

III - HOLY WELLS AND DRUID RELICS.

Fresh from the quaint old houses, the delightfully irregular streets, and the fragrant terrace-gardens of Looe, we found ourselves, on entering Liskeard, suddenly introduced to that "abomination of desolation," a large agricultural country town. Modern square houses, barren of all outer ornament; wide, dusty, deserted streets; misanthropical-looking shopkeepers, clad in rusty black, standing at their doors to gaze on the solitude around them--greeted our eyes on all sides. Such samples of the population as we accidentally encountered were not promising. We were unlucky enough to remark, in the course of two streets, a nonagenarian old woman with a false nose, and an idiot shaking with the palsy.

But harder trials were in reserve for us. We missed the best of the many inns at Liskeard, and went to the very worst. What a place was our house of public entertainment for a great sinner to repent in, or for a melancholy recluse to retreat to! Not a human being appeared in the street where this tavern of despair frowned amid congenial desolation. Nobody welcomed us at the door--the sign creaked dolefully, as the wind swung it on its rusty hinges. We walked in, and discovered a low-spirited little man sitting at an empty "bar," and hiding himself, as it were, from all mortal inspection behind the full sheet of a dirty provincial newspaper. Doleful was our petition to this secluded publican for shelter and food; and doubly doleful was his answer to our appeal. Beds he believed he had--food there was none in the house, saving a piece of corned beef, which the family had dined on, and which he proposed that we should partake of before it got quite cold. Having said thus much, he suddenly retired behind his newspaper, and spoke no word more.

In a few minutes the landlady appeared, looking very thin and care-worn, and clad in mourning weeds. She smiled sadly upon us; and desired to know how we liked corned beef? We acknowledged a preference for fresh meat, especially in large market towns like Liskeard, where butchers' shops abounded. The landlady was willing to see what she could get; and in the meantime, begged to be allowed to show us into a private room. She succeeded in incarcerating us in the most thoroughly private room that could be found out of a model prison. It was situated far away at the back of the house, and looked out upon a very small yard entirely circumscribed by empty stables. The one little window was shut down tight, and we were desired not to open it, for fear of a smell from these stables. The ornaments of the place consisted of hymn-books, spelling-books, and a china statue of

Napoleon in a light green waistcoat and a sky-blue coat. There was not even a fly in the room to intrude on us in our privacy; there were no cocks and hens in the yard to cackle on us in our privacy; nobody walked past the outer passage, or made any noise in any part of the house, to startle us in our privacy; and a steady rain was falling propitiously to keep us in our privacy. We dined in our retired situation on some rugged lumps of broiled flesh, which the landlady called chops, and the servant steaks. We broke out of prison after dinner, and roamed the streets. We returned to solitary confinement in the evening, and were instantly conducted to another cell.

This second private apartment appeared to be about forty feet long; six immense wooden tables, painted of a ghastly yellow colour, were ranged down it side by side. Nothing was placed on any of them--they looked like dissecting-tables waiting for "subjects." There was yet another and a seventh table--a round one, half lost in a corner, to which we retreated for refuge--it was covered with crape and bombazine, half made up into mourning garments proper to the first and intensest stage of grief. The servant brought us one small candle to cheer the scene; and desired to be informed whether we wanted two sheets apiece to our beds, or whether we could do with a sheet at top and a blanket at bottom, as other people did? This question cowed us at once into gloomy submission to our fate. We just hinted that we had contracted bad habits of sleeping between two sheets, and left the rest to chance; reckless how we slept, or where we slept, whether we passed the night on the top of one of the six dissecting-tables, or with a blanket at bottom, as other people passed it. Soon the servant returned to tell us that we had got our two sheets each, and to send us to bed--snatching up the landlady's mourning garments, while she spoke, with a scared, suspicious look, as if she thought that the next outrageous luxury we should require would be a nightgown apiece of crape and bombazine.

