

W H A R F D A L E .

EX CRAVENAE MONTIBVS DESCENDIT ETIAM WHEREF, SIVE WHARF, SAXONICE GUERF, ET ARO AEQVI-DISTANS DIV DEFERTVR. SI QVIS NOMEN DETORTVM EXISTIMAT EX GVER DITIONE, QVÆ BRITANNIS RAPIDVM SONAT, NÆ ILLIVS OPINIONI FLVMINIS NATVRA SVFFRAGATVR! PRÆRAPIDA ENIM CELERITATE FREMENS QVASI CONTVMAX ET IRATVS DEVEHITVR SAXISQVE CREBRIS EXASPERATUR, QVÆ NON SINE ADMIRATIONE PROVOLVIT, PRÆSERTIM CVM HYBERNIS AQVIS INTUMUERIT. IPSA ETIAM ÆSTATE PERINFESTVS EST, QVOD IPSE NON SINE PERICVLO MEO SENSI CVM HAS REGIONES PERLVSTRAREM SAXA ENIM HABET ADEO LVBRICA VT EQVI VESTIGIA FALLANT AVT VNDA RAPIDIOR SVBDVCAT.*

AT Ilkley we enter on the course of this beautiful and animated stream, the nymph of which, as we have already seen, had an altar within the station of Olicana. Nor was this an idle homage only to her charms. Verbeia was dangerous as well as fair; the Roman Trajectus was a deep and stony ford, and the prefect Clodius Fronto having unwarily plunged into its deceitful torrent, or been supplanted by the slippery gravel in its bed,† might vow an altar in the moment of distress, and absolve his obligation in the calmer season of gratitude. Fourteen centuries after, the learned discoverer of that altar had nearly met with the same fate.‡

From Ilkley to Bolton, a space of six miles, Wharfdale is a fertile open valley, enriched by subterraneous beds of pebble limestone,§ but without any regular strata of that valuable fossil.

According to the rational hypothesis of Mr. Kirwan, limestone is a substance partially superinduced over the original surface of the earth, and always leaving the primitive mountains of grit, or other rock, extant above it. This theory is in Craven verified by fact.

At Bolton the first symptoms of calcareous strata|| in Wharfdale begin to appear.

[* Camden has led to the true etymology but not completed it—*Guer-aw*, swift water, of which the last syllable with the true Celtic pronunciation, becomes *af*.]

† Livy's account of the Durance may not improperly be applied to the Wharf. "Is et ipse Alpinus amnis, difficillimus transitu: nam, quum aquæ vim vohat ingentem, non tamen navium patiens est; adhæc saxa glareosa volvens nihil stabile nec tutum ingredienti præbet."—L. 21.

‡ Camden, *vide supra*.

§ These beds of limestone gravel are productive of considerable profit to the owner, and advantage to the adjoining lands. In fact they yield the best and whitest lime.

|| This is not to be understood of the *calx arenaria*, which abounds in the course of the river beneath, and gave name to the Roman Calcaria.

Thence the beds take their course westward to Skipton, merge in the low grounds of Aredale, and make their appearance once more in Lothersden, where they finally expire.

But it is only on the western side of Bolton that limestone appears; and it is to the absence of its impenetrable blocks on the margin of the Wharf, for the next three miles, that this enchanting place is indebted for the richness and variety of its native woods.

Wharf has long been a favourite resort of the brethren of the cork and fly, but my readers have to lament that, with greater pretensions than the Dove, it never has had a votary who held the pen, as well as threw the line of Izaak Walton.

Less boisterous, less athletic, more solitary, than any other amusement, angling seems marked out for the relaxation of composed and pious minds; I am willing to hope that it was sometimes indulged to the prisoners of the cloister: * it has given scandal to none but fanatics in the practice of the English clergy. "Venatores," saith St. Jerome, or the writer who passes under his name, "sanctos non novimus, piscatores novimus." †

This river, from its various character, successively deep and shallow, still and rapid, is adapted to the habits of every species of the finny tribe, which delights in clear and uncontaminated waters. For the Wharf is beautifully transparent; not, indeed, like the streams which feed the Cumberland lakes, perfectly colourless, but resembling brown crystal, which tinges without obscuring the objects seen through its medium.

