Cumberland Sheep−Shearers

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Three or four years ago we spent part of a summer in one of the dales in the neighbourhood of Keswick. We lodged at the house of a small Statesman, who added to his occupation of a sheep−farmer that of a woollen manufacturer. His own flock was not large, but he bought up other people's fleeces, either on commission, or for his own purposes; and his life seemed to unite many pleasant and various modes of employment, and the great jolly burly man throve upon all, both in body and mind.

One day, his handsome wife proposed to us that we should accompany her to a distant sheep−shearing, to be held at the house of one of her husband's customers, where she was sure we should be heartily welcome, and where we should see an old−fashioned shearing, such as was not often met with now in the Dales. I don't know why it was, but we were lazy, and declined her invitation. It might be that the day was a broiling one, even for July, or it might be a fit of shyness; but whichever was the reason, it very unaccountably vanished soon after she was gone, and the opportunity seemed to have slipped through our fingers. The day was hotter than ever; and we should have twice as much reason to be shy and self−conscious, now that we should not have our hostess to introduce and chaperone us. However, so great was our wish to go, that we blew these obstacles to the winds, if there were any that day; and, obtaining the requisite directions from the farm−servant, we set out on our five mile walk, about one o'clock on a cloudless day in the first half of July.

Our party consisted of two grown up persons and four children, the youngest almost a baby, who had to be carried the greater part of that weary length of way. We passed through Keswick, and saw the groups of sketching, boating tourists, on whom we, as residents for a month in the neighbourhood, looked down with some contempt as mere strangers, who were sure to go about blundering, or losing their way, or being imposed upon by guides, or admiring the wrong things, and never seeing the right things. After we had dragged ourselves through the long straggling town, we came to a part of the highway where it wound between copses sufficiently high to make a green gloom in a green shade; the branches touched and interlaced overhead. while the road was so straight, that all the quarter−of−an−hour that we were walking we could see the opening of blue light at the other end, and note the quivering of the heated luminous air beyond the dense shade in which we moved. Every now and then, we caught glimpses of the silver lake that shimmered through the trees; and, now and then, in the dead noon−tide stillness, we could hear the gentle lapping of the water on the pebbled shore the only sound we heard, except the low deep hum of myriads of insects revelling out their summer lives. We had all agreed that talking made us hotter, so we and the birds were very silent. Out again into the hot bright sunny dazzling road, the fierce sun above. our heads made us long to be at home, but we had passed the half−way, and to go on was shorter than to return. Now we left the highway, and began to mount. The ascent looked disheartening, but at almost every step we gained increased freshness of air; and the crisp short mountain grass was soft and cool in comparison with the high road. The little wandering breezes, that came every now and then athwart us, were laden with fragrant scents now of wild thyme now of the little scrambling creeping white rose, which ran along the ground and pricked our feet with its sharp thorns; and now we came to a trickling streamlet, on whose spongy banks grew great bushes of the bog−myrtle, giving a spicy odour to the air. When our breath failed us during that steep ascent, we had one invariable dodge by which we hoped to escape the 'fat and scant of breath' quotation; we turned round and admired the lovely views, which from each succeeding elevation became more and more beautiful.

At last, perched on a level which seemed nothing more than a mere shelf of rock, we saw our destined haven a grey stone farmhouse, high over our heads, high above the lake as we were with out−buildings enough around it to justify the Scotch name of a 'town;' and near it one of those great bossy sycamores, so common in similar situations all through Cumberland and Westmoreland. One more long tug and then we should be there. So, cheering the poor tired little ones, we set off bravely for that last piece of steep rocky path; and we never looked behind till we stood in the coolness of the deep porch, looking down from our natural terrace on the glassy Derwent Water, far, far below, reflecting each tint of the blue sky, only in darker fuller colours every one. We seemed on a level with the top of Cat Bell; and the tops of great trees lay deep down so deep that we felt as if they were close enough together and solid enough to bear our feet if we chose to spring down and walk upon them. Right in front of where we stood, there was a ledge of the rocky field that surrounded the house. We had knocked at the door, but it was evident that we were unheard in the din and merry clatter of voices within, and our old original shyness returned. By and by, someone found us out, and a hearty burst of hospitable welcome ensued. Our coming was all right; it was understood in a minute who we were; our real hostess was hardly less urgent in her civilities than our temporary hostess, and both together bustled us out of the room upon which the outer door entered, into a large bedroom which opened out of it the state apartment, in all such houses in Cumberland where the children make their first appearance, and where the heads of the household lie down to die if the Great Conqueror gives them sufficient warning for such decent and composed submission as is best in accordance with the simple dignity of their lives.

