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## CHAPTER I.

### SEAT-SANDAL.

"This happy breed of men, this little world."

"To know  
That which before us lies in daily life  
Is the prime wisdom."

"All that are lovers of virtue ... be quiet, and go a-angling."

There is a mountain called Seat-Sandal, between the Dunmail Raise and Grisedale Pass; and those who have stood upon its summit know that Grasmere vale and lake lie at their feet, and that Windermere, Esthwaite, and Coniston, with many arms of the sea, and a grand brotherhood of mountains, are all around them. There is also an old gray manor-house of the same name. It is some miles distant from the foot of the mountain, snugly sheltered in one of the loveliest valleys between Coniston and Torver. No one knows when the first stones of this house were laid. The Sandals were in Sandal-Side when the white-handed, waxen-faced Edward was building Westminster Abbey, and William the Norman was laying plans for the crown of England. Probably they came with those Norsemen who a century earlier made the Isle of Man their headquarters, and from it, landing on the opposite coast of Cumberland, settled themselves among valleys and lakes and mountains of primeval beauty, which must have strongly reminded them of their native land.

For the prevailing names of this district are all of the Norwegian type, especially such abounding suffixes and prefixes as *seat* from "set," a dwelling; *dale* from "dal," a valley; *fell* from "fjeld," a mountain; *garth* from "gard," an enclosure; and *thwaite*, from "thveit," a clearing. It is certain, also, that, in spite of much Anglo-Saxon admixture, the salt blood of the roving Viking is still in the Cumberland dalesman. Centuries of bucolic isolation have not obliterated it. Every now and then the sea calls some farmer or shepherd, and the restless drop in his veins gives him no peace till he has found his

way over the hills and fells to the port of Whitehaven, and gone back to the cradling bosom that rocked his ancestors.

But in the main, this lovely spot was a northern Lotus-land to the Viking. The great hills shut him in from the sight of the sea. He built himself a "seat," and enclosed "thwaites" of greater or less extent; and, forgetting the world in his green paradise, was for centuries almost forgotten by the world. And if long descent and an ancient family have any special claim to be held honorable, it is among the Cumberland "statesmen," or freeholders, it must be looked for in England.

The Sandals have been wise and fortunate owners of the acres which Lögberg Sandal cleared for his descendants. They have a family tradition that he came from Iceland in his own galley; and a late generation has written out portions of a saga,—long orally transmitted,—which relates the incidents of his voyage. All the Sandals believe implicitly in its authenticity; and, indeed, though it is full of fighting, of the plunder of gold and rich raiment, and the carrying off of fair women, there is nothing improbable in its relations, considering the people and the time whose story it professes to tell.

Doubtless this very Lögberg Sandal built the central hall of Seat-Sandal. There were giants in those days; and it must have been the hands of giants that piled the massive blocks, and eyes accustomed to great expanses that measured off the large and lofty space. Smaller rooms have been built above it and around it, and every generation has added something to its beauty and comfort; but Lögberg's great hall, with its enormous fireplace, is still the heart of the home.

For nowhere better than among these "dalesmen" can the English elemental resistance to fusion be seen. Only at the extreme point of necessity have they exchanged ideas with any other section, yet they have left their mark all over English history. In Cumberland and Westmoreland, the most pathetic romances of the Red Rose were enacted. In the strength of these hills, the very spirit of the Reformation was cradled. From among them came the Wyckliffite queen of Henry the Eighth, and the noble confessor and apostle Bernard Gilpin. No lover of Protestantism can afford to forget the man who refused the bishopric of Carlisle, and a provostship at

Oxford, that he might traverse the hills and dales, and read to the simple "statesmen" and shepherds the unknown Gospels in the vernacular. They gathered round him in joyful wonder, and listened kneeling to the Scriptures. Only the death of Mary prevented his martyrdom; and to-day his memory is as green as are the ivies and sycamores around his old home.

