



CROWCOMBE.

From a Drawing by J. W. NORTH.

## SUMMER IN SOMERSET.



THE brown Barle river running over red rocks aslant its course is pushed aside, and races round curving slopes. The first shoot of the rapid is smooth and polished like a gem by the lapidary's art, rounded and smooth as a fragment of torso, and this convex undulation maintains a solid outline. Then the following scoop under is furrowed as if ploughed across, and the ridge of each furrow, where the particles move a little less swiftly than in the hollow of the groove, falls backwards as foam blown from a wave. At the foot of the furrowed decline the current rises over a rock in a broad white sheet—white because as it is dashed to pieces the air mingles with it. After this furious haste the stream does but just overtake those bubbles which have been carried along on another division of the water flowing steadily but straight. Sometimes there are two streams like this between the same banks, sometimes three or even more, each running at a different rate, and each gliding above a floor differently inclined. The surface of each of these streams slopes in a separate direction, and though under the same light they reflect it at varying angles. The river is animated and alive, rushing here, gliding there, foaming yonder; its separate and yet component parallels striving together, and talking loudly in incomplete sentences. Those rivers that move through midland meads present a broad, calm surface, at the

same level from side to side; they flow without sound, and if you stood behind a thick hedge you would not know that a river was near. They dream along the meads, toying with their forget-me-nots, too idle even to make love to their flowers vigorously. The brown Barle enjoys his life, and splashes in the sunshine like boys bathing—like them he is sunburnt and brown. He throws the wanton spray over the ferns that bow and bend as the cool breeze his current brings sways them in the shade. He laughs and talks, and sings louder than the wind in his woods.

Here is a pool by the bank under an ash—a deep green pool inclosed by massive rocks, which the stream has to brim over. The water is green—or is it the ferns, and the moss, and the oaks, and the pale ash reflected? This rock has a purple tint, dotted with moss spots almost black; the green water laps at the purple stone, and there is one place where a thin line of scarlet is visible, though I do not know what causes it. Another stone the spray does not touch has been dried to a bright white by the sun. Enclosed, the green water slowly swirls round till it finds crevices, and slips through. A few paces farther up there is a red rapid—reddened stones, and reddened growths beneath the water, a light that lets the red hues overcome the others—a wild rush of crowded waters rotating as they go, shrill voices calling. This next bend upwards dazzles the eyes, for every inclined surface and striving parallel, every swirl, and bubble,

and eddy and rush around a rock chances to reflect the sunlight. Not one long pathway of quiet sheen, such as stretches across a rippled lake, each wavelet throwing back its ray in just proportion, but a hundred separate mirrors vibrating, each inclined at a different angle, each casting a tremulous flash into the face. The eyelids involuntarily droop to shield the gaze from a hundred arrows; they are too strong—nothing can be distinguished but a woven surface of brilliance, a mesh of light, under which the water runs, itself invisible. I will go back to the deep green pool, and walking now with the sun behind, how the river has changed!

Soft, cool shadows reach over it, which I did not see before; green surfaces are calm under trees; the rocks are less hard; the stream runs more gently, and the oaks come down nearer; the delicious sound of the rushing water almost quenches my thirst. My eyes have less work to do to meet the changing features of the current which now seems smooth as my glance accompanies its movement. The sky, which was not noticed before, now appears reaching in rich azure across the deep hollow, from the oaks on one side to the oaks on the other. These woods, which cover the steep and rocky walls of the gorge from river to summit, are filled with the June colour of oak. It is not green, nor russet, nor yellow; I think it may be called a glow of yellow under green. It is warmer than green; the glow is not on the outer leaves, but comes up beneath from the depth of the branches. The rush of the river soothes the mind, the broad descending surfaces of yellow-green oak carry the glance downwards from the blue over to the stream in the hollow. Rush! rush!—it is the river, like a mighty wind in the wood. A pheasant crows, and once and again falls the tap, tap of woodmen's axes—scarce heard, for they are high above. They strip the young oaks of their bark as far as they can while the saplings stand, then fell them, and as they all lie down hill there are parallel streaks of buff (where the sap has dried) drawn between the yellow-green masses of living leaf. The pathway winds in among the trees at the base of the rocky hill; light green whortleberries fill every interstice, bearing tiny red globes of flower—flower-lamps—open at the top. Wood-sorrel lifts its delicate veined petals; the leaf is rounded like the shadow of a bubble on a stone under clear water. I like to stay by the wood-sorrel a little while—it is so chastely beautiful; like the purest verse, it speaks to the inmost heart.

