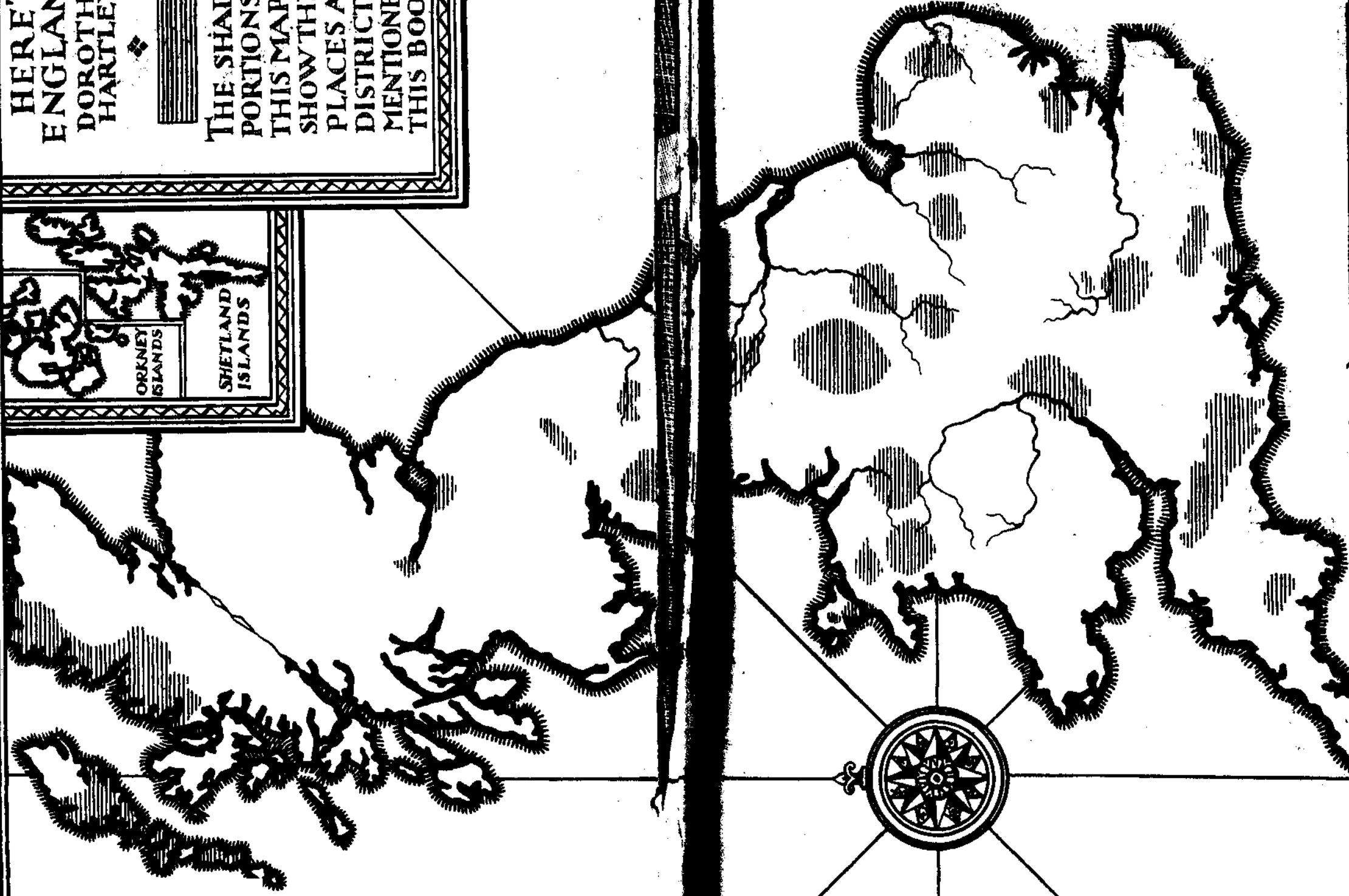


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**In Oxfordshire, in the heart of England.
View from the tower of the church, Adderbury, near Banbury.**

HERE'S ENGLAND

By
DOROTHY HARTLEY



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PREFACE AND DEDICATION
TO FRIENDS IN AFRICA

THIS is no more than a sketch book. Always I have drawn the things of the country side, the small homely things that I knew well, and when I came out, you people liked my sketch book, laughed and took possession of it, tore out the pages and kept them, seeing not my smudged drawings, but your own clear memories.

So now, back in England I have made for you another sketch book—here it is.

You took my first sketch book, and we laughed and lost it in the blue, here is another for you—like it as much as you can remember.

D.H.

North Wales
1932-1933.

C O N T E N T S

	PAGE
JANUARY.	
<i>A Ploughman.</i>	15
<i>Following the Plough.</i>	17
<i>The Storm.</i>	25
<i>Snowed Up.</i>	27
FEBRUARY.	
<i>The Cook.</i>	31
<i>Bread.</i>	33
<i>Tithe.</i>	39
<i>In the Fens.</i>	41
MARCH.	
<i>Old Verse.</i>	45
<i>Clogs.</i>	47
<i>Spring cleaning.</i>	53
<i>Domestic Spring.</i>	55
APRIL.	
<i>A Fair and Happy Milkmaid</i>	63
<i>Butter.</i>	65
<i>The Suitable Sheep.</i>	71
<i>Thinking Mutton.</i>	73
<i>Wood.</i>	77
<i>The Jolly Tent Peggers.</i>	79
<i>Snakes and Ladders.</i>	83
MAY.	
<i>Sortes of Cheese.</i>	89
<i>Cheese.</i>	91
<i>Back-Steyn.</i>	101
<i>Back-Steyn.</i>	103
JUNE.	
<i>The Shepherd.</i>	107
<i>Sheep Washing.</i>	109
<i>Sheep Shearing.</i>	111
<i>Sheep Drive and Dip.</i>	119
<i>Irish Cocks.</i>	123
<i>Good Morning!</i>	125

C O N T E N T S (contd.)

JULY.	PAGE
<i>Tankard and Jack.</i>	131
Hay.	133
<i>Possessions.</i>	141
Waste Paper Mills	143
AUGUST.	
<i>Fifteenth Century Ale.</i>	149
In the Cornfield	151
<i>Besom</i>	159
The Making of the Besom	161
<i>Tarry Wool.</i>	169
"Woollen Mill—Still Working"	171
SEPTEMBER.	
<i>The Cyder Press.</i>	177
Cyder.	179
<i>Singen I would.</i>	191
Marrum Grass	193
OCTOBER.	
<i>Where Houses be Reeded.</i>	199
Thatching	201
<i>Old Song.</i>	209
On the Moors	211
NOVEMBER.	
<i>Autumn.</i>	219
The Western Islands	221
<i>Making A Fishing Rod.</i>	231
Worm	233
DECEMBER.	
<i>Beetle and Wedge.</i>	237
Snow	239
<i>Carol.</i>	247

C O N T E N T S

	PAGE
JANUARY.	
<i>A Ploughman.</i>	15
<i>Following the Plough.</i>	17
<i>The Storm.</i>	25
<i>Snowed Up.</i>	27
FEBRUARY.	
<i>The Cook.</i>	31
<i>Bread.</i>	33
<i>Tithe.</i>	39
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MARCH.	
<i>Old Verse.</i>	45
<i>Clogs</i>	47
<i>Spring cleaning.</i>	53
<i>Domestic Spring.</i>	55
APRIL.	
<i>A Fair and Happy Milkmaid</i>	63
<i>Butter.</i>	65
<i>The Suitable Sheep.</i>	71
<i>Thinking Mutton.</i>	73
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<i>The Jolly Tent Peggers.</i>	79
<i>Snakes and Ladders.</i>	83
MAY.	
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<i>Back-Steyn.</i>	101
<i>Back-Steyn.</i>	103
JUNE.	
<i>The Shepherd.</i>	107
<i>Sheep Washing.</i>	109
<i>Sheep Shearing.</i>	111
<i>Sheep Drive and Dip.</i>	119
<i>Irish Cocks.</i>	123
<i>Good Morning!</i>	125

C O N T E N T S (contd.)

JULY.	PAGE
<i>Tankard and Jack.</i>	131
Hay.	133
<i>Possessions.</i>	141
Waste Paper Mills	143
 AUGUST.	
<i>Fifteenth Century Ale.</i>	149
In the Cornfield	151
<i>Besom.</i>	159
The Making of the Besom	161
<i>Tarry Wool.</i>	169
"Woollen Mill—Still Working"	171
 SEPTEMBER.	
<i>The Cyder Press.</i>	177
Cyder.	179
<i>Singen I would.</i>	191
Marrum Grass	193
 OCTOBER.	
<i>Where Houses be Reeded.</i>	199
Thatching	201
<i>Old Song.</i>	209
On the Moors.	211
 NOVEMBER.	
<i>Autumn.</i>	219
The Western Islands	221
<i>Making A Fishing Rod.</i>	231
Worm.	233
 DECEMBER.	
<i>Beetle and Wedge.</i>	237
Snow.	239
<i>Carol.</i>	247

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
In Oxfordshire in the heart of England	<i>Frontispiece</i>
<i>FOLLOWING THE PLOUGH.</i>	
Horse wheel in a winter farmyard	17
Driving horses	21
Leading on a bull pole	21
Spacing and spreading manure	23
Chain harrowing	23
<i>SNOWED UP.</i>	
Passage through the snow drifts	27
<i>BREAD.</i>	
An "honest to goodness" working mill	33
Carting the firewood bavins	35
Types of loaves	38
<i>IN THE FENS.</i>	
Croyland Abbey.	41
<i>CLOGS.</i>	
Clog soles	47
The long road goes North	49
"A reet good clog".	49
A Hardwick hog	49
<i>DOMESTIC SPRING.</i>	
Out on the line	55
A North-Country doorway	59
Well out of the way in Spring	61
<i>BUTTER.</i>	
Come in to breakfast	65
The milkman	67
A North country dairy maid and her "assistant"	67
<i>THINKING MUTTON.</i>	
Ewes in April	73

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS (contd.)

	PAGE
<i>THE JOLLY TENT PEGGERS.</i>	
Tent peg-maker's shed	79
Tent pegs	83
<i>SNAKES AND LADDERS.</i>	
The foot-vice	84
Ladder in the wood	84
Tent pegs drying out	84
<i>CHEESE.</i>	
A Wensleydale cheese expert	91
"Double Gloucester is a fine rich cheese"	95
Farm-house cheese press	95
Smoothing Stiltons at a country factory	95
Strong sledges bring down milk	98
Cows and a big milk lorry	98
An old farm milk flote	98
<i>BACK STEYN.</i>	
A Dungeness cart	103
Back-stays	106
<i>SHEEP.</i>	
June noon-day	109
On the downs	113
On turnip	113
Bringing hurdles to the turnip field	113
Sheep-dipping among the Welsh hills	120
<i>THE VILLAGE WAKES IN JUNE.</i>	
Early morning	125
From the church tower at 7 a.m.	127
<i>HAY.</i>	
Cutting and baling	133
Gathering up off the field	135
Lifting on to the stack	135
Shaping the stack	135

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS (contd.)

	PAGE
<i>WASTE PAPER MILLS.</i>	
Sunlit "waste" sheds	143
<i>IN THE CORNFIELD.</i>	
My cornfield	151
Will it rain ?	154
At the cottage door.	154
<i>THE MAKING OF THE BESOM.</i>	
Old low stone bridge	161
"It peels up into clean strips"	165
A good craftsman	165
The knee vice	165
Driving in the tail	165
<i>WOOLLEN MILLS.</i>	
The dry wheel	171
Mending a mill dam at low water	174
Rewinding bobbins	174
A sweat-hole shirt for a ploughman	174
Who'll wear the breeches ?	174
<i>CYDER.</i>	
The thirsty man of chalk	179
<i>MARRUM GRASS.</i>	
Glistening green cones of grass	193
Where the marrum grass bends in swathes of silk	194
Shaking out the sand	196
Plaited mats	196
Small sturdy besoms	196
<i>THATCHING.</i>	
Thatcher arrives	201
Placing the reeds	204
Beating into the slope	204
The special tool	204

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS (contd.)

	PAGE
Sewing on to the bars.	204
At Lydd, Kent	207
 <i>ON THE MOORS.</i>	
Over the moors.	211
 <i>THE WESTERN ISLANDS.</i>	
Landing sheep to graze.	221
The first snow.	225
Winter sunshine.	228
 <i>WORM.</i>	
Digging for worm.	233
 <i>SNOW.</i>	
In the cold North.	239
"We're in for a heavy fall of snow"	241
Christmas greetings.	244
Snow in Wales, 1932	246

ENGLAND

ENGLAND is a wel good land, it were of each land best
It is set in the end of the World; afar in the West
And England is full enough of fruit and of treen—
Of woodes and of parks, that joy it is to seen
Of foules and of bestes; both wild and tame also
Of salt fishe and freshe fishe; and fayre rivers thereto
Of welles swete, and colde snow; of leaf en and of meade
Offelner ore and of gold; of tyn and of lead
Of stele, of iron, and of bras, and good corn great wonder
And of the white wool good, betere n'er may be none other.
Waters she has, eke good enough—before all others three
Out of the land, into the sea, armes as they be
Whereby the ships move, that come from afar and wende
And bring our land goods enough, aboute in each ende
Severne and Themes; Homber it is the pride
Of where it is, as it were set, the land amid,
Homber bringeth by the North, much good and wide
Severn by the West and South, the Themes by the Eastside
So that of goods enough, that other lands have
They cometh to England, by no default ways.

(From Robert of Gloucester)

JANUARY

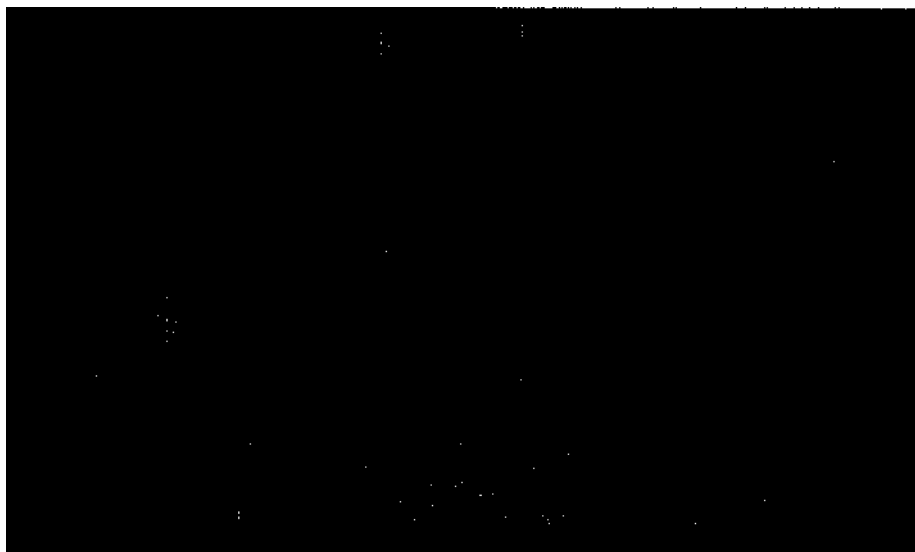


A PLOUGHMAN

*Nay, I am not yet so mad or so blynd,
For when I am at my cart or my plow
I am more merry than either of you,
I would not change my life nor my lyffing
For to be made a great Lord or a Kyng
There is no joy, nor no pleasure in this World Iwe,
But fill belly full, and make good cheer,
Be it Prynce, lord, gentleman or knave,
Hit is all the joy that here he can have.
But these covetous and ambitious wretches
They set their mynd in honour of ryches
So much, that they be never content,
So they lyf ever in payne and torment.
But a man that can meanings find
To have food and cloths and a merry minde
And to desire no more than is needful
That is in this world the lyf most joyful.*

(A dialogue, 1535)

FOLLOWING THE PLOUGH



THE ROUND OF THE YEAR

The Horse wheel works round and round in the winter farmyard.

THE best way to understanding is to begin at the beginning with simplicity, and if in these sketches I have stressed the old and primitive life of the English fields, forgive one who has plodded as slowly over the centuries as over the ploughed acres. Far away, in new undeveloped lands they said to me "Of course, we are still so primitive here; now in England you can get anything." Yes, anything; now, including primitive; that is my point.

The diversity of this island is its use. People who go from it to new lands take with them that diversity, (e.g. the native "boy" who serves your porridge with cold milk in a separate bowl and with salt, and learns his proud "English": "Thirrtty-two, thirrtty-thrree, thirrtty-fourr," counting out the mealies). The native of the Dark Continent knows that the tiny island of England holds many different tribes, alike in the main, but with ingrained

HERE'S ENGLAND

differences in detail. The closer you get to the simple beginnings, the more these subtle tribal differences show clearly. How can it be otherwise ?

*The Romans first with Julius Cæsar came
Including all the Nation of that Name
Gauls, Greeks and Lowlands; and by Computation
Auxiliaries or Slaves of ev'ry Nation.
With Hengist, Saxons; Danes with Sueno came
In search of Plunder, not in search of Fame.
Scot, Picts and Irish, from th' Hibernian Shore :
And Conquering William brought the Normans o'er.
. . . . From this Amphibious Ill-born Mob began
That vain ill-natured thing, an Englishman.
The Customs, Surnames, Languages and Manners
Of all these Nations are their own Explainers:
Whose Relicks are so lasting and so strong
That ha' left a Shibboleth upon our tongue
By which with easy search you may distinguish
You Roman-Saxon-Danish-Norman English.
Fate jumbled them together, God knows how,
What e'er they were, they're True Born English now.*

Therein lies the magic; people and things come to England and are adapted or rejected by the island's condition. The very influences that force adaptability, force also a cautious conservatism. Hunting for a simple example of this I find a good one in the Hainault scythe. Years ago I hunted for this through official Departments in vain. Courteously I was told "It is not English, we have no knowledge of it"; but in the archives of the Scottish Agricultural Society I found details of how two Scottish farmers had deliberately brought over two Flemish experts with this strange weapon, patiently tested them in the Scottish cornfields, and East Anglia, but found the English corn "too light to stand up to the swinging blow" and "the tool difficult of use by the women field workers" of the North. After a genuine trial it was

FOLLOWING THE PLOUGH

rejected "as unsuitable to our climate and custom" (Flemish Scythe Trials, 1825). I quote this as it is seldom one gets such a good example of a thing rejected, or adapted, not by legislation, but by the country people's own decision.

Yes, the land itself and the living things are the rulers, the ploughs but serve. The Caschrom has left the islands and the wooden plough gone from the sandy fields of Essex, but practically every type and prototype of agricultural instrument can still be found on the hills and in isolated fields. The great cultivators and harvesters of the wide Colonial lands would not have room to turn in one of our small fields, but their forbears probably came from those fields, and in them still new inventions may be tested, experiments tried, and a finer corn developed and nursed into being. So much is fundamentally unchangeable. The feering of the land changes with the plough, (the old field divisions have become visible under air photography), but in feering, the necessity, to-day as always, is that the lines for the growing things must run to catch the sun, and drain the rain, beyond that, get as clear a length and as few turnings as possible. The eight-ox ploughman had a goad that could reach the leading ox, that goad could be held sideways, and touch along the parallel feering line. You can trace the marks of these ploughs to-day. The old measures of the barley-corn, thumb, palm, foot and pace, and leap and hide, are left with us to-day. *An acre containeth XL perches in length and III I in brede and IIII acres make a yerde and V yerdes make a hyde, and Vij hydes make a knyghtes fee by the whiche reason a knyghtes fee should welde elx acres and that is deemed for a ploughe tyll in a year.*

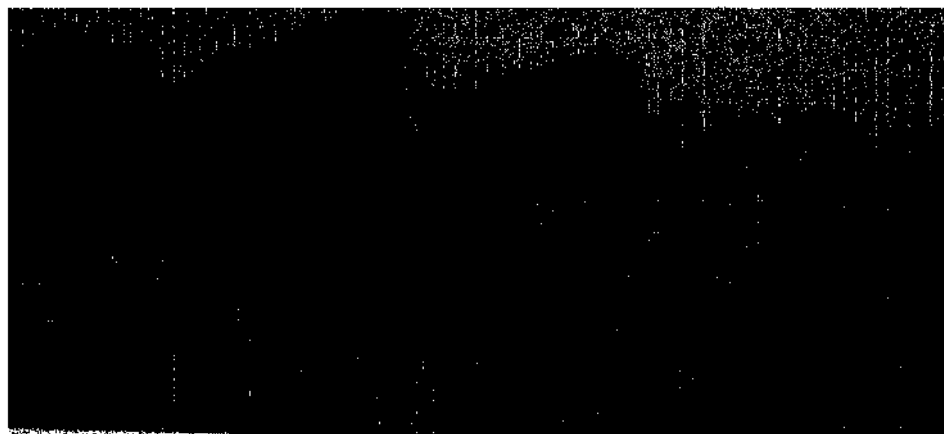
It is the man with the plough who has measured out our land (even as the little seamstress turning her cheek from her outstretched finger tips takes the yard arrow of

HERE'S ENGLAND

our archers), and the smallness and individuality of our fields have preserved much that would of necessity be lost spread abroad on wider acres, without the close contact. So that nearly all imported customs and inbred ideas can be found and studied in the English fields now. The harrow (we were slow in adopting the harrow) **grumbles and grunts, "the ox is never woe> till he to harrow goe, because it goeth by twitches and not always at one draught"**. The ox has almost gone from the fields, but the brush harrow is to be found spreading the *"mouldy warpes castyngs in the medowes"* and *"In Apryll let them be beaten smalle . . . Take a great bough of a tree and plashe the bowes abrode and laye them lowe and yf they lye not brode enoughe, then take other small bowes and bynde them faste to the frame and lay a tree or two over the bowes to hold them down flatte to the earth and then bore a hole with an auger in the great boughs ende, or else tye a rope to all the boughe endes together•, and so fasten the teme . . . And oxen or horses draw the said bowes both up and down athwarte the moldy warpe hylls the which shall spread them better than any mans hands can do, and that shall refresh the grasse and make the medowes mucche better."* I have chosen the simple job of rolling for illustration. The man from Selsey Bill walks alongside leading his team on a bull pole. The Essex man is driving his horses with a long driving rein ; elsewhere there will be a seat on the roller and the man will ride, or he will walk ahead, the horse following at his shoulder. Such small individual differences, yet so firmly marked. Nothing in England seems to have withstood changes of time, climate, inter-communication, plague, pestilence and famine, so firmly, as the local names for everyday things about a farm, and it is interesting how, where labour is brought temporarily from one district to another, visitors will almost in one breath adopt an entirely new vocabulary use it daily for weeks, and instantly change back again to their own local



The Essex Man driving his horses.

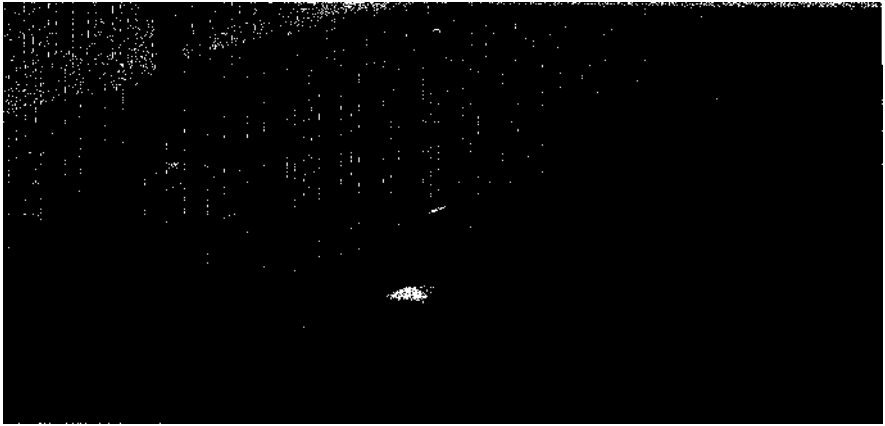


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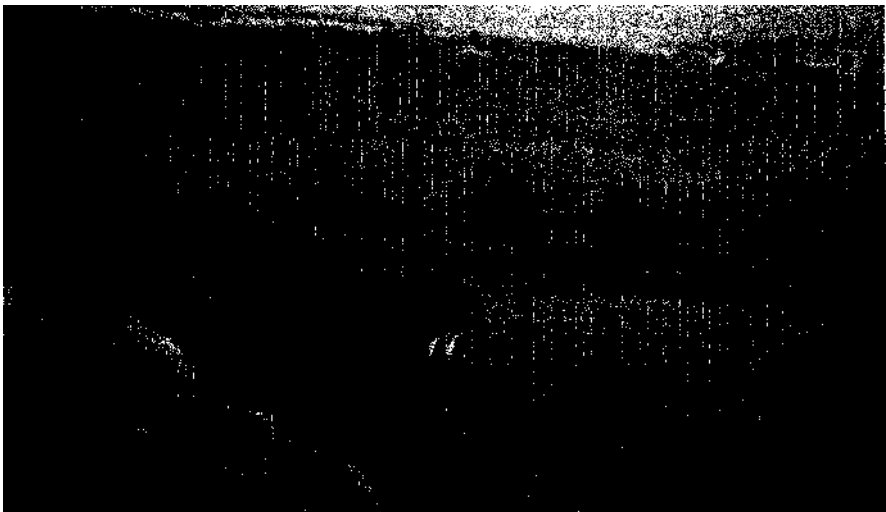
HERE ' S E N G L A N D

names the very day they return home *"notwithstanding"* as Fitzherbert says, *"/ give them those names as most familiar unto me, yet in other countries I know they have other names, which I am assured are not so far different that by these the simplest may conceive my meaning."* And to the traveller in England to-day, puzzled by finding changed names set comparatively close together in the land, I would say that it has always been thus, and that the writer, or chronicler, has always had to explain, almost apologise, for this triumphant diversity. *"A Mattock is a pyck, or a pike, a sum, men says,"* painstakingly Robert le Brun elucidates, but the ploughman who packs bread, cheese and onions, into his wallet, and the wives who bring dinners, *"wives went forth to wit how they wrought? in board cloths white, white bread they brought, cheese and chickens, cleanly dight"*, they are always the same, unchanged, kindly and beautiful.

Do not see the old and primitive customs of the fields as useless or old-fashioned. Change they must, and the sooner they change the better in many ways, but the change must be made with co-operation of the people themselves who know the land. Internationally we must learn to understand these very same countrymen, the foreigners, who have left their mark on our own land, and natives, primitive as we were ourselves. For this we need the strength and friendly patience of the English countryman, we must work in one communal field again now, then let our feerings be set, straight eye to the sun and the rain of harvest, while there are still in this country men with steady strength and patience, ready and glad to follow the plough.



Spacing and spreading manure over the fields



Chain harrowing it in. (These Photos are taken in Yorkshire, W. Riding).

THE STORM

Llewelyn and Gwrneth were two saints who met every night for prayer.
One night Llewelyn saw the door of GwrnetKs cell shut and prayed alone.

*Mountain snow—wind in the trees
It is the Creator of Heaven who strengthens me
Is it asleep that Gwrneth is ?*

*Mountain snow—God above all things
It is to Him I will pray
No—/ cannot sleep.*

*Mountain snow—wind about the house
Is it so thou speakest?
Is it thou Gwrneth ?*

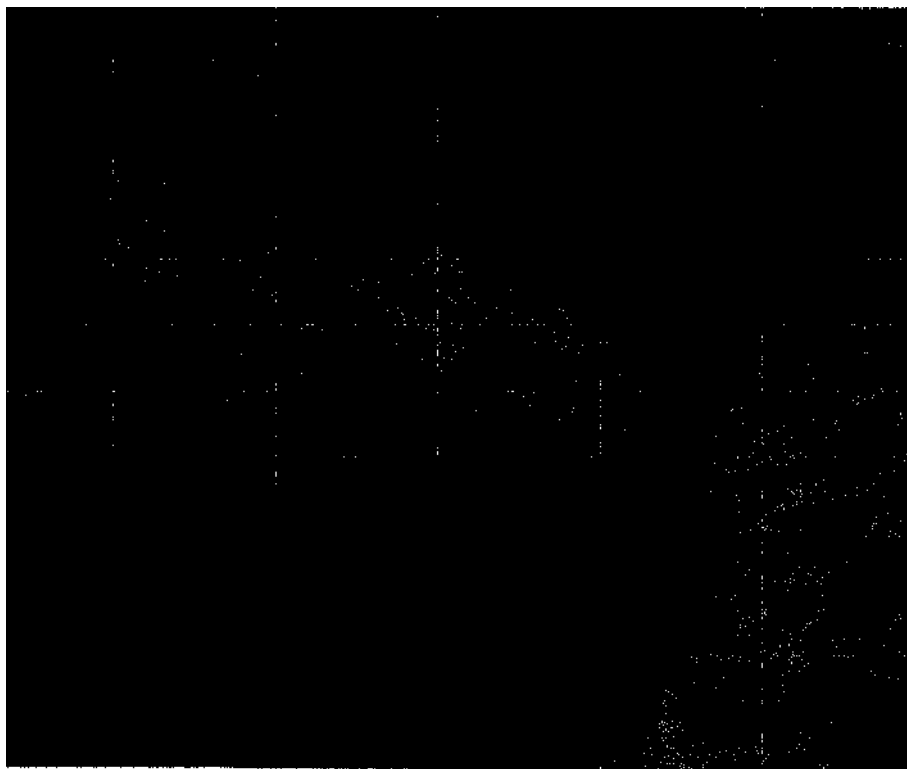
*Mountain snow—wind from the north
I will say the prayers
Most probably he is dead.*

*Mountain snow—white topped the valley lies
Everyone is kind to him by whom he is beloved
So may the Creator of the Heavens deliver thee Gurneth.*

*Mountain snow—wind about the hills
Is it thou my Brother ? is it thou who speakest ?
Or is it asleep Llewelyn is ?*

SNOWED UP

A Tale from the Peak



A Passage through the snow drifts.

FLASH has been snowed up ! cold little village, lost among the peaks. Miles and miles of even white snow around them, and overhead a dull grey sky. They managed to get a 'phone call through, before the silence of the snow over the hills closed around them. Questing aeroplanes above saw only low-lying grey mists of a winter twilight. Tiny Flash was wiped completely from the map of England.

When I happened along (snow -man that I was ; *'wintering" through the hills) the deep snow drifts were still piled high over the moors, but, with shovels, men had cut a tiny narrow passage, thin as a thread, through the snow drifts and Flash was again in communication with

HERE 'S E N G L A N D

the outside world, but, far from rejoicing, Flash was singularly abashed and reticent after its bout of publicity in the newspapers. Milk cans up to their necks in snow looked as if the cows snow-buried in their byres were indulging in an ice cream orgy, an old lady said "Well it really was bad," the man at the pub. said "Yes, we have had *some* snow," and turned away. The surrounding villages spoke more freely.

"It's not that we'd deny that Flash has *had* snow" said Calton and Throwley, "but then we must expect such things in the winter."

"Very nice for them," said Butterson and "though of course there's others have had snow too," agreed Warslow-with-Elkstone, "but what we say *is*" said the assembled Bar Parlour at Warslow "that we think it was a put-up job" . . . (ten-feet deep drifts seemed to make the statement difficult to follow ! and I meekly pointed out that it would be a little difficult for Flash to *arrange* with the Almighty for quite so much snow; even if? . . .) "That's not the point," Up Holme explained from under the dart board, "We don't say not but what they have *had* snow at Flash, not but that they had *quite some* snow at Flash, but what we say is, they ought to have made provision for it." "Knowing their own weather," interjected another voice. "Sixteen years I have been on this farm, and six years ago I was 'under' [the snow] five months, and we never got the door open for a week." "Yes and we'd four Manchester fellows left on us," the Inn-keeper's wife joined in. "A whole week they was here, and not up nor down could we get—but after we had eaten the leg of mutton I gave them a shovel apiece and promised them two young pullets for dinner if they'd dig to the hen house—and they dug across fast enough ; like a little tunnel it was."

"There's not a farm up or down the district but hasn't a bacon piece to fall back upon, and a barrel" (the inn-

S N O W E D U P

keeper looked at Hollinsclough's tankard as if it wasn't there).

"There's some folks have no objection to getting themselves talked about and setting themselves into the newspapers." (Earl Stendale district prides itself on keeping-itself-to-itself, so this remark was overlooked).

"There's no denying that Flash lies higher *by the feet*" (I suffered a sudden rush of blood to the head and climbed back to comprehending safety by a contour line) "higher by the Feet," my informant spoke severely, and fixed me firmly with his eye; "but what we all say is, that they should have managed for themselves, and not go showing themselves up on the wires!"

"If they'd only telephoned to Leek now" the Inn-keeper's wife spoke as one who would say "if they'd only told Mother all" "But" (and now I felt we were getting to the crux of the matter) "They're a line on Buxton". . .

That did it ! You see a line on Buxton lies as a Bordure wavy in the family escutcheon of any Derbyshire village. It accounts for a lot of things, dramatics and hydrostatics, any slight "looseness," shall we say, of behaviour is accounted for by—"a line on Buxton." You see, Buxton is "A Spa."

Everyone took a drink and the air cleared. It was felt that there were explanations possible, a feeling of leniency was in the smoke, one felt Flash was being turned over to "extenuating circumstances." . . . After all, Leek, Dear Old Motherly Market Town, would have known how to deal with her children, but . . . "A Spa"—(as one would say "An Aunt").

"Not that there's anything against Buxton." "NO." (Surrounding villages are all secretly rather proud of Buxton.) But it's no denying there are "goings on" at Buxton, "Christmas times," "dressings-up" "and so on." Yes, "Having a line on Buxton" excused a lot in any village.

HERE ' S E N G L A N D

I ploughed back through Flash, the snow drifts were piled high over the chimney pots, front doors looked like rabbit holes burrowed through the snow, but the road showed now, and Flash was liberated, but shy. The melting snows were gurgling and chuckling down the water courses to meet and dance in the flooded valleys below.

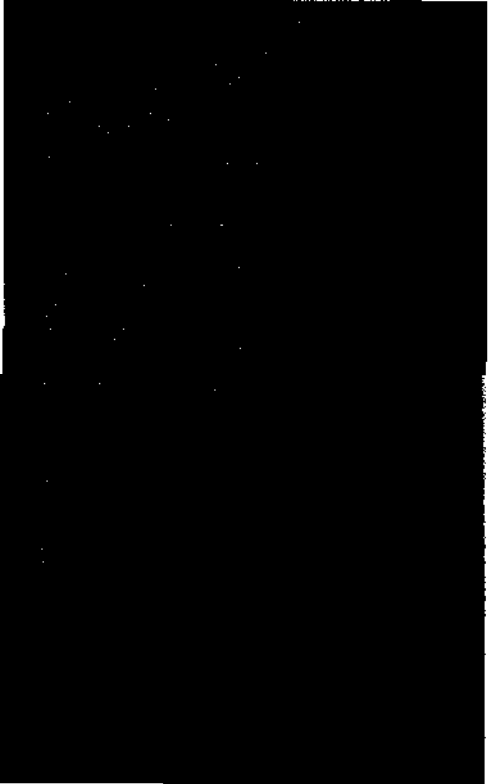
FEBRUARY

THE COOK

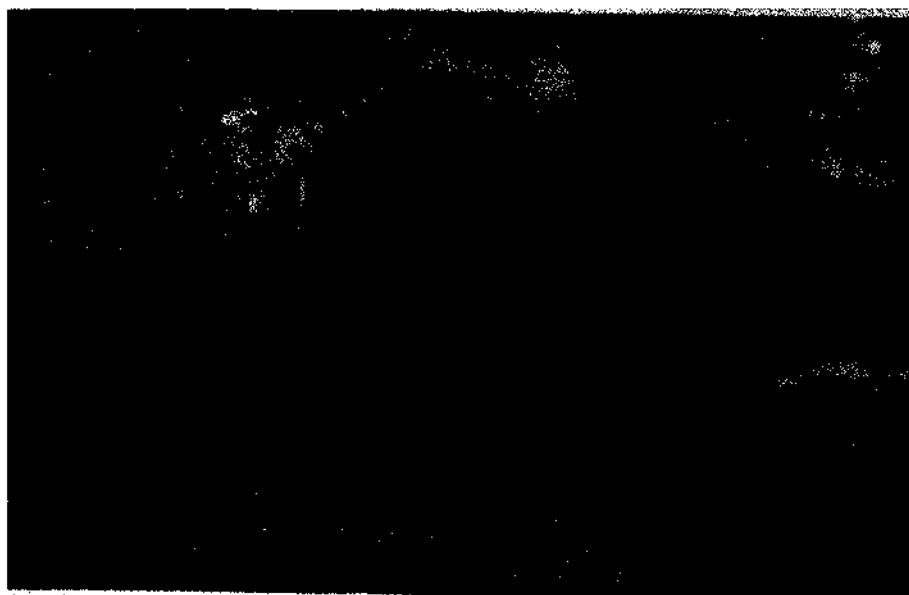
A good Coke is halfe a physycyon. For the chefe physycke . . . clothe come from the Kytchyn. Wherefore the physycyon and the coke for sycke men, muste consult togyther for the preparacion of meate for sycke men.

*For yf the Physycyon without **the** Coke, prepare any meate, {excepte he be very experte} he wyll make a werysse dysshe of meate of whiche the sycke man can not take . . .*

(Borde: 1542)



B R E A D



An "honest to goodness" working Mill.

DOWN at our Stores on a Saturday night they sell seven-pound loaves of bread; the little mountain ponies come down to fetch it, and are well-balanced with the loaf on one side and a can of paraffin on the other, and the bundles and the baby in the middle—then back they go! picking their neat foot tracks up the steep hill-sides, where none but a little mountain pony could find a footing.

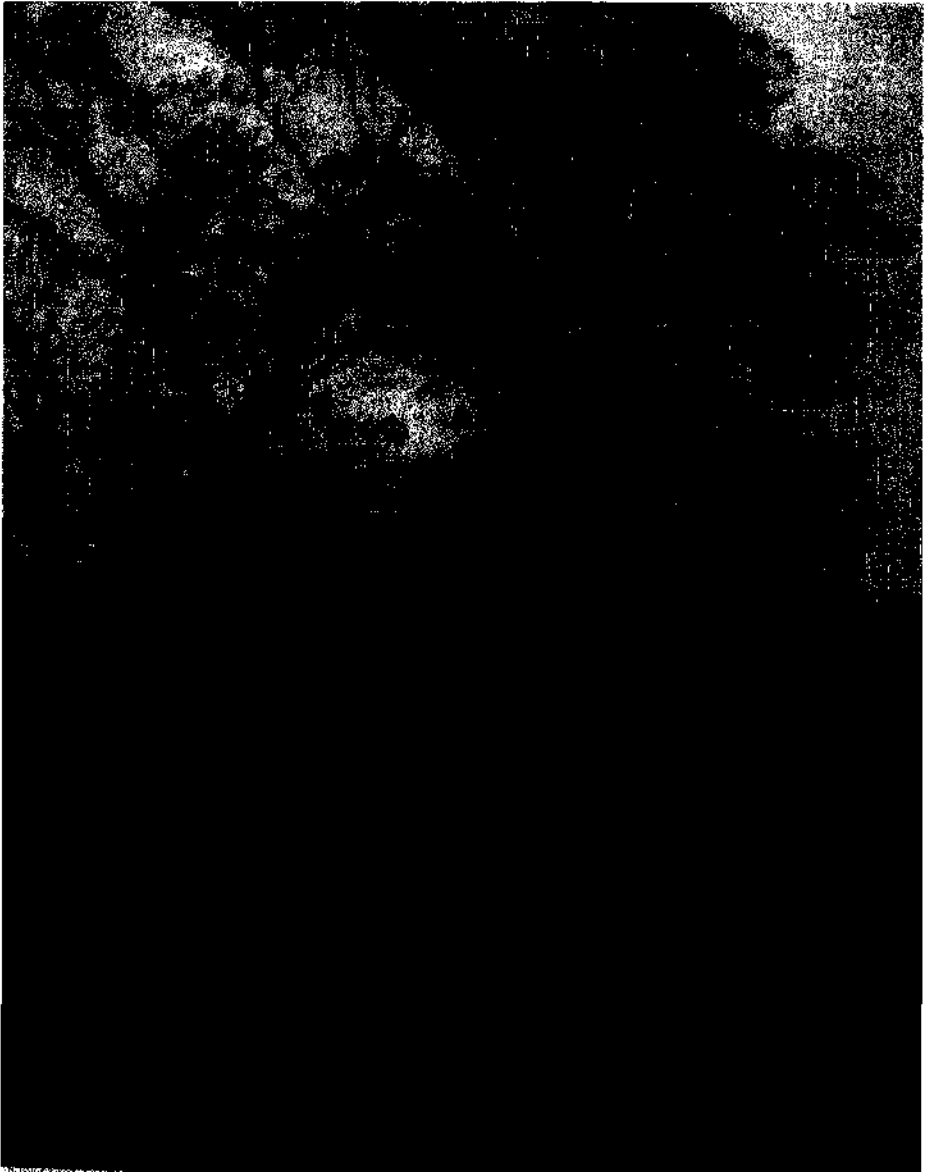
We rather pride ourselves on our bread. You see, we have Our Mill. It is none of these picturesque ruins of the beauty spots, but a real honest-to-goodness working Mill, and a miller, white as dust with a golden thumb. He can tell what wheat is good and well stoned by one rub! and it was said his grandfather could tell which side of the shadowed hills the corn was grown by the "feel of the colour of it!"

