

where we may fail to find him?" he appealed, looking blankly at the official, and speaking in a low hoarse voice.

"Humph! Yes, I should rather say it is, very possible indeed! With three weeks' start I would guarantee to hide myself pretty securely," opined Mr. Wilson.

"He has escaped!" repeated Dr. Rossiter, too absorbed in his own reflections to have noted what was passing. "But he shall *not* escape!" he went on, rising in an impulse of insupportable passion. "I will spend every penny I possess in searching for him. But I don't believe he has gone at all. This is a trumped-up story. I'll have the house searched. I shouldn't wonder if he is hiding somewhere in the house, and that this tale is meant to put us off the scent."

"Not a bad suggestion, that, sir," responded Wilson. "Anyhow, there could be no harm in running through the house. I'll call Thomas and Giles," he continued, referring to the two policemen, who were waiting, with handcuffs in their pockets, to carry poor Mr. Rossiter off to prison. "And we shall have to trouble *you*, sir, to keep in our company," he subjoined to Frank.

To have offered any opposition to this proposal would, Frank felt, have been worse than useless. Accordingly, submitting in silence to the indignity, which involved a doubt of his own word, he followed the four men as they now proceeded to examine the house from basement to attic. Not a place was sacred from their investigation. They insisted even upon entering Effie's room, which she, poor girl, had refused

to leave to-day, and the door of which Mrs. Rossiter and Christine had opened in alarm at the sound of those loud trampling feet in the corridor.

The search, however, issued in failure, as did likewise a careful inquisition to which each of the servants was put separately, respecting the time and manner of their master's departure.

By the time all these inquiries were ended, Dr. Rossiter's disappointed wrath had risen to a white heat of passion, the very strength of which imparted to his manner a false appearance of calmness.

"A word with you, please, before I go," he said to young Rossiter, motioning him into a room, and closing the door behind him. "I wish to tell you that I now retract my promises of assistance to your family. You may starve for me, as you have a right to do! And, look here, you will be good enough to leave my house within a week. I give you until a week to-day to clear out."

"We shall be gone by that time, Dr. Rossiter," returned the young man with quiet dignity, and a face pale as death. "And as for your offers of assistance, though I thank you for having made them, be assured, sir, that under no circumstances would any of us have consented to accept from you a penny."

"Dear me! You are very independent in your pauperism," rejoined the doctor, with an ugly laugh. "However, that is your own look-out. Remember, then, that I and my family will arrive here a week to-day, and that we shall expect to find the premises clear. Good-bye to you."

END OF CHAPTER THE THIRTY-EIGHTH.

