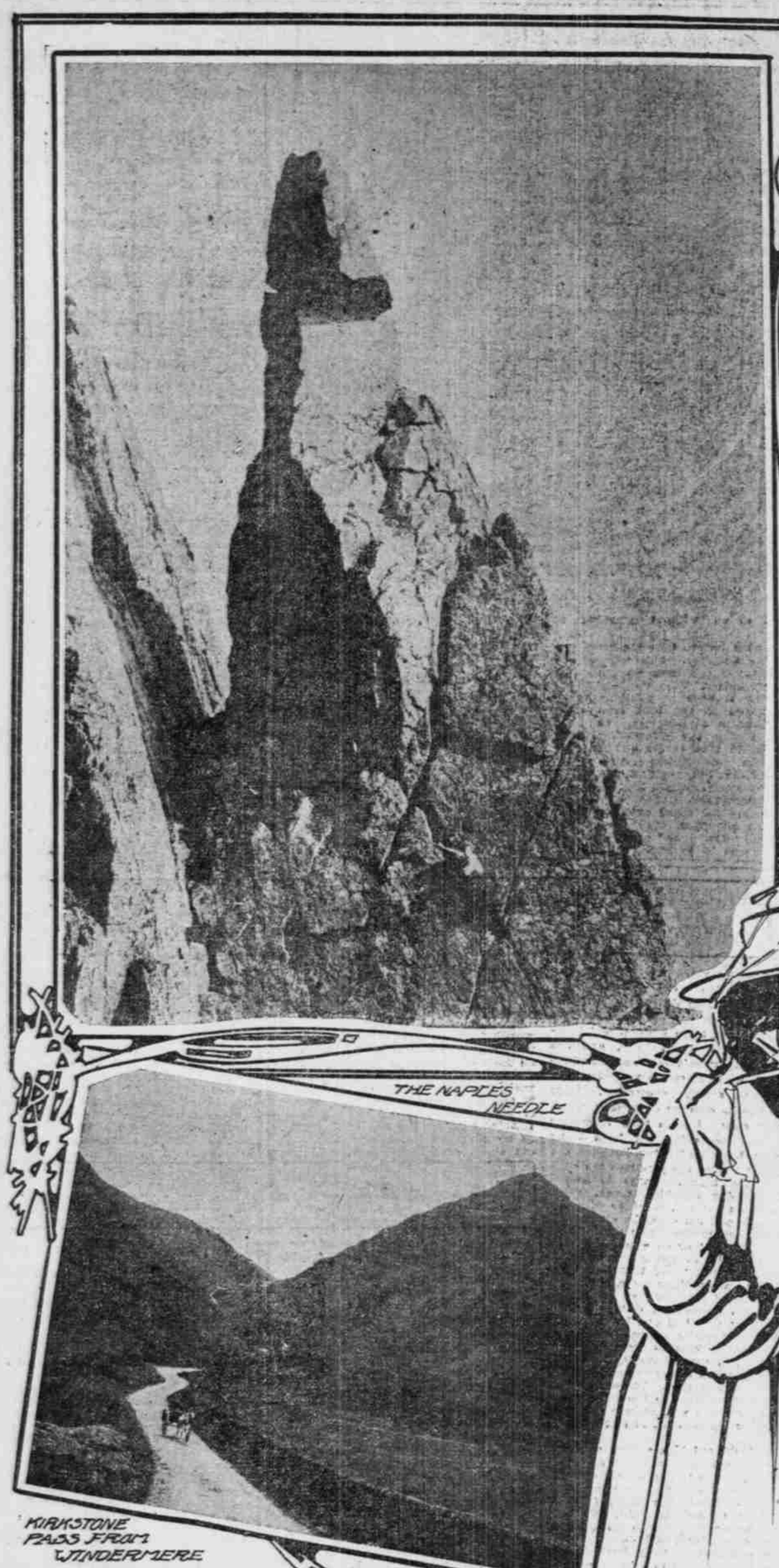
Picturesque Breathing Spot of a Crowded Island

In the Lake Country of England, Rich in History and Inspiring to Great Poets.