Reflecting on our lamentable situation the last thing at night, we derived some consolation from remembering that we should leave our quarters early the next morning. It was not Liskeard that we had come to see, but the country around Liskeard--the famous curiosities of Nature and Art that are to be found some six or eight miles away from the town. Accordingly, we were astir betimes on the morrow. The sky was fair; the breeze was exhilarating. Once past the doleful doorway of the inn, we found ourselves departing under the fairest auspices for a pilgrimage to the ruins of St. Cleer's Well, and to the granite piles and Druid remains, now entitled the "Cheese-Wring" and "Hurler" rocks.

On leaving the town, our way lay to the northward, up rising ground. For the first two miles, the scenery differed little from what we had already

beheld in Cornwall. The lanes were still sunk down between high banks, like dry ditches; all varieties of ferns grew in exquisite beauty and luxuriance on either side of us; the trees were small in size, and thickly clothed with leaves; and the views were generally narrowed to a few well-cultivated fields, with sturdy little granite-built cottages now and then rising beyond. It was only when we had reached what must have been a considerable elevation, that any change appeared in the face of the country. Five minutes more of walking, and a single turn in the road, brought us suddenly to the limits of trees, meadows, and cottages; and displayed before us, with almost startling abruptness, the magnificent prospect of a Cornish Moor.

The expanse of open plain that we now beheld stretched away uninterruptedly on the right hand, as far as the distant hills. Towards the left, the view was broken and varied by some rough stone walls, a narrow road, and a dip in the earth beyond. Wherever we looked, far or near, we saw masses of granite of all shapes and sizes, heaped irregularly on the ground among dark clusters of heath. An old furze-cutter was the only human figure that appeared on the desolate scene. Approaching him to ask our way to St. Cleer's Well--no signs of which could be discerned on the wilderness before us--we found the old fellow, though he was eighty years of age, working away with all the vigour of youth. On this wild moor he had lived and laboured from childhood; and he began to talk proudly of its great length and breadth, and of the wonderful sights that were to be seen on different parts of it, the moment we addressed him. He described to us, in his own homely forcible way, the awful storms that he had beheld, the fearful rattling and roaring of thunder over the great unsheltered plain before us--the hail and sleet driven so fiercely before the hurricane, that a man was half-blinded if he turned his face towards it for a moment--the forked lightning shooting from pitch-dark clouds, leaping and running fearfully over the level ground, blackening, splitting, tearing from their places the stoutest rocks on the moor. Three masses of granite lay heaped together near the spot where we had halted--the furze-cutter pointed to them with his bill-hook, and told us that what we now looked on was once one great rock, which he had seen riven in an instant by the lightning into the fragmentary form that it now presented. If we mounted the highest of these three masses, he declared that we might find out our own way to St. Cleer's Well by merely looking around us. We followed his directions. Towards the east, far away over the magnificent sweep of moorland, and on the slope of the hill that bounded it, appeared the tall chimneys and engine-houses of the Great Caraton Copper Mine--the only objects raised by the hand of man that were to be seen on this part of the view. Towards the west, much nearer at hand, four grey turrets were just visible beyond some rising ground. These turrets belonged to the tower of St. Cleer's Church, and the

Well was close by it.

Taking leave of the furze-cutter, we followed the path at once that led to St. Cleer's. Half an hour's walking brought us to the village, a straggling, picturesque place, hidden in so deep a hollow as to be quite invisible from any distance. All the little cottage-girls whom we met, carrying their jugs and pitchers of water, curtsied and wished us good morning with the prettiest air of bashfulness and good humour imaginable. One of them, a rosy, beautiful child, who proudly informed us that she was six years old, put down her jug at a cottage-gate and ran on before to show us the way, delighted to be singled out from her companions for so important an office. We passed the grey walls of the old church, walked down a lane, and soon came in sight of the Well, the position of which was marked by a ruined Oratory, situated on some open ground close at the side of the public pathway.

