

Tour of the Lake District by Herbert Somerville Jackson¹ (1842-?) and
Alfred Le Mare (1843-1917).

H.S.J. & A.L. left Victoria station² by 12.0 train (August 7th /69) via Tyldesley for Windermere, the weather was bright & warm, until we reached Lancaster, when the journey became anything but cheering. We arrived at Windermere at 4.30 instead of 3.50. Our plan was arranged to dine at the Victoria Hotel, and take the steamer to Ambleside, and walk to Grasmere, and there spend the week-end, but as there were no signs of a fine evening, we took the coach from the station direct to Grasmere.

After a ride of an hour and a half through pelting rain, there suddenly appeared close to, the Prince of Wales Hotel³, which was to be our destination for three nights, but to our great disappointment on entering we were told by the landlord (Mr E. Brown) that he had not a bed in the house to spare, but could find accomodation (*sic*) in the village - thinking "half a loaf was better than none" we asked him to do his best for us, but the news was brought to us by the waiter as we were dining, that a gentleman, who was expected by a party staying at the hotel, had telegraphed to say that he was not coming, the bedroom was therefore offered to us, which although had but one bed, was much more desirable than sleeping out.

Although early in August, a fire was very acceptable, at the same time it seemed a shame to be sitting around a fire while such a pretty lake, & village, & grand mountain scenery, could be viewed from the windows, but the rain poured down the panes in such torrents that you could scarcely distinguish the trees from the houses. As is generally the case at hotels, we were at a loss to know how to spend the evening, the weather fortunately cleared up a little, at 9.0, sufficient for us to run round to the billiard room, where there is a good table, which of course is the principal attraction but a miserable, cold looking room. There we managed to get rid of an hour, by watching two gentlemen play, one who appeared to have practised the game for some time, and was rather over the average of players you generally meet with at tourist's hotels. We managed to find our dormitory on this first night by following the directions of a female guide, seated half way to the top of the hotel, at a few minutes before eleven. We retired to rest with a faint hope of having a bright Sunday.

We did not come far short of our anticipations, for the morning seemed to promise a fine afternoon. We made our way to the church which is but ten minutes walk from the hotel, situated in a lovely spot, and as you approach Wordsworth's grave in the churchyard you are at once struck what a suitable resting place it forms for a poet. Close by his grave, and directly through the village, runs a beautifully clean stream, which with the rustic bridge under which it flows, the cottages overgrown with ivy, roses, & convolvulus, & the old fashioned church with its square tower, gives one who has visited this place for the first time such an admiration for its beauty that words can but barely describe it.

The interior of the church is as simple as the exterior, and one would suppose that the collection for repairs & cleaning occur about once in every generation, for the walls are white-washed, the pews, pulpit, reading desk & and furniture about the communion pew are all plain oak & of such an age, that what is left is almost rotten. The church is divided by a thick wall running almost from end to end, and not apparently supporting any portion of the building. We were handed to one of the seats set apart for the scholars, which was so shallow, and the backs so high and strait, that when you were once seated you felt that you were literally fixed there for the morning. This position became almost unbearable in a few minutes; we therefore decided to make a change for the better. We succeeded in a slight degree, for the pew we next took was facing a wall, with the clergyman almost behind us. If we attempted to look towards the pulpit, we must have appeared rude.

The congregation was what we might very well term a highly respectable and fashionable one. The service you could not enter into with the spirit you felt you ought to do, it was simple & monotonous but the sermon was clear, practical & evidently well studied.

Leaving church we calculated we should be able to reach the top of the hill "Silver Howe" which lies opposite the hotel across the lake, and come round by the Ambleside road before dinner at 3.30. We enjoyed this walk, especially as we came along the edge of the hill directly opposite the village across the lake, we had here quite a panorama by looking in the direction just mentioned, between our legs. It may seem childish to do such a thing but

1 Herbert Jackson married Alfred Le Mare's sister, Elizabeth Agnes Le Mare in 1870, and Alfred married Herbert's sister, Mary Levett Jackson in 1875.

