

CHAPTER XVII.

GRIMSARGH TO WALTON-LE-DALE.

GRIMSARGH CHURCH—THE RIBBLE AT RED SCAR—SAMBLESBURY—
HIGHER AND LOWER BROCKHOLES—RIBBLETON MOOR—HISTORIC
GROUND—BROCKHOLES BRIDGE—CUERDALE HOARD—WALTON
CHURCH.

GRIMSARGH, like its near neighbour Longridge, has but few historically interesting associations, and the tourist after an inspection of its church—which stands by the roadside some distance beyond the village—may pass along without fear of having omitted anything of special note. The place, however, despite its present-day modern appearance, has some claim to antiquity and in the reign of Henry III. it is recorded of one William de Eton having held the “town of Grymesargh.” The first small church appears to have been erected about the year 1716 by subscription and chiefly through the exertions of the Rev. Samuel Peploe, Vicar of Preston. When the building was enlarged about a century later, the edifice was almost covered with ivy and presented a most picturesque object. In 1840 the Rev. J. E. Cross built at his own expense a chancel and north aisle, and in 1868-9 rebuilt the nave and tower. The church contains several handsome stained glass windows, mementoes of the Cross family of Red Scar.

Continuing along the highway, there is seen by the roadside the remains of an old cross and stocks. Of the cross itself only the base or socket stone is left, though it is rather surprising that this interesting relic of a past age has so long remained neglected. Cannot this ancient symbol be restored? No elaborately carved emblem is required, a plain cross cut from local stone would serve the purpose admirably.

Less than a mile further a stile upon the left before reaching Riches Farm, marks our departure from the highway. This field path leads alongside the Red Scar estate. To the right amidst the trees may be discerned Ribbleton Hall, which has many links with former distinguished families, including the Sherburnes of Stonyhurst. Before arriving at the wood where the path winds through, there is a vantage point from whence is obtained one of the loveliest views along the whole Lancashire portion of the Ribble. Unfortunately for the sightseer a thorn fence prevents ready access to the site commanding the most extensive outlook. The landowner has, of course, his freehold rights, but surely it would not entail a great sacrifice to make some small provision by which the public could have access to a few yards of the land commanding so charming an outlook.

From this plateau which overlooks the woods of Red Scar and the famous "horse shoe" bend of the river there is an enchanting prospect. The Ribble from where we left its banks at Hothersall flows onward by the precipitous Balderstone Scar towards Preston. Its course is marked by many windings, the most pronounced of these occurring at Red Scar, where the river has carved out a semi-circular indentation not unlike an elongated horse shoe. At the extreme outer bend the repeated inroads of the waters of the Ribble, which here flow over the red sandstone rock, have wrought considerable havoc with the wood upon the north bank. Repeated attempts to prevent further encroachments have so far proved futile, and each year sees the demolition of some of the trees and portions of the bank bordering the river. Rich alluvial land is, however, being laid down upon the opposite bank, though this transplanting of land, however advantageous to the farmer whose acres are being added to, is scarcely likely to commend itself to the owner of Red Scar. At the present time about two hundred acres of fertile land lie within the peninsula, most of which has in days gone by formed the bed of the stream.

One might descant at length on the natural beauty of the scenery in the vicinity of Red Scar. It is one of those places that can be visited again and again and each occasion reveal some new charm. The varying seasons bring along their own particular attractions, and so long as there are those who can appreciate the beautiful in Nature Red Scar will never lack votaries ready to sing its praise. The youths of Preston know the adjoining woods as furnishing a productive black-berrying ground, and in our young days many excursions have we made here in quest of this delectable fruit. Other youthful reminiscences are of entomological pursuits, when in the early and exciting days of "collecting" Red Scar furnished us with many specimens. A certain grassy slope bordering the wood will always be associated with the blue butterflies that frequented it, and many a gorgeous red admiral and small tortoiseshell have we madly chased along the flower-bordered lanes of Elston. The riverside still holds its fascination, though our methods of observing the wild life by its banks have certainly undergone some change for the better. In those days of misguided Nature Study bird nesting was almost a passion, and be it said to our shame, many a sand-martin's nest was minus its eggs on returning from a visit to Red Scar.

The residence of Red Scar is delightfully situated on the table-land above the wood. It is a modern house in the late Jacobean style and for several generations was the seat of the Cross family. In the grounds are two observatories constructed for William Assheton Cross, who devoted considerable time to astronomical study. Prominent among the distinguished members of the family was the late Viscount Cross, who was born at Red Scar, and whose death at the advanced age of ninety-one took place in January, 1914. Educated at Rugby under Dr. Arnold and at Trinity College, Cambridge, his subsequent career was one of the most remarkable in the story of political service. He represented Preston in the Conservative interest from 1857 until 1862,

and later was returned M.P. for South-West Lancashire, having successfully opposed Mr. Gladstone. He was Home Secretary in the Government of Disraeli and was a Minister under Lord Salisbury. From 1886 until 1892 he was Secretary of State for India, and three years later was made Lord of the Privy Seal. While in active service Lord Cross won distinction as a legislator, and for many years was the trusted adviser of Queen Victoria. To Lord Cross is attributed the once famous declaration: "I think I hear an honourable member smile," the only instance, so it is recorded, of his ever having perpetrated a joke.

Resuming our journey through the wood by way of a path, part of which at times does duty as a water-course, we have on emerging an uninterrupted view of the Ribble Valley in the direction of Preston. The river after its elliptical wind round Red Scar flows along a fertile alluvial flat, part of this land being under the plough. In the valley are seen the once stately halls of Higher and Lower Brockholes, now serving as more humble farmsteads. Spanning the river is Brockholes Bridge and beyond is Cuerdale Hall, while in the distance stands the church-crowned hill of Walton-le-Dale. On the opposite bank of the river is the extensive township of Samlesbury, of whose history many pages might be written. Its famous old Hall, situated on the Preston and Blackburn highway is a remarkable specimen of mediæval architecture and has, moreover, a wealth of historic associations centred around it. The Lower Hall, standing on the bank of the river, though not so noted a building as the old Hall, is not by any means devoid of interest. Occupying a like position is Samlesbury Church, a link with the little chapel that was here in existence in the twelfth century. Samlesbury in the past has furnished a black chapter in Lancashire history in its connection with witchcraft. At the famous witch trials at Lancaster in the year 1612 eight of the nineteen persons arraigned before the judges to answer charges of witchcraft were from Samlesbury.



HIGHER BROCKHOLES (1643).

Descending to the lower ground, the ancient mansion of Higher Brockholes is quickly reached. Though modern alterations have shorn this building of much of its old-time dignity, the preservation of its quaint postern gable affords some idea of the former picturesque style of architecture. A carved wood panel bears the initials R.E.A. and the date 1643. The initials are those of the builders, Richard Elston and Ann, his wife. Lower Brockholes Hall, situated nearer the bridge, is a little more ancient and was built in 1634. Over the hall door of the house are the arms of Brockholes in *alto relievo*.

A fair amount of land in the valley is at the present time occupied with cereal crops, fields of wheat and oats now growing where once flowed the lake-like river. The woods upon the right, on the acclivity bordering Ribbleton Moor, were in time past a productive ground for the botanist. In Brockholes wood there formerly grew quite plentifully the royal fern (*Osmunda regalis*), the most majestic of our British species, beside other plants now rarely met with in the district. Until the year 1860 the moor itself was a swampy and desolate tract of land, very different indeed from its present-day appearance. Before that period it is doubtful if anyone other than the plant lover would have found much enjoyment in rambling over Ribbleton Moor. To the botanist, however, it must have possessed special attractions and the list of plants which at one time flourished here is an interesting one. The beautiful marsh gentian (*Gentiana pneumonanthe*) is recorded as having been abundant, and the bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) scarcely less so. In and around the margins of the shallow pools were to be found the frog-bit (*Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*), least water parsnip (*Sium inundatum*), sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*), marsh speedwell (*Veronica scutellata*), and the marsh violet (*Viola palustris*).

But Ribbleton Moor has other associations likely to be of more general interest than those concerning its past botanical records. It was here that Cromwell early on the

morning of the 17th of August, 1648, surprised and defeated a division of the Royalist army under Sir Marmaduke Langdale, who had come down from Northumberland with a body of fighting men in order to join the Duke of Hamilton, whose troops were quartered in the town of Preston. History records that though later in the day Langdale's men were reinforced by Hamilton's army they were no match for the Parliamentarians, who, driving their opponents into Preston, continued the fighting in the streets. Near the old Ribble Bridge at Walton-le-Dale, the combat was renewed with gallant determination, resulting in heavy losses on both sides. The Royalists, however, were compelled to fall back before the fierce onslaught of the Cromwellian army, who captured the bridge and drove the enemy southward. This decisive victory of Cromwell's at Preston sounded the death-knell of the Stuart cause in England. It is estimated that the total Royalist forces amounted to about 21,000 men, whilst the whole force under Cromwell did not at any time number more than 8,600. Relics of this engagement in the form of cannon balls and musket bullets have been found on Ribbleton Moor during draining and ploughing operations.

