The first sound of a lamb’s bleating carried us up the steep hedge to peep through at the absurdly big ears and awkward woolly legs of the little creatures. “Betimes I shall keep sheep,” wrote Raleigh in London at the mercy of the Virgin Queen’s whims, probably thinking of just such a February morning as this, when all the wide country was lively and busy with the frisking lambs. He was a many-sided man, and, as our historian Bancroft said, “limited in himself as many kinds of glory as were ever combined in an individual.” It would take long to tell off on buttons, as children count, “doctor, lawyer, merchant, chief,” the parts he played: some of them are “country gentleman, student, soldier, sailor, adventurer, courtier, favorite and spoilism, colonizer, fighter, landlord, agriculturist, poet, patron of letters, state prisoner, explorer, conqueror, politician, statesman, conspirator, chemist, scholar, historian, self-seeker and martyr to patriotism.” With all this comprehensive experience, he was always “a proper Devon man.” He never lost his broad speech, for which Elizabeth had a liking, as well she might, considering what she owed those who spoke it. He was very fittingly employed on those days when it was his duty to dispense justice to his own countrymen from one of the wind-swept, fog-draped tors of Dartmoor. Few ever loved Raleigh but the men of Devon; that is, of his contemporaries. Posterity generally holds with Stevenson that there may have been nobler heroes than Sir Walter, but never a finer gentleman.

Even my small escort, driving an imaginary flock of sheep through the winding lanes with a bit of furze for a whip, found him attractive, and enthusiastically talked of him as a little boy tramping through the woods with his brother to the beach at Budleigh-Salterton, and learning from the sailors there about the far-away new America and about the building of toy ships and the sailing of real ones. The basis of all this was the famous painting by Millais, a really admirable starting-point for forming an acquaintance with Sir Walter, considering that the painter has suggested in the boy’s face those dreams of the new world which became the passion of his life. Others sailed to America for gold; Raleigh, though he loved money, worked unceasingly and spent fortunes to found settlements there which should in time be of use to England; for instance, sending at least five expeditions just in search of the Roanoke colonists whom it turned out Powhatan had murdered. Those were the heroic days when men were “as near to heaven by sea as by land,” when plundering Spanish ships was a sacred duty. Raleigh saw that the best way to curtail
THE BIRTHPLACE OF RALEIGH

Spain’s power was to build up an English domain beyond the western ocean. Through his far-seeing patriotism it happened that we English-speaking people dominate the western hemisphere.

TO US Americans, as we knocked on the iron-studded, four-foot oak door at Hayes-Barton, it was interesting to reflect that the threads of our history were entangled with those of this secluded farmhouse. It was not imposing. The Raleighs, when they occupied it, were saving money. When the young Walter was spreading his cloak in the mud, and scribbling on the window-pane, “Fain would I climb but that I fear to fall,” it will be remembered, he had his fortune to make. But his first home looked exceedingly substantial and friendly, and its thatched roof and gables, casement windows, and gray “cob” walls suited the landscape as if designed for the purpose. Inside the neat, round-topped wall, a wattled pen, which one of Shakespeare’s shepherds might have made, protected a lamb and its mother. A brook told of small pinnacles and caravels which the lads of long ago must have launched in it.

The wife of the master-farmer who lives in the house now had lately been dealt with by her rector to the point of consenting to admit visitors. Accordingly we had tea in the large, low-studded room with the lambskin rugs, where the Raleighs entertained their friends. It still looks the part, although the huge fireplace has been boarded up, and partitions have been erected through the middle of the building to make a hallway. Everything is well-preserved, and few changes have been made. Some of the windows are new, as they were closed once because of the execrable window tax, and then reopened. In many places monster beams show. No two treads of the stairs were the same width. Although the farmer’s wife had another belief, the room where Sir Walter was born probably looks from the front of the left wing, on the ground floor, out upon the woods. The small square room over the projecting central porch she assured us was Sir Walter’s smoking room. ‘Twas here, she said, that the servant threw water over him under the impression that he was afire. Our hostess took much pleasure in picturing the scene, and we forbore to endanger her business of “serving teas” by reminding her that Sir Walter left this house while still a small boy.

