

# BUDE HAVEN:

A PEN - AND - INK SKETCH

WITH

PORTRAITS OF THE PRINCIPAL INHABITANTS

LONDON. 1863

The thundering shore of Bude.  
TENNYSON, "Idylls of the King."

## BUDE HAVEN

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There is a wonderful sameness in the "Watering-places" of the south of England. Except in size and in the necessary differences of one hill, it may be, higher than another, or a little more or less of wood, or a steeper cliff, or a shallower beach, they are evidently members of one family, and have the monotonous family likeness. Go from Margate to Plymouth, --- the Alpha and the Omega of the class, --- you will find this to be true. The same kind of lodging houses, and the same tariff of prices ; the same Lord Nelson Inns and Royal Hotels ; the same dingy circulating libraries and dreary reading-rooms, with one "Times" and four penny local papers ; the same kind of shore, half shingle, half sand, with its tiresome little waves all alike from year's end to year's end ; the same young ladies with their pork-pie hats and wet hair down their backs coming out of the bathing machines, identical with one another from the Nore to the Start ; the same young gentlemen lounging all day long with the same penny cigars in and out of the same kind of billiard-rooms, with the same kind of chipped balls and greasy cloth : --- but let one word suffice ; Margate, Ramsgate, Worthing, Hastings, Brighton, Bournemouth, Weymouth, Teignmouth, Ilfracombe, and a dozen others, may, one and all, be equally described under the head "Watering-place." Let us, however, go round the Lizard and the Land's End ; or, if our sea-going qualities are but second rate, let us not conclude that Devonshire is the last county in England which can be reached by land ; and we shall find two small villages upon the west coast of Cornwall, which cannot (anyhow at the present time) be put upon the same bad eminence as those which we have named. One of these is Newquay ; the other Bude Haven.

It is of the last of these places that we propose to give our readers a short account : Newquay is perhaps equally primitive, but it is less accessible ; of less importance ; and without the variety of scenery which surrounds Bude.

Queen Elizabeth, of pious and chaste memory, was good enough to say that the further she went west in her dominions, the more convinced she was that wise men came from the east. However this may be, it is quite certain that the men of the east, who desire “to suffer a sea change” have not yet shown their wisdom by going westward : visitors to Cornwall are still not numerous. The “season,” such as it is, at Bude, mainly depends upon the annual coming of almost neighbours from the county towns ; of people whose faces are well-known and whose absence would be missed and to be accounted for. And the writer of this sketch sincerely trusts that it will be very long before such a state of things is altered ; he does not want a railroad within a mile, and “facilities of communication :” he hopes excursionists will never hear of Bude, or ever be able to get at it and home within the day : he is intensely selfish, and desires to keep Bude for the next fifty years just as it is : in short, he trusts that it will never be a “watering-place.”

There are three chief roads which lead to Bude. One from Bideford, through Holsworthy ; another from the same place, across the country, by way of Clovelly and Hartland ; the third from Launceston. The last of these is the least varied, perhaps, in character, being more like the common roads and usual scenery which one finds everywhere. Of the others, the second runs across some moors for several miles, interesting from their wildness and extent, with occasional broad glimpses of Barnstaple Bay, and the steep headlands near Clovelly, and the point and church at Hartland, with Lundy Island at a few miles distance. It is worth while to go to Bude by the road through Holsworthy, on account of the superb view which suddenly opens about halfway from that town, upon the top of the last hill, which sinks with a gradual descent of several miles down to the margin of the sea. There is no sign which suggests the chance or likelihood of any change : the road has been winding through a somewhat dreary-looking district for a few miles past ; the traveller forgets that he has been passing for a long time over a high inland level, until with a sharp turn of the road, as it were a new world lies before him. He is suddenly upon the edge of the declivity ; and before his eyes, on either side, there spreads a vast expanse of country, its horizon bounded by the distant undulations of a semicircle of lofty hills, bending in every direction downwards to the west ; with the outlines of a thousand cliffs, and the hollows of the larger bays, and the mighty sea itself, gleaming and distinct beneath his feet, lighted, it may be, under the slanting brilliance of a setting sun.

