

master of Mortmain held out to him. He declined, too, to be seated.

"I am here," said the earl, in his sternest tone and with his coldest manner, "to give you a warning Sir Richard. It may seem strange to you, perhaps, that such a warning should come to the forger from the man whom he has robbed, but——"

"My lord, this language must be accounted for!" interrupted the baronet, as a patch of red mounted to his pallid cheek.

The earl eyed him with haughty scorn. "I shall account for it," he said severely, "before a proper tribunal, if necessary. Let me tell you, before you attempt to cloke your guilt by denial or bluster, that your accomplice, the fellow Crouch, has denounced you. Let me tell you, too, that within the space of one short hour I have had before my eyes the proofs—the absolute proofs—that Captain Richard Mortmain, the son of my best and oldest friend, wrote my fictitious signature to the forged cheque for which, at the Threddleston Bank, Crouch received five hundred pounds. I have seen your letters to him—they are tantamount to a confession. I have seen your first essays in the art of forgery, which your knavish ally feigned to destroy, but secreted, that he might be able at his pleasure to use you as a tool or to bring you to shame and punishment."

This was terribly plain speaking. Sir Richard, ghastly in his pallor, clutched at the table near him for support, and seemed as if about to faint. His white lips moved, but he strove in vain to speak.

"Mine, as I said before," continued Lord Wyvern, "is an errand of mercy, not of vengeance. I do not pretend, Sir Richard Mortmain, to pity you personally. But, as you know, your good father was an early and a valued friend of me and mine, and for his sake I am most unwilling to prosecute his son. Were it possible, I would leave you to your own conscience. But this cannot be. The proofs against you are not in my keeping—they are in the hands of a magistrate."

Here Sir Richard started, changing colour.

"And my request for delay has only put off the evil hour of your arrest and trial, at which I must, however reluctantly, bear evidence as to the reality of the fraud upon me. Take my advice, and fly! Leave England and that speedily, lest it should be too late; and in some distant country repent, if you can."

"I thank you from my heart—I will go," stammered out the baronet feebly, and again he extended his hand.

Lord Wyvern did not take the offered hand. He bowed stiffly and formally, and, turning away, left the room without another word; while the stricken man, staggering from the place where he had stood, dropped into a chair, with haggard face and trembling limbs.

"I think your master is ill," said Lord Wyvern to the Mortmain servant who was ready to open the hall-door for his exit. And then, re-entering the carriage, he went back to Thorsdale Park.

END OF CHAPTER THE FORTY-FOURTH.

## A CANOE VOYAGE DOWN THE WHARFE.



"ARE you ready?"  
"Aye, aye!"  
"Go ahead!"

The paddles dip merrily. The *Kelpie* and the *Volsung*, with their crimson- and - gold silken flags fluttering in the breeze, shoot out from the shelter of Ilkley Bridge into the swirling brown waters of the river Wharfe, and the voyage begins. There is

a heavy "fresh" on, and the river rolls rapidly along, trailing the drooping willows as if it would tear them away, and gurgling over the meadow-railings and through the hedge-stakes. Both skippers are in high spirits, for the strong stream which is racing with them will float the canoes over many a long stretch of shallows where else would be much toilsome shoving and hauling. As we glide along the first quarter-mile of the journey, we get a capital

view of the village, with its clustered houses standing on a level plateau above the river.