HERE ' S E N G L A N D

Now, that was impressive! My gran-dad could tell which side of the mountain his mutton came off, but that was easy, because a lot more wild thyme grows on some sides of the hills than on others, and it is the thyme makes our mutton so tasty.

So our flour is good, and our ovens adequate, and we nearly all "bake." There is no need to say what—just "we bake," "Do you bake?" "She bakes", "He *has* baked", (dubiously!) and in the valley I think that Miss Jamie's bread is just a little the best. It is fine and close and fresh smelling, and the outside crust is just right. When you come up from the farm with an armful of bread, seven pounds of it, all warm and brown, and wrapped up in a linen cloth, you know you have got something good. She begins to bake overnight, when the lad brings in the three-feet logs of dry wood, and Miss Jamie takes the week-before-last's newspaper from under the settle cushion, and builds the fire in the brick oven. Next morning it is lit early.

Have you ever seen a beehive oven alight? Ours is four feet across and rounded, and fits into a bulge in the outer wall. The logs are burned inside it. I sometimes wonder if a white bread loaf in a brick oven was the prototype of the Phoenix nest. Open the oven door when the flames have died down and see. Inside, a circle of white-hot ash, and then the logs that have burnt themselves into a nest, round as any bird could build it, and all the middle of the oven is a pulsing scarlet purple flame, that fans and breathes gold and purple breaths, like a bird of fire beating its wings. An iron rake goes in, and scrape, scrape, then Woof! Down fall the charred logs, dying out in black and grey ash upon the stone floor. But for half an hour more the tiny blue flames still run about them, up and down, like tiny blue wood lice, whining and weeping because the fun is over . . .



Carting the firewood-bavins.

HERE'S ENGLAND

But Miss Jamie; she grips a firm damp mop and swishes round inside that oven—Souse! till the bricks go dark and the oven door breathes steam. Then she puts one little brown hand inside; tilts her head for one moment; and says "Right, Jan'e!" and in go the loaves. "Slide them right to the back"—"No, shove in there"—"Give *me* the bat." "There, what did I tell you?" "So!" and the oven door is shut tight, and everyone sighs and says "That was a nice bit of wood," or "It will be out about three o'clock!" or "You can come and clear now, Tarn," according to what they are thinking of, and *the* baking is over for another fortnight or a month. Yes, the bread keeps moist as long as that.

Our loaves are what we call "proper loaves" because they sit down upon themselves. We secretly rather depreciate a loaf that has to be supported by a tin, though we always "run a few tins," when there's a "tea" on, or parties, because they are so good to cut. But I don't think we have any feeling against tin loaves—they are most sensible. In industrial districts where the English mechanic lives, his rectilinear loaf probably feels the same aloofness to ours.

N.B.—In Africa, near the mines, we found the English mechanics' tin loaves baked in had-been half petrol tins. They had ghostly shells upon them, and every second loaf had a wart, where the stopper used to be!

Some tin loaves try to compromise by being filled very full and bulging over obscenely. These are sometimes called "Church-and-Chapel" loaves, but the completely tinned loaf that comes out a suppressed square, well—when we feel lenient, we say it's good for sandwiches, but feel it is rather ultra-modern in design.

There used to be Lancashire loaves, baked in jam pots, that came out like Gothic mushrooms. They were convenient, because your man got the stalk with cheese, and the children got the top with jam. Elsewhere,

B R E A D

there are "cobs," Coburgs, rollers, rounds and punches, but "long" bread only grows naturally in the Midlands or East Anglia, where the French folk came. In the South, from under bake pots, you get flattish pot loaves, and all the mountain districts, and some sea coasts have "bake stones." Scottish and English bake stones are quite different, and there is a solid flat Welsh bake stone, barely half-inch thick, which split and buttered is jolly good. Scottish baps are bake stones gone to heaven, they have become ethereal and one-and-a-half inches thick, and are snowy white.

Of brown breads there is little need to speak now, but the Welsh sturdy "bara brith" of the west is worth finding.

Teacakes are not bread, but verge on to it. Yorkshire teacakes have dimples in their middles, where they used to be threaded on cords. They are split and internally toasted, and no Yorkshire tea-table is decent without them.

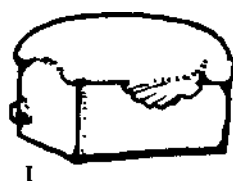
Nottinghamshire has a super-teacake baked in saucers with a soupcon of candied peel. They are served hot from the oven. I have drawn a pattern of one for you, but the butter melting within and the aroma cannot be drawn. Muffins, pikelets and crumpets, and such-all are not bread. Scones are definitely where bread stops being bread, so I have lightly sketched the round and quartered scones, found in all colours, and localities, in England.

Oatcakes must be separately considered, but "pan bread," i.e., baked over the fire and turned twice, and boiled Boston bread are both really bread, and to be found in country places. This last is worth practice by camp cooks, as it is the nearest substitute for a genuine-to-goodness loaf. It's simply bread boiled, and boiled, and boiled, and when done, rolled out damp on to oatmeal and dried to a finish before the fire. (This gives it a sort of crust) If you are clever you wrap it in netting before boiling, when it comes out very fancifully. But you have got to be clever to guess just how much it is

HERE'S ENGLAND

going to swell, and once I experimented and it swelled till it took the string bag bodily inside itself and it had to be hung up for the tomtits, and even then, the mater said she was afraid they would catch their feet when they were pecking.

But come back to the oven door—the bread has been turned and is out now. The pies are going in, and some stone jars of stewed fruit are standing ready. Afterwards the paper bags full of feathers, that are hanging from the ceiling, will go in and stay overnight, so that not a scrap of heat is wasted, and—as I go off hugging my new crusty loaf, I am wishing all people knew how interesting our bread is in England now.



I

THE COLONIST
TIN
THAT HAD A
WART ON EVERY
SECOND LOAF WHERE
THE STONES WERE
TO BE



II

CHURCH & CHAPEL



III

PUNCH



IV

POT
LOAF



V

BAKE STONES.



VII

SCONES



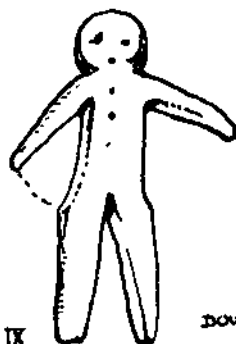
VI

SAUCE. TEACAKE



VIII

PROPER LOAVES.



IX

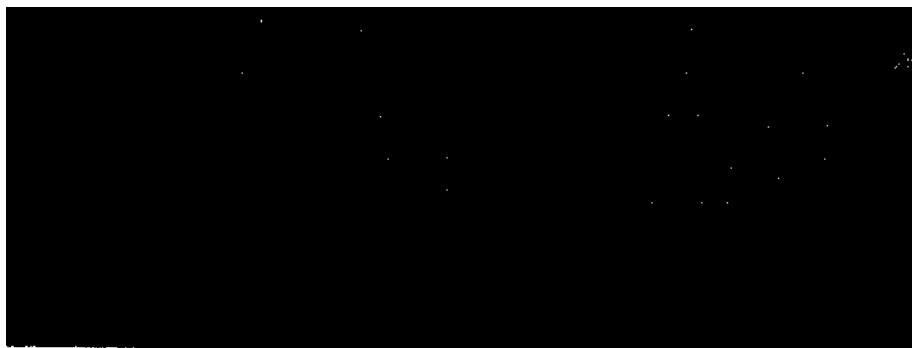
DOUGH BOY

TITHE

"/ now therefore adjure all my bishops, and governors, throughout my kingdom, by the fidelity they owe to God and me, to take care that, before I come to England, all dues owing by ancient custom be discharged: that is to say, plough-alms, the tenth of animals born in the current year, and the pence owing to Rome for St, Peter, whether from cities or villages: and in the middle of August, the tenth of the produce of the earth: and on the festival of St, Martin, the first fruits of seeds, to the church of the parish where each one resides, which is called in English 'Circscef.'"

(Malmsbury)

IN THE FENS



In the Fern

The Bells of Croyland Abbey

From Cru-marsh or soft land.

The Abbey was founded by Guthlac, who, lead by a Saxon boatman, Tatwin, landed on the island.

The six bells are of great sweetness and strength and sound well across the marshes when the Wash is up. The "great bell of St. John" was cast for John de Lytтейntons in the fifteenth century, and the inscription runs: "May the bell of John resound through many years: Jesus mercy Ladi help."

AGALE is howling across the Marshes, and the ships rocking in the Wash will hear the ringing of the Croyland bells between the gusts of the storm.

Clean and strong, the deep-toned bells of John can be heard far out to sea. White fury of the wind, and high mountains of water towering past, and laced with patterned foam, the green hollows hold the sound: "May the bell of John resound." "Through many years"—"Through many years." "Years." "Many years."

HERE ' S E N G L A N D

weaves the foam to the echo of the great bell. "Jesu mercy Ladi help!" The spray breaks on to the deck with the cry of the treble bells, as the gale thrums the stiff wet cordage (till it hums like thick harp strings training a Saxon choir).

Over the marsh the reeds bow their heads, sweeping in waves before the wind, and the flood water drives wildly up the bank, and seethes out in foam between the grey stems . . .

It is an evening of wild wet dark, such as only the Fen-lands know, lying defenceless under the sky. A few black and twisted thorn-bushes are shuddering against the wind, and the dykes are sobbing and choking thro' the darkness.

In the broken lulls between the gusts of wind, falls a little cold lapping sound, like some stone creature licking its lips. That is the flood water rising over the stones of the bridge way. It is a small cold sound, but it releases all primitive fear of the fens, and the hiding terrors of darkness and cold come tearing down the wind, like hounds in full cry. Bending reeds, marsh water, dark treachery and fear, no shelter, no defence, nowhere to cower down and hide from the wild sky.

"Lady help!" The small bell lets fall tender music, like a gracious medieval Lady, reproving the greedy cold monsters of the dripping tongues.

Now can I see what those artists heard, who carved the stone gargoyles with the cruel curving lips.

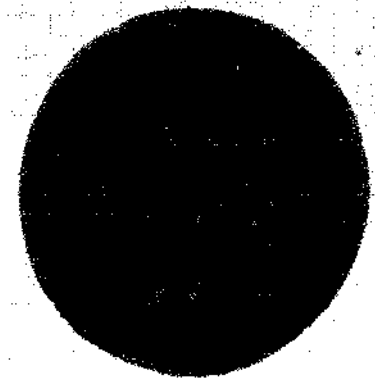
Such sounds would their stone tongues make lapping the moonlight off the icy flagstones on a winter night.

Burr!—it is cold!—forgotten centuries of cold and snow are besieging the reclaimed marshes. "O ye ice and snow, bless ye the Lord!" The melted snow water swirls about my ankles as I fight my way over the stone bridge towards the Abbey; the windows shine, faintly lit, through the dark.

IN THE FENS

The great bell of John is sounding alone now—reassuringly; steady; with strong firm voice, and through the dark, following the silver dusk above the river, silently flies a little square winged owl. Ghost-like he flies, grey against the grey reeds, hurrying towards the Abbey—towards *his* Abbey; he is Tatwin, boatman to Guthlac, going home.

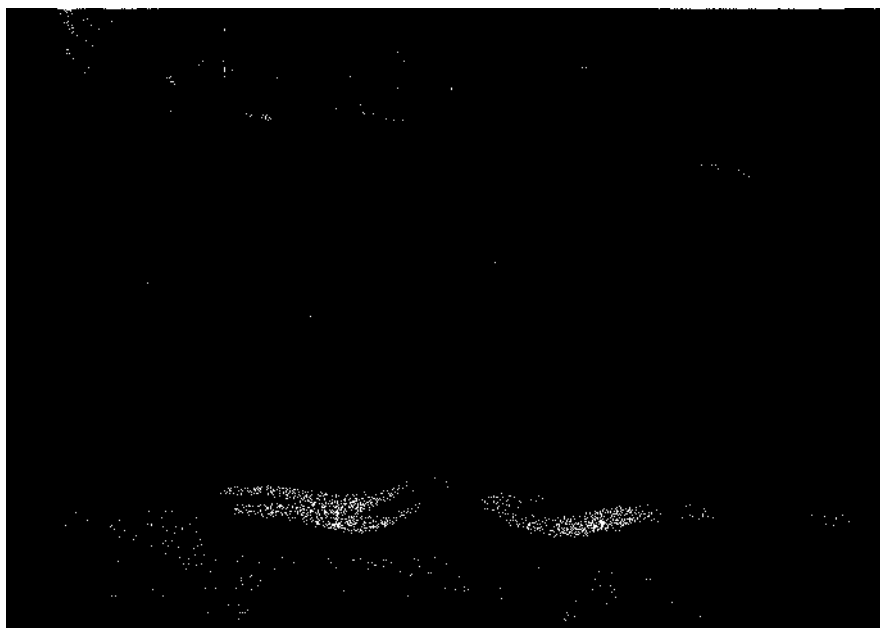
MARCH



OLD VERSE

*Said March to Averil
D'you see they hogs on yonder hill?
If you will give me days three
I'il do my best to gar them die
The first day it was sna and sleet:
The next day it was wind and wet:
The third day, it was sic a freeze
It fastened the birdies to the trees:
But—zwhen the three days were come and gane
All tha wee hoggies came hirpling hame.*

CLOGS



Clog Soles.

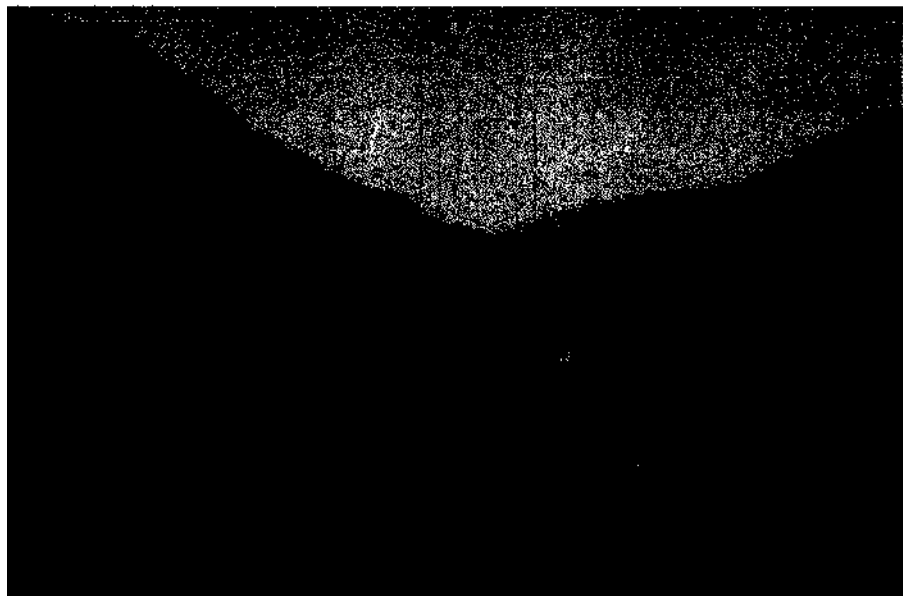
NOW here is something that needs understanding—Clogs are going out—as a mass production. Following the closing of many pits and the change in the mills, the clog trade is definitely becoming smaller, but there is a firm demand for a certain number of clogs. Dairy-farm workers—clattering about over the wet swilled floors—need clogs—the rough wet cement and tile floors wear out anything else, and a preparation of rubber would slip on the greasy patches. Workers standing on slats (the wood and iron draining boards before machines) need clogs. This does not appear so at first glance, but try standing on an uneven surface for a whole day's work, and you will realise the need for the smooth wooden sole; cobbles have the same effect underfoot. Yard workers, whether on the

HERE'S ENGLAND

hill farms, or in the dray-horse sheds of some manufacturing town, need clogs. Any wet, hard rough footing needs clogs for comfort—they are characteristically a "stone," not a "sand" shoe. There is still a steady demand for children's clogs—small boys especially, and I should think you'd get a more freely grown foot with instep less injured than when children are given badly made close-fitting boots and shoes which are squeezed on longer than they should be, because they are more expensive to replace. So that, although the great mass production of the standard clogs that clattered by hundreds and thousands to the mills in the early morning as the whistles blew, is past, there seems likely to remain a fair number of clogs still in hard use—and while mass production produced ever cheaper and quicker clogs, the clog itself deteriorated—it was still serviceable, but standardised out of all individuality. Now there are fewer clogs sold, the quality is finer, and except where economic pressure is very heavy, the wearer of clogs can afford to get a "reet good clog."

To digress; for a true story of the comprehension of clogs—A small community of French nuns settled in a remote Yorkshire district near us. Any women more different from the rough, kind, materialistic and blundy honest Yorkshire women, never had suddenly to rely upon each other. Little kitchen Sister Bernadette, tiny, Breton, lonely, wept and retired to bed. The blunt friendly gardener could not persuade her to come down to the kailyard, the nuns and the priest scolded and exhorted in vain, and then the raw-boned Yorkshire charwoman came up to do the rooms; 'twas wet after the rain, and she'd brought her lassies' grown-out clogs to lend to the litde Sister.

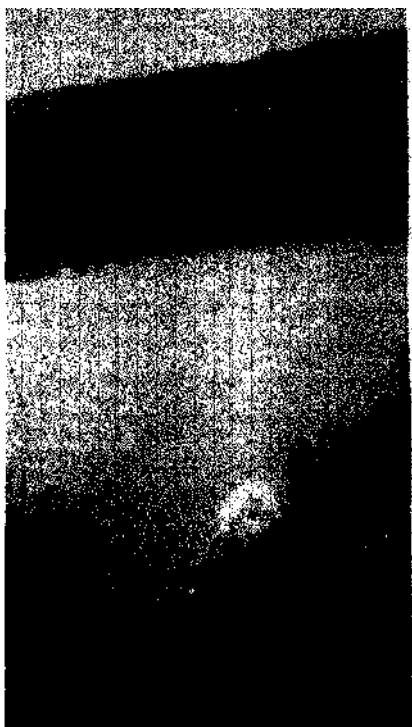
Sister Bernadette took one look: "O Ia! les bon sabots!" she clattered down the garden path; she saw the apple blossom pink and wet—"Le bon Dieu!" She



The long road goes North.



"A reet good clog."



A Hardwick hog.
(The little Lakeland sheep are
surefoot as goats).

HERE'S ENGLAND

and the Yorkshire woman embraced each other, damply; thereafter they were inseparable companions—but what language they talked between them Heaven knows! It was frequently drowned in the clatter of their clogs.

Incidentally, the Yorkshire, Westmorland and Lancashire clogs all vary slightly; but firmly; and the Leicestershire and South country clogs, vary in pattern. You see, to clog connoisseurs, there are many points understood and appreciated that the ordinary (especially the Southern) mortal never knows exist. You've got to wear clogs from a child to acquire the grace and skill of the lassies who will spin you a dance on a wet slippery pavement; a workless chap going off down a long road in search of a job, knows many things about a clog iron, —and in these days you've got to have "summat to sit on" while you're waiting. So let us view the industrial clog. Take the first view of Clog soles down by the waterside, in a remote river valley full of bird song, and the clop, clop of an axe in new wood. Alder is the best, it doesn't split and stands the wet well. (Oak? you make a sole of oak, and it will split under your foot the first time you stamp on a stone.) But birch is almost as good. Many of the blood-red alder "bushes" by the rivers are the stumps of old trees cut down for clogs; (there was a giant alder four yards round noted in Staffordshire). The gypsies used to monopolise the clog sole trade, cutting the blocks (rough shapes) and selling to the finisher. Sometimes the clog maker bought the trees and commissioned the gypsy to do the cutting—in those cases you find a scrap of bark rind left on each clog shape—this was to show the owner that the gypsy had not cut down smaller than he need, like the "tell-tale" a lathe hand leaves, when he roughs out work. (You find this "tell-tale" sometimes down the side of wooden bowls, just a slight "flat" to show the maker has not turned down a smaller bowl than needed.) It not only proved the clog

C L O G S

maker had cut skilfully, but also that he had located the "pair by the grain", so that the shrinkage in drying out was uniform. The white square piles by the river side, and the blue camp smoke are seldom found now; I know where there may be a few, soon, but . . . well, you might not be the sort of person who'd eat a grilled trout that could "look you in the face" i.e., it's mouth not torn by a fly hook!

For the leather you take good strong backs, well tanned and cut to the weathering and locality and fashion,—but the iron sole of the clog is its life and your comfort.

There is a length for sole and instep, and a separate length for the heel, the heel-piece is single, but there's subtlety in the foot-piece.

You see, a clog is unbendable ("there's a spring; O ah'd not say it was immovable") but, in walking, the curve must be given by the iron, and the iron must grip the ground, and protect the toe. If the iron was plain nailed on, the heads of the nails would wear off, and the iron clatter loose, so that strips must be pierced, and a sunk pocket made for the nail head, and a round ridge, that will protect the head and strengthen the pierced iron.

The part under the foot must be thickened. A chap that's much to do in water needs a good height to keep the wood above the wet, an old hand will not only get this thickness adjusted, but will adjust the length of this extra thickness to his own step! A tall chap with a fair stride likes a level "reach" to his toe, and a little chap likes a "more rounded rocking."

But "the less nailing the better," like horse shoes, "it's the shape." Originally the nails were made by little groups of older men, working around a small central forge, each at his own anvil: there are the old anvil stones, pierced with square holes for the nail anvils,

HERE'S ENGLAND

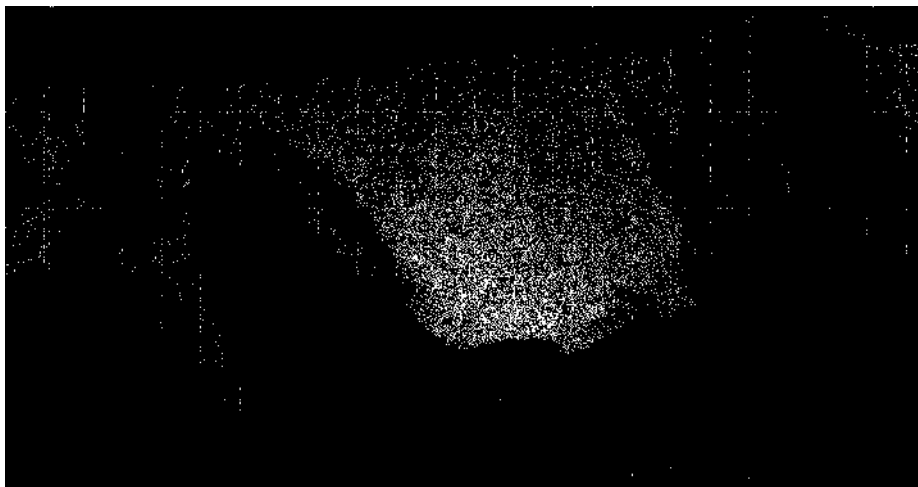
outside many old works. The nails had many names, "Sparrow Bills" was one, and a clog iron "shop" usually had its own nail making section kept busy. A "good nail and few," it destroys the sole to be "nail rid"; "yes, they are clamped through like horseshow nails, they'll not come out till the iron wears" and "the iron will wear thin as a razor before it gives out, and will cleave to the sole to the last"—and "the flattened turn is steady and level at the toe," because, "well, you've got to have a clear end for sitting down on while you are waiting for work these days!"

SPRING CLEANING

"Swepyng of houses and chambres ought not to be done as long as any honest man is within the precynct of the howse. For the dust doth putyfy the ayre makynge it dence"

(Andrew Borde)

DOMESTIC SPRING



Out on the line.

UP North, down South, East and West, the only thing we do alike, we all begin with the sweep. The town people coolly telephone to the sweep, country houses send for him, lesser folk arrange with him to come. In country places where there are not enough chimneys to keep a real sweep in countenance, there's always someone who obliges, in the spring. In really remote places we do it ourselves—oh! yes, tack an old wet blanket over the fireplace, and poke up a bunch of holly twigs tied to a mop; upon the solid stone roofs and rock-like chimneys of the Cotswolds (and other stone districts) you can take the fruit ladder, climb up and drop a rope down the chimney, tie last year's Christmas Tree on to the bottom and haul it up.

In crofts, it's simplest to drop a hen down from the top. No, it doesn't hurt the hen, it takes a lot to unsettle a hen, and a crofter's animals are always wanting to get into the kitchen anyway. The first sweet Irish Spring that I saw it happen, the creature hooked half a bannock as she went out over the dresser. Yes, "*Clear*

HERE'S ENGLAND

chimney of soot from top to foot." Afterwards you take the soot out and put it on the young cabbage plants against slugs. Whiles you keep a pokeful to put in a bucket; it makes a strong lye for bleaching, and among wool workers they use it for dye, it makes a fine yellow. Mining towns and quarries, where the men folk are used to blasting, the women get them to "fire" their chimneys: of course, it's strictly illegal, but nobody minds.

Washing goes forward as fast as the warm weather discards blankets, coverlets and winter clothing. Users of laundries are spared a lot of trouble, but miss a lot of interest. The older washing processes were divided into steeping, bucking, boiling and scouring, (before you got to pressing, ironing and finishing), and they all had complicated sub-divisions. There's nothing "catches on" in a country place like a new trick in the laundry. Some French nuns came to a Northern town—and one of the things that most impressed the house-proud Northern women, was their skill with the clear starching of their straw goiffered ruffs and stiffly pleated linen! In a week there wasn't a curtain or a tablecloth in the district that didn't fairly crackle on the line, and not a man could sit down in comfort for months! The delightful fragrance you get from old linen was partly from the orris and turpentiney pinewood sticks that were used to build up the steeping piles. The thick white linen was packed into tubs over criss-cross stacks of orris root or pine poles, and coppersful of boiling water poured through, over a lye of charcoal, soda and pearl ash, and turpentine, each household treasuring its own recipe; that was steeping. Bucking was done with wooden "dollies" or bats. (Stains were treated less pleasantly, with foul mixtures of chamber-lye and fowl dung). When the linen was clean, it was boiled; all the houses had copper boilers built in as a matter of course, and they were heated for the bath water every

DOMESTIC SPRING

week (and you lit them specially when there was a baby coming). Drying was spread out in the fields, over the hedges, or on lines (especially lines in the North) and aired on carriers, (overhead rail fitments that lift the whole mass up to the ceiling). Scotland has most elaborate clothes-prop erections, that shove out from the upper stories over the wynds. They have them in the Lakes, too, and Northumberland; it's likely you can't walk up a wynd on a Monday or Tuesday, the whole air is flapping solidly with washing. It was in a lost Edinburgh wynd I heard the old "Gar Do!" (Garde l'eau) cry. "What did you call?" I asked up to the window. "I was for telling you to guard yourself, would you no' get my man's panties about your heid" was all the answer I got. (Well, well! he was a tall man and the shadow of his grey woollie hose flung a fantastic medieval shadow on the whitewashed wall.) Stirling has most elaborate iron clothes props, built in; some of them almost rival the Provost's lamp-posts. Old Bill Clothesprops of a Lancashire village used to come from the Liverpool Docks with splintered Norwegian masts and ladder larches, sawn into fifteen- and twenty-foot clothes props (i.e., fork-nosed sticks which hold up the sagging line in the middle and tilt it against the wind). You'd hear his cry start two blocks away: "Clo-o-o-o-o-s 'ops!"—with a gulp at the end.

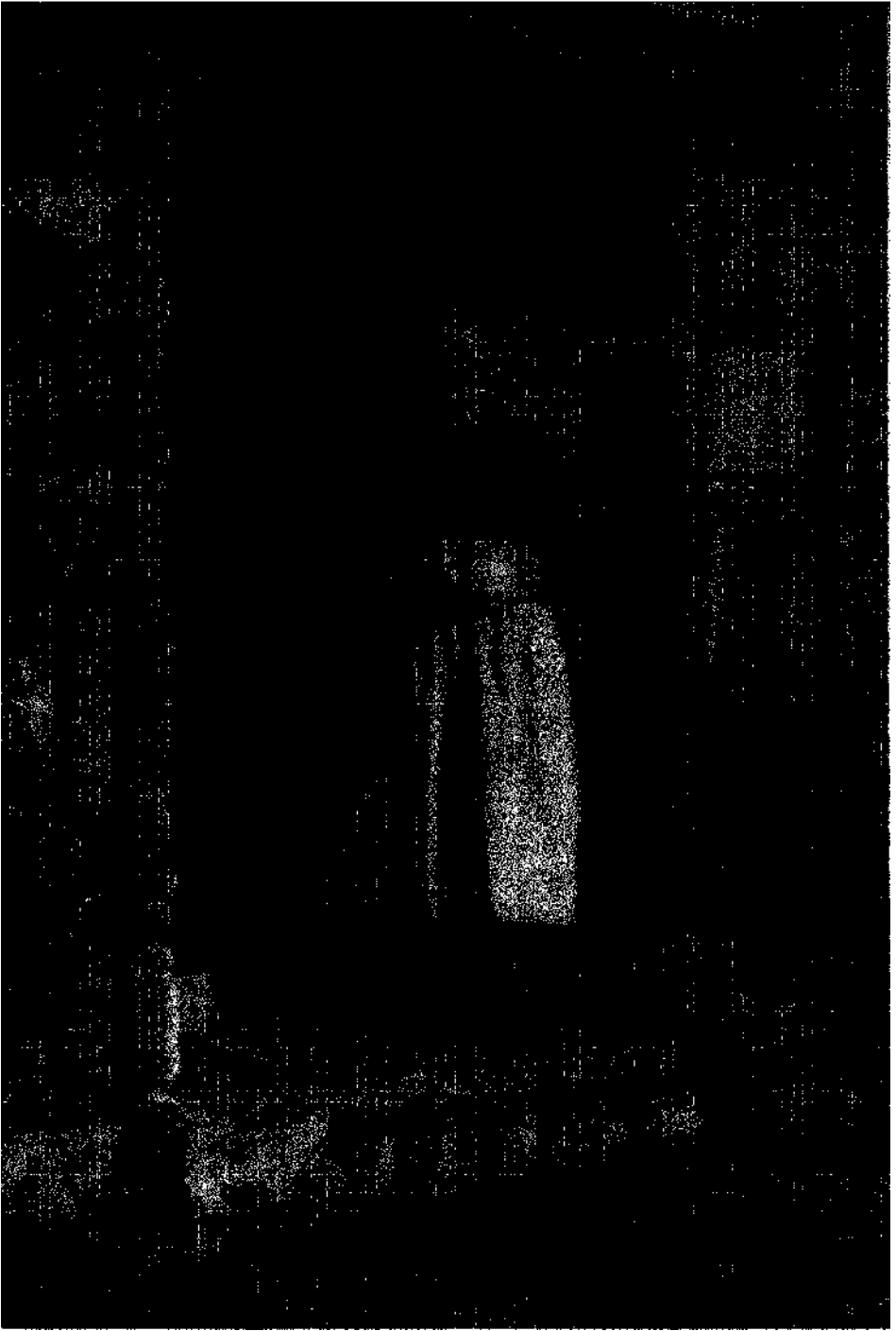
The gypsies make most of the clothes pegs.

In country villages, specially in the Midlands, there is usually a woman who undertakes your washing "by the week" as a job; this being new to me it was puzzling to be told "Mrs. Abraham has had Monday and Tuesday for years, the Rectory's taken Wednesdays and Thursdays, but if Saturday delivered is any use to you, you're welcome to it on Friday by the milk float."

Fountains of whitewash are loosed by the melting snow. The West perhaps whitewashes most: the

HERE'S ENGLAND

burst of apple-blossom along the Borders brings a burst of pink wash and yellow wash on to the houses. Anglesea uses a round rush besom for its whitewash, and puts it on solid, and as they have learnt the sensible trick of cementing over their wind-shifted roof tiles, they sometimes (like a bald-headed man that doesn't know when to leave off washing his face) whitewash up over the roofs, too, so the neat little low houses nestle among the green fields white as mushrooms in grass. Some of the old Scotch and Devon crofts have had such layers of whitewash that the rough granite below has softened till the angles are rounded as the Pise building of Devon, and you can watch the firelight trick out faces and forms in a century-deep gesso. Pink and yellow is the West, blue the North, where the clogs clatter over the holystoning. Going into Yorkshire or Lancashire, over Glossop Hill, into the Black Country, in the early morning, you will see all the women holystoning doorsteps, window steps, ledges of walls and hearthstones. Time was when we holystoned and sanded fine patterns all over our stone floors, now we have fallen for linoleum, but if we cannot burst into bloom so early as the South, we can burst into holystoning—and we do. Specially fireplaces, nowhere but the North do you get such snowy gleaming white hearthstones. Lancashire shines in blacklead, because the elaborate iron kitchen fireplaces are in the sitting-dining-rooms, with convenient red tile floors, where the chaps in their pit and workshop clothes can sit in comfort. Give an ex-mill lass a penny-worth of blacklead in a gallypot with mysterious vinegar and beeswax and she'll produce a gleaming miracle of black satin. Fireplaces "get the spring" as variously as they are built. The big open fireplaces get washed over with soot-water, and the outsides are tarred till they are black as black cats. A funny style I found in Central Ireland; they blacked or red-raddled

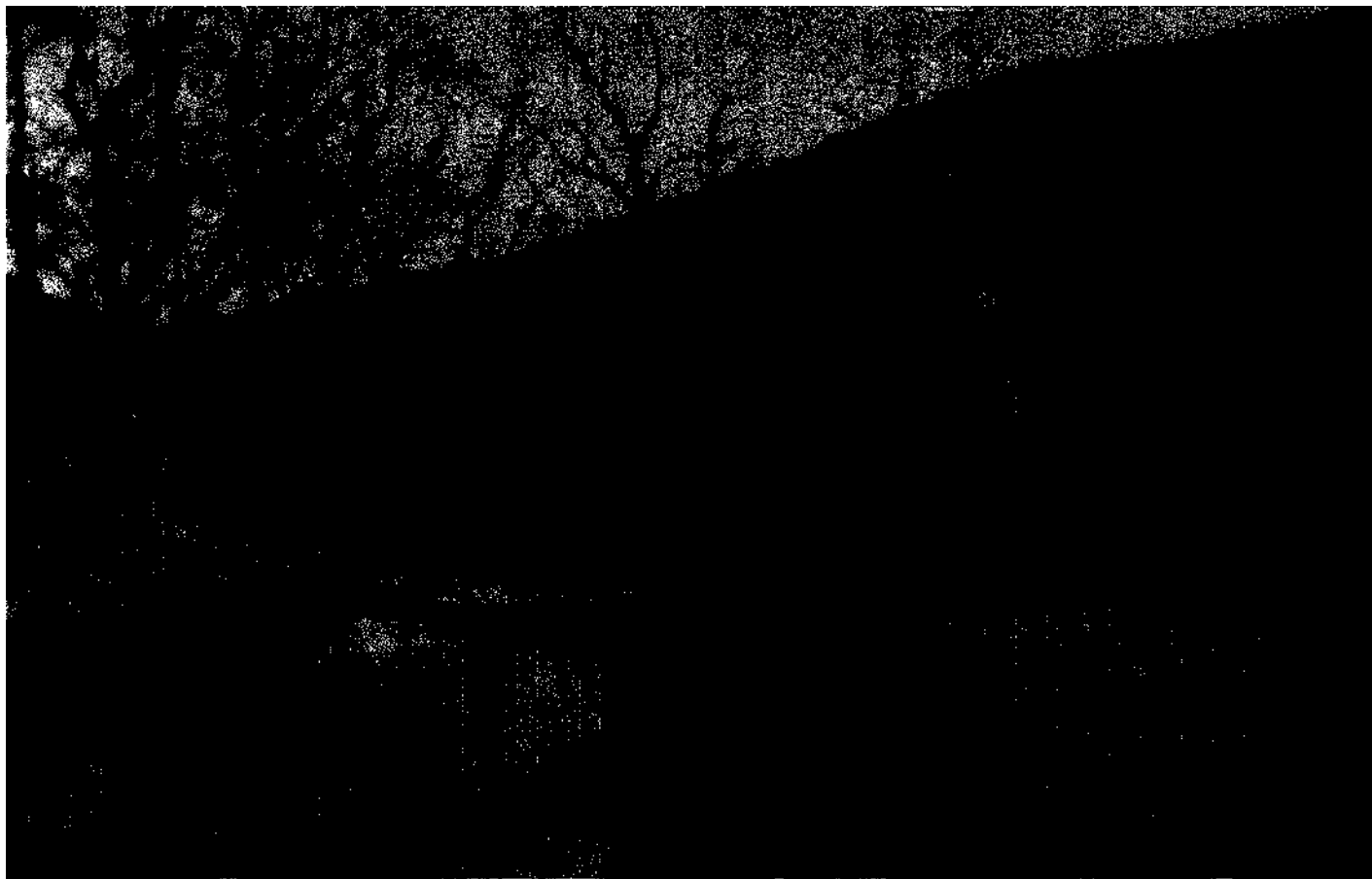


A North-Country Doorway.

the entire fireplace and then imitation bricks were painstakingly drawn over the black with whitewash! "Shure, it was so neat you might be living in a brick house entirely." Nottinghamshire had a passion for red raddle (the red earth you mark sheep with) and in Spring around Nottingham the lace curtains spread like hoar-frost upon the fields (if you dry a lace curtain on a hedge you will never get it off again if it blows).

