



## THE ATTRACTIONS OF BOURNEMOUTH.

BY J. T. GARRISH.

*Illustrated from photographs by A. T. CAMDEN PRATT.*



WHEN the bright cloudless days of August are past, and the shortening evenings of September lead on to the first night-frosts and eager air of chill October, Bournemouth is at her best. She feels neither the chill nor the gloom of advancing autumn. Snugly seated upon her sunny slopes, she remains bright and genial, open to the bracing breezes of the west, her broad bay speckled with the shadows of clouds that break and drift away eastward or inland, rarely covering this happy valley with their gloom.

Then, too, the fall of the leaf, though not unknown, is only partial here. Embowered in evergreen woods, Bournemouth is spared much of the melancholy associated elsewhere with the season of the dying year. Her autumnal tints are comparatively few—only sufficient to vary what would otherwise be a monotony of perpetual green; to add picturesqueness without sadness to the view.

Although Bournemouth is at her best in autumn, there is not a month in the year but she seems to put forth some fresh attraction, to appeal to some new set of visitors. In June, for instance, when the rhododendrons, which here abound, burst forth into flower, and the warm sunshine brings out

the odour of the pines, one might well say, "This is *the* month." However this may be, it is a fact that the town, almost alone amongst our British watering-places, enjoys a perpetual "season."

In the summer her sands and cliffs are crowded with masculine "blazers," and the scarcely less variegated "blouses" of the gentler sex. Happy groups of children paddle on the safe smooth sands, building their castles, and bailing the salt water into tiny trenches with small tin buckets. The smooth sea is studded with rowing-boats and white-sailed yachts, and there is a great going and coming of excursion steamers around the noble pier.

At this season even the day tripper is not unknown, though, truth to tell, his appreciation of the place is by no means reciprocated by the inhabitants. He comes vast distances from the grimy midland towns—the railways bring him and the female of his species, the railways take him away; and when he is gone select, high-class Bournemouth hurriedly clears his luncheon papers and empty bottles from her beach and pleasure-grounds, and breathes more freely.

It is when the tripping season is over, and even the fortnightly and monthly visitors have returned home—when the blazer has

disappeared from the cliff, and the blouse from the pleasure-gardens—that the place awakens to a superior kind of life. That life is ushered in by the autumn visitors, who are really only the “first flight” of that superior class of winter residents, the earliest and still most esteemed patrons of the place. Soon the arrival lists in the local papers teem with titles and bristle with aristocratic names, and private carriages take the place of the summer “flies.” This glorious season goes on in full swing till Easter, for which festival yet another set of distinguished guests arrive, and for a week or two the town is crowded more than at any other time except perhaps August. Before the Easter visitors have all departed, the

white sloping sand, admirable alike for bathing, walking, or riding. There is very little difference here between high and low water, owing to the double or return tide caused by the outflow from Poole Harbour. Viewed from the sands the cliffs present an endless variety of picturesque outlines and rich tints, crowned by sombre fir or purple heather, affording great opportunities for the artist.

At intervals the cliffs are broken into chine, caused by the action of streams, and the principal chine is that of the Bourne (or “Brook”)—hence the name “Bournemouth.” This chine or valley runs far inland; the brook now flows through beautiful pleasure-grounds, which divide the town into two portions, and it was along the hillsides that the first houses appeared.

The pier entrance faces the mouth of the valley, and here roads from all parts of the town converge upon the sands. About a mile to the eastward is Boscombe Chine, a smaller valley hollowed out between high sand hills, and until recently allowed to remain in all its primitive wild beauty.

As, however, the suburb of Boscombe has grown into almost a separate watering-place, with a pier of its own, the chine and its little wandering stream have fallen victims to the landscape

gardener, or as the guide book puts it, “have been very judiciously laid out as pleasure-grounds.” There is a “spa” here whose water is said to resemble that of Aix-la-Chapelle.

Boscombe Manor, rebuilt by Sir Percy Shelley, the son of the poet, is embowered in woods just beyond, and farther on is Southbourne, another little watering-place with a pier of its own. Hengistbury Head, marking the entrance to Christchurch Harbour (opposite the Needles), shuts in the bay on this side, whilst westward of Bournemouth pier the cliffs extend in broken chines of delightful beauty right up to the sandhills which nearly close the harbour of Poole, beyond the narrow opening to which the hills of Purbeck begin to rise and form a line of cliffs extending far into the Channel.

