

A R E D A L E.

ARVS EX PENNIGENTI MONTIS RADICIBVS, QVI INTER OCCIDVOS MONTES ALTIVS SESE EFFERT, ORTVS, STATIM ITA MAEANDRIS LVGIT, QVASI DVBIVS FONTES AN MARE PETAT, VT SEPTIES SEMIHORAE SPATIO * RECTO ITINERE MIHI TRAIICIENDVS ESSET. TRANQVILLVS, COMPOSITVS, ET VIX FLVENS, LENITER FLVIT, VNDE SORTITVM NOMEN CREDIMVS: LENEM ENIM ET LENTVM ARA BRITANNIS DENOTARE DIXIMVS, VNDE LENTUS ILLE GALLIAE ARARIS NOMEN HABET. REGIONEM AD HVIVS FONTES CRAVEN VOCAMVS, FORTÉ A BRITANNICA CRAGE, ID EST SAXVM: SAXIS ENIM ATQVE PENDENTIBVS RUPIBVS ET ASPRETIS OMNIA INHORRESCVNT.†



BEFORE we take a more particular view of this valley, it may not be improper to premise a few observations on its general character and scenery.

The southern part of Aredale, so far as it is connected with the present subject, has a basis of grit or sandstone peculiarly favourable, from its pervious nature, to the growth of the oak, which strikes its perpendicular roots into the numerous fissures, whence it derives at once nutriment and stability.

Our subject commences with Bingley, a rich and woody scene, commanding two valleys almost equally beautiful. High up (perhaps too high) in the smaller of these is St. Ives, which commands a well-wooded vale, in which are many beautiful knolls clothed with timber. From these woods the late proprietor, by means of judicious thinnings, derived for many years a considerable income, without injuring their picturesque effect. On the whole, in extent of view, richness of scenery, and wild and rocky distances, every situation in Aredale to the northward must yield to St. Ives.

The basis of the vegetable mould on the levels near Bingley is a limestone gravel, evidently brought down by torrents at some remote period from the great masses of calcareous rock at the source of the river. The soil is dry, but shallow: the pasture ground, of course, suffers from the effects of drought in summer; but grain, for the same reason, attains an earlier maturity than in any part of the vale above.

From Bingley upward towards Kighley the woods are very beautiful, with irregularly-indented outlines which artificial plantations never attain, and indeed rarely attempt.

The happiest outlines on the sides of these valleys are produced by cultivation

* I have never been able to discover where this was.

† Camden.

encroaching at random upon the limits of the native woods, and pursuing surfaces of richer soil than ordinary, which often form glades of herbage piercing far and wide into the deep forest gloom around them.

Before the introduction of manufactories the parish of Kighley did not want its retired glens and well-wooded hills; but the clear mountain torrent now is defiled, its scaly inhabitants suffocated by filth, its murmurs lost in the din of machinery, and the native music of its overhanging groves exchanged for oaths and curses.

Northward from Hawcliff and Holden, the parish of Kildwick, from the extirpation of its native woods, and the absence of a spirit of planting in the proprietors, somewhat disappoints the expectations of a stranger; yet, in an ornamental view, I am no undistinguishing advocate for this species of improvement. All that art can do is a contemptible substitution for what nature has done in the creation of woody scenery, and man in its partial destruction. It is not the work of one or even two generations to hang the sides of these hills once more with the full and majestic foliage of their native oak; and in the pine tribe, all the species of which are sufficiently grateful to the planter, there is at once a poverty and a stiffness which deprives them of any higher merit than that of being better than no shade or clothing at all.

If, however, the proprietors will plant, let them reserve every acre of their fertile levels, with the exception of judicious spottings, for the foreground of their landscape: let them leave the tops of the fells to present their craggy fronts and deep purple surfaces as a distance to the picture; but let them remember that it is the intermediate slopes which nature has chosen for the growth of wood in large masses, and that by treading anxiously in her footsteps they can alone hope to produce an harmonious or pleasing effect. In defining their outline, let them beware of angular forms, and, if possible, of stone walls, but above all of the Scottish invention of *bells*, which, instead of circumscribing, fairly impound a domain.

At Skipton the basis of limestone commences, and henceforward Aredale assumes a new face and character. The verdure and fertility of the soil are now unrivalled; and if the oak in its native state disappears, the maple, beech, wych-elm, and, above all, the ash, more than compensate the loss; so that the banks of the Are in the parishes of Carlton, Broughton, and Gargrave, as specimens of soft and expanded landscape, have no equals in Craven.

Yet this favoured district is ill adapted to the growth of corn. Even its fertility indisposes it for agriculture, as a luxuriant soil and dripping climate will always produce gigantic straw and a thick-skinned, unyielding grain; but Providence distributes its blessings with a more equal hand than we are willing to allow, and the productions of a better climate and inferior soil now find their way into Craven with a facility which will ensure the fine pastures of Aredale from being ever again perverted to the purposes of tillage. A single horse, which forty years since toiled from Knaresborough to Skipton with a sack of wheat upon its back, will now, with equal or greater ease, draw a boat upon a canal laden with forty tons of the same great necessary of life.

The descent of the Are in a course of sixteen miles, and along the valley which we

have been traversing, is ascertained by the same canal, which operates as a water level, since from Bingley, south, to Gargrave, north, there is not a single lock. At a small distance from Bingley are eight locks, including perhaps in the whole a descent of nearly eighty feet. This circumstance points out the propriety of another accommodation: our hardy forefathers, whose ideas on the subject of roads were evidently formed on the direction of the great Roman strata, many of which were then not only visible but in use, evidently preferred the shortest line from point to point, whatever inequalities might happen to lie in the way. The toil of ascending and descending the rugged pavements or pathways of the fells to them was nothing; they despised alike the sudden burst of the mountain storm in summer or the overwhelming drift of winter snow, and with patient indifference encountered the same difficulties which their ancestors had endured before.

But modern nerves are of a less hardy texture, and the general introduction of carriages calls aloud for attention to an evil now become insupportable. To this purpose something has already been done in Craven, and more is promised. One of the great passes into Lancashire, over Pinhow, has already been exchanged for a safe and level way to Coln: another easy communication has been opened, under the auspices of Lord Ribblesdale, from Burnley to Gisburne, and the terrific road over Rumblesmore, which has appalled stouter travellers than Mr. Gray, will now be avoided by a diversion which, in the length of four miles, encounters a much smaller ascent than heretofore in one.

But to return to the Are. From Gargrave, northward, the course of the Are through Coniston, Calton, Airton, Kirkby, &c., carries us through a tract sufficiently fertile, but upon a higher level, more exposed to the west winds, and therefore less propitious to the growth of wood. From Gargrave to Malham scarcely a tree is seen but the ash, the hardy and congenial native of Craven.

At Malham, without entering into the minutiae of topographical inquiry, which are reserved for another place, we may consider the Are as traced to its source; and shall leave it for the present, undecided whether it bursts from two of the finest springs or from the face of one of the most majestic rocks in Britain.