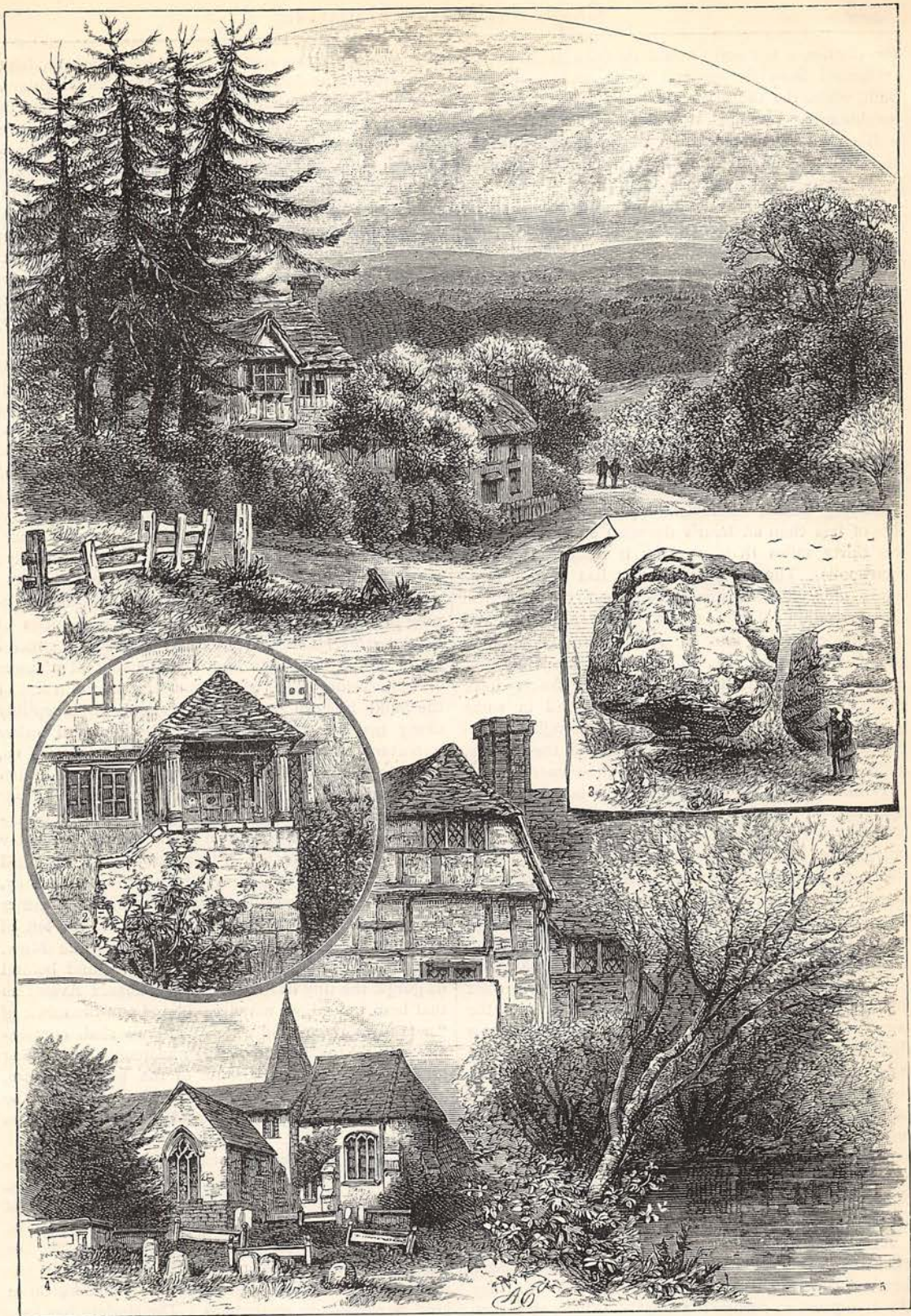
CRAWLEY DOWN AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD.



DOWN in the north-western corner of the eastern division of the county of Sussex lies the small scattered hamlet of Crawley Down. It was the centre of my peregrinations in that neighbourhood some years ago, and although I have since visited many localities

more historically interesting, my mind even now often reverts with very great pleasure to the delightful rambles and quiet meditations enjoyed in that peculiarly healthful and secluded retreat. The place, no doubt, derived its name from the character of its position, and its comparative proximity to the larger village of Crawley, situated some four or five

miles distant. It lies on the very border-land of the counties of Sussex and Surrey, and any one who cares to examine a map of this district will not fail to notice how numerous are the tracts of uncultivated land scattered about the neighbourhood, and designated as either "heath" or "common." Indeed, they form a very distinctive and characteristic feature. They are probably the remnants of a vast expanse of waste land considered valueless for agricultural purposes at a time when the population of the country was not more than a fifth of what it is now, and may, indeed, have formed part of the territory covered by the ancient forest of Andreade, which is known in early times to have extended over a large portion of the south-eastern provinces. The still existing forests of Ashdown and St. Leonard's, the one situated to the east, the other to the west of this neighbourhood, are probably remains of the same forest. Gradually the trees disappeared—a process greatly facilitated by the enormous consumption of wood for smelting purposes in former days—and the land was abandoned to the luxuriant growth of the purple heather, intermingled here and there with golden patches of yellow gorse. At widely distant intervals, and especially in the neighbourhood of the great highways which intersected



CRAWLEY DOWN AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD.

1. VIEW FROM TURNER'S HILL: CRAWLEY DOWN IN MIDDLE DISTANCE. 2. PORCH AT EAST GRINSTEAD. 3. "BIG UPON LITTLE."
 4. WORTH CHURCH (BEFORE RESTORATION). 5. ROADSIDE FARMHOUSE NEAR GRANGE ROAD STATION.

the district, a few acres would be from time to time reclaimed from the general waste, and homesteads built, where the industrious owners, assisted by a few neighbouring peasants, would wring an honest and well-earned subsistence from the meagre soil. Here clustered the surroundings which marked a life of rural industry and quiet content.

Occasionally, however, there were other habitations, occupied by men of more questionable integrity; and very frequently these formed the secret rendezvous of smugglers or their patrons, who concealed their wares in this wild and little-frequented region, which they made the base of operations for carrying on their illicit traffic.

"But times are altered: trade's unfeeling train
Usurp the land and dispossess the swain."

