

ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, JULY 1, 1893.

QUAINT ENGLISH INNS.

PLACES THAT EVERYBODY HAS READ ABOUT IN NOVELS.

The Unicorn at Bowes—Where Dickens went to investigate Squeers and his school—the Odd Construction and Arrangements of Old Time Hostels.

LONDON, JUNE 19.—Dead old Bowes, in northern Yorkshire, alongside what in former times was called the Great North Road, possesses one of the finest specimens of the ample roadside inns of the olden coaching days to be found in all England. The village and this inn have always had for me the weird fascination of any provincial spot in Britain, though both hamlet and inn are now dreary and desolate beyond description. The old inn here, now called the Unicorn, was first known as the George. Eight coaches, bound either to London or Glasgow, daily changed horses in its great yard in the good old coaching days. It is to this inn that Charles Dickens, with a great and merciful motive in fiction, repaired with his friend and companion, Hablot Browne, a few weeks before Christmas of 1837, where the two remained while Dickens secured material for "Nicholas Nickleby."

He had letters to a yeoman of the place, soon to shine as one of the immortals of fiction as honest "John Browdie." He represented himself as agent of a poor widow desirous of placing her only boy in a quiet country school. In this way he secured admission to a pumber in the vicinity, though shut out of some by the wary masters. The "school" seeming most suitable as a prototype of them all, from the person of its savage owner and his family, with wild and desolate physical surroundings in keeping with the hopelessness of the school-life of the place itself, was the Dotheboys Hall, still standing in Bowes—hardly a stone's throw from the ancient Unicorn inn, the house being now occupied by "old man Bonsfield," husband of the veritable Squeers' daughter, known in life as Mary Ann Shaw—where "Nicholas Nickleby," his protegee in misery the wretched "Smike," and scores of other helpless young lives, are depicted as having undergone an almost inconceivable life of servitude, starvation and cruelty.

Investigations showed that the horrible picture drawn was not an exaggeration, and bore out Dickens' own statement in the original preface that "Mr. Squeers and his school are faint and feeble pictures of an existing reality, purposely subdued and kept down lest they should be deemed impudent." This, Dickens' second, and in some respects his greatest, novel was begun in April, 1838, and finished in October, 1839. At the appearance of the first part, he ran away from London, as he always did, to remain in hiding until a distinct measure of public favor or disfavor was shown. In the case of "Nicholas Nickleby" his forgivable skulking was of short duration. The first day's sale of the first part exceeded 50,000 copies. Not six months had passed before the torture and cruelty to helpless scholars in these remote prison-pens were abated, and before the last chapter of "Nicholas Nickleby" had been read, public feeling, which in many portions of the country barely escaped expression in riot, had annihilated every child-hell of the Dotheboys Hall variety in England.

If you came from London to Bowes over the same coach-road as did Nicholas Nickleby, when nearing the end of his dreary journey, "at about 6 o'clock that night, he and Mr. Squeers and the little boys and their united luggage were put down at the George and New Inn," you would have come by the old coach road from London to Edinburgh and Glasgow. On leaving the ancient city of York you would have struck into a highway 2,000 years old. Masses of Roman legions have swept, tide on tide, back and forth over the same stone road. Stern Agricola, the courtly Tacitus and Emperor Servius himself, have ridden towards the unconquerable North upon it. The latter left 50,000 of his army dead among the Scotch mists and mountains, and with his face set towards Rome and home, only reached York to die of his wounds and chagrin.

It is the great Roman Road of England Watling, or Watling, Street it is called. Away in the north of Yorkshire, a few miles above Catterick bridge, one stem of this highway goes on through Durham and Northumberland, and thence to Edinburgh. The other, swings around to the westward traversing Westmorland and Cumberland through Carlisle to the great Roman wall, which once protected Britain from the Caldeonians, and thence, in a more modern coach road, winds through the olden lovers' haunts, Gretna Green, to Glasgow. On this western stem, between the rivers Tees and Greta, at the eastern edge of Stanemoor, nearly surrounded by desolate moors, and in the northwest corner of Yorkshire, lies what is left of Bowes.

It is difficult not to wander away from a description of the old Unicorn Inn, at Bowes, among the literary and antiquarian things of interest in its neighborhood. The

inn itself must not be confounded, even under its old name of the George, with the George inn of Greta bridge, six miles nearer York, now used as a corn mill. To disguise the exact location of Dotheboys hall, Dickens made Squeers (Shaw) travel with young Nickleby three miles from the George inn at Greta bridge to the supposititious "hall," followed by the "cart-load of infant misery." What they really did do was to dismount all together from the York and Carlisle coach within the inn-yard of this very Unicorn, and then shiver along the crooked, cobbled single street of Bowes, until they arrived at the "long, cold-looking house," a little way beyond to the west, and a tall, lean boy (poor Smike!) with a lantern in his hand issued forth.