Staying, I hear unconsciously—listen! Rush! rush! like a mighty wind in the wood.

It draws me on to the deep green pool enclosed about by rocks—a pool to stand near and think into. The purple rock, dotted with black moss; the white rock; the thin scarlet line; the green water; the overhanging tree; the verdant moss upon the bank; the lady fern—are there still. But I see also now a little pink somewhere in the water, much brown too, and shades I know no name for. The water is not green, but holds in solution three separate sets of colours. The confervæ on the stones, the growths beneath at the bottom waving a little as the water swirls like minute seaweeds—these are brown and green and somewhat reddish too. Under water the red rock is toned and paler, but has deep black cavities. Next, the surface, continually changing as it rotates, throws back a different light, and, thirdly, the oaks' yellow-green high up, the pale ash, the tender ferns drooping over low down confer their tints on the stream. So from the floor of the pool, from the surface, and from the adjacent bank, three sets of colours mingle. Washed together by the slow swirl, they produce a shade—the brown of the Barle—lost in darkness where the bank overhangs.

Following the current downwards at last the river for a while flows in quietness, broad and smooth. A trout leaps for a fly with his tail curved in the air, full a foot out of water. Trout watch behind sunken stones, and shoot to and fro as insects droop in their flight and appear about to fall. So clear is the water and so brightly illuminated that the fish are not easily seen—for vision depends on contrast—but in a minute I find a way to discover them by their shadows. The black shadow of a trout is distinct upon the bottom of the river, and guides the eye to the spot, then looking higher in the transparent water there is the fish. It was curious to see these black shadows darting to and fro as if themselves animated and without bodies, for if the trout darted before being observed the light concealed him in motion. Some of the trout came up from under Torre-steps, a singular structure which here connects the shores of the stream. Every one has seen a row of stepping stones across a shallow brook; now pile other stones on each of these, forming buttresses, and lay flat stones like unhewn planks from buttress to buttress, and you have the plan of this primitive bridge. It has a megalithic appearance, as if associated with the age of rude stone monuments. They say its origin is doubtful; there can be no doubt of the loveli-



ON THE BARLE.  
From a Drawing by J. W. NORTH.

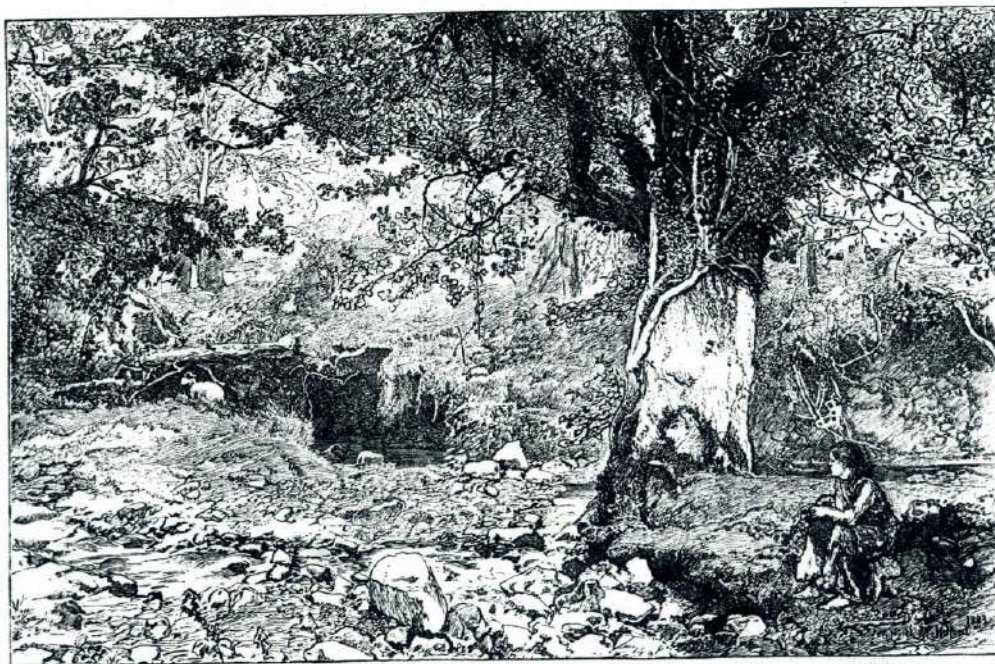
ness of the spot. The Barle comes with his natural rush and fierceness under the unhewn stone planking, then deepens, and there overhanging a black pool—for the shadow was so deep as to be black—grew a large bunch of marsh marigolds in fullest flower, the broad golden cups almost resting on the black water.

