

still occupy jointly is the neighbouring moorland and the distant shealing that is attached to it. For the management of their common affairs and the settlement of differences, and punishment of offenders, the tenants elect one of their number, the shrewdest and most respected of them, to be a kind of head-man of the village, and to rule it under the name of constable, or sometimes of mayor or little mayor. He is always sworn in in a regular way before a justice of the peace as a valuator, and his decision in all cases of trespass or other damage are final. He convenes the tenants from time to time in open-air courts held on a knock or mound in front of his house, for the purpose of deliberating on common affairs, on the building of a dyke, or the repairing of a ditch, or the purchase of a bull; or for deciding upon some change in the old by-laws and customs of the community, or punishing some violation of them. These open-air courts, meeting on a little knock, are a very primitive institution. In early times in England all courts of justice or deliberation met in the open, on a little mound like this one, or at standing stones, or in a grove. And the reason for this was not that they could not build houses adequate for the purpose, for the practice continued *de rigueur* long after they were able to do so. They had the idea that in the open air magic could have less power over the judges. That reason is expressly given in the old statutes of the Isle of Man, as the ground why the dempsters or judges were required to decide causes anywhere they chose, if only in the open air. It is a remnant of the old worship of the sun, for in those primitive courts the presiding magistrate not only sat in the open air, but sat with his face to the east. When Sir John Stanley ascended the throne of the Isle of Man in the fourteenth century, he asked what was the customary ceremonial at the annual assembly of the islanders on Tynwald Hill, on St. John the Baptist's Eve, and the instructions he received thus began:—

First, you shall come thither in your royal array as a king ought to do, by the prerogatives of the Isle of Mann, and upon the Hill of Tynwald sitt in a chaire covered with a Royal Cloath and cushions, and *your visage unto the East*, and your sword before you holden with the point upwards.

We may fancy that in old times the president of this little village court in Lewis sat in the same way on his knock with his face to the east, and his sword or dirk held up before him. The dirk is of course now gone, but we gather that the custom of facing the east still remains. Mr. Carmichael, a local gentleman, to whose interesting communication, published in Mr. Skene's "Celtic Scotland," we are indebted for much of the foregoing information, gives a curious description of their method of voting. The two sides go to separate lobbies as it were; the ayes go sunwise to the south and the right of the chairman, the noes go sunwise to the north and his left. The chairman, therefore, has his left hand to the north and his right hand to the south, and consequently faces the east. The going sunwise is another circumstance connecting the practice with the primitive worship of the sun. The chairman yielded deference to the sun by facing his rising-place, the members by following his course. There was really something fine in the rationale of our forefathers' custom of holding their courts in the open air. The proceedings were to be conducted in

the sight of God and man. The light of the sun was the very presence of the divinity they worshipped, and nothing that worked in darkness could enter there. The searching eye of day was to be upon everything, and to impress all minds, as by the sanction of an oath, with the characteristics that have been always been dear to Englishmen, with being straightforward, open, and aboveboard in all their ways, dispensing honest judgment, making just complaints, and bearing true witness. If the votes are equal in the Lewis court, then lots are resorted to; they are drawn three times, and the best of three carries the day; and if any obstinate fellow still holds out and refuses to accept the decision, he is greeted with cries of "goat-tooth," and finds it his best policy to agree. Mr. Carmichael, who being long resident in the district, knows the facts well, states that the deliberations at these village courts are very thorough and well-conducted, that the tenantry speak well and often with great force and mastery over their native Gaelic, that they reason and illustrate and argue surprisingly, and that, though they sometimes use strong language, they usually listen patiently and respectfully, and are tolerant of anything but doggedness and pertinacity. Another interesting trait mentioned by him about these village communities is that in laying out their land for the year, they set apart a portion for the poor, which is called the poor man's acre. This is probably an archaic exhibition of humanity, with, however, the feeling it embodies still alive—the wonderful sympathy of the poor man for the poor.

(To be continued.)

PSALM CXXVII.

Only as God builds the house strong and deep,
Their labours are blessed who are building and toiling;
Only as God the city doth keep,
Safety and peace o'er the portals are smiling;

Vain to rise up, and midnight to keep,
Vain to eat bread of labour and sorrow;
For so His beloved He giveth His sleep,
A calm brooding night, and a blessed to-morrow!

Sons of the righteous, and children of grace,
A heritage blest to the godly forever;
These stand in the battle, with sin face to face,
Like a warrior stern with a well-filled quiver.

Happy the man with such weapon in hand—
A righteous seed, in His footsteps pursuing—
Honoured and blest among men shall he stand,
Enemies never shall work his undoing!

WILLIAM WYE SMITH.

AT THE LAKES.

"Aunt, I'm going out for a little while."

"Going out?"

"To row on the lakes. I am stifling in this fevered atmosphere."

Ten minutes afterwards Ethel, in company with a fairy-like little companion, Cora Steele, was gliding over the glassy surface of the beautiful lake in a tiny