KIRKSTONE PASS FROM WINDERMERE

LANGDALE PIKES WITH DERWENTWATER IN THE DISTANCE

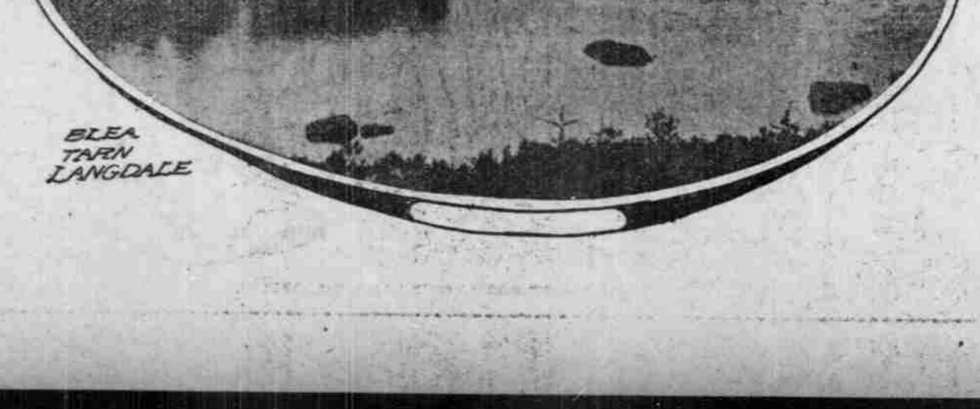
THE NAPLES NEEDLE

SUMMIT OF SCAFELL ENGLANDS HIGHEST MOUNTAIN

SUMMIT OF HELVELLYN WITH ITS TARN

MILTON WERSCHING

A STORM ON WASTWATER



BLEA TARN LANGDALE

WINDERMERE, England, Nov. 18.—(Special Correspondence of The Sunday Oregonian.)—This is the lake country of England, which custom, even stronger than law, has consecrated to the lovers of Nature's beauties. Only at this point does the screaming locomotive enter this lovely land; at all others, railroads are jealously shut out and are allowed only to reach its outer bounds. All communication is by coach, bicycle, automobile or steamer, as in Yellowstone Park. Travel here is a joy, for the roads are of solid macadam, the coaches have splendid teams and go bowling along at a spanking pace wherever they strike a level stretch or even moderate grade.

Here come the tired workers of the dirty, black, gloomy factory towns of the north and, in less numbers, those of the south of England, to revive the memories of Nature unsmirched, which have become dimmed by years of grubbing in the grime for a living. Here the wealthy retire to spend the evening of their lives away from the din of factories and commerce, in beautiful homes surrounded by wide gardens and parks, planted with England's forest giants. It is the big breathing spot of a crowded island.

The mountains are generally great, long ridges and rounded knolls, but they often terminate in precipitous cliffs, below which are treacherous rock slides, here called skrees. The high ridges are almost treeless, but the timber thrives in the narrow valleys wherever it has not, ages ago, made way for hayfields. Doubtless, the mountains were once as well timbered as those of the Pacific Coast, for the climate is as moist as that of Oregon. As the southwest winds of the Pacific unload their burden of moisture on the Cascades, so do the west winds of the Atlantic pour frequent showers on the Pennine Range, as these mountains are called. There is no long, dry Summer, as with us, though the rain does abate at that season, but thunderstorms are frequent. But there is a delicious softness in the air and, when the sun breaks through the clouds and the sky clears, there could be no lovelier sight than the roads winding among comfortable residences standing amid spacious grounds, with an occasional row of stone cottages and here and there an ancient church, the lakes reflecting the green, rounded knolls of the mountains in their clear, calm, depths; the knobs and crags and cliffs of rock jutting out among the sward; and the hardy sheep feeding far up the slopes.

Windermere is the largest, and one of the most beautiful of the lakes. It is 12 miles long and is dotted with several wooded islets, one of which is occupied by a solid gray stone building with turrets and keep, called Wray Castle. It is not ancient, as its name would indicate, and no legends of medieval robber-barons are associated with it. It was built about 50 years ago by a London stockbroker named Wray, whose fad it was to imitate the fortresses of the middle ages. He did not live in it long, probably because baronial castles are not up to the modern standard of comfort, and it stands mainly as a monument to his vanity and folly, though it by no means disfigures the lanscape.

Highest House in England.

The main coach road runs north from Windermere over Kirkstone Pass to Ullswater, past the Red Skrees, a cliff stained a dull red which crowns the mountain overlooking the pass. On the very summit of the pass is an inn where horses, driver and passengers all stop for a drink. Above its door is a sign announcing that it is 1428 feet above the sea, and is the highest inhabited house in England. The road leading up to the pass has on its right, beyond the brawling Troutbeck, a long ridge of mountains about 2000 feet high, down whose side tumble many tiny cascades, here called "ghylls." Along the summit of this ridge runs an old Roman road, which was built to maintain communication between the north and south, and which has given the ridge the name "High Street." The Romans generally built their roads along the summits of the ridges, for they did not care to give the natives an opportunity to roll rocks down on their legions.