In South Wales, and some Northern markets, patchwork squares, made from the patterns and cuttings of the cotton mills machined together, have a sudden sale, for old worn blankets, (yes, and flannels and shawls and woollies) get sandwiched between two brightly-coloured pieces of patchwork and sewn together with a fancy border, and another "quilt" has come to flap on the family line. Feather beds and pillows get re-made. The hams swinging against the walls get new paper mats to sit on, hen-houses are upheaved, the dairy is white-washed and spare dairy pans and cheese tubs come out and are put to soak "against the new milk." Perhaps the bonfire of the rubbish is something of a beltane fire, but who am I to admit it? Chintz covers come out and are glazed and fresh white muslin frosts at the windows; women-folk get new hats, children get brimstone and camomile; outside the men-folk are whitening the cow byres and liming the fruit trees; carts, after the toil and mud of winter, are getting new spokes and fresh paint. In the garden, cucumber frames have sudden white squares of new glass, thatching starts up and "sets" appear in the markets, lemon puddings, spring chickens, duck and green peas . . . Oh! I cannot tell you one-thousandth part of the odds and ends of domestic spring tokens in England, or the joys of spring cleaning, but on one thing we are all agreed, North, South, East or West, we all like to get that honest man well out of the way before we begin!

ON



Well out of the way in Spring.

APRIL

A FAIRE AND HAPPY MILKMAYD

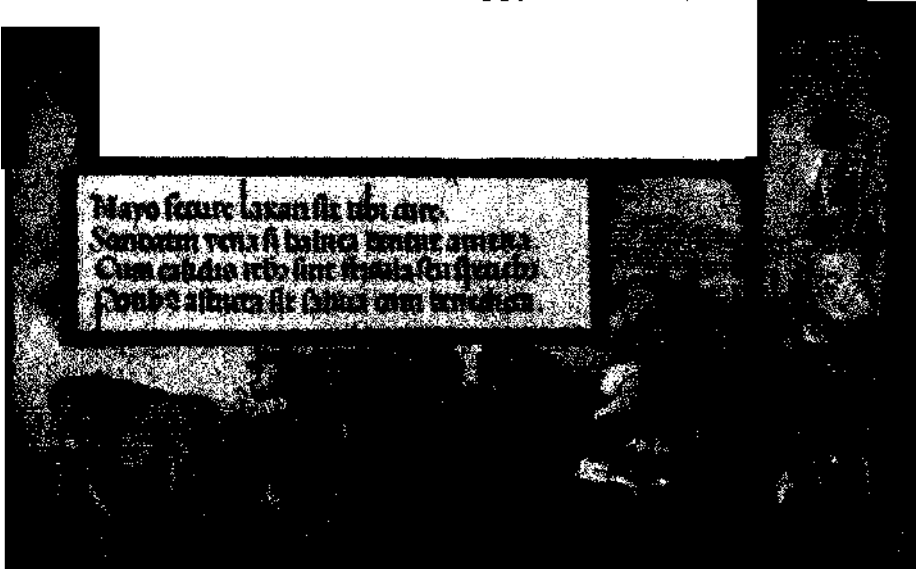
*She rises with chanticleare and at night makes the lamb her curfew.
In milking, and straining the teats through her fingers it seems that so
sweet a milk presse makes the milk the whiter and sweeter. The golden
eares of come fall and kisse her feet when shee reapes them. Her breath
scents all the yeare long of June; like a new made haycock. She makes
her hand hard with labour and her heart soft with pity and when winter
evenings fall early (sitting at her merry wheele) she sings—She doth all
things with so sweet a grace it seems ignorance will not suffer her to doe
illy being her mind is to doe well. She bestowes her years wages at next
faire; and in choosing her garments counts no bravery in the world like
decencie. The garden and the beehive are all her physick and chyrurgery.*

*She dares goe alone to unfold sheepe in the night, and fears no manner
of ill, because she means none . . .*

*Lastly her dreames are so chaste, that shee dare tell
them.*

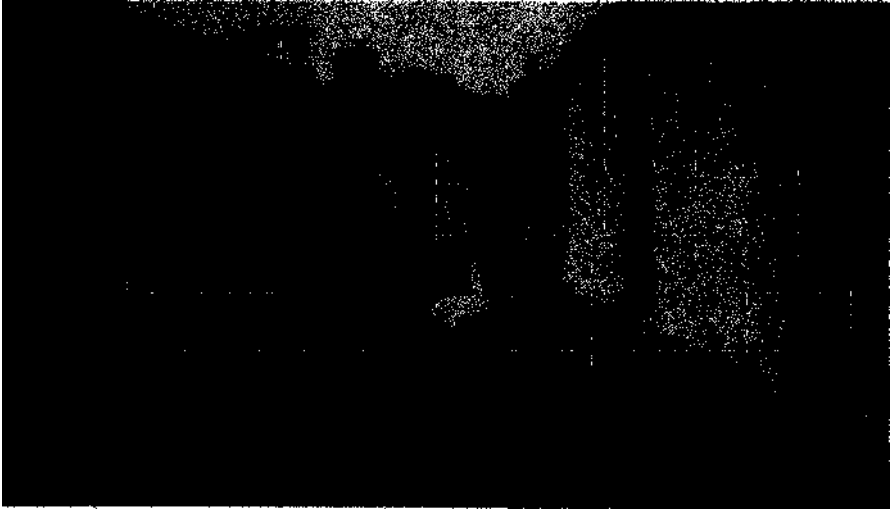
*Thus lives she, and all her care is she may die in
the spring time to have store of flowers stucke upon
her winding sheet.*

(Hearn: Fair and Happy Milk Maid)



Mayo secure laxan sit tibi cure.
Sancitum vena si balnea tantum amica
Cum cadit ideo sunt fructa curfue
fons et affluat sit salax cum lacrima

B U T T E R



Come in to breakfast.

" " B U T T E R of the richest quality and flavour and appearance can be made from sweet cream. Were such butter not super-excellent would noble men have it on their tables every morning? I consider butter out of the churn from sweet cream and before it is handled the most delicious.

"For my own use I would never desire better butter all the year round than that churned every morning from sweet cream. Such butter on a new cool baked oatcake, sweetened with flower virgin honey, accompanied with a cup of hot strong coffee, modified with crystallised sugar and fresh cream, is a breakfast worth partaking of."

So says Stevens in 1870.

And very pleasant, too, and obtainable to-day anywhere in the mountains if you know where to look for it. The coffee you will probably have to provide yourself, because it's gone out of fashion. I believe it went out when the new fireplaces and stoves came in, for they

HERE'S ENGLAND

make quick-boiling "tea water" more easily than slowly-warmed close-lidded coffee. In the old days the coffee-pot could be shoved in among the soft hot ashes and settled with a dash of spring water, or a burned stick, (I have yet to find where the settling of coffee with eggshells came from, maybe from a district where they use them to settle the cider, or perhaps it's just the general proximity of eggs and bacon), but the butter is as good as ever.

In all England I hardly know a farmhouse craft that varies more than butter-making. I have found it still made in box churns, from milk cooled in round flat milk pans, the cream taken off with a skimmer like a porcelain shell, the cream wrinkling up in thick leathery folds. They are mostly block-tin milk pans now, but there are a few earthenware ones made, and glass ones may be found with luck, and there's many a bird bath in a country garden, or sink in some stone cottage, that was once a square built-in marble milk cooler, and the pride of the dairy. Of the old tall plunge churns there is nothing left but their shape and name, in the present-day iron milk "churns" of railway and lorry and country carts. One gets used to a churn, and one likes the churn that one's learnt on as a child, and that's why there's a specimen of almost every churn that was ever invented to be found *in use* in England now. And as for labour-saving contrivances, I've known water wheels, donkeys, and dogs, all used to help out the monotonous labour of milk churning, and are so used now, in hidden valleys, and the dogs come to understand the job and enjoy it.

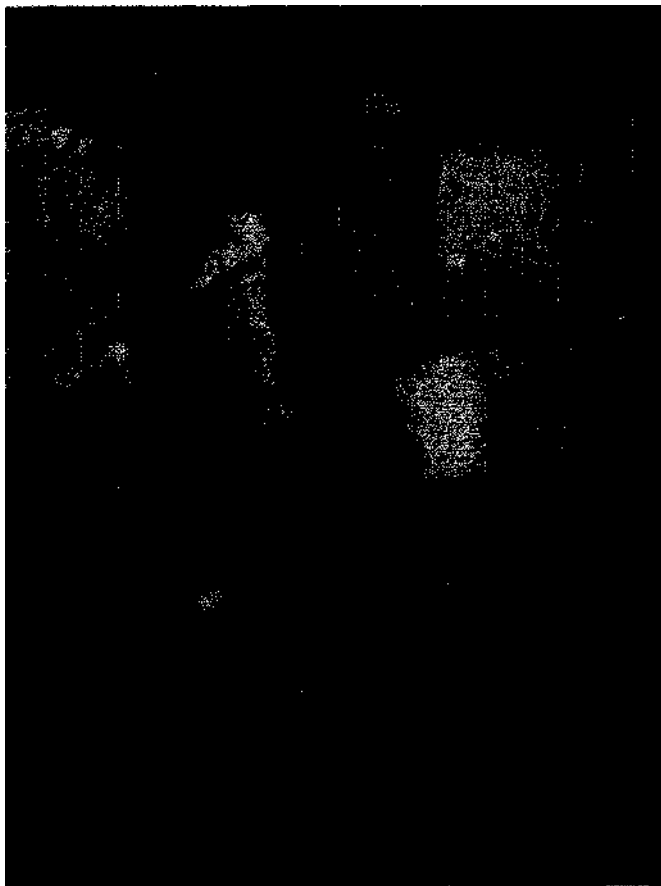
"That's reet, and they worked champion."

"Yess, yess, indeed, whyeffer not?"

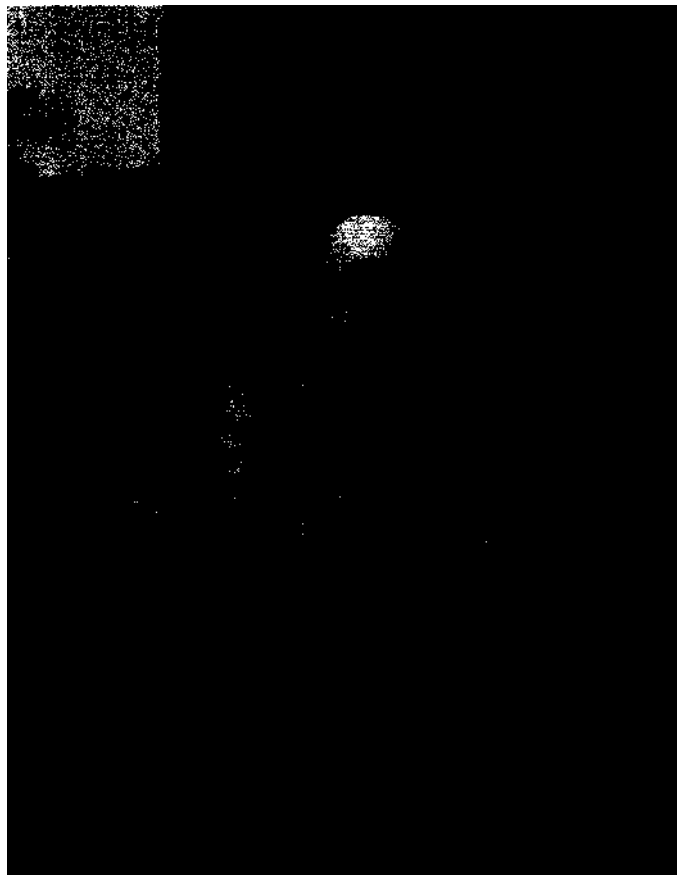
"And why for no?"

Several of the old end-over-end churns have retired to the smaller cheese factories, where they earn a modest competence as washing machines, and attend to the

ON



The milkman sets off to bring down the milk from the cows on the high pastures.



A North country dairy lass and her assistant.

HERE ' S E N G L A N D

cheese cloths and overalls, foaming up the soap suds as willingly as they once foamed up the butter milk.

Certainly we tie charms to our churn, for certainly butter is a chancy thing, and "politeness costs nothing, and you never know," but the elder flowers I found in the dairy were indeed "against the flies," and, across the blue water, the twisted palm frond was "left by the good priest himself," and "where would be the harm in that?" and I'd give you the same answer myself, for why would I be wanting to offend the Little People, who know how to enjoy a delicate dish of cream, and can tell more about butter than any country judge at an Agricultural Hall ever dreamed of? No, you'd better not be stirring up the Stardust with which we sand our dairies! I will tell you instead simple old dairy knowledge that you can appreciate.

Wool and cloth must not come into the dairy. Old linen for the wood and scouring sack (hempen) for the floor. White sand from the brook to scour with, and lime, "set" with skim milk, for the walls. Theoretically, soap ought not to be used at all, but if you must use it the best dairy maids will make a fine jelly of it, and use it with cold water only, so that it will not strike into the wood, and they rinse off very fine. The milk utensils must be scalded with boiling water, slightly salted, and they get a very clean rinse, and the tubs and jars must not be dried, but set to drip and drain in the wind until they are white as snow. The dairy-woman's hands should be smooth as butter, white as milk, and cool as spring water. I've seen Janet rub them with salt and oatmeal, and she'd keep dipping them into cold salt water as she made up the butter.

Butter moulds used to be specially carved for each farm, so that one could see at a glance where each golden pound came from. Very handsome were some of the designs and had definite meaning. The cows were

B U T T E R

portraits of some prize-winning celebrity, the Swan located a river farm, Rushes and Stars are marsh grazing, Roses and Thistles and Shamrocks and Sheep and all sorts of interesting patterns could be found on the market stalls. Some of the garlands (now reputed to be laurel) were probably representations of the Mountain Sweet gale. Cool, stiff, green cabbage leaves were used to line the butter baskets. Then the commercial packing and transport made square butter more fashionable, and the neat long rolls came to market with criss-cross patterns on them, made by the wooden butter hands.

The fashion for salt butter has changed, and now you mostly get the fresh unsalted butter; but they used to pack down the butter, when it was plentiful and rich and creamy from the summer grass, into wooden kits with finely-powdered salt. There was much controversy over the delicacy of this salt; our only real rivals being considered the Dutch, who "*made a very refined form of salt*" But there were those in England who considered the best products of Droitwich equally good. Certainly salt butter was put down at the best time of the year, and, far from being considered a second-rate article, was preferred for use on oatcake, or with cheese and meat dishes, and a few of us miss the cold fresh tang of the rather hard salt butter, and wish more country people would continue to sell it. A dairy is always a pleasant place, whether it's of modern up-to-date blue-and-white aluminium finish, or the shady stone outhouse of a farm. The floor is usually tiled or brick or stone flats, and in some places where they can get it even the shelves are great slabs of black slate, cold as black stone ice. The fine slate becomes glossy black with polish and use, and how it catches the light and how the butter gleams and shines on it! Snow-white walls, black slate shelves and golden cream. Give it a chequered floor of old black and red burnt tiles, and then a rosy-cheeked dairy

HERE ' S E N G L A N D

woman, with her skirts kilted high, and a big blue apron over a holland one, over a print frock, and you'll see the very cream of England swishing around. And step back and wipe your feet, and speak respectfully, for the dairy is about the last stronghold of the English woman on the farm, and she's queen in her own domain.

THE SUITABLE SHEEP

*The sheeps flesh also is a natural restoration
As men say, after great sickness
Roasted or sodden wholesome is mutton
Boiled with gruel, phisiciens all express
Full nourishing it is after illness.*

(Early English verse)

THINKING MUTTON



Ewes down on the lower pastures in April.

HE was respectable and elderly, he had grey side whiskers and ought to have been a pillar of the Church, and he lay on his back half-way through a blocked-up sheep hole. His face was turned to the sky and his eyes were shut. The stones he lay on were knobbly, and he grunted painfully as he oozed through. Afterwards he picked himself up slowly, replaced a stone in the gap hole, readjusted his galluses and tie, and, turning round, saw me.

I coughed. He coughed. A sheep at the other side of the wall said "Baa-a-a-a" (the sound only made the silence louder). He said: "I've coomed under't dyke." I said: "Yes," and waited.

There was a perfectly good stile a few yards farther down the road and I looked at it, audibly. "I've given 'em the slip," he said. "They were following me," he added. "What for?" I asked. "Hay," he said.

Wildly I looked around for the other March hare, and the sheep said "Baa-a-a" again, loudly. The man grinned sheepishly. "They *would* follow me," he said, "Five old 'uns. *Ewes*." My brain cleared a little and we fell into step.

"They be *old* ewes; the others won't be lambing until April" (i.e., the old sheep have their lambs earliest—and many contented old ladies are lying in the sun in the lower meadows now, watching their lambs racing about).

"The old 'uns like to get around the house," he said; "They get knowing where the hay comes from, and the kids fuss 'em with bits of bread and sweet."

We were walking along the cart track now, alongside the wall. I could hear the sheep running on the other side to keep up with our footsteps. Earlier in the day I'd watched a shepherd and his dogs out, working along the upper hillside—they were high up above the valley road, but I could pick them up and lose them for miles, as they crossed the patches of white snow and disappeared against the dark withered ling.

Later, I'd seen the dog gently bringing a special few sheep downwards towards the farm pastures. Our Northern sheep are hardy and often have their lambs on the mountain, but, especially in bad snowy weather, they are brought down to the warmer levels, and the luxury of shelter.

These old ewes had come down with the man and dog to a welcome armful of hay and the remains of a sandwich lunch, and had then refused to be left behind in their little field.

Three times he had started out for the farm and tea, and three times they had leaped the wall and out after him, hence his undignified exit by the sheep hole.

"But why don't they jump the wall now?" I asked, for your black-faced sheep will clear seven-foot with a running jump.

THINKING MUTTON

"They'll not think on't," he replied—"they'll hang around the hole where I've come out," he nodded his experienced head. "I'd have left the dog to bid them," he explained; "but I wanted him for some more work up yonder, and they ewes won't follow me now, they'll watch that hole." (My side of our road ran nearest the dyke, and I thought I heard a hurried breathing along the other side of it, but said nothing).

"Yes, they breed very tame some of the old 'uns. Cunning? Yes, they are that; they'll find their way home miles if they get lost on the road."

"No, not worth much if too old. I had one ewe I thought too old to breed. I only had the offer of fifteen shillings standing for her (i.e., as she stood, for meat), and that weren't worth taking, so I killed her for ourselves, and we had mutton three weeks off her and there's eight of us, not much wrong with that."

I asked about mutton hams, for they used to be made locally. He said a few farms made one if they were "stook" with mutton, but "nowadays the women don't seem too keen and now the 'busses run too easy to get fresh meat, and bacon, too. We do mostly keep our own bacon, but it's none too easy to kill for ourselves."

"Why?"

"Well, it's got to be done in a proper slaughter-house, or prove reason for not. Of course, if you get all straight you can kill on your own premises, but the writing comes difficult for some of the top farmers, they don't manage to read the forms very easy."

"What about sheep that break their legs, or any siek animals?" I asked.

"Oh! you may kill them out of hand, so you can prove it saves suffering; and it's sometimes there's a few animals gets killed to save their lives, as you might say, and it's no matter what you do with your own; but

you mustn't 'offer for sale' unless you can prove it's fit for human consumption."

I remembered a horrible description of a fourteenth century method of making Braxy mutton edible. It's written in Anglicised French—as queer and bad as the mutton.

It may amuse some scholar to puzzle it out:

Si une berlyz murge sudernement il methent le char en ewe aulant de hure com e entre mydi noune e pus le pendant su e kant le ewe est escule le front saler e pus ben scher.

"It seems a pity, though, that you don't use your own animals oftener," I suggested. "It would save buying from the butcher." "Well, and then he'd be grumbling, and we'd get less choice," was the reply. "And, whiles, when there's a snow down, we get heartily sick of the same mutton by the time it's all done."

"Still," with a twinkle in his eye, "it's better than Capt. So-and-So, I heard of."

"Why?" "Oh! he set up an incubator, and it went wrong first day."

"Well?" I asked. "Oh! then they had to eat one hundred and forty-four hard-boiled eggs straight off," he chuckled. "Well, here I turn down to my tea, and if you want the bridge you keep round to the left."

"Good-night."

"Good-night."

I had caught the muffled hammer of little hooves on grass at the far side of the stone wall for the last quarter of a mile, and now, as I turned down to the bridge and he turned home through the farm gate, I saw five black-faced ewes, all rather short of breath, neatly jump the end of the stone dyke and trot in after him.

WOOD

"If thou have any wood to sell retail it thyself, if it be small wode, kydde it and sel it by the hundreds or by the thousandes (i.e., faggots, kindling) if there be asshes in it, to sell the small asshes to coopers for garches, and the great asshes wheele wryghts, and the meane asshes to plough-wrights and the er abbe trees to my Hers to make cogges and rongs. And if there be any oakes fell them and pyl {bark for tanning) and sell the bark by itself"

(Norden 1607, "Surveying")

THE JOLLY TENT PEGGERS



One of the tent peg-maker's sheds.

LESS than an hour out of London, find a country bus; get off at exactly the right corner, and walk half a mile down a country lane, turn out of the lane and clamber up a wooded hill-side, and you will find some of the jolliest workers in England.

The Tent Peg Makers.

Under the trees the wood violets grow thick, and the white cherry blossom blows down in drifts of snow. The hedges and bushes are full of quick-flying birds busy with their nests—a little wind laughs up from the river and rustles the crisp brown beech leaves.

On the day I was there last week swift scurries of rain and sunlight chased each other through the trees. The Tent Peg Makers had moved to a new pitch; they have only been in their new place a few days, yet already there are traces to find them by if you know where to look;

HERE'S ENGLAND

a curl of wood shaving blown over the violets, a chip of new white wood in the mud off a boot by the stile—a V mark on a tree.

All are traces to track down old friends, or, best of all, a whiff of their wood smoke among the cherry blossom.

I caught the first whiff of wood smoke and saw the first shaver of wood simultaneously, and a few breaths farther on was their shed.

As a triumphant welcome came the sudden chu-chow, chu-chow of their long saw, slicing up the beech.

The sawyer spotted me first, and I waited until the cut was through before I took a picture of him, measuring up for the next length. He held the standard peg against the log to measure for the next cut.

The grey, thin beech bark shines smooth as silk, and the wood is creamy white and cuts like cheese. It is now full of sap. Exactly like cheeses are the smooth, round sections of beech tree, each a scrap longer than the finished pegs will be.

To the unknowing, tent pegs are insignificant wooden hooks that fasten down tents. To the traveller, and man of camps, they are rooted security, the firm peg upon which hangs his comfort.

Are they small things to fuss over? Remove all the collar studs at a city banquet, and picture the effect! Remove the tent pegs of an army under canvas, and await chaos.

Now, there are a thousand miles of experience behind my knowledge of tent pegs. I have made them, and proved them, under many conditions.

Iron pegs drive in easily, but are heavy to carry, and in queer climates quickly rust the rope. Lighter metals may bend or snap against the shock of a hidden rock.

Cracking frost or hot sun changes them (let a weary day on the edge of a desert 100 degrees in the shade testify to this)—also—a very real trouble with all metal

THE JOLLY TENT PEGGERS

pegs in all grounds—they make a hole, wear it smoothly larger, and come out as easily as they slide in. (Let a horrible night under pelting northern sleet and rain testify to this).

Now, wood swells and dries with the ground, and wedges itself tighter. For experienced comfort I have found wood reliable, but that wood must be properly made up.

The cheapest sawn tent pegs look all right; and for a couple of days' gentle picnic may last, but one good whack and they lose their heads (a thing one must never do under canvas), and in damp they will split atwain.

Also, the rough edges of sawn wood will fray through a half-inch rope in one night. (No one who has not lived under canvas can believe the sheer wear of a flapping, tugging tent, especially in wet weather when one is obliged to slack the guy ropes).

In camp, through months of daily use, a set of light, strong tent pegs can become known as individuals!

In a life of crime I remember most guiltily one cold wet camp when I burnt three spare tent pegs. There was not a scrap of fuel on a stony, wet desert, and we were so tired that it really seemed that without a drink of hot coffee we should not survive to drive another peg anyhow. So the sacrifice was made.

Never did tent pegs die more carefully. One was shredded to paper fineness—one split to spillikins, and one was the log, breathed upon with prayer, and it produced a boiling billy-can.

Revived, we went forward, and the four regular pegs on duty, realising that now all depended upon them, stiffened up to their responsibilities and lasted out, but somehow those three little innocent tent pegs have haunted me. Let true travellers commend this—no others will understand the feeling.

HERE 'S E N G L A N D

But to return to the English beechwoods. There was a time not long ago when the woods were full of chair-makers, beautiful chairs, all turned with an old pole lathe.

A cherry tree chair, turned in the woods, was a wedding present dear to any English woman (and would solve the problem of many a wife now, could she get one).

The scent in the wood was faint, delicious, and never faded. It was stronger in damp weather. One of the workers told me he had made a set of twelve chairs for his own wedding.

Now, in the woods, over the brown, rustling leaves and the violets, the tent pegs of a nation were coming into being at the rate of 600 to 800 a day, or more. A million were bought by the Government last year from one firm, and each of that million was well and truly split with the grain, shaped by the grain, and would, therefore, drive in Straight, hold Steady, and Stay Firm. Trujy British tent pegs.

They are being piled in hollow battlements, four-square to the drying wind. They will be well dried out and seasoned before selling.

There were strong, thick grandfather tent pegs, all of thirty-six inches long, fit to uphold pavilions of state, or marquees at a garden party, and there were tiny four-inch shavers that looked too young to leave their mothers, but would support some hiker's home, or peg down a frivolous tennis net gladly enough.

Large or small, they faced their responsibilities no less firmly for their size, for each size peg is cut out of the tree to its own measurement, and each has the same careful work expended upon it.

It is skilful work. The workers have an almost uncanny hereditary knowledge of the wood under their fingers, a knowledge that splits and shapes the wood with swift, sure skill.

THE JOLLY TENT PEGGERS

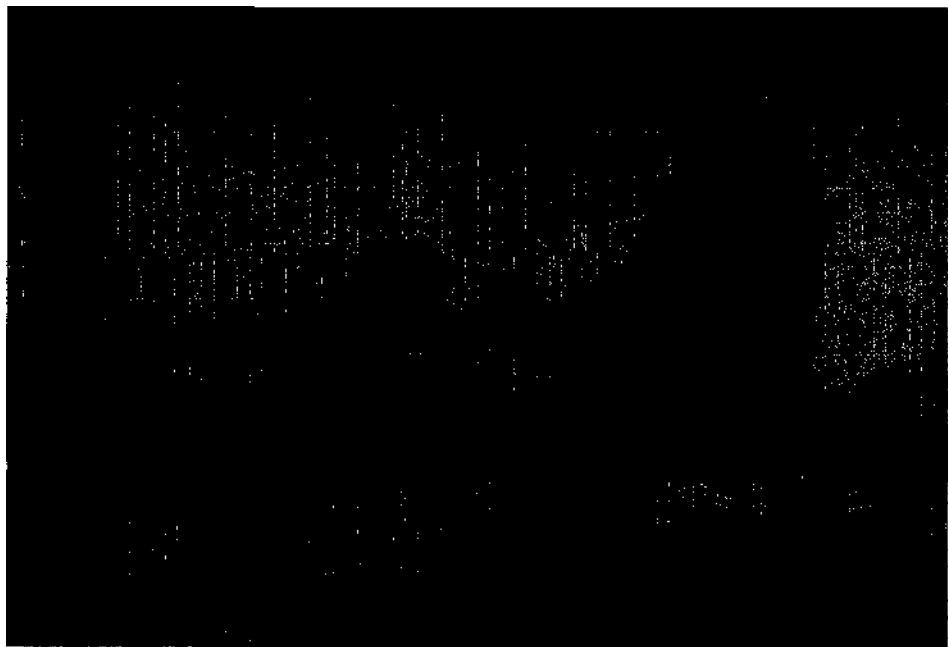
The tools are primitive in their simplicity—a block, angle bill, mallet and spoke shave, and the simple, wooden foot-vice used by all country woodmen, all hand tools, but they can do what no machine can do—they can think, and no machine has yet made a better tent peg than those made in the beech-woods under the flowering cherry trees in England.

TENT PECS

SNAKES AND LADDERS

DO you want a wheelbarrow that is exactly right for your height, or exactly the width to pass through that doorway? Do you want a present for the lady of the garden? or does the lady of the garden want a present for her assistant? Does anyone want a ladder that is exactly the right length? "What's the use of toteing around steps and steps that you don't want to use?" Why go reaching and raking about for need of a ladder when you can get one made to your measurements? Why have anything too heavy or too light when the right sizes can be made for you? At your door, so to speak.

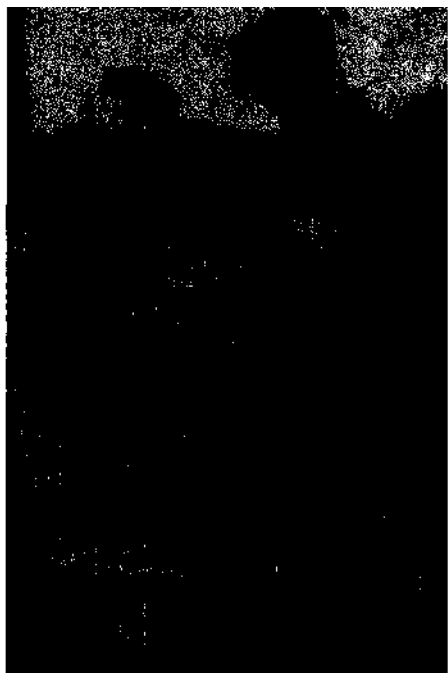
Your Englishman is the quietest salesman in the world. If you want anything, he will get it for you;



The foot-vice ; used by all country wood workers.



The ladder in the wood.



Tent pegs drying out, 100 to the pile.

SNAKES AND LADDERS

take endless trouble to get it exactly right, and not let you have it unless it is perfectly good and he can approve of your purchase. But as for forcing his goods upon you, or showing them off, No! You would never guess there was a workshop turning out perfect stuff, excellently chosen material and carefully finished, in the very heart of this bluebell wood. I only found it by accident. I had been following a little brown snake hardly visible through the leaves, it slid along so quickly that it was difficult to keep up with it and keep it in sight. I was not going anywhere in particular, and the snake very certainly was, so obviously the snake was the one to lead the way. He had just waved up and over a log and poured down and out on the other side, and as I stepped over the log I raised my head and saw a fairy colonnade before me. A double colonnade of tiny pillars gleaming white all alone in the beech woods!

Not a soul about, just the dancing sunlight patterning the floor of the woods. Drifts of bluebells and a primrose or two and . . . well, of course, if you take your eye off a snake among leaves, even for a second, it is gone. It doesn't take pixie palaces twelve inches high or ivory colonnades to magic that. So, at the rattle of the dice box I slid off the snake's tail on to the foot of the ladder, and as the children's game has it, walked up free. It was a few minutes before my snake-woven eyes could take in that it was a ladder, for it was in the preliminary stages, and both sides were lying on their backs. Rungs were standing up alternately side by side in a double row. There were fresh shavings about, and a couple of tools, cold, but obviously going to be used again soon. So I went round to the cottage and asked permission for a photograph. They had hardly finished lunch, but the owner came out courteously, and showed and explained, as kindly as if I had been a fellow-carpenter and not just a wander-boggart with a camera, wasting his time.

HERE ' S E N G L A N D

My foreign friends say they find English country people very cold and reserved, but Oh! so kind "when we asked." And I thought what a good example this was. I might have sat snake-led within a yard of this ladder all day, and beyond a cheerful "Good-day," or perhaps the enquiry: "Were you waiting for anyone?" I should have been politely left to my own unknown devices. But just because I wanted a photograph and wanted to know how it "was done"—here was someone letting the tail end of his lunch go cold and going to any amount of trouble to show me just how the rails went and how the clamps fitted and the sides had been split. The rungs are oak—the sides larch "got about here"—the smaller are English larch, but for long ones, the ship-masts they grow in Norway are tallest; this—he showed me a fine sturdy piece,—is English, this—a fine slender one—imported.

No, there was no machinery used, the holes are best drilled with this. No need to make them too large, but it is needful to plot off the length, both sides, before you start. A machine would have to begin at the beginning, but by looking carefully and studying the grain, perhaps by shifting an inch or two up or down, you can choose the best places for the whole length. There is not much grain in good larch sides, but what there is you want "to use the feel of it." He showed how each oak rung was planed to an exact fit, turning it in the hole. There must be just enough play to wedge the rungs tight when they are driven in, but not enough to strain the larch sides. The two sides are held taut by this iron clamp, he showed me how. Of course, after they are tested and finished, I paint them.

"Do you put iron ties through also?" I asked. "No need, no need. Only a very long one. A good ladder holds without. And the less the sides are pierced, the stronger. You see, a long ladder has got to stand

SNAKES AND LADDERS

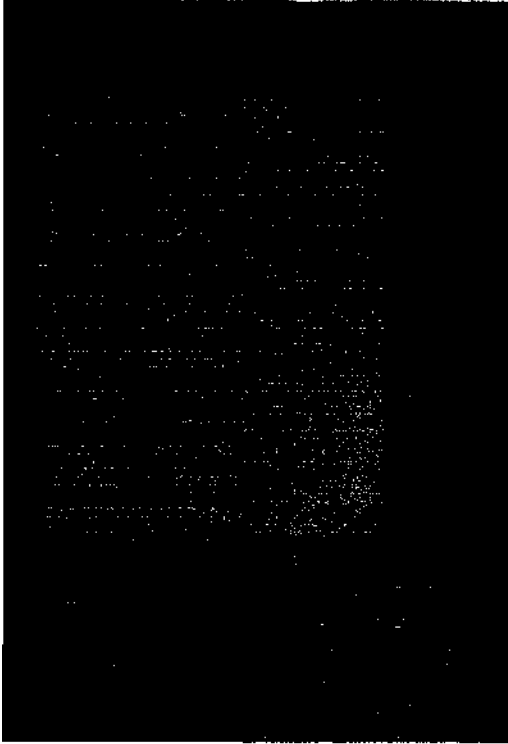
springy. It is not like a pair of steps. Oak is best for rungs—No, they are never painted, it would step off, and besides, you want to see the wood."

"The ladder, afore anything else, has got to be reliable."

The wheelbarrows came next, by request. We discussed prices and transport difficulties, ladders run between is. 3d. and 15. 9d. a foot, as an average. But all work varied according to the individual requirements of the purchaser. The best wood available was used and, he added, "the handiest paint," but if you like to have special colours, "0/ *course*, you can please yourself." So, when I get a ladder, it is going to be that ochre-red with which they paint cartwheels, and I am going to have a wheelbarrow just oiled and creosoted, and I am going to send my measurements beforehand.

No one came near the cottage all afternoon. Quietly the ladder maker got on with his job, quietly the sunlight slid to and fro, over the beech-leaf floor, and when I went back through the wood I was thinking what a lot of kindness and skill were hidden out of sight in England.

MAY

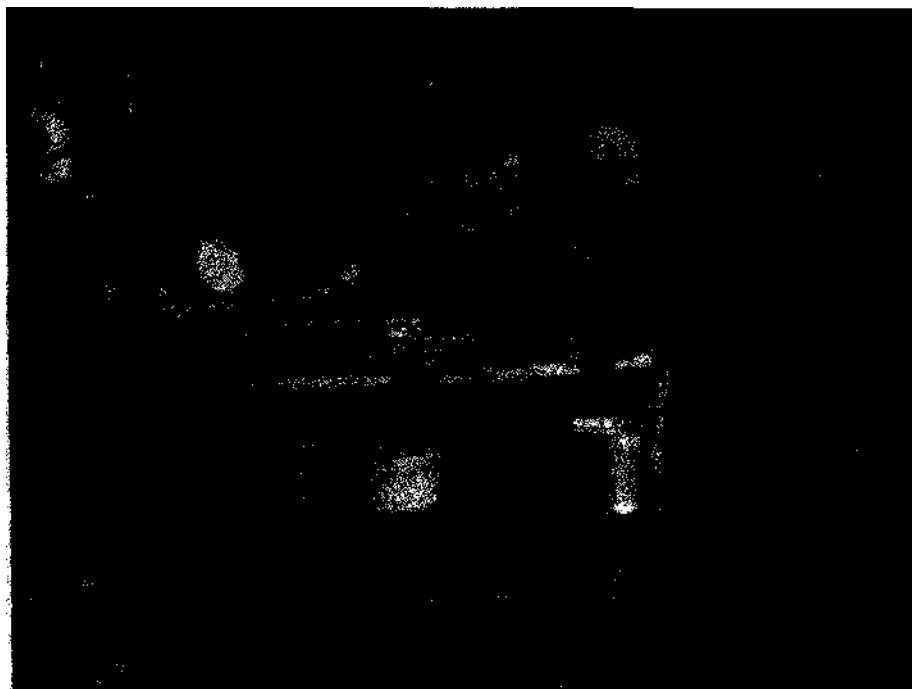


SORTES OF CHEESE

There is IIII sortes of chese, whiche is to say, grene chese, softe chese, harde chese, and spermyse. Grene chese is not called grene by the reason of colour, but from the newnes of it . . . Softe chese, not to new nor to olde, is best. . . Harde chese, is hot and dry and euyll to dygest. Spermyse is a chese the which is made with curdes and with the juce of herbes. To tell the nature of it I can not, consyderynge that every mylkewyfe may put many juces of herbes .. one not agreynae with another . . .

(A. Border

CHEESE



A Wensleydale cheese expert, with her apparatus scoured and drying in the cold Spring sun and wind—ready for the first new cheeses.

THERE are two sorts of cheese, Pedigree and Mouse Trap. The last is not made, it usually happens in wedges. In London, landladies put it on square dishes, under pot catafalques, and you will always know it is "mousetrap" because they say, "I brought 'chew' a 'mice bit' of cheese." I know of one such cheese wedge that lay untouched so long, that it glued itself on to its slab by a sort of gummy secretion through its own pores, and my friend, who was an artist, touched it up with colours, and gave the whole a coat of varnish, and hung it up for another h'ornament between a china cat and two shells and a ship on a plush plate. It hung there for years and the next lodger said, in his time it had

HERE'S ENGLAND

wrinkled a bit, and he always thought it was a view of Morecambe Bay. That's mousetrap.

Pedigree cheeses are apart, they are born in the round—they live on round stands in country houses and hotels, and in wooden bowls in cottages and inns. These cheeses always have napkins wrapped around them, to show they are properly taken care of. No, this is not for appearance; it is to prevent the too sudden change of temperature from the cold larder to the over-heated dining room or kitchen. Any dairymaid will tell you a cheese is all as sensitive as a baby, that's why only old thick-walled farm houses can store cheeses—"natural-like." (They used to keep them under the bed quite often!)

Whole volumes could be written on the pedigree cheeses of England—centuries-old manuscripts tell of their virtuous diversity; there were snowy soft and cool milk cheeses, and cream cheeses, and some that were coloured pale green with sap of green herbs. It's likely the Roman nettles and docks massed so closely around old farms were purposeful, because many cheeses had nettle juice to sharpen them, and were laid on dock leaves. Other cheeses were laid on hollow reeds or straws. Some cheeses even in these days were "Hot and dry and evill to dygest."

Of Suffolk cheese it was said :

*"Those that made me were uncivil
For they made me harder than the devil
Knives won't cut me, fire won't sweat me,
Dogs bark at me, but can't bite me."*

But the majority of English cheeses are good, and varied as England. When East Anglia was a golden land of wheat, a saffron cheese was made, so that on the East you ate white bread and golden cheese and on the West, in Devon and Cornwall, golden saffron bread and white cream cheese.

C H E E S E

All the smaller districts had their own make of cheese, varied as the climate, pasturage, breed of animal, and custom of the people. Goats, ewes, cows, all varied, and all were used, but in each district, the characteristic cheese of that district developed competitively. So that the finest qualities of its kind were brought up to perfection, and the differences accentuated. It's the copy-cat competition between varieties, that is bringing down our modern cheese into one dull level of mediocre soap.