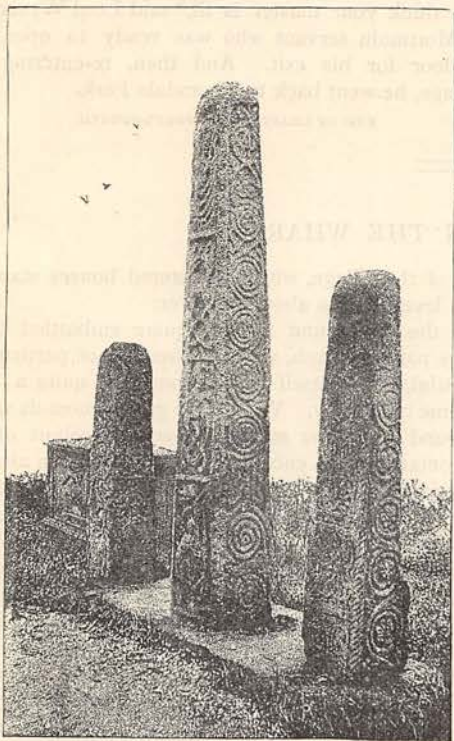
In the foreground is the square embattled tower of the parish church, which, although not particularly beautiful, is, in itself and belongings, quite a little epitome of history. Within the grassy mounds which surround it on the south, the second cohort of the Lingonian Legion encamped, and erected an altar to Verbeia, the goddess of the Wharfe, in the times of grim old Severus, when Ilkley was the Roman station "Olicana," and was being rebuilt by Virius Lupus, the prætor. On the south side of the churchyard are still three squared shafts of stone, graven with weird figures and mystic Runic knots, which are called the Saxon Crosses.

But whilst the archæological member of the expedition has been making these notes, the river has turned sharply to the left, and, with a series of rushes, eddies into a deep bight, and then swirls off to the right, down a long stretch of tossing wavelets. The high road skirts the right bank, and away above it Rombald's Moor terminates in a bold gritstone cliff, called the "Cow," from whose flat top there are splendid views both up and down dale, and at whose foot lies a huge boulder, yclept the "Calf."

"Look out aft, there!" comes a hail from the

*Kelpie*, as she hugs the shore closer; and, a second later, the "look-out" on board the *Volsung* sees a thin, taut line stretching from bank to bank, and dipping within a foot of the water in mid-channel. Half a dozen vigorous strokes on the port bow send her a yard or two nearer in, and then the crew bends forward desperately as she is swept beneath the wire rope of a ferry, which catches the back of his head and scrapes along his back and shoulders. Before order is restored the little ship is rolling and tossing through a series of white-topped breakers, which foam and tumble above a row of stepping-stones, or "hippen-steans," now lying a foot under water.

Now we are gliding merrily down a long run of deep water, with the west wind blowing steadily at our backs, and Denton Hall, once the seat of the Fairfaxes, and the birthplace of the Roundhead general, standing in its sloping park to the left. Again we are skirting the road, along which a gang of gipsies are leading a string of sorry-looking horses, with a couple of tilt-carts bringing up the rear. Dirty, ragged urchins swarm over the railings, and a volley of stones and mud comes splashing round the little fleet; but a Rob-Roy spinning along on the top of a flood is not an easy mark to hit, and before the second salute comes we are far out of range.



SAXON CROSSES IN ILKLEY CHURCHYARD.

A turn of the river brings Burley Weir—a bold, crescent-shaped fall—into view; and, as its four deep steps are too far apart to shoot, the word is given to "tumble out," and both vessels are hauled up

on to the grass, in full view of the residence of the late Chief Secretary for Ireland. A cheery splash, and the *Kelpie's* captain slips off a rock into the water, the wee barkie veering out with the eddies just at the moment he is stepping aboard. Whilst the man overboard climbs dexterously over the gunwale, the *Volsung* sees how near she can poke her nose into the foaming water at the foot of the weir. Her pilot missing a stroke, she spins round like a top, and sweeps broadside on to the *Kelpie*, just as her damp crew is shoving her off with his paddle against the bank. For a moment he is resigned to a second plunge, but skilful "backing" gets him out of danger.

"Otle Top-Weir!" sings out the pilot, as the water deepens and the current slackens between walled banks.

The town is a sleepy little place, lying between the Wharfe and the foot of a lofty ridge called the "Chevin," which rears its rocky and wood-clothed front to the southward, and cuts off no small amount of sunshine from the dull streets. It once sent two members to Parliament, but grew too poor to afford the luxury, and lost its privilege. The church has a good Early Norman doorway, and contains some monuments to the various county families of by-gone generations—Fairfaxes, Fawkes, Vavasours, and Pulleyns.