After passing the inn, the road descends rapidly, passing on the left a lakelet called Brothers Water, from the fact that two brothers once drowned while bathing here. Then it descends into a vale, spreading out towards Ullswater to the front and right, but cut off to the left by the frowning walls of steep gorges and canyons. A pretty village with many fine houses, well shaded with trees, extends the rest of the way along the road to the steamer-landing on Ullswater, which is in front of a handsome hotel, standing in well-kept grounds. Ullswater is second only in size to Windermere, but does not equal it in the beauty of its surroundings.

England's Highest Peaks.

It is on the journey south from Windermere that one sees the full glory of the lakes and mountains. Here one passes under the very shoulder of Helvellyn, England's second highest mountain, 3055 feet above sea level, which seems little harder to climb than Mount Tabor, as one looks up from the road, but one finds, on nearing the summit, a black tarn surrounded by terrible cliffs. On this road, too, one passes the houses where Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey and Mrs. Hemans sought their poetic inspiration. Passing on to Rydal water, a small lake between Windermere and Grasmere, one sees on the shore a great rock with flat top, which Wordsworth used to climb for silent meditation. Beyond, the great leaning cliffs which form the twin summits of the Longdale Pikes loom into view, in form somewhat resembling Index Mountain in Washington, though of less than half its altitude.

To the right in the distance the outlines of Scafell, highest mountain in England, can be distinguished. Though but 3166 feet high, its almost vertical, deeply seamed face of bare rock creates the impression of much greater height. Half the huge pile appears to have split off and been swept away, leaving a precipice to tempt the foolhardy mountaineer, its feet hidden in the steep, even slope of the skrees. It was in attempting to climb this cliff that four men lost their lives a few years ago. In the dim distance, a little to the left of Scafell, is the cone-shaped summit of Skiddaw, England's third highest mountain, only 33 feet lower than Helvellyn. All one can see, in driving along the road, is its outline, and a nearer view might remove the impression that it is a cone.

Reviving an Old Industry.

From Grasmere, which furnishes the great city of Manchester with its water supply, one climbs another ridge to Derwentwater, passing through the pretty village of Ambleside, and at its further end is the ancient town of Keswick. Here was once a thriving woolen industry, which decayed with the growth of the great factory towns of West Yorkshire. In the neighborhood are lead mines, and the town still boasts of a pencil factory. Its most interesting sight, however, is a factory where vessels and ornaments of antique style are made of beaten copper and silver. This was established by Canon Rawnsley, the rector, for the purpose of reviving an ancient industry and at the same time giving employment to the poorer people in Winter, when outdoor work is all but impossible, tourists come not, and funds, therefore, run low. It employs 40 or 50 men and the ware they turn out makes one strain the tenth commandment to the breaking point. The work is slow, and requires infinite patience, care and skill. There has been a great revival of taste for such articles, and the factory is building up a thriving business.

"Statesmen" and Their Sheep.

The chief industry of the lake country, aside from supplying the wants of the tourists who swarm here in Summer, is sheep raising. The land is owned by "statesmen," a very different kind from that produced in Ohio, for they are simply freehold farmers. They have a sort of community ownership and divide the land among them from time to time. They cling to it with great tenacity, and in order to "keep the property in the family" intermarry almost entirely among themselves. A peculiar custom of these people is that when they transfer any land the sheep upon it go with it. The explanation is that their holdings are divided only by low, uncemented walls built of the stones scattered in abundance on the mountains, and the sheep have a great homing instinct. Necessity has made them athletic and, when removed from their native range, they leap the walls with ease and roam on and on till they reach home again. It being easier to humor them than endeavor to restrain them, the sale of a farm includes its sheep.

Hardy as these sheep are, their owners often suffer heavy losses in the severe storms and deep snows which sweep over these mountains. A farmer told me of such a storm which occurred four years ago. A high wind carried a deluge of rain and sleet along with it, and the sheep on the mountains sought shelter on the lee side of the walls. The sleet changed to snow, and a sharp frost followed. The sheep, all huddled together against the walls, were frosen to the ground, and when their owners came to rescue them the only way to do so was to chop off the wool with axes. Thousands of sheep were found dead and great damage was done to the fleece of the survivors.

The scenery of these lakes and mountains is apt to strike as tame and uninteresting one who has seen the surpassing grandeur of the Cascades. But what

(Concluded on Page 43.)