A few characteristic old English cheeses survive, old branches of the once flourishing family tree. Cheshire cheese is still large and red, like a harvest moon or carrots; (and partakes of the nature of both). In old times they cut a circle out of the top, poured in a tankard of sack, and bunged it up and left it to digest itself—a similar treatment often improves modern Cheshire cheese, which is apt to be dry and stolid, (like a Cheshire farmer, they both warm and soften under the influence of drink), still it's a good, sensible, serviceable cheese is Cheshire.

There is a variety of goat milk cheese that used to be made in Flint, up on the hills and on the waste land by the coast. It was bright ginger red and knocked you down at one whiff (if it still exists it ought to figure in the disarmament conference!) There is a delicious white milk cheese sold by the country women in the Oswestry and North Welsh markets. (N.B.—If it is with this cheese the blackberry-eyed Welsh "birdies" made overtures to the English warriors on guard in the Marches, I don't wonder the breed is so mixed along the border!) This milk cheese is cold and deliciously fresh, slightly salt, is decorated with primroses and served on snowy cheese cloths. If you find such a cheese for sale on a grey-green cabbage leaf, buy it! for it's probably come from one of the old top farms, "Pen-y-Pass" or "Pen-y-Craig"—where they still use three-pronged forks

HERE' S ENGLAND

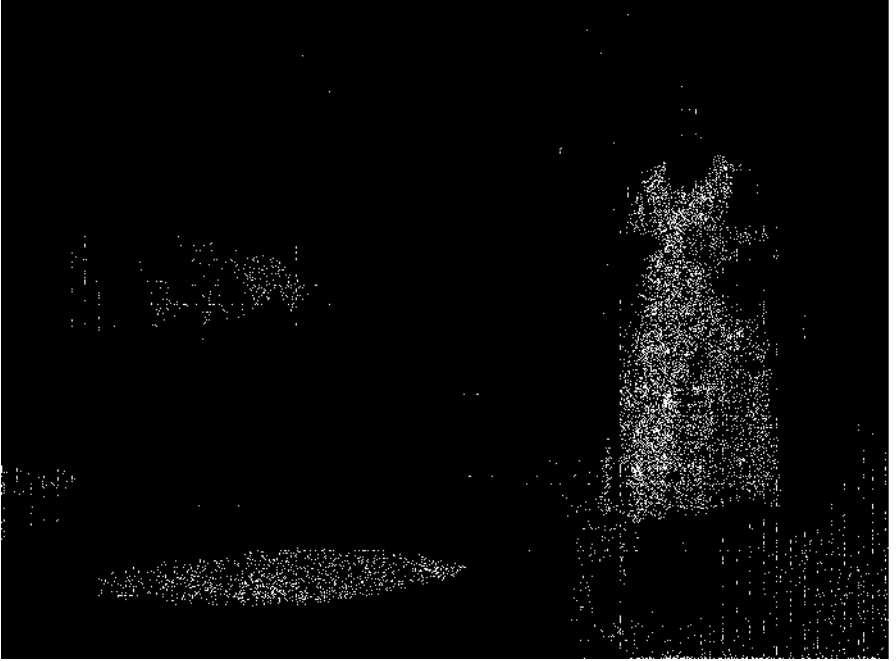
and where the cows milk is rich and the dairies are scoured with spring water and white sand.

Sometimes on these hills, at very remote farms, you can get a curd cheese that "blue moulds" in the most wonderful way—the country folk believe it is because the cows graze by the old copper mine streams, and point out that using an old-fashioned copper wire curd breaker had the same effect—but this is non-proven to me—there may be something in it—it's a pleasant cheese and rare to find.

But Stranger! beware of the "Welsh cheese" of the Beauty Spots—at Bettws-y-Coed I met old Mrs. Jones, who had first sold off one of her light milk cheeses (now green and rotten with age) to an American Antiquarian for a shilling. Said I, "Now, Mrs. Jones, have you no shame? to do so to a poor unsuspecting foreigner? Those cheeses are sixpence fresh at the Market on Wednesday, fourpence by Saturday, and that one was four weeks old and gone bad! O shame to you, Mrs. Jones!"

"Well! well! and yes, indeed, it wass too bad; it was very wrong ass you say," (the Welsh always take the wind out of one's moral sails) "but, indeed, the poor lady wass all for the old things and wanted something with a real old flavour, and would have nothing of the cheese the smell of it she could not hear, and she did give me a shilling, and how would I be so rude as dispute with her and she a visitor?"

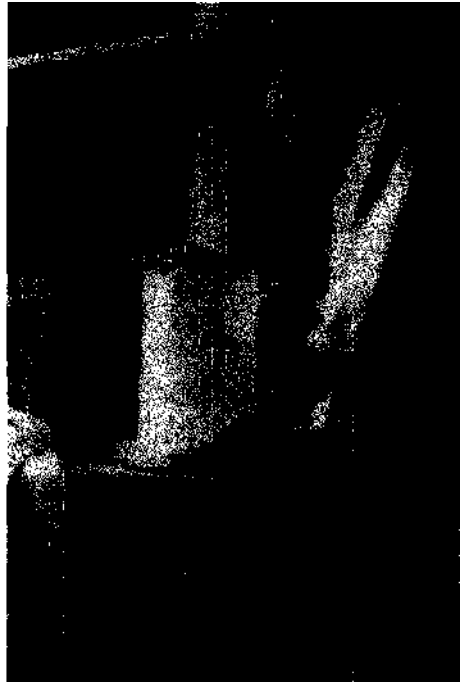
North Wales has suffered more than any district from this "beauty spot" mania, and the influence of smart young business men and dealers who sadly misuse the honesty and simplicity of the country women. If you want the genuine thing you must go up into the mountains, or find the sad little forgotten panier markets—the one at Holyhead is almost purposely hidden behind large commercial stalls. Thereabouts the farm women sit, patient and neglected, with their fresh butter, and



The best double Gloucester is a fine rich cheese



Small farm house cheese press.



Smoothing Stiltons at a factory
in the country.

HERE'S ENGLAND

home-made cakes and eggs, and dressed poultry (so carefully "dressed" with their livers under one wing and neat parsley buttonholes on their bosoms). They have no idea of salesmanship—these women—and they will wait patiently all day, on the remote benches where the smart business men have shoved them, till towards evening they will sell their little stock for less than its value, rather than carry them back the weary road home. Here, in these "farmers" markets, you find honesty and real worth. Go and look for them, lovers of England.

But to return to cheese. Cheddar has a fine peppery cheese—a ripe Cheddar with a good "bite" to it takes a lot of beating and it's a good cheese to go with ale and exercise.

Stilton is Ancestral—it belongs to family portraits and Bibles and gout—it has an atmosphere of Country Houses and "about Town" and at the Club, the waiter dates by it—"When we finished that Stilton, Sir." At Christmas, Stiltons go out to homesick Englishmen all over the Globe.

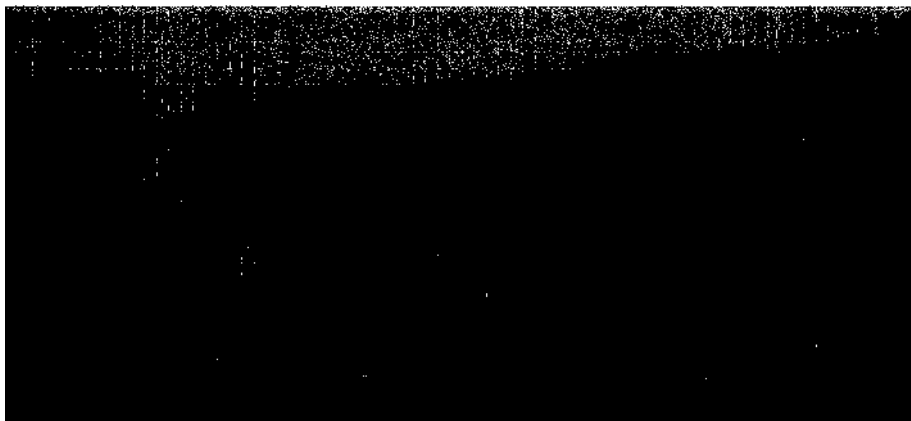
The finest Gloucestershire cheeses are still made in farm houses down among the lush rich meadows of the Severn Estuary: it is a rich smooth cheese—there are several varieties. Brecon cheese is firm and white.

There are Leicester cheeses, light milk cheeses and small "tea" cheeses that are milk cheeses with cream cheese in the middle, that I have never found anywhere else but in the villages round Charnwood Forest. Lancashire, Cumberland and Wiltshire cheeses are good (it was in Wiltshire they set to rake the moon out of a pond, thinking it a drowned cheese!) They make cheese up and down England, but the most thoroughly English cheese is the Wensleydale. It's a little like Stilton, but the process varies slightly. Delicate as the dales' colouring, and yet sturdy; and with an "honesty" about it

C H E E S E

(I do not know any other word for the quality I want to describe). Something of the limestone that has preserved in the Dalesman his subtle child-like quality, on his rock basis of honesty, seems to be in this dalesman's cheese (for cheeses are characteristic). This cheese has lost repute sometimes by its rarity, for rather than leave an order unfilled, between March and June, they will send up a Hay cheese—i.e., a cheese made while the cows are on the lower pastures or being partly fed with hay. The Wensleydale cheese made then is dead white, does not "blue," and is soft in texture. A fair amount is made and has a ready sale locally, and in Lancashire, chiefly because it cooks best! The Dales folk themselves often break it up with a fork and add milk and eggs and make delicious cheese cakes (very like curd cakes) and they used to have a dish in which thin slices of bread were fried in the breakfast bacon fat, bedabbled with the cheese or crisped in the oven—I can't think why inn-keepers don't use it more now, to supplement their excellent, but eternal, eggs and bacon). This "Hay cheese" is a good dull cheese, but it is not best Wensleydale.

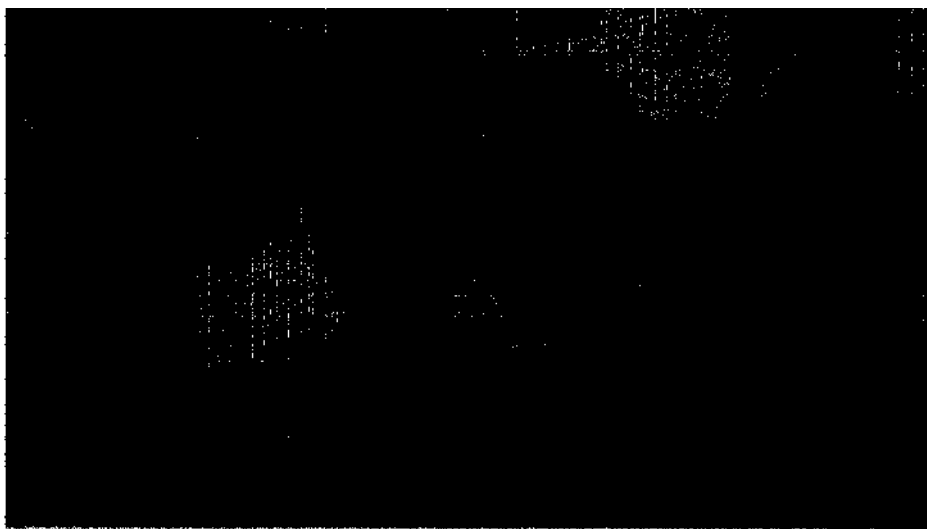
A good Wensleydale cheese made in late spring when the cows are at grass is perfect. It is a pale cream, fine textured, and breaks a little crumblingly, there are faint blue-grey veins in it, and it tastes of blue-grey moorland grass and cold moorland streams, and has the faint aroma of wet alder wood. The country folk will tell you the milk from the high pastures is best, and also when, in Spring, the cows get the fresh quick grass, with a scrunchy mouthful of blown snow on it. Our dale cows are no hot-house-fed byre dwellers. They are sent out nearly all the year and the milk is carried down from the sheds in pails on the backs of the milkers. Perhaps the fresh flavour is something to do with the cleanness of the lime-washed dairies and white scoured oaken cheese pots, for



Strone sledges still bring down milk from high hill farms.



The cows passing one of the big milk lorries that collect the milk for towns.
(A waiting milk can is on a ledge on the right).



An old farm milk flote, brings milk to a new cheese factory.

C H E E S E

the Dales farms are the cleanest in the world. Sun and wind, and scouring rain and snow of the wind-swept moorlands!

*"Although the lower meddowes doe abound in the plenty
"of grasse, yet the higher ground even beareth the sweeter
"grasse, and it is a rule amongst Husbandmen that the low
"meddowes doe fill, but the high meddowes do feede. The
"low are for the stable, but the high are for the Cattle,
"that (grass) which is long will maintaine life, but that
"which is short will breede milke"*

So mind you get a fresh spring grass cheese from a high farm; for after a delicate nutty Wensleydale all other cheeses seem blatant and rough.

Yes—cheeses have character, and English cheeses are best for English people. Foreign cheeses are sold in England. Parmesan and Gorgonzola belong to Soho and Hammersmith, Gruyere is holy soap and Camembert pure temperament. Roquefort and Pont l'Eveque are modernistic, and there is a strong Dutch School, but if you are a peaceable sort of chap, who likes simple things that are really good—you will like Wensleydale. There's a sweet reasonableness about a Wensleydale cheese.

B A C K - S T E Y N

"Along the coast of Pevensey Bay one may meet peasants with flat pieces of wood called backsters fastened to the soles of their boots to assist them in walking over the rough shingle', a rude expedient doubtless, handed down from a remote period"

(H. Hewlett. 1884)

BACK - STEYN

The Stone Lands of Dungeness



A Dungeness cart. The wide barrel wheels are an adaption to shingle. These fetch the fish from the boat's side.

" T F we are going to walk, Fil have to borrow you a
I pair of stays." (I demurred that I'd never worn
them.)

"Oh, that's all right! You'll probably split them or
they'll fly off you, but it's five miles, so you'd better have
them."

Did you know there was a place in England where they
ski daily as a matter of course ? Not skis in the longest
sense of the word, because they are only about eighteen
inches long, but skis they are, and you shoot along very
conveniently once you get the hang of it.

You would never suspect, from the completely care-
free appearance of the town, that the people kept a
secret sport like that behind their daily life.

The streets, the church, the shops, the pubs: are all
peaceful and unsuspecting. The sea is heard faintly in
the distance, the grass lands lie level to the sun, the gorse

is molten gold, and the cries of sea-birds and the bleatings of lambs blow to and fro between the summer winds.

But beyond the rim of the green lands lie the lands of the back-stay, grey acres of stone, sea-cleansed grey shingle, laced with lines of drift-weed and starred with tiny flowers.

It is a quiet, undisturbed world. Sea-born clouds blow in across the sky and trail blue shadows over the downs. Inland, in the smoke-scented evenings, the young new moon rises in rainbow silver over the marshes.

I can only think of one disadvantage to the inhabitants: lovers could not linger by the ripples in the twilight, whispering sweet nothings, because you can't hear yourself think wearing back-stays! (Still, there's room for two people sitting close, on four back-stays).

A back-stay is of wood, eighteen inches by eighteen inches, has one strap of leather that you put over your foot, is tar and mud lumps and scratches of reminiscent use on the top side, and underneath is white as bone.

My guide, an expert, started me off on the level. Back-stays are easy as pie on the levels, and we ranted along at a fine pace—left, right, rutt-rutt-rutt-rutt, but once off the levels, and start speeding down-hill, and the back-stays either leave you and go on ahead, or fly up behind and hit you in the neck.

On this account beginners are permitted (nay, admonished) to belay the crossbar of leather to their boot-laces, because twenty feet is a fair fly for a back-stay, given a good start and a wind blowing.

Down-hill, put in your heels and scoot. Up-hill, dig in your toes and plod, and for goodness' sake don't look as if you were doing anything out of the ordinary. I tell you everyone does it here.

The children back-stay to school, the baker-boy props his bicycle against the high-road hedge and back-stays to the back door. When the fisher boats are sighted over

B A C K - S T E Y N

the billows, the sailor's bride gives a pat to her permanent wave, pops on her back-stays and slips down to greet him.

The gardener back-stays, the doctor back-stays.

We met the curate back-staying to Sunday school class, and the scholars back-stayed to greet him. I suppose even the truants (we did not see any) back-stayed away (or would you call this back-sliding ?) When I tell you that a perfectly good old-established inn, with an excellent brew, can only be reached by back-staying, need I say more ?

Runt! runt! runt! runt! It has many adaptations, this life on the shingle. Its health statistics are marvellous. All rubbish is eliminated. Every scrap of burnt ash is wanted for the garden, and even tins are pounded out of existence.

Below the hollows of the shingle clear water gurgles. Scoop down a few feet and below the loose, dry stones there it is, sparkling clear and cold. The goats know of it, and so does the purple-branching seakale.

The most astonishing thing at the end of that barren, stony wild was finding a colony of bees and "Honey for sale!"

Then one realised that there were acres of tiny aromatic herbs netting their way among the stones, tiny leaves that smelled like incense, sage and thyme flowers, and the green rosettes of coming purple fox-gloves, and, like the promised land, the gold of gorse against the skyline.

The fragrance rose as a rainbow from a newly-opened pot of that strange honey. The bee-master herself hardly knows wherefrom the litde workers gather, but seemingly, if that is the first real English honey the Romans found, I don't wonder they came back for more.

The terns have a colony beyond, and we walked wet-foot awhile on the shingle, for the terns, of the tiny black

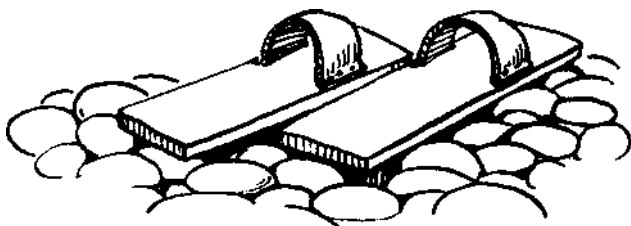
HERE'S ENGLAND

heads, slender wings and tiny scarlet feet, tilt up and down the wind with troubled, anxious cries.

Inland, as we crashed back through the twilight, we found smooth places where the stones were marked with a shadow line that showed silvery like watered silk. The hares made them.

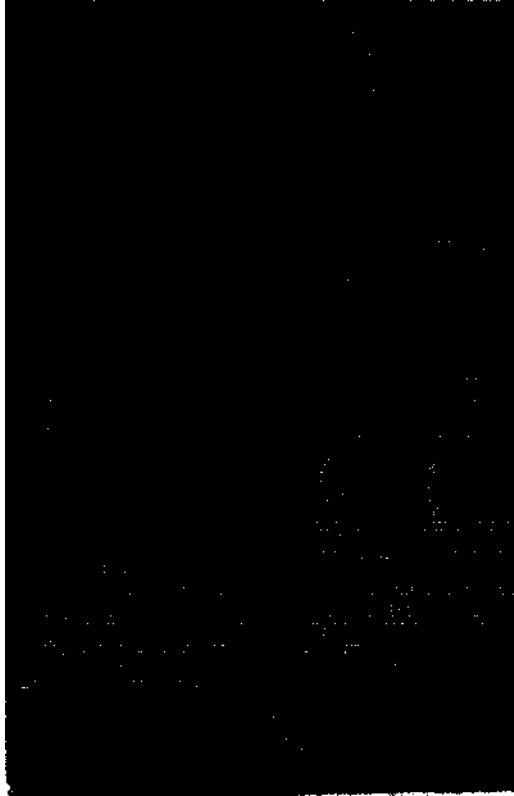
Lie down flat, chin on the shingle, with the silver streak against the sky-line, and by and by you will see the procession go past, or if you are lucky, as I was, you may see an astonished brown gentleman sitting bolt upright, two ears twitched up tight on top of his head and his whiskers fairly spinning around, within a yard of you . . . then . . . you will see nothing but a single shingle slipping down the silver road trackway and the grey sea mist sliding up over the marshes.

Then rise up with a crash and a clatter, hitch up your back-stays, and set out—runt! runt! and rattle!—for home, and arrive down the High street with your back-stays, string slung, clattering down your back and an awful appetite inside you.



Back-stays.

JUNE



THE SHEPHERD

. . . A Shepherd have a borde set fast to the syde of his lytell folde, to lay his shepe upon whan he handleth them and a hole bored in the borde, with an auger, and therin a grayned stake of two fote longe to be set fast, to hange his ter boxe upon and than it shall not fall And a Shepherd shulde nat go without his dogge, his shepehoke, a payre of sheres, and his ter box . . . and hee must tech his dogge to barke whan he wold have hym, to ronne whan he wolde have hym and to **leve ronnynge** . . . or els he is nat a conninge Shepherd.

(Fitzherbert. 1470)

S H E E P W A S H I N G



June Noon-day.

EVER been to a big sheep washing? It's great fun to watch and you usually get a few good laughs between the splashes. One of the things you first hear is a great bleating and hullo-ba-loo down in the valley, and one of the first things you will see will be some stream blocked up and cleared and store pens cleared, and hurdles set and got ready and a tub or two put handy. Look out for the signs any day about the middle of June. A good big flock of sheep and lambs on the move down-hill are worth following, because they often bring the sheep down in the evening, or very early morning. It's hot for sheep to trot far in their thick summer fleece, and they give them time to cool off before their cold tub. It is a good time for the shepherd to look over the flock and see to feet and mouths, and eyes and ears.

(A point for a townsman: there are dozens of different names for sheep in England, so if the shepherd you are bothering speaks of hogs, don't look around for pigs;

HERE'S ENGLAND

and clegs, tegs or tups, or t'winters, or any of the names in the shepherd's academy will vary according to the type of sheep and the type of country—so if you can't follow what he tells you, tell him so, and he may laugh a little, but he will surely teach you.) Now washing sheep varies locally as much as the sheep do and some breeds of our sheep are centuries and continents apart. So I can only give you a general view which you must modify by enquiry. Firstly, the dirty sheep are on the right bank of the river facing up-stream so that, as they swim across, their heads will be convenient handles for the shepherd as he faces down-stream. They have to be well soaked to float out the dirt, yet not stay in long enough to be chilled. A sheep-full of water is light and easy to manage *in* the water, but an awful weight out of it, and the men pass them about in the water easily enough. One of the funniest things I ever saw was an elderly black-faced ewe, who suddenly heaved over, planted her feet firmly on the washer's chest, and fairly pushed him over. There was a splash, and the next moment, the man, helpless with laughter, was being towed to the bank by the old lady, who with her head well out, fairly landed him to the bank—gave him a contemptuous shove and herself waded out several yards higher up and began to eat grass, as if downing six-foot Highlanders was "lamb's play to her!"

The old sheep who've been there before usually take a header with a "let's get it over" plunge, submit quietly to the washing, and I've seen a few go paddling off as if they rather enjoyed it. But there is seldom a washing but some sheep makes a bolt for it and chases off. Sometimes the boys go after her, more often the shepherd sends the dogs to fetch her back, and then she usually goes in pretty quietly, being slightly out of puff, (N.B. washing is not the same as a "*dip*") Beyond the stream the sheep come out dripping and baa-ing, and if

S H E E P W A S H I N G

it's North, and the lambs are still with the ewes, they are kept separate a little, until most of the wet has drained off, but they can hear and sometimes see their mothers—they keep up such a woeful chorus of "Ma! ma!" "Waars the maatar with my ma?" "Waars ma Mamma!" that all the farm creatures start calling back, and far away to the hills above their cries will carry on the wind and "Baar," "Baar" say the sheep above.

As the clean sheep dry a little they are let through to another pen. Some may be put separately because the washer has noticed a sore place, a little cut, or anything that wants special attention. As a rule the sheep do not go straight back to the hills, but stay in clean pasture for a time, because as soon after washing as the yolk (i.e., the lubricant lanoline natural to the wool) has come back and the fleece is in condition and ready, they will be clipped. Mostly the drying sheep enjoy a special serving of hay or grass to warm them up, and if the lambs are let back to their mothers, they rush in and have breakfast, too.

After the wool is dried and the yolk—or oily element—recovered, then the shearing takes place.

S H E E P S H E A R I N G

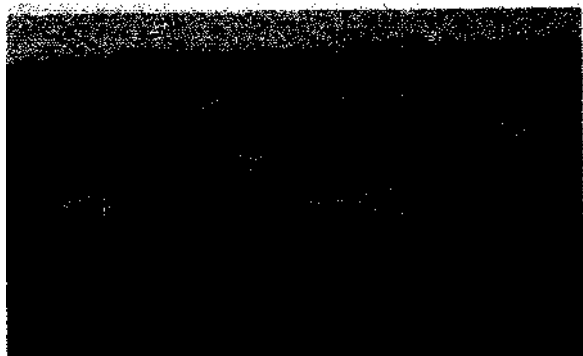
When you went to the sheep-washing, were you invited to the shearing? Time was when you would have been dancing under the summer moon at the weekend of sheep shearing. Very neat footed some of those shepherd lads could be when they were in their slippers. Up North, old folks say, big sheep-shearing parties went out when machine clippers came in, while the sheep were done by hand, with hand shears, and the flocks ran in thousands, there would be a regular set-to at each farm

HERE ' S E N G L A N D

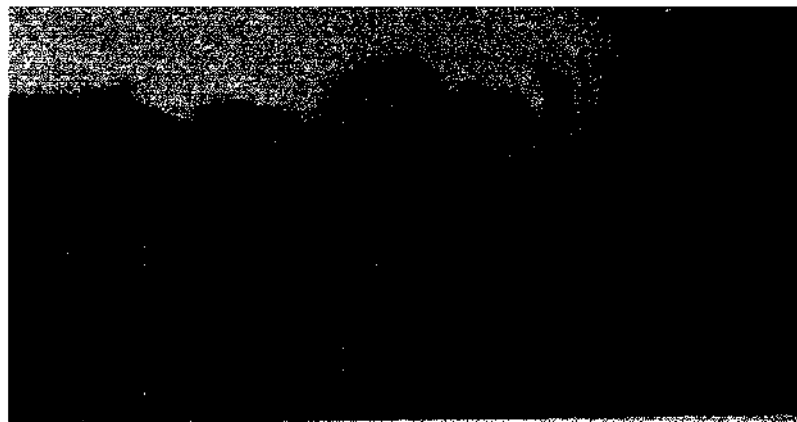
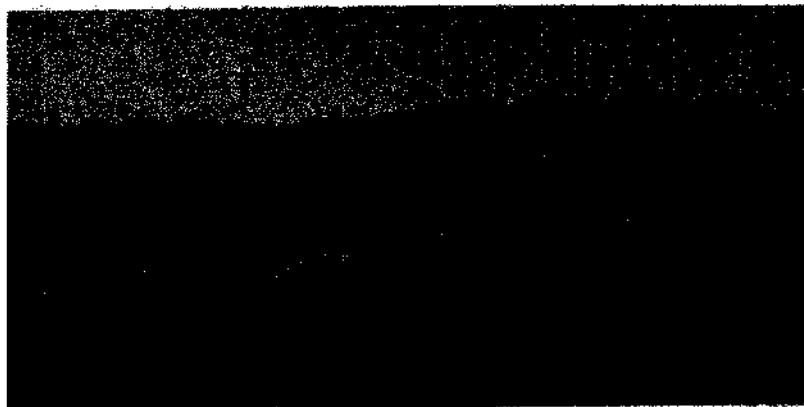
in turn; and you'd meet foreigners from fifty mile away, and folk that you had not seen since last shearing. Up in the dales, I remember, huge rounds of beef would be roasted for the hands. It would be slowly roasted and covered closely till it was cold, then, next day, the women folk would stand in a row, and one would cut even slices of the close farm-house bread, another spread it thick with salty butter, yellow as gold, the next would lay on a slice of brown and white beef, one would give a good sprinkling of salt and clap the other slice down, and then lay it atop the piles resting on white board cloths in the big baskets, and each basket had a little jar of new mustard, with a long bone spoon, tied to the handle. Those plainly-cut sandwiches *were* good; the beer was in glass jugs, a clear golden reddish colour, with the foam slowly, wetly, sliding down outside. There were parkins and cheeses for tea, and cheese-cakes, and for us children, treacle, lovely stuff, it wasn't black, nor refined "silver," it was transparent dark amber, and came in kits (i.e., small tubs) and all the farm animals got a mugful when they were sick (N.B. we got Gregory powder). Treacle was cheaper than most jams in those days, and wholesome, and it swam beautifully and perilously off the oatcake, and stuck to things, dogs especially, and there were always lots of dogs at shearing.

Contrary to the general idea, the white-tipped sheep-dog had a natural flair for childhood, quite genuinely and without sentiment these dogs would adopt child friends and used to "act reet saft" as the shepherds would say for a game of tag, or catchball, with some children. I had several working friends who would race down the steep fells for a quick greeting lick and a reluctant dash back to duty.

No sheep dog would ever fight with another when among the sheep, but they would cut each other out shamelessly on the farms and cadge in the kitchen



On the downs



Bringing hurdles to pen the sheep in the turnip field.



un turnip.

HERE ' S E N G L A N D

for beef bones. They enjoyed sheep-shearing week immensely.

The real reason for the dance was that the big barns, standing empty before the corn harvest, were cleared and swept for the shearers, and made a perfect dance room. Some sacks well stuffed with hay, one for each shearer to rest upon, were thrown down, but a lot of our own chaps used stools for the sheep. Have you ever seen a sheep clipped? Even with the newest shearing machines (a *mesalliance* between a dentist's drill and a safety razor) the procedure is something the same. The sheep is caught and held on its back, while the neck and chest are done first and down the belly to the tail, while the sheep is thus up-ended, the shepherd often takes the opportunity to examine the hoofs. It looks funny to see a silly sheep lying back in the shearer's arms, like a fat old lady swooning, with the shepherd kneeling down, gravely manicuring her toes. They trot whole flocks through a curative foot bath sometimes to cure cracks and chapping. It smarts rather, like some of our dressings, but it cures the hurt, though as a shepherd remarked—"the sheep don't know that and they stand looking at you, as if they didn't know which foot to put down first when they come out."

It is good workmanship to get the clipping lines even and neat and following the shape of the sheep: an old hand can clip a sheep for a show so as to bring out its good points and gloss over bad ones. Gypsy ing they call it, because tradition says that once a gypsy cheated a Yorkshireman over a horse on Ripon Bridge.

But it is not gypsying to make market stock look its best and do credit to your care. A skilful shepherd is all of an artist and he will "match 'em up by their faces" to get a "level set" and "fetch 'em down over-night and tuck a wide shovel into the kitchen fire" and smooth over their woolly backs till they have that solid, square, meaty

S H E E P S H E A R I N G

figure, that is so elegant in elderly mutton. And clear their ears and tails, and pull out the wool about their fat cheeks, and get a pipin of oil and rub their little feet and then—they do look a neat polite little set of animals, and "alike as dominoes." All hill Shows have a class for three ewes and one ram "straight from the mountain" (i.e., not fed up but taken straight from the grazing and cleaned and put into the pen). It is a jolly class and it shows good work to win that. Rams are among the few animals it's fun to watch fight, they thoroughly understand a fair sporting contest and it does them good and warms them up in the winter (and gives their ladies an interest). The rams set their distance fairly, pause, then at a given signal gallop ahead and crash into each other—bang! The ground fairly rocks! back they stagger, panting; then they turn and trot back again and wait fox each other, and then full tilt again, bang! till over one of them goes. His antagonist stops dead, feet braced—the fallen takes the count—and then the victor moves off, with dignity, and the ladies in *his* charge. They say that medieval knights took their tilting from the fighting rams they saw in the East during the Crusades.

Clipping is longish work even in our days, and many Lowland shepherds still clip by hand, maintaining that the closer clipping machine, that gives a "moleskin" finish, leaves the sheep more liable to sun-burn blisters than the equally neat, but slightly more tufted finish of the shear points, which makes shadowed finish, just that slight rippling in the texture is very important in a hot summer on the shadeless downs. By hand clip or machine the wool is taken off front, sides and back, lifted clear of the sheep, and then the creature is set on its legs and goes off, looking cool and slim and slightly self-conscious, and as often as not its own lamb does not know it.

HERE'S ENGLAND

In the Islands the little friendly Shetland sheep are not sheared, they are plucked. Most of the lambs are given to the children, for playmates, as they are born, and many are the joyous re-unions when the sheep come down to the rooing. A friend has just given me the following charming dialogue reported verbatim last year:

"Kins du what ewe dis is a'm rooin' Jamie?" asks the grandmother, plucking busily at a sheep. Jamie, his eyes round behind a large bannock, looks at the newly-rooed sheep without recognition. "No I," he says, shaking his head. "Dis is du Grey Mootie."—"But she's ower peerie (small) for my Mootie!" cries Jamie in great concern, failing to recognise in this shorn creature the comfortable old ewe with whom he has played in the hills. Finally after he has gazed long and earnestly into the animal's face, he is convinced. "Aye, dat is so," he says with a sigh, "but ye mauna tak ony mair off, or there'll be nothing left o' my Mootie."—(J.G.)

The fleece is taken off just when the new wool is lifting the old, so there comes to be, naturally, a space of shedding growth close to the skin. You can tell the health of a sheep down the length of its wool, a little like you can tell the growth of a tree down its bark rings.

A test among old wool buyers was to take a length of the wool between their hands pulling it taut and plucking across the fibre with their thumbs, strumming a low note. A period of poor food or illness would make a thin place in the length of the wool, you could hear it. Old ewes who have lambed often, their fleece drops off them; youngsters, lively little hogs, have strong woolly fleece, there are long staple stranded fleeces, and curled fleeces. The old fleeces had long coarse hairs left in them which have been almost bred out, but a little of that quality left makes a stronger yarn. There are dozens of different sorts, of sheep in England and all the know-

S H E E P S H E A R I N G

ledge of them is turned over between experts talking in the shearing sheds.

A fleece is snow white inside with a lovely silvery sheen and as soon as it comes off the sheep a worker (it used to be a woman) lays it out flat, skin side down, trims it, putting any loose locks into the middle, folds in the two sides, and then beginning at the tail end rolls it up tight. When they get to the neck end they put a knee on the roll and, with two hands pulling out the neck wool into a long rope, they twist it round the fleece, tuck in the end and carry it away in a neat round shining white bundle.

There is nothing prettier than a newly-shorn fleece unless it is very thick thistledown with the sun on it. The farm I knew best, they would "put away" in a low oak-floored room with the shutters to, and the sunlight would come through the shutters in long silver spears and the white fleeces would gleam and shine in the dark. When all was done, they were covered up with a cloth to wait for the wool buyer, because the shepherds will tell you wool is a live thing and goes on living after it leaves the sheep's back.

Everyone knows that in the House of Lords the Lord Chancellor sits on a woolsack, but few realise that plump looking mattress was the regular packing of wool done by two labourers in the barn. The great strongly-woven linen sacks were slung from the roof of the barn so that the lower side just swam the floor. A line of the white fleece bundles was laid inside, along the bottom so that there was a layer just as long and as wide as the completed wool pack. The two men then got inside the bag (the open edge just reached their necks) and they walked up and down, stamping down the wool and forcing it into the corners with their toes. Another layer was handed in and they trampled down that, and so on, packing evenly and firmly till by and by they were

walking along the swaying top of a wall of wool four or five feet high, and had to steady themselves against extra ropes hung from the ceiling, while they trod the last few layers of wool. The minute they jumped out their assistants closed in on the sack, securing the open mouth from side to side (three-pronged forks were excellent, and I've found many an old horn-handled "three-pronger" on the rafter of a wool barn!) they then sewed up the open mouth from end to end before the elastic wool burst up and boiled over the top. Then the new woosack was pulled across and lent against the wall, where it swelled and stiffened itself until it seemed as if it really must burst. It was a specially-paid job in medieval times weaving the cloth for woosacks and windmill sails.

The treatment of fleeces varies much. When some Southdown sheep were being shorn unwashed, an old shepherd sitting on the wall by me laughed, "Six years ago," he said, "they would have been washed, that's a fac', this is the only times I have ever known to get money for dut!" Yet many things remain unaltered. In Yorkshire in 1641 *"He hath 49 clippers all at once) and each gets his wage a day and beere and bread and cheese, and the traylers (catchers) serve each many and the tenants (village folk) and Graingers (lonely farms are called Granges), come in and winde the wool, and they have a fat wether and afatte lambe killed, and a dinner provided for the help. And there will be usually three score or four poore folks gathering up the lockes, and the Steward and his friends oversee. Two carry away the wool and weight it, and there is sixpence allowed to a piper for playing to the clippers all the day. The shepherds have each of them their own Bell-Wethers fleece"*

Many of the calls and sheep-dog training cries are as old as the Circistacian Monasteries; there is one old "Tup's way" over a hill, which was the only little tract

S H E E P S H E A R I N G

that pampered gentleman was allowed to walk, between his ferry boat from one monastery to the mountain stream that bumped him down in a boat to the next steading. There are centuries of learning and patient wisdom held by the herdsmen of the mountains—treasure trove of English moors. The Broom water and the tar box are gone, but the shepherd's care is still there and the music of the sheep bells is as old as the Downs.

SHEEP DRIVE AND DIP

The dipping of mountain sheep (shown in the photograph) takes place later, about September. It is not to prepare the fleece for market, but to protect the sheep before the winter; dip kills off ticks and lice. The sheep used to be dressed with tar or grease dressing, each in turn was lifted on to a slatted wooden stool, where their legs dangled down helplessly. The shepherd then parted the fleece, while his assistant poured on the mixture through a long spouted tin like a coffee pot (an old tea or coffee pot was often used) but as the old saying goes: *"the best grease for a sheep is to grease his mouth with good food,"* still, broom-water made of broom blossoms and tar and tobacco mixtures, were brewed by individual shepherds for years. The drive, that is the collecting of the flock from the hills, is done by parties of shepherds on ponies, and later, about October, come the great sheep drives, when they clear the sheep down from the high pastures. All the shepherds who graze one mountain meet, and scatter thereon, waiting at strategic points, while the dogs are sent up to clear the hill. Last year I watched them clear Snowdon: it was a cold bright October day—the visitors had gone, the sun shone red through the cold autumn mists, and we waited, the shepherds and myself. One shepherd had a



Sheep dipping among the Welsh Hills. This was taken at Llanrhiader-y-Mochant, near Tyn-y-Pystll. [PHOTO-BUSH]

SHEEP DRIVE AND DIP

little sheep-dog, a bitch, tucked inside his coat, she was **feeding five puppies at home**, and as her master said, "she **had** no business to come, but she would have **fretted all day at** being left out of the clearing.*" As it was, **her** little nose was poked out, and she wriggled free **to rush out and** inspect the sheep herself, as each lot came down. It was a quiet sun-warmed waiting, on the hill-side. Far up on the hills, across an open glade, one would see a dog streak across, and then some resentful old sheep that had been rooted out of some hidden cranny, would come jumping down off the rocks, till gradually a small woolly glacier of sheep accumulated in the gully far above us, and began to move slowly down. At intervals a dog would appear, stand panting a moment on a rock, viewing up and down, and receive from his watching shepherd a whistle or a wave of the arm, but our mountain dogs work very independently, and mostly we sat quietly on our rock, in the winter sunshine, watching them. After about two hours, gently down the gully came a grey stream of little sheep and two dogs, one driving behind and one slowing them up in front, or dashing from side to side, clearing the rocks and glens on either side as they passed. Then, when the flock were down to the lower level field, at a wave from the shepherd, this dog swept round in front of the leading sheep, facing them back into the flock and stopping the advance; then, there was a pool of grey sheep standing still in the valley; and both dogs sat down—panting, tongues hanging out, grinning from ear to ear awaiting instructions.