The Ribble in the immediate vicinity of Preston is spanned by no fewer than eight bridges. Brockholes Bridge—more familiarly known as the “Ha’penny Bridge,” owing to a toll of one halfpenny being formerly levied on all foot passengers passing over—is the first structure to claim our attention. This substantial stone bridge on the line of the Preston and Blackburn highway was built in 1861. Its predecessor was a wooden structure erected in 1824 at the time the road was made. When the construction of this road was under consideration considerable opposition was offered to the scheme by the owners of land in Brockholes. These landowners, who were evidently not of the “free trade” fraternity, were alarmed lest the proposed road should prove injurious to their interests, and even went to the length of petitioning Parliament against the Bill. Their complaint was

that the road would be likely to entail them in serious loss by giving the farmers of Samlesbury facilities for supplying Preston with milk and butter in competition with them! The petition as may be surmised met with little sympathy, and the necessary powers being obtained the work was proceeded with.

A weir at one time existed near where the bridge crosses the river, a structure that was the cause of one of the most prolonged litigations that ever occupied the English courts. The owners of Brockholes Hall estates, who had a small mill near the river, claimed the right to dam the stream for power purposes. The lawsuits fought were in respect of the Ribble fisheries, the bone of contention being the weir which it was contended prevented the salmon ascending the stream. For nearly a hundred years the Brockholes fishery case occupied the courts of law. Lady Shelley figured in three lawsuits respecting it, and during one of the trials the judge and jury sat for twenty-four hours consecutively. Occasional passages of humour served at times to provide a little diversion during the hearing of what must have proved a most tiresome dispute to all concerned. The story is told concerning one legal luminary named Sergeant Cockle, a member of the northern bar, who upon one occasion was somewhat peremptory in his cross-examination of an adverse witness—an elderly female. Much having been adduced in evidence about the stoppage of salmon in their way eastward by the weir, he, after some browbeating of the old lady, said: "I suppose, mistress, you like salmon?" "Yes, sir," came the unexpected retort, "I like salmon, but I don't like *Cockle* sauce to it."

From Brockholes Bridge a field path on the left bank of the river leads by Cuerdale Hall to Walton-le-Dale. This portion of the valley is of considerable width, the greater part of which is practically dead level. The mill chimneys of Preston crowning the opposite bank afford indication that

we are now virtually in touch with this important centre of industry—the only town of any magnitude by the banks of the Ribble.

Although Cuerdale Hall is not associated with any historic records of special note, the prettily situated old manor house, now a farm residence, can scarcely fail to attract the tourist's attention. Its uneventful annals extend a little beyond two centuries, the present Hall having been built in 1700. The estate, however, has been owned by some noteworthy families, including the Asshetons of Downham, whose possession it became in 1582. There are some particularly fine trees near by, principally elm and beech, many of these veterans representing the growth of centuries.

If the quiet pastoral vale of Cuerdale bears no outward indication of having played a part in history, it *may* have been the scene of some important event. What is usually regarded as tangible evidence in support of this assumption was furnished some years ago by the discovery of an immense hoard of ancient coins, one of the most unique "finds" ever made in the kingdom. The unexpected discovery of this long-hidden treasure was made in May, 1840, during some repairs to the river bank near Cuerdale Hall. Whilst the work was in progress one of the workmen struck, either with pick or spade, what proved to be an old lead-lined chest, when to his astonishment out rolled a stream of silver coins. The resultant excitement quickly attracted a number of persons to the spot, and before the treasure was officially taken charge of a goodly number of "mementoes" were carried off. The treasure actually recovered from the banks of the Ribble included no fewer than 6,800 coins of the ninth and tenth centuries in addition to ingots and small bars of silver, rings, armlets, chains, etc. The coins contained the mintages of seven Anglo-Saxon Kings, while about 1,000 were French, 3,000 Scandinavian, and a few Oriental. Some of the issues were totally new to collectors. When the discovery became

known the legal question arose regarding the rightful ownership of the "find," and a few weeks afterwards a coroner's court was held at the Bull Inn, Preston, when the various claims of aspiring owners were considered. The investigation ended in a verdict to the effect that the "treasure-trove" rightly belonged to the Queen as Duchess of Lancaster. The coins were subsequently judiciously distributed, specimens being sent to museums and institutions throughout the country. A collection of Cuerdale coins in a remarkably fine state of preservation is to be seen in the Harris Museum, Preston. Various opinions have been put forward from time to time by way of accounting for the presence of so vast a treasure in such a spot. All, however, are more or less conjectural, and why or by whom the Cuerdale hoard was deposited is ever likely to remain a mystery.

Continuing along this pleasantly attractive valley, where at intervals are disclosed some charming "bits" of landscape, the ascent to higher ground brings us to Walton Church.

Old and new mingle incongruously in the architecture of the Church of St. Leonard. The tower is as it has stood for centuries, but the body of the church is noticeably modern. Time, however, will tone down this apparent newness, and if the critical eye of the antiquary cannot appreciate the supplanting of the old by the new, the restoration of Walton Church was certainly needed. The tower contains six bells famed for their remarkable sweetness of tone. These were hung in 1761, four bells having previously formed the peal. The most historically interesting memorials in the church are those of the Hoghton and Assheton families.

Few churches along the valley enjoy so commanding a situation as that of Walton, whose hoary old tower is so familiar a landmark from many points. It stands upon an acclivity above the Ribble which is here known as "Walton deeps," a once noted stretch of fishing water that has yielded innumerable "Ribble salmon." Across the valley are seen the clustering chimneys and spires of Preston, and one

familiar with the place has no difficulty in identifying most of its principal public buildings. If ever the familiar doggerel lines, "Proud Preston, poor people; high church, low steeple," could be truthfully applied, this is no longer the case, at least not so far as its church steeples are concerned. Mr. Hewitson, however, suggests that the reference to "low steeple" probably originated when the tower of the Parish Church was taken down early in the nineteenth century and the structure for some years remained no higher than the church itself. Prominent amidst the upreared landmarks seen from Church Brow are the Gothic spires of the Parish Church and Town Hall, while near by is the conspicuous Renaissance tower of the County Sessions Hall. In the distance, though not seen from here to the best advantage, rises the beautiful tapering spire of St. Walburge's Church, Preston's loftiest structure and one of the tallest church steeples in the country. Its height of 303 feet renders it a familiar landmark for miles around, and the limestone of which it is built remains to-day almost as white as when first quarried. On the tapering shafts that speak of the town's industries we need not dwell. Mill chimneys, be they ever so graceful of form, rarely furnish an aesthetic contribution to a landscape. Each year sees the extension of Preston's boundaries and a few more chimneys are upreared. But we would not have it otherwise. The factories largely represent the progress and prosperity of the old borough, and even if a few have usurped some time-honoured site a long time must elapse before the march of industry destroys the natural charm of the valley.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WALTON-LE-DALE TO PRESTON.

ITS EARLY OCCUPATION—WALTON BRIDGE—A NOTED INN—THE RIVER DARWEN—ROMAN WALTON—AVENHAM AND MILLER PARKS—ANCIENT FORDS—PENWORTHAM—CASTLE HILL AND PRIORY—RIBBLE FISHERIES—PAST AND PRESENT.

THE ancient-cum-modern village of Walton-de-Dale has, apart from its picturesque setting, many associations that merit recognition by the tourist. Its early history goes back to a remote past, for at Walton have been found bronze spear heads, bronze axes, and other articles of the same metal presumed to be authentic relics of Celtic occupation. Its records, too, are mingled with the history and traditions of Roman times, for Walton, like Ribchester, was a station occupied by the early invaders of Britain. During later periods it has been the scene of many historic incidents, and it was here that Cromwell delivered the *coup de grace* to the Royalist forces under the Duke of Hamilton.

Spanning the river at the northern end of the village is Walton Bridge, a graceful structure consisting of three large arches. Set in the masonry on the north side is a stone bearing the following inscription: "Built by John Sam^l and Rob^t Laws in 1779, 80, and 81. Under the Inspection of Rich^d Threlfall. Cost £4,200." The present structure superseded the famous "Bridge of Ribble" alluded to by Cromwell in his dispatch as having been taken at "push of pike" after stubborn resistance by the enemy. This bridge, which stood a short distance below the present one and close by the old Roman ford, was long regarded as an important military position. A bridge at Walton has existed from very

early times. In the thirteenth century the "Bridge of Ribble" is referred to, and in the reign of Henry IV. letters patent were granted for the "pontage of the River Ribble, juxta Preston." Leland, the antiquary, in the reign of Henry VIII., makes mention of the great stone bridge of Rybill, having V. great arches. Until the middle of the eighteenth century the Ribble Bridge at Walton was the only structure spanning the river in the neighbourhood of Preston.

Among Walton's past worthies who have left behind imperishable records might be mentioned Edward Baines, the historian, who was born here in the year 1774. Joseph Livesey, the great pioneer of temperance reform, to whom belongs the honour of having drawn up the first teetotal pledge (at Preston on the 1st of September, 1832), was also a native of Walton.