A second weir crosses the river at a sharp angle some 300 yards below the bridge, and its sloping face affords an easy descent for a canoe: so, "Get ready aboard! Run her boldly at it, bows on!" Over the curve she plunges, and, with a quivering rush, dashes down the water-slide into the foam below.

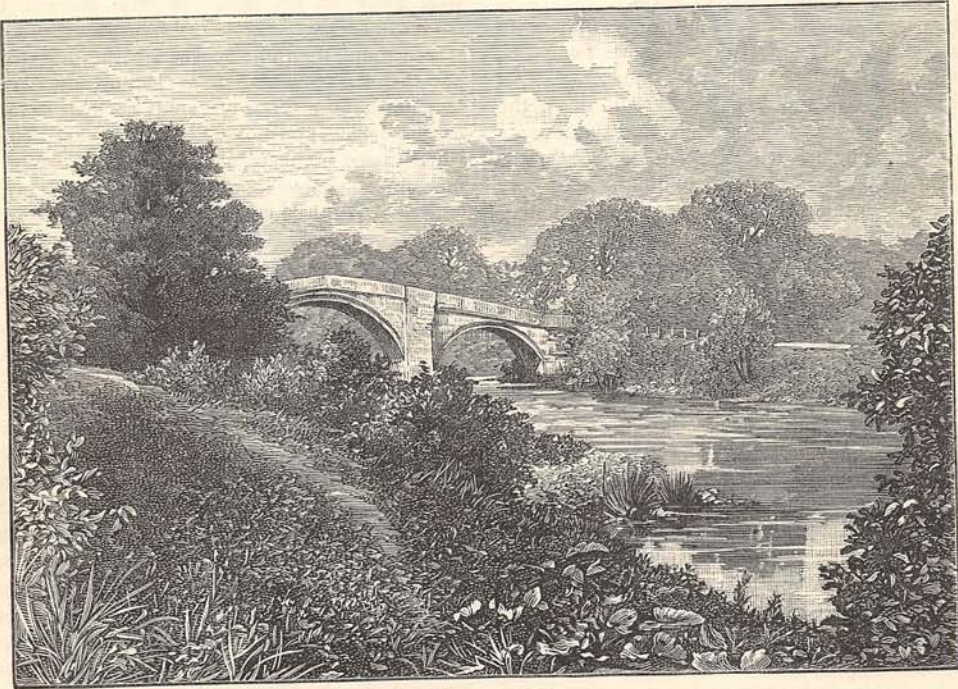
So the afternoon wears away, and we float onward, with jest and song, between rich meadows, where the cattle, deep in luscious herbage, raise their heads to gaze, or race, tails hoisted, alongside us; with now and then a weir to pass or bridge to shoot; whilst the sun slopes westwards behind us, and throws long shadows across the hill-sides, and a soft purple haze settles down upon the woods, where the singing of the birds is growing fainter.

The dusk is wrapping round us as we make out the dim outline of Harewood Bridge with the mill-dam above it; and as we haul up our fleet into a gallant colonel's cow-shed for the night, one of the crew under cover of the darkness makes the sorry joke, "What a weir'd river this is!"

Next morning, as we glide down the first reach, a fine view of the ruined Harewood Castle opens out on high ground, commanding a wide expanse of country round it. The woods and manor once belonged to the great Romelis, and through them came to the Aldburghs, another powerful county clan, by one of whom the castle was rebuilt in Stephen's reign. The river runs between high banks fringed here and there with tall trees until Netherby is reached, and then it flows onward between thickly-wooded shores which rise steeply on either hand. The current soon grows shallow, and the waters begin to leap and splash, curl and foam down

a long reach of rapids, where great stones and mossy boulders hide their heads in the brown depths. Our little ships plunge and roll in the rush and swirl as though they too feel the exhilaration of the dancing breakers, and it is no place for careless navigation, as it needs all a quick eye and ready paddle can do to

again. The loose pebbles slip beneath your feet, and the stream catches the boat and will not let you haul her off; or if you seize the bow, the stern will swing round and get further aground, and when it is slewed clear, the bow slips away and broadside on she goes again.