Into this chamber we were ushered, and the immediate relief from its dark coolness to our overheated bodies and dazzled eyes was inexpressibly refreshing. The walls were so thick that there was room for a very comfortable window−seat in them, without there being any projection into the room; and the long low shape prevented the sky−line from being unusually depressed, even at that height, and so the light was subdued, and the general tint through the room deepened into darkness, where the eye fell on that stupendous bed, with its posts, and its head−piece, and its foot−board, and its trappings of all kinds of the deepest brown; and the frame itself looked large enough for six or seven people to lie comfortably therein, without even touching each other. In the hearth−place, stood a great pitcher filled with branches of odorous mountain flowers; and little bits of rosemary and lavender were strewed about the room; partly, as I afterwards learnt, to prevent incautious feet from slipping about on the polished oak floor. When we had noticed everything, and rested, and cooled (as much as we could do before the equinox), we returned to the company assembled in the house−place.

This house−place was almost a hall in grandeur. Along one side ran an oaken dresser, all decked with the same sweet evergreens, fragments of which strewed the bedroom floor. Over this dresser were shelves, bright with most exquisitely polished pewter. Opposite to the bedroom door was the great hospitable fireplace, ensconced within its proper chimney corners, and having the 'master's cupboard' on its right hand side. Do you know what a 'master's cupboard' is? Mr Wordsworth could have told you; ay, and have shown you one at Rydal Mount, too. It is a cupboard about a foot in width, and a foot and a half in breadth, expressly reserved for the use of the master of the household. Here he may keep pipe and tankard, almanac, and what not; and although no door bars the access of any hand, in this open cupboard his peculiar properties rest secure, for is it not 'the master's cupboard'? There was a fire in the house−place, even on this hot day; it gave a grace and a vividness to the room, and being kept within proper limits, it seemed no more than was requisite to boil the kettle. For, I should say, that the very minute of our arrival, our hostess (so I shall designate the wife of the farmer at whose house the sheep−shearing was to be held) proposed tea; and although we had not dined, for it was but little past three, yet, on the principle of 'Do at Rome as the Romans do,' we assented with a good grace, thankful to have any refreshment offered us, short of water−gruel, after our long and tiring walk, and rather afraid of our children 'cooling too quickly.'

While the tea was preparing, and it took six comely matrons to do it justice, we proposed to Mrs C. (our real hostess), that we should go and see the sheep−shearing. She accordingly led us away into a back yard, where the process was going on. By a back yard I mean a far different place from what a Londoner would so designate; our back yard, high up on the mountainside, was a space about forty yards by twenty, overshadowed by the noble sycamore, which might have been the very one that suggested to Coleridge

This sycamore (oft musical with bees Such tents the Patriarchs loved)

And in this deep, cool, green shadow sat two or three grey−haired sires, smoking their pipes, and regarding the proceedings with a placid complacency, which had a savour of contempt in it for the degeneracy of the present times a sort of 'Ah! they don't know what good shearing is nowadays' look in it. That round shadow of the sycamore tree, and the elders who sat there looking on, were the only things not full of motion and life in the yard. The yard itself was bounded by a grey stone wall, and the moors rose above it to the mountain top; we looked over the low walls on to the spaces bright with the yellow asphodel, and the first flush of the purple heather. The shadow of the farmhouse fell over this yard, so that it was cool in aspect, save for the ruddy faces of the eager shearers, and the gay−coloured linsey petticoats of the women, folding the fleeces with tucked−up gowns.

