

Holiday making at Shipley

It is difficult to understand why more of those persons who are accustomed to the crowded bustling, noisy life of our industrial centres do not seek the restful quietude and peace of the countryside in the hours of their leisure. From the littleness, the meanness and the ugliness forced upon them by circumstances what a relief it would be to turn to the effulgence and beauty of Nature - the real joy of which is revealed to the individual while obscured from the multitude. Only a cursory observation of the holiday migration of the masses of our large towns is required, however, to show that they look for recreation and enjoyment in much the same congested environment as that in which they labour and have their being. They take their pleasures collectively; they are essentially units of homogenous crowd.

Of this phenomenon Shipley Glen, at Easter time - and other holiday times too, but particularly at Eastertime - supplies an interesting example, for provided that the weather is sympathetic, it is invariably the rendezvous of a large concourse of people. In hundreds, thousands, and at times tens of thousands, they gather together on the rocky plateau at the Saltaire end of the Glen, drawn from many parts of the West Riding, but principally from Bradford whose tall, grimy chimneys are not altogether lost to view. In size the crowd fluctuates with the vagaries of the weather, but from year to year its characteristics change but little - it was the same "buzzing, pleased multitude" yesterday as some Good Friday may be a couple decades ago. It would be difficult to analyse its constituent parts, but the artisan class is the predominating element.

What is it that draws a crowd of such dimensions year after year with unflinching

regularity? The attractions are both natural and artificial. Situated on the fringe of the rolling moorlands and commanding a splendid view of the Aire Valley, the Glen possesses a romantic charm and picturesqueness which is irresistible. The two slopes of the ravine, at the foot of which runs a purling stream, are all the more striking by reason of their contrasting features, for whilst the one is closed with "patrician trees and plebeian underwood" the other is bare and barren, rough and rugged, stern and wild. About the rocks are scattered picnic parties, but it is at the lower end of the Glen, where the mountain railway deposits its human freight, that the great bulk of the people gather. Here the attraction is purely artificial - and not such as are likely to appeal to the poetic taste either - consisting in the main of the usual showman's paraphernalia - merry go rounds, swing boats, penny gaffs, "Aunt Sallys" and a host of other profit-making devices. Here the "fun of the fair" goes on all the afternoon long and well into the night too, its frivolity and hilarity quickening as the hours flee, until at length the naphtha-flares are extinguished and the Glen resumes its normal

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