And their influence has undoubtedly been at work—though not, perhaps, in the direction implied by the poet's lines—even in this remote neighbourhood. Indeed, the introduction of railways has rendered this qualifying epithet no longer applicable, for an easy ride of less than an hour's duration suffices to cover the thirty miles that separate it from the world's metropolis. The immediate result has been a large influx of well-to-do inhabitants, and the practical transformation of the district from a barren and uncultivated waste into an outlying and flourishing suburb of the great city. The value of land has proportionately increased, and the open tracts have gradually diminished in consequence, and in some parts have almost disappeared. But enough still remains to indicate the original character of the locality, and to lend an additional charm to the scenery.

Within the last few years many well-built villas and mansions have sprung up all around, and the adjacent land has been enclosed and laid out in parks tastefully planted with trees, or formed into smiling gardens rich with evergreen shrubs, such as the rhododendron, laurel, laurustinus, and holly, all of which flourish luxuriantly in the neighbourhood, and give it a verdant aspect even through the dreary and often snow-clad months of winter. Birch, larch, oak, and the common fir overshadow the roadside with their foliage; and in spring-time the yellow laburnum, the purple lilac, and pink and white may-blossoms throw their delightful beauty from innumerable points by the wayside, and shed their grateful perfume all around. Such is the general aspect of the place as viewed at present by the casual visitor, and it is only after a more lengthened residence, and many miniature excursions of exploration into the apparently less accessible portions of the district, that its real wealth of interest can be discovered and its true character ascertained.

As viewed from the railway station, to which the trackway leading to an old and pleasantly situated farmhouse has given the name of Grange Road, Crawley Down appears to occupy the crest of a slight elevation, whose sides slope gently up from this point, and a prominent object in the view is the little church embowered among the firs and other trees clustering

thickly about the spot. It was built here, as being a convenient midway position between the neighbouring villages of Turner's Hill and Copthorne, about the year 1844, and was, until within the last few years, the only church in the district nearer than that at Worth, though there is now another at Copthorne, about a mile distant. It was enlarged in 1871 by the addition of a side aisle and extended chancel, the great and rapid increase of population having rendered it too small for the requirements of the district. Close by is the national school and the adjoining playground, resonant at stated hours with the merry voices of children, and hemmed in on all sides by overshadowing trees and clustering shrubs.

From this point we have a choice of many interesting routes for our rambles, and we shall find many things to delight the eye and interest the mind whichever we may take. Leading directly to the north is one that will, at the distance of a mile or so, bring us to the point where, until recently destroyed by fire, stood the picturesque windmill on the edge of Copthorne Common, immediately beyond which the boundary-line between Sussex and Surrey crosses our track. Directly in front of us is a beautiful and extensive view over the valley that stretches between us and the distant hills, forming part of the long chalk range running in almost an unbroken line along the counties of Kent, Surrey, Hants, and part of Wilts, under the general name of the North Downs. At the foot of a lower and intervening ridge we can just discern the trains of the South-Eastern Railway as they creep imperceptibly along between Reigate and Tunbridge, and other important places in the vicinity. To the left of us, and at a distance of two or three miles, is the London and Brighton Line, running parallel to the line of our vision, and reminding us, as we gaze upon the peaceful scene before us, so full of quiet calm and drowsy repose, of that busier life, of that hurry-skurrying world in the midst of which so many thousands—ay, millions—of our countrymen spend their lives, either from necessity or choice. The district to the left of us is drained by the many affluents of the Mole, that to the right by those of the Medway, and behind us gurgle the tiny tributaries of the Sussex Avon; so that here, indeed, we may be said to be in the midst of "a land of rivers and waters," and we shall continually stumble upon some of them hastening gaily along to pay their bubbling tribute to the parent stream, and adding their sweet music to the warbling of the birds, and the many other rural sounds and echoes around us.

Turning our backs upon this fair scene, and retracing our steps a little, we shall find the long straggling village of Copthorne stretched to the right and left of us. On the edge of the common, not far off, can be seen the vans of a band of roving gipsies, who for the most part exercise the calling of pedlars, and in the intervals between their various excursions make this a kind of permanent rendezvous. The student has here a rare opportunity of viewing human nature under its more simple aspects, and may discover how few of the comforts and appliances of life, which we have

somehow or other learnt to look upon as indispensable, are really necessary either for subsistence or happiness. Certainly these "denizens of the desert" are merry enough as they roll about in the sunshine among the heather, or cluster around the glowing fire that is cooking their evening meal.