When we first went into the yard, every corner of it seemed as full of motion as an antique frieze, and, like that, had to be studied before I could ascertain the different actions and purposes involved. On the left hand was a walled−in field of small extent, full of sunshine and light, with the heated air quivering over the flocks of panting bewildered sheep, who were penned up therein, awaiting their turn to be shorn. At the gate by which this field was entered from the yard stood a group of eager−eyed boys, panting like the sheep, but not like them from fear, but from excitement and joyous exertion. Their faces were flushed with brown−crimson, their scarlet lips were parted into smiles, and their eyes had that peculiar blue lustre in them, which is only gained by a free life in the pure and blithesome air. As soon as these lads saw that a sheep was wanted by the shearers within, they sprang towards one in the field the more boisterous and stubborn an old ram the better and tugging, and pulling, and pushing, and shouting sometimes mounting astride of the poor obstreperous brute, and holding his horns like a bridle they gained their point and dragged their captive up to the shearer, like little victors as they were, all glowing and ruddy with conquest. The shearers sat each astride on a long bench, grave and important the heroes of the day. The flock of sheep to be shorn on this occasion consisted of more than a thousand, and eleven famous shearers had come, walking in from many miles' distance to try their skill one against the other; for sheep−shearings are a sort of rural Olympics. They were all young men in their prime, strong, and well−made; without coat or waistcoat, and with upturned shirt−sleeves. They sat each across a long bench or narrow table, and caught up the sheep from the attendant boys, who had dragged it in; they lifted it on to the bench, and placing it by a dexterous knack on its back, they began to shear the wool off the tail and under parts; then they tied the two hind legs and the two fore legs together, and laid it first on one side and then on the other, till the fleece came off in one whole piece; the art was to shear all the wool off, and yet not to injure the sheep by any awkward cut: if such an accident did occur, a mixture of tar and butter was immediately applied; but every wound was a blemish on the shearer's fame. To shear well and completely, and yet to do it quickly, shows the perfection of the clippers. Some can finish off as many as six score sheep in a summer's day; and if you consider the weight and uncouthness of the animal, and the general heat of the weather, you will see that, with justice, clipping or shearing is regarded as harder work than mowing. But most good shearers are content with despatching four or five score; it is only on unusual occasions, or when Greek meets Greek, that six score are attempted or accomplished.

When the sheep is divided into its fleece and itself, it becomes the property of two persons. The women seize the fleece, and, standing by the side of a temporary dresser (in this case made of planks laid across barrels, beneath what sharp scant shadow could be obtained from the eaves of the house), they fold it up. This again is an art, simple as it may seem; and the farmer's wives and daughters about Langdale Head are famous for it. They begin with folding up the legs, and then roll the whole fleece up, tying it with the neck; and the skill consists, not merely in doing this quickly and firmly, but in certain artistic pulls of the wool so as to display the finer parts, and not, by crushing up the fibre, to make it appear coarse to the buyer. Six comely women were thus employed; they laughed, and talked, and sent shafts of merry satire at the grave and busy shearers, who were too earnest in their work to reply, although an occasional deepening of colour, or twinkle of the eye, would tell that the remark had hit. But they reserved their retorts, if they had any, until the evening, when the day's labour would be over, and when, in the licence of country humour, I imagine, some of the saucy speakers would meet with their match. As yet, the applause came from their own party of women; though now and then one of the old men, sitting under the shade of a sycamore, would take his pipe out of his mouth to spit, and, before beginning again to send up the

softly curling white wreaths of smoke, he would condescend on a short deep laugh, and a 'Well done, Maggie!' 'Give it him, lass!' for with the not unkindly jealousy of age towards youth, the old grandfathers invariably took part with the women against the young men. These sheared on, throwing the fleeces to the folders, and casting the sheep down on the ground with gentle strength, ready for another troop of boys to haul it to the right hand side of the farmyard, where the great out−buildings were placed; where all sorts of country vehicles were crammed and piled, and seemed to throw up their scarlet shafts into the air, as if imploring relief from the crowd of shandries and market carts that pressed upon them. Out of the sun, in the dark shadow of the cart−house, a pan of red−hot coals glowed in a trivet; and upon them was placed an iron basin holding tar and raddle, or ruddle. Hither the right hand troop of boys dragged the poor naked sheep to be 'smitten' that is to say, marked with the initials or cypher of the owner. In this case, the sign of the possessor was a circle or spot on one side, and a straight line on the other; and after the sheep were thus marked, they were turned out to the moor, and the crowd of bleating lambs that sent up an incessant moan for their lost mothers; each found out the ewe −to which it belonged the moment she was turned out of the yard, and the placid contentment of the sheep that wandered away up the hillside, with their little lambs trotting by them, gave just the necessary touch of peace and repose to the scene. There were all the classical elements for the representation of life; there were the 'Old men and maidens, young men and children' of the Psalmist; there were all the stages and conditions of being that sing forth their farewell to the departing crusaders in the 'Saint's Tragedy.'