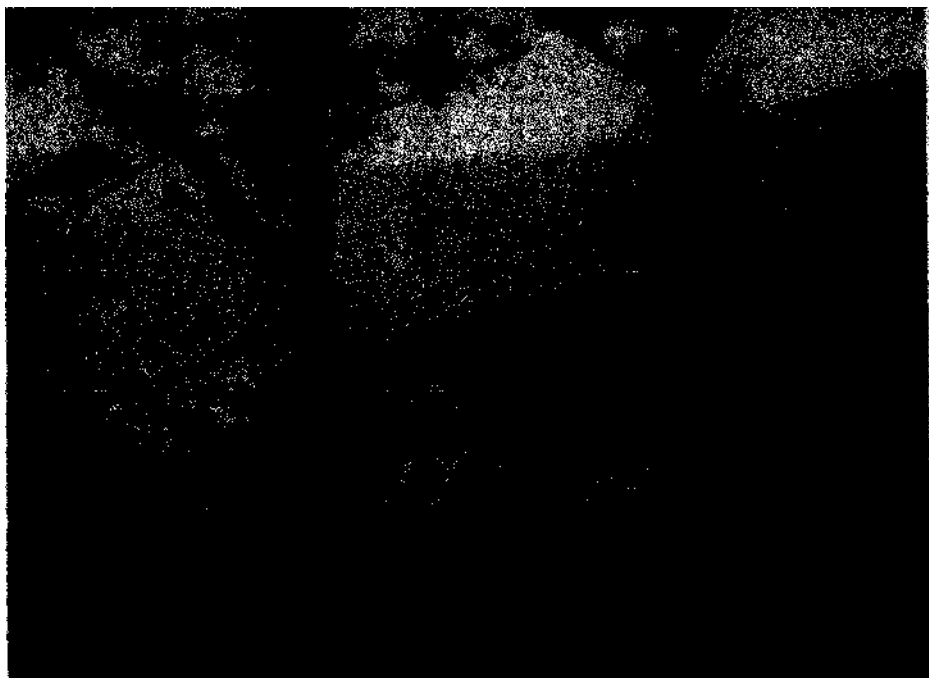
Slowly the shepherd un-did his legs and rose: and the little bitch dashed across to smell noses with the two dogs (and I am certain vowed that she would manage differently and not miss the fun next year). Quietly we waited till the sheep cooled and the other flocks joined us. Then slowly all moved off down the great wide road to the sorting pens.

IRISH COCKS

"Cocks at roost in Ireland, do not, as in other countries, divide the 3rd and last watches of the night by crowing at 3 successive periods in the interval. Here they are heard a little before dawn. Nor is it to be supposed that they have here a different nature from those in other countries, for cocks which are brought over to the island from other parts crow here at these (Irish) periods."

(Giraldus)

GOOD MORNING!"



Early morning.

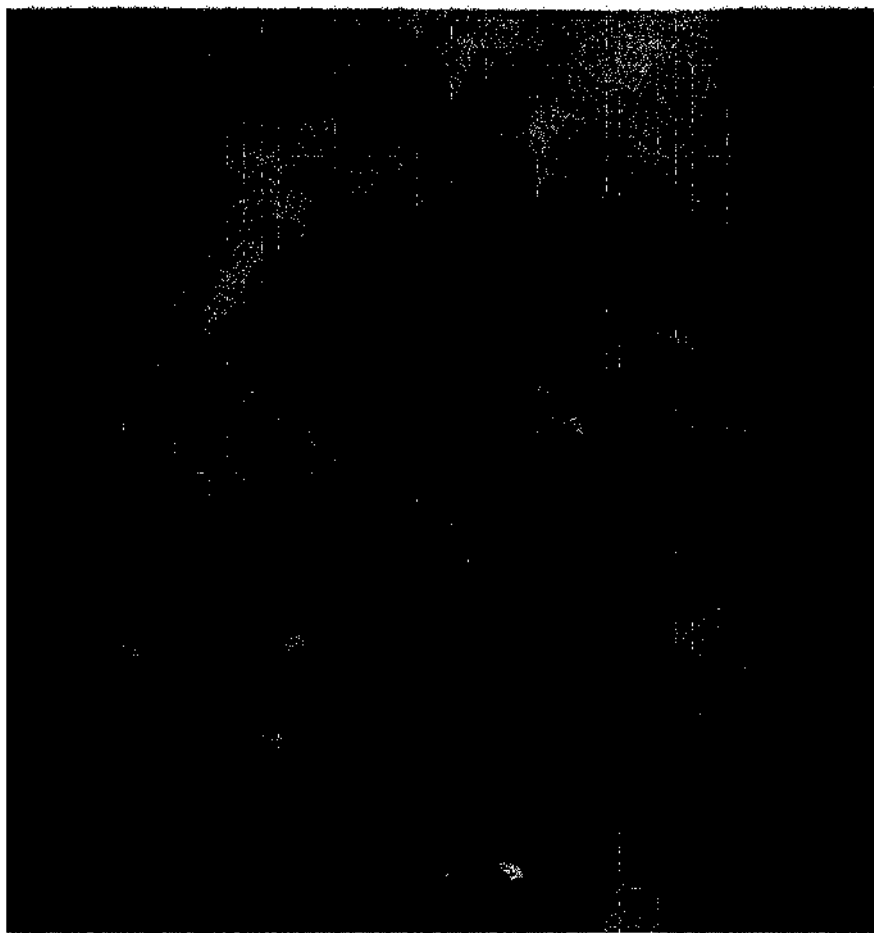
The Village Wakes in June

A COCK crows under my window. He says : "My Mistress is Master : Here-e-e !" Two fields away his son and heir braces his claws against the half door and levels his head for the time-honoured reply: "So she is : Here-e-e-e !" and far across the valley from a hidden farm comes the distant comment, "So, She is Everywherr-r-r-r!" There has been a faint squeaking of ivy leaves on wet glass window-panes all through the night, and now the glistening leaves shiver and spill little cascades of wet as I shove open wide the window, and a starling who had been sheltering under the eaves overhead starts out with a crash and a spatter of cold rain-drops over my head as I lean out. It's a morning such

HERE'S ENGLAND

as you only get on a little island, a morning in England in June.

A clear cool morning after rain. A white sky across which trails the wind-fretted silver of the blown rain-storms. No sun, only a clear whiteness in the East and blue shadows ghostly on whitened grass. Below my window the slate roofs of the village turn every tilt of grey and silver wetness to the sky. The long grasses are heavy with a load of wind-blown trembling crystal. The torn woolly cobwebs along the hedge are grey as pearl, and the rank green elder bushes that crowd between the houses hold up their thick "slices of bread" drenched with wet. The bird chorus flows on like a waterfall, over and under the quiet cooing of the wood-pigeons, while the cuckoo keeps gentle insistent time in the meadows. Through the bird song sounds the clear fluting of swiftly-running water. The hills are singing with the wet. Up above, hidden within the white mist, grey Cader Ffron is singing to herself (like a quavering, sweet old woman's voice, heard singing within her cottage over the spinning). Below, by the low bridge, the moss is purring and soaking down to the bog. There breaks out a quacking and a spluttering as Mrs. Postle's white ducks go splashing joyously across into the stream to gurgle and chuckle in the delicious, cold, juicy wet mud, and paddle over the scurrying sand. Simultaneously with their release comes the clank of a bucket and the complaining grunts of a pump: then the filling of a kettle (running up a little scale with a satisfying staccato click to put the lid on). The blue smoke of dry wood begins to curl out of chimney-pots, and door mats are shaken vigorously and flung over the yard walls. The rattle of a dog-chain comes from a kennel, and cats, appearing from nowhere (as is the magic of cats) come out and blink disparagingly at the light, stretch like elastic, and then selecting the driest spot available (usually on the mats) place their four



Good-morning ! taken from the Church Tower at 7 a.m.
The village wakes and the chimneys smoke for breakfast.

HERE ' S E N G L A N D

paws carefully, yawn, and sit down to wait for the milk.

As it's Monday and likely to be a wash day, quite a number of small chimneys above lean-to's or small out-houses are smoking up, too. These are the poor little off-hand chimneys that "only get a mouthful of smoke once a week." Several little black and white figures have come out of the cottages and had a look at the sky, and wherever two such little figures come out simultaneously, they drift together, by a curious capillary attraction, and together regard the sky enquiringly (and since rain before seven fine before eleven is our safest prophecy) usually nod their heads, and toddle in again, and two more blue boiler chimney smokes start up! As a sort of bravado a few strong kitchen chairs appear in the open, and some white clothes lines, with their fork-nosed line props, are spearing defiance against the wind.

Indoors, muffled calls and occasional squeals pronouncing that early rising is being inculcated into the reluctant young, and a few night-shirted babies regard the day from door-steps. A thump and bang of wooden doors mixes with men's voices, and the ring of lumpy iron horseshoes on cobbles, as one after another the big, gentle farm horses are set loose, and make their way across the yards down to the pond. There comes the lowing of cows, halting reluctantly as they pass the calf sheds.

The village is thoroughly awake now, and there is a continuous quiet coming and going. Postie has just gone past, cycling up the lane to fetch his pony that takes the mail cart. He'll only have to pedal one way, for the pony will tow him back free-wheeling on the end of the hitching rope. Little Bill Thomas has made off inconspicuously along the hedge to the old pigeon cote, where he has kept his Angora rabbits ever since his big brother jestingly threatened to run the safety razor over them, because their continual moulting gave him hay fever.

GOOD MORNING ! "

The children who "do-the-milks before school" are drifting down to the sheds, and the ones that have forgotten to bring their cans are going back to fetch them. Mrs. Ruttles has gone by up the hill to do the schools. She turns down to speak to Mrs. Echob. That's so that Mr. Echob is to come and help her shift the desks after school to-night ready for the Institute meeting. (So they are going to have it in the schools after all). The funny n-shaped thing in the bottom of that garden is old Jimmy Boxer (he used to be a ring attendant, hence the surname) bending to see if his vegetable marrows are setting. Little Tommy Gardner has just come down from the allotments. With six curling cucumbers sticking out of his pockets, three on each side, so that he looks like an earwig with green legs. That means his week-end visitors are going back to-day. They'd take flowers, but it's too wet to gather them. Just now Mrs. Stubbs went down her garden and peered into the empty pig pen, and now she's taken the rector's old lawn mower, and a cider mat and barricaded up the door, so her Rhode Island hen is sitting. They found the old lady (the hen, I mean, not Mrs. Stubbs) on sixteen eggs inside the hay tosser when they went to fetch it out, and she drew blood off three of them before they could shift her, so the eggs must be hard set. Wonder how long she'll be? It's funny, come to think of it, hens lay their eggs different times, yet they all arrange to hatch out nearly the same day . . .

Suddenly a shout and crash and rattle of loose stones, and the milk float comes clattering loose-hoof down the lane, and there are greeting voices and calls and the crash and bump of heavy milk churns being dumped out and in.

The frenzied departure of our milk float marks the end of early morning in the village. Now between the opening and shutting of a door comes the sizzle of frying

HERE ' S E N G L A N D

bacon and the rattle of tea-cups. Children and kittens make hopefully for back doors, and Mrs. Wadkin and Mrs. Postle are planning the day's work under my window. Their voices rise up. "Good morning, Mrs. Postle. It's been a nice drop of rain we've had?" "Well, it do seem to have come down, that's certain." Mrs. Wadkin straddles meteorologically over a puddle. "My dad won't be half pleased, because they wanted to cut lower four acres last night and he stuck them out this was going to come." "They'll leave it over till next week now." "They prophesy it's always fine for Wymeswold Choir Outing." "Good morning! Mrs. Hallan, We were just saying it do seem to have come down in the night." "I was minded to jam to-day, but them strawberries'11 be too wet to gather." "There's a tidy few ought to be got, too! The birds get that audacious if they're left . . . "

I laugh, and the sprinkle of water shaken down from the dripping ivy, makes them look up. "Good morning! Good morning!"

JULY

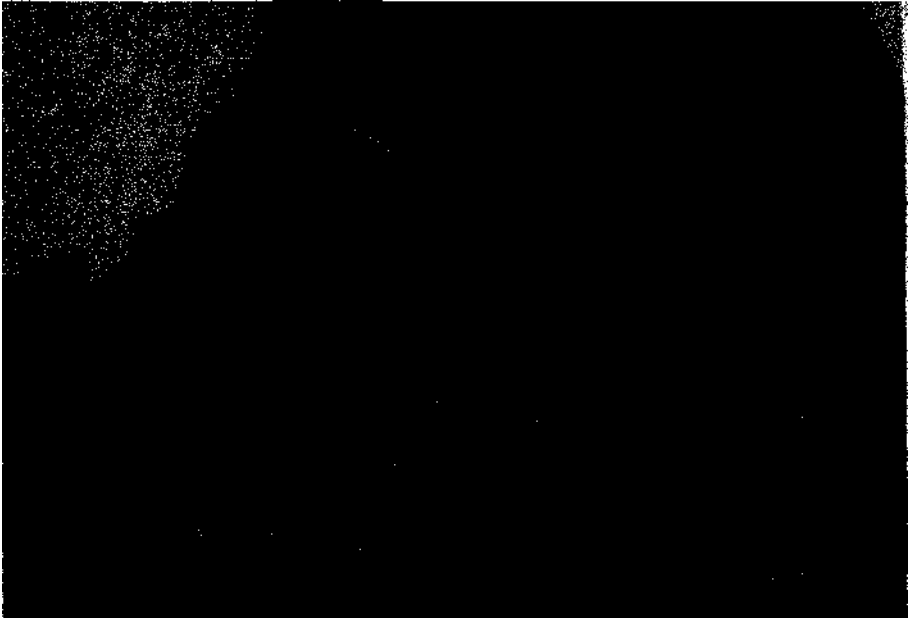


TANKARD AND JACK

*A Leather bottel ye knozv is good
Far better than glasses or cans of wood,
For when a Man is at work in the Field
Your glasses and pots no comfort will yield,
But a good leather Bottel standing him by
He may drink always when he is dry.
When this bottel doth grow old,
And will good Liquor no longer hold.
Out of the side you may take a clout
Will mend your shoes when they're worn out.
Else take it and hang it upon a pin,
It will serve to put odd trifles in,
As hinges, awls and candle ends,
For your Beginners must have such things.
Then I wish in Heaven his soul may dwell
That first devised the Leather Bottel!*

(Old Song)

H A Y



Cutting and baling hay.
The stack is cut and the hay pressed into bales.

" S E L D O M is leisure found to thatch stacks as long as there is corn to carry." So says a book a hundred years old, before reapers, binders and mechanical harvesters took over the field work. Even now, in the North, when making the hay and singling the turnips overlap, it is always a scramble to get both done. Down South it is easier, for the hay comes under earlier.

The hay-fields in January were looked over carefully. The old English "*meddoes*" used to be what we now call water meadows, that is land flooded under water in the spring. The fine silt deposit made this grass lush, and for years it was the staple fodder. Since then farmers have been importing and experimenting with Overseas flowery grasses and trefoil mixtures to enrich the Eng-

HERE'S ENGLAND

lish hay, and grass seed mixtures are carefully sorted according to fields and climate—but I believe the *anthoxanthum odoratum* grass and the short woolly grass, that makes our hay smell so sweet, are natives.

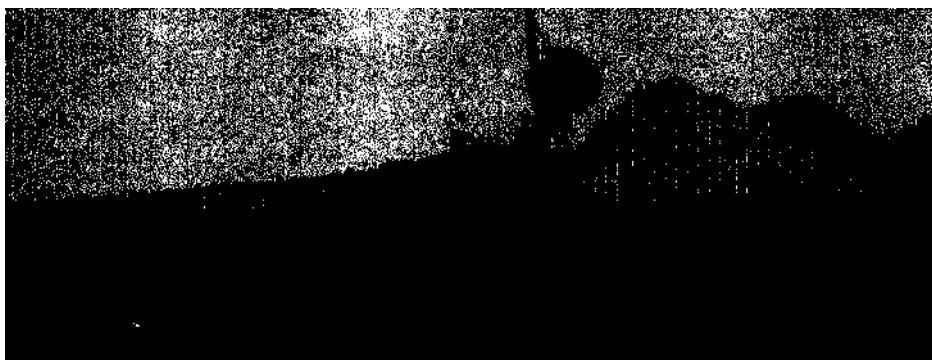
Yes,—centuries of thought and care have gone into the grasses of our hay-fields. In winter the fields are first raked with a horse-drawn comb harrow, that claws up the moss, knocks down mole hills and lumps, removes strangle weeds, and leaves the surface scratched up and loosened a little. A good man then goes over the ground with care, filling up holes, chucking off stones and bits of stick, and he usually has a poke-full of grass seed for any thin places.

Early in spring if the meadow is not a water meadow, manure is often spread, scattering it well, and sometimes a chain harrow goes over to brush it in. Sometimes liquid manure is dripped over the fields from a tank cart. The chain harrow or brush barrow is often run over after this, and the last brushing takes place about April, and leaves the fields lying up and down, smooth as striped silk;—the gate is shut tight, and don't you go walking about that field any more.

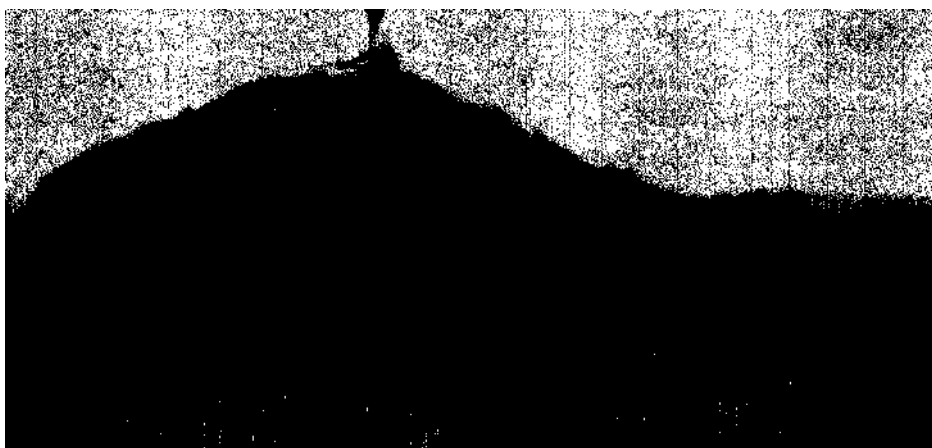
The time before the grass is ripe for cutting is very technical. If you see a farmer cutting early, and calling it "seeds" don't you call it hay. Hay is the mature grass and this main crop comes later. The exact moment when the grass is full and not begun to wither and become woody, and is yet not too sappy to dry well, is a moment taking years of experience to appreciate, and there is the awful compromise with the weather to complicate matters, for you must have a spell of dry weather for hay. The general rule is that the sooner after the grass is cut down it's dried and got in the better, but if it rains on cut hay it half revives it (like cut flowers that are put into water, and if you've ever smelt vase water that has not been changed, you will know what



Gathering up off the field.



Lifting on to the stack.



Shaping the stack.

happens to sodden grass). Also, grass that has been wetted on the outside, lying horizontally, takes much longer to dry than grass which is only wet with its own sap on the inside. For this reason in parts of Scotland where the weather is notoriously bad, they seldom leave the hay lying in swaythes over-night, but scuttle round and rake it into windrows and slide it up into enormous hand-cocks, and with a horse and rope, or what we English children term the "teatray," slide it up into small stacks and give it a sort of field thatch of combed hay before they dare go to bed. Nowadays, in the hay-fields the new tossers and "mechanical pick-ups" sweep around, and as soon as the hay is dry and "won," (not quite the same thing), it is whipped up and off the field and into the stack quick as lightning.

From hay wain to stack they often fix up a pulley and tackle, and with a horse to draw the rope away, the grapplefuls go aloft as quick as the stack-man can shake it into place. Even this is not an unskilled job. Notice how a good field worker, with an almost instinctive movement, shakes the sun bleached over-dry forkfuls over damper patches, and tosses the soft loose unmanageable stuff so that the strands lie downwards, sloping from the inside of the stack outwards to the edge. The men change places and move about the swaying, rocking stack, shifting their weight and strength, and building with even tightness throughout, otherwise as the hay settles, the stacks will lean over on one side, and it will be: "Ho! Bill, where was you sleeping the night you builded that stack?"

Stacks used to be built on stools, or raised stone and wood platforms, and in some districts they still build them on wooden or coarse straw and bavin foundations, and often, especially in bad weather, hay trestles, i.e. hollow cones built of wooden laths, are built into the centre of the rick to let in the air and keep it from heating. All

stacks warm up a little as they win, and it is this action that makes the dry grass into savoury flavoursome hay. Wet grass overheats, and may even fire the rick, and overheating ruins the hay for good. The animals cannot and won't eat it, and it is a dead loss.

Now you have got to thatch your hay stack, and the thatcher has gone up. First he shapes it, piling up a good tilt and plunging about carefully, filling up soft holes and pulling down lumps till he gets a well-shaped top. Meanwhile a load of good straw has been laid down by the stack, and well damped—and, according to the locality, bundles of split sticks, or willow withys, or straw rope and other material, are laid down near. Then he comes along with a ladder and graip and comb and shears, and sets to work. The straw is pulled out and laid even, and a twist of hay rope made ready, and pegs for fastening are taken up on top. Lunch (and a bottle) and a folded coat are tucked away in a cool place in the hedge. A dog is set to watch them, and he begins.

Usually in the South one man works alone with sometimes a boy to help fetch and carry. In the North where there is more wind usually two men work together. To understand the working of one simple form of thatching will furnish a key to the varieties in other districts. The men being mounted on the stack, bundles of straw are handed up to them one by one as needed, the bundle being retained in its place by a graip, i.e. a pointed stake driven deep into the hay. The straw is first placed over the eaves, and handful after handful upwards from the eaves to the top are added, until the thatch is laid in a wide smooth strip from eave to ridge. As the two men meet on top, the straw is laid along the ridge rather more thickly, for it supports the weight of the grass ropes that go from side to side of the thatch. When the first strip is laid, it is switched lightly with a willow wand or combed out with a wide-toothed

HERE ' S E N G L A N D

thatcher's comb. Then the first "length ropes" are laid across, one near the top, one about three feet down and one about one foot above the eaves. The ends are fastened securely into the stack and brought across the smooth straw and pegged down by a stake driven through into the stack. The horizontal lines of rope are carried once around each of the upright cross ropes as they pass them (exactly as if stringing up a parcel) and, as each fresh strip of straw is laid on, the coil of ropes is unwound just far enough to cross it, tied round the cross ropes and pegged down again. So the workers travel along the stack weaving a square mesh net of roping as they go.

Afterwards final ropes are run along the ridge and each eave, and secured to stakes or pegs driven deep into the ends of the stacks.

Up in the cold stormy North rocks and logs are hung on to the cross ropes to anchor the stack against the gusts of wind, and when you are sheltering against the lea of a stack in a gale you know it, when you catch a clout over the head with a piece of granite! Farther South they sometimes dispense with the cross ropes and only use the length ones, and they often slip lengths of willow along the stack instead of straw. Incidentally, this straw rope used to be made any odd wet day in the barn, a man feeding the straw onto a throwcock twisted by a girl worker. It used to be considered rather a good courting time, because nobody else could come into the barn, on account of the twisted swinging rope, and you'd got your lassie to yourself, fast on the end of the string, and she couldn't get away, so that to present her with a neat new throwcock, with her name carved on the handle, and tell her to come and meet you in the barn, and be prepared to make a "terruble lot of rope," was a very suitable way of popping the question before the quarter day.

H A Y

They used to put fine straw birds with spreading barley tails at the gable ends of the stacks, pointing North and South. They'd tell you it was to show which end they had worked from, so that the stacker who undid the hay could start from the other end, and thus find all the knots and the fastenings come undone more easily, but . . . "we reckon that was only an excuse!" One said it was the trade mark to show what stacker had done the stack. I don't know! My friend who twisted me up the last straw bird that I have seen this many a long day, smiled shyly: "Well," he said, "it was a bit of all sorts, but they were handsome birds and no mistake, and I never heard complaints of them stealing no corn!"

POSSESSIONS

*And if a Lord of a towne
Rob his men out of resoune
Though it beith in his bondage
Against Right; he doeth outrage
He shall so take that they may live
And as law of land will forgive
For if he take over measure
Little tyme shall he endure
Though God hath given him seynorye
That gives him no leave to do robborye*

*If thou withdrawest a marts right
Stealing though it be not in sight
Though a man parseyue hyt noght
Thou stealest it—and theft has wrought.*

(R. Brunne)

WASTE PAPER MILLS



The sun-lit "waste" sheds.

THIS industry ought to be visited by some religious preacher—I am not nearly good enough to do it justice. If there is any virtue in taking down-and-out and worthless rubbish, that folks are wanting to be rid of, and turning it into something shiny and new and useful, that everybody is glad to buy, then this little mill is virtuous. If the indestructibility of matter is no theory, if Things live and die as we do, then this mill is where they go to Heaven! Laugh! you may; but there is a queer shadow of greatness about this trade. There is too close an analogy to our own troubled wasted life to be disregarded. Where do our waste products go to? The old chap who is getting past work, the beggar whom you saw asleep under the railway arches? This old woman? You vaguely wonder what she will do now that the works have closed? What becomes of them? The horror we express, because some savage tribes kill off their old and feeble when they are

HERE ' S E N G L A N D

no more use—are we much kinder? to leave them unwanted? We store their bodies carefully and separately in workhouses; those tired old bodies that are no more use, but their minds and their loves, their thoughts, even the little memories that they treasure, these things we take away from them, or starve. Oh! what is the use of a comfortable bed and good food and endless blank empty days, or even a garden to look at where there is no one to grow flowers for, there are no animals to pet, no one to smile when you come in, when you are only a Number, a body, old and unwanted, when no one wants you, no one will be glad to see you when you come in, never again?

Oh! come quickly up the lane past the big water-mill and let me show you how Things at any rate can be wanted again, even when they are old and worn out. Look out! here is the cart coming, let's go round while they unload. Where does the material come from? Where does it not! Just look at this shed, and it's only one corner, mind you! Here be old laundry books, grubby records of a weekly purity. Here be worn-out coal sacks; here be old blankets; here be newspapers; here be inky school books, dumps of "household" books (the ink has run them together into one unpleasant whole, very blue and slightly damp—which is what accounts are apt to be in real life, anyhow). Here be old fire screens, and lace curtains in sordid entanglement. Come out into the field—here in dumps are catalogues, old telephone books, bundles of newspaper-cuttings (anything from the death of kings to the birth of a baby powder.) Here, under the trees, the shredded matting of a chapel, and the bleached coir of some swimming bath. Here be old hop bin sacks. Here be piles of rope, great ship's hawsers, broken hammocks, tennis nets, here fent ends from the mills—salvage from the docks—here old army ground-sheets, and here the waste

WASTE PAPER MILLS

paper sheds; **and** over **all** the sunlight spatters down. In the grass the friendly daisies poke up, and the **little** creepy hedge plants finger these still Things with tiny inquisitive tendrils.

The waste-paper shed is a restless place, stirring always, each tiny scrap restlessly trying to attract attention. Here is a French exercise, the painstaking red ink corrections between the ill-spaced lines. I wonder if you were ever read as attentively by your perpetrator, as I read you now? Or was that frantic waving in order to attract my attention? (The pent-up energy that had already been wasted on your careful ink striving to attract the attention it deserved at last).

Here are the simple beginnings of an essay. Poor friend, you'd got your opening, and your central matter, and could not bridge the gap. You wrote it fully, then felt that was too exuberant, and cut out all adjectives and wrote it again, and that was too crude and bald, and you re-wrote it, putting back the adjectives, and by that time you had got so self-conscious about it you could not write at all, and tried beginning afresh at the other end of the paper, and the memory of the old shadowed through—and so—that dash of ink and into the waste-paper basket. Oh! unknown intimate, how well I know that feeling! Half guiltily I expect to see my own hand writing, and find instead half an old MS. recipe book by Matilda P——in copper-plate writing, that by some fell fate has been chopped in half lengthwise. What a nightmare of interrupted information, how it would annoy you, Matilda P——! There is a solid square of unused paper patterns fluttering and pleading "no seam allowed for," "cut here." All, in this shed, are stirring restlessly.

Queer how the physical things, the worn-out bodies of physical things, rest. The weary dust sacks lie still, the old army tents are folded and quiet, the blankets sleep,

HERE'S ENGLAND

and under the shadow of the trees the great ropes and hawsers lie in coils, motionless. The great ships will tug and strain with them no more, the shouting and the beating spray are gone, they are past work, worn out and dead. A land breeze, scented with hay, shakes the hedge, and the honeysuckle sways downwards, stroking the rough coils tenderly, very gently; too gently even to awake the shadow of a dream. The grey-haired corn-cockle brushing backwards against the folds is blue-flowered, soft as the shadow of a sea bird's wing. The sun pools slide to and fro, to and fro, dreaming, but the old hawsers sleep on, for there is no more sea.

Come back to the unpacking sheds, and see the new loads delivered—the condemned arrive compressed into bales about ten feet square. In the sheds the chequered sunlight criss-crosses the rippling corrugated-iron into intricate interwoven pattermings (that the rain on the galvanised roof makes audible). There strong men wrestle with steel bandings, using strange oaths and weirder implements. I hid within this Olympus, and from afar watched the sudden violent cloud of parti-coloured dust and stress and strife, revolving amid padded falling thunder, and then the streaked lightning, of riven steel, then the voice of Man spoke from the cloud. It said mildly: "They *doos* pack 'em, don' they, George?" The chopping sheds, where the heavier material is sliced up, come next. Have you ever tried to kill a coal sack? To part the tenacious rope handles that are welded as one soul with its rope sides? . . . You take an axe to it! . . . Old army haversacks disintegrate more easily—a piece of old scythe set upright in a wooden vice is a proved weapon. Through the hem: "giig-gug-Wheeee-e," across the middle, and "gug-gug-gut," through the hem, and two limp strips lie down. Old marquees fairly shriek as they are slit out into strips, blankets mutter a little sleepily, old trousers choke on the seams,

WASTE PAPER MILLS

and lace curtains gag and snag and worry to a slattern end, and Chiron, in blue boiler slips, waits until the barrow is full, and trundles them off to the chopping box.

This is where "Them" becomes "It."

Up till now trousers, rucksacs, ropes, curtains, account books, worn and shredded, are still individuals. Now—there is a queer thudding sound as the machine gulps them down, and then . . . they are a fine mince.

Between "mince" and cardboard much happens. For "It" (the "mince") the next few days are chiefly spent revolving round and round in a trough under a nautical mowing machine. It is here that the colouring matter is added, and the pulp is finally prepared for use. Incidentally this particular trough has been revolving since Queen Victoria's days, and gaining experience all the time. Queer to think it may have chewed up coronation carpets, Boer War tents and the door mats of hansom cabs! This machine is an avaricious old lady of good appetite, who likes a mixed diet.

The stage is now reached when the pulp is turned into board. A trough is full of what looks like dissolved blanket (it will not pour like batter but quivers and slips about). Each tiny particle swims free and the workman takes the shallow square wire sieve, fills it from the trough, and quickly, while still dripping wet, places it under a slow wood press.

Now see something difficult to explain. You know how, when you take a handful of limp hairy seaweed from the water, it clings together a solid slimy mass in your hand? And you have seen that same seaweed when the tide has gone out, slowly, spread out widely upon the sand? Each tiny fibre clear and interlaced, like a spreading tree? Well, if you pressed your felted board swiftly, you would get a crumbly mass of lumps, but by pressing slowly the water drains out, spreading each tiny strand

HERE ' S E N G L A N D

out to its fullest, and interlocking and felting together the whole. And a fine strong wet sheet of new-born cardboard is lifted from the press and set to dry between felts under a steady weight.

How they are finished afterwards is the heavenly part. Some are polished and ironed till they gleam, some will travel the world as part of a motor car, some, from the shadow of the waste paper sheds, go back to the publishers to try life again on other books, and some—queer end, will go out to work in the revolving wheels in the cotton sheds, and perhaps hear Uncle Remus sing, and the banana fronds lisp and sway under a tropical sun! Some will make boxes, and cases, and fill responsible posts in Government Departments, and some will live a strange life with the mechanics, their very nonentity having given them a value apart from either living wood or fire-born steel. *All* are new and strong and beautiful, and none of them is old or unemployed, or out of work any longer. If you had told me that a waste-paper mill could be such a joyous place I never would have believed it. It proves there simply is no such thing as an inanimate object . . .

An errant paper bag passed me in the lane going home; it was slightly inflated and making spasmodic efforts to rise in the world. The breeze caught it, swung it upwards to a place in the sun, and dashed it down under the mill wheel, where it instantly flattened out limply, and was washed down stream saying: "Pong's Sausages" to the last . . .

AUGUST



FIFTEENTH CENTURY ALE

*Bring us in good ale, and bring us in good ale
For our Blessed Lady's sake, bring us in good ale.*

*Bring us no brown bread for that is made of bran
Nor bring us no white bread for therein is no game
But bring us good ale.*

*Bring us no Beef, for there is many bones
But bring us good ale for that goeth down at once!
But bring us good ale.*

*Bring us no bacon, for that is passing fat,
Bring us good ale and give us nought but that.
But bring us good ale.*

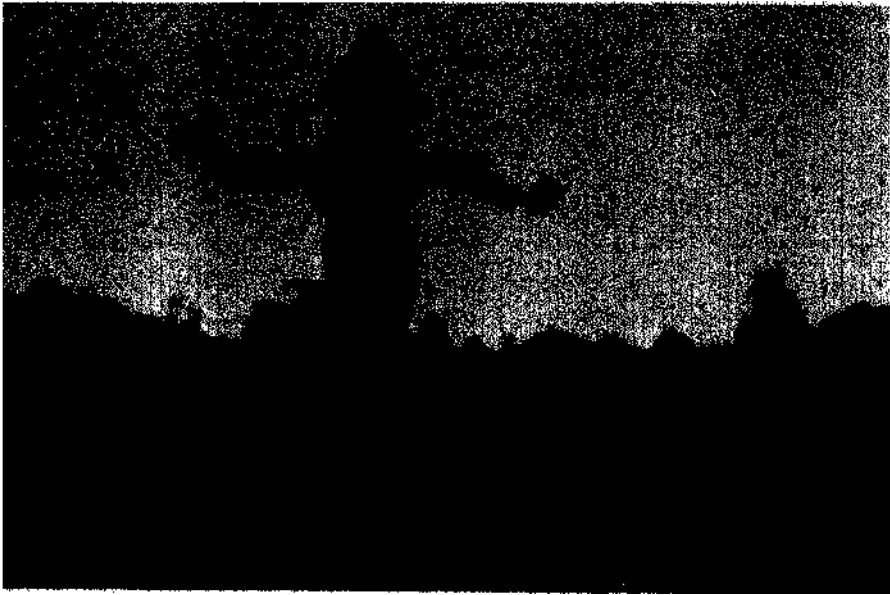
*Bring us no mutton, for that is often lean,
Bring us no tripes, for they be seldom clean,
But bring us good ale.*

*Bring us no egges, for there are many shells,
Bring us good ale, and give us nothing else!
But bring us good ale.*

*Bring us no capons' flesh, for that is dear to hire.
Bring us no ducks' flesh, for they stopper in the mire.
But bring us good ale.*

IN THE CORN FIELD

(Interview with Mr. Boggart of Tenacres, Wheatfield, Mid.)



"My cornfield."

WHIRR-RR-GUP! Good morning, miss. Nice day! Rather windy for my liking! But very seasonable indeed! On the whole a very good season. Whirr-rr-gup!" He grinned from ear to ear, and his coat-tails flapped pleasandy. "This is a fine field, *as you say*, miss. Very fine and full o' the ear, Standard Red it is, very popular in these parts, very close set, and don't shed like the white; but there, miss, I could tell you more about the different varieties of wheat than you'd be able to follow, no offence meant, but not having had my experience."

"Been on this job long?"

"You may say so! It's been in our family down generations, miss. Why, my grandfathers on the trousers side, have clung to the family stake for centuries! Whirr-rr-gup! As we were saying, heads of corn vary. Roughly, as a guide for you to understand, when the

grains are set so that you can see the main stalk down the middle, between the rows, it's 'open ear.' When the rows are so close set you can't see the join, it's 'close.' Reason for it? Well, it's a matter of judgment according to the climate. They say some stands the rain better, but there, as you say, miss, it's too deep for you, it's taken me years . . . Whirr-rr-gup! Do I undertake to guard all sorts of corn? Why, of course, miss. Barley, oats, wheat, I supervise them all in my time (never the same in two years running, of course not! It would not be suitable). I took over this field last autumn. Winter sown they call it. Ploughing by Caudwell for Wadkin, on X—'s two-horse plough. Sowing by Wadkin's Junior on X—'s duplex driller" (he spoke as a stable boy stringing out a pedigree). "Very nice job they made of it, very nice. It covered the whole field in one day, very different from what my father's waistcoat used to tell me of the old hand sowing days. They'd walk forty miles a day sometimes, up and down the furrows, if it was a late season and likely to rain. A cloth they'd have slung about them, or a basket slung in front. 'Twas a lovely swinging movement, broadcasting . . . One swing of the arm between each foot-fall, and the hands slowly opening as it swept round, so that the last grain left the palm at the end of the swing. They'd spread the corn in even waves over the rows." (You occasionally see a broadcast field now, on very small hill farms, you can tell them because they're "all-overish," but, as Mr. Boggart agreed, the rows are much better). I told him of an old fiddle I'd seen once, used for spreading peas, a shallow box that the farmer "bowed" across, just like a fiddle, till it vibrated, and the peas would hop abroad. Mr. Boggart listened (leaning at an angle of 75 degrees). He could not remember seeing one in use, "No!" He shook his head vigorously (thereby arousing guilty con-

IN THE CORN FIELD

sciences in two crows peering over the hedge). "I expect for peas, miss, they would have imitation *human* scarecrows (this view of the boy with the sling, or wooden clapper, made me jump!—I had not realised the pride of a boggart in being *made to the job*, not born haphazard!) "They prefer to sow before rain, then?"

"As a rule, miss, as a rule. The ground should be light and moist; you must never sow when it's sodden with rain, or you'll have the grain enclosed in little hard clay bricks,—nor, of course, during a hard frost."

I quoted:

*"Leave little wheat, little clod, over his head
That after a time ye may go out and spread,
If clods of thy wheat will not break with the frost,
If then that ye roll it it quitteth the cost
But see when ye roll it the weather be dry
Or else unrolled "'twere better to lie,"*

from Tusser, and the boggart nodded.

"He was quite right, you don't want too close a surface for wheat. At first it needs the shelter, and later, if you rolled after wet, it would either pull up the rows or cake the land so that the tender shoots could not break through. Rolling is nice work. I had a laugh out of my boots; they came from Selsey Bill. The chap there used to walk level with his horses when rolling; led them sideways with a stick. The boots said: 'It upset their owner altogether, walking in front of the team as we do here.' I had great responsibilities in the spring, young stuff, so *green*, just coming up. Birds would pull up the green, peck off the seeds: Whirr-rr-gup! Pickling the seed is some protection, but doesn't last, but there! a boggart's whole life is a year of responsibility! Birds can't do much after the seed's gone and the snoots and roots are set, then I can



want too close want



At the cottage door.

IN THE CORN FIELD

close an eye for a month or two; but once the ears are formed—Whirr-rr-gup!

"What birds are worst? Well, that varies with the year and the place. Sparrows? No, miss. As far as corn goes they are maligned, they hatch their families, four running, in the spring, and the young ones spend their time feeding on insects and weed-seeds in the fields all day, I see them, whole families among the corn stalks: what they take in harvest is well earned, we think. Wood pigeons, now, fairly stuff themselves, they do! Rooks? well when there's one or two it's nothing, but sometimes a whole rookery comes from miles away and makes a dead set, but if you notice, rooks always set a watching bird, and if I have a word or two with *him*—no rooks in my field! If he doesn't clear off *at once*, I tell the master to shoot the ringleaders!" And Mr. Boggart looked very fierce! "Magpies? Jays? Well, never both together, they each want the same food, so there's not enough for both."