Bude Haven is a hamlet in the parish of Stratton, in Cornwall, about 25 miles from Bideford, and 20 from Launceston. The population may amount to about 600 or 700 ; the men mostly employed in manning the twenty sloops and schooners belonging to the port ; or in loading and unloading vessels which trade to and from the place. Large employment is also given by the proprietors of the Bude Canal, which carries

goods in two or three directions into the interior of the county, and immense quantities of sea-sand to the farmers for manure.

Considerable as the population of Bude is, there is no doctor resident in the village : but there soon may be. Coming events are casting their shadows before ; and last year a well-appointed chemist's shop startled and pleased the people with its huge blue and green and yellow coloured bottles. Neither is there a lawyer in the place : but it is said that there are at least more than one close by in the little town of Stratton.

The village of Bude lies upon two sides of a small stream, which runs into the sea at the mouth of the harbour. It belongs chiefly to two proprietors only : and consists upon the north side of a scattered collection of houses, some in rows, some singly, extending up a moderately sloping hill ; upon the other of rows of houses, and a pretentious-looking hotel, a new church, the parsonage, the coast-guard station, and some good cottages let to visitors in the summer. The two sides are very different in character and appearance. On the one side there is small sign of care or expense in keeping the houses in repair, or of attention to the wants of those who live in them : and not a few of the buildings which are under the control of the proprietor, exhibit a very narrow escape indeed from the general look of a dilapidated little Irish town. There is no difficulty whatever in distinguishing upon this side those houses which are in the hands of other owners ; for there is a distinct attempt at improvement, and so far as means allow, generally successful. But upon the other side, every house or little row of houses, though not always perhaps built with the best taste, shows as plainly as words could tell it, that the careful hand and eye of a liberal landlord have been over them for years. Here, there is no unheeded cry for necessary repairs ; there are no dirty pigsties close under cottage windows, and opposite cottage doors ; no stables with rotting roofs ; or open gutters, miscalled drains ; but everything is kept, fairly, in decent order.

On both sides, north and south, there are several rows of decent houses, which, in the summer and autumn, are let to visitors. Most of them have two small sitting-rooms, and three, four, or five bedrooms : and it is not an uncommon circumstance from July to September to find every lodging occupied and bespoke. These houses, except some two or three, do not command a view of the sea : built originally rather for shelter (if not, it is difficult to discover a reason for such perverseness), their first owners did not, perhaps, anticipate the future uses to which they might be put. But there are three cottages, of a better kind, not a quarter of a mile distant from the village, which were built for lodging-houses twenty years ago, close upon the shore, perfectly sheltered, and commanding fine views along the coast.

The church --- at first intended for a chapel of ease, but now a district church --- stands well upon the slope of the hill on the south side ; plain in appearance and, were it not for its picturesque position some cavillers might possibly think it something worse than "plain." But it was a noble gift of the same generous landlord, a layman, whom I have spoken of already, to the people of the place : and he has given them a

schoolhouse also ; and to the incumbent and his successors, a fine old manor-house, as a parsonage. Thinking of all these things, people regret that there should be a stream of water dividing the two sides of Bude.

The little river is crossed in one place by a stone bridge, built about twenty years ago ; and below again, by a small wooden footpath bridge, close to a ford and leading to a causeway, which was made very lately to replace a long row of stepping stones. This wooden bridge adjoins two or three cottages, the lower parts of which are among the oldest buildings in Bude. Carew, in his survey of Cornwall, printed in 1602, speaks of these cottages as having then just been built, for a mill, &c. ; and that the stepping stones had been lately placed also, to the great benefit of the people and neighbours. It is true that these cottages had fallen into a bad state, and the stepping stones were awkward for modern refinements : nevertheless, one is sorry that they have disappeared, even to be supplanted by walls with tidy new windows in them, and slated roofs, and a dry and safe footpath. They gave a picturesque character to the old ford and roadway, and they were pleasant enough to look at ; so long as other people lived in them.