The Unicorn, which seems to have completely escaped the attention of English antiquarians and travellers, is not only remarkable for its associations, in having been the most important inn near the border between York and Glasgow and Edinburgh in olden times, but in also being the largest of those ancient English roadside hostels still extant which were called into existence by the necessities of travel in the old coaching days.

At its very door the Royal Mail began the ascent over the Great North Road of weird, dreary and vast Stanemoor, peopled only by with and warlock; silent ever save from howling tempests; and with no semblance of humans upon it, save at its desolate top, where William the Conqueror and Malcolm of Scotland fought dreadfully and long to decide the boundaries of their respective kingdoms; and then wisely stopped and feasted, sensibly deciding that on the very spot should be raised the great Roi (now Rere) cross, or "Cross of Kings," on one side of which was graven the image of William, and on the other that of Malcolm; but 800 years have eaten these old faces away; and none other will be seen until Kirby Stephen, nestling in the valley, on the other side towards ancient Penrith and Carlisle, is reached; all of which gave travelers cheer at the Unicorn a special zest not unmixed with a tinge of dread.

Its form is of a double quadrangle, each fully 100 feet square. The one next the street has its entire front open to the great inn-yard thus formed. The two sides abutting the street comprised respectively the inn proper—a long, two-storied and garreted stone structure, with a perfect mass of curious old rooms approached by outlandish stairs, entries and landings, and rendered additionally bewildering by countless niches, cupboards, alcoves and blind panels; and the other a huge brew-house, with dozens of granaries and store-rooms behind. The side opposite the street provided offices and sleeping accommodations for guards, post-boys, whips and all those inn-helpers concerned in working the coaches, or dealing with the tired cattle of the many travellers on horseback, merchandise, packers and wagons passing between England and Scotland a century ago. In this quadrangle are also many open stone sheds, with tiled roofs, stone feed-boxes and neat, sealed cobblestone floors, where private vehicles and wagons could find temporary shelter in great numbers; and in the centre of this quadrangle, about with stone drinking-troughs, is the most tremendous ancient pump I have found in England, still creakingly serving the scanty uses of the present degenerate days.

The quadrangle behind the inn-yard is formed by what remains of the ancient stone stables, where scores of pairs of post-horses could have found comfortable quarters and as many more carter's and packer's cattle have good shelter and care. In the hostel proper the huge kitchen must have quite equaled the famous ancient kitchen of old St. Mary's Hall, Coventry. There are still to be seen a half dozen coffee and breakfast rooms, low, with deep window-seats, quaint cupboards, and odd old oak paneling, where guests were served in parties and groups, instead of in a common hall. There are tons and tons of lead in the roof-gutters, about the window-frames, and still firmly holding the ancient tiny panes of glass. Little old parlors and sitting-rooms, with curious windows and most ancient stucco work are still recognizable; but most ancient looking of all, and illustrating the customs of that early time is a tiny tap-room opening into the rear of the inn-yard.

It has low oaken settles built stationary into wall and floor. Its huge fire-place is full of tiny cranes for steaming kettles. In one corner is an oaken bed, enclosed in a closet-like frame, where landlord or barman could not only retire at night completely from sight, but also lock himself in against uproar and disturbance; and the window of this room is a low, portly bow, in the centre of which, above a tiny stout shelf, is a single hinged pane. Through this, the stablemen, hangers-on, the late night travelers, who might be honest or otherwise, were served with usquebaugh or a jorum—only after they had deposited coin of the realm and the latter had reached the hostel treasury, a great buckskin bag within the dark recesses of the barman's fortified bed.

SEEN AT THE ANTIPODES.

DISTINGUISHED ENGLISHMEN AT THE GOLD DIGGINGS.

Continuation of the Story of an Old Timer—Sir Charles Hotham's Visit to Bendigo—The Chinese Question and How It Was Settled.

Strangers when visiting the Victorian diggings always take in Ballarat and Bendigo. They are what London and Paris are to the American tourist.

Mr. J. R. de la Harpe, the historian and Lord Rosebury visited Bendigo a few years ago making themselves acquainted with its "lions" and resources as also did the Marquis of Normandy accompanied by Princes Albert and George of Wales.