The bridge is not intended for wheels, and though it is as firm as the rock, foot passengers have to look at their steps, as the great planks, flecked with lichen at the edges, are not all level. The horned sheep and lambs go over it—where do they not go? Like goats they wander everywhere.

In a cottage some way up the hill we ate clotted cream and whortleberry jam. Through the open door came the ceaseless rush! rush! like a wind in the wood. The floor was of concrete, lime, and sand, on the open hearth, —pronounced "airth"—sods of turf cut from the moor, and oak branches were smouldering under the chimney crook. Turf smoke from the piled-up fires of winter had darkened the beams of the ceiling, but from that rude room there was a view of the river, and the hill, and the oaks in full June colour, which the rich would envy. Sometimes in early morning the wild red deer are

scanty foliage left the nests exposed, they were still occupied by late broods. Rooks' nests are not so often seen in ashes as in elms.

By a mossy bank a little girl—a miniature Audrey—stout, rosy, and ragged, stood with a yellow straw hat aslant on her yellow hair, eating the leaves from a spray of beech in her hand. Audrey looked at us, eating the beech leaves steadily, but would not answer, not even, "Where's your father to?" For in Somerset the "to" is put last, and must never be omitted; thus, instead of saying "I bought this at Taunton," it is correct to



IN ROLFORD GLEN.

From a Drawing by J. W. NORTH.

seen feeding on the slope opposite. As we drove away in reckless Somerset style, along precipices above the river, with nothing but a fringe of fern for parapet, the oak woods on the hills under us were shading down into evening coolness of tint, the yellow less warm, the green more to the surface. Upon the branches of the trees moss grows, forming a level green top to the round bough like a narrow cushion along it, with frayed edges drooping over each side. Though moss is common on branches, it does not often make a raised cushion, thick, as if green velvet pile were laid for the birds to run on. There were rooks' nests in some tall ash trees: the

say "I bought this to Taunton." There are models under glass cases in places of entertainment with a notice to say that if a penny be inserted the machine will go. Audrey the Little would not speak, but when a penny was put in her hand she began to move, and made off for home with the treasure. The road turned and turned, but which ever way the Barle was always under us, and the red rock rose high at the side. This rock fractures aslant if worked, vast flakes come out, and the cleavage is so natural that until closely approached a quarry appears a cliff. Stone got out in squares, or cut down straight leaves an artificial wall;



EXFORD FROM THE BRIDGE.  
From a Drawing by J. W. NORTH.

these rocks cannot be made to look artificial, and if painted, a quarry would be certainly quite indistinguishable from a natural precipice. Entering a little town (Dulverton) the road is jammed tight between cottages; so narrow is the lane that foot passengers huddle up in doorways to avoid the touch of the wheels, and the windows of the houses are protected by iron bars like cages lest the splash-boards should crack the glass. Nowhere in closest-built London is there such a lane—one would imagine land to be dear indeed. The farm labourers, filing homewards after their day's work, each carry poles of oak or faggots on their shoulders for their hearths, generally oak branches; it is their perquisite. The oak somehow takes root among the interstices of the stones of this rocky land. Past the houses the rush! rush! of the brown Barle rises again in the still evening air.