It is peopled, in unusual abundance, by the trout, the umber or grayling, the lampern, ‡ dace, barbel, and chub. § But smelts, which once abounded in this river, are now rarely caught; a deprivation of which the epicure, no less than the angler, has reason to complain, as no other fish, not even the trout, are comparable to them in point of flavour. The general disappearance of this species at present identifies them with the salmon, as it took place from the very time the latter began to be excluded, by a well-known cause, from their usual ascent up the river, at the season of spawning. A few of the parent fish, however, at the time of high floods, still continue to overleap these impediments; so that the young fry is not altogether extinct.

From the bulk of this fish, and the shallowness of the beds, which in the Wharf, it chooses for the deposits of its spawn, an important fact relating to a very obscure subject has been nearly ascertained: "Generatio piscium," says Linnæus, || "etiamnum obscura est;" and ichthyologists have, in general, been prone to indulge themselves in conjectures, rather than depend upon observation.

It must, however, be observed that in the smaller species, and in deeper water, observation becomes nearly impossible.

* Was Prior's Pool, near Bolton, frequented by that ecclesiastic for the purpose of bathing or angling, or both? Tradition is silent.

† In Ps. lxiv.

‡ *Petromyzon fluviatilis*.

[§ A few salmon ascend the river as high as Greenholme, and a considerable number get up to the Otley Weir every year, below which, an increase in the number of salmon smelt is beginning to be perceptible. The lampern, chub, dace, and barbel abound, and are found as far up the river as Addingham. Trout and grayling afford sport for many a keen fisherman, from below Harewood Bridge to nearly the source of the river. The grayling is not found, however, above Grassington; formerly it was plentiful in the deeps near Starbottom, and the oldest inhabitants still talk of it under the name of "Ombre," but for some cause or other, it has now here disappeared and has moved further down the stream to Grassington.]

|| "Systema Naturæ," vol. i. p. 421, ed. 12.

But the following circumstances may be depended upon :—At the moment when the ova are to be excluded, the male and female are seen in the shallows uniting their efforts, by the motion of their tails, to cast up the large gravel, so as to form a pit of two or three feet deep, in which process they frequently displace stones several pounds in weight. Immediately after this follows the exclusion of the roe, which seems to be laborious, while the male closely applies his body to the female, and, with a violent stroke of his tail, disengages the roe from her belly into the basin, which, by the same effort, is beaten down over the eggs. At this instant, undoubtedly, the emission of the milt takes place, so that both are buried together for the purpose of impregnation.*

In the meanwhile, fierce disputes take place between the males for the honour of attending the female during her parturition, and wounds inflicted by the teeth or the proboscis are sufficiently visible on the backs of the competitors. The rivalry of love, in all animated nature, produces something like the neighbourhood of Chemosh and Molech.†

After all, the reader will be surprised to find that these facts, so little understood by modern ichthyologists, were well known to an ancient naturalist and poet, who adopted, however, a very unphilosophical opinion, that the female devoured the male roe as soon as excluded, and that conception took place through the medium of digestion.

Ὡς οὐ ῥηιδίην γενεὴν οὐδ' ἰχθυσι μοιραὶ
 ὦπασαν, οὐδ' ἄρα μόνου ἐπιχθονιοῖσι γυναιξίν
 Ἄλγεα, παντῆδ' εἰσιν ἐπαχθεὲς Εἰλειθυῖαι
 Ἀρσενες αὐτ' ἄλλοι μὲν ἐπ' ἰχθυσι κήρας ἀγοντες
 Δαιτυμονες ῥηγμῶσιν ἐπειγομενοὶ πέλαουσι
 Ἐνθ' οἱ μὲν σφετερας ἐπι γασερας ἀλληλοῖσι
 Τριβομενοὶ θορον ὕγρον ἀπορραουσι δπισθεν
 Αἰ δ' οἰσρῶ μεμανῖαι ἐπαῖγδην στοματεσσι
 Καπτουσι τοῖφ δε γαμφ πληθουσι γουνοιο.‡