Lying midway between the two opposite slants of hill is a large mound, about eighty or one hundred feet high, originally a mere sand-bank but now covered with green turf, with a lawn of an acre or two towards the village, and terraced slopes and banks towards the sea ; close under its shelter is a larger house, occupied by the family of the owner during the summer and autumn months. At low water the sands extend in front, and when the tide is high the waves rush along its sea-wall. The beauty of the sea-view from the windows of this house is very striking. It looks straight out towards the Atlantic Ocean (not an inch of land between it and America), and on either side, before you reach the water's edge, the hills which enclose the little harbour sweep in a gradual rise to the summits of the cliffs, with the Breakwater and the Chapel rock extending halfway across between them.

Until about thirty years ago, the ships which traded to and from Bude ran in upon the sand, and, lying there, discharged and took in their cargoes. They were small sloops, generally, and the risk was great upon a shore so exposed. But about that time a Company obtained an Act of Parliament, and the canal, already mentioned, was completed. This --- after a succession of remarkable inclines from the high hills inland, up and down which the barges are worked by a very ingenious management of water-power --- ends in a long basin with a wharf, opening upon a lock, and leading out directly, at high water, into the sea itself. The advantages of this canal are very great. Ships, once inside the lock, can lie safely in the basin, and the whole country is benefited by the conveyance of coals, timber, and other traffic into the interior.

More than all, the canal supplies the neighbouring villages, within a circuit of perhaps twenty miles, with the famous Bude sea-sand. For centuries this has been taken from the beach in front of the village, and for centuries no lasting increase and

no decrease have been marked. After a small visible diminution by means, it may be, of two months steady work in carrying it away, a tide comes in and deposits again in the same place, inside a range of perhaps some ten or twenty acres, all that is required : or, if a succession of such tides may come, there soon follows another with a change of wind, and the excess is swept out, once more, into the sea. This sand is valuable as a manure, containing sixty or seventy per cent. of lime ; and its good effects upon heavy lands may be traced for years after. At what may be called the farmers' idle time, in August, between the two harvests, there may be often seen upon the sands, in addition to the carts of the canal company, as many as fifty or a hundred county wagons at one time, all busy in loading the sea-sand. The canal company have laid down iron tram-roads, running far down towards low-water mark, upon which their peculiarly constructed carts run, and a horse draws easily two or three tons of sand. It is said that the first notice of Bude is with reference to its sand, in a charter dated in the reign of Richard the Second.

In some few parts of the south of England there are spots where trees grow almost to the water's edge ; but a wooded country and the sea close joining are seldom found in our climate. And when they do combine (strange as at first it may appear to say so) they are far from being in every way desirable. In such cases there are always an accompanying dampness and a relaxing quality in the air ; a dampness which for some reason or other is certainly different in the feeling of it from that which we find inland. Woods and the sea really do not harmonise upon our coasts : it is an exception to the rule to find both of them, and, as it were naturally, we do not like them. We speak of them indeed, and praise places which have both trees and sea, but for the pleasure only which for a short time they give to the eye. In more southern latitudes, upon the Mediterranean or nearer the tropics, it is equally in character that the two should often be together ; but not so in England. Hence it is that although the trees which clothe the sides of the hills at Dawlish or Torquay are charming to look at, yet people generally soon feel the want of a clear and open air close by the sea, and rather choose the bleaker downs which surround Weymouth or Brighton.

A stranger coming from a midland county to Bude, would say that it wanted trees ; but a few walks will show him that though Cornwall is not a wooded county, yet trees grow freely in every little valley, or in the hollows which run down here and there, sheltered nearly to the sea. It is here far more wooded near the shore than the counties of Sussex or Dorset. No trees, of course, can grow to any height open to the full blast of wind from the Atlantic ; but out of it, in anything like shelter, the oak and elm are common enough, and every lane is bordered with high thick hedges of thorn and hazel. At Bude, near the church, a plantation of firs made about twenty years ago, although upon the open side of one of the hills close to the sea and exposed to the full force of every wind except the south-west, has flourished well, and adds greatly to the appearance of the place.