Probably the most interesting building in the village to-day is the old Unicorn Inn, which remains externally much the same as it did in the days of the Stuarts. It is, however, no longer a licensed house, but a popular and well-appointed tea room. Cromwell is supposed to have slept here on the night following his memorable victory, and "Cromwell's room" is shown to any interested visitor. In later days the inn became the resort of a Jacobite club known as the "Mock Corporation of Walton," a body ostensibly social and convivial in its aims, but in reality a political organisation for the furtherance of the ill-starred Stuart cause. Among the notable names associated with the assembly, which had its mayor, recorder, bailiffs, physician, jester, mace bearer, poet laureate, town clerk, etc., were the Duke of Norfolk (who was "mayor" in 1709), Sir Thomas Sherburne, and Sir William Pennington.

Close by the Unicorn is the bridge spanning the Darwen, re-built in 1901 at a cost of over £8,000. Let into the parapet are two interesting incised stones discovered during the demolition of the old bridge. These bear the following

information in eighteenth century lettering: "Built 1366, Repaired 1701. John Walmsley, Esq. Re-built 1752. T. Nevett and R. H. . . . supervisors." Just beyond the bridge is Walton Green, where the quaint seventeenth century houses preserve much of the old-time aspect of the village. Passing along here and by the beautifully wooded demesne of Walton Hall brings us alongside the Darwen, but not the Darwen as of old. This is one of the Ribble's tributary streams of which it has no cause to be proud; nor are we tempted to hail with acclamation this once pellucid river famed for its salmon and the clarity of its waters. It is at the present time perhaps the most defiled of any stream of note paying tribute to the Ribble. But the Darwen at Walton is not without historic reminiscences. In the oft-quoted dispatch written on the 20th of August, 1648, to the speaker of the House of Commons, Cromwell makes mention of having possessed the "bridge over Darwen and a few houses there, the enemy being driven up within musket shot of us where we lay that night." Milton in his sonnet to Cromwell refers to "Darwen stream with blood of Scots imbrued."

The present course of the Darwen from the bridge to its junction with the Ribble does not follow the path it formerly did, having been straightened and shortened about the beginning of the nineteenth century. Before this was undertaken the stream made an elliptical curve eastward, after the manner of the "horse shoe" at Red Scar, only of smaller dimensions. Between the Darwen and the Ribble was situated the old Roman station and most of the relics have been found within this portion of the "flats." No extensive systematic excavations have been carried out, but the number of relics unearthed at various times must have been immense. When excavating for the foundation of Messrs. Calvert's mill, as well as some of the cottages near by, a great number of ancient articles were disinterred. Most of these, however, appear to have attracted but little attention at the time and

almost all traces of them are lost. To Mr. Charles Hardwick is due the first authentic information regarding Roman Walton, though his interesting discoveries were, as he himself states, the result of purely fortuitous circumstances made whilst searching for relics of the Commonwealth on Walton flats in 1855. In examining the debris turned up by workmen who were at the time engaged in digging for stones for the purpose of road mending, Mr. Hardwick came upon a portion of a Roman pewter vessel, and the subsequent discovery of brass coins by the workmen led to a stricter search being instituted. The antiquities found from time to time and still preserved, include coins, fibulae, querns, and a large collection of pottery, including some pieces of "Roman red lustrous ware" exhibiting well-executed figures in relief.

Regaining the banks of the now tidal river, there is revealed westward a fine view of the Avenham Valley, the most delightful portion of Preston's many charming environs. Prestonians have every reason to be proud of their share in the Ribble Valley, as here are situated the Avenham and Miller Parks comprising nearly forty acres and which certainly rank amongst the most attractive and picturesque resorts possessed by any town.

The old tram bridge spanning the river at the eastern side of Avenham Park is a wooden structure erected in 1802 and re-built in 1860. It originally formed part of a tramway system connecting the Lancaster canal with a branch of that from Liverpool to Leeds at the "Summit" coal pits near Bamber Bridge. On the brow of the hill at Avenham a stationary engine raised by means of an "endless chain" the coal-laden waggons to the level of the high bank of the river. A deep pool just below the bridge on the north side is known as the "stone delph," the red sandstone rock having at one time here been quarried. It is generally supposed that the old steeple of the Parish Church at Preston, taken down in

1814 owing to its unsafe condition, was built of stone obtained from this quarry.

Passing over the bridge, which leads into Avenham Park, a continuation of our journey along the tree-shaded path fronting the river enables us to obtain a fair conception of the commendable use that has been made of this fine natural site. The liberal planting of trees and ornamental shrubs has certainly made this part of the Ribble Valley a valuable acquisition to the town. Nor have the claims of the youngsters been overlooked, for if ever children possessed an ideal playing field it is the wide expanse of greensward here made over for their use.

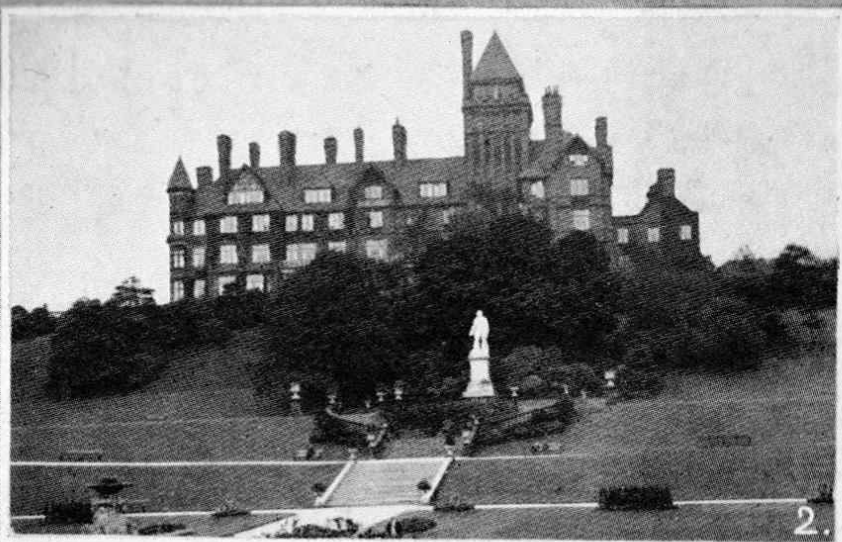
That the playground at Avenham is at all times made good use of goes without saying, but there is one day in the year when it can furnish a picture unparalleled throughout the country. This is the Easter Monday egg-rolling festival, a never to be forgotten sight by those who have witnessed it. The past few decades have witnessed the passing away of many old time customs, and even where these survive the majority are only kept alive by some special effort. But Preston's egg-rolling carnival loses nothing of its popularity with the passing years. Each fine Easter Monday thousands of eager eyes and feet turn towards Avenham Park, practically every child with a supply of dyed eggs and oranges to roll and indulge in mimic warfare upon the greensward by the bank of the Ribble. It is now many years since the writer made one of the multitude of youthful egg rollers, but the memory of those fête days is sufficiently vivid to warrant the statement that one of the keenest disappointments that can come the way of a Preston child is a wet Easter Monday.

The East Lancashire Railway separates the Avenham and Miller Parks, a three-span iron girder bridge, over which there is a public footway, crossing the river at this point. On the south side the railway is carried over the Ribble

Valley by a long viaduct consisting of fifty-three brick arches. This line was opened for traffic in 1846. The construction of the river bridge and viaduct is estimated to have cost about £55,000.

The eleven acres of land forming Miller Park was a gift by one of Preston's respected townsmen, Alderman T. Miller, in 1864. It is now a charming retreat where the landscape gardener's art is seen displayed to perfection. Crowning the lofty sloping bank on the north side is the palatial Park Hotel, a picturesque building in the Elizabethan style of architecture that in no way detracts from the charming surroundings it enjoys. The cost of this hotel, exclusive of furniture, is said to have been about £40,000. A monument not likely to be overlooked by the visitor is the Derby statue which occupies a prominent position on the north terrace. It represents the 14th Earl and is considered a very striking likeness. The statue is of white Sicilian marble and rests upon a base and pedestal of granite. The weight of the entire monument is nearly fifty tons. It was erected by subscriptions raised in Lancashire, the total sum expended upon it being about £2,500. It is worthy of note that of this sum £346 15s. 7d. was raised by penny subscriptions entirely subscribed by working men.