From Bolton to Barden, a tract of three miles, the scene is unequalled in richness and beauty. On a low peninsula, formed by a curvature of the Wharf, and at the very point where the contracted gorge of the valley begins to expand, are the ruins of the Priory of Bolton, better expressed by the pencil, or the graver, than by the exactest verbal description. Either bank of the river, here both broad and rapid, is hung with indigenous oak, ash, wych-elm, birch, alder, &c., of the finest growth, proving their satisfaction in the soil by

* Since the first edition of this book, I have met with the following remarkable illustration of these facts in Hector Boece, whom I quote, for an obvious reason, in the old English translation. "The salmon in harvest time commeth up into the small rivers, where the water is most shallow, and there, the male and female rubbing their wombe against each other, they shedde theyr spawne, which forthwith they cover with sand and gravel, and so depart away. The aforesaid spawne and milte being hidden in the sande, in the next spring doth yielde great numbers of little frie, but so neshe and tender, for a long time, that, if you catch any of them, you shall perceyve them to melt and fade, even as it were gelly."—Harrison's translation of Hector Boece's Description of Scotland. Holinshed, Vol. I. p. 2.—1577, p. 10. The last observation, however, leads to the etymology of the word *smelt*, which is the same with *melt*.—Thus, to *smelt* lead is to *melt* the ore.

† Milton's "Paradise Lost," I. 417. "Lust, hard by hate."

‡ Oppiani Halieutica, L. 1. I learn from this poet, that in his time (that of Severus and Caracalla) brass hooks were in use for angling. The reed and hair line were the same as at present.

Θριξὶ δ' ἐν ἠπεδανοῖσι, παλιγναμπτοιο τε χαλκοῦ
 Χειλεσὶ καὶ δορακέσσι, λινοῖσι τε καρπὸς ἐχουσι.

Scil. Piscatores, ibidem.

expanding leaves of unusual size, and by that pendulous inclination of the branches which always accompanies luxuriant vegetation.

To the right is the park of Bolton, ranging nearly from the river to the summit of the Fell, where the blasted heads of weather-beaten oaks form no unpleasing accompaniment to the forked antlers of a herd of stags, almost always seen in the horizon.

Up the stream, and in the deepest recess of the valley, is the well-known Strid, rendered doubly interesting by the ancient anecdote attached to it, where the whole body of water is suddenly contracted into a space of less than six feet, and shot with proportionate rapidity through the rocky channel.

Grey tower-like projections of rock, stained with the various hues of lichens, and hung with loose and streaming canopies of ling, start out at intervals; beyond which, the scene terminates with the shattered remains of Barden Tower, shrouded in ancient wood, and backed by the purple distances of the highest fells.

The upper part of Barden affords nothing remarkable in point of landscape; but an antiquarian eye rests with pleasure upon a scene of thatched houses and barns, which, in the last two centuries, have undergone as little change as the simple and pastoral manners of the inhabitants.

Pursuing the course of Wharf upward from Barden, we next enter the parish of Burnsal, the southern part of which, afterwards cut off by that of Linton, is intersected by the river for about three miles of its course.

In this part of the landscape is a very singular and not unpleasing mixture of gloom and cheerfulness. The bottoms are clothed in all the luxuriance of verdure; the trees bear every mark of a generous soil and rapid growth; the intermediate pastures are green swelling knolls spotted with brushwood; while the fells on either hand, and especially on the left, cast a deep and solemn shade over the whole.

At Garumgill [or Garralgum], near Burnsal, the chapelry of Bolton, by far the most interesting part of Craven, terminates; a tract of eight miles, in which not an object occurs to offend the eye, or to disturb the imagination.

At Burnsal the limestone commences; and a little above the church another vast rent in the rock affords an interrupted passage to the river, which foams through its contracted channel, and forms a scene more awful than pleasing.