Ninety years ago there was not even a



THE INVALIDS' WALK.

summer guests are again descending upon the hotels and villas, the Rosebanks, and Sea Views and Fern Vales, of the place. Happy Bournemouth, whose perpetual charms are at once the envy and despair of her rivals!

Situated at the south-western corner of Hampshire, Bournemouth occupies a position of unique advantage, looking directly south over the English Channel, which here forms a wide bay guarded on either hand by grim gray cliffs. It needs no knowledge of geology to recognise that at one period the high downs of the Isle of Wight, which terminate suddenly at the Needles, were continuous with those of the Isle of Purbeck (island only in name) on the western side of the bay. By some convulsion of nature the intermediate land was submerged, and the present shore formed.

A beautiful shore it is, composed of firm

road in the Bournemouth district, much less a house. The beautiful sandy shore was left to the sea-birds and the smugglers. The pine woods, which have been the making of Bournemouth, were not then planted. The hills and valleys were simply a wild expanse of gorse and heather, and up the narrow romantic chimes was rolled many a cask of illicit rum and untaxed brandy. Local traditions exist of fierce fights between the representatives of law and the smugglers, who, as usual, had the sympathy of the country side.

The only communication between the ancient towns of Christchurch and Poole was by a long detour inland up the valley of the Stour. The Enclosure Acts, passed about 1806, led to the extensive plantation

owners, built a mansion which has, after many transformations and enlargements, become the Royal Exeter Park Hotel of to-day. The inn, which bore the name of the Tregonwell Arms, has unfortunately not been preserved as a landmark for the future historian.

It is difficult to fix the birthday of Bournemouth, but it would seem to be about the year that her gracious Majesty ascended the throne. Sir George Tapps (afterwards Tapps-Gervis), the proprietor of much of the land east of the Bourne, consulted with his architect, Mr. B. Ferrey, who very wisely counselled the building of detached or semi-detached residences, a policy the more creditable to both architect and patron, because at that time sanitary science had scarcely



THE WEST CLIFF.

of this deserted spot with Scotch and pinaster fir. About the same time the present Poole and Christchurch road was constructed. For many years it was so lonely a thoroughfare that the bank clerk who paid a weekly visit to Christchurch, took care to arm himself to the teeth before mounting his trusty steed. Now two miles of the centre of this road form practically the only business thoroughfare in Bournemouth.

A wayside inn was erected on the eastern side of the valley of the Bourne, but such was the seclusion of the district, that on the same side of the brook a decoy pond was formed for shooting purposes, and the country people first knew the site of the new watering-place as "Coypond." Near the sea, Mr. Tregonwell, one of the local land-

come into existence. That enlightened policy has since been faithfully followed, and except as regards portions of the business street already alluded to, Bournemouth of to-day is a unique town of detached or semi-detached houses, a fact which undoubtedly conduces much to its reputation as a health resort.

An amusing mistake made by a popular illustrated weekly, which has been publishing representations of the English watering-places in former times, may here be mentioned. One of the views is entitled, "Bournemouth, near Christchurch, Hants," but it is a picture of what the town never was and never will be. The East Cliff is shown as having upon it a long terrace of white houses, while upon the site of the Belle Vue Hotel is placed an imposing edifice crowned by a lofty tower,

An old resident explained to the writer the curious picture as being a copy of one of the rival plans prepared for the laying out of the town, but rejected by Sir G. Tapps in favour of Mr. Ferrey's scheme.

With but two or three exceptions the first house of the new watering-place to be opened was the Royal Bath Hotel, which dates back to 1838, and occupies a commanding position on the East Cliff. The Belle Vue (facing the pier) quickly followed, and in 1840 the oldest private business establishment, Sydenham's Library, was founded, and soon became known to visitors as the "local Mudie's." It says well for the salubrity of Bournemouth that the founders of this establishment are still the active proprietors, and the Library, having grown with the requirements of its *clientèle*, is now one of the most conspicuous objects in every view of the Bournemouth sands.

The building of villas commenced with the Westovers, a row of white residences facing the pleasure-grounds. These were constructed between 1838-46, and from that time onward villas, hotels, and business-places began to spring up in various directions.