"Believe not in the pies chattering, it is no truth but false believing"

"Ha! ha! that's a very old saying. A magpie is a very noticeable bird. Tale went round, that if you shot a magpie his mate would commit suicide by drowning, they found some drowned birds in water butts, but I expect the lonely bird balanced on the edge, saw the other bird reflected in the water, bent down to touch beaks, as they do, and toppled in. Yellow-hammers are terrors for oats, the laverock (skylark) eats corn, but the corn-bunting earns it's name, it's really knowing! In a hard winter they'll go to the stacks and pull out the straws till they get the heads, real holes they'll dig in, and the other birds are quick enough to see the corn when the buntings have shown them the way!"

I asked him if he believed in counting grains of wheat? as bushels per acre? "Well, it is a rough guide, but

HERE'S ENGLAND

I'd not buy a field for it! The idea was, thirty grains to the ear will give you thirty bushels to the acre; you see, a chap knows how much seed he's put in; well, if each seed is multiplied thirty times—you get me? But counting losses by weather or moles or insects" (we both politely ignored birds) "there's bound to be *less*, but still, you can take it as a slight guide if it amuses you. Excuse me, Whirr-rr-gup! What's a strike? Why, miss, the old wooden bushel measures were filled full of corn, and the farmer ran a strike, i.e., a wooden rule, level with the top, so; so many bushels were so many 'strikes.' Why is that small piece left uncut in the middle of the field? That's left till Saturday afternoon, miss, till the boys come with the guns. There's always a good number of rabbits in the last round; and the master likes a few good shots to keep them down. How soon will they start carting? Not yet. It *looks* dry, but break across one of the little green knots of the straw, you'll see there's a lot of sap in it yet. For oats? They reckon three churchings (i.e., three Sundays in the field). The top oats drop, but the lower hold, and the price they get for letting 'the picking' to some of the new poultry farms should cover that. When is corn ripe? It needs experience to judge. I always consult the master. Better a little under-ripe than over-ripe, when very ripe wheat bends its head; barley opens till the beard bushes a little sideways; oats straighten out, and the chaff loosens a little."

I saw a blue cotton frock passing down the hedgerow at the side of the field, the boggart eyed it with approval.

"That's Nancy, miss," he said. "A very sensible, well-stepping girl. Dick thinks so, too, and I strongly approve." (The idea of a boggart approving of humans amused me but he took it quite seriously). "She's very punctual with the tea, miss, when she brings it to the field during harvest, *very* punctual; and Dick, he stops

IN THE CORN FIELD

the teams for Sarah, but he gets down off the binder and walks half a row quick to meet Nancy; *besides, I've got on Dick's old trousers, that means he's been buying himself some new clothes!"*

I bent quickly to hide my laughter, and plucked a patriotic buttonhole of white camomile, red poppies and blue cornflowers, and pinned it on to the scarecrow's bosom (where his stout heart would beat, were he not entirely stuffed with straw). He looked pleased; and I went away down the hedge to join Nancy. The boggart waved to us as we passed . . .

I went back next week to find him, but the corn was carried. The hens were in hen-heaven among the stubble, and my friend was gone.

B E S O M

O the bowes and branches of the lyrche ben besomes made.

(Barthe: Anglicus)

THE MAKING OF THE BESOM



The old low stone bridge.

IT was a good broom—a superlatively good broom. Before its bristling front the tiny straws and sticks and hopping pebbles skittled and scattered away in panic froth—behind it—calm as a patterned shore left by the tide—the cobbles lay clean and polished, the causeway smooth and bare.

I sat on the wall in the sun, swinging my dusty shoes over the kind grass. Never had I seen a yard swept so swiftly, never a yard left so clean. A muddy stable cat appeared suddenly out of a blank wall.

What a magician's rabbit will do out of a top hat, with a vociferous audience to stimulate his temperament, your stable cat has done from his youth up unobserved. Because most men and all boys like to make a cat jump-to-it on sight, your stable cat, born and bred in a masculine environment, has reduced invisibility and materialising to a science.

HERE'S ENGLAND

You can turn a cat out of a house, but you *can't* turn a cat out of a stable; ten strong men couldn't, not if it didn't want to go. It would just vanish under their eyes, and come back when they'd shut the door.

But I was still sitting on the wall looking at the cleanest yard I had ever seen, when the cat materialised. He walked to the wall end, paused, bent his head, slid his two front legs down the gate-post before him, and jumped. He landed on the exact spot automatically, and then stopped suddenly, one paw uplifted, and sniffed the air.

I watched that cat closely. He stood immovable a second, then he retreated a step and blinked up at the sky as who should say: "Is it? Or am I?" He looked again at the yard, looked all round the yard. The polished cobbles gave back his stare unwinkingly.

Then that cat deliberately turned back to the gateway, and sat down and washed all four feet and his face, before he picked his way carefully up the clean causeway to the front door.

Then I knew that it had been given to me to see a Masterpiece. One completely perfect work. One man on this earth had made something that completely satisfied the reason for its being, and I went humbly around to the back and asked them where they got that broom.

Being kin to myself, in land and thought, they wasted no time side-tracking my sanity; they verified my request.

"Is it the broom you just saw me sweep our yard with that you wanted?"

"That's the one, I do."

"Listers at Skyreholm makes those besom and they're sixpence—ninepence with the tail."

A square and courteous answer—Beloved North Country.

Now a quicker Southerner would have spent time asking what on earth an already overloaded walker

THE MAKING OF THE BESOM

wanted a broom for at 2 p.m. on a hot day miles from any possible home.

Adelphi or Wimpole Street would have deduced my "motives" to cover their own surprise; the Commercial World would have hesitated to tell the price, for fear it was too cheap, or too dear, hoping that I'd pay more; or get it for less—but in the West Riding, be you prince or beggar, rustic or learned, you will ever get your pennyworth for your penny, neither more nor less. (John of Hainault found the same thing in 1300). They are surely the most straightforward people in all the world.

I turned and started ten miles off to Skyreholme. At the small farm, set near the head of the dale, I found the wife of the besom master.

Yes, there were a few besom in the shed. If I could wait he'd be back any time now—and would fix in the tail for me—if I needed a tail? They were three-pence extra and perhaps I had a tail already that would do? It would save me three-pence and be less to carry.

"Come in and sit down and have a cup of tea while you wait. The kettle's on for him, and he won't be later than five to-night." (He came at 4.55 exactly).

Next day I went up on to the moor to see him "pull the ling." The grouse were clucking and clacking in the cover. Yes, he said, he'd got to move quick, and get this load off before next week, "because of the birds; they're not to be disturbed while nesting." Why go so far into the moor? "Well, you've got to get the heather just right. You see that's too long, it's bendable, and that short there, is woody." He bent a handful and the stems snapped between his fingers. "You'd be putting more on to the floor than you'd take up, with a broom of that.

"That patch would do (I nearly took it), but there's too much bracken among it and stone that twists the

HERE 'S E N G L A N D

ling. You want where it's grown straight and clean, and yet branched fairly.

"Now, here's the works"—it was an open square of brown ling; in the middle, a spidery-looking three-legged stool. Slipping his hand under a truss of cut ling, he pulled out a long knife chopper.

"Now," he said: "Where do you want me to stand for your picture? You'll not get much light once the rain comes."

He stood as quietly as a rock, head thrown back, one arm resting on the pile of ling, as he looked up at the sky—behind him the torn rain clouds fled across the sky. The silver light of passing rain lit his face and square shoulders and etched with silver point the strong, brown hand that rested on the ling.

His face was brown as the ling, and in the caves of his high cheek-bones his eyes shone clear grey as a moorland mist, and the passing clouds made lights and shadows in them.

We tramped back over the heather to the roadway—and so back to the shed. The billets of ling would be carted along later. It used to be "on the sledge," but he might "get a lorry if one was near enough."

Then he showed me his apparatus. A clutch held down with the knee and a long iron needle to thrust through the stems, and the white binding lash of wood.

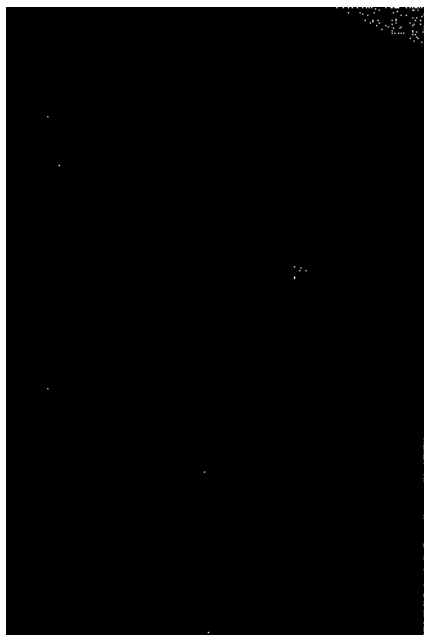
"What's that?"

"Oh, that's a different tale altogether; want to see that binding too?"

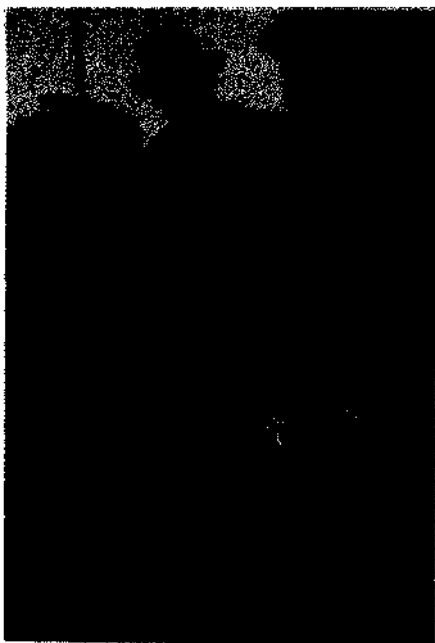
He showed me a log-ash—about four feet long and pearly white. "They're scarce to get just right now—you see they must have no knots in the length—and it has to be even grown. This is a good piece."

"How did it come like that?"

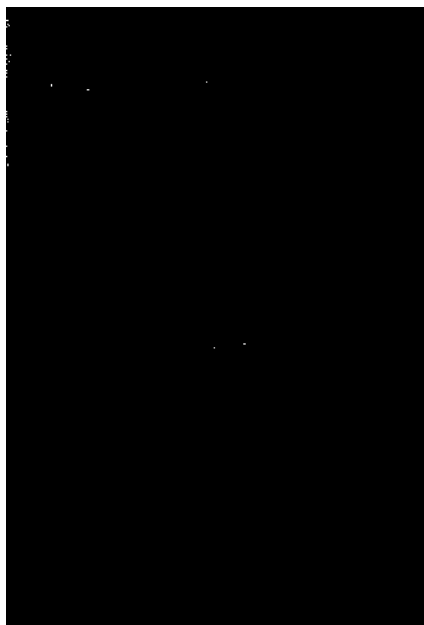
"Just soaking—soaking in running water. See, here is where I lay it in the beck and tie it under. Long ways



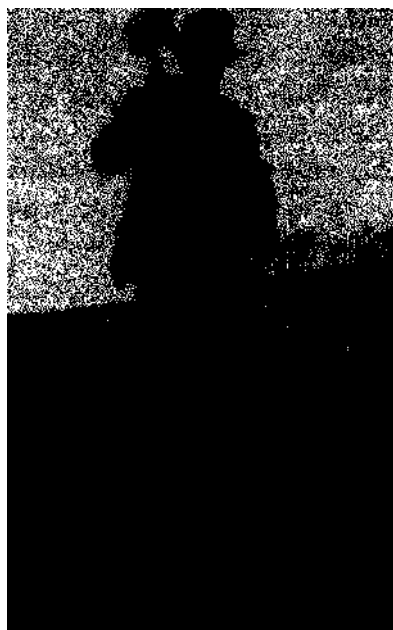
A good craftsman.



' It peels up clean into strips



The knee vice.



Driving in the tail.

of the water—it runs between the fibres better—then it just soaks—four or five weeks. Oh, *altogether* this piece has been in three months, as you might say, for you can't work it dry. You have to keep putting it back. Then it swells the rings, and they peel up—so."

He detached a thin slip about the width and somewhat the consistency of a half-inch leather strap. He beat the log as he did so—"That makes it split up—as you want it. Now you try."

As the strips came off each was neady pointed at the "sewing" end with a sharp clasp knife. There were five bundles of white binding strips tied up ready for use in that shed. I began to realise the thought and understanding that went to the making of the perfect besom.

The strips were pliable and bound the ling tightly round and round; through and up went the white slip, forming an immovable band. It was secured, the iron grip released; and as the binding took the strain it rounded to a glistening band—black besom bound white.

"Now it's trimmed"—a few strokes with the axe—slanting upwards to the handle end, so that the top of the besom shaped into a surfaced roundness like an acorn cup.

The feather-soft end was squared a little, and now: "Do you want the tail?"

How little one knows or thinks. I was suddenly blank before the problem of *how* would one drive a stout stake *into* a resistless resilient besom *without* bending and breaking the ling?

Laughing, he climbed on to the low wall of the shed and, measuring the length of the *hold* outside against the height of the stake to be "druv," he slipped in the point and, holding it in the air clear of the ground, Whack! whack! on the top end of the stake. And the besom climbed up the stake and wedged itself on to its own tail.

That was the last thing. He did drive a wooden pin through, securing the stake, but it was an afterthought,

THE MAKING OF THE BESOM

a mere caress of the master commending the perfect thing.

"Yes," he said, "it's done now. Last well, they do. Don't leave 'em lying about in the wet, and stand them on their tails to dry out. Birch is better for some ground work, but ling sweeps finer for stone floors and such."

I paid for two besom—with tails.

On the kitchen dresser I wrote the label, printing the address of a London owner of an acre of large yards.

The Maker of Besoms read the address with care. "Yes," he said simply, "I'll send them two besom there safe. He'll find them good besom, and they'll last him. Tell him not to leave them out in the wet all nights."

I have told him.

TARRY WOOL

Tarry woo' tarry woo'
Tarry woo' is ill to spin
Card it weel, card it weel
Card it weel, ere ye begin
When 'tis carded, row'd and spun
Then the work is halflings done
When 'tis woven dressed and clean
It may be cleading for a **queen!**

O, the bonny woo'ly sheep
Feedin' on the mountain steep
Bleat ye! bleat ye! as ye go!
Thro' the winter frost and sno'
Hart, nor hind, nor fallow deer,
No by half, so useful are
Fra' king to lads that hauds the plough
All gi praise to tarry woo'.

(Old Spinning Song)

Mountain sheep have different wool and stronger than the Lowland and Cheviots, which to a great extent have replaced them. Tar dressings were poured out of a long spouted can down shedings, parted through the sheeps' wool to protect them from the wintry weather and keep down lice. It was called greasing or salving, but as Fitzherbert remarks, the "best grease for sheep is to grease his mouth with good meat."

Tar was also used to mark sheep in very wet mountains where raddle washed off.

(D.H.)

"WOOLLEN MILL—STILL WORKING"



The dry wheel.

DO you know that you can see the wool trotting about the mountains on the sheep's back, and the same wool, dyed and woven and dressed and sold to you, made into cloth, all in one village, in dozens of places in England now ?

It's true—and I wish all the deserted mills could be at work, as well as the few who are making a success of this job, for there is surely no better wear than the fine cloth grown in our own climate and woven in our own country. It's all the colours of the hill-sides in it, and the faint scent of peat streams and wood smoke clings to it, and it will wear and wear as only good cloth can.

Don't, because the mills are small, have any idea of there being anything Arty and Crafty about their output. I'm not talking of amateur weavers, some of whom may be adequate, but of the majority "you get enough

HERE ' S E N G L A N D

loose fluff off their products to make another coat!" Nor of the pretty-pretty hand-loom school. These mills *are* mills, and make genuine hard wearing cloths; in many cases the machinery is as up to date as any in the larger establishments. The only thing odd about their cloth is the tradition for making it thoroughly sound. There's usually a strong tradition for cloth making where you get a water mill. Streams that have worn grooves down the hill-sides fall against wheels that have been splashing around hundreds of years. There are water dams up the ghylls that have lost trace of time and seem now to be natural tarns. Ordnance Maps show mills that have been in position for centuries, and they are still going; the interiors have changed, and the works have changed, and *the wool has changed most of all*. Our earliest English sheep had wool with long hairs in it, and the earliest example we have (they say it's lining an old Bible box) shows why a hair shirt was a penance; and just a trace of that original springiness left, is still thought no bad thing in some hard-wearing country stockings. But nowadays sheep have fleece like thistledown. White as snow and warm as dreams. Black sheep is an opprobrious term, because it means the "old Adam" coming out, but Black Sheep were not altogether unpopular in medieval England, because a familiar "device" given as a household hint in 1400 was to cut black lambs' fleece and white lambs' fleece together into diamond shapes and sew them alternately and neatly together, and line with squares and stripes of chequered skins; and a poor hard-up countryman might swish as gay a cloak as any man-about-town! So it's nice to think the little spindle-legged blackies, bleating pathetically on the cold hill-side, were popular, and there are enough left for "trimmings" now! because some of the best county mills specialise in natural un-dyed wools, and you've got to see the products to

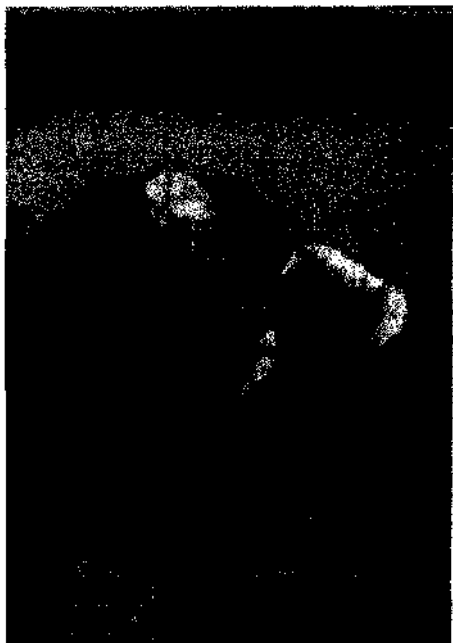
"WOOLLEN MILL—STILL WORKING"

appreciate them. Every shade, from warm bronze black through golden sepias to creamy ivories, comes by skilfully blending the wools. I have seen just such an old shawl, with a single scarlet initial worked into one corner, and white shawls with deep delicately shaded grey borders that simply asked for snow-white hair and russet-apple cheeks and dark eyes to brighten over them.

Some of the mills make blankets, at least they *call* them blankets, but the patterns are those of Merrie England. The interchanged intricate patterns that turn on the satisfying English angles of 90 and 45 and the comfortable half drop repeats. The best of these patterns are as delicate as a Csedmon poem and adequate as a Norman arch. There is not an extravagant line or degenerate shape in them, and I believe one would know them for English if met on an Indo-Brazilian-Jap in a Madagascar-catamarang in Borneo.

Being English and used to it, I took my country blanket for granted! And because it was warm and waterproof I once used it for a steamer rug, going abroad, and had refused four offers for it, cash down, before we reached the line; and the pity was the half of its admirers were visitors who'd been "travelling around England" but "hadn't been shown anything half so lovely," or "they'd have bought them." A craze for vile light colours and ugly circles spoilt the design of some of the blankets, but now let's hope the old standard black and white and grey and gold and bronze colourings are coming back—for the colours suit our quiet English designs best.

One small jolly mill was making tweeds, and sold also the sturdy made-up "farmer's wear" that is required in **that** bleak **land**. Every cut had been the result of structural necessity and experience. Some of the flannel shirts had cut free underarms, a device as useful in **the** down-armed ploughman's shirt as the gusset-back



Mending a mill dam at low-water.



Rewinding bobbins.



A sweat-hole shin for a
ploughman.



Who'll wear the breeches ?

WOOLLEN MILL—STILL WORKING

is to **the** golfer. Now the country girls have brought **their hand** knitting needles to town, their sisters are **taking knitting** machines to the country, and some small mills will match you socks and stockings to your tweeds—almost while you wait.

The best time to find a woollen mill is on a fine day when they've just finished a length of flannel. All around **the** fields are wooden stands that stretch for yards and yards, and out comes the cloth! and flap, flap and pull **and** . . . see those tiny holes all along the selvedge? **that** where it's fastened down.

The jolliest place on a windy day is a drying ground! It looks rather like the sky being washed. Sometimes netfuls of dyed wool are washing under the water wheel! Sometimes there's a great boiling and steaming going on, and the whitewashed walls of the dyehouse look like **a** misspent life (reminiscent and exciting) and sometimes they are putting in an odd day clearing out the mill dam! While the mill mechanic sings the love songs of his breed (which anyone else would think was swearing) to a refractory oil engine. There's never a dull day in **a** woollen mill, and the saddest thing on the Ordnance Maps in England now are the words: "Site of old Woollen Mill—disused."

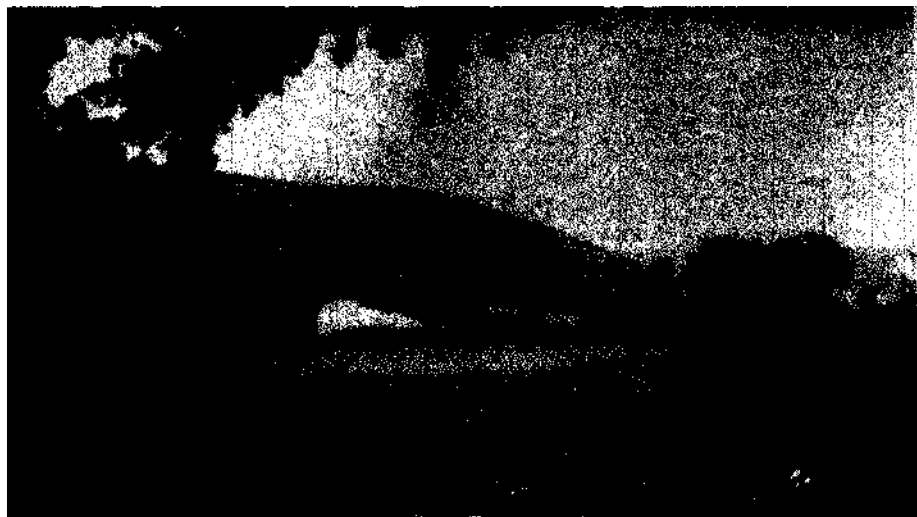
SEPTEMBER



THE CYDER PRESS

*Materials for thy Mill, a sturdy Post
Cylindric to support the grinders weight
Excessive, and a flexile sallow entrench*d.
Rounding capacious of the juicy hord.
Nor must thou not be mindful of thy Press!
Long ere the vintage, but with timely care,
Shave the goats shaggy beard, least thou
In vain should'*st seek a strainer . . .
Be cautious next a proper steed to find.
Whose prime is past, the vigorous horse disdains
Such servile labours, or, if forced, forgets
His past achievements and victorious palms.
Blind Baynard rather, worn with work and years
Shall roll the unweildy stone, with sober pace
He'll tread the circling path till dewy eve,
From early dayspring, pleased to find his age
Declining, not unuseful to his Lord.*

(18th Century Ciderman)



The Cerne Giant.

That thirsty man of chalk waved his club across the sweltering Downs.

WE had met and spoken together outside Puddletrenthide, so that when we encountered again among the Abbas's we greeted each other as well met in a strange country.

"He'd come down with the shearing," he explained to me, and "stay'd through the hay." (He, and the Devon man, were opening out for the cutter, i.e., scything the opening path around the headlands so that the machine could come in and reap the corn). An old man from Somerset had joined us "off the turnpike." His barrow was in the hedge against the gate. He'd been edging the road against the tar spray would be expected.

They'd stepped out of the field and set themselves in the fence corner, where the wilding apple trees made a square courtyard of shade. Behind, the barley swayed low in the heat and the Cerne Giant waved his club at us, friendly, across the sweltering downs.

It was noonday rest and the four of us sat peacefully and undid our lunches. I successfully swapped a synthetic sausage roll for a slab of home-baked Bredy bread

HERE'S ENGLAND

(you only get it about here, yellow it is and close as sand, they stand me out that it is only wheat flour, but it's unusually close for wheat). I had collected a hatful of greens, where they were clearing out the watercress beds farther back up the stream. It was plenty young picking yet under the banks, so I sat and chewed away silently in great content. The others had cheese and onions, and we'd a tree a-piece to lean against.

The dogs were rabbiting in the hedge; in all that hot contented earth there wasn't anything needed to do but chew . . . peacefully . . . I was sorry for the Giant man, . . . with no lunch to eat at noon—only watching us eat ours . . .

It was at the napkin folding end when one reaches around for a drink and a smoke. The talk seemed to turn "natural like" to cyder. The three men had big green bottles, but "'tis only cold tea," "not but what I'd rather have cold tea better than some cyder, what they call cyder these days." "Ah! . . ."

"Wish't I could get some cyder." I rolled over on to my back. "I've tried lots of places along the road, but they'd sell me nothing but minerals and I hate them."

"You'm right, gas water's no comfort to your inwards." The Devon man spoke sadly.

"Shall I ride along and fetch us some?" I offered.

"Tes no use, not afore the 'George' opens." The Somerset man spoke wearily.

"Is it good when I do get it?"

"Yes, 'tis good there, they get it off a farmer at the top end—he belongs to give them all he brew, contracted to it. Yes, . . . it's good enough." He drained the last drops of cold tea down inside. "Quite," he finished gloomily. "They ought to alter Times."

The Somerset man scowled at the Giant as if He ought to take steps; and that carved man of thirsty chalk flourished his club in agreement, and a black crow who'd

been walking across his face winged hurriedly westwards (He may have been taking a message). "Where?" I rolled over and spoke to the sliding apple-tree shadows : "Where can I get the *best* cyder?"

"You belong to go to Devon for it, miss, there's no Somerset cyder can touch it. They've not the *clay*. You see how dry tes, no apple does on chalk same as on clay, it's beyond nature." The Devon man spoke earnestly.

The Somerset man began his reply by loosening his braces. "Water" he said to his left brace, and "Hoats" to the right brace. Then he leant back and entered the lists vigorously and slowly . . .

I gathered he disapproved of the assertions of the Devonian, that his clay theory held no water (or rather it held too much). "Tes BODY you want," he glared at me, "Not WIND." He expounded with authority and force, the paltry brew that passed for cyder in Devon was practically "barley water" on account of the amount of packing straw the Devons *had* to use because their apples were "all sweaty wet" . . . The Somerset man got a good innings, because Devon was lighting his pipe, but I gathered between puffs that the straw was "fer flavour" (puff) "and I tell yew" (puff, puff) "tes oat straw brings out the goodness, barley" (puff) "were mossy." He got the pipe going and the pair settled down to instruction.

The cyder presses of both countries are packed with straw between the layers of apple pulp. "Pumice" they call it. I'd only thought of this straw as a drainage and packing convenience, but now both Somerset and Devon enlightened me. "Pad it may, drain it may, but bring out the flavour it *dew*." "There was a power of minerals raised in all grass." The apple juice was "searching acid and draw'd it out." That's why iron implements must never be used, not even to

HERE'S ENGLAND

stir with. Even the stack knife that was sometimes used to slice the pumice could be tasted in the second pressing. Clean wood only must come near the apple pulp and that wood be well chosen. "Pinewood, now, 'twould flavour, unless intent was." " 'Twas all," as they both agreed, "the natural minerals in the soil taken up by the natural acid in the apple that made cyder." "That's why a soil with a clay footing . . ." (the Devon man when he spoke of soil seemed to see red instinctively!)

"Hereford makes a good cyder," I tried trailing the herring tactfully.

"They sop it up with *blankets!*" Somerset was referring to the huge black horsehair sieves or mats four feet square that they pack the crush in, they hold the cyder like a sponge; it takes four strong men to lift them when they're full. I've seen the mats hung drying, all black and glossy, over the walls above Ross.

My Wiltshire man broke his silence. "Worcester used to send down a lot o' trees, and cherries too from Kent way, they say it improved the cyder wonderful."

"You know nothing o'cyder . . ."

"You know nothin' o' cyder, you'm ignorant!" Before the combined blast from the West the Wiltshire man wilted under my very eyes. The indignant silence held several minutes, quivering in the air as the heat mist hovered over the corn. A shadow stirred in the hedge. A friend of mine from the British Museum stepped through and sat down by the discomfited Wiltshire man. He handed me a letter *he'd just received* dated 1748:

"Elford Leigh, near Plympton in Devonshire.

We request the 20 Bleeding Heart Cherry Trees be sent by coasting vessel which comes to Plymouth very frequently) my master has lived in Herefordshire and is a good judge of our country, having Wit and Will and

C Y D E R

we (he nodded across the parchment) have consulted much on the improvement of cider."

The next letter stated proudly: *"I have bought 16 of the best Cider trees that I could get for money and hope they will come safe to hand and fulfil your expectations. They cost two shillings apiece and may in time be worth pounds to you, as I know you will graft from them and thereby supply your whole country with famous sorts that will produce, if managed aright, a cyder that cannot be paralleled in your parts. The apples trees are shipped aboard the 'MEMLAND COASTER,' Stephen Tutt, master, Stanton's Wharf, Southwark, 1748."*

To Southram's in Devonshire.

"Sir," *I thought the Devon man spoke, but the voice came from a stranger sitting behind him.*

"I live on the edge of the Southram's and here acquaint you that these parts of Devonshire for good cyder exceed all other parts of England, notwithstanding Somerset and Herefordshire afford great quantities of cyder, but it is not SO RICH STRONG OR PALATABLE . . ."

The two warm Western voices boom on; *but my sleeve is plucked by a little wizened clerk, brown-skinned and shrivelled as a rusty-coat apple in January. He spoke with a Cockney accent, and pointed with a large quill pen. "I have here," he said, "taken down from a man who lived at Plumtree, ten miles this side of Exeter, a refutation of the quantity. He says that they make every other year three times as many hogsheads of cyder as there are men, women and children in the town. He says (the clerk jabbed his pen excitedly through the parchment) that they use Deux Anns apples for a good cyder, but 'tis pale, so they put the Jerseys (a rough little apple, miss) one bag of Jerseys to seven of the other sort, and this makes it a fine amber colour. Now the French Long Tail apples, they make a pretty liquor, but not so bright, the Culvering,*

HERE'S ENGLAND

the Russet, the Holland Pippin, the Cowley Crabs—"What are they?" I interrupt. "They be larger than common crabs, being crab grafted upon a crab stock, and so always breeding strong, two bags of them to a hogshead will make cyder stronger . . . much stronger . . ." A Gardener spoke, a gaunt sinewy man. *"In Hereford, we lay bare the roots of our trees for the twelve days at Christmas that the wind may loosen them and after that cover with a Compost, a rotten dung and lime, it makes them bare Fruit exceedingly."* The Gardener spoke over my head to a Gloucestershire man, who nodded. *"Blighting winds trouble us," he said: "the South-West winds from over the Narrow Seas are to be avoided, as they bring from Holland swarms of imperceptible eggs of insects in the air, from the Vast Tracts of low Tartian lands they float over to settle on the Proper Objects for their Subsistence and Breed for increasing their Species"* ("Dom Mossy!" ejaculated the Devon man. He spoke as if in his sleep). *"From these mildews," the Gardener continued: "proceed infinite numbers of Lice, Flies, Bugs, Caterpillars and Cobwebs, etc., on to our Trees."*

"Summer apples are to be rejected, as of Juice weak, windy and unwholesome." A dapper little man sat down by the Somersetshire man, who murmured *"Body, 'tis Body that's wanted, not Wind."* *"Altho' "* the dapper little shade continued: *"the Golden Pippin, Non Pareil, Pearmain and others of the luscious sort, yield a palatable, sweet racy cyder, esteemed by those whose Palates are Strangers to the rough, Stronger Sort; yet all True Knowing Cyder Drinkers (everybody present looked self-conscious) all Knowing Cyder Men, reckon it no better than the weak Summer Fruit Cyder we all make of the leavings of our Presses."*

"I was told by an Irish Knight in London," the Cockney rustled his parchments: "that in Ireland they use the Cackagee, Burlington Crab, Kendrick and Royal Wilding,

CYDER

and even borrow the Hereford Styne Apple, the Fox Whelp, the Woodcock and White Swan, and with the Native Irish crabbe they make a juice little inferior to Canary."

"We have the Kentish Pippin"—another shade joined us, "and use also the Red Streak, Ruby Streak, and Long Streaked Red Streaked. It yields the Best of English drinks, because the fruit is harsh and unpleasant and tempts not the Palate of all persons! (Not hospitable to foreigners!) The tree thrives on mean land, because it's a spontaneous plant and ungrafted, and the fruit may be as large as my fists . . ." (they looked large and knobbly, and the Kentish man's words went undisputed). "We raise young apple trees in the hop grounds, and sometimes add dark cherry juice at the first racking. (Racking is the straining off from one Hogshead to another leaving the lees and so best done in frost).

"How do they know *when* to Rack it?" I asked.

The Doctor of Physic had joined us, his horse was cropping the hedge in the lane, and there hung a wedge of Cornish heavy cake at his saddle bow. *"When it begins to sing, lady, we apply the ear to the cask, and when it sings, low and sweetly, we rack it in clear weather. There was a farm not a mile from this very place (a cloud slid over the sun and a shadow lay for a moment across the downs before the sweet voice went on) not a mile away, where I always went to buy my cyder for my own taste, and sometimes Vd ride over two or three times to effect it, for 'Sir,' the farmer would say: 'this Cyder is just now come for sale, but I would not recommend it to you, it has not so good a body, but two or three frosty mornings will make it fine and sweet. Now, take my advice, and give it a few rackings and it will mellow down to your palate, Sir.' I did so; I always followed that farmer's advice, he understood cyder. He was so clean and dexterous and experienced in cyder; it was a pleasure to see his cyder house, and all his casks laid up*

well washed and sweet smelling like a rose, and all his utensils pretty and every day washed and clean. He said the goodness of cyder much depended on the regular ordering and sweet working of the whole . . . but there are folk who huddle up their cyder anyhow." His gaze wandered to two Cornishmen who had just come up. One, a dark, handsome fellow (the little Cockney clerk whispered to me that he was of Spanish extraction, and had taken out a patent for making Brandy from Blackberries). The other was a sturdy, rough miner with a short-handled pick on his back. He swore that in the mines they put a "*Quart of warm sheep's blood into their brew, and a dozen or so of egg-shells, to clear it. They also added Mazzard and black cherries and black currants and spice, so that the Cornish cyder had a fine dark colour and flavour."* But the general opinion ran that this was uncouth, though a *Proper Gentleman called Elliott, who lived near Leominster* admitted to gingerbread and wheat being put into their casks, and some added milk, maintaining it improved the warmth of the stomach—but, alack! "*everybody who sells even one hogshead of cyder, even to a private family, the King takes seven shillings duty,"* but, he brightened: "*the Hogsheads in those parts hold 70, 80 to 100 gallons."*

The talk was still turning against unseemly additions to cyder, when a polite little Dartymoor lady rode up. She shook her black curls, and her dark eyes snapped, and she quoted recipes for cyder, that had sugar, spice, treacle and elderberries in it. (The Wiltshire man whispered back: "*she was very curious in managing her cyder*" and that "*the folks from Dartymoor parts and Exmoor, you couldn't tell which of their doings was to the cyder or for the witches*"). This little dark witch was on excellent terms with her serving maid, a large sunny-haired slow Devon girl, with cheeks rosy as peaches and hands smooth and white as Devon cream, and it was curious to notice how all the men folk instinctively left

the material part of the work, the" packing of the press, the scouring and cleaning of the casks, to this woman's judgement.

The best press was the wooden screw press, this must be well soaked with clear spring water before use, and only a little of the finest lard ("*we'm use butter*" a golden Devon voice came slowly like dripping cream) used to grease the screw. The wooden crashing mills must be wet and the stone mills scoured with straw. The casks must be scoured with cold spring water, and dry straw set alight in them, till they are aired. When a cask is tainted the cooper must come and shave out thinly the inside of the cask, "*for*" shaking her pretty curls: "*the simplicity of men! who think scalding a stinking cask will recover it! Why, the scalding water would drive the taint further into the wood.*"

White wine casks are the best for cyder. No malt liquor casks must ever be used, but wine casks scoured with spring water and dried with wind and burnt straw were the only use for cyder (The men nodded agreement and throughout all the arguments between all the counties, I truly believe this was the only point on which they all agreed).

"*To scent a cask*"—she looked at the Spaniard: "*take roll brimstone, burnt alum and brandy and dip a strip of linen in it, and sprinkle thickly with anniseeds and cloves and hang the strips in the casks to burn slowly. Set the heads on the casks almost tightly, 'twill by degrees extinguish the flame, but pour in the cyder while the smoak is within the cask . . . to hold it. There are easier and cheaper ways of scenting your cyder, but, if you would have scented wine at all?*" She looked across at the Spaniard, and their eyes caught alight from each other.

Her Devon maid smiled slowly and moved across to the Gardener. Their talk ran on mills and presses. An old hollowed tree trunk, "*it holds my milk pails by the back*

HERE'S ENGLAND

door now" was a cyder trough, and cottagers who could not afford mills would beat their apples in a tub. The stone mill that grinds round, turned by an old blind horse, was best, the only objection being that it crushed the pips and gave a tang of bitter to the cyder, but some liked the "almond" flavour of it. The wooden mills were upheld further South. The main point was to break the apple pulp till "*it runs smooth through the fingers*" More roughly broken apples would make clearer juice, the more finely broken make more juice, but as it needed to be racked more carefully, some contended it was not more juice, in the end, and the pulp would spoil if not pressed at once.

A screw press that was slowly tightened down was judged best, flail, pulley and other presses notwithstanding, and whether straw or hair mats were used, the racking must be done carefully in clear weather. The Pumice could be cut and run through again with the first racking lees, and it made a fair drink for use on the spot. "*A poor cyderman, a publican, being too low in Pocket to buy a wooden mill, beat his apples in a trough, and laying them in a frame with straw under the press made his cyder after a serviceable good method, but did not make any Cyderkin (The Herefordshire man called it Pomepirk) but gave the pumice away to fatten pigs, so that he need not pay excise for it, as the clerk said he must have done had he sold it*"

The little shadow patch was full of talk and voices, and the theories were sizzling like a new tapped cask. I don't know the exact century when someone mounted a barrel and began a speech. I heard only the final "*Sirs! As Providence has given It (the cyder) to Us in This our Northern Climate, to supply the want of grape, then Cyder should have Strength enough! and Spirit enough! to answer this Great End! (applause) It is wholesome as well as pleasant! and improves with Age!*"

C Y D E R

(applause by all parties) . . . Was it the heat simmering on the hill-side ? or did the Cerne Giant wave his club ?

I opened my other eye to see . . . there were only three men in the field—two were asleep—but the Wiltshire man was watching some old shadows sliding out under the hedge . . . He said: "You *could* get to the 'George*' before closing time . . ."

. . . It was a clear dark amber . . . and cool as deep woods.