St. Cleer, or--as the name is generally spelt out of Cornwall--St. Clare, the patron saint of the Well, was born in Italy, in the twelfth century--and born to a fair heritage of this world's honours and this world's possessions. But she voluntarily abandoned, at an early age, all that was alluring in the earthly career awaiting her, to devote herself entirely to the interests of her religion and the service of Heaven. She was the first woman who sat at the feet of St. Francis as his disciple, who humbly practised the self-mortification, and resolutely performed the vow of perpetual poverty, which her preceptor's harshest doctrines imposed on his followers. She soon became Abbess of the Benedictine Nuns with whom she was associated by the saint; and afterwards founded an order of her own--the order of "Poor Clares." The fame of her piety and humility, of her devotion to the cause of the sick, the afflicted, and the poor, spread far and wide. The most illustrious of the ecclesiastics of her time attended at her convent as at a holy shrine. Pope Innocent the Fourth visited her, as a testimony of his respect for her virtues; and paid homage to her memory when her blameless existence had closed, by making one among the mourners who followed her to the grave. Her name had been derived from the Latin word that signifies purity; and from first to last, her life had kept the promise of her name.

Poor St. Clare! If she could look back, with the thoughts and interests of the days of her mortality, to the world that she has quitted for ever, how sadly would she now contemplate the Holy Well which was once hallowed in her name and for her sake! But one arched wall, thickly overgrown with ivy, still remains erect in the place that the old Oratory occupied. Fragments of its roof, its cornices, and the mouldings of its windows lie scattered on the ground, half hidden by the grasses and ferns twining prettily around them.

A double cross of stone stands, sloping towards the earth, at a little distance off--soon perhaps to share the fate of the prostrate ruins about it. How changed the scene here, since the time when the rural christening procession left the church, to proceed down the quiet pathway to the Holy Well--when children were baptized in the pure spring; and vows were offered up under the roof of the Oratory, and prayers were repeated before the sacred cross! These were the pious usages of a past age; these were the ceremonies of an ancient church, whose innocent and reverent custom it was to connect closer together the beauty of Nature and the beauty of Religion, by such means as the consecration of a spring, or the erection of a roadside cross. There has been something of sacrifice as well as of glory, in the effort by which we, in our time, have freed ourselves from what was superstitious and tyrannical in the faith of the times of old--it has cost us the loss of much of the better part of that faith which was not superstition, and of more which was not tyranny. The spring of St. Clare is nothing to the cottager of our day but a place to draw water from; the village lads now lounge whistling on the fallen stones, once the consecrated arches under which their humble ancestors paused on the pilgrimage, or knelt in prayer. Wherever the eye turns, all around it speaks the melancholy language of desolation and decay--all but the water of the Holy Well. Still the little pool remains the fitting type of its patron saint--pure and tranquil as in the bygone days, when the name of St. Clare was something more than the title to a village legend, and the spring of St. Clare something better than a sight for the passing tourist among the Cornish moors.[1]

We happened to arrive at the well at the period when the villagers were going home to dinner. After the first quarter of an hour, we were left almost alone among the ruins. The only person who approached to speak to us was a poor old woman, bent and tottering with age, who lived in a little cottage hard by. She brought us a glass, thinking we might wish to taste the water of the spring; and presented me with a rose out of her garden. Such small scraps of information as she had gathered together about the well, she repeated to us in low, reverential tones, as if its former religious uses still made it an object of veneration in her eyes. After a time, she too quitted us; and we were then left quite alone by the side of the spring.