The Ribble contributes in no small measure to the attractiveness and popularity of the Avenham and Miller Parks. Boating is largely indulged in and the river oftentimes presents a picture of gaiety and animation. At full tides a long stretch of river is available for boating purposes, though at low water the numerous shallows render this form of recreation not unattended with danger. If the recent scheme (postponed owing to cost) for the construction of a weir in the river had gone forward, a safe boating depth for a distance of some 200 yards above the confluence of the Darwen would at all times have been assured. Spanning the river at the western end of Miller Park is the North Union Railway Bridge, a structure considered to be one of the finest of its kind in



1. THE RIBBLE AT RED SCAR, NEAR PRESTON.
2. MILLER PARK AND PARK HOTEL, PRESTON.
3. THE "ALBERT EDWARD" DOCK.

England. It consists of five stone arches, each having an elliptical sweep of 120 feet. It was opened for traffic in 1838, and in 1879-80 it was doubled in width. The increasing traffic of late years has necessitated a still further widening and this has been accomplished by adding an iron girder extension to the west side. When excavating for the foundations of this bridge many remains of extinct animals were discovered. Similar relics have also been found in the alluvial detritus of the valley at various times. These include the remains of whales, bones of the gigantic ox, skulls and horns of the long faced ox, skulls of the wild boar, skulls of bears, etc. In the Harris Museum is a fine collection of fifty-six mounted antlers of the red deer and horns of the wild ox from the excavations connected with the making of the Preston Dock and the Ribble diversion.

The iron girder bridge of the old West Lancashire Railway calls for no special mention. It is a plain erection set upon stone piers and is now but little used. Penwortham Bridge, which crosses the river near by, and until lately the last bridge spanning the Ribble, has, however, a few features of interest. Penwortham structures have been singularly ill fated. The first bridge—erected by subscription—was opened in 1755. About a year afterwards, owing to some structural defect, one of the central piers gave way and shortly afterwards five other arches fell. At all times it has been a costly bridge to maintain and is altogether unsuited for the enormous amount of traffic now passing over. It carries the main road from Preston to Liverpool, and as its width between the parapet walls is only eighteen feet, considerable inconvenience is caused. The new County Bridge now in course of construction lower down the river will, when completed, take the major portion of the traffic which now passes over the old Penwortham structure. The estimated cost of the new bridge is £37,214, the contract for the work having been let at this figure to Messrs. Bentley and Company, of Bradford.

Until the building of Penwortham Bridge the bridge at Walton-le-Dale was the last structure across the Ribble. Before that time the ford and ferry provided the only means of crossing. The new bridge occupies the site of the principal ford which led across Penwortham Holme, at that time a river island. Until the early part of the nineteenth century the Ribble at a point about 300 yards below Penwortham Bridge divided itself into two channels. The main stream followed its present course, while the other wound round the south-western edge of the Holme and rejoined the general current opposite Penwortham Church. The outer channel appears to have been sufficiently deep to accommodate small craft, and at the foot of Penwortham brow was a primitive sort of wharf where the "flats" discharged their cargoes. A few traces of the old channel (now filled up) can still be made out. The Holme is now incorporated with the main land and the road leading from the County Bridge passes directly over it. In the Guild week of 1842 and also in subsequent years horse races were held on Penwortham Holme. The last event of this character was in 1848 and terminated in riotous scenes between the police and a number of soldiers. Another ford was situated at Broadgate, a little below where now stands Penwortham Bridge. The ferry was about midway between the North Union and West Lancashire bridges. In Dr. Kuerden's descriptive notes of Preston, apparently written between the years 1681 and 1687, he makes mention of this ferry, "where diverse boats are ready as occasion may require for horse or foot to waft them over to the other side."

Some remarkable flood scenes on the Ribble may at times be witnessed in the neighbourhood of Preston. Just below Penwortham Bridge there is sometimes displayed a magnificent spectacle where the commingled waters of sea and river fill the bank to overflowing. On January 9th, 1914, following an abnormal rainfall, the river at Penwortham

rose eleven feet in a few hours, flooding the whole of Broadgate and rendering the road impassable. Above Walton Bridge the water overflowed on to the meadows and washed over the pastures opposite the confluence of the Darwen and Ribble. The heaviest flood ever recorded in the Preston district occurred in 1866, when the Ribble Valley was laid completely under water. Upon this occasion the river in places was fully a mile in width. The torrent rushed straight through Walton-le-Dale, submerging all the lower rooms in the village, as well as in the mills of Messrs. Calvert and Sons, where a man was drowned. It is unlikely that such a disaster will be repeated, as the navigation works in the lower reaches of the river have made such an extraordinary flood highly improbable.

Peeping out amid the tree-crowned eminence on the south bank is Penwortham Church with its ancient tower, and here it stood when Preston itself was scarcely more than a village. A little to the north-east is the historic Castle Hill, a wood-fronted prominence that has yielded a few treasures to the spade of the antiquary. Some minor excavations were made here, in the year 1856 under the auspices of the Lancashire and Cheshire Historic Society. Shafts sunk to the depth of eleven feet disclosed a pavement of boulders, and the remains of a rude wattled hut, conjectured to have been the residence of a petty Saxon chief, were discovered. Other "finds" included the bones of several animals, half an oaken canoe paddle, a padlock key of Roman pattern, a few nails and other metal articles, and an ornamental iron spur. Many speculations have been advanced as to the probable history of the mound itself, part of which, if not all, is of artificial construction. It is not improbable that during the Roman occupation the hill served the purpose of a *speculæ* or outlook in connection with the Ribble. In the Domesday Survey mention is made of a castle at Peneurerdant (Penwortham), but no trace of such a structure has ever been found at Castle Hill.

A short distance from the church stands Penwortham Priory, a very beautiful residence occupying the site of the original Priory founded during the reign of William I. by Warin Bussel. This small monastic institution was attached to Evesham Abbey in Worcestershire. Once a year the monks at Penwortham had to dispatch to the parent establishment at Evesham a supply of Ribble salmon. A memorandum in the Chetham Society's publications respecting Penwortham Priory contains the following particulars of this ancient claim: "That the Convent of Evesham shall have from the Priorship of Penwortham yearly at the feast of St. Egwin sixty salmon, namely sámlets, or twenty-four larger fish which make up that weight. . . ."

Although the foregoing contribution of Ribble salmon would at that time be easily supplied, it is doubtful if such a tribute could now be rendered. Of late years the Ribble as a fishing ground, particularly in the lower reaches, has deteriorated. Modern commercial enterprise has exacted its penalty, and the river no longer yields its harvests as of old.* The Ribble fisheries date back to a remote age, and in Domesday there is reference to half a fishery at Penwortham. The earliest recorded enactments relating to salmon fisheries in the "Ribbyl" were passed in the reign of Richard II. The times during which the river (along with the Wyre, Lune, and Mersey) might be fished are specified, together with the appointment of conservators. In the reign of Elizabeth it was enacted that "the meshes of the nets used in taking salmon shall be two inches and a half broad, and that the fish shall not be taken by any other means. At one time the "fishery and tithes" of Preston were owned by the "priory of Lancaster." During a trial which took place towards the close of the thirteenth century between Edward I. and the burgesses of Preston it was asserted by the bailiffs of

* Drayton in 1622 terms it "The Rybell, a river verie rich of salmon and lamperie."

the borough that the right of "free fishing in the Ribbel" was held in common by the burgesses and Henry de Lacy, Earl of Lincoln. For generations the Mayor and Corporation of Preston, on behalf of the burgesses, have owned all that portion of the Ribble to the centre of the channel between the boundaries of the borough.

From the Ribble in the past there have been taken some notable hauls of fish. In *Williamson's Liverpool Advertiser* of June 24th, 1768, there appears this paragraph: "On Saturday morning last 3,384 salmon and salmon trouts were drawn in Preston river, near Penwortham, all at one draught." This record reads in striking contrast to the following note culled from a local newspaper of 1914: "The anglers of Preston and district complain that last season was one of the worst known. Salmon seem to have been very scarce in the Ribble, for the net fishers between Preston and Lytham did not in many cases cover the outlay on their tackle and licence."

That the Ribble could be made more productive is not beyond the bounds of possibility, though it is unlikely to ever yield the supplies it did when the channel was rarely disturbed by navigation and the mills along the Calder and Darwen were few and far between. The construction of suitable fish-passes in order to facilitate the ascent of salmon and sea trout to the higher reaches, which in time of drought are practically cut off from the run of sea fish, would undoubtedly improve matters. If such provision were made, coupled with the cleansing of some of its tributary streams (the root evil from which it suffers), we might reasonably expect to see the once famed "Ribble salmon" again on the market.

But the Ribble is not without its fish and occasionally a surprise in the form of an unexpected catch is made. Such was the experience of two Preston men in October, 1912, who hauled from the river a giant conger eel 6 feet long, 21 inches

in girth, and which turned the scale at 44 lbs. Eels, by the way, appear never to have forsaken the Ribble, and each spring the "snig fra" or elvers (young eels) swarm up the river from the sea, not in thousands but millions. One of the familiar street cries of Preston is "snig fra," or "eel fry," and men with bucketsful of moving life may be seen selling from door to door the product of several hours' labour on the banks of the river. Occasionally a sturgeon strays up the Ribble as far as Preston, and more than one measuring six or seven feet long has been captured near Avenham.