The Protestant spirit which Gilpin raised among these English Northmen was exceptionally intense; and here George Fox found ready the strong mystical element necessary for his doctrines. For these men had long worshipped "in temples not made with hands." In the solemn "high places" they had learned to interpret the voices of winds and waters; and among the stupendous crags, more like clouds at sunset than fragments of solid land, they had seen and heard wonderful things. All over this country, from Kendal to old Ulverston, Fox was known and loved; and from Swarthmoor Hall, a manor-house not very far from Seat-Sandal, he took his wife.

After this the Stuarts came marching through the dales, but the followers of Wyckliffe and Fox had little sympathy with the Stuarts. In the rebellion of 1715, their own lord, the Earl of Derwentwater, was beheaded for aiding the unfortunate family; and the hills and waters around are sad with the memories of his lady's heroic efforts and sufferings. So, when Prince Charles came again, in 1745, they were moved neither by his beauty nor his romantic daring; they would take no part at all in his brilliant blunder.

It was for his staunch loyalty on this occasion, that the Christopher Sandal of that day was put among the men whom King George determined to honor. A baronetcy was offered him, which he declined; for he had a feeling that he would deeply offend old Lögberg Sandal, and perhaps all the rest of his ancestral wraiths, if he merged their ancient name in that of Baron of Torver. The sentiment was one the German King of England could understand and respect; and Sandal received, in place of a costly title, the lucrative office of High Sheriff of Cumberland, and a good share besides of the forfeited lands of the rebel houses of Huddleston and Millom.

Then he took his place among the great county families of England. He passed over his own hills, and went up to London, and did homage for the king's grace to him. And that strange journey awak-

ened in the mountain lord some old spirit of adventure and curiosity. He came home by the ocean, and perceived that he had only half lived before. He sent his sons to Oxford; he made them travel; he was delighted when the youngest two took to the sea as naturally as the eider-ducks fledged in a sea-sand nest.

Good fortune did not spoil the old, cautious family. It went "canily" forward, and knew how "to take occasion by the hand," and how to choose its friends. Towards the close of the eighteenth century, an opportune loan again set the doors of the House of Lords open to the Sandals; but the head of the family was even less inclined to enter it than his grandfather had been.

"Nay, then," was his answer, "t' Sandals are too old a family to hide their heads in a coronet. Happen, I am a bit opinion-tied, but it's over late to loosen knots made centuries ago; and I don't want to loosen them, neither."

So it will be perceived, that, though the Sandals moved, they moved slowly. A little change went a great way with them. The men were all conservative in politics, the women intensely so in all domestic traditions. They made their own sweet waters and unguents and pomades, long after the nearest chemist supplied a far better and cheaper article. Their spinning-wheels hummed by the kitchen-fire, and their shuttles glided deftly in the weaving-room, many a year after Manchester cottons were cheap and plentiful. But they were pleasant, kindly women, who did wonderful needlework, and made all kinds of dainty dishes and cordials and sirups. They were famous florists and gardeners, and the very neatest of housewives. They visited the poor and sick, and never went empty-handed. They were hearty Churchwomen. They loved God, and were truly pious, and were hardly aware of it; for those were not days of much inquiry. People did their duty and were happy, and did not reason as to "why" they did it, nor try to ascertain if there were a legitimate cause for the effect.

But about the beginning of this century, a different day began to dawn over Sandal-Side. The young heir came to his own, and signaled the event by marrying the rich Miss Lowther of Whitehaven. She had been finely educated. She had lived in large cities, and been to court. She dressed elegantly; she had a piano and

much grand furniture brought over the hills to Sandal; and she filled the old house during the summer with lords and ladies, and poets and artists, who flitted about the idyllic little village, like gay butterflies in a lovely garden.

The husband and children of such a woman were not likely to stand still. Sandal, encouraged by her political influence, went into Parliament. Her children did fairly well; for though one boy was wild, and cost them a deal of money, and another went away in a passion one morning, and never came back, the heir was a good son, and the two girls made splendid marriages. On the whole, she could feel that she had done well to her generation. Even after she had been long dead, the old women in the village talked of her beauty and spirit, of the tight hand she kept over every one and every thing pertaining to Sandal. Of all the mistresses of the old "seat," this Mistress Charlotte was the most prominent and the best remembered.