We were very glad indeed that we had seen the sheep−shearing, though the road had been hot, and long, and dusty, and we were as yet unrefreshed and hungry. When we had understood the separate actions of the busy scene, we could begin to notice individuals. I soon picked out a very beautiful young woman as an object of admiration and interest. She stood by a buxom woman of middle age, who had just sufficient likeness to point her out as the mother. Both were folding fleeces, and folding them well; but the mother talked all the time with a rich−toned voice, and a merry laugh and eye, while the daughter hung her head silently over her work; and I could only guess at the beauty of her eyes by the dark sweeping shadow of her eyelashes. She was well dressed, and had evidently got on her Sunday gown, although a good deal for the honour of the thing, as the flowing skirt was tucked up in a bunch behind, in order to be out of her way: beneath the gown, and far more conspicuous and, possibly, far prettier was a striped petticoat of full deep blue and scarlet, revealing the blue cotton stockings common in that part of the country, and the pretty, neat leather shoes. The girl had tucked her brown hair back behind her ears; but if she had known how often she would have had occasion to blush, I think she would have kept that natural veil more over her delicate cheek. She blushed deeper and ever deeper, because one of the shearers, in every interval of his work, looked at her and sighed. Neither of them spoke a word, though both were as conscious of the other as could be; and the buxom mother, with a side−long glance, took cognizance of the affair from time to time, with no unpleased expression.

I had got thus far in my career of observation when our hostess for the day came to tell us that tea was ready, and we arose stiffly from the sward on which we had been sitting, and went indoors to the house−place. There, all round, were ranged rows of sedate matrons; some with babies, some without; they had been summoned from over mountains, and beyond wild fells, and across deep dales, to the shearing of that day, just as their ancestors were called out by the Fiery Cross. We were conducted to a tea−table, at which, in spite of our entreaties, no one would sit down except our hostess, who poured out tea, of which more by−and−by. Behind us, on the dresser, were plates piled up with 'berry−cake' (puff−paste with gooseberries inside), currant and plain bread and butter, hot cakes buttered with honey (if that is not Irish), and great pieces of new cheese to be put in between the honeyed slices, and so toasted impromptu. There were two black teapots on the tray, and taking one of these in her left hand, and one in her right, our hostess held them up both on high, and skilfully poured from each into one and the same cup; the teapots contained green and black tea, and this was her way of mixing them, which she considered far better, she told us, than if both the leaves had been 'masked' together. The cups of tea were dosed with lump upon lump of the finest sugar, but the rich yellow fragrant cream was dropped in but very sparingly. I reserved many of my inquiries, suggested by this Dale tea−drinking, to be answered by Mrs C., with whom we were lodging: and I asked her why I could neither get cream enough for myself, nor milk sufficient for the children, when both were evidently so abundant, and our entertainers so profusely hospitable. She told me, that my request

for each was set down to modesty and a desire to spare the 'grocer's stuff,' which, as costing money, was considered the proper thing to force upon visitors, while the farm produce was reckoned too common and everyday for such a choice festivity and such honoured guests. So I drank tea as strong as brandy and as sweet as syrup, and had to moan in secret over my children's nerves. My children found something else to moan over before the meal was ended; the good farmer's wife would give them each 'sweet butter' on their oat−cake or 'clap−bread;' and sweet butter is made of butter, sugar, and rum melted together and potted, and is altogether the most nauseous compound in the shape of a dainty I ever tasted. My poor children thought it so, as I could tell by their glistening piteous eyes and trembling lips, as they vainly tried to get through what their stomachs rejected. I got it from them by stealth and ate it myself, in order to spare the feelings of our hostess, who, evidently, considered it as a choice delicacy. But no sooner did she perceive that they were without sweet butter than she urged them to take some more, and bade me not scrimp it, for they had enough and to spare for everybody. This 'sweet butter' is made for express occasions the clippings, and Christmas; and for these two seasons all christenings in a family are generally reserved. When we had eaten and eaten and, hungry as we were, we found it difficult to come up to our hostess's ideas of the duty before us she took me into the real working kitchen, to show me the preparations going on for the refreshment of the seventy people there and then assembled. Rounds of beef, hams, fillets of veal, and legs of mutton bobbed, indiscriminately with plum puddings, up and down in a great boiler, from which a steam arose, when she lifted up the lid, reminding one exceedingly of Camacho's wedding. The resemblance was increased when we were shown another boiler out of doors, placed over a temporary framework of brick, and equally full with the other, if, indeed, not more so.