At no point along the valley can the result of Preston's enterprise and progress be seen to better advantage than from the wooded height of Penwortham. Especially is this so in regard to the Ribble navigation, of which we shall have occasion to refer later. Within our own memory a wonderful transformation has taken place in this part of the Ribble Valley. Its whole aspect has been changed. Even the river itself has been diverted from its former channel. Commodious warehouses and works now occupy a goodly portion of the once desolate "Marsh," while the capacious dock with its modern equipment accommodates vessels that are indeed leviathans compared to the craft that formerly berthed alongside the old quay. A rather singular feature in regard to one of Preston's former industries is that while the shipping has come shipbuilding has gone. Not very many years ago a couple of firms engaged in this branch of industry on the bank of the Ribble employed scores, if not hundreds, of men. When the agitation was in progress for deepening the river and making the dock, it was generally expected that shipbuilding would be extended. But just the reverse has happened and the industry is now extinct, due no doubt to the centralisation of the work elsewhere, where ships can almost be erected by machinery. Beyond the dock is seen a large area of reclaimed land by the river, land formerly swept by the tides, but now yielding the farmer excellent

crops. Upon the opposite hill where is situated the now populous district of Ashton-on-Ribble stands Tulketh Hall, with its memories of the monks of Savigny, in Normandy, who occupied the original building in the twelfth century. A tradition still survives to the effect that formerly a subterranean passage existed between Tulketh Hall and the Priory of Penwortham.

CHAPTER XIX.

PRESTON.

EARLY CHARTERS—CURIOUS BY-LAWS—PRESTON GUILD—JOHN HORROCKS—PROMINENT BUILDINGS—HARRIS LIBRARY AND MUSEUM—THE RIBBLE NAVIGATION—THE FIRST STEAMBOATS—A STUPENDOUS TASK.

THE visitor to Preston who cares to make a brief inspection of the town will experience no difficulty in spending a few hours to profitable advantage. It is not our purpose here to dwell upon its earliest history, though few towns can lay claim to more interesting past associations. Documentary evidence in the form of Charters of Incorporation granted to the town go back to the time of Henry II. (1179), though the first charter was apparently granted by Henry I. Most of the old topographical writers refer to "Proud Preston" as a town of some importance. John Marchant, in his "History of the Present Rebellion," published in 1746, says: "Preston may from its bigness and beauty compare with some cities. . . 'Tis a very gay town. . ." Daniel Defoe makes mention of it as a town where "the gentry resort in the winter for many miles round. . ." Taylor, the "water poet," who paid a visit to Preston, says he "never saw a town more wisely governed," though some of the laws in force about that time would scarcely meet with the approval of the present generation. In the early part of the seventeenth century the Corporation through its by-laws exacted considerable order, especially in regard to Sabbath observance. In 1616 it was decided that all the householders of Preston should close their doors "in all the tyme of divyne service and sermons upon Sabbath daies and other

festival days," and that the said householders should be respectively fined fourpence every time they permitted any of their "children, servantes, or familie, or anie of them beinge above the age of seaven years, to plaie in the open streetes of this town at anie game or plaie whatsoever, or to sit at the doors or in the streete."

A link with the old-time pageantry of Preston still survives in its "Guild Merchant," a spectacular display that is probably unique and which attracts sightseers from all parts of the kingdom.* The first Guild of which there is any record dates from 1328, and until 1542 it was held irregularly. Since the latter year the celebrations have taken place every twenty years.

As with many other Lancashire towns, Preston's commercial prosperity is largely centred in the cotton industry. Mr. John Horrocks, "the founder of manufacturing Preston," gave the first real impetus to the trade. He erected his first spinning mill in 1871, and laid the foundation of works that have since grown to huge proportions and whose products have achieved world-wide fame. It is worthy of mention that the motive power originally used in working his mill was furnished by a horse which pulled round the main driving shaft. The only one horse power cotton mill we have ever heard of! He died in London at the early age of thirty-six and was interred in Penwortham Churchyard. Another name intimately associated with the earliest inventions in connection with spinning machinery is Richard Arkwright, afterwards Sir Richard, who was born at Preston in 1732.

Few of the features of ancient Preston are to be seen to-day. Modern improvements have rendered necessary the demolition of most of its old buildings with any claim of note. Striking changes have taken place in the vicinity of the

* During the Guild week of 1882 no less than 440,000 persons came into the town by railway alone (Smith's History of Preston Guild).

Market Place, and here is to be seen the cream of the town's architecture. Fronting the main thoroughfare on the south side of the square is the Town Hall, an elegant Gothic building designed by Sir Gilbert Scott, R.A. Built of Longridge stone, enriched with shafts of polished Aberdeen granite and a variety of carved work, the structure presents a fine appearance. The foundation stone was laid during the Guild week of 1862 and the building was opened by the Duke of Cambridge in 1867. The total cost of the structure was upwards of £69,000. At the south-western corner a lofty and graceful tower rising to a height of 176 feet forms one of the most conspicuous landmarks of Preston.

On the opposite side of the square stands the County Sessions Hall, a magnificent building in English Renaissance style with an ornate tower 179 feet high. The cost of this building, including the site, was £90,000. Near by is the handsome and commodious new Post Office, designed by Mr. H. Tanner, of H.M. Office of Works, Whitehall.

The Harris Free Public Library and Museum, fronting the Market Place, might be regarded as Preston's most imposing building. To the visitor it will undoubtedly prove the chief attraction by reason of the interesting and valuable exhibits it contains. The possession of such a magnificent institution was made possible by the munificent bequest of Edmund Robert Harris, who in 1877 bequeathed to his native town and its neighbourhood a fortune amounting to £300,000. The foundation stone was laid in 1882, and the building was opened in 1893 by the Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G. It is pure Greek in design and was erected and endowed at a cost of £105,000. The interior is quite in keeping with the noble exterior. On the principal and ground floors are the various libraries containing a total of about 70,000 volumes. The Natural History Museum and Art Gallery was opened to the public in 1896. In the latter department are displayed the pictures and articles of vertu

forming the Newsham bequest, a remarkably choice and valuable collection acquired by Richard Newsham, a native of Preston, and bequeathed by him to the town in 1883. The pictures, which comprise representative works of eminent British artists, are valued at £60,000. In the natural history department commendable taste and judgment have been shown in the acquisition and display of the various specimens. This section has also benefited by gifts from generous donors. Here are displayed the Bleasdale Urns, while other exhibits specially pertaining to the Ribble Valley include a fine stone axe found in the Ribble at Penwortham, relics from Walton-le-Dale, charcoal wheat from Ribchester, stone hammers from Longridge and Chipping, and the fine collection of mounted horns and antlers from the Ribble excavations.

Undoubtedly the greatest and costliest undertaking ever embarked upon by the Corporation of Preston has been in connection with the navigation of the Ribble, a scheme that has already involved the expenditure of a million and a half of money. The magnitude of the work accomplished can only be conceived by those who have kept in touch with it year by year and who have some personal knowledge of the former state of the tidal way compared to the accommodation it provides for navigation to-day. The wisdom of attempting to make and maintain an efficient navigable channel in a river whose estuary is mostly sandbanks exposed at every ebb tide has often been questioned, and one does not wonder that the scheme has met with considerable opposition. But modern skill and engineering appliances have accomplished work in connection with the Ribble navigation that might well be regarded as nothing short of marvellous, while many former opponents to the scheme are now convinced of the ultimate success of the enterprise.

Although the tidal way of the Ribble has doubtless been navigable for shallow craft from time immemorial, it is only within comparatively recent years that vessels of fairly deep

draught could safely reach Preston. Dr. Kuerden, in his MS. history of Preston, written towards the end of the seventeenth century, says that "a vessell of reasonable burden may arrive from the Western Sea, guided by a knoweing and well skill'd pylot, though the River below at present is much choked up with sand." Mr. Murdock Mackenzie who surveyed the coast about the year 1770, describes the Ribble channel as "crooked and defective," and intimates that "no instructions will be sufficient for a stranger" to enable him to navigate it with safety. In the year 1806 the first company was formed under Act of Parliament, with a capital of forty shares of £50 each. As may be surmised, the operations of this company did not accomplish much and the venture proved unremunerative. For a long time the shipping on the river was chiefly confined to "flats" and "lighters," though in 1829 a steamboat made its appearance. This was the first vessel of its class to sail the waters of the Ribble. It was named the "Ribble." Five years later the "Enterprise," built at Preston, was launched. Both were, however, after a time removed owing to the unsatisfactory state of the channel.

The favourable reports of Captain Belcher, who surveyed the coast of Lancashire in 1836 and of Messrs. Robert Stevenson and Sons in 1837, aroused some little public interest in regard to the possibilities of the Ribble for navigation. In 1838 the Ribble Navigation Company was formed to carry out the improvements suggested by Messrs. Stevenson. The original company was merged in this new venture, and the Corporation of Preston took up a large number of shares. In 1843 the Corporation made a new quay opposite the Marsh, and in the same year Preston was constituted an independent port, having previously been a part of the port of Fleetwood, and earlier still of Lancaster. Parliamentary powers to reclaim tide-washed land contiguous to the Ribble were granted in 1853, and a great quantity of valuable land was thus obtained. Although the navigation

of the river was by this time considerably improved, it was apparent that success could only be assured by improvements carried out on a far more comprehensive scale than had hitherto been attempted. In 1865 a committee was appointed by the Corporation to confer with the Ribble Navigation Company on the subject. A survey of the river was made in 1866 by Messrs. Bell and Miller, civil engineers, of Glasgow, who recommended the deepening of the channel of the river and the provision of adequate dock accommodation at an estimated cost of £120,000 to £130,000. This proposed scheme, owing to cost, met with strong opposition, and a petition numerously signed by ratepayers was presented to the Corporation in which objection was taken to any portion of the town's revenue being "expended in the construction of docks, or upon any alleged harbour improvements, or any pledging of any existing or future revenues or estate of the borough for any such purpose." This evidently had the effect of postponing matters for the time being, but in 1880-1 the question of improving the navigation was again revived. Ultimately in 1883 the Corporation acquired the property and interests generally of the Ribble Navigation Company for the sum of £72,862.