From the Devon border I drifted, like a leaf detached from a tree, across to a deep coombe in the Quantock hills. The vast hollow is made for repose and lotus-eating, its very shape, like a hammock, indicates idleness. There the days go over noiselessly and without effort, like white summer clouds.

Ridges each side rise high and heroically steep—it would be proper to set out and climb them, but not to-day, not now; some time presently. To the left massive Will's Neck stands out in black shadow defined and distinct, like a fragment of Night in the bright light of the day. The wild red deer lie there, but the mountain is afar; a sigh is all I can give to it, for the Somerset sun is warm and the lotus sweet. Yonder, if the misty heat moves on, the dim line of Dunkery winds along the sky, not unlike the curved back of a crouching hare. The weight of the mountains is too great—what is the use of attempting to move? It is enough to look at them. The day goes over like a white cloud; as the sun declines it is pleasant to go into the orchard—the vineyard of Somerset—and then perhaps westward may be seen a light in the sky by the horizon as if thrown up from an immense mirror under. The mirror is the Severn sea, itself invisible at this depth, but casting a white glow up against the vapour in the air. By it you may recognise the nearness of the sea. The thumb-nail ridges of the Quantocks begin to grow harder, they carry the eye along on soft curves like those of the South Downs in

Sussex, but suddenly end in a flourish and point as if cut out with the thumb-nail. Draw your thumb-nail firmly along soft wood, and it will, by its natural slip, form such a curve. Blackbird and thrush commence to sing as the heavy heat decreases ; the bloom on the apple trees is loose now, and the blackbird as he springs from the bough shakes down flakes of blossom.

Towards even a wind moves among the lengthening shadows, and my footsteps involuntarily seek the glen, where a streamlet trickles down over red flat stones which resound musically as the water strikes them.

where the spring rises, and where the sundew grows. Sometimes climbing steep and rocky walls—scarce sprinkled with grass—we pause every other minute to look down on the great valley which reaches across to Dunkery. The horned sheep, which are practically wild, like wild creatures have worn out holes for themselves to lie in beside the hill. If resolution is strong, we move through the dark heather (soon to be purple), startling the heath-poults, or black game, till at last the Channel opens, and the far-distant Flat and Steep Holms lie, as it looks, afloat on the dim sea. This is labour enough ;



MINEHEAD HILL FROM BLUE ANCHOR.  
From a Drawing by J. W. NORTH.

Ferns are growing so thickly in the hedge that soon it will seem composed of their fronds ; the first June rose hangs above their green tips. A water-ousel with white breast rises and flies on ; again disturbed, he makes a circle, and returns to the stream behind. On the moist earth there is the print of a hare's pad ; here is a foxglove out in flower ; and now as the incline rises heather thickens on the slope. Sometimes we wander beside the streamlet which goes a mile into the coombe—the shadow is deep and cool in the vast groove of the hill, the shadow accumulates there, and is pressed by its own weight—up slowly as far as the "sog," or peaty place

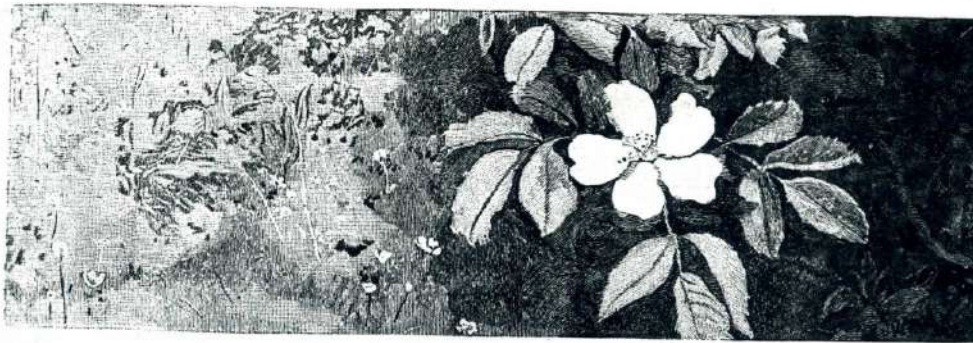
stern indeed must be the mind that could work at summer's noon in Somerset, when the apple vineyards slumber ; when the tall foxgloves stand in the heavy heat, and the soft air warms the deepest day-shadow so that nothing is cool to the touch but the ferns. Is there anything so good as to do nothing ?