Devonshire lanes in their peculiar features are not confined to Devonshire ; lanes as deep, as overgrown with thicket, and as picturesque, are to be found also on the

western side of Dartmoor, and along the Cornish banks of the Tamar. Some of the villages near Bude would supply studies for an artist, with frequently an old mansion changed into a farmhouse, or very ancient cottages or water-mill overhanging the stream. The small town of Stratton (though little indeed can be said in praise of its splendour when in it), looked at from a short distance, is in situation beautiful. Buried in the hollow formed by several hills, itself slanting along the lowest step of one of them, the cluster of housetops is broken by the thick foliage of tall trees, and rising through them is the solemn-looking, well-proportioned, tower of the parish church.

A word here upon the neighbouring churches. They are all of one type, and of one date, the fourteenth century. The towers usually of three stories, with a pinnacle at each corner. Before the dissolution of the monasteries, a large part of this district belonged to the abbey of Hartland, its incumbents were supplied from there, and the architecture naturally followed the example of the mother church. The church at Hartland is famous for its beauty, and these churches near Bude are, more or less excellently, imitations of its style.

In several of the churches, the old oak settles still remain, chiefly of the date of around 1500 : low and massive in construction, with the ends carved with emblems of the Passion, and with arms and initials of the original donors. The church at Poughill, a mile from Bude, is well worth the trouble of a longer journey, were it only for the old seats. They remain almost complete, and have been unmoved since the day they were first fixed there. They occupy not only the nave as far as the sanctuary or where the rood screen anciently went across, but the narrow aisles also. Probably there are but few churches in England which can show an interior so perfect, so unchanged in this respect, in spite of the fanaticism of the seventeenth century, in spite of the odd fancies, even more mischievous and destructive, of a succession of curates and churchwardens, greedy after improvement and of going with the times.

The parish of Poughill can boast also of a very complete and well-preserved register of births, deaths and marriages. It commences within a year or two of the act of Henry VIII., which obliged parishes to keep these registers : and everyone knows how rarely parish registers are found extending back nearly so far. This book of late years, owing to the care of the present incumbent, has been properly kept from further risk of damp, and harm arising from neglect and mischief. There are still in existence also (in the possession of the writer of this) two volumes in manuscript of churchwarden's accounts of the parish of Stratton during the sixteenth century, from the year 1512 to nearly the end of the reign of Elizabeth. These are highly interesting and valuable, containing as they do a contemporary record of the changes necessary for Divine service and public worship, in consequence of the frequent orders put forth at that period.

The coast of Cornwall, from its northern extremity, 10 miles from Bude, southward to Trevoze Head, which is distant about 20 miles, sweeps in a long curve, to which the name of Bude bay is given on the maps. The coast is terrible throughout the

whole extent. Rockbound, with cliffs rising often to the height of 300 and nearly 400 feet, there are only a few breaks of sand here and there, at distant intervals, interrupting the constant dash of the waves against the very bases of the cliffs. Of these breaks of sand that at Bude with its harbour (a deeper indentation of perhaps a quarter of a mile) is the most important.

Lofty and precipitous as many of the cliffs are immediately close to Bude, the highest on the coast are in the adjoining parish of Morwenstow, where one, Henna Cliff (the Raven's Crag), towers to a height of more than 400 feet. It is Morwenstow, also, whose vicar's name will long be remembered, not alone for energetic work in his own village, but as the author of some of the most beautiful modern English Ballads. These long ranges of cliffs are seen from the shore at Bude, lying as it does in the depth of the bay, extending southward to Trevoze, and on the north to Hartland Point, with Lundy Island, clear and lofty, separate in the farthest distance.

The haven or harbour at Bude is in shape something like the section of a pear, from which the end at the stem has been cut off. It faces west ; on the north side the cliffs for about a quarter of a mile are low; on the south they are lofty, with beds of rock and reefs below them. Upon the north side, below the cliffs, stretches a magnificent reach of sand, firm and dry at low water, for the length of three or four miles. Between the two sides, nearly midway, a large rock stands boldly up, in appearance like that of St. Michael's Mount ; and it had anciently a chapel dedicated to St. Michael on the summit. No ruins of this remain. From the base of the cliffs at the south side a breakwater, constructed at great cost by the canal company, runs out and joins the "Chapel Rock." This forms a good shelter for vessels once inside, but limits the entrance of the harbour to the narrow space between its extremity at the rock and the north cliffs: not exceeding, perhaps, 300 yards : and even this space is not equally available for vessels entering the port. The real entrance is as narrow, except under very favourable circumstances of weather, as the channel of the little river which deepens close under the Chapel Rock towards the sea.