Since the acquirement of the undertaking by the Corporation, a vast amount of work has been accomplished. Under powers obtained by several Acts of Parliament a part of the river has been diverted, docks built, the channel deepened, and training walls erected. The "Albert Edward" Dock opened in 1892 is a commodious structure of forty acres and is well equipped with modern appliances for the handling of cargo. Regular lines of trading steamers now run from Preston to both home and Continental ports. The imports cover a wide range and each year a steady increase in traffic is reported.

Probably the greatest task confronted by the Ribble engineers and one that has involved a serious charge upon the undertaking has been that of dealing with the vast

quantities of sand brought up from the estuary by the incoming tides. The building of training walls has, however, achieved wonders in the way of maintaining a more navigable waterway. It is computed that no less than fifteen million tons of sand have been removed from the channel, mainly by the action of the scour due to training walls. At the present time the north wall reaches from the dock seaward a distance of $14\frac{1}{2}$ miles and the south wall will soon be extended this distance. When this is accomplished and the bed of the river westward of the dock deepened (the great task of the next few years), it is confidently expected that a perfectly safe waterway will be assured for vessels of 10,000 tons register.

The conquering of the Ribble is proving a stupendous task, demanding not only huge expenditure (as the Preston ratepayer knows only too well), but constant forethought and unremitting labour. Still those who are in perhaps the best position to judge predict a highly successful future for the port of Preston.

CHAPTER XX.

PRESTON TO LYTHAM.

ASHTON AND LEA MARSHES—BIRD LIFE—SAVICK BROOK—FRECKLETON
—NATURE NOTES AT NAZE MOUNT—THE LITTORAL WASTE—SUB-
MARINE FOREST—DREDGING OPERATIONS—LYTHAM—THE TOLL
OF THE RIBBLE ESTUARY—A MEMORABLE DISASTER—RETROSPECT.

LEAVING Preston by way of the road north of the docks, we may, beyond the dock itself, take the path leading over Ashton Marsh, which followed the river previous to its course being diverted. Probably in the near future this will be one of the footpaths closed by the Corporation of Preston. They are utilising the adjacent land as a tip for receiving the matter from one of the powerful sand-pumping vessels. Already many thousand tons of sand have been poured over the land and into the old river bed which is now practically filled up. During the construction of the navigation works in connection with the docks the Ribble was diverted and a long stretch of the old stream was left intact. This formed an extensive natural lake, a sheet of water that provided Prestopians with an ideal skating ground for several years.

Beyond the site of the old "chain caul" the path runs parallel with Lea Marsh upon an earthen embankment constructed by the Ribble Navigation Company for the purpose of protecting the reclaimed marsh lands from the action of floods. Although in places the embankment is some few hundred feet from the river the high tides, particularly when augmented by the flood waters of the Ribble, rise sufficiently high to inundate the whole adjoining marsh land. At such times a walk along the embankment with the waters lapping at one's feet and stretching away as far as eye can reach affords a never-to-be-forgotten sight. Most of the reclaimed

land hereabout is cultivated under the four-course system, wheat, clover, oats, and potatoes occupying the same ground in successive seasons.

To the natural history student perhaps the chief attraction in the neighbourhood of the river is the variety of bird life to be met with. After the subsidence of the floods, which leave behind a fair amount of garbage as "feed," many interesting species of shore birds congregate. The extensive marshes of Longton and Hesketh on the south bank are, however, the principal resorts of wild fowl. During recent years both the avifauna and flora of the Ribble estuary have been actively investigated by competent naturalists and much valuable scientific knowledge has been obtained. Ornithologists generally are indebted to Messrs. J. R. Charnley, F.Z.S., and W. H. Heathcote, F.L.S., of the Preston Scientific Society, whose systematic observations of the bird life of the estuary extended over a period of fourteen years. The records of their investigations, published in "*The Lancashire Naturalist*," give reference to nearly one hundred species.

Despite the marshy character of the land by the river the country is not by any means unattractive. Looking in the direction from whence we have journeyed, a particularly pleasing view of Preston is revealed, where above its many upreared landmarks towers the stately white spire of St. Walburge's Church. The country to the north partakes of a pleasantly pastoral character, while to the west the course of the river may be traced to the headland of the Naze at Freckleton. At the termination of the embankment the footpath leaves Lea Marsh, and passing through a few fields joins the main Preston and Blackpool highway opposite Lea Gate Hotel.

The Rambler who desires to make a tour of the Ribble Valley is fortunately able to accomplish the journey without having to tramp long distances upon the highway. And it is

well this is so, for, however charmingly placed some of our main roads may be, only at rare intervals can the pedestrian ramble along them with any real degree of comfort. To-day the motorist is in full possession and the humble wayfarer receives the benefit either in the form of clouds of choking dust or liberal contributions of mud. Maybe when the art of road making has been learnt and applied some of the discomforts at least will disappear, but to the Rambler the old charm of the highway has gone for ever.

The Preston and Blackpool road offers little attraction to the pedestrian. It is one of the highways of locomotion, where throughout the greater part of the year an almost unending stream of traffic passes along. Luckily we are only restricted to the road until arriving at Freckleton. The stream which passes under the highway near Lea Gate Hotel is Savick Brook, the "bigge brooke" over which Leland rode in the reign of Henry VIII. and mentioned by him as "rising in the hilles a iii. or iv. miles of." Harrison, the oldest English topographer, also makes reference to it in his itinerary. This is his quaint description: "As for the Savvocke brooke, it ryseth somewhat above Longridge chappell, goeth to Broughton towne, Cottam, Lee hall, and so into Ribell, and here is all that I have to say of this river."

The physical aspect of the district we now make acquaintance with totally differs from any we have hitherto passed through. The undulating country is left behind and a wide expanse of perfectly flat country is spread out before us. Much of the surrounding land is under the plough, cereal crops and market produce being extensively grown. Leaving the Blackpool highway at the first branch road to the left, we are not long before arriving at Freckleton Marsh. The toll bar here is one of the last remaining in this part of the country, and the only one we have had occasion to pass in our rambles by the Ribble. Here, at any rate, the pedestrian has the better of the motorist, for whilst the former passes

on without payment all vehicular traffic pays toll. Beyond the uninviting marsh stands the village of Freckleton, entered by a narrow cobble-paved street held in ill repute by the cyclist and motorist.

To describe Freckleton as a beautiful village could only be accomplished by drawing upon one's imaginative faculty. It is a straggling sort of place where ancient and modern jostle each other, though the ancient features still predominate. Like most other villages near the Ribble, it has experienced the usual vicissitudes attendant on changed conditions of labour. At one period shipbuilding was one of the industries of Freckleton, and, together with sailmaking (carried on at the Ship Inn), found employment for a number of hands. This class of labour has now passed away and to-day the prosperity of the village is largely dependent upon the cotton weaving industry.

The promontory of the Naze and its sheltered "Pool" comprise the principal natural features of Freckleton. The Pool, formed by the conjoined waters of the Ribble and the tiny River Dow is still navigable for small craft and serves to accommodate the little shipping of the port. The ebb-tide, however, leaves the Pool practically waterless and its craft mostly stranded in the mud. But Freckleton Pool and the Naze have been invested with some little glory by former noted historians. Both the Rev. John Whitaker and Mr. T. Glazebrook Rylands, amongst others, regarded it as the "Portus Setantiorum" of the Romans. Although weight of opinion to-day favours the Wyre as having furnished the more likely site of the port of the Setantii mentioned by Ptolemy, it is quite probable that the Romans in navigating the Ribble made use of the creek at Freckleton. Moreover, the fine *Speculæ* provided by the Naze, which commands the best outlook for miles around, both of the Ribble and the River Douglas, would most likely have been made use of by the warlike Romans. No trace of Roman occupation has, however, been found at Freckleton.