Fame travels slowly up these breathless hills, and pauses overcome in the heated hollow lanes. A famous wit of European reputation, when living, resided in Somerset. A traveller one day chancing to pass through the very next parish inquired of a local man if somebody called Sydney Smith did not

once live in that neighbourhood. "Yes," was the reply, "I've heard all about Sydney Smith; I can tell you. He was a highwayman and was hung on that hill there." He would have shown the very stump of the gallows-tree as proof positive, like Jack Cade's bricks, alive in the chimney to this day.

There really was a highwayman, however, whose adventures are said to have suggested one of the characters in the romance of *Lorna Doone*. This desperate fellow had of course his houses of call, where he could get refreshment safely, on the moors. One bitter winter's day the robber sat down to a hearty dinner in an inn at Exford. Placing his pistols before him, he made himself comfortable, and ate and drank his fill. By and by, an old woman entered, and humbly took a seat in a corner far from the

common. A well-to-do farmer who used to attend Bristol market, and dispose there of large quantities of stock and produce, dared not bring home the money himself lest he should be robbed. He entrusted the cash to his drover; the farmer rode along the roads, the drover made short cuts on foot, and arrived safely with the money. This went on for years, in which time the honest fellow—a mere labourer—carried some thousands of pounds for his master, faithfully delivering every shilling. He had, however, a little failing—a dangerous one in those days, when the gallows was the punishment for sheep-stealing. He was known to be a sheep-stealer, and actually after bringing home a hundred pounds would go and put his neck in danger the very same night by taking a sheep. This went on for some time, people shut their eyes, but at last patience was



THE FIRST JUNE ROSE.  
From a Drawing by J. W. NORTH.

fire. In time the highwayman observed the wretched, shivering creature, and of his princely generosity told her to come and sit by the hearth. The old woman gladly obeyed, and crouched beside him. Presently, as he sat absorbed in his meal, his arms were suddenly pinioned from behind. The old woman had him tight so that he could not use his weapons, while at a call constables, who had been posted about, rushed in and secured him. The old woman was in fact a man in disguise. A relation of the thief-taker still lives and tells the tale. The highwayman's mare, mentioned in the novel, had been trained to come at his call, and was so ungovernable that they shot her.

Such tracts of open country, moors, and unenclosed hills, were the haunts of highwaymen till a late period, and memories of the gallows, and of escapes from them, are

exhausted, and efforts were made to catch him in the act, without success.

One night he came home in the usual manner from market, delivered the cash, and went to his cottage. Next day a little girl was sent on an innocent errand to the cottage, with orders while she was there to look sharply round and observe if there were any ashes on the floor. She came back with the news that there was a heap of wood ashes. Immediately a posse set out and the drover was arrested. The use of the ashes by sheep stealers was to suck up and remove stains of blood, which were certain to be left in cutting up the animal. Sufficient proof was found in the cottage to condemn the honest thief to be hung; great exertions were, however, made in his behalf; and principally it is supposed, on account of his character for carrying large sums of

money untouched, he was saved. There is a story of the smugglers—once notorious folk on these hills—teaching their horses to understand the usual words of command backwards. If they were driving pack-horses along at night with a load of brandy landed from a lugger, and were met by the revenue men, who ordered them to stop that the packs might be searched, the smugglers, like good and loyal subjects, called "Whoa! whoa!" Instantly the horses set off at a tearing gallop for they understood "Whoa," as "Gee-up."