North of Burnsal we enter upon the parish of Linton, the lower part of which is bleak and naked, the higher a sheltered valley overspread with native brushwood.

A wide opening between the hills, which admits the western winds in unabated violence, as it contributes to render the villages of Linton, Threshfield, and Grassington, among the coldest in Craven, evidently indisposes their environs to the growth of wood. Accordingly, the fences are of stone, which is so much the worse because the enclosures are numerous.—Still the Wharf, true to its general character, is lively and variable, sometimes reposing in deep transparent pools, at others rushing through narrow channels, or tumbling over ledges of rock, which exasperate its waters still more by a contrary inclination to the current.*

* After an interval of thirty-five years, the roar of these waterfalls still vibrates with no unpleasing association on my ear, though the first impulse was made in the solitary evenings which I spent while a boy in the upper chamber of

All at once the scene undergoes a total change, and for the space of nearly two miles up the river, on either side, scarcely a vestige of the hand of man is seen: the hills, except where jutting points of grey rock appear, are covered with ash, hazel, whitebeam, &c., to their summits, and so entirely does a state of primæval nature prevail, that a stranger might suppose himself in the wilds of an American forest.*

Out of the depths of this sylvan retreat, the Wharf issues with his accustomed rapidity, and, after expanding into a tranquil pool, as if on purpose to form a mirror to the woody scenery above, suddenly projects himself through a cleft in the rock little more than two feet in diameter, and, after struggling with great impatience under his momentary confinement, forms a boiling caldron of tremendous depth beneath.†

This place [which is about twelve hundred yards above Linton Bridge] is happily named the Gastrills [or Ghaistrills]; *i.e.* the Rills or Streams of the Ghost; the plural form being possibly chosen by our ancestors, as the river, when a little swelled, pours over the broad surface of the adjoining rock in distinct and numerous rills.

But the Saxon scholar may be inclined to derive the latter syllable from *þrīan*, *perforare*; in which case the word becomes Gast-thrills, and must be understood to mean the narrow aperture of the Ghost, a name which is certainly more exact, though less poetical.‡

Fear and fancy are nearly allied; but the most elegant superstition could scarcely have imagined fitter scenery than that of the Gastrills for a haunted stream.

At the northern extremity of the parish of Linton, the valley once more expands into a tract of level meadow and pasture. The strand of the river is broad and pebbly, and a tract of five miles from hence to Kettlewell maintains a character peculiar to itself; for the tints are almost universally light green and grey, the foliage is that of the pale and elegant ash; the stream, when illuminated by sunshine, an undulating line of silver; the villages stone-colour, softened by distance, or mellowed by time; even the leaden coverings of their little churches harmonise with the general effect: but, above all, the brown and purple fells are here withdrawn, and, far as the eye can range, to right or left, the sloping sides of the valley are covered with a scabrous surface of limestone, blanched by storms, which, in a powerful sun, oppresses the strongest vision by its whiteness.

On the left hand, and little more than a mile from the point where I am now stationed, the rocks, instead of retreating shelf beyond shelf as before, suddenly protrude an enormous overhanging mass, which, from the vastness of its dimensions, and the boldness of its form, justifies the admiration of Camden, who called it “*Cautes omnium quas quidem ego vidi editissima et præruptissima.*”

the Grammar School of Threshfield. How obtuse in comparison are the perceptions of more advanced life! The præcepts Anio would scarcely make so strong and permanent an impression at fifty.

* To which it has been compared by Mr. Pennant.

† Not many years ago, while a gentleman was handing a young lady over this narrow, but fearful abyss, the latter, seized with a panic, drew herself and her protector into the stream; but before their companions had time to do more than exercise a single act of reflection, in giving them up for lost, both were ejected, without injury, upon the shallow gravel below. All asperities in the rocky passage had long since been worn away, and the caldron beneath, though eighteen feet deep, was too violently agitated to permit them to sink.

‡ Thus the ancient name of Wiborn-water is Thirl-mere, from a sudden contraction in the middle.