ILKLEY BRIDGE.

prevent an upset as the current catches now the stem and now the stern, and swings them perilously near some half-sunken rock.

One of the great charms of canoeing an unknown river, especially if it be a rapid one like the Wharfe, is the constant expectancy of something happening and the readiness with which emergencies must be faced: so that there is never a dull uneventful hour in the day's work, and one soon learns to decide quickly and act promptly, and to come to hold that when afloat "second thoughts are *very* seldom best."

The *Volsung's* skipper forgets this article of his creed hereaway, for as the boats rush round a bend, an island with a long tongue of shingle protruding upstream comes into view. The port channel is the main one and both boats run for it, but when about twenty yards above the said island, the *Volsung's* helmsman suddenly changes her course and tries to make the starboard passage. The current is too strong for him, however, and in a second more there comes that well-known grating under the keel, and "all hands" jump out to save an upset as she sweeps broadside up on to the shoal, and the chuckling wavelets break merrily inboard. If you have never been in a like predicament, you have no idea how awkward a thing it is to get your canoe clear and float her into deep water

But this voyager is an old hand and up to all a canoe's coquetting. He seizes the painter-line and drags his ship well up against the tide. "Stand by!" A vigorous jerk pulls it between his legs, and he sits hastily on the after-deck as she begins to drop downstream, and plies foot and paddle to get clear into the main channel before the current carries him on to the island again. Hurrah! that last stroke has just done it, and she sweeps past clear by a foot only, and gives chase after the vanishing *Kelpie*.

Here comes a squall, with big hail-stones which hum and bounce upon the decks and patter sharply round one's ears, followed by a pelting rain-storm; but a wetting more or less is nothing to a real canoeist, it comes all in the day's work, so "Up collars!" and paddle steadily on down the bubbling waters.

A bend to the left, and the river deepens, with a stream which slides steadily on between banks studded with thorns and willows, and a splendid kingfisher darts out from the bank and goes skimming before us in and out of the bushes, until we come abreast of the stone wall which keeps the river out of the Wetherby Workhouse gardens, and the aged paupers from falling into the sullen water gliding below. Wetherby Weir is a bold curve over which the river leaps for twelve feet or more, and it has to be passed

somehow. A salmon-ladder helps the fish up-stream, but does not help us down, for it turns sharply at right angles twice, with no room for a canoe between. It is no use gazing viciously at the green oily-looking curve of water, so ashore the crews run, and the ships are hoisted shoulder-high, carried up a cartway across the high road, over a wall into a meadow, and run down the grass slope into the river again.

Wetherby is a small market-town, more famous in days of old, when it belonged to the Knights Templars, and later to the Hospitallers, than it is now.

For the next two miles we shall sail down the loveliest stretch of lower Wharfedale, and rounding a bend we come upon as delicious a bit of scenery as an artist could long for. The river is rolling along deeply and noiselessly, as though hushing its softest rippling to listen to the singing birds hidden in the thick beech-woods which rise up from the very water's edge. Here and there a spur of cliff stands out like a buttress amongst the foliage, until the trees draw themselves up right away to the top, and leave a bold wall of rock to turn the river to the right. A little further and the limestone edge trends back just far enough to make room for the quaint gabled "Flint Mill," to turn whose weed-grown water-wheel fixed to the outside wall, the river is headed back by a deep horse-shoe-shaped weir, over which the water leaps full twenty feet, and makes a glorious fall, with its spray-cloud ever rising and glittering in the sun.