By a farmer's door I found a tall branch of oak lying against the porch. The bark was dry, and the leaves were shrivelled, but the bough had been originally taken green from the tree. These boughs are discovered against the door on the morning of the 29th of May, and are in memory of the escape of King Charles from his enemies by hiding in an oak. The village ringers leave them, and then go to the church and ring a peal, for which they expect cider or small coin from each loyal person honoured with an oak-branch. Another custom, infinitely more ancient, is that of singing to the apple-trees in early spring, so that the orchards may be induced to bear a good crop. The singers come round and visit each orchard; they have a rhyme specially for the purpose, part of the refrain of which is that a cup of good cider cannot do any one harm, a hint which brings out a canful. In strange contrast to these genial customs, which accord so well with flowery fields, I heard an instance of the coldest indifference. An old couple lived for many years in a cottage; at last the wife died, and the husband, while the body was in the house, had his meals on the coffin as a table.

A hundred years since, before steam, the corn was threshed out by the flail—a slow, and consequently expensive process. Many efforts were made to thresh quicker. Among others, wooden machines were put up in some of the villages, something resembling a water-wheel placed horizontally. This was moved by horses walking round and round, and drove machinery in the barn by belt or shafting. The labourers, greatly incensed—for they regarded threshing by the flail as their right—tried to burn them, but the structures were guarded and still exist. Under the modern conditions of farming they are still found useful to cut chaff, crack corn, and so on. The ancient sickle is yet in use for reaping in Somerset; the reapers sharpen it by drawing the edge through an apple, when the acid bites and cleans the steel. While we

were sauntering through a village one morning, out rushed the boys from school, and instantly their tongues began to wag of those things on which their hearts were set. "I know a jay's nest," said one; "I know an owl's nest," cried a second; a third hastened to claim knowledge of a pigeon's nest. It will be long before education drives the natural love of the woods out of the children's hearts. Of old time a village school used to be held in an ancient building, the lower part of which was occupied as almshouses. Underneath the ancient folk lived as best they might, while the young folk learned and gave their class responses, or romped on the floor overhead. The upper part of the building belonged to one owner; the lower part to another landlord. It came about that the roof decayed, and the upper owner suggested to the lower owner that they should agree in bearing the cost of repairs. Upon which the owner of the basement remarked that he contemplated *pulling his part down*.

In these hamlets along the foot of the hills ancient stone crosses are often found. One of them has retained its top perfect, and really is a cross, not a shaft only. This is, I think, rare. Sometimes in the village street, the slender column grey against the green trees, sometimes in the churchyard, these crosses come on the mind like a sudden enigma. It requires an effort to grasp their meaning, so long have the ideas passed away which led to their erection. They almost startle modern thought. How many years since the peasant women knelt at their steps! On the base of one which has a sculptured shaft the wall-rue fern was growing. A young starling was perched on the yew by it—he could but just fly, and fluttered across to the sill of the church window. Young birds called pettishly for food from the bushes. Upon the banks hart's-tongue was coming up fresh and green, and the early orchis was in flower. Fern and flower and fledglings had come again as they have come every year since the oldest of these ancient shafts was erected, for life is older, life is greyer, than the weather-beaten mouldings. But life too is fresh and young; the stern thought in the stone becomes more cold and grim as the centuries pass away. In the crevices at the foot of another cross wall-flowers blossomed, and plants of evening primrose, not yet in flower, were growing. Under a great yew lay the last decaying beam of the stocks, a little yew tree grew on the top of the church tower, its highest branch just above the parapet. A thrush

perhaps planted it—thrushes are fond of the viscous yew berries. Through green fields, in which the grass was rising high and sweet, a footpath took me by a solitary mill with an undershot wheel. The sheds about here are often supported on round columns of stone. Beyond the mill is a pleasant meadow, quiet, still, and sunlit; buttercup, sorrel, and daisy flowered among the grasses down to the streamlet where comfrey, with white and pink-lined bells, stood at the water's edge. A renowned painter, Walker, who died early, used to work in this meadow; the original scene from which he took his picture of *The Plough* is not far distant. The painter is gone; the grasses and the flowers are renewed with the summer. As I stood by the brook a water-rat came swimming, drawing a large dock-leaf in his mouth; seeing me, he dived, and took the leaf with him under water.