Beyond the Ship Inn a narrow winding path leads along the Naze from whence is obtained a delightful and extensive prospect. To the north and north-east rise the heights of Parlick and the Bleasdale and Longridge Fells, while the old hill of Pendle, now fully twenty-four miles distant, figures prominently in the landscape. The windmill at Clifton is a conspicuous landmark, and the scattered villages dotted about the fertile country lend a picturesque touch to the scene. Preston is viewed to distinct advantage and most of the principal buildings of the town may be readily identified. The headland overlooking the Ribble affords the observer a rare view of the river's broad estuary and its yellow sands which merge into the distant sea. From this point one may form some conception of the work accomplished and still being carried out for improving the navigability of the Ribble. At low tide vast stretches of sandbanks lie exposed through which a deep-water channel is maintained by the aid of training walls. Opposite the Naze is the wide embouchure of the Douglas or Asland, the last tributary of note to join the Ribble. It is a river not without historic interest and by its banks have been waged some sanguinary battles in Saxon days. It rises in the neighbourhood of Blackrod, near Wigan, and near its junction with the Ribble separates the marshes of Longton and Hesketh.

A scheme embodying the construction of a bridge over the Ribble at the Naze in order to carry a railway line from Blackpool to join the West Lancashire Railway at Hesketh Bank was formulated in 1882. The Bill to secure it was, however, withdrawn the following year through threatened opposition on the part of the Preston Corporation, who about that time purchased the property and interests of the Ribble Navigation Company with the object of improving the river for navigation purposes. Other schemes for bridging the Ribble near the estuary have been brought forward within recent years, but the heavy cost of construction has led to their abandonment.

The naturalist will find the Naze unusually attractive. As an observation ground for the ornithologist, it is probably unequalled along the whole course of the Ribble and the marshlands it overlooks are rarely without some signs of bird life. During spring and summer hosts of migratory birds here afford an interesting sight. Large flocks of dunlin, ringed plover, curlew, and redshank are often seen, besides many other species which congregate in smaller companies. Occasionally a rare visitor from overseas is sighted, though unfortunately many of the rarities fall victims to the wildfowler's or collector's gun. A fine specimen of Bewick's swan (*Cygnus musicus*) was shot near the Naze a few years ago. Other uncommon visitors noted at or near the Ribble estuary and duly recorded as "shot" include the avocet (*Recurvirostra avocetta*), red-nacked phalarope (*Phalaropus hyperboreus*), cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), grey-lag goose (*Anser cinerea*), bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*), black-tailed godwit (*Limosa rufa*), Richardson's skua (*Stercorarius crepidatus*), and the great skua (*S. catarrhactes*). The foregoing do not by any means exhaust the list of rarities shot in the district, though one is glad to report that of late years less indiscriminate killing has taken place. To the gunner-collector the bagging of a rare bird may secure the possession of a much coveted trophy, but knowledge of bird life is not acquired from the inanimate form. True the gun might be the means of acquiring a fine collection, but the patient observers with field glass and camera have contributed more to our knowledge of wild life than ever did the "gunners."

The prevailing geological characteristics of the Ribble estuary and coast are carboniferous and triassic rocks, with overlying glacial and post-glacial deposits of clay, sand, and gravel. There is a fair amount of exposed clay at the Naze and at other points along the river.

Of the botany at Naze Mount much might be said, as here are found many maritime plants we make acquaintance

with for the first time. The acclivity fronting the shore, as the land alongside the tidal-way is termed, presents a really beautiful sight during certain months of the year, for despite the poorness of the soil many plants find it a congenial habitat. Perhaps the finest display is furnished by the rest-harrow (*Ononis arvensis*), the handsome rose-coloured flowers of this plant providing a most attractive display. Another leguminous or pod-bearing plant quite as abundant is the yellow melilot (*Melilotus officinalis*), with its graceful upright flowering stems of bright golden-yellow colour. Another handsome and showy flower here met with in plenty is the common mallow (*Malva sylvestris*). A flower that asserts itself amidst the surrounding herbage and which yields to none in point of attractiveness is the centaury (*Erythroea centaureum*). It is essentially a flower of the sunshine, expanding its beautiful pink blossoms only in fine weather. The centaury, by the way, appears to be one of the plants that is fast disappearing from many portions of the Ribble Valley, where it formerly grew quite plentifully. It is now but occasionally met with. Other plants contributing to the floral display, all of which we have found in bloom upon a single visit during the month of August, include the sea sandspurry (*Spergularia marina*), chamomile (*Anthemis nobilis*), dyer's greenweed (*Genista tinctoria*), sow thistle (*Sonchus arvensis*), sea wormwood (*Artemisia maritima*), and sea arrow grass (*Triglochin maritimum*). Upon the shore other flowering plants are met with, thriving under what may appear to be the most adverse conditions. The scurvy grass (*Cochlearia officinalis*), at one time famed amongst sea-faring men for its antiscorbutic properties, is a common shore plant, and the diminutive yet pretty sea milkwort (*Glaux maritima*) is found near the Naze. The thrift or sea pink (*Armeria maritima*) is a familiar plant along the tidal way of the Ribble, where its vari-coloured blossoms, from deep rose pink to pure white, lend a touch of brightness to many an otherwise uninviting tract. But the starwort or sea-aster

(*Aster tripolium*) is pre-eminently the plant of the littoral waste, displaying its star-like pale purple blossoms often in the most unpromising situations. Even on the salt marshes repeatedly covered by the overflowing tides it flourishes, where when the halcyon days of summer are past it oftentimes provides the only display of real colour along the storm-swept shore.

"The marsh is bleak and lonely. Scarce a flower
Gleams in the waving grass. The rosy thrift
Has paler grown since summer blest the scene ;
And the sea-lavender, whose lilac blooms
Drew from the saline soil a richer hue
Than when they grew on yonder towering cliff,
Quivers in flowering greenness to the wind.
No sound is heard, save when the sea-bird screams
Its lonely presage of the coming storm ;
And the sole blossom which can glad the eye
Is yon pale starwort nodding to the wind." *

The variety of plants met with in the vicinity naturally attracts a wealth of insect life and affords a fine field for the entomologist. One of the commonest butterflies at Naze Mount is the meadow brown (*Epinephele jurtina*). Another insect we have here met with more frequently than in any other spot near the Ribble is the sun-loving six-spot burnet moth (*Zygaena filipendulae*), though one unversed in entomological lore would have some difficulty in associating this handsome insect with the term moth.

The absence of rock pools does not appear to favour a very extensive shore fauna, though a few interesting marine species are to be found in the pools left by the receding tides, which also furnish ample material for the microscopist. One, however, needs to be suitably shod in order to thoroughly explore the foreshore. There is no exposed rock between the Naze and Lytham, though an interesting variety of drift boulders are met with. Other objects which the observer

* Merritt.

cannot fail to note are the fragments of large trees strewn about the shore, relics of the submarine forest of which we shall make mention later.

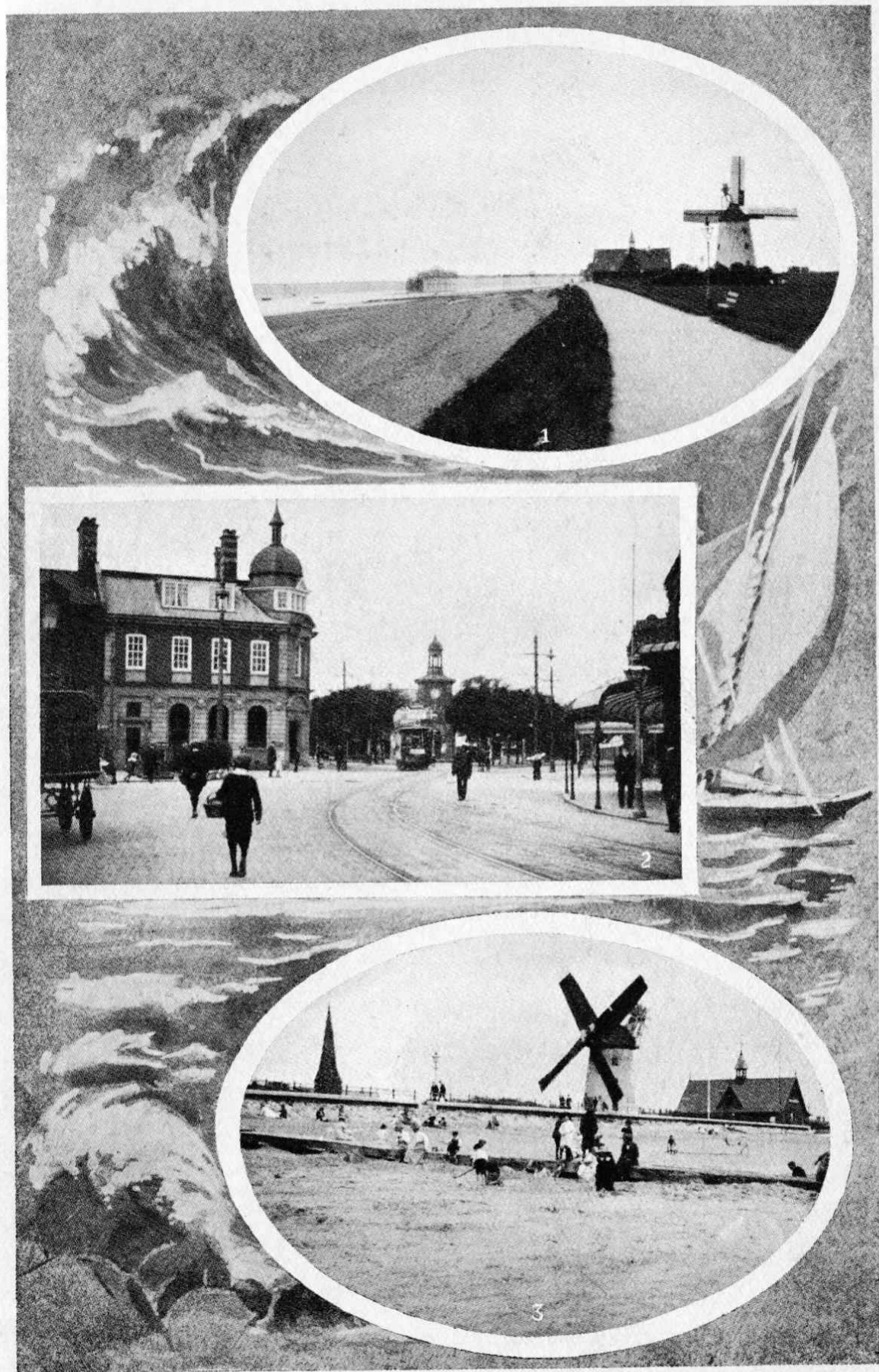
From the Naze a primitive sort of path may be followed along the shore, and within a mile we are again in touch with a little civilisation where some enterprising persons have converted a number of old boats into miniature habitations. These boat dwellings, which are securely fixed upon the shore, are let to visitors during the summer months. Given fine weather conditions a holiday spent here might be pleasant enough, but the limited accommodation one would imagine proves rather trying during a spell of wet weather. Close by the shore stands the "Guides' House," an unpretentious inn well known to waterside visitors. Here in former days lived the guide who rendered assistance to those who wished to shorten the distance between the Fylde coast and the villages on the opposite bank of the river. A boat was kept here for the purpose, though the journey appears to have been possible on horseback during the time of low water.