Leaving them to the enjoyment of their simple pleasures, we turn into the road leading towards the east, and which at length brings us into the East Grinstead Road at Felbridge, at the corner of Hedgecourt Common. We view the pretty little church situated at this point, with its neatly-kept graveyard, and crossing the little stone bridge thrown over one of the affluents of the river Eden, we find ourselves within a mile or so of the market-town of East Grinstead. If we care to go on so far, we can traverse its quaint High Street, bounded by houses for the most part built at least two centuries ago, and view the fine old church close by, with the tall square tower that, standing as it does on high ground, forms a very conspicuous feature in the landscape for several miles around. The graveyard is crowded with memorials to the departed, some of them very interesting. Among the latter are two plain slabs, said to mark the burial-spot of those who perished in the flames on account of their religious opinions during the great Marian persecution. We can now return either by rail to Grange Road, or by a somewhat different and more direct route than that by which we came, many points of which would furnish the artist's pencil with many charming and interesting subjects. The road winds gently along, sometimes between wide strips of emerald turf, bounded by hedges fragrant with wild flowers, and often rich with blackberries and wild cherries; at others between high banks covered with luxuriant ferns, and overtopped by the hazel branches that throw their grateful shadow across our path.

Now and then we pause upon some rustic stile that, half-hidden among the clustering verdure of the hedges, points the way to many a pleasant pathway "through wood and glen," and across the pleasant meadows and cornfields far out of "the beaten track;" or we stand and ponder over the drowsy homeliness of one of those old-time farmsteads to which we have already alluded, and picture in fancy the changing generations, with their varied manners and habits, that have from time to time occupied them. Anon we stay to pick the sweetbriar from the hedges, or to gather a spray or two of the delicious honeysuckle that throws its clustering blossoms so temptingly within our reach, or to make a posy or a "button-hole" of those delicate wild roses that clamber carelessly among, and intermingle their sweet beauty with, the tangled luxuriance of the roadside.

Another time we can ramble up what is both in name and in deed the Sandy Lane, and thence into the wood lying between the two routes we have already taken. I have enjoyed many a quiet hour in threading the mazes of its numerous walks. These are crossed incessantly by little purling streams, the yellow sediment at the bottom of all of which betrays

the presence of a strong admixture of iron. Mineral springs, indeed, abound here, and we shall constantly come across traces of the industry of other days in connection with the manufacture of charcoal and the smelting of iron ore. Sussex was the Black Country of those times, but when, towards the end of the eighteenth century, coal came into general use for smelting and other purposes, the iron-works of this county were gradually abandoned, the expense of carrying them on being found too great to admit of successful competition with those more recently established on the coal-fields of the North.

We have not by any means exhausted the resources of this neighbourhood, for there are many other routes we may take for future exploration, and which possess as great and as many attractions as those we have already enjoyed. But I will only mention two, and these are in an opposite direction. The first leads towards the south, in the direction of and passing through the villages of Turner's Hill and West Hoathley, and affords several beautiful and extensive views of the district, and to the geologist a rich treat, by landing him within a few minutes' walk of what is popularly known as the "Rocks," and which I strongly suspect to be the remains of an ancient sea-coast. There are evident and distinct traces of sea-washing, especially in the remarkable structure known as "Big-upon-Little," which stands apart from the main line of these curious remains, just as the rocks known as the Needles do now from their corresponding coast; and if my conjecture be the right one, the waves of the ancient sea which overspread the Weald must often have lashed and tossed themselves in vain around this standing witness to the grinding and wearing nature of their energy. The owner of the property kindly throws it open to the public on certain days of the week, under certain proper and necessary conditions; at other times special permission must be obtained.

The other route lies towards the west, and passes through the village of Worth, which gives its name to the far-spreading parish comprised within the limits of our various rambles. The village is situated within the angle formed by the London and Brighton Railway and the Tunbridge Wells Line, and only a short distance from the junction known as the Three Bridges. Its church is the most attractive feature, being indubitably of Saxon origin, and one of the oldest churches in the kingdom. The apse, or chancel, is circular in form—an uncommon feature, except in churches of very ancient date—and whilst the building was undergoing restoration about ten years ago, it was discovered that there were apertures in the clerestory which had plainly been originally intended for the admission of light, but which had evidently never contained glass. They had probably been built up for many centuries, but were now each re-fitted with a single piece of glass, so as to present the same appearance as nearly as possible, and to answer the same purpose for which "the rude forefathers of the hamlet" had intended them a thousand years ago.