Everywhere wild strawberries were flowering on the banks—wild strawberries have been found ripe in January here—everywhere ferns were thickening and extending, fox-gloves opening their bells. Another deep coombe led me into the mountainous Quantocks, far below the heather, deep beside another trickling stream. In this land the sound of running water is perpetual, the red flat stones are resonant, and the speed of the stream draws forth music like quick fingers on the keys; the sound of running water and the pleading voice of the willow-wren are always heard in summer. Among the oaks growing on the steep hill-side the willow-wrens repeated their sweet prayer; the water as it ran now rose, and now fell, there was a louder note as a little stone was carried over a fall. The shadow came slowly out from the oak-grown side of the coombe, it reached to the margin of the brook. Under the oaks there appears nothing but red stones, as if the trees were rooted in them; under the boughs probably the grass does not cover the rock as it does on the opposite side. There mountain ashes flowered in loose order on the green slope. Redstarts perched on them, darting out to seize passing insects. Still deeper in the coombe the oaks stood on either side of the stream; it was the beginning of woods which reach for miles, in which occasionally the wild red deer wander, and drink at the clear waters. By now the shadow of the western hill-top had crossed the brooklet, and the still coombe became yet more silent. There was an alder, ivy-grown, beside the stream—a tree with those lines which take an artist's fancy. Under the roots of alders the water-ousel

often creeps by day, and the tall heron stalks past at night. Receding up the eastern slope of the coombe the sunlight left the dark alders' foliage in the deep shadow of the hollow. I went up the slope till I could see the sun, and waited; in a few minutes the shadow reached me, and it was sunset; I went still higher, and presently the sun set again. A cool wind was drawing up the coombe, it was dusky in the recesses of the oaks, and the water of the stream had become dark when we emerged from the great hollow, and yet without the summer's evening had but just commenced, and the banks were still heated by the sun.

In contrast to the hills and moors which are so open and wild, the broad vales beneath are closely shut in with hedges. The fields are all of moderate size, unlike the great pastures elsewhere, so that the constant succession of hedges, one after the other, for ten, twenty, or more miles, encloses the country as it were five-fold. Most of the fields are square, or at all events right-angled, unlike the irregular outline and corners of fields in other counties. The number of meadows make it appear as if the land was chiefly grass, though there is really a fair proportion of arable. Over every green hedge there seems a grassy mead; in every hedge trees are numerous, and their thick June foliage, green too gives a sense of green colour everywhere. But this is relieved with red—the soil is red, and where the plough has been the red furrows stand out so brightly as to seem lifted a little from the level. These red squares when on the side of rising ground show for many miles. The stones are red that lie about, the road dust has a reddish tint, so have the walls of the cottages and mills. Where the banks of the hedges can be seen (or where rabbits have thrown out the earth), they are red, and the water in the ditches and streamlets looks red—it is in fact clear, and the colour is that of the sand and stones. The footpath winds a red band through the grass of the meads, and if it passes under a cliff the rock too rises aslant in red lines. Along the cropped hedges red champions flower so thickly as to take the place of green leaves, and by every gateway red fox-gloves grow. Red trifolium is a favourite crop, it is not much redder than the land which bears it. The hues of the red ploughed squares, seen through the trees, vary as the sun dries or the rain moistens the colour. Then, again, the ferns as the summer advances bring forward their green to the aid of the leaves and grass, so that red and green constantly strive together.



