

CIRCA-1903. See page 64

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remote spot, miles from a habitation, lost in mist, or might take a wrong direction which landed him miles out of the course, yet he always found shelter and friends, and only once I believe spent the night in a lonely shepherd's hut in the midst of drenching rain, to find at daylight he was but a mile or so from a village, which the darkness of night and hilly country had hidden. This is surely a record in nearly 50 years of

wandering, often in remote districts and often alone.

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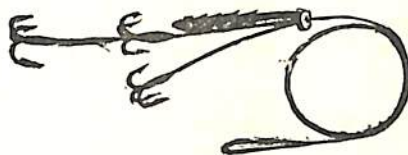


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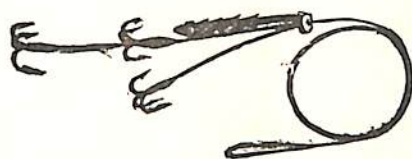


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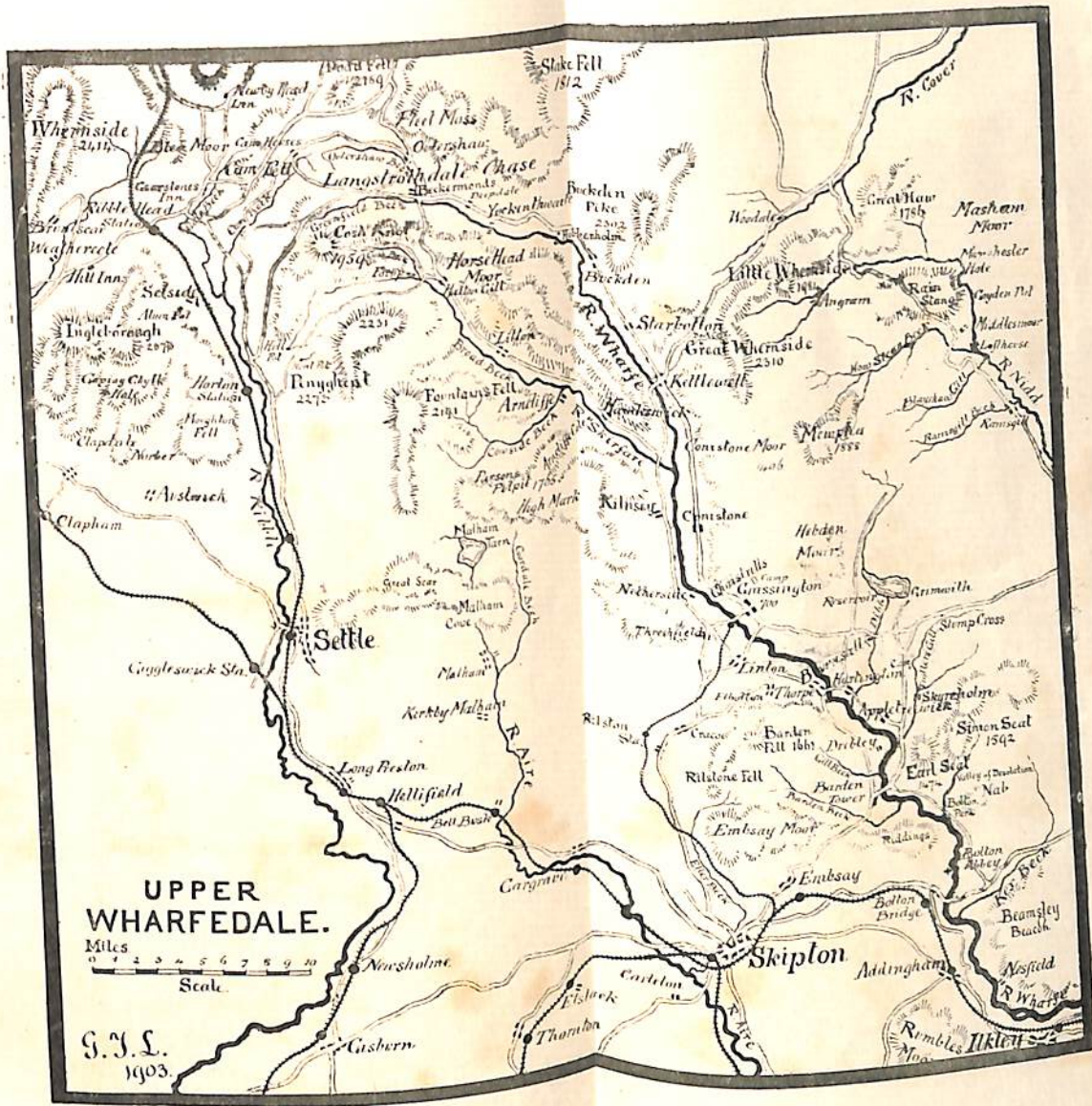
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**ROUND ABOUT SKIPTON, GRASSINGTON,
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Skipton, the ancient capital town of "Craven"—an old Baronial and ecclesiastical kingdom—is 26 miles distant from Leeds, 18 from Bradford, and the objective of our visit, lies just upon the verge of the "Craven" limestone, where it comes to the surface from beneath the overlying Airedale grit rocks, through which the Wharfe river winds so picturesquely past Bolton towards Ilkley, where its bed is, like the Aire at Keighley, also on grit.