The first opportunity that Bendigo had of giving an expression of loyalty to the crown was on the occasion of Sir Charles Hotham's visit in 1854—though I fear their enthusiasm at that time was tinged with a spirit of selfishness. Sir Charles Hotham was a newly appointed governor of the colony and was making a tour of the diggings accompanied by his lady with the laudable desire of informing himself of the wishes and grievances of the digger. His predecessor Governor La Trobe had bequeathed him a legacy of discontent that was jarring the whole mining population, namely their objection to the gold mining tax. Therefore his presence was doubly welcome as they could appear to him in person. All classes being equally effected, the procession of reception partook of an international character, none were more demonstrative than the Germans with their band and flags, none more distinctive than the colored Americans who carried aloft the stars and stripes with all the pride of free born citizens, and bringing up the rear none attracted more attention than the Chinese with banners and their horrid air-vibrating tom-toms supposed to be instruments of music—yes John Chinaman had an axe to grind in common with all.

The diggers, to show their unity of purpose, held a mass meeting of 8,000 men or more, at which a memorial was drawn up for presentation to his Excellency stating their objection to the license tax, claimed an extension of the franchise, and that the lands be thrown open to the people as early as they could. After hearing the memorial read he replied that he would give the matter his serious consideration. At the conclusion of his remarks a tremendous burst of cheering broke forth from the assembled thousands.

Notwithstanding the reasoning tone of his Excellency's address, he failed to keep his promise, as there was no mention of the diggers' grievances in his speech at the opening of the legislature, which took place shortly after; which fact was strongly commented on. No doubt he meant to do as he promised, at the time, but was probably overruled by his advisers. The diggers here realized that he to whom they had looked to for redress of their grievances had gone back on them, and that the royal welcome accorded him and the flattering mottoes were undeserved. On one motto in particular (savoring of Yorkshire origin) on a banner hung across the road, about the first his Excellency's eyes would rest on, were the words, "He's a Right 'Un," inscribed on it, was the widest of the mark, as the sequel proved.

The Governor's course in this matter proved very damaging to his reputation, for in three months after, the miners' troubles culminated in the Ballarat riot, when the government, by force of public sentiment, was compelled to give way, and he, its head, a man of high spirit—sensitive, with an honest desire of doing right and to distinguish his regime, had to suffer the humiliation of being driven when it was his prerogative to lead.

As I have before said that the Chinese had a grievance also, however they managed their case, and succeeded without recourse to arms by coming the heathen Chinamen dodge over the government. About the time I am writing of there was a strong agitation on the gold fields against the wholesale introduction of Chinese—they would land by ship loads. The year before on a trip to Melbourne we passed 600 that had arrived that week and were making their way to the diggings. Every little while we would meet a string of a 100 in single file each carrying load enough for a pack mule and all on a trotting gait keeping time to the spring of the bamboo at each end of which was suspended their load.

The government becoming alarmed at the marked hostility of the mining population to the Chinese passed a law imposing a capitation tax of £10 per head. By some manipulation on John Chinaman's part this tax was removed and a resident tax of £4 per annum substituted. In course of time this was also removed. What followed after I am not aware of. Owing to frequent collisions between diggers and Chinamen the government was obliged to step in and keep the peace, compelling the Chinamen to live in communities by themselves also providing protectors and interpreters. This arrangement suited John capitally for when disputes arose and were

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carried to the courts he generally stood a chance to win, having his own countryman as interpreter and very often the sympathy of the court by reason of that characteristic trait of the English of being disposed to lean to the side of the weaker or oppressed—hence it became a saying that it was no use of a white man going to law with a Chinaman as one would stand no show against them. Therefore John Chinaman was a great admirer of the English and summed up the character of the English nation as follows:—English, belly good; Scotch, little good; Irish, no good. J. E. WILSON.

POISONS IN PHOTOGRAPHY.

Mr. Givan Answers the Questions of a "Progress" Correspondent.
TO THE EDITOR OF PROGRESS:—In your last issue I noticed a number of questions by a correspondent signing himself a North Shore Amateur. I will answer them to the best of my ability and further, will be only too happy to give any information that I am able, on this subject which is so interesting to us.

1. Bi-chloride of mercury is intensely poisonous, I grain being fatal. A solution of it entering a cut or sore on the hands is very apt to cause death. The following chemicals, largely used in photography are also very poisonous, cyanide potassium, the salts of lead, and nearly all the acids.
2. It is decidedly injurious to open the printing frame in direct sunlight. They must be examined in a very subdued light.
3. When the print is removed from the frame, it is only necessary to keep it in the dark until the necessary number has been completed. In warm weather albumen paper will not keep more than two days. The high surface papers will keep two or three months.
4. The object of washing prints in acetic acid is to counteract the alkaline effect of the ammonia used in fixing. It also renders them making them tone slower and much more evenly.
5. I cannot imagine how you can get the toning and fixing baths confused, if you use ordinary care. If you keep them both in bottles label them. You will find it much more convenient to keep the Hypo in a shallow tray, and the toning bath return to its bottle when you are through using it. C. F. GIVAN.

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