Still keeping to the shore we are soon at Warton Bank, where is found another good botanising ground, but mention of a few species must here suffice. The sea purslane (*Honckenya peploides*) is met with in abundance between Guides and Warton Bank, the tangled masses of this plant covering a goodly portion of the shore. A conspicuous flower and one that will certainly not be overlooked is the pretty sea campion (*Silene maritima*). The bladder campion (*S. inflata*) likewise grows at Warton Bank. The poisonous henbane (*Hyoscyamus niger*) is found beyond the tidal line, though we have only come across occasional specimens.

The rapidly widening estuary is an indication we are nearing our journey's end and a full view of Lytham, now but a couple of miles distant, is obtained. A short distance below Warton Bank the path joins the highway and this affords the most convenient route onward to Lytham.

Between Warton Bank and Lytham Dock is an interesting bit of ground, where may be seen the traces of a submarine forest supposed to be of vast extent. It is not difficult to locate the peaty deposit near the tidal line, though the remains above ground are not so prominent as was the case some few years ago when many of the trees themselves were exposed. During the dredging operations of the old Ribble Navigation Company the submerged trees in various parts of the channel caused serious obstruction. Upwards of one hundred trees, containing nearly three thousand feet of timber, were taken from the river bed within six months. Even during recent years the buried trees of the old forest have often been met with and have proved no slight obstacle to the work of deepening the river. The inflexible buckets of the dredgers, by the way, each with a holding capacity of twenty cubic feet, scoop from the river bed a heterogeneous collection of material. Occasionally some interesting relics are recovered from the debris, though probably the majority are never seen. One, however, rather too ponderous to be overlooked was brought up by the dredger "Gilbertson" in 1913 when working in the Ribble estuary. This was a relic of the ice age in the form of a striated block of granite weighing over two tons, one of the most perfect specimens of glacial boulders ever discovered.

Occupying a somewhat sheltered position on the north side of the Ribble estuary stands the prettily environed resort of Lytham—leafy Lytham as it is not inaptly styled. The town itself has a pleasing and well-to-do appearance, and as one may readily judge is much favoured as a residential resort. Though the majority of its buildings are quite modern, it has some claim to antiquity, and Lytham as "Lidun" is mentioned in Domesday. In the reign of Richard I. Roger Fitz Roger "gave all his land at Lythum together with the church and all things appertaining thereto, to the monks of Durham for the purpose of founding a



1. THE PROMENADE, LYTHAM.

2. CLIFTON SQUARE, LYTHAM.

3. THE CHILDREN'S CORNER.

Benedictine cell in honour of St. Mary and St. Cuthbert." The present Parish Church, the first stone of which was laid in 1834, is dedicated to St. Cuthbert and is supposed to occupy the site of the ancient priory. A name that will ever be lovingly associated with St. Cuthbert's and of the town itself in which he so faithfully laboured is that of the Rev. Canon Hawkins, who was vicar of the church for forty-four years.

Two and a half centuries ago when seaside resorts were comparatively few Lytham was a favourite watering place, though to-day its fame as a "popular" resort is eclipsed by some of its younger and more pleasure catering neighbours. It is, nevertheless, a place of unfailing summer charm, and Lytham by choice prefers to remain enjoyable to those who in addition to the sea, love trees and flowers, and quietness.

Few seaside towns possess so spacious a sea frontage as Lytham, and the wide level stretch of greensward considerably over a mile long could comfortably afford accommodation for thousands of persons. The Dutch-like aspect of the promenade is intensified by the picturesque old windmill, the most familiar of Lytham's landmarks. Near by the windmill is the building where the lifeboat is housed, and Lytham for many years has been one of the principal lifeboat stations on the Lancashire coast. From the promenade a pleasing view of the town is obtained, where behind the handsome villas fronting the sea rises the conspicuous spire of St. John's Church and the square tower of St. Peter's. Across the estuary is seen the modern town of "Sunny Southport" eight miles distant.

At low water a vast area of desert-like sands occupies the estuary, where the Ribble confined by training walls pursues its way between great sandbanks, stretching for miles on either side, until finally it reaches the deep waters of the Irish Sea. The older portions of the walls are covered with a fine species of mussel and afford a rich harvest for the fishermen who gather them when the tide is low.

A large part of the estuary is occupied by the far-famed and one-time dreaded Horse Bank. These treacherous sands upon which many a vessel has come to grief and where more than one schooner still lies buried were for many years regarded as a veritable death trap to shipping. When the westerly gales drove the huge rollers into the mouth of the Ribble, then it was that the Horse Bank exacted its toll, and scarcely a winter passed without some calamity involving loss of life occurring. Many memorable scenes have been witnessed from the beach at Lytham when the lifeboatmen—the bravest of the brave—have launched their boat upon a relentless sea in order to render assistance to some vessel in distress. The magnificent heroism of the lifeboatmen of our coasts was never more prominently displayed than was the case upon that fateful night of December 9th, 1886, when the German barque "Mexico," outward bound from Liverpool, was driven upon the Horse Bank. Upon this occasion, still vividly remembered by many, the Lytham, St. Annes, and Southport lifeboats put out to the wreck. The Lytham boat, the "Charles Biggs," was away five hours and succeeded in rescuing the crew of the "Mexico," twelve in number, after a tremendous struggle. The "Laura Janet," the St. Annes lifeboat, was lost with all hands, thirteen in all, while the Southport boat, "Eliza Fernley," when within twenty yards of the "Mexico," was overturned by a huge wave and failed to right herself. She carried a crew of sixteen, but only two returned alive after miraculous escapes. Most of the St. Annes lifeboatmen were buried at St. Cuthbert's, and in the graveyard is a memorial of these brave heroes of the sea.

Luckily the Horse Bank has been robbed of its former terror, and disasters are now of rare occurrence. The almost general application of steam as a motive power has lessened the risk of drifting, while the work accomplished in connection with the navigation of the Ribble has vastly improved the channel.

With the rise of the tide the estuary assumes its wonted activity and the passing of vessels to and from Preston add variety to the scene from the promenade.

As the eye wanders over the wide expanse of sea where the Ribble is no longer traceable, we feel our task is accomplished and so take leave of the stream whose course we have endeavoured to follow. We have traced it from its birth, where first issuing to light it flowed as a tiny rivulet—a silver streak amid the moorland hills. Through valleys we have seen it, wending its way by the procreant hills where other units joining forces formed the widening stream that finally assumed the dignity of a river. We have followed its course by lonely hamlet and sequestered village and by humble cottage and historic mansion. We have viewed it under varying conditions and in its many moods; at times quiet and unruffled as a mill pond, and again when its restless waters have sped along with madding onrush to the sea.

And if we have shown the Ribble to add to the scenic beauty of the landscape, its claim to practical utility will scarcely be denied. Not only does it lend welcome aid to many a mill alongside its banks, but man by its agency has established direct communication with other ports, and upon its tidal waters the Ribble bears many who by virtue of their calling “go down to the sea in ships.”

And so the river flows generation after generation, and age in many respects brings but little change, for it preserves something of a perennial charm. And in distant futures yet to be there will doubtless be many who in response to Nature's irresistible call will find the very embodiment of natural beauty by the banks of the Ribble.