2 Manchester.

3 Originally in 1855 Brown's Lake Hotel. November 2006, The Waterside Hotel. 21 July 2012, opened as [The Daffodil Hotel and Spa](#) .

this advice was given to one of us by a man of eighty years of age, & certainly it was worth being childish for once. We were by this time quite ready for the table d'hôte which this hotel is so famous for in the district. As is the custom, most if not all of those in private rooms appear at this time. We of course then had a knowledge of all who were staying at the hotel, we numbered 42. The table was set very tastefully, the display of flowers, which were entirely from their own grounds were very good.

Everything provided was also very good (when you got it). There was one great fault, which is inexcusable where there are ten waiters; we waited from 5 to 15 minutes between each course. One may not be surprised to find that we did not rise before 5.30.

In the evening, following the bent of our inclination, we had service on the lake (no choir and no organ).

While we were at tea a party of ladies and three gentlemen seemed to be quite upset. One of the ladies having lost a valuable eardrop. They had searched the road from the church to the hotel, but in vain. Before going to No 28 (a small room with a small bed in it for two) we arranged with Mr Brown to have a dog-cart for Monday.

We woke in the morning with the sun shining full into the room, but we thought it too good to last, and eventually found it so. After breakfast we had quarter of an hour to spare; and this we filled up by strolling round the grounds and just before the entrance AL saw something amongst the gravel which appeared to be jewellery, & it turned out to be the eardrop lost on the previous evening. This of course was received by the lady in a very gracious manner.

By this time our trap was waiting for us at the door (10.15). We provided ourselves against a rainy day & we had scarcely left Grasmere when found our mackintoshes very useful. Our first halting place was Rydal. We drove round to the cottage below the church where one of the fair sex is found who conducts you to the Falls, but the question arose, what is to be done with the horse? We waited patiently for someone to turn up who would hold it, but we had to resort to tying the reins to the railings of the cottage.

On our way through the park the rain came down in torrents, the only consolation we had was that the falls would look the finer for it. The only road is past the front of the house, which is now occupied by General le Fleming, it is a large, plain, square building of no pretention whatever. Thence through a pretty wooded part, when you unexpectedly stand directly opposite the lower falls. To have the prettiest view you must enter a sort of summer house, about two yards square, & look through a window (minus the glass) onto the falls through a rustic bridge. The higher falls are three quarters of a mile through the park, and when reached you find you are well paid for the trouble. From the summit to the basement there is a direct fall of fifty feet.

We made our way back as quick as possible, to get a peep across the park, to see if our horse & vehicle were still attached. We fancied he was three or four yards lower down than we left him, but were not so anxious as to miss visiting Wordsworth's house. A woman at a cottage close to was glad to earn sixpence by unlocking the gate, & giving us a volume of information (but no poetry). The house was unoccupied, consequently the white ? (*sic*) blinds were down.

The morning being rather dull we cannot give a practical description of the place. The plateau which is a lawn elevated some six feet in order to be level with the path, & about 30 feet in circumference, affords an extensive view of Windermere, & very possible Morecambe Bay on a clear day. It is situated opposite the front of the house. From the room which was his study the view will evidently be wider still. We hurried down the road & to our astonishment were told that the trap had almost been broken to pieces &c &c. The horse had been down three times and playing all manner of pranks, but most fortunately one of Brown's drivers was passing, and by his wonderful management had saved an endless number of mishaps. We had evidently tied the horse up too tight & he had got provoked, & broken the rein; this was a lesson for us for the future. The damages were charged in our bill 2/-.

Our route to Coniston lay through Ambleside & by Skelwith bridge. This was a lovely drive as the weather was bright, & continued so for the remainder of the day. We reached Coniston (Water Head Hotel) at 12.0, just leaving sufficient time to order dinner, & walk to the steamer Gondola, which was sailing the length of the lake at 12.30. The boat is very nicely fitted up, and affords a very pleasant opportunity of seeing the lake. We returned to the hotel at 3.0.

- This account was transcribed from a pencil manuscript in AL's notebook now held by Peter H. Le Mare; he added the footnotes.



HSJ and AL

Photograph by Moses Bowness, Ambleside.