

## The Sermon.

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"There scattered oft, the earliest of the year,  
By lands unseen, are showers of violets found  
The redbreast loves to build and warble there,  
And little footsteps lightly print the ground."— *Gray*.

The picturesque village of Whitedale, in the north of England, is almost surrounded by a range of high hills, which, covered with gorse and heather, are profuse in color. The hamlet itself, with its low-roofed, whitewashed dwellings; its diamond-paned, lattice windows; its narrow, cobble-paved streets; its old-fashioned inn; its public pump; its ancient stocks and old-world air, is suggestive of the England of the middle ages. But for one sign of activity, with its close relationship to modern life, one might easily imagine that two centuries ago, Whitedale fell into a peaceful slumber from which sleep of contentment it was loth to awake.

Its only sign of activity is also its only blemish, and it is a disfigurement which the inhabitants have bitterly resented ever since its introduction into their midst. During the lifetime of the old Squire the place had been secluded, and the simple-hearted rustics had daily "pursued the noiseless tenour of their way" in perfect happiness. Two years ago, however, he had been killed whilst hunting and his only son, Percy, now reigned in his stead.

The new Squire had come to Whitedale from Oxford, where he had come in touch with modern ideas and methods, and he immediately began to remodel his estate upon scientific lines. This produced an immense sensation in the place, and he and the changes he instituted became the talk of the village. The great theme of conversation at the *Malt Shorel*, the local hostelry, was Master Percy. Mine host had given it as his solemn opinion that these things portended the end of the world, and over their long clay pipes his guests had sagely nodded their acquiescence. Old John, the cobbler, had protested violently to his set of cronies against the innovations being introduced by Master Percy. "Jest ye mark my words," he had said, "Whitedale is agoin' to the bad, an' noa gooid can ivver coom oot o' all this."