The Church element has always been strong here. So long ago as 1842 a small church was erected on the site now occupied by St. Peter's; and, under the fostering care of its first vicar, the late A. Morden Bennett, the building was developed into one of the most beautiful and perfect of modern churches in England, whilst no fewer than a dozen subsidiary parishes have been formed out of what was originally all St. Peter's.

These provide for Churchmen of all views, but in the early days of Bournemouth High Church principles were undoubtedly most popular. Followers of Pusey made their home here, and Keble, the well-known author of "The Christian Year," died in Bournemouth at "Brookside," a house which is still pointed out near the sands, on the western side of the pleasure-grounds. The large south window of St. Peter's Church is a fitting memorial of the Anglican poet, who worshipped here during the last four months of his life. The window illustrates the *Te Deum*, and in the lower part of the fourth compartment a portrait is introduced, the inscription beneath recording the death of John Keble and Charlotte his wife, with the motto, "Day by day we magnify Thee." A second window, illustrating the Resurrection, was placed at the east end of the south chancel aisle.

The Rev. J. Ossian Davies, a famous

preacher, has a fine Congregational church in Bournemouth.

Loyal and aristocratic to a degree, Bournemouth has one grief, and that is, that the Queen has never honoured her with a visit. From time to time a rumour gets afloat that her Majesty is contemplating a stay here, and a flutter of pleased anticipation goes through the place; but hitherto, unfortunately, these flutters have been the only sequel to the rumour.

There is, however, plenty of room still for hope, especially if Bournemouth could undertake that the Queen's privacy should be as much respected as it is on the Mediterranean coast, to which of late years she has been in the habit of repairing in the perilous spring season. Certainly in the matter of suitable climate Bournemouth need not fear comparison even with the Riviera. But of this question more anon.

Although the Queen herself has not yet seen the queen of South Coast watering-places, Bournemouth by no means lacks royal appreciation. The Prince of Wales has paid two or three visits, on one occasion being accompanied by the Princess; and the Duke and Duchess of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, the Duke of Connaught, and the Duchess of Albany, have also seen and acknowledged the charms of the place, which enjoys the warm admiration among foreign royalties of the Empress of Austria, the King of the Belgians, the King and Queen of Sweden, and the Princesses of the German Imperial House. The unfortunate Empress Eugénie has also sought quietude and rest here.

Before discussing the claims of Bournemouth as an invalid resort, it may be as well to remove a popular misconception which, though not so prevalent now as it used to be, is still frequently met with, namely, that Bournemouth is all very well for the invalid, but rather a trying and depressing place for the robust.

This is quite a mistake. It is true that in the early years of the town the healing qualities of its air drew thither a large number of sick persons, who, in fact, could scarcely pass the winter elsewhere in England; but the idea that respirators and invalid carriages are the prominent feature of the place, even in the winter season, is an antiquated one. This arises not from the fact that fewer invalids now come than formerly—on the contrary, more do—but the great increase in visitors does not belong to the invalid class, consequently the latter are no more *en évidence* than they are in other warm and sheltered nooks of the South

Coast. Thanks to an enlightened board of Improvement Commissioners, who lived well up to their name, and have in due process of time blossomed into a full-blown municipal



ON THE SANDS.

corporation, ample provision has been made for the enjoyment of visitors at all seasons.

Even the latest addition of golf-links has been made, and Bournemouth is thoroughly up to date in this respect. To the north of the town there was a large district of common land, now known as Meyrick Park, where residents in the parish had a right to cut turves for fuel, but this privilege having small attractions for the people of a fashionable watering-place, it was not found difficult, two years ago, in conjunction with the lord of the manor, to obtain an Act of Parliament, under which eighty acres were taken in and laid out as a public park, cricket-ground, and golf-links. The ground is prettily undulated, and commands fine views of the surrounding country. It was formally opened not many months ago by Mrs. G. Meyrick, wife of the heir to the great Meyrick estates. Professional golfers speak highly of the provision thus made for their absorbing sport, and Mr. A. J. Balfour, although unable to be present in person, sent a fervent epistolary blessing upon the encouragement afforded to his favourite pastime. The links are open freely to all players.

A more general source of enjoyment is to

be found in the Winter Gardens, where the Corporation provide a permanent band under the direction of Mr. Dan Godfrey, junior, with other constant musical attractions. During the winter, too, grand concerts are given, at which some of the stars of the musical world make their appearance.