Every one who steps within the wide, cool hall of Seat-Sandal faces first of all things her picture. It is a life-size painting of a beautiful woman, in the queer, scant costume of the regency. She wears a white satin frock and white satin slippers, and carries in her hand a bunch of white roses. She appears to be coming down a flight of wide stairs; one foot is lifted for the descent, and the dark background, and the dim light in which it hangs, give to the illusion an almost startling reality. It was her fancy to have the painting hung there to welcome all who entered her doors; and though it is now old-fashioned, and rather shabby and faded, no one of the present generation cares to order its removal. All hold quietly to the opinion that "grandmother would not like it."

In that quiet acre on the hillside, which holds the generations of the Sandals, she had been at rest for ten years. But her son still bared his gray head whenever he passed her picture; still, at times, stood a minute before it, and said with tender respect, "I salute thee, mother." And in her granddaughter's lives still she interfered; for she had left in their father's charge a sum of money, which was to be used solely to give them some pleasure which they could not have without it. In this way, though dead, she kept herself a part of their

young lives; became a kind of fairy grandmother, who gave them only delightful things, and her name continued a household word.

Only the mother seemed averse to speak it; and Charlotte, who was most observant, noticed that she never lifted her eyes to the picture as she passed it. There were reasons for these things which the children did not understand. They had been too young at her death to estimate the bondage in which she had kept her daughter-in-law, who, for her husband's sake, had been ever patient and reticent. Nothing is, indeed, more remarkable than the patience of wives under this particular trial. They may be restive under many far less wrongs, but they bear the mother-in-law grievance with a dignity which shames the grim joking and the petulant abuse of men towards the same relationship. And for many years the young wife had borne nobly a domestic tyranny which pressed her on every hand. If then, she was glad to be set free from it, the feeling was too natural to be severely blamed; for she never said so,—no, not even by a look. Her children had the benefit of their grandmother's kindness, and she was too honorable to deprive the dead of their meed of gratitude.

The present holder of Sandal had none of his mother's ambitious will. He cared for neither political nor fashionable life; and as soon as he came to his inheritance, married a handsome, sensible daleswoman with whom he had long been in love. Then he retired from a world which had nothing to give him comparable, in his eyes, with the simple, dignified pleasures incident to his position as Squire of Sandal-Side. For dearly he loved the old hall, with its sheltering sycamores and oaks,—oaks which had been young trees when the knights lying in Furness Abbey led the Grasmere bowmen at Crécy and Agincourt. Dearly he loved the large, low rooms, full of comfortable elegance; and the sweet, old-fashioned, Dutch garden, so green through all the snows of winter, so cheerfully grave and fragrant in the summer twilights, so shady and cool even in the hottest noons.

Thirty years ago he was coming through it one July evening. It had been a very hot day; and the flowers were drooping, and the birds weary and silent. But Squire Sandal, though flushed and rumpled looking, had still the air of drippy mornings and hazy after-

noons about him. There was a creel at his back, and a fishing-rod in his hand, and he had just come from the high, unplanted places, and the broomy, breezy moorlands; and his broad, rosy face expressed nothing but happiness.

At his side walked his favorite daughter Charlotte,—his dear companion, the confidant and sharer of all his sylvan pleasures. She was tired and dusty; and her short printed gown showed traces of green, spongy grass, and lichen-covered rocks. But her face was a joy to see: she had such bright eyes, such a kind, handsome mouth, such a cheerful voice, such a merry laugh. As they came in sight of the wide-open front-doors, she looked ruefully down at her feet and her grass-and-water-stained skirt, and then into her father's face.

"I don't know what Sophia will say if she sees me, father; I don't, indeed."

"Never you mind her, dear. Sophia's rather high, you know. And we've had a rare good time. Eh? What?"