A curious cavern, cut by some owner long since, runs through the cliff from the water's brink above the weir, and comes out into the little yard opposite the house-door, serving as cellarage and cart-shed combined. The mouth of this dark cave makes a setting for a peep of sunlit river, backed by rich verdant woods, whilst the roar of the weir comes softened like the murmur of a far-off sea.

A mile below Flint Mill, on the starboard hand, we make "Jackdaw Crag," whose yellow limestone cliffs rise fifty or sixty feet from the water. The river has grown tired now of noisy rushing, and glides silently past, with the long harts'-tongues dipping into its depths and the drooping ash-trees shadowed on its placid surface. From hundreds of holes and crannies in the weathered rock the noisy jackdaws come and go, keeping up a dismal caw-caw-caw. A roadway runs up from the river between sweet-smelling pine-copses, and paths climb right and left to the summit of the overhanging cliffs.

There is still Thorparch Weir to pass. So full speed ahead, and get the boats smartly over by the mill-wall there into the pool below. On the pretty five-arched bridge hangs the usual crowd of loungers as we shoot the centre span, who applaud with boisterous glee as, our canoes grounding at the shallows just below, we tumble out to float them, and having punted clear, resume our voyage sitting abaft with legs overboard ready for the next shoal.

At Boston Spa, for so is the village on the south side of the bridge called, is a convenient boat-house, whose

proprietor is an old acquaintance, and soon hauls our vessels up into his garden for the night, as the September sun sinks behind a crimson bank of cloud, so brilliant that the eastern sky blushes a rosy hue.

"A good run to you, gen'elmen," says the boatman, as the paddle-blades flash in the morning sun, and we dash out again into the rapidly-rolling stream, and spin away on the tide. A mile onward, the river curves abruptly to the left, forming a deep, sullen pool where more than one luckless bather has gone down, and then rushes with a noisy clatter down a steep incline, forming a series of rapids not half so formidable as they look. Our bows plunge bravely amongst the white-tipped breakers, and with a few careful strokes now and again, we shoot under the railway bridge, past long rows of willows, into smoother-flowing reaches, and across an old Roman ford called after St. Helen.

Twisting and turning, the stream sweeps us by the ivy-clad church and fine old mansion of Newton-Kyme, where reside a branch of the Fairfaxes, owning now the manor which of old belonged to the Barons de Kyme, whose castle remains may yet be traced in the trim grounds. Fine woods spread to the left, and a short run brings Healaugh Hall in view, standing up boldly on high ridge-land.

A muttering roar tells of a weir ahead, and as we drop down underneath a massive stone viaduct, which was to have carried a railway over the river to York, we see Tadcaster Mill with the town beyond. Our wee barkies, one after another, glide down the weed-covered salmon-slide into the foam-flecked pool below, and we thus pass the twelfth barrier since leaving Ilkley, and meet the tide, and have now a fair way out into the Ouse, and down to Humber and the sea.

Tadcaster is a dull market-town, with little besides its fine church to interest a stranger, except the fact that it was once the Roman station *Calcaria*, and now has a nine-arched bridge. A little below the town, a rivulet called the Cock joins the river, coming under an old bridge of undoubted Roman work—so antiquarians say. Two hours' run, on past drear alder-beds and slimy sluices, between high flat banks, and we shoot out with the last ripple of the Wharfe into the broader, yellower waters of the Ouse, and steer down-stream under the counter of a timber-laden barge which is waiting for the tide to turn and carry her up to York, as the twilight deepens rapidly into the gloom of night.

At last, lights glimmer through the darkness, flashing upon the river as we reach Selby, and five minutes later the *Volsung* and the *Kelpie* lie keels uppermost upon the grimy deck of the coal-barge *Amy Ann*.

Our voyage did not end here, for next day we ran on down the Ouse, and then turned up the Derwent, and made our way to Malton and to the sea. But it was at Selby where we lay for the night, after a three days' delightful passage down the rapid, beauteous Wharfe.