In fact, Bournemouth goes a step farther in her devotion to St. Cecilia's art. Last year a musical festival was inaugurated here at which the late Sir J. Barnby and Dr. Bridge conducted their own compositions. The success of the experiment justifies its repetition, and arrangements are already being made for a second festival in January or February next, when equally eminent masters of the art will appear.

As regards the climate of Bournemouth, personal evidence is preferable, and certainly more interesting, than mountains of statistics. King Oscar II of Sweden gave the place a testimonial, of which it is naturally very proud, in proposing "Prosperity to Bournemouth" at a luncheon given some years ago at the laying of the first stone of the "Mont Dore," an institution which now combines the



THE PIER APPROACH.

functions of a hydro with those of a general hotel:—

"When the Queen came here" (said his Majesty), "in the month of January, in the midst of winter, which was,

as you all know, everywhere exceptionally hard, she came here in order to recover her strength, after long years of severe suffering, and she was immediately struck with the charm of this place. She found here not only a quiet and comfortable home, but she found softness of air and mildness of climate with few exceptions, the dryness of the soil, and that charming evergreen which, to northern eyes, has so great a value. When she returned with me a few months later, we both had occasion to appreciate, in still higher degree, the merits of this place, which she already had found. It was now spring-time, and the sun stood higher in a pure sky and shone glittering on the waves, casting its light on the cliffs of the Isle of Wight, and on this place, behind the high cliffs of which there were gardens with rich flowering rhododendrons, and other flowers spreading their blossom. We found here just what we wished for and desired, and we spent a quiet and happy time."

The King went on to say that they had also found what they had scarcely dared to hope—kindness and greeting from everyone from the first moment they came to Bournemouth. "Certainly," he added, "we shall never forget this place, but ever shall we with the greatest interest hear of its prosperity and welfare."

The chief requirements of invalids in seeking a winter residence in this country are a mild climate and a dry atmosphere. In both these respects Bournemouth offers great advantages. Its climate is not only mild, but, what is of still greater importance, is remarkably equable; whilst the soil, being composed of sand and gravel, is very dry. In addition to this, the aromatic exhalations from the surrounding pine woods are of the greatest benefit in cases of lung trouble. Many eminent medical men have written strongly in favour of the place, which really may be said to have been discovered by the doctors, though now, as we have seen, it has long outstepped the stage of a mere sanitarium.

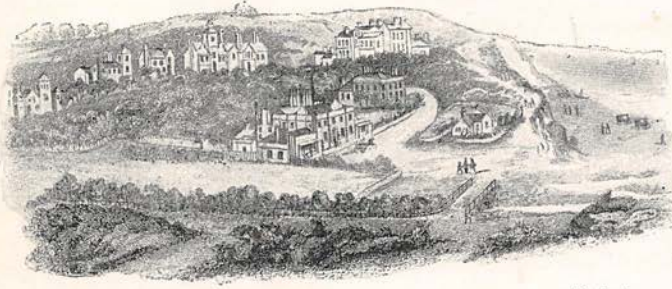
It ought, however, to be added that the climate is very suitable to two classes of persons who may not labour under any actual disease—namely those who have long been resident in hot climates, and young persons and children who from hereditary or accidental causes are in need of special help in their development. Rickety children in particular obtain great benefit here.

Bournemouth claims to enjoy more hours

of sunshine than almost any other English town. The meteorologists bear out this claim. Of course London cannot be fairly compared with so bright a spot; in some months there are nearly twice as many shining hours recorded at Bournemouth as there are at Greenwich, and many more than at Kew, which should be a sunny place. An even more important superiority is that already referred to, the dryness of the atmosphere. This is most marked in the season when mists and fogs prevail elsewhere, for these are of rare occurrence at Bournemouth, owing to the remarkable conformation of the district, the result being that especially during November and December the air is drier here than at any place in England at which accurate records are kept.

The high downs of Purbeck to the south-west, and of the Isle of Wight to the south-east, visibly attract the clouds, which occasionally pass over the sea between the

two headlands in the form of fog, whilst the Bournemouth sky remains perfectly clear. At other times heavy rain may be seen falling in the distance, with-



From a view by]

BOURNEMOUTH IN 1843.

[Sydenham.

out even a shower in the evergreen valley.