In olden days when visiting the higher reaches of Wharfedale, one's rail-ride ended at Skipton; the rest of the journey being either on foot, or by coach, latterly styled "bus." There was ever a spice of romance in these up-date adventures which the traveller by train, to-day, can never realise, much less encore. Those "drives" stand forth as red-letter days in one's memory.

Skipton's market for cattle, sheep, etc., was at that time, 25 years ago only! held in the broad thoroughfare of High Street, with its "cobble"-set areas, the noise of wheel and nailed boot, and vocal uproar commencing soon after midnight, and becoming stronger as the hours rolled by. The lowing of kine, the bleat of sheep, the hoarse shouting and swearing of drovers, once heard by the writer has not yet been forgotten.

But the historic hey-day of Skipton dates back more than a thousand years. Its modern name is only an altered Anglo-Saxon Sceph, i.e., sheep, the sheep-town in all verity; the place to which in pre-Norman times the moormen from the emerald limestone pasture uplands drove their sheep both to fold and barter for raiment and the other necessities of life. But glancing back to ruder days, what tragic enactment has not this market-place witnessed. Executions, rescues, the raiding sweep of the Scots, fierce skirmishes, or gay cavalcades of knights and their following, passing through it to the castle entrance, bull-fights and baitings, and other rough scenes of merry-making, have often been witnessed here.

Over the imposing entrance-gates of the Castle, which frowns down on High Street, may be deciphered these words, cut in the stone—"Des-or-mais," meaning, "Henceforward, enduring through all time"—forcible words in which is centred all the glamour of mediæval association, and all the glory, dignity, and nobility which ancient lineage only can bestow. Out of the shadowy past rose the mighty Castle, begun by Robert-de-Romille, who had been granted large tracts of land around Skipton. Of the original structure very little now remains, built to stem the recurring "bore" of Scottish invasions, and to hold in part subjection the half wild men of the dales. As one says, there is "a story in every stone," and a deed of high endeavour enshrined on every battlement; and despite the fact that the almost kingly Skipton lords have passed in the land of silence and shadow, their name and accomplishments will henceforward endure through all time. Space forbids any save the briefest description of the Castle. Little of the early Norman building remains; of subsequent erections, the seven towers, and the curtain wall are the most ancient. The walls range from 9 to 12 feet in thickness, the present entrance, opening into the main street, conceals or masks the original doorway, and is the work of Lady Anne Pembroke. The north wall runs alone the brink of a huge rock from the base of which to the battlements is fully 200 feet. Among the interesting parts shown to the visitors is "fair Rosamond's Chamber," "Rose of the world" as her name means in Latin, of "Woodstock" fame. Others are the co.



BOLTON ABBEY

W. G. Foster.

court, the old yew tree, the dungeon, and the banquetting hall.



natural nave of greenery that all visitors to Skipton should view.

The Church, with its massive tower fills up the space at the north end of Skipton's High Street. It comprises a wide and spacious nave and choir of seven bays, three remaining on a cluster of shafts are of an earlier date than the latter being a four-stalled sedilia. The font, of 12th century date, has a magnificent carven-oak cover. The choir screen is fine in character. The small north transept keeps in memory George Robinson, of Overdale. But the main embellishing features of this church are the magnificent tombs covering the remains of the Cliffords, Earls of Cumberland. To attempt an adequate description is

A few paces beyond the west end of the Church, a flight of steps lead down to the banks of the canal-moat alongside which and between it and the swift-running Ellerbeck the path leads by the moat; above rises sheerly the rocky wall of solid limestone, atop of which is the battlemented Castle wall; on this side making an absolutely impregnable bar to assault. The visitor can hardly fail to be impressed with the stern intent of the old castle builders, to conquer or subdue, and "hold their fort" against all comers.