It was a bright, sunshiny day; a pure air was abroad; nothing sounded audibly but the singing of birds at some distance, and the rustling of the few leaves that clothed one or two young trees in a neighbouring garden. Unoccupied though I was, the minutes passed away as quickly and as unheeded with me, as with my companion who was busily engaged in sketching. The ruins of the ancient Oratory, viewed amid the pastoral repose of all things around them, began imperceptibly to exert over me that

mysterious power of mingling the impressions of the present with the memories of the past, which all ruins possess. While I sat looking idly into the water of the well, and thinking of the groups that had gathered round it in years long gone by, recollections began to rise vividly on my mind of other ruins that I had seen in other countries, with friends, some scattered, some gone now--of pleasant pilgrimages, in boyish days, along the storied shores of Baiæ, or through the desolate streets of the Dead City under Vesuvius--of happy sketching excursions to the aqueducts on the plains of Rome, or to the temples and villas of Tivoli; during which, I had first learned to appreciate the beauties of Nature under guidance which, in this world, I can never resume; and had seen the lovely prospects of Italian landscape pictured by a hand now powerless in death. Remembrances such as these, of pleasures which remembrance only can recall as they were, made time fly fast for me by the brink of the holy well. I could have sat there all day, and should not have felt, at night, that the day had been ill spent.

But the sunlight began to warn us that noon was long past. We had some distance yet to walk, and many things more to see. Shortly after my friend had completed his sketch, therefore, we reluctantly left St. Clare's Well, and went on our way briskly, up the little valley, and out again on the wide surface of the moor.

It was now our object to steer a course over the wide plain around us, leading directly to the "Cheese-Wring" rocks (so called from their supposed resemblance to a Cornish cheese-press or "wring"). On our road to this curiosity, about a mile and a half from St. Clare's Well, we stopped to look at one of the most perfect and remarkable of the ancient British monuments in Cornwall. It is called Trevethey Stone, and consists of six large upright slabs of granite, overlaid by a seventh, which covers them in the form of a rude, slanting roof. These slabs are so irregular in form as to look quite unhewn. They all vary in size and thickness. The whole structure rises to a height, probably, of fourteen feet; and, standing as it does on elevated ground, in a barren country, with no stones of a similar kind erected near it, presents an appearance of rugged grandeur and aboriginal simplicity, which renders it an impressive, almost a startling object to look on. Antiquaries have discovered that its name signifies The Place of Graves; and have discovered no more. No inscription appears on it; the date of its erection is lost in the darkest of the dark periods of English history.

Our path had been gradually rising all the way from St. Clare's Well; and, when we left Trevethey Stone, we still continued to ascend, proceeding along the tram-way leading to the Caraton Mine. Soon the scene presented another abrupt and extraordinary change. We had been walking hitherto

amid almost invariable silence and solitude; but now, with each succeeding minute, strange, mingled, unintermitting noises began to grow louder and louder around us. We followed a sharp curve in the tram-way, and immediately found ourselves saluted by an entirely new prospect, and surrounded by an utterly bewildering noise. All about us monstrous wheels were turning slowly; machinery was clanking and groaning in the hoarsest discords; invisible waters were pouring onward with a rushing sound; high above our heads, on skeleton platforms, iron chains clattered fast and fiercely over iron pulleys, and huge steam pumps puffed and gasped, and slowly raised and depressed their heavy black beams of wood. Far beneath the embankment on which we stood, men, women, and children were breaking and washing ore in a perfect marsh of copper-coloured mud and copper-coloured water. We had penetrated to the very centre of the noise, the bustle, and the population on the surface of a great mine.

When we walked forward again, we passed through a thick plantation of young firs; and then, the sounds behind us became slowly and solemnly deadened the further we went on. When we had arrived at the extremity of the line of trees, they ceased softly and suddenly. It was like a change in a dream.