There is a fly-rod in every house, almost every felt hat has gut and flies wound round it, and every one talks trout. Every one too complained that the rivers were so low it was difficult to angle. This circumstance, however, rendered the hues of the rocky banks more distinct. Sitting down to dinner by chance with two farmers, one began to tell me how he had beguiled three trout the previous evening; and the other described how, as he was walking in a field of his by the river, he had seen an otter. These creatures, which are becoming sadly scarce, if not indeed extinct in many counties, are still fairly numerous in the waters here. I hope they will long remain so, for although they certainly do destroy great numbers of fish, yet it must be remembered that in this country our list of wild animals has been gradually decreasing for centuries, and especially wild animals that show sport. The otter, I fear, is going; I hope the sportsmen of Somerset will see that it remains in their county, at all events, when it has become a tradition elsewhere. Otter hounds frequently visit the rivers, and first-rate sport is obtained. In these villages, two hundred miles from London, and often far from the rail, some of the conditions resemble those in the United States where, instead of shops, "stores" supply every article from one counter. So here you buy everything in one shop; it is really a "store" in the American sense. A house which seems amid fields is called "The Dragon;" you would suppose it

WATER MILL, STOGUMBER.  
From a Drawing by J. W. NORTH.

an inn, but it is a shop, and has been so ever since the olden times when every trader put out a sign. The sign has gone, but the name remains.

Somewhere in a wood there is a stone, supposed to be a tomb-stone of the prophetess Mother Shipton, and bearing an undecipherable inscription. One of her rhymes is well remembered in the neighbourhood:

When Watchet is all washed down  
Williton shall be a sea-port town.

This is founded on the gradual encroach-

if you let your eye travel, say to the right, as you would follow the flight of a bird, you find that one side of the current of insects flies up that way, and the other side returns. They go to and fro in regular order, exactly like the fashionable folk in Rotten Row, but the two ranks pass so quickly that looked at both together the vision cannot separate them, they are faster than the impression on the retina.

At Selworthy a footpath leads up through a wood on Selworthy hill, and as it ascends, always at the side of the slope, gradually opens out what is perhaps the finest view of



FARM UNDER THE QUANTOCKS.  
*From a Drawing by J. W. NORTH.*

ment of the sea, which is a fact, but it will be some time yet before masts are seen at Williton.

At Dunster there is a curious mill which has two wheels, overshot, one in front of the other, and both driven by the same sluice. It was very hot as we stood by the wheels; the mill dust came forth and sprinkled the foliage so that the leaves seemed scarce able to breathe; it drifted almost to the stream hard by, where trout were watching under a cloud of midges dancing over the ripples. They look as if entangled in an inextricable maze, but

Dunkery Beacon, the Dunkery range, and that edge of Exmoor on to the shore of the sea. Across a deep vale the Exmoor mountains rise and reach on either hand, immense breadths of dark heather, deep coombes filled with black shadow, and rounded masses that look dry and heated. To the right is the gleaming sea, and the distant sound of the surge comes up to the wood. The headland and its three curves boldly project into the sunlit waters; from its foot many a gallant stag hard pressed by the hounds has swum out into the track of passing vessels.

Selworthy woods were still in the afternoon heat; except for the occasional rustle of a rabbit or of a pheasant, there was no evidence of life; the sound of the sea was faint and soon lost among the ferns. Slowly, very slowly, great Dunkery grew less hard of aspect, shadows drew along at the base, while again the declining sun from time to time sent his beams into valleys till now dark. The thatched house at Holnicote by the foot of Selworthy much interested me; it is one of the last of thatched houses inhabited by a gentleman and landed proprietor. Sir Thomas Acland who resides here is a very large owner. Thatch prevails on his estates; thatched cottages, thatched farmhouses, and his thatched mansion. In

the coolness of the evening the birds began to sing and squirrels played across the lawn in front of Holnicote House. Humblebees hummed in the grass and visited the flowers of the holly bushes. Thrushes sang, and chaffinches, and, sweetest of all, if simplest in notes, the greenfinches talked and courted in the trees. Two cuckoos called in different directions, wood-pigeons raised their voices in Selworthy wood, and rooks went over cawing in their deliberate way. In the level meadow from among the tall grasses and white-flowering wild parsley a landrail called "crake, crake," ceaselessly. There was a sense of rest and quiet, and with it a joyousness of bird life, such as should be about an English homestead.

RICHARD JEFFERIES.



FARM ARCHITECTURE.

From a Drawing by J. W. NORTH.

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