Following the path along the canal banks we gain the arcaded shades of the Castle woods, quite a romantic

vain, so massive are they, so elaborate in detail, so beautifully rich in heraldic device and colour, wrought in their dark grey, polished, imperishable marble. Around the sides

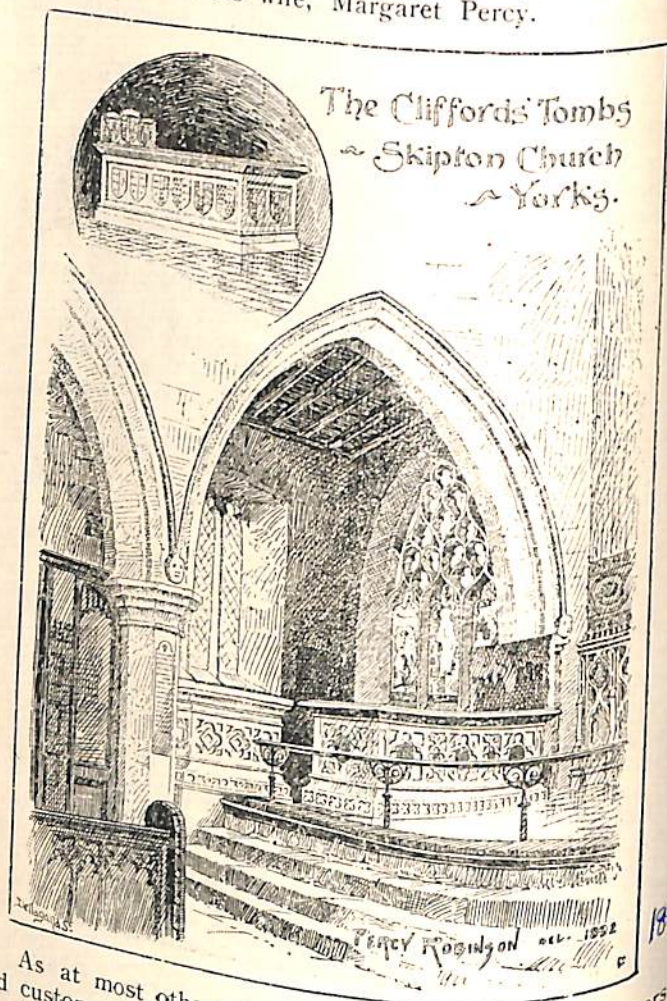


BOLTON ABBEY.

[Bernard Evans.

and ends are emblazoned the armorial bearings, shields, and quarterings—the alliances by marriage of this important family. On the one on the north side of the altar are two

rare "brasses" to the memory of Henry, 1st Earl of Cumberland, and his wife, Margaret Percy.



As at most other places, notable changes in manners and customs have come to Skipton, and the Craven dales to which it is the gate-way, during the last 70 years. The transition during Victoria's reign alone was as profound as

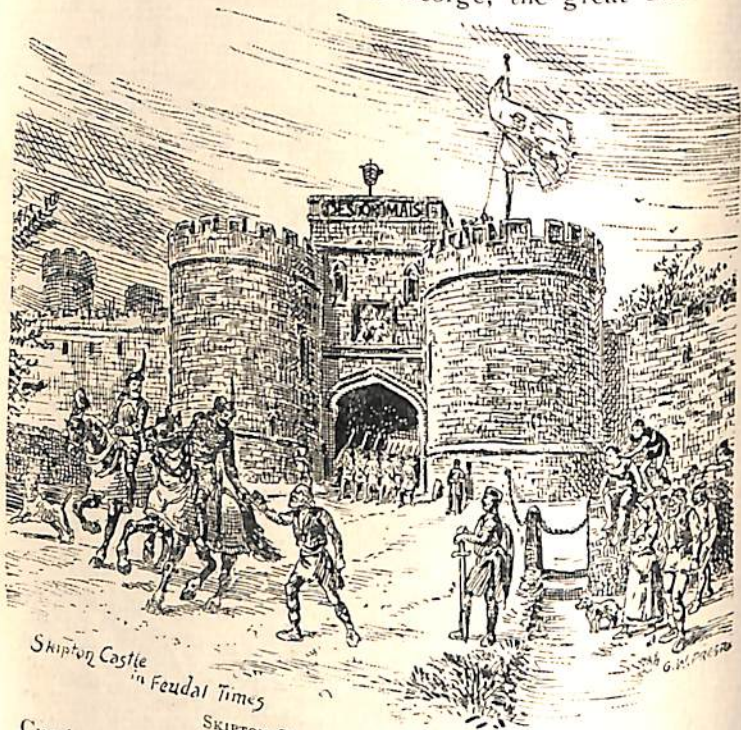
the change during the whole preceding period between Cromwellian days and those of George the Third. People are apt to speak of the "Good old days," but those who have lived beyond three-score years fully understand the alterations for the better, for lower and middle class, which have, after lengthy "interested" political strife, come to pass.