We now left the tram-way, and stood again on the moor--on a wilder and lonelier part of it than we had yet beheld. The Cheese-Wring and its adjacent rocks were visible a mile and a half away, on the summit of a steep hill. Wherever we looked, the horizon was bounded by the long, dark, undulating edges of the moor. The ground rose and fell in little hillocks and hollows, tufted with dry grass and furze, and strewn throughout with fragments of granite. The whole plain appeared like the site of an ancient city of palaces, overthrown and crumbled into atoms by an earthquake. Here and there, some cows were feeding; and sometimes a large crow winged his way lazily before us, lessening and lessening slowly in the open distance, until he was lost to sight. No human beings were discernible anywhere; the majestic loneliness and stillness of the scene were almost oppressive both to eye and ear. Above us, immense fleecy masses of brilliant white cloud, wind-driven from the Atlantic, soared up grandly, higher and higher over the bright blue sky. Everywhere, the view had an impressively stern, simple, aboriginal look. Here were tracts of solitary country which had sturdily retained their ancient character through centuries of revolution and change; plains pathless and desolate even now, as when Druid processions passed over them by night to the place of the secret sacrifice, and skin-clad warriors of old Britain halted on them in council, or hurried across them to the fight.

On we went, up and down, in a very zig-zag course, now looking forward

towards the Cheese-Wring from the top of a rock, now losing sight of it altogether in the depths of a hollow. By the time we had advanced about half way over the distance it was necessary for us to walk, we observed, towards the left hand, a wide circle of detached upright rocks. These we knew, from descriptions and engravings, to be the "Hurlers"--so we turned aside at once to look at them from a nearer point of view.

There are two very different histories of these rocks; the antiquarian account of them is straightforward and practical enough, simply asserting that they are the remains of a Druid temple, the whole region about them having been one of the principal stations of the Druids in Cornwall. The popular account of the Hurlers (from which their name is derived) is very different. It is contended, on the part of the people, that once upon a time (nobody knows how long ago), these rocks were Cornish men, who profanely went out (nobody knows from what place), to enjoy the national sport of hurling the ball on one fine "Sabbath morning," and were suddenly turned into pillars of stone, as a judgment on their own wickedness, and a warning to all their companions as well.

Having to choose between the antiquarian hypothesis and the popular legend on the very spot to which both referred, a common susceptibility to the charms of romance at once determined us to pin our faith on the legend. Looking at the Hurlers, therefore, in the peculiar spirit of the story attached to them, as really and truly petrified ball-players, we observed, with great interest, that some of them must have been a little above, and others a little below our own height, in their lifetime; that some must have been very corpulent, and others very thin persons; that one of them, having a protuberance on his head remarkably like a night-cap in stone, was possibly a sluggard as well as a Sabbath-breaker, and might have got out of his bed just in time to "hurl;" that another, with some faint resemblance left of a fat grinning human face, leaned considerably out of the perpendicular, and was, in all probability, a hurler of intemperate habits. At some distance off we remarked a high stone standing entirely by itself, which, in the absence of any positive information on the subject, we presumed to consider as the petrified effigy of a tall man who ran after the ball. In the opposite direction other stones were dotted about irregularly, which we could only imagine to represent certain misguided wretches who had attended as spectators of the sports, and had therefore incurred the same penalty as the hurlers themselves. These humble results of observations taken on the spot, may possibly be useful, as tending to offer some startling facts from ancient history to the next pious layman in the legislature who gets up to propose the next series of Sabbath prohibitions for the benefit of the profane laymen in the nation.

Abandoning any more minute observation of the Hurlers than that already recorded, in order to husband the little time still left to us, we soon shaped our course again in the direction of the Cheese-Wring. We arrived at the base of the hill on which it stands, in a short time and without any difficulty; and beheld above us a perfect chaos of rocks piled up the entire surface of the eminence. All the granite we had seen before was as nothing compared with the granite we now looked on. The masses were at one place heaped up in great irregular cairns--at another, scattered confusedly over the ground; poured all along in close, craggy lumps; flung about hither and thither, as if in reckless sport, by the hands of giants. Above the whole, rose the weird fantastic form of the Cheese-Wring, the wildest and most wondrous of all the wild and wondrous structures in the rock architecture of the scene.