"I should think we have! There are not many pleasures in life better than persuading a fine trout to go a little way down stream with you. Are there, father?"

"You are right, Charlotte. Trout are the kind of company you want on an outing. And then, you know, if you can only persuade one to go down stream a bit with you, there's not much difficulty in persuading him to let you have the pleasure of seeing him to dinner. Eh? What?"

"I think I will go round by the side-door, father. I might meet some one in the hall."

"Nay, don't do that. There isn't any need to shab off. You've done nothing wrong, and I'm ready to stand by you, my dear; and you know what a good time we've been having all day. Eh? What?"

"Of course I know, father,—

    "Showers and clouds and winds,  
    All things well and proper;  
    Trailer, red and white,  
    Dark and wily dropper.

Midges true to fling  
Made of plover hackle,  
With a gaudy wing,  
And a cobweb tackle."

"Cobweb tackle, eh, Charlotte? Yes, certainly; for a hand that can manage it. Lencie Crossthwaite will land you a trout, three pounds weight, with a line that wouldn't lift a dead weight of one pound from the floor to the table. I'll uphold he will. Eh? What?"

"I'll do it myself, some day; see if I don't, father."

"I've no doubt of it, Charlotte; not a bit." Then being in the entrance-hall, they parted with a smile of confidence, and Charlotte hastened up-stairs to prepare herself for the evening meal. She gave one quick glance at her grandmother's picture as she passed it, a glance of mingled deprecation and annoyance; for there were times when the complacent serenity of the perfect face, and the perfect propriety of the white satin gown, gave her a little spasm of indignation.

She dressed rapidly, with a certain deft grace that was part of her character. And it was a delightful surprise to watch the metamorphosis; the more so, as it went on with a perfect unconsciousness of its wonderful beauty. Here a change, and there a change, until the bright brown hair was loosened from its net of knotted silk, to fall in wavy, curly masses; and the printed gown was exchanged for one of the finest muslin, pink and flowing, and pinned together with bows of pale blue satin. A daring combination, which precisely suited her blonde, brilliant beauty. Her eyes were shining; her cheeks touched by the sun till they had the charming tints of a peach on a southern wall. She looked at herself with a little nod of satisfaction, and then tapped at the door of the room adjoining her own. It was Miss Sandal's room; and Miss Sandal, though only sixteen months older than Charlotte, exacted all the deference due to her by the right of primogeniture.

"Come in, Charlotte."

"How did you know it was I?"

"I know your knock, however you vary it. Nobody knocks like you. I suppose no two people would make three taps just the same." She was far too polite to yawn; but she made as much of the movement as she could not control, and then put a mark in her book, and laid it down. A very different girl, indeed, was she from her younger sister; a stranger would never have suspected her of the same parentage.

She had dark, fine eyes, which, however, did not express what she felt: they rather gave the idea of storing up impressions to be re-acted upon by some interior power. She had a delicate complexion, a great deal of soft, black hair compactly dressed, and a neat figure. Her disposition was dreamy and self-willed; occult studies fascinated her, and she was passionately fond of moonlight. She was simply dressed in a white muslin frock, with a black ribbon around her slim waist; but the ribbon was clasped by a buckle of heavily chased gold, and her fingers had many rings on them, and looked—a very rare circumstance—the better for them. Having put down her book, she rose from her chair; and as she dipped the tips of her hands in water, and wiped them with elaborate nicety, she talked to Charlotte in a soft, deliberate way.

"Where have you been, you and father, ever since daybreak?"

"Up to Blaeberry Tarn, and then home by Holler Beck. We caught a creel full of trout, and had a very happy day."

"Really, you know?"

"Yes, really; why not?"

"I cannot understand it, Charlotte. I suppose we never were sisters before." She said the words with the air of one who rather states a fact than asks a question; and Charlotte, not at all comprehending, looked at her curiously and interrogatively.

"I mean that our relationship in this life does not touch our anterior lives."