During the 17th and next century the laws of Skipton dealing with the poor vagrants who visited the town were drastic indeed, somewhat reminding one of the Transvaalian methods as shown in the Labour Leaders deportation, but here at Skipton vagrants were publicly whipped before being driven beyond the confines of the Parish, and, in cases where possible, sent back to their native places*.

The Parish accounts have an item: June 28, 1740,—For taking four strollers, and putting them out of the town, cost 6d. In the 17th century a "Bedle" for the whipping of undesirables, was elected; his yearly stipend for the performance of these occasional castigations being 26 shillings! "Whereas the towne and P'ishe of Skipton is grievously pestered with rogues and vagabonds that swarme in those parts, ytt is therefore ordered that a "Bedle" shall be appointed for the whipping and punishing of such rogues to the end that their owne poore may be better relieved and "forreigne" beggars (strangers) may be kept out." This was in the day of the ducking-stool, pillory, and parish-stocks; and many are the records in these parish accounts of payments made for the upkeep and repairing of these old-time punitive instruments. Another series of small accounts, covering several generations, is for the splicing and repairing the bull-rope, and "ye Bull Ring." In 1757, a new bull rope "26 pounds" (weight) at 6d. a lb., for "bull-baiting," costs 13s. The considerable number of small sums paid for killing and burying "mad-dogs" is somewhat amazing, to those who do not know that hydrophobia was once far more prevalent than now; at one time or another all the dogs belonging to Skipton might be supposed to have gone mad. In those days, too, females guilty of a natural law of "frailty" had to do "penance at church," i.e., clothed in a white sheet, and bare-footed,

* From "Dawson's Loose Leaves of Craven History."

bearing a white wand, had to silently pace the aisle in sight of all during service! In 1712, one William Dring (parish clerk!) and Rachael Goodgion underwent the ceremony; the record says that after their impropriety they married, however. What could be expected of these lapses from strict virtue of lowly born folk when George, the great Earl of



Skipton Castle
in Feudal Times

SKIPTON CASTLE IN FEUDAL TIMES.

Cumberland was one of the worst offenders in this respect? According to Whitaker, "he certainly ought to have done penance regularly" in Skipton Church, since "several families in Craven owe their origin to his amours."

During the latter half of the 18th century there lived in Skipton a notable "wise-man" and astrologer, Timothy Crowther, who in seer-like way undertook to cure all sorts

of ailments, counteract spells, and recover to the rightful owner goods which had been stolen. He became famous for his wonderful "arts and charms," and his revealing of various occult mysteries; people flocked from far and near to consult him. In the Bramley Parish accounts, under date December, 1783, the following appears:—"Expenses on bargaining with a conjuror from Skipton to cure Matthew Hudson's daughter—is." and the year after, another account of 12s. 6d. paid to the said same wise-man, for again attending Hudson's daughter. Clearly the shillings-worth had not proved sufficient. Crowther became so well-known to the people of Craven that his name passed into a simile "saw"—"As cunning as a Crowther." Many families now in the Craven upland bear the patronymic of the "wise" man.

So much for the doings, cruel or merely ignorant in the so-called "good old times"—to which, for the present occasion we say good-bye.

In departing, for the sake of associated recollections, we choose the old route—the Dale's highway by the Craven Heifer, along which we have travelled into Wharfedale and back again so often in the years that have flown.

Leaving High Street we go by the church, turning to the left and over the canal, then joining and pursuing a very pleasant "up and down" country road, trending north, through what may be defined as the Flasby-Cracoe and Embassy Gap, adown which, roughly-speaking, runs the Ellerbeck from the Waterford Gill, recently brought into re-notice from a proposition to establish a local hospital thereabouts.

Strange scenes have been enacted on this route in the centuries that have lapsed since "Sheep-town" became the "capital" of Craven. After the great fight at Bannockburn the victorious Scots repeatedly raided this district. There is deep meaning in the words of an old historian, who says they came "In the month of Maie," the beautiful spring month. They left behind a scene of desolation, devastated villages, and smouldering farmsteads, from whence the cattle and sheep had been driven forth, and peradventure, the young people and women folk also, whilst the