Just at this moment as she and I stood on the remote side or the farm−buildings, within sound of all the pleasant noises which told of merry life so near, and yet out of sight of any of them, gazing forth on the moorland and the rocks, and the purple crest of the mountain, the opposite base of which fell into Watendlath the gate of the yard was opened, and my rustic beauty came rushing in, her face all a−fire. When she saw us she stopped suddenly, and was about to turn, when she was followed, and the entrance blocked up by the handsome young shearer. I saw a knowing look on my companion's face, as she quietly led me out by another way.

'Who is that handsome girl?' asked I.

'It's just Isabel Crosthwaite,' she replied. 'Her mother is a cousin of my master's, widow of a statesman near Appleby. She Is well to do, and Isabel is her only child.'

'Heiress, as well as beauty,' thought I; but all I said was,

'And who is the young man with her?'

'That,' said she, looking up at me with surprise. 'That's our Tom. You see, his father and me and Margaret Crosthwaite have fixed that these young ones are to wed each other; and Tom is very willing but she is young and skittish; but she'll come to she'll come to. He'll not be best shearer this day anyhow, as he was last year down in Buttermere; but he'll maybe come round for next year.'

So spoke middle age of the passionate loves of the young. I could fancy that Isabel might resent being so calmly disposed of, and I did not like or admire her the less because by−and−by she plunged into the very midst of the circle of matrons, as if in the Eleusinian circle she could alone obtain a sanctuary against her lover's pursuit. She looked so much and so truly annoyed that I disliked her mother, and thought the young man unworthy of her, until I saw the mother come and take into her arms a little orphan child, whom I learnt she had bought from a beggar on the roadside that was ill−using her. This child hung about the woman, and called her 'Mammy' in such pretty trusting tones, that I became reconciled to the matchmaking widow, for the sake of her warm heart; and as for the young man the woe−begone face that he presented from time to time at the open door, to be scouted and scolded thence by all the women, while Isabel resolutely turned her back upon him, and pretended to be very busy cutting bread and butter, made me really sorry for him; though we experienced spectators could see the end of all this

coyness and blushing as well as if we were in church at the wedding.

From four to five o'clock on a summer's day is a sort of second noon for heat; and now that we were up on this breezy height, it seemed so disagreeable to think of going once more into the close woods down below, and to brave the parched and dusty road, that we gladly and lazily resigned ourselves to stay a little later, and to make our jolly three o'clock tea serve for dinner.

So I strolled into the busy yard once more, and by watching my opportunity, I crossed between men, women, boys, sheep, and barking dogs, and got to an old man, sitting under the sycamore, who had been pointed out to me as the owner of the sheep and the farm. For a few minutes he went On doggedly puffing away; but I knew that this reserve on his part arose from no want of friendliness, but from the shy reserve which is the characteristic of most Westmoreland and Cumberland people. By−and−by he began to talk, and he gave me much information about his sheep. He took a 'walk' from a landowner with so many sheep upon it; in his case one thousand and fifty, which was a large number, about six hundred being the average. Before taking the 'walk,' he and his landlord each appointed two 'knowledgeable people' to value the stock. The 'walk' was taken on lease of five or seven years, and extended ten miles over the Fells in one direction he could not exactly say how far in another, but more; yes! certainly more. At the expiration of the lease, the stock are again numbered, and valued in the same way. If the sheep are poorer, and gone off, the tenant has to pay for their depreciation in money; if they have improved in quality, the landlord pays him; but one way or another the same number must be restored, while the increase of each year, and the annual fleeces form the tenant's profit. Of course they were all of the black−faced or mountain breed, fit for scrambling and endurance, and capable of being nourished by the sweet but scanty grass that grew on the Fells. To take charge of his flock he employed three shepherds, one of whom was my friend Tom. They had other work down on the farm, for the farm was 'down' compared with the airy heights to which these sheep will scramble. The shepherd's year begins before the twentieth of March, by which time the ewes must be all safely down in the home pastures, at hand in case they or their lambs require extra care at yeaning time. About the sixteenth of June the sheep−washing begins. Formerly, said my old man, men stood bare−legged in a running stream, dammed up so as to make a pool, which was more cleansing than any still water, with its continual foam, and fret, and struggle to overcome the obstacle that impeded its progress: and these men caught the sheep, which were hurled to them by the people on the banks, and rubbed them and soused them well; but now (alas! for these degenerate days) folk were content to throw them in head downwards, and thought that they were washed enough with swimming to the bank. However, this proceeding was managed in a fortnight after the shearing or clipping came on; and people were bidden to it from twenty miles off or better; but not as they had been fifty years ago. Still, if a family possessed a skilful shearer in the person of a son, or if the good wife could fold fleeces well and deftly, they were sure of a gay week in clipping time, passing from farm to farm in merry succession, giving their aid, feasting on the fat of the land ('sweet butter' amongst other things, and much good may it do them!) until they in their turn called upon their neighbours for help. In short, good old−fashioned sheep−shearings are carried on much in the same sort of way as an American Bee.