Immediately beyond Kilnsey, a collateral valley forks off to Arncliffe, with little to distinguish it from the vale below but a long ridge of rocks, greatly inferior in height and boldness to that of Kilnsey, yet more perpendicular than those of its environs.

With respect to the middle parts of this dale, they are so exact a counterpart of their twin-sister near Buckden, that, could a person not unacquainted with the country be conveyed blindfold into either, he might require some time after his eyes were unbound to determine whether he were in Litton or Longstrothdale.

The last portion of Wharfdale is a tract of fifteen miles from Kettlewell to the source of the river. The Wharf, though now an inconsiderable stream, repays the skill of the angler by the finest trout, and waters (often unseasonably) some of the richest meadows in Craven.

The sides of the hills on either hand are hung with meagre bushes, just surviving to prolong the memory of much valuable wood, which the avarice of the proprietors has gradually destroyed, to their own merited inconvenience, as well as the loss of posterity.

This work of havoc is, comparatively, of recent date. A respectable correspondent, born in Longstrothdale, remembers many of the brows and upland pastures to have been clothed with the ash, the mountain-ash, the asp, holly, hawthorn, and hazel, native and ornamental coverings, of which they are now wholly disrobed: nay, he* has heard an aged person declare, that in his younger days there was a continued forest from Deepdale to Oughtershaw.

What renders this improvidence the more extraordinary is, that great part of the district remains in the hands of the proprietors; for in the earlier part of the 17th century Longstrother, which had, time immemorial, been a forest dependent on the Percy fee, was parcelled out by the last Earls of Cumberland, mostly, as it should seem, to the occupiers of the farms, who, having held them at low rents, were almost universally enabled to purchase. The descendants of these purchasers, a plain and hardy race of yeomanry, still continue to occupy their own estates, rich in the primitive wealth of flocks and herds, but careless alike of present ornament and of remote advantage.

The surrounding hills from Wherside† to Penygent are rendered extremely unsafe in the dark both to men and quadrupeds, by many deep perpendicular chasms in the limestone-rock. Each has at the surface a wide and treacherous funnel of greensward, and at the bottom a murmur of waters is generally heard. These seem to have been native fissures, once filled with earth, which the stream beneath, and the rain-water above, have contributed to wear away; and many a rustic tale of murder and secret interment is sufficiently accounted for by the fall of nightly wanderers into these perilous gulphs.

On the boggy fells near Oughtershaw the fruit of the *Rubus Chamæmorus*, when ripe, is seen in such abundance as to redden the whole surface of the ground. It is somewhat larger than the common mulberry, but has a dingy brickdust hue, and a flat disagreeable taste. Notwithstanding the last objection, the good housewives of Longstrothdale, with whom the gooseberry itself is a kind of exotic delicacy, sometimes make what they call tarts of cloudberry.

* Rev. Mr. Lodge, of Ledbury, Herefordshire.

† Above Kettlewell.

But the abundance of this ethereal plant in the top of Longstrother proves, beyond every other symptom, its great elevation above the level of the sea; a general conclusion, which, however true, has never yet been reduced to exactness in the measurements so confidently given of Ingleborough, Penigent, and Whernside.*

[* The principal heights in Craven, in feet above the mean level of the sea, as given on the Ordnance Survey, are as follows :—

Great Whernside	2310
Buckden Out Moor	2302
Pennegent	2273
Fountain Fell	2191
Yockenthwaite Moor	2109
Simon Fell	2088
Horse Head Moor	1985
Hills on north side of Outershaw Beck	1890
Gray Moss	1812
Rye Loaf Hill	1794
Hill between Outershaw Moss and Langstrothdale	1600
Settle Scarr	1693
Highest point, Burnsall Fell	1661
Earl's Seat on Barden Fell	1474
Beamsley Beacon	1341
Highest point on Ilckley Moor	1323
Addingham High Moor	1236
Appletrewick Pasture	1000

And for comparison in the lowlands :—

Devonshire Arms Hotel, Bolton Abbey	327
Gargrave Village	350
Settle Bridge	484]