If a man dreamt of a great pile of stones in a nightmare, he would dream of such a pile as the Cheese-Wring. All the heaviest and largest of the seven thick slabs of which it is composed are at the top; all the lightest and smallest at the bottom. It rises perpendicularly to a height of thirty-two feet, without lateral support of any kind. The fifth and sixth rocks are of immense size and thickness, and overhang fearfully, all round, the four lower rocks which support them. All are perfectly irregular; the projections of one do not fit into the interstices of another; they are heaped up loosely in their extraordinary top-heavy form, on slanting ground half-way down a steep hill. Look at them from whatever point you choose, there is still all that is heaviest, largest, strongest, at the summit, and all that is lightest, smallest, weakest, at the base. When you first see the Cheese-Wring, you instinctively shrink from walking under it. Beholding the tons on tons of stone balanced to a hair's breadth on the mere fragments beneath, you think that with a pole in your hand, with one push against the top rocks, you could hurl down the hill in an instant a pile which has stood for centuries, unshaken by the fiercest hurricane that ever blew, rushing from the great void of an ocean over the naked surface of a moor.

Of course, theories advanced by learned men are not wanting to explain such a phenomenon as the Cheese-Wring. Certain antiquaries have undertaken to solve this curious problem of Nature in a very off-hand manner, by asserting that the rocks were heaped up as they now appear, by the Druids, with the intention of astonishing their contemporaries and all posterity by a striking exhibition of their architectural skill. (If any of these antiquarian gentlemen be still living, I would not recommend them to attempt a practical illustration of their theory by building miniature Cheese-Wrings out of the contents of their coal-scuttles!) The second explanation of

the extraordinary position of the rocks is a geological explanation, and is apparently the true one. It is assumed on this latter hypothesis, that the Cheese-Wring, and all the adjacent masses of stone, were once covered, or nearly covered, by earth, and were thus supported in an upright form; that the wear and tear of storms gradually washed away all this earth, from between the rocks, down the hill, and then left such heaps of stones as were accidentally complete in their balance on each other, to stand erect, and such as were not, to fall flat on the surface of the hill in all the various positions in which they now appear. Accepting this theory as the right one, it still seems strange that there should be only one Cheese-Wring on the hill--but so it is. Plenty of rocks are to be seen there piled one on another; but none of them are piled in the same extraordinary manner as the Cheese-Wring, which stands alone in its grandeur, a curiosity that even science may wonder at, a sight which is worth a visit to Cornwall, if Cornwall presented nothing else to see.

Besides the astonishment which the rock scenery on the hill was calculated to excite, we found in its neighbourhood an additional cause for surprise of a very different description. Just as we were preparing to ascend the eminence, the silence of the great waste around us was broken by a long and hearty cheer. The Hurlers themselves, if they had suddenly returned to a state of flesh and blood, and resumed their interrupted game, could hardly have made more noise, or exhibited a greater joviality of disposition, than did some three or four tradesmen of the town of Liskeard, who had been enjoying a pic-nic under the Cheese-Wring, had seen us approaching over the plain, and now darted out of their ambush to welcome us, flourishing porter-bottles in their hands as olive branches of peace, amity, and goodwill. My companion skilfully contrived to make his escape; but I was stopped and surrounded in an instant. One benevolent stranger held a glass in a very slanting position, while a brother philanthropist violently uncorked a bottle and directed half of its contents in a magnificent jet of light brown froth all over everybody, before he found the way into the tumbler. It was of no use to decline imbibing the remainder of the light brown froth--"There was the Cheese-Wring (cried all the benevolent strangers in chorus), and here was the porter--I must drink all their good healths, and they would all drink mine--this was Cornish hospitality, and Cornish hospitality was notoriously the finest thing in the world! As for my friend there, who was drawing, they bore him no ill-will because he wouldn't drink--they would buy his drawing, and one of the commercial gentlemen, who was a stationer, would publish a hundred, two hundred, five hundred, a thousand copies of it, on sheets of letter-paper, price one penny! What had I got to say to that?--If that wasn't hospitality, what the devil was?"