SINGEN I WOULD

*Singen I would—but alas!
Englond sometime was
Of Manhood the flower
Now gone is that honnour.*

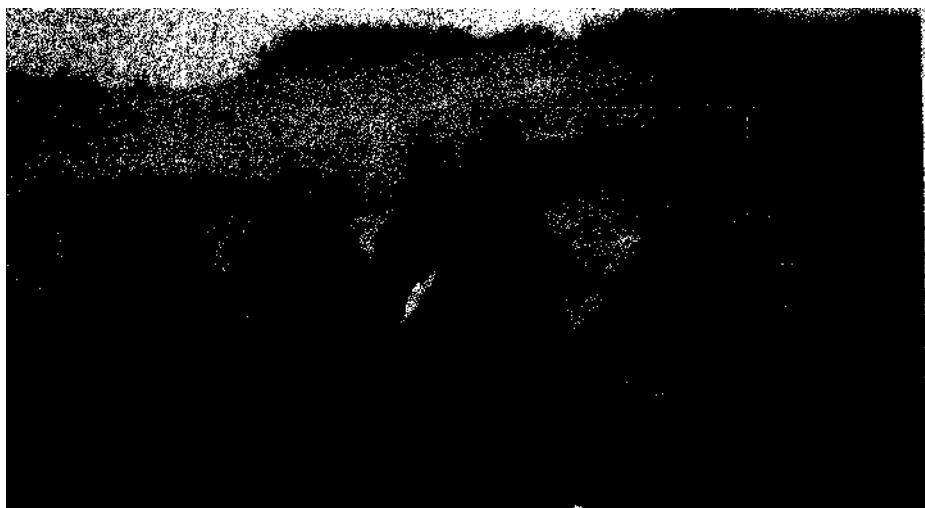
*The rich make merry
The pepul is weary
The church is grieved
And so men be mischieved.*

*Englond awake now
And good hede take thou!*

(1388)

MARRUM GRASS

An Industry of the Sand Dunes



The glistening green cones of grass.

OVER the Sand Dunes by the sea, where the white sand blows in the wind, grows the Marrum Grass, grey as dreams, and strong as a promise given. And there lives still one of the oldest Industries of England. Old probably when Caesar came. It has nearly died out many times, but always there have been a few faithful country people to go down and carry on, often more for the sake of the meeting, and the custom and use of it, than for the little money it barely earned. It is a craft that deserves to survive—this old skilful enduring work of the Marrum Grass.

They cut the grass in the late summer, when the deep sand is warmed through, and the grass, long and pliant, lies in swathes of silk before the wind. Perhaps there will be a party of twenty or forty people down there, laughing and calling to each other, and twelve or more knives will be hacking vigorously. Perhaps only four or five old women will be there, alone among the dunes. Very sad are these little lost parties that sit down to rest, and memory, among the shifting blowing sand dunes.



The Sand Dunes—Where the marrum grass bends in swathes of silk under the wind.

MARRUM GRASS

For new times are difficult, and few country children can afford to stay at home on the land, and the old people are lonely, and feel very sad and forgotten. Once, far away in the West, I came upon one old woman sitting solitary; by her was a pile of fresh cuttings, her old blue eyes were looking away and away out to sea through the waving grass—and as I came close to her, silent foot through the sand, she looked through me, and smiled and spoke to me as if I was a lost shadow that . . . she had been waiting for. Behind her, across the smooth sand dunes, the track of her old footprints went, lonely, back to the cottage; the tired steps were very slow and close together, and there were little ruffled places where she had stopped to rest.

Sixty years she had come, she told me, to cut the grasses, and as the blue shadows slid across the summer sea, and the dreams came and went in her eyes, she told me stories of parties long ago—where whole villages had come to the Marrum cutting, and the sledges had gone home high laden with grass, and there had been laughter and songs and long evenings in the barns sorting the grasses—but—that was long ago—the lads had all gone abroad, the girls had gone into factories, and the men had gone to wars, and "there were few of us old ones to come," and "it was dull without the young ones to make us laugh," "and I'd not have come alone, but it's something to do in the long evenings—there's little I can do now, and my fingers are getting stiff." "Why, yes, my dear, I'll be glad if you can carry it to the roadway for me, but it will have to go home on the cart, my daughter's boy is coming for it for me, but he's late now: perhaps he's forgot, and it's getting cold now the sun's gone . . ." So we went along home and left the ghosts to whisper and sigh among the grasses.

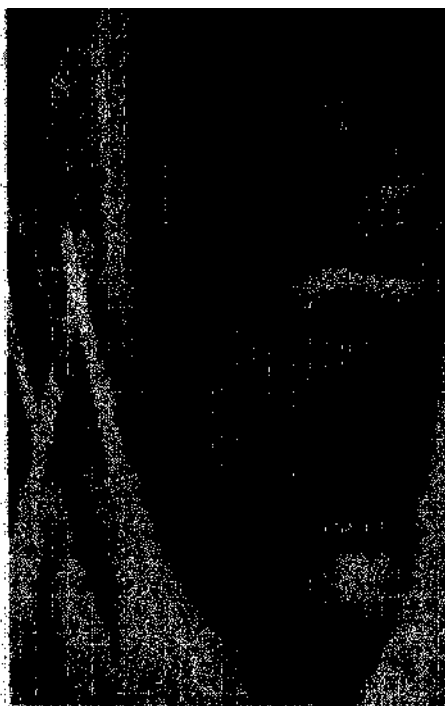
Very different was another jolly party! They were still going strong on that sand dune, and good luck and



Shaking out the sand.



The plaited mats.



They make small sturdy besoms
of the rush.

M A R R U M G R A S S

more power to them. They deserve it. I wish you could see them setting out—word gets around the village one fine morning, and then off they go, stringing out in a long, laughing, panting line over the sand dunes and foregathering at tea-time, sunburnt and hot! It's warm work swinging that cutter—you try it.

The knives are specially made—an old scythe, a nice bit of old hand-forged "cutting-iron" if you can find it in some barn: "indeed that iss the best," "the blacksmith he will make you a good one, if you tell him what it's for." See, it must be heavy at the top end, for it goes deep through the sand, so—to cut down to the roots—and clop-clop-clop-clop and the grass is laid in swathes. The late level sun, catching the flying sand, makes crystals, wheels of light spun out against the sky; but the real skill is in the stacking movement. Quick as lightning they whip together a strand of grass rope, take a huge armful of slipping, glossy, grass, and Whir-r-r-r—clip! it's spread through all the range of conic sections and left, a glistening cone of green silk with a neat knot on its top! (I want to see this done in slow motion!) The cones are left to "win" and then carted home.

Afterwards, it's made up. Plain twist, double twist, weaving, plaiting, and a dozen exciting skilful tricks they showed me, laughing and thoroughly amused at my bewilderment. I tried to get one of the cleverest to do the movement slowly for me to make diagrams, but it only showed an unexpected factor! *the grass is springy, and the speed of the working fingers is timed to catch the spring-back of the plait with its own bending*, so that the Marrum grass *Itself* seems alive; and you have the pixie look of a live grass creature, making itself, while a laughing old lady tickles its whiskers!

A party of grass workers weaving, waving patterns of grey grass, and their grey shadows against a white-washed wall is a delicious dance design.

HERE ' S E N G L A N D

But the greatest fun was when I asked to see the mats, for presently, down the empty white roadway came, slowly and independently, four pancakes! and each with two funny little human boots poking out and trotting along on the under side!

You see, a mat is ten feet across, and if you put the middle on your head it just touches the ground all round, and you can peep through the crevices and—so, flap! flap! here we come along! and now where do you want us to stand ?

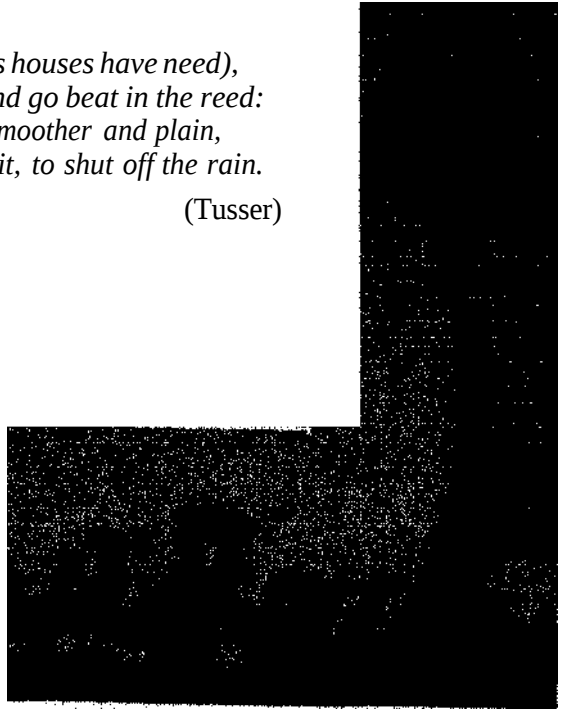
The rounds are "special"—square is the usual make, and sold for haystack covers. Hay will never heat under these covers, nor any rain beat through. They can be used in gardens to stop frost on early fruit, or to lay on store shelves, or over the ground in the open,—the Marrum grass is perfectly waterproof and rot-proof,—the fibre has grown, through hundreds of years, to withstand driving rain, and salt spray, and the wear of the grinding, polishing sands—and it's of this the mats are woven, and with it they are sewn. Mats, bags, anything! the village chapels have hassocks of it—do you want a garden seat ? or a chair cover ? or a footstool ? Do you want a broom for swilling the yard? or sweeping the hearth ? or a brush for whitewashing the house ? Come and find the Marrum grass workers and have a cup of tea and a new-laid egg to it, and butter from a round wooden mould with a fine cow carved on it, and home-made bread, and afterwards—see if you can persuade some friendly old eyes to twinkle and laugh, and some skilful old hands to twist you a hollow-bodied bird, with a waving grass tail! or a green rush, and white pebble, musical box, that looks as if the Little People themselves had woven it for some changeling baby, and then—you will have found the Marrum grass workers . . . and a craft that is as old as England.

OCTOBER

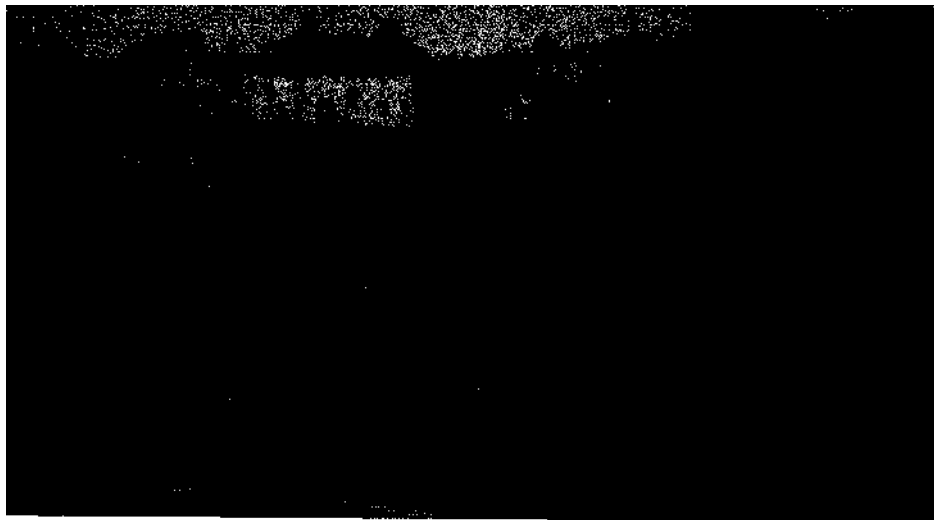
WHERE HOUSES BE REEDED

*Where houses be reeded (as houses have need),
now pare off the moss, and go beat in the reed:
The juster ye drive it, the smother and plain,
mare handsome ye make it, to shut off the rain.*

(Tusser)



THATCHING



The Thatcher arrives

LOTS admire thatched cottages, few know how thatch is put on, and only those who have lived under thatch appreciate its advantages. There are many advantages: I've known cottages become uninhabitable when the old thatch roof was removed and replaced by tiles. The sun beating through made the low rooms unbearably hot, and whereas the thatch, setting well out, had protected the walls, the newly-exposed upper plaster simply soaked up the rain like blotting paper. Also (and this is a matter for cottages set near the roadway) the noise of the traffic, that used to be deadened by the thatch, became unbearable under a light metal roof. There is also the question of heat and cold. The thick wooden covering of a thatch is much warmer in winter and cooler in summer than anything else. Once you get a thatched house warmed

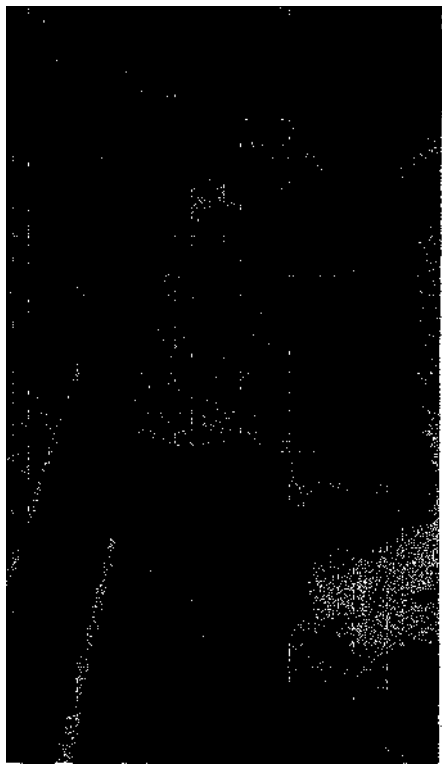
through it will stay warm all winter, and it will be the end of the summer before the thatch is hot, and then a thunderstorm and a blow of wind will cool it down again. A bedroom under thick thatch is always cool and most curiously quiet. Even noises in the house itself seem to be absorbed and deadened. Yet tiny sounds are delicately clear. It would be interesting to know if some forms of deafness find any difference under thatch. By the same token over thatch, under which I lived myself, they raised the walls and put a tiled roof over it, and the starlings, breaking through into the thatch roof, and the house-martins building underneath the tiled one, kept things musical. There were two centrally heated sites round the chimney stacks; and each was fiercely contended for by both camps every year. I believe the birds used the chimney for a private incubator—it used to get really hot on baking days, so I suppose they liked hard boiled eggs.

But, returning to thatch. The main different varieties in England are reed, straw, ling, rush, bavin and turf. (That's not counting rick, hay, and corn-stack work). Each of these main divisions are sub-divided again into many others. Straw may be either rye, oat, wheat, Somersetshire or Wiltshire reed (which isn't reed at all) and many comprises. Rye was considered best and grown specially for thatching. Round straw, specially hand-reaped is best, and was grown for the purpose long after early threshing machines and mowing machines (that cracked and broke the straw) came into use. I've known them use cracked straw when they can't get any other, but all agree it's not much use. In Somersetshire . . . *"they do shear their wheat very low and all the wheat straw that they purpose to make thacke of, they do not thresshe it, but cut off the ears and bind it in sheaves and call it reed, and therewith they thatch their houses"*

THATCHING

Reed thatching may be Norfolk, Suffolk or Kent reeds, or Welsh and Northern Border reeds, which are not reeds at all but rushes. Norfolk reed is "terrible strong," and will last fifty years well tended. It weathers with a grey iridescent sheen, like a pigeon's neck, and it matches the flint work perfectly. Kent reed is very like it, but stands to be thicker set. Down Devon way 'tis very thick and soft straw thatch. Oxfordshire thatch is thick, but closer and less exuberant than the West, and there's a strong concise school beyond Tewkesbury. Some of the South Down thatch has the very curve of the chalk over it, sweeping almost down to the ground and bending up and over the gable ends. Some districts in Buckinghamshire have thatched walls and thatched houses very beautifully done, and a few Leicester thatches that I know have an extra line of thatch run round below the windows and over the porch, as if the rim of the house's straw hat had split and slid down over its eyes. In some districts the thatch rises in heavy eye-brows over the windows. (These usually are very high-pitched roofs). Some lower-pitched cottages seem to pull the thatch well down over their ears. Up North we thatch less; preferring slabs of stone, in which we agree with Gloucestershire and the Cotswolds. But we use ling thatch very successfully. This is darker work and you can't "show off" with trimming and fancy pattern like you can with reed and straw; but it's enduring ("ah! it is that!") This thatch is frequently roped down against the wind. Sometimes the ends of the rope are tied to rocks or a log of driftwood or pegged into the houses themselves. In winter, out in the windy islands, I have seen cottages with their thatches so wrapped on, they look more like parcels than anything else.

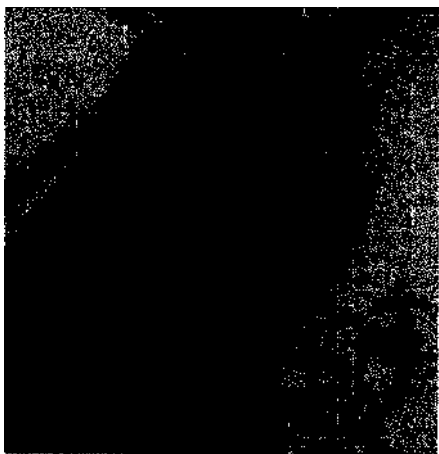
One variety of roofing (but I hesitate to class it as thatch) occurs near the harbours. We fling our old



Placing the reeds.



Beating them into the slope.



The special tool.



Sewing them on to the bars.

THATCHING

fishing nets over the top and peg them down, and then we tar over the top of that and chuck up some pebbles, and, "well, it's a bit of all sorts, as you might say."

The structural basis upon which **the** thatch is fastened varies as much as the thatch. The roof ridge must be roughly a right angle. It's usually more—say about sixty degrees, that allows the thatch to slope down it pretty thickly. The main scaffolding of beams fit from the eaves to the ridge pole, and between them the horizontal strips are fastened according to the thatch. The work begins at the eaves and bundle after bundle is raised, each very slightly overlapping, and fastened and tied on to the horizontal strips, with ties of willow, string, rush-rope, or wedged with wooden pegs, till the ridge pole is reached, when the last sheaves must go over, on either side. (It is here that the fancy work comes in). Straw gets "combed down," reed gets "beaten up":

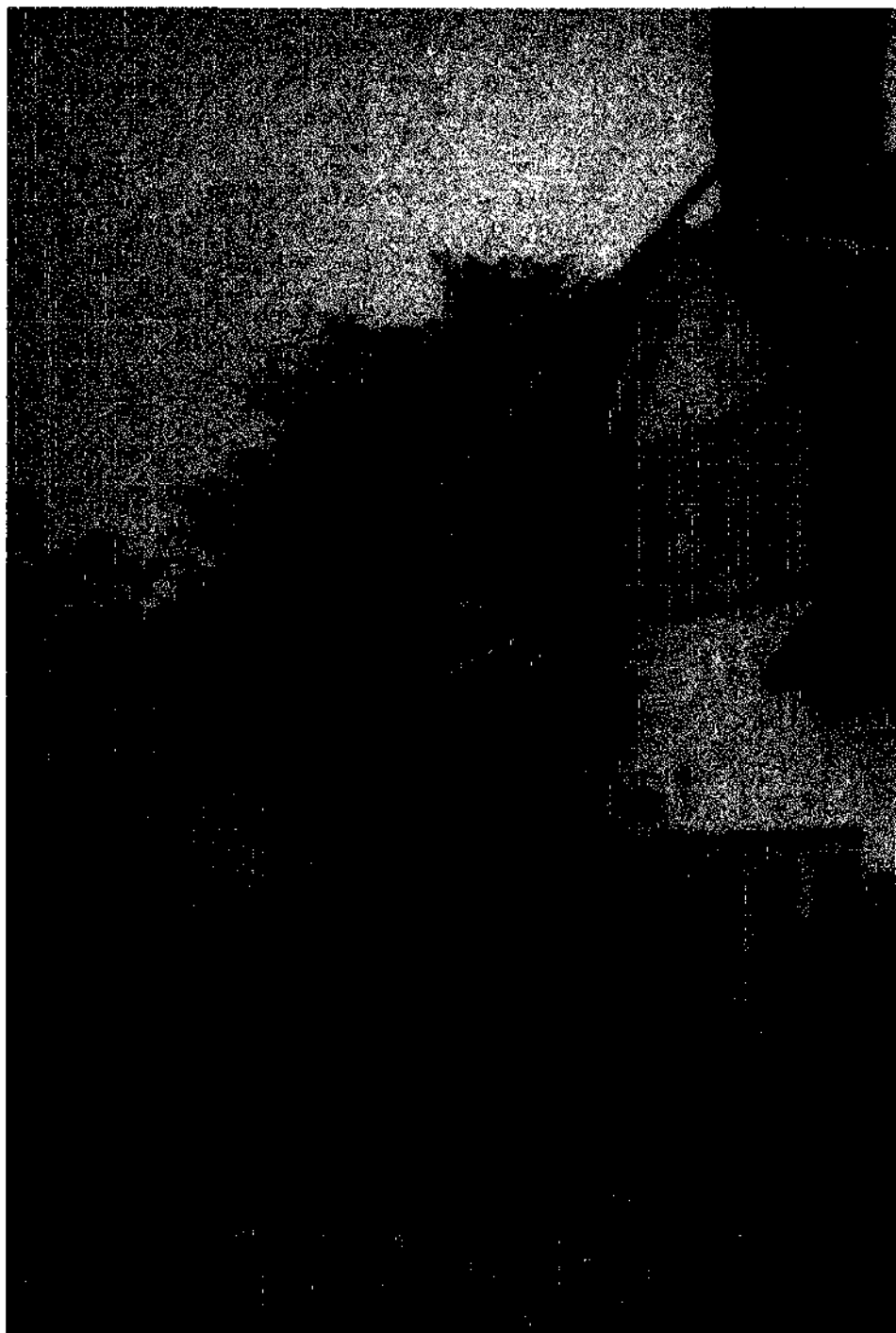
*"Where houses are reeded, as houses have need,
Go pare off the moss and beat in the reed"*

Weather and frost tend to "lift" reed a little (like frost lifts the soil) especially when the thatch is new, so it is wise to drive it in and down tightly in the Spring, and remove moss which would hold the damp and cause it to rot. The season for thatching has always varied. Theoretically it is best to do it after corn harvest in the Autumn, when the straw is not yet brittle; but reeds must be kept till the green outer leaves wither off. "We stack till they droporphan," one reed thatcher explained. On the other hand, if you are going to have half your roof off, you'd best do it in the summer, and it's pleasanter working in summer, for as a kindly writer in 1641 remarks: *"it will not get a man a heat in a frosty morning sitting on the top of a house, where the wind cometh to him on every side!"* Actually we try to get it done if there's a slack moment before the hay

HERE'S ENGLAND

harvest; and if it isn't done then, it has to wait till the busy time is over; so you will see straw-thatched cottages a handsome piebald pattern **both** Spring **and** Autumn.

You may read every thatcher's own style as clearly as you may see the signature of an artist in his handiwork. No two men ever thatch exactly alike. I have purposely avoided puzzling you with technicalities and names, for unless you knew the special district it would probably be misleading. Only the other day in a district, well known for its neat cross-stitch patterns in willow, I found a thatcher unable to get the straight willow material, using long, strong trails of blackberry with excellent effect, but the pattern worked out in curves, not squares! for the blackberry bent more loosely than the cracked willow. If you find a good thatcher, greet him as one of the most skilled master craftsmen left in England. Get him the material he asks for; give him the very simple facilities that he will want, and he will turn you out a roof that is a sheer joy to look at and a real comfort to live under.



The thatcher begins a new Reed Thatch—at Lydd, Kent.

OLD SONG

*Caw the ewes to the knowes
Caw them where the heather grows
Caw them where the burnie rows
O my bonny dearie O.*

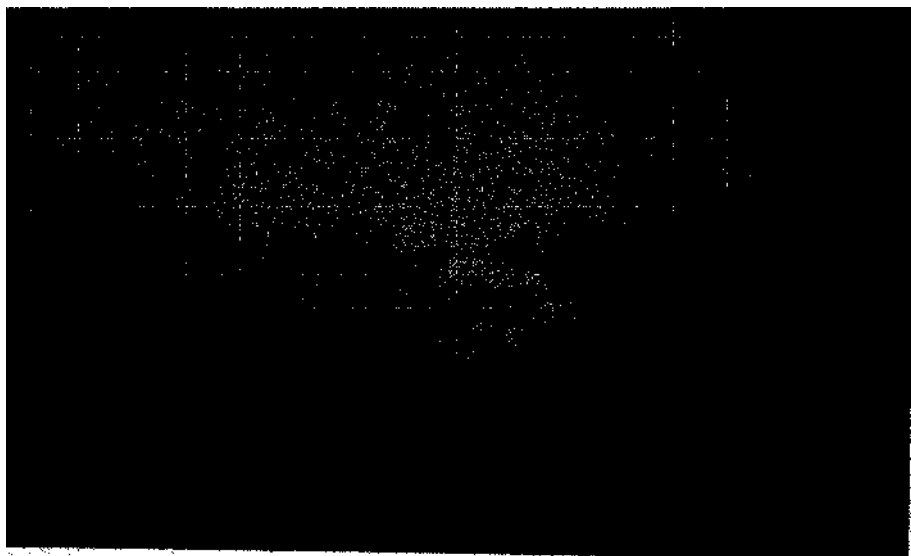
*"Ye shall ha' gowns and ribbons sweet
"Calf leather shoon upon your feet
"If in my arms ye'll lie and sleep"
O my bonny dearie O.*

*Caw the ewes to the knowes
Caw them where the heather grows
Caw them where the burnie rows
O my bonnie dearie O.*

*"If you but stand to what you've said
"I'll gang wi you my shepherd lad
"And you may row'd me in your plaid
"And I will be your dearie O."*

*Caw the ewes to the knowes
Caw them where the heather grows
Caw them where the burnie rows
O my bonny dearie O.*

ON THE MOORS



Over the Moors.

THE heather was knee-deep and smelt peppery **with** heat. I clambered up the green crack of a gyll. The heather was a furnace round me; it's the reddest heather of the moors grows on the Ruabon Mountains; almost it pales the penetrating permanent brick of Rhos. It's a notable brick they make around here: the workers speak with pride of its colour and its durability: it's a really *good* brick. In winter against the snow it shines like holly berries, but on a hot day in summer: Oh! my God! one can fairly hear it!

It makes the whitewashed cottages by the roadside look blue-green (with envy or optical illusion). Anyhow, the cottages are left below now, and here I pant up through the heather and rock, up and up, sometimes scrambling on hands and knees where the dried lichens curl off into feathers from the hot rocks, sometimes finding a thin trail of water still running deep-sunk between the stones (well worn by little feet are those places), up past a black and barren acre, where a moor

fire has swept; there the ground is charcoal, crackling beneath the foot, the heather stems writhe like a thousand black serpents, and the bared rocks in the water-course are white as bone. Four-footed things usually escape before a fire; you see them streak out before the crackling, sometimes over the very feet of the fire-beaters; but the birds often stay on their nests . . . there is a little pitiful dump of charcoal and fire smothering feathers, and under them the tiny scorched eggs.

There was a queer fire on this mountain a few years ago: the peat below the surface burnt slowly, destroying the roots of a grove of fir trees. Unknowingly, taking a short cut over the hills in the dark, I stumbled into this wood, and to my astonishment three trees toppled over like ninepins, the ground below showing a sudden red glare; a nasty Dore's Inferno effect. The derelict wood is still there, but the kindly fern is covering the spoilt timber.

You have to know the moors as a child a-foot to learn their infinite variety: each, for a child, has its own special treasures, the sun-dew on the south-west of Snowdon (there's plenty elsewhere, but I never found any so large) the cotton grass of Dartmoor, the myriad-coloured fungus jewelling the silver grey dales, will o' the wisp on Cader Idris, the stags-horn moss, marking the high contour lines; joy to find spagnum moss, dried and white for feather beds in the summer; to lie on your back watching the hawks hung in the blue, till you sway below them like a riding ship. To lie, chin over a cliff, and see the rabbits scattering and scuttling in the sun, or the fox, red-gold, slip past; on a little open place in the sun to surprise a stoat dancing and dancing all alone by himself; to hear a thud and locate a ram fight, or watch against the sky-line the shepherd and his dogs at work. O! the moors are the finest playground in the world for children.

ON THE MOORS

Up and up through the heather "*Our heath groweth in playnes ana in wylde growndes and in moyste places . . . Plini speaketh of low bushy moyste and watery wooddes where it is possible for hethe to grow but . . . The Hyest Hethe that ever I saw groweth in Northumberland which is so highe that a man may hyde hymselfin.*" (That's Turner in 1551). Well, this is waist-deep and thick with bees. In low places on the Yorkshire moors the Gale blows as it did in Caedmon's time; they make beer of it; it's aromatic; in the wind after rain waves of the scent slide down between the warm waves of the heather. The Cornish gorse smells sweetest in the hot sun, carried across the valleys by the little wind that comes up from the sea. The bell heather has not the scent of this true ling . . . Heather varies in colour locally, and there are plants of white heather in the same places, on the same mountains, year after year; I have found patches of pale lavender, almost blue, on the shadowed slopes of Westmorland. Some of the East Coast heathers are dark pink. The Festiniog hills are shaded bronze purple as a beetle's wing, and in Glyn the copper streams make vivid blue-green streaks, quivering with colour, like a shrill cold cry among the scarlet. Farther North the claw-curved bracken is lemon and gold; and the sky, cut out between the black slate rocks, shines polished blue as broken pots.

Oh, the joyful fierce colours in the high east slopes! They are tuned to the strident clamour of the cock pheasant and the metallic wirr of wings in the dry water-courses. They are colours pagan and earthly—for why? the souls of the colours are slid out of them and all the August nights they sing in the red gold mist below the hot harvest moon. It is on the turn of the hills to the West that you get the misty rain and shadowy grass. I have lain in the shallow hidden pool of an Irish hollow-toothed hill, and watched around the circle of rocks

above me, the purple and gold of the eastern rim beat up and fall like name, and the sky overhead floated across like fire-lit opals, but—there below, out of the wind, I'd be lying in a grey-shadowed pool of silence, with thick green water lapping over my ears. The Yorkshire tarns are cold even at midsummer and black as the rocks above, or blue washing into bronze like tempered steel. The Scotch hills, riven with waterfalls, are sapphire coloured. The Ochills and Cairngorms are warm, rich gold and purple, even as the Cairngorm stones themselves (one shade of these stones is clear burn water colour, neither grey, nor brown, nor amethyst, but the colour of Loch Meadie.) Have you seen the Scottish regalia at Holyrood? crystal gold and a mist of pearl. Those are the hills round old Edinburgh in winter, hills of snow-grey shadows and crystal ice, the waterfalls shrill in the frost, like the treble pipes, and the frozen lochs give out uncanny hoots and howls. After the sun goes down the wind shrieks and booms through the gulleys; full orchestra of the Grampians on a wild, blowing evening at dusk; and then—black frost and white silence—silence deep as snow—so utterly still you can hear the stars.

The Pennines are different hills, round-topped, of blue and grey limestone, or shelved like giant stairways with surprising patches of heather, ling and gorse, and wierdly patterned water paving. The dales have their own colouring, set above are high white cliffs, sheltering deep enamelled green dales, down the centre of which runs the clear pebbled trout beck. In the South are other moors, Dartmoor of the bogs and the wild ponies, Exmoor and Cornwall of the old pit-shafts. East Anglia has its heathy fen lands, and Sussex and Dorset have their heaths. The Peaks (of Blue John) are most individual of all hills and to them all you win up through the foot-hills, the lands of the low blackberry bushes.

ON THE MOORS

(Anglesea blackberries are thickest, but those low-hanging over the river Dee are perhaps the juiciest, the Midland Wolds have perhaps the sweetest blackberries in England, and the New Forest blackberries have the longest whiskers). Up through the drifts of wild raspberries (it is nice to know that the foot-sore pilgrims plodding round, past San Compostella, to the Mediterranean shores, through Italy to Jaffa, mention the places they could pick raspberries by the way-side, like they could at home). Up past the grazing grounds of the hill farms, up, up through the rocky foot-hills to the bilberry tops!

"VACCINIUM MYRTILLUS"

BILBERRY
WHORTLEBERRY
BLAEBERRY
HURTS
WHURTS
WHORTS

Bilberry, blaeberry, whortleberry or whinberry on the hills, it's a regular Norseman's foot of a plant; stand on any bilberry patch, looking towards the blue, and see the foamy long serpents riding against the land! Norway is the real home of the bilberries, but over all North Europe and England they grow in patches.

The gypsies get panniers of the berries and bring them to the back door, purple-bloomed and broken, dripping great splashes of red juice over the stone steps. They sell them by the pint, measuring out in scoopfuls, their coral beads and gold ear-rings dangling, and their patter dripping and popping and spilling in flow, like the bilberries, and its "Bless you, and cross me hand with silver now and I'll tell you a fortune"—and isn't it

HERE'S ENGLAND

bound to be an interesting fortune? For are not my palms stained purple patches—even before you begin?

The hurt pickers (in the South) use a comb and scratch the berries out; they get little bits and leaves among the berries, but there is such a swim of juice when cooked that the leaves float off, so it is little matter. The hand pickers slide brown fingers under, and pick with a scrabbling shake, and some pick delicately each berry separately, but it is slow work, and you can't get more than a pint or so in an hour. In the dales we had boiled puddings of the berries, crisp white crust and then, when cut, a gush of luscious purple berries and juice and crushed brown sugar; or we made tarts served with thick yellow cream, or in the South stewed the hurts in rough brown oven dishes, the rougher by contrast with a virginal white glass dish of junket. They are difficult fruit to pack for travel, but they bottle well, and a set of purple bottles, heather-packed into an osier crate, are a real country present. You seldom get the berries in town. One firm sells bottles of the juice "As Supplied to His Majesty the King of Norway." ("Well, well," as the gypsy said: "Now Heaven help him! and would the gentleman be needing anything more?")

Besides gypsies, whole villages make parties and go off picking for the day; such a party I found one noon. I'd passed a sun-warmed hollow full of the finest bilberries, and filled my billie-can, to eat as I went along, and then scrambling over a low dyke, I saw ahead of me the bilberry pickers. A plump brown baby had been laid asleep under the wall, and a shaggy old sheep-dog got up and stood defensively (wagging a friendly explanatory tail) as I smiled and passed on, and then, just beyond, was the dearest little old Welsh lady I have ever seen. She can't have been much over five feet tall, her skirts were tucked high over neat little ankles and strong little black shoes, the decent black gown of her was

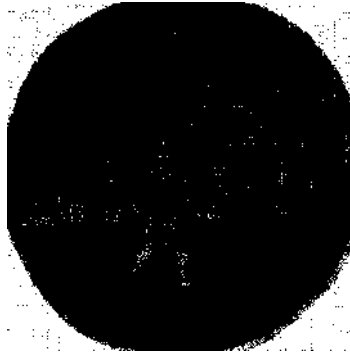
ON THE MOORS

green and purple with the sun and rain of the hills, her bleached hessian top-apron was over a linen apron, white as snow, and she wore the frilled white cap of the old people close over black hair, hair that would still try to crinkle a little above her brown neck; her little plaid shawl was pinned down neatly, her twinkly black eyes were set in a bird's-nest of wrinkles, and she was picking bilberries for dear life.

"Hoo-ee-Bach," I called softly: "Let me give you a leg over here, there are the best lot ever."—She nipped over the wall like a blackbird and I emptied my gathering into her little tin pail—it half filled it. She looked at me, and her eyes twinkled like wet berries through the rift of brown. "Dyn bach! child, do not tell the others! their legs are younger than mine—and—and—they thought I was ower old to come!"

"O, mamyn fach!" We looked into each others eyes, and how we laughed, and loved each other on that instant! It's fifteen or more years ago and you must long ago have curled up like a little brown leaf and be sleeping for ever now, but still we share our joke, and still I hear you chuckling among the bilberries.

NOVEMBER

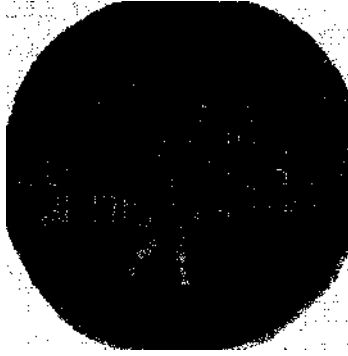


AUTUMN

*Hyt fell thus by fortune, the fairest of the yere,
Was past to the point of the pale wintur;
Heruest, with the heite & the high sun,
Was comyn into colde with a course low;
Trees, thurgh tempestes, tynde, hade there leues;
And briddes abatid of hor bren songe;
The wynde of the west wackenet aboue,
Blowyng full bremlly o the brode ythes;
The clere aire ouercast with cloudys full thicke,
With mystes full merke mygnet with showres;
fflodes were felle thurgh fallyng of rayne,
And wintur vy wacknet with his wete aire.*

(Battle of Troy: Early English Verse)

NOVEMBER

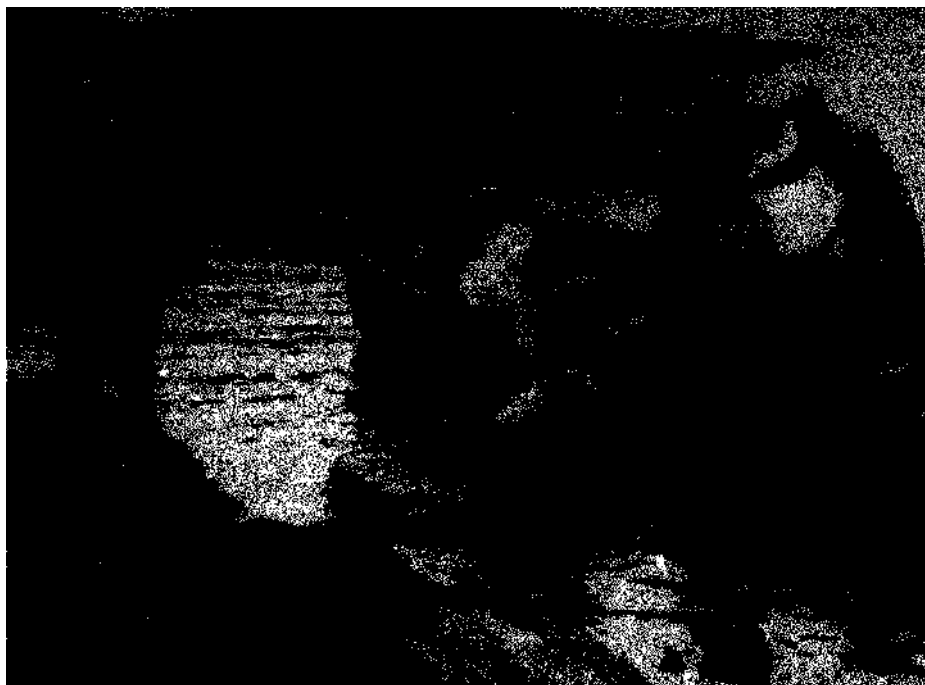


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THE WESTERN ISLANDS



Landing sheep to graze the small islands.

WE have several thousands of Islands. Actually the Gaelic names for some groups are "The Stars," "The Milky Way," "Sheep Flocks," or "The Broken Lands." Altogether there are about 600 miles of islands. The larger islands, Islay and Hebridean groups are fairly well known: many others are not. An island is above all things individual, so choose according to your interests.

Iona, St. Columba's Isle, belongs to dreamers. White and grey-green in a blue sea. They say the animals there have learned to talk to humans, they say the white horse who carried the milk pails for the monastery pressed his old head tight against Columba's breast and cried because the saint was going away from that peaceful land. There the reeds and grasses sing to the wind the chants

HERE'S ENGLAND

the monks taught **them** long ago—there **are** many songs heard on the islands.