"Oh, you know you are talking nonsense, Sophia! It gives me such a feel, you can't tell, to think of having lived before; and I don't believe it. There, now! Come, dear, let us go to dinner; I'm that hungry I'm fit to drop." For Charlotte was watching, with a feeling of injury,

Sophia's leisurely method of putting every book and chair and hair-pin in its place.

The sisters' rooms were precisely alike in their general features, and yet there was as great a relative difference in their apartments as in their natures. Both were large, low rooms, facing the sunrise. The walls of both were of dark oak; the roofs of both were of the same sombre wood; so also were the floors. They were literally oak chambers. And in both rooms the draperies of the beds, chairs, and windows were of white dimity. But in Sophia's, there were many pictures, souvenirs of girlhood's friendships, needlework, finished and unfinished drawings, and a great number of books mostly on subjects not usually attractive to young women. Charlotte's room had no pictures on its walls, and no odds and ends of memorials; and as sewing was to her a duty and not a pleasure, there was no crotcheting or Berlin-wool work in hand; and with the exception of a handsome copy of "Izaak Walton," there were no books on her table but a Bible, Book of Common Prayer, and a very shabby Thomas à Kempis.

So dissimilar were the girls in their appearance and their tastes; and yet they loved each other with that calm, habitual, family affection, which, undemonstrative as it is, stands the wear and tug of life with a wonderful tenacity. Down the broad, oak stairway they sauntered together; Charlotte's tall, erect figure, bright, loose hair, pink dress, and flowing ribbons, throwing into effective contrast the dark hair, dark eyes, white drapery, and gleaming ornaments of her elder sister.

In the hall they met the squire. He was very fond and very proud of his daughters; and he gave his right arm to Sophia, and slipped his left hand into Charlotte's hand with an affectionate pride and confidence that was charming.

"Any news, mother?" he asked, as he lifted one of the crisp brown trout from its bed of white damask and curly green parsley.

"None, squire; only the sheep-shearing at the Up-Hill Farm tomorrow. John of Middle Barra called with the statesman's respects. Will you go, squire?"

"Certainly. My men are all to lend a hand. Barf Latrigg is ageing fast now; he was my father's crony; if I slighted him, I should feel as if father knew about it. Which of you will go with me? Thou, mother?"

"That, I cannot, squire. The servant lasses are all promised for the fleece-folding; and it's a poor house that won't keep one woman busy in it."

"Sophia and Charlotte will go then?"

"Excuse me, father," answered Sophia languidly. "I shall have a headache to-morrow, I fear; I have been nervous and poorly all the afternoon."

"Why, Sophia, I didn't think I had such a foolish lass! Taking fancies for she doesn't know what. If you plan for to-morrow, plan a bit of pleasure with it; that's a long way better than expecting a headache. Charlotte will go then. Eh? What?"

"Yes, father; I will go. Sophia never could bear walking in the heat. I like it; and I think there are few things merrier than a sheep-shearing."

"So poetic! So idyllic!" murmured Sophia, with mild sarcasm.

"Many people think so, Sophia. Mr. Wordsworth would remember Pan and Arcadian shepherds playing on reedy pipes, and Chaldean shepherds studying the stars, and those on Judæa's hills who heard the angels singing. He would think of wild Tartar shepherds, and handsome Spanish and Italian."

"And still handsomer Cumberland ones." And Sophia, having given this little sisterly reminder, added calmly, "I met Mr. Wordsworth to-day, father. He had come over the fells with a party, and he looked very much bored with his company."

"I shouldn't wonder if he were. He likes his own company best. He is a great man now, but I remember well when people thought he was just a little off-at-side. You knew Nancy Butterworth, mother?"

"Certainly I did, squire. She lived near Rydal."

"Yes. Nancy wasn't very bright herself. A stranger once asked her what Mr. Wordsworth was like; and she said, 'He's canny enough at times. Mostly he's wandering up and down t' hills, talking his poetry; but now and then he'll say, "How do ye do, Nancy?" as sensible as you or me.'"