All this might have been very amusing, and our new friends might have proved excellent companions, under a different set of circumstances. But, as things were, we neither of us felt at all sorry when their manners subsequently exhibited a slight change, under the influence of further potations of porter. Soon, they began to look stolid and suspicious--suddenly, they discovered that we were not quite such good company as they had thought us at first--finally, they took their departure in solemn silence, leaving us free at last to mount the hill, and look out uninterruptedly on the glorious view from the summit, which extended over a circumference of a hundred miles.

Turning our faces towards the north-east, and standing now on the topmost rock of one of the most elevated situations in Cornwall, we were able to discern the sea on either side of us. Two faint lines of the softest, haziest blue, indicated the Bristol Channel on the one hand, and the English Channel on the other. Before us lay a wide region of downs and fields, all mapped out in every variety of form by their different divisions of wall and hedge-row--while, farther away yet, darker and more indefinite, appeared the Dartmoor forest and the Dartmoor hills. It was just that hour before the evening, at which the atmosphere acquires a more mellow purity, a more perfect serenity and warmth, than at earlier periods of the day. The shadows of great clouds lay in vast lovely shapes of purple blue over the whole visible tract of country, contrasting in exquisite beauty with the sunny glimpses of landscape shining between them. Beneath us, the picturesque confusion of rocks, topped by the quaint form of the Cheese-Wring, seemed to fade away mysteriously into the grass of the moorland; beyond which, high up where the hills rose again, a little lake, called Dosmery Pool, shone in the sunlight with dazzling, diamond brightness. In the opposite direction, towards the west, the immediate prospect was formed by the rugged granite ridges, towering one behind the other, of Sharp Torr and Kilmarth--the long hazy outlines of the plains and hill-tops of southern and inland Cornwall closing grandly the distant view.

All that we had hitherto seen on and around the spot where we now stood, had not yet exhausted its objects of attraction for strangers. Descending the rocks in a new direction, after taking a last look at the noble prospect visible from their summit, we proceeded to a particular spot near the base of the hill, where the granite was scattered in remarkable abundance. Our purpose here was to examine some stones which are well known to all the quarrymen in the district, as associated with an extraordinary story and an extraordinary man.

During the earlier half of the last century, there lived in one of the villages

on the outskirts of the moor on which the Cheese-Wring stands, a stonecutter named Daniel Gumb. This man was noted among his companions for his taciturn eccentric character, and for his attachment to mathematical studies. Such leisure time as he had at his command he devoted to pondering over the problems of Euclid: he was always drawing mysterious complications of angles, triangles, and parallelograms, on pieces of slate, and on the blank leaves of such few books as he possessed. But he made very slow progress in his studies. Poverty and hard work increased with the increase of his family, and obliged him to give up his mathematics altogether. He laboured early and laboured late; he hacked and hewed at the hard material out of which he was doomed to cut a livelihood, with unremitting diligence; but times went so ill with him, that in despair of ever finding them better, he took a sudden resolution of altering his manner of living, and retreating from the difficulties that he could not overcome. He went to the hill on which the Cheese-Wring stands, and looked about among the rocks until he found some that had accidentally formed themselves into a sort of rude cavern. He widened this recess; he propped up a great wide slab, to make its roof: he cut out in a rock that rose above this, what he called his bed-room--a mere longitudinal slit in the stone, the length and breadth of his body, into which he could roll himself sideways when he wanted to enter it. After he had completed this last piece of work, he scratched the date of the year of his extraordinary labours (1735) on the rock; and then removed his wife and family from their cottage, and lodged them in the cavity he had made--never to return during his lifetime to the dwellings of men!