Further West, on Achill, I have heard Seal choruses shouted on the sandy beach, and caught and played with a wet, furry baby seal. Splattering across the shallows from the kelpie beaches the women sit sideways on the tail end of their donkeys, with their bare heels hammering against the donkey's sides; but, oh! Englishmen, beware the Irish mile! "How far is it to Ballyroony?" I ask. "Shure! how far would you be wanting it to be?" they reply—and then they fit the distance into the miles so's to give you a pleasant answer! A lovely people! I've recollections of a camp of eight of us on a remote island out there. Being hard up the easiest provisions we could get were lobsters and tea! Lobsters direct from the pots, fourpence and sixpence each; so we walked all day, swam in the evening, had a lobster a-piece for supper and slept like babies! But when an elderly intellectual friend joined us I button-holed our darling Irish forrager: "Sheila now, you *must* take the boat and get some proper things from the stores, if you feed that woman on lobsters and tea at 9 p.m. she'll curl up and die on you!" "Shure, and why? What harm is there in a lobster? Shure there's a lot of miscellaneous eating on a lobster! Shure with a lobster and a good strong cup of tea inside you, you'll take no harm till morning!" Well—by the grace of St. Patrick—she didn't.

If you enjoy boats you can be taken over the water to the northern islands. I myself have made Innish Boffin to Islay in one day's sail, and such a memory of blue-green seas and racing cloud-shadows white foam and thrumming sail will live with me when I am very old. The western Irish boats are black full-bosomed Coroughs, that breast the billows like corks. The Hebrides are well known, and there are good

THE WESTERN ISLANDS

hotels, and their little islands are wonderfully friendly. Stornoway is still an island of the gulls; they simply own the place. They greet you in the harbour, hold Parliament in the fields, and froth over the herring yards. As the boats come in they comment upon the catch, and bring them to their landing; and on the turn of the tide they hoot and jeer them out again. In the towns they steal the food from the Yardie hens, and when yourself goes in and out of the house, a big gull perched on the ridge pole comments upon it! Of course the summer is glorious there, but it is beautiful in the winter. There is a shell beach at the back of the island which is the strangest, loneliest place in all the world on a grey November day. Here the sea gulls who own the island are Lords no longer, but only sad grey sea birds, or a bunch of soft wet feathers in among the seaweed; and the winds sing over them without any sadness, for sorrow is alive, and they . . . are dead.

Perhaps the island is loveliest when the blue peat smoke drifts low in the evening, and the green fog shuts out the sea, and the gulls cry out of the void, and the grey-green grass is covered with pearls and crystals of salt, and sobs under your feet with the wet . . . and there is a heavenly smell of kipper! and a kettle boiling and the white scones, all fluffy and soft, powder your top lip as your teeth sink through to find the creamy, salty butter in the middle! And afterwards, when you've had three cups of tea (with crystallised sugar) and are sitting round the fire, and the scones are expanding inside, and the sheep dogs have come in, and are lying under the dresser, and the little short-legged hens are thoughtfully beginning to edge up for the warmest places on the perches under the table, and the peats are turned and you're knitting, it's then you really find the islands. Lord Leverhulme had bought the island and intended to live at the castle. My hostess of the islands said:

HERE'S ENGLAND

"He's a man of good intentions, but has much to learn." The grandmother was of sterner stuff; she drew herself up and she spake: "That one means well, but he is misguided o' the value of money. I'm thinking that Lord Leverhulme will find that there are many things in Stornaway that money cannot buy."

But there are hundreds of less-known islands. Some have a few sheep. They take them out to the islands in the little boats and dump them there, reckoning so many sheep to an island, then they collect them again. The little things are very tame and quiet. Tammass (him that lives by the quay at Badcoll) took me out with him. In the front of the boat were lobster pots, but the bottom was full of the tiny sheep. Some of the islands are lucky, some unlucky. It means the little people are there, and will not have you overnight. Some have sandy coves, sheltering caves and little safe bathing beaches, and on the mainlands behind are the heather-clad hills.

Don't get the idea of romantic wet discomfort. Simplicity, yes, and the sun and wind, but many a town-dweller has less real solid comfort than your genuine islander. I know a croft where the warm, quiet peat fire burns slowly night and day, the bed, built into the wooden wall that partitions off the stable, is warm and springy of heather tips and spread with the freshest, cleanest, white and brown blankets. The kettle of spring water hangs over the fire, always ready and hot. The burn outside, scampering through a wooden trough, conveniently does the washing-up and cools the butter. The lamp burns trimly of an evening, and Robbie has long ago made himself a "modern" newspaper holder to fit across his chair as he sits reading by the fire. The newspaper, folded, will go into the rack above his head, the bible is on the next shelf, the bottle of sheep dip—and another bottle—are handy. A piece of scythe in a leather loop hangs on the mantel to cut the peats. A



The first Snow.

HERE'S ENGLAND

row of kippered herrings, yellow as gold, wink down from a deer-skin rack over the fireplace, and he will come to the door and give you counsel, help and friendliness. The people of the Islands are kindly folk.

SMOO CAVE

Up in the far North at the Western Point by Cape Wrath is Smoo Cave. To the right of Durness it lies, and few know of it. Fifteen years ago the only way to reach Durness was by Robbie's pony mail cart. Four or six sturdy little shaggy ponies, and a high iron-wheeled cart, and Robbie, and the Cullan Dhu. All those long sixty-odd miles to the Cape. For Lairg where the rail ends is seventy-five miles away.

There was a house half-way—a rough stone Inn, where the ponies were changed, and one stretched cramped legs and sometimes spent the night en route.

The first winter night I went to the Cape the only other passenger was a sailor home on leave, and he and Robbie got out and with the spades that lived permanently under the seat, they dug their way through the snowdrift, while I led the ponies, foot by foot, over the top of the Pass. A courtesy "lead"; for the sturdy little sure-foots knew their way better than I did; it was funny to see the experienced look the leaders gave at the snow and Robbie's assistant, and then either started forward over the shallow drift or settled themselves down placidly to wait till he'd shovelled clear.

They knew that cart and the road to an inch. Robbie told me, two years later, of the entry of the first motor lorry that ultimately replaced him. It took six stages to get to the Cape. It got the first day as far as the burn; "and they had to widen the bridge" (and the ponies took the mail off her) and then they drove as far as the lower pass, and "she would no take the curve," so they had to cut back the road (and the ponies took the mail off her),

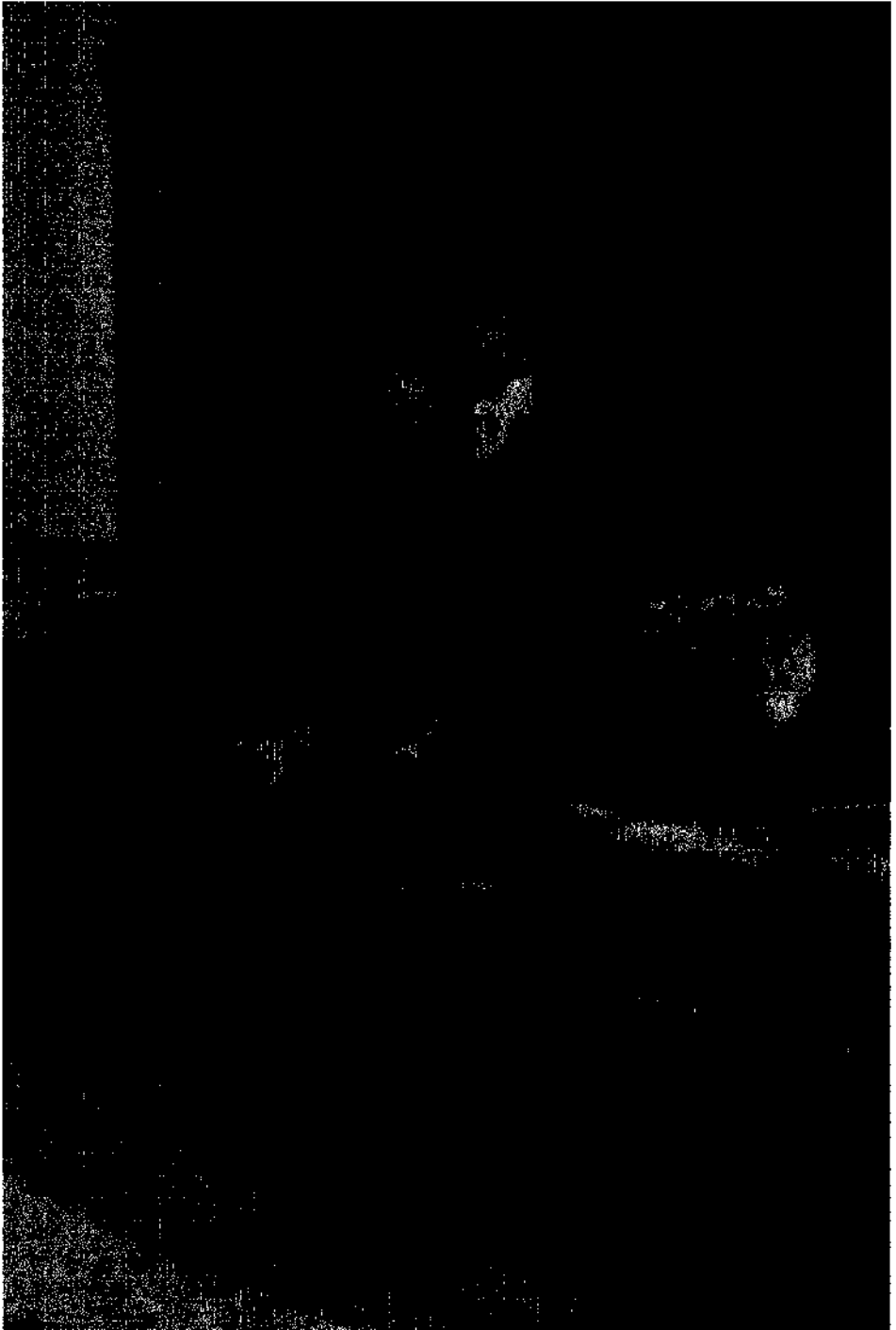
S M O O C A V E

and then she got to the top of the pass, and the radiator boiled dry (and the ponies took the mail off her), and then she came down the other side and went into the Loch—and that was a long job (and the ponies took the mail off her), and so it went on. I wish I could remember all the sequence, but by the new bridge, and the broken wall, and the battered lorry, I knew he spoke true words.

But there was no mail lorry then, only the ponies, and in winter no shooting boxes were open, nor visitors about; I had walked over the mountains alone for two days, finding no sign of human beings, only one empty hut and half a horseshoe. I had lost my way, and had half stripped and waded through a marshy burn earlier that day, before I suddenly tilted down over Ben Stack and reached Laxford Bridge and the roadway over to Durness. My soaked clothes stiffened and dried while waiting for the mail cart. I must have looked a tattered boggart, for my woollen cap had been cut in two and used to pad the wrists of my dripping mittens, a long pair of worsted stockings were pulled on outside my shoes to keep the snow from working down inside; the hem was torn from my already brief tweed skirt, and my oilskin was covered with fish scales off a herring boat, but one was young and warm and care-free in those days, and, happy as a queen, I sat behind the ponies as we rattled down the last mile into Durness.

The hotel had been burnt down, and no one would expect a visitor in such snow, so Mrs. Robbie took me in herself, and well pleased I was to reach her friendly arms and welcome, for I was tired out and I had eaten nothing since the day before except a dried "oatie," the half of which I had thrown to the Loch gulls for the joy of seeing them tilting down from the sky to the snow, white against the blue, blue against the white.

It was dark as Robbie and I and his meeting labourers floundered stiffly over the snow, laden with packages



Winter Sunshine.

along the way to the house, and there was the sudden warmth of fire and hot broth and the big wide blanket that Mrs. Robbie wrapped me into (Robbie had unpacked a parcel of mail and was wrapping up a violin in exactly the same way. I felt as if we were both unexpected and interesting parts of His Majesty's Mail). The warmth of the welcome, and the broth, made the whole world swim out into a mist of red-gold and hot-ache—and hardly awake, Mrs. Robbie put me to bed in the cupboard-bed facing the firelight in the kitchen, and the last sounds I heard were the clumping of footsteps going up the wooden staircase over my head, and the steady monotonous sound of Robbie's brother reading the Bible in the next room.

I woke deliciously, late in the night, as one does after the first sleep of utter weariness has worn off—the peace of a thousand years was around me, the leather deer-skin curtains that hung before the bed screening it off had been looped back, and a wee glimmer of lamp-light left for me, as one would leave a night-light for a child in a strange room. The kitchen was small and warm, and full of quiet sleep. On the low wooden table lay a pool of light under the lamp; underneath, in the dark on the stretcher below, a long row of little short-legged hens crowded close together; every now and then one of them would give a sleepy croon . . . and the others would shuffle a little and set to sleep again. An old sheep, who had been part of the furniture when I came in, had been turned out into the passage, and I could hear her breathing under the door. The old sheep-dog got up slowly from under the dresser against the wall and walked quietly to the fireplace. Feeling my open eyes he turned and came across and stood a moment by my bed and dropped a friendly cool nose into my hand, lying open on the bed; he sighed reassuringly, gave a contented look around to note that all was well

HERE ' S E N G L A N D

and quiet and then walked back to bed again; around and around and then a flop and a long sign . . .

He woke at intervals all through the night, just to do this quiet round; he walked to the fireplace, across to the door to listen to the old sheep, the friendly pause by my bed to see if I was sleeping, and the contented return to his own.

Once a tiny scratchy sound came from a corner of the cupboard—a wee mouse; he lifted his head and looked at it reproachfully, then at me, as who should call witness that the door was *shut*—he could not be expected to do "that cat's work"—the mouse went, and all was quiet again. And all night long, upon the hearth, the soft trail of smoke rose up from the peats, slowly and steadily, weaving the endless soft told story of peace—that is a thousand years old.

Next day I went to find the cave—follow the river, but do not follow it too far—for it goes down into the earth and below in the lashing wet dark and cold lies Smoo Cave.

It's just a cave (what did you expect to find?) Outside on the ledges broken drift-wood lies splintered, and after a storm—dead dog fish lie strewn about.

There is a deep lake inside, and the weed hangs limp and clammy and dark, great heavy masses of weed—anything might be concealed in that cave, any boats have hidden, a queer dangerous place in the dark of a winter's evening with the rising tide—my feet slipped on the treacherous weed, and I flung my arms upwards, clutching against the rock, my hands sank wrist-deep under the green slimy weed, and my fingers unexpectedly closed around a thick strong iron mooring ring. It was driven into the rock, it was old, disused and rusted, and it hung now completely hidden by the dripping weed—but—the staple of the ring bolt had been nearly worn through.

MAKING A FISHING ROD

AND that ye shall make your rod carefully I shall tell you how you shall cut between Michaelmas and Candlemas a fair staff over 6 ft. long (or more as ye list) of willow or aspen, and bake him in an oven (and when ye bake him set him even as straight as ye can make him) and then let him cool and dry four weeks or more, then take and bind him fast with a good cord on to a form or to a square tree, and then take a wire that is long and sharp at one end, and heat the sharp end in a fire till it be hot, and pierce the staff through with it to bring out the pith from first one end and then the other. And then take a bird spit and bind the rod to it, and thin it till it be as thin as a taper of wax and then overbind him and let it dry in the smoke house or along a house roof till it be dry.

And the same season take a white hazel wand and strip him and insert him in the hollow of the first wand, and then take a fair shoot of black-thorn and cut it and fit it into the other end of the rod and bind all together. And take a hot taper of wax and bind and wax the staff well and bind both ends with hoops of iron.

(An Old Book)

W O R M



Digging for worm

A little-known Industry

A LETTER from the West Indies, where the white-hot sun bleaches the air and the knotted mosquito curtains hang, has reached Mr. Nockings' house at the end of the village.

"It's the end house, set close to the road, and you'll see it through the rain." (And out in the West Indies someone else is seeing Mr. Nockings' house and wooden gate reflected in the green and grey pond by Mr. Nockings' door, and seeing his string of white and brown ducks wetly splattering across the puddled road).

The grey skies hang low over the wild, grey sea and the rain is scudding across the marshes. I'd been told "All folks in this district gets the worm sometimes, but if you want to know about worm you'd best see Mr. Nockings, because it's his calling."

"Yes," says Mr. Nockings, thoughtfully spiking sodden brown corks on to the prongs of his fork, and tying it along the crossbar of his bicycle: "Yes, I heard from the Captain this morning; he's using gar fish for bait out there, he tells me; we get gar fish here, sometimes, but the size out there is different, so he gives me to understand."

"When will be he coming back, Mr. Nockings?"

"He should be here in about two months now, maybe three, it depends. I don't know for certain, but one thing I *do* know," says Mr. Nockings, preparing to mount, "one thing I *do* know, I'll be seeing him as soon as he *do* come back."

I'd a hurried vision of a ship's gangway and a sun-burnt stranger walking up Piccadilly; four years is a long time. But the present vision was urgent, for Mr. Nockings was already hopping behind his bicycle (like a heron in waders). "But how shall I find you on the mud for the worms?"

"Go down to the quay," said Mr. Nockings, standing on one leg, "go down to the *end* of the quay and get out on to the spit and bear to the left a bit, till you see a bit of a bridge, and then I'll be out on the flats. There'll maybe a few of us down there, but I'll keep a watch out for you; you can follow my tracks in the mud."

"But how shall I tell your tracks among all of the others?" I asked.

"I'll trail my fork a bit." Mr. Nockings was hopping again. "You'll find me all right"—and that reliable iron bike spizzled off slowly down the wet road.

Years ago I'd found these lost wet lands by the sea. I'd come drifting along the foreshore, set on a winter's walk all around the East Coast, till the Wash drove me inland.

It was late autumn, and the crawling sea mist had come in with the tide. Two hours before I had mounted

up on to a wide dyke wall that stretched on ahead along the flat grey coast.

Inland, to my left, were grey, wet floods, and beyond them wet, grey houses sloped and tilted to the wet, grey marsh.

They used to put stones under the corners of the houses to prop them up and stop them from sliding right into the mud in those days; but now a winding asphalt road shines wetly blue, reflecting the grey tilting house fronts as in a black mirror. Below each small square of lighted window, in the dusk, the drowned reflections lie in a straggling silver line across the wet.

So, far down the wet road out on to the spit, we followed Mr. Nockings to the worm workings, and duly followed the trail of his fork (cork spike protectors now removed) ("You can't be too careful," said Mr. Nockings. "Children, dogs, they come running out, and then . . .") and found him on the job.

"Not mud, black sand. They'll not live in mud, and it's black sand that gets the best cockles too; at least some *likes* them best, anyway.

They go about two feet down, in cold weather. Now stop, this is a likely place."

It looked exactly the same as all the other miles of mud (pardon—black sand) to me, but he showed me where the small worm castings lay thick, or curious breeding bags in the shallow pools showed bubbily.

"Only about four hundred wanted this time." He was digging away as he spoke. "It's only a small order, but it doesn't do not to get 'em. They can't do without them at the other end."

One, two, or three to a forkful, sometimes five forkfuls and no worm. "It all depends on the weather," he told me. "Damaged worms, No. One broke worm" (he showed me an unpleasant sight) "will kill all the others. Alive they must be."

HERE'S ENGLAND

They averaged four inches; by stretching, seven; red and yellow, and seemingly full of juice. They were thrown on to a square of sacking and accumulated, limply squirming.

"They move about more active nearer the surface, right on the surface they lie sometimes," he said: "but the cold drives them down.

"They keeps," said Mr. Nockings, numbering up two hundred with an experienced eye: "they keeps fairly well in cold weather; don't let the rats get to them.

"These few worms are going to Lowestoft on the eight o'clock bus and must be dressed first.

"All over the place I send worms, and some bait; different sorts."

"In barrels?"

"Yes, that would be what you smelt. All such sort of stuff they use for bait. But these worms I sends all over the place; and they can rely on me."

Yes, we were rightly told: "Lots get worms, but with Mr. Nockings it's his calling."

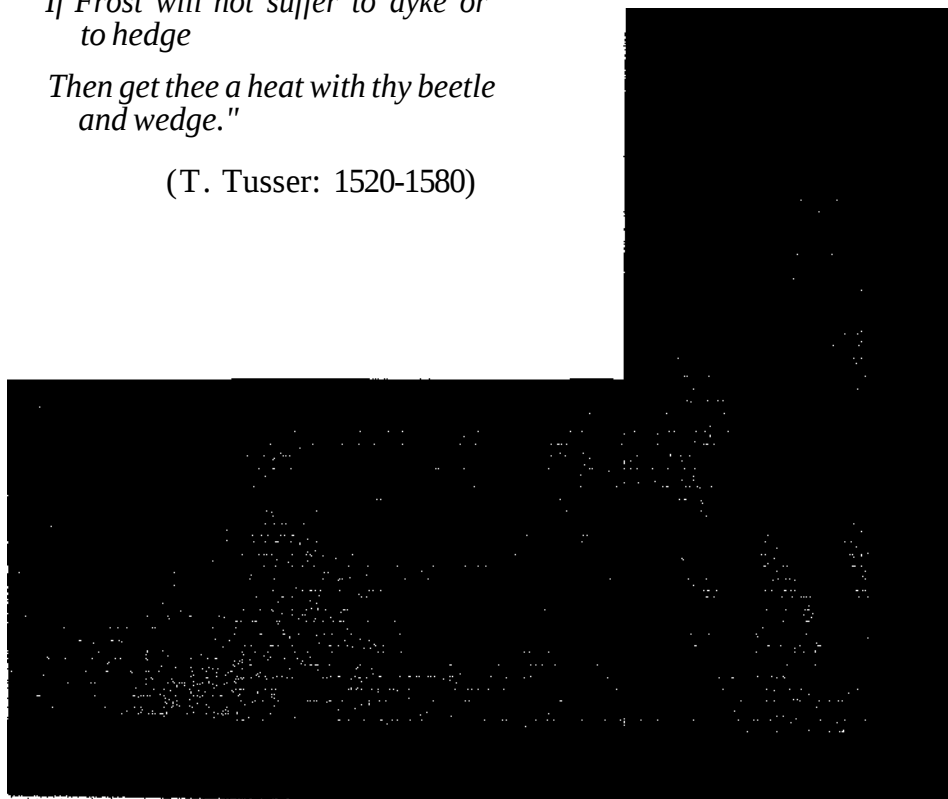
DECEMBER

BEETLE AND WEDGE

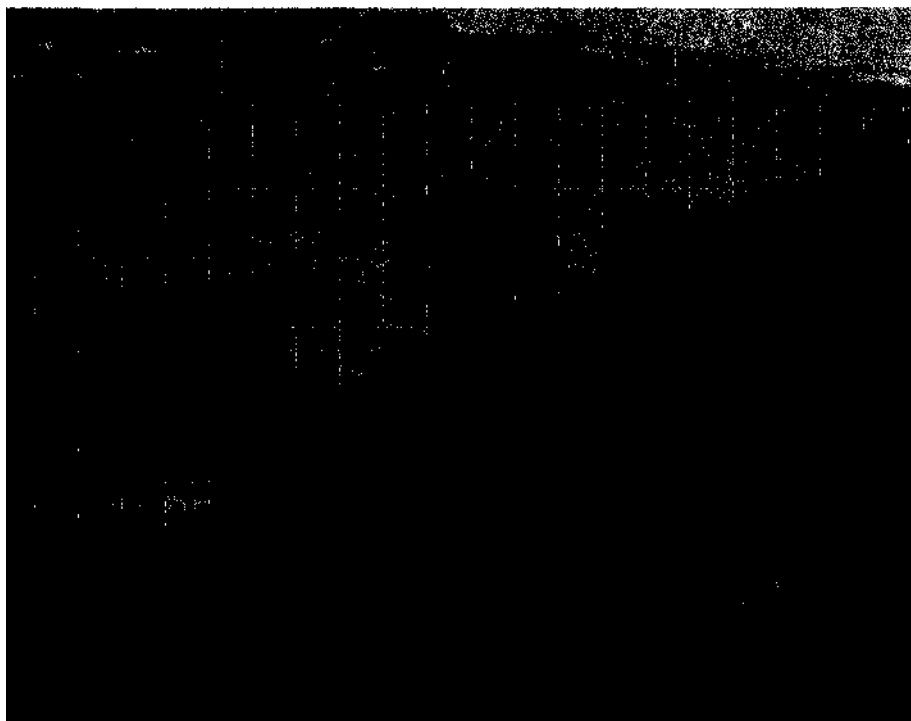
*"If Frost will not suffer to dyke or
to hedge*

*Then get thee a heat with thy beetle
and wedge."*

(T. Tusser: 1520-1580)



S N O W



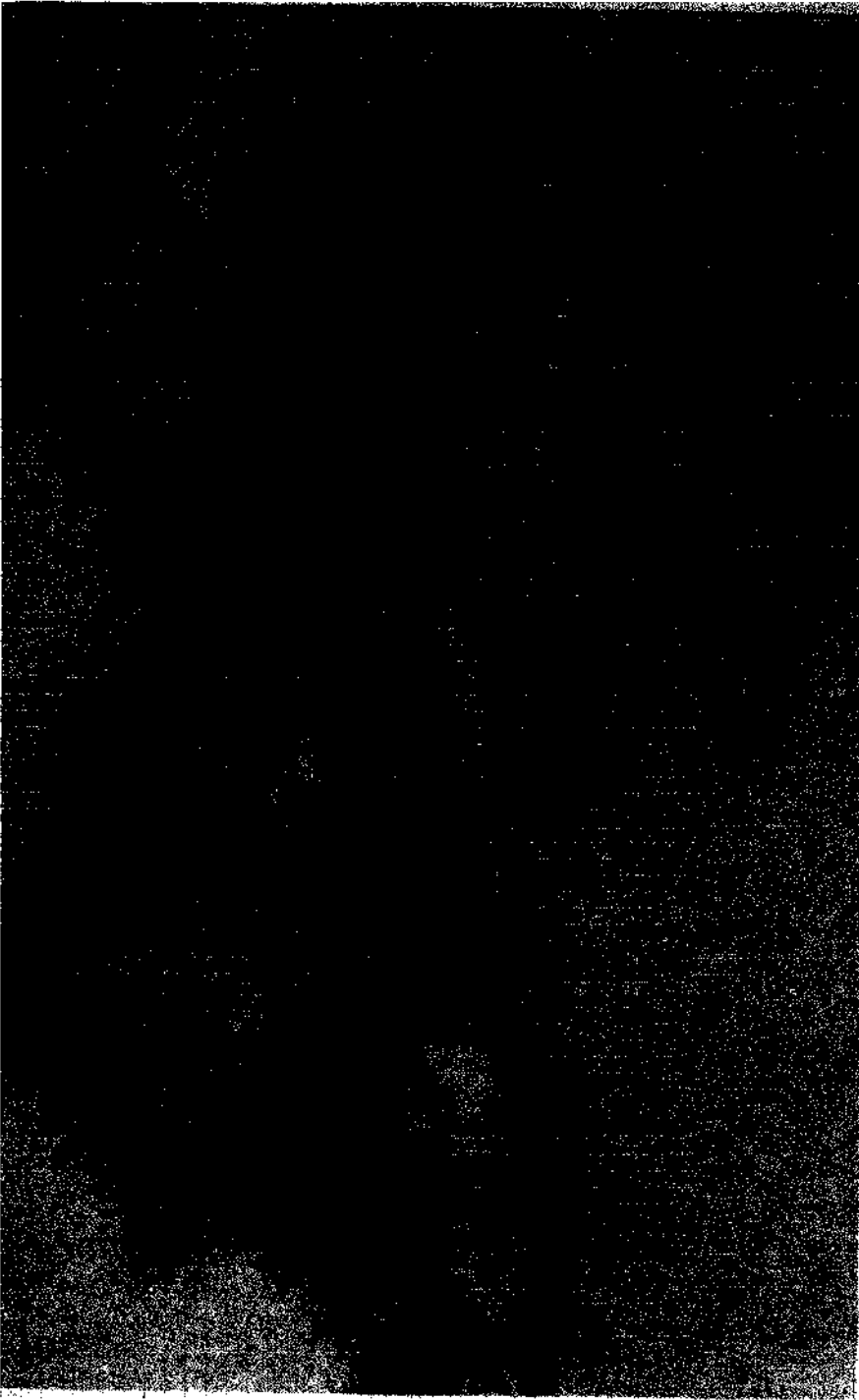
A stone cattle trough, by the roadside in the cold North.

THE silence woke me, the stream had stopped, the fir tree that sighs under my window was gone. For weeks the little stream had been piping like thin glass through the icy frost. Now it was still and the air was thick and opaque, as if the tight sheet of frost had slackened and one had laid a grey cover over the iron earth. For days, as we met on the roads, we'd twist our heads and look up at the sky and say: "It's going to come," "We're in for a heavy fall of snow," or "It will be warmer when it's down." The line of the hills against the sky has been gone for weeks, one can only see the solid grey white mist, (but one can feel the hills are there, a weight over our heads) and a white porcelain

HERE ' S E N G L A N D

sun, thin and cold as a plate, has slid down; one can almost feel the boughs scratching it as it goes down behind the bare orchard. In frost our noses are blue and red, and our voices high and clear. On the hard roads as we trot around, children are spanked for making slides where they'd no business to, and the blacksmith is busy, sharpening the horses. But yesterday all was grey and sullen and heavy in the little street, and the damp, dark, cold sat on us like a wet blanket. I came in and made gingerbread, the kitchen fire was red, glowing, warm and cheery. A yellow bowl of bread was rising in the fender, a cricket chirping, hidden in the old wall. Phyllis had cycled into Shrewsbury (better go before the snow comes). The golden-eyed brasses and pans winked back at me in the firelight. My father came out from his study and sat again in the rocking chair, speculating on our new electricity scheme (we'd "been measured for it," as the village said). The cat sat blinking yellow-eyed at the yellow bowl; when she washed the hairs stuck together in little patches of wet silk (that shows it's going to snow).

The gingerbread smelt heavenly, all spicy, hot and brown, with waxy sticky wells of spice where I'd dropped in the ginger and the cloves ... The windows showed black in the candle light as we went to bed. Oh! it's good to be warm in the snow . . . The icicle at the end of the roof has begun to drip now, ping! ping! we banked up the boiler fire to keep the frost out of the pipes, so the chimney will be warm, and the icicle will drip all night into the tin pail we leave there. (Extra rain water's always handy; in spring I hear the birds come there and splash, in the morning). It is soft, mushy, floating ice to-day, and the birds, all fluffed out in the cold, and subdued, are tucked in under the ivy. The hollyhocks will stand like white campaniles, silent in the garden; the lead Babes, so valiantly supporting



[PHOTO-CROSSLEY]

[PHOTO-CROSSLEY]

S N O W

the fountain-top, will become a grotesque snow dragon, with long icicle tail dripping over the rim . . . a different dragon comes every year . . . The old-fashioned stone urns will be piled full of snow, with spinings of icicles round the rims . . . the dripping has ceased now, the roof must be covered round and white and smooth. Soon the thick snow will fall off with soft muffled thuds, snow falling upon snow, heavy, soft and deep; a sound felt rather than heard, like voices remembered through sleep . . . and afterwards, you find it's taken four tiles off the roof, and a map of Australia comes out on the spare room ceiling . . .

The canal boats will be white, floating on black, with red tails by their cabin stoves; the lime kilns on the hill-side will glow red with a blue-green nimbus, the quarries gape black.

It must be thick snow by now, it's fallen so steadily. I know just how the mountains will look in the dark above, smooth and white, with the streams drawn black as ink, spreading like tree branches, up and up. I remember the first time as a child I slept out in the snow, looking back it seems strange, that trustfulness in the safe out-of-doors. It wasn't carelessness, nor ignorance, for in times of trouble my bumps—and bruises—of self-preservation proved very well developed, but so much then was unconscious. All day I had walked slowly along, seeing only the level grey sky and white snow, my mind a perfectly happy blank, soaking in only the change in the light on the snow, the shape of the ice, more consciously interested in the tracks of a deer than my own worsted-covered feet. One was as unconscious of movement as of breathing: one *was* the snow. Then suddenly I was sleepy, my eyes had seen what they wanted to, the unconscious study was ended, my body was equally as tired as my brain; a child wanted to go to sleep. Then I remembered a picture of

people who had to fight sleep, and keep awake lest they fall in the snow and "perish miserably," and, puzzled, across it came Buck, dear dog Buck of the sun-kissed Santa Clara valley. They had slept warm in the snow; was it right for humans? or dogs? why not both? I must have walked another mile, gently puzzling; then, it was no conscious selection, but in a sheltered quiet hollow I remember my woolly paws scooping down and down through the snow to where the blackened stems showed crushed and dark, and the sleepy pulling off of heavy shoes from under worsted stockings, methodically packing tingling feet into a rucksack, smiling sleepily at some half-remembered tale shaken by my father out of his brown sack. I remember methodically lining my bed with my big oilskin, the sticky smell of the sleeves folded well up over my head, and then—the heavenly moment when one stretched out level and straight, and the strings of one's back slipped one by one off their hooks, and one stirred, giving luxuriously to the yielding snow, and dropped down and down into sleep. The last conscious thought was "Well . . . I'll know . . . about waking . . . in the morning."

I wonder if the moors have missed my childish trails, if they, too, like myself, wonder where the long-legged child has gone to . . .

The snow plough will be out to-morrow, most of the small villages in the hills, and on the fens, keep a snow-plough at their top end. I remember one snow we lost ours: Sammy had borrowed it to bring in his bracken, when he broke his sledge runner (bracken is good warm bedding for animals—we use a lot in the winter). Rowley, he had the plough by his long barn, and feeling public-spirited (besides, he had a pig he wanted to get to market, but the public spirit was on top) he went to get the plough, and took a spade and dug his way to it, and sent the boy for the horse, and when all was ready



IPHOTO-"OVERSEAS"]

Greetings.

Christmas

the plough wasn't there (he got to thinking more of **the** pig than the public spirit then) and it took him hours to reach Sam, and by then the snow had given Sam a guilty conscience, and he was off looking for the plough, thinking he had left it at the back of the meeting house, and nobody could remember where they'd seen it, or rather, they all thought it was in different places, and you've no idea all the things that everybody did find that they weren't looking for, but the plough never turned up till the snow was gone, and by then the place looked like a rabbit warren in spring . . .

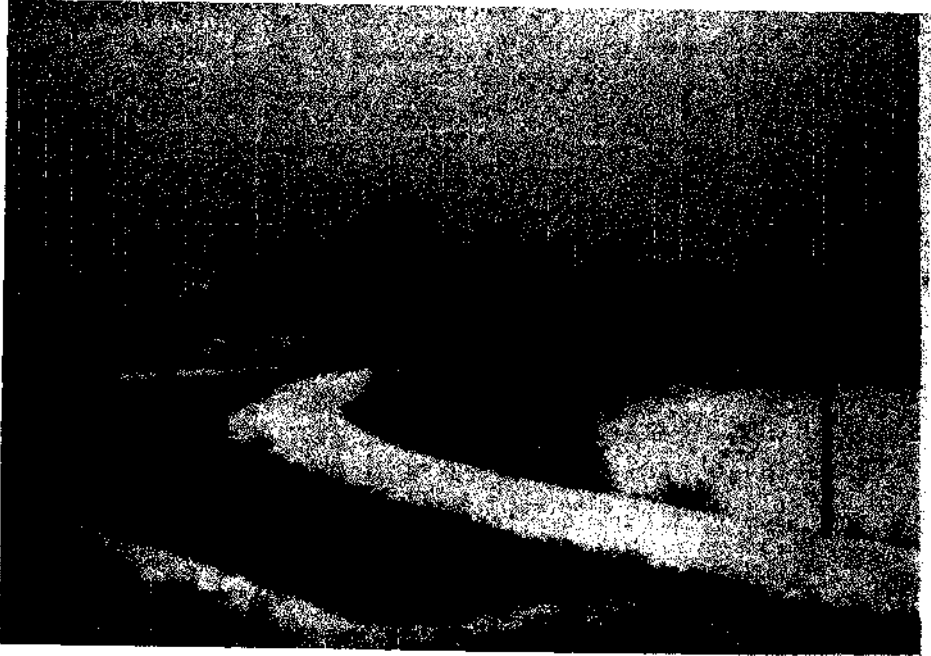
It's four o'clock now, and still dark night, but it smells towards morning the dawn wind is coming up and making the snow sigh against the panes. I'm so sleepy. To-morrow the roads will be thick and the pass stopped, and we shan't get post till lunch-time. To-morrow . . . at seven I shall hear the old farm horses fidgetting and stamping in their stables, no work for them to-day, and the cows will mooe and grumble. To-morrow old Gailor will have a fire in the little stable room, and all the harness hung on a pin, and pots of grease, and dubbin, and rags about, and the cat will come up and go to sleep on his folded coat and purr . . . and purr . . .

I'm glad I made the gingerbread . . .

To-morrow the smoke will rise straight and look cut off in the air . . . and Tom will decarbonise the car . . . maybe I'll help grind valves. To-morrow the mill will be stopped, and if the snow holds Mrs. Jones may get my knitted jumper finished for me at last . . . to-morrow the trains will be late and the ones coming up from the South will be black-backed, and the ones from the North will be white . . . To-morrow when I force open the French window, the snow will push up into a little wall and spill down the steps, and the balls of snow will roll off over the smooth sloping snow . . .

HERE ' S E N G L A N D

and purr, and sigh, like warm snow . . . and . . . I must remember . . . to hang out that beef bone for the birds . . . Poor little things . . . in the snow . . . snow . . . snow . . .



In Wales, 1932.

CAROL

Probably Fifteenth Century

*A shepherd upon a hill he sat
He had on his tabard and his hat
His tar-box, his pipe and his flaget
His name was jolly jolly Wat!*

*Ut! Hoy! For he was a good herds boy!
In his pipe he made so much of joy!*

*The shepherd upon a hill was laid
His dog unto his girdle tied
He had not slept but a little braid
When "Gloria in Excelsis" to him was said!
Ut! Hoy! For he was a good herds boy!
In his pipe he made so much of joy!*

*The shepherd upon a hill he stood
Round about him his sheep they yode
He put his hand under his hood
He saw a star as red as blood.
Ut! Hoy! For he was a good herds boy!
In his pipe he made so much of joy!*

*"Now farewell Mall and also Will,
"And for my love, go ye all stilly
"Till that I come you again untill,
"And Wether; ring thou well thy bell!"
Ut! Hoy! He was a good herds boy!
In his pipe he made so much of joy!*

*"Now must I go where Christ is born
"I come again, to-morrow morn,
"Dog keep well my sheep from the corn!
"And warn well Warrock when I blow my horn."
Ut! Hoy! For he was a good herds boy!
In his pipe he made so much of joy.*

*Wat to Bethleem came he was
He sweat! he had gone fast a pace!
He found Jesus in a simple place
Between an ox and an ass.
Ut! Hoy! For he was a good herds boy,
In his pipe he made so much of joy.*

HERE'S ENGLAND

*"Babe; I give to you my pipe,
"My cloke, my tar-box and my scrips
"Home to my fellows now will I skip,
"And look also unto my sheep!"
 Ut! Hoy! For he was a good herds boy.
 In his pipe he made so much of joy.*

*"Now farewell my own Herdsman Wat!"
"Yea! God's Lady! even so am I hight!
"Lull well Jesus in thy lap
"And farewell Joseph with thy round cap"
 Ut! Hoy! For he was a good herds hoy.
 In his pipe he made so much of joy.*

*"Now may I well both hop and sing
"For I have been at Jesus' bearing
"Home to my fellows now will I fling
"Christ of Heaven! to His bliss us bring"
 Ut! Hoy! For he was a good herds boy
 In his pipe he made so much of joy.*

HERE'S
ENGLAND
DOROTHY
HAY

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THE
PORT
THIS
SHOW
PLACE
DISTRICTS
MENTIONED
IN
THIS BOOK

H 33H

ORKNEY
ISLANDS

SHETLAND
ISLANDS