"Mr. Wordsworth speaks foolishness to a great many people besides Nancy Butterworth," said Sophia warmly; "but he is a great poet and a great seer to those who can understand him."

"Well, well, Mr. Wordsworth is neither here nor there in our affairs. We'll go up to Latriggs in the afternoon, Charlotte. I'll be ready at two o'clock."

"And I, also, father." Her face was flushed and thoughtful, and she had become suddenly quiet. The squire glanced at her, but without curiosity; he only thought, "What a pity she is a lass! I wish Harry had her good sense and her good heart; I do that."

## CHAPTER II.

### THE SHEEP-SHEARING.

"Plain living and high thinking ...  
The homely beauty of the good old cause,  
...our peace, our fearful innocence,  
And pure religion breathing household laws."

"A happy youth, and their old age  
Is beautiful and free."

The sheep-shearings at Up-Hill Farm were a kind of rural Olympics. Shepherds came there from far and near to try their skill against each other, — young men in their prime mostly, with brown, ruddy faces, and eyes of that bright blue lustre which is only gained by a free, open-air life. The hillside was just turning purple with heather bloom, and along the winding, stony road the yellow asphodels were dancing in the wind. Everywhere there was the scent of bog-myrtle and wild-rose and sweetbrier, and the tinkling sound of becks babbling over glossy rocks; and in the glorious sunshine and luminous air, the mountains appeared to expand and elevate, and to throw out glowing peaks and summits into infinite space.

Hand in hand the squire and his daughter climbed the fellside. They had left home in high spirits, merrily flinging back the mother's and Sophia's last advices; but gradually they became silent, and then a little mournful. "I wonder why it is, father?" asked Charlotte; "I'm not at all tired, and how can fresh air and sunshine make one melancholy?"

"Maybe, now, sad thoughts are catching. I was having a few. Eh? What?"

"I don't know. Why were you having sad thoughts?"

"Well, then, I really can't understand why. There's no need to fret over changes. At the long end the great change puts all right. Charlotte, I have been coming to Barf Latrigg's shearings for about half a century. I remember the first. I held my nurse's hand, and wore

such a funny little coat, and such a big lace collar. And, dear me! it was just such a day as this, thirty-two years ago, that your mother walked up to the shearing with me, Charlotte; and I asked her if she would be my wife, and she said she would. Thou takes after her a good deal; she had the very same bright eyes and bonny face, and straight, tall shape thou has to-day. Barf Latrigg was sixty then, turning a bit gray, but able to shear with any man they could put against him. He'll be ninety now; but his father lived till he was more than a hundred, and most of his fore-elders touched the century. He's had his troubles too."

"I never heard of them."

"No. They are dead and buried. A dead trouble may be forgot: it is the living troubles that make the eyes dim, and the heart fail. Yes, yes; Barf is as happy as a boy now, but I remember when he was back-set and fore-set with trouble. In life every thing goes round like a cart-wheel. Eh? What?"

In a short time they reached the outer wall of the farm. They were eight hundred feet above the valley; and looking backwards upon the woods from their airy shelf, the tops of the trees appeared like a solid green road, on which they might drop down and walk. Stone steps in the stone wall admitted them into the enclosure, and then they saw the low gray house spreading itself in the shadow of the noble sycamores—

... "musical with bees;  
Such tents the patriarchs loved."

As they approached, the old statesman strode to the open door to meet them. He was a very tall man, with a bright, florid face, and a great deal of fine, white hair. Two large sheep-dogs, which only wanted a hint to be uncivil, walked beside him. He had that independent manner which honorable descent and absolute ownership of house and land give; and he looked every inch a gentleman, though he wore only the old dalesman's costume,—breeches of buckskin fastened at the knees with five silver buttons, home-knit stockings and low shoes, and a red waistcoat, open that day, in order to show the fine ruffles on his shirt. He was precisely what Squire Sandal would have been, if the Sandals had not been forced