As soon as the clipping is over, the sheep are turned out upon the Fells, where their greatest enemy is the fly. The ravens do harm to the young lambs in May and June, and the shepherds scale the steep grey rocks to take a raven's nest with infinite zest and delight; but no shepherd can save his sheep from the terrible fly the common flesh fly which burrows in the poor animal, and lays its obscene eggs, and the maggots eat it up alive. To obviate this as much as ever they can, the shepherds go up on the Fells about twice a week in summer time, and, sending out their faithful dogs, collect the sheep into great circles, the dogs running on the outside and keeping them in. The quick−eyed shepherd stands in the midst, and, if a sheep make an effort to scratch herself, the dog is summoned, and the infected sheep brought up to be examined, the piece cut out, and salved. But, notwithstanding this, in some summers scores of sheep are killed in this way: thundery and close weather is peculiarly productive of this plague. The next operation which the shepherd has to attend to is about the middle or end of October, when the sheep are brought down to be salved, and an extra man is usually hired on the farm for this week. But it is no feasting or merry−making time like a clipping. Sober business reigns. The men sit astride on their benches and besmear the poor helpless beast with a mixture of tar and bad butter, or coarse grease, which is supposed to

promote the growth and fineness of the wool, by preventing skin diseases of all kinds, such as would leave a patch bare. The mark of ownership is renewed with additional tar and raddle, and they are sent up once more to their breezy walk, where the winter winds begin to pipe and to blow, and to call away their brethren from the icy North. Once a week the shepherds go up and scour the Fells, looking over the sheep, and seeing how the herbage lasts. And this is the dangerous and wild time for the shepherds. The snows and the mists (more to be dreaded even than snow) may come on; and there is no lack of tales, about the Christmas hearth, of men who have gone up to the wild and desolate Fells and have never been seen more, but whose voices are yet heard calling on their dogs, or uttering fierce despairing cries for help; and so they will call till the end of time, till their whitened bones have risen again.

Towards the middle of January, great care is necessary, as by this time the sheep have grown weak and lean with lack of food, and the excess of cold. Yet as the mountain sheep will not eat turnips, but must be fed with hay, it is a piece of economy to delay beginning to feed them as long as possible; and to know the exact nick of time, requires as much skill as must have been possessed by Emma's father in Miss Austen's delightful novel, who required his gruel 'thin, but not too thin thick, but not too thick.' And so the Shepherd's Calendar works round to yeaning time again! It must be a pleasant employment; reminding one of Wordsworth's lines

In that fair clime, the lonely herdsman stretched On the soft grass, through half the summer's day,

and of shepherd boys with their reedy pipes, taught by Pan, and of the Chaldean shepherds studying the stars; of Poussin's picture of the Good Shepherd, of the 'Shepherds keeping watch by night!' and I don't know how many other things, not forgetting some of Cooper's delightful pieces.

While I was thus rambling on in thought, my host was telling me of the prices of wool that year, for we had grown quite confidential by this time. Wool was sold by the stone; he expected to get ten or twelve shillings a stone; it took three or four fleeces to make a stone: before the Australian wool came in, he had got twenty shillings, ay and more; but now and again we sighed over the degeneracy of the times, till he took up his pipe (not Pandean) for consolation, and I bethought me of the long walk home, and the tired little ones, who must not be worried. So, with much regret, we took our leave; the fiddler had just arrived as we were wishing goodbye; the shadow of the house had overspread the yard; the boys were more in number than the sheep that remained to be shorn; the busy women were dishing up great smoking rounds of beef; and in addition to all the provision I had seen in the boilers, large−mouthed ovens were disgorging berry pies without end, and rice−puddings stuck full of almonds and raisins.

As we descended the hill, we passed a little rustic bridge with a great alder bush near it. Underneath sat Isabel, as rosy red as ever, but dimpling up with smiles, while Torn lay at her feet, and looked up into her eyes; his faithful sheep−dog sat by him, but flapped his tail vainly in hope of obtaining some notice. His master was too much absorbed for that. Poor Fly! Every dog has his day, and yours was not this tenth of July.