Here he lived and here he worked, when he could get work. He paid no rent now: he wanted no furniture; he struggled no longer to appear to the world as his equals appeared; he required no more money than would procure for his family and himself the barest necessaries of life; he suffered no interruptions from his fellow-workmen, who thought him a madman, and kept out of his way; and--most precious privilege of his new position--he could at last shorten his hours of labour, and lengthen his hours of study, with impunity. Having no temptations to spend money, no hard demands of an inexorable landlord to answer, he could now work with his brains as well as his hands; he could toil at his problems, scratching them upon the tops of rocks, under the open sky, amid the silence of the great moor. Henceforth, nothing moved, nothing depressed him. The storms of winter rushed over his unsheltered dwelling, but failed to dislodge him. He taught his family to brave solitude and cold in the cavern among the rocks, as he braved them. In the cell that he had scooped out for his wife (the roof of which has now fallen in) some of his children died, and others were born. They point out the rock where he used to sit on calm summer evenings,

absorbed over his tattered copy of Euclid. A geometrical "puzzle," traced by his hand, still appears on the stone. When he died, what became of his family, no one can tell. Nothing more is known of him than that he never quitted the wild place of his exile; that he continued to the day of his death to live contentedly with his wife and children, amid a civilized nation, under such a shelter as would hardly serve the first savage tribes of the most savage country--to live, starving out poverty and want on a barren wild; forsaking all things enduring all things for the love of Knowledge, which he could still nobly follow through trials and extremities, without encouragement of fame or profit, without vantage ground of station or wealth, for its own dear sake. Beyond this, nothing but conjecture is left. The cell, the bed-place, the lines traced on the rocks, the inscription of the year in which he hewed his habitation out of them, are all the memorials that remain of Daniel Gumb.

We lingered about the wild habitation of the stonemason and his family, until sunset. Long shadows of rocks lay over the moor, the breeze had freshened and was already growing chill, when we set forth, at last, to trace our way back to Liskeard. It was too late now to think of proceeding on our journey, and sleeping at the next town on our line of route.

Returning in a new direction, we found ourselves once more walking on a high road, just as the sun had gone down, and the grey twilight was falling softly over the landscape. Stopping near a lonely farm-house, we went into a field to look at another old British monument to which our attention had been directed. We saw a square stone column--now broken into two pieces--ornamented with a curiously carved pattern, and exhibiting an inscription cut in irregular, mysterious characters. Those who have deciphered them, have discovered that the column is nearly a thousand years old; that it was raised as a sepulchral monument over the body of Dungerth King of Cornwall; and that the letters carved on it form some Latin words, which may be thus translated:--"PRAY FOR THE SOUL OF DUNGERTH." Seen in the dim light of the last quiet hour of evening, there was something solemn and impressive about the appearance of the old tombstone--simple though it was. After leaving it, we soon entered once more into regions of fertility. Cottages, cornfields, and trees surrounded us again. We passed through pleasant little valleys; over brooks crossed by quaint wooden bridges; up and down long lanes, where tall hedges and clustering trees darkened the way--where the stag-beetle flew slowly by, winding "his small but sullen horn," and glow-worms glimmered brightly in the long, dewy grass by the roadside. The moon, rising at first red and dull in a misty sky, brightened as we went on, and lighted us brilliantly along all that remained of our night-walk back to the town.

I have only to add, that, when we arrived at Liskeard, the lachrymose landlady of the inn benevolently offered us for supper the identical piece of cold "corned beef" which she had offered us for dinner the day before; and further proposed that we should feast at our ease in the private dungeon dining-room at the back of the house. But one mode of escape was left--we decamped at once to the large and comfortable hotel of the town; and there our pleasant day's pilgrimage to the moors of Cornwall concluded as agreeably as it had begun.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] I visited St. Cleer's Well, for the second time, ten years after the above lines were written; and I am happy to say that two gentlemen, interested in this beautiful ruin, are about to restore it--using the old materials for the purpose, and exactly following the original design. (March, 1861.)