OUR hostess’s greatest treasure was the original letter, recently discovered, in which Sir Walter, in the days of his mingled triumph and disappointment, tried to buy the old farm. Small wonder if he longed for this haven, in Durham House on the
THE FRONT ENTRANCE OF HAYES-BARTON: SIR WALTER RALEIGH'S HOME IN EAST BUDLEIGH, DEVON.
THE PARISH CHURCH AT EAST BUDLEIGH, NEAR RALEIGH'S HOME.

GARDEN WALL ABOUT THE OLD ESTATE OF HAYES-BARTON.
WINDOW IN THE ROOM IN WHICH RAFFLEIGH WAS BORN.
CARVED PEW ENDS IN THE EAST BUDGEIGH CHURCH.
A VIEW OF HAYES-BARTON LOOKING UP FROM THE POND: THE LINES OF THE OLD THATCHED ROOF ARE OF SPECIAL BEAUTY.
Thames bank, which, after he had characteristically lavished vast funds on it, was twenty years later given back to its former owner. A still greater contrast to the simple farmhouse was that other strange home, the great cheerless stronghold by the busy Thames, the Tower of London. Perhaps, according to our estimates, he was not guileless: “he was a man with a higher ideal than he attempted to follow.” But the traditional English sense of justice seemed sadly crowded throughout the long story of his undoing, of his desperate attempt at suicide, of the appeals which he enclosed in apples and had thrown into the window of the fellow-prisoner who could have saved him of the strange trial in which, one present said, “Sir Walter served for a whole act and played all the parts himself,” of the tragic-comic postponement of the executions which it pleased King James to arrange as he would have planned a court play.

Life in the Tower was a strange one for Raleigh and his faithful wife, and the servants, some of whom were Indians whom he had brought from Guiana. His younger son was born and grew to a sizable boy in the Tower. Raleigh had many visitors, and was permitted to stroll on the terrace, where, handsomely dressed and bejeweled as always, he attracted more sympathy among the crowds on the Tower wharf than ever in his life before. In an outhouse in the garden he had his laboratory, where he assayed the specimens of gold brought from Guiana from time to time. Year by year under his restless pen grew his History of the World, that deservedly admired literary monument. He became greatly respected as a chemist, almost as a wizard. To the noble Prince Henry he was a hero; their friendship might have meant liberty to Raleigh if the boy had lived.

While it was a cruel experience for anyone who had known the freedom of these meadows and moors near Hayes-Barton. He was like a ghost from another world when after twelve years he was released. But his boyhood dreams on the Budleigh-Salterton beach were strong within him still: his only thought was to make one more attempt, though his resources were badly shattered, to found a colony in the new world. With youthful enthusiasm he plunged into this last expedition, even before he embarked practically doomed by the bargaining between James and England’s old enemy, Spain. Few sadlier figures present themselves in history than the old, broken man, in the wilds of Guiana, the gold mine which was to have convinced James undiscovered, his son slain by the Spaniards, his faithful retainer, because of his upbraiding, a suicide.

Raleigh’s career was full of dramatic contrasts. Not the least is that which comes to mind in the parish church at East Budleigh. It is a plain small edifice; its only treasures are the traces of the
A SONG OF CONTENT

Raleigh family in wood and stone; few travelers ever see it. Sir Walter worshiped there as a boy, in the pew which still bears the family arms. But he does not lie buried there. Many Americans visit his resting-place every year, in beautiful St. Margaret’s, Westminster, near the spot on Old Palace Yard where he was “done to death by the basest king that ever sat on Britain’s throne,” for trying to plant a branch of the Angle-Saxon race in South America. The inscription reads:

“Should you reflect on his errors
Remember his many virtues
And that he was a mortal.”

It should be supplemented by the words put into Raleigh’s mouth as he stood ruined, in Guiana, by an American man of letters:

“Whether here
The manly law of England shall prevail,
Or else this tropic western hemisphere
Languish with slumb’rous Spain, is what we fought for.”

A SONG OF CONTENT

A

BOVE an emerald sea of sod
Blow linen sails like snow;
The floors are sanded, and the hearth
Gleams with an Altar’s glow.

A wholesome smell of bread, new-baked;
The spinning-wheel’s low hum;
These, with an hundred homely tasks,
Make of her day, the sum.

Yet search the whole world thro’ and thro’,
Her happiness to match,—
Her drowsy babe upon her breast,
His hand upon the latch!

Edith Vaughan Michaux