When, however, the rain does fall, as fall it must, the excellent system of drainage aids the naturally-porous soil in speedily removing all traces of it. Again, in the rare occurrence of a fall of snow, the arrangements made by the Corporation are so perfect that, should it occur in the night, the visitors on descending to their late breakfast would hardly be aware of the fact.

Little room is left in which to describe the subsidiary attractions of the district. But these are far too important to be passed over without comment. In the summer season, at any rate, and this extends as we have seen from Easter to October, the visitor to Bournemouth has a wider choice of excursions and trips than is offered by any other South-Coast resort.

This is mainly due to the admirable service of powerful and beautiful steamers, the property of two companies, who, after being for some years at daggers drawn, have now wisely

joined forces, and are thus enabled to offer their patrons an unrivalled choice of excursions. Even in their earlier and rival state the boats practically made the Bournemouth summer season. The two principal vessels are the *Monarch* belonging to Messrs. Cosens & Co., of Weymouth, and the *Brodick Castle*, the property of a local company. These vessels scour the Channel from Brighton in the east to Torquay in the west, whilst the *Monarch* frequently crosses the sea to Cherbourg and the Channel Islands.

This means that visitors are enabled within a comfortable time easily to explore the whole of the delightful Solent district, to circumnavigate the Isle of Wight, to visit the old watering-place of Weymouth, so much patronised by George III., and where, in the now protected Portland Roads, some of our great war vessels are frequently thrown open for inspection, and to call at other towns of interest on the coast.

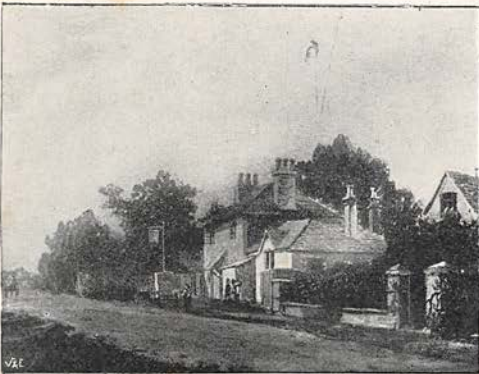
There is, moreover, a constant service of fast steamers between Bournemouth and Swanage, a delightful little town situated on a miniature bay which, for beauty of colour, has been likened to the Bay of Naples. Swanage is built of gray stone, quarried high on the downs above. The coast here is wild and picturesque, abounding in steep cliffs and outlying rocks, and plentiful in deep caverns.

The most interesting object to the visitor is the finely preserved and easily reached ruin of Corfe Castle, a renowned fortress of Saxon times, and famous in history as the scene of the murder of Edward the Martyr by his perfidious kinswoman, Elfrida. So complete are the remains that the visitor, with scarcely any exercise of imagination, can reconstruct for himself the castle and its appurtenances.

Inland, on every side the district around Bournemouth affords ample opportunities for charming drives, and during the summer season these can be obtained very cheaply. The principal places within moderate distance are Christchurch, the New Forest, Wimborne, Poole, Corfe Castle, and the Isle of Purbeck (more speedily reached by steamer to Swanage). Christchurch, which by the way is the political centre of Bournemouth, is an old Saxon town, beautifully situated at the junction of the rivers Avon (from Salisbury) and Stour. Its principal attraction is an ancient priory church, about which a fascinating legend is told. The tower, overlooking the harbour, commands magnificent views of sea and land, and is a well-known landmark at the western entrance to the Solent. The church contains a beautiful memorial chapel to the famous Margaret, Countess of Salisbury, and under the tower is a noble monument to the poet Shelley.

Wimborne is another ancient town containing a fine minster, dating from the early Norman period, but the church is of much earlier foundation, as it contains a memorial of Æthelred, King of the West Saxons. Poole is an old seaport, once of much greater importance than at present. A judicious expenditure of capital on her fine but sand-blocked harbour, might at any time render her an important commercial rival to Southampton in accommodating the largest vessels.

The country, indeed, all around is rich in attractions: there are many ancient camps and barrows to be explored; the cliffs abound in fossils, and the fishing in the rivers is good. Both for itself and its surroundings, in fact, Bournemouth may, without exaggeration, be described as a bourne from which no traveller willingly returns.



BOSCOMBE FIFTY YEARS AGO.



From a photo by]

[J. Habgood, Boscombe.

BOSCOMBE IN 1896.