Hence it is that there is very little exaggeration in saying that ships seldom get into or out of Bude without some slight risk. Let the weather be ever so moderate, there may be a little roll of the sea on, and the wind may drop, and the ship drift upon a rock ; or, from ignorance of the locality, a strange captain may keep his vessel a little away from Chapel Rock, --- too close to which, generally he cannot go, --- and so, run in upon the sand or reefs to the north.

But it is (and frequently it happens) when there is an "awkward" tide, and perhaps some six or eight ships waiting to run in, that we see excitement and anxiety at Bude. Every hour since low water the sea and wind have been anxiously watched by the old captains of the place, by the owners who are at home, and by the "hovellers." As the hour of high water approaches, you may often see faces lengthen, and hear grave doubts expressed as to the safety of attempting to bring in the ships. Perhaps at last the decision is "No ;" and the flag is hoisted at the Storm Tower, and they must wait

for another tide ; or if the weather is threatening, up sail and away to Ilfracombe or Clovelly.

If, on the contrary, the decision is to bring them in, the flag is hoisted on the Chapel Rock, and the hovellers' boat is rowed out to the point of the breakwater. Then, if it be really a doubtful, which (in fact) means a dangerous, tide, people flock down to the breakwater and the cliffs, and watch each ship as she steers for the entrance and tries her chance. Women are there, whose husbands, sons and brothers are on board, and often the anxiety deepens into something worse. Happily, cases of the wreck of Bude ships are rare, and, for many years, still rarer with loss of life. But they are frequently ashore, and then their safety entirely depends upon smooth water at the next flood tide : or there may be some collision, or they might touch the rock, in which case the force of the "outset" carries them to sea again and there is hardly a chance of saving them.

By way of example : --- Some little time ago, three or four ships were waiting for the signal. There was scarcely any wind, but a long, heavy, ground-sea rolling in. The signal to come in was made, and slowly two of the vessels rounded the Chapel Rock safely. The two last, just at the very entrance, hung upon the same wave together and the light wind was completely taken out of the sails of the smaller one. In an instant she drifted upon the rock ; the cry was, "All will be lost !" Fortunately, the second wave, instead of driving her higher up, lifted her completely, and the reflux swept her out to sea, clear of the breakwater. But she was sinking, and the crew hoisted their boat over the side. In a few minutes the lifeboat was also got out and manned, and at great risk, for the ground sea was rolling in heavily, went through the surf and saved the crew.

So, this past summer. A strange sloop, attempting the harbour one evening, touched the sand upon the north side. There was but little sea --- a billow sea --- but it broke over her as soon as she touched. Some two or three people only happened to be watching her ; these ran out upon the nearest ledge of rock shouting to the crew, "Keep on board." They either did not hear or would not listen. Two men, a woman, and a boy, got into their boat : the first wave which reached it lifted the boat and it was capsized. We were near enough to hear the cries of the poor wretches, and thought they would be drowned. But another wave or two helped in the two men who could swim, and the woman and the boy were caught hold of also, as they were washing past the rock. It was a near thing indeed, and the woman was utterly exhausted.

A few months before, one of our own ships struck under the same cliff, missing the entrance in a ground sea, and no wind ; the crew were saved by the rocket apparatus, and the ship went to pieces the following tide.

Such being the undeniably dangerous nature of the harbour, there is no want of interest and of excitement often at every time of high water. The most exciting case



is, of course, when some vessel *must* make the attempt, on account of heavy weather outside and a gale of wind upon the coast, which prevent altogether any chance of beating out of the bay. At such times, except to mark the tide, there is no need of any signal. The cliffs are lined with people, many also on the breakwater, in spite perhaps of the seas running over it : the rockets are brought down ; the lifeboat ready under shelter ; and every one prepared to do his best.

One such case occurred a few years ago, which few who saw it have forgotten. It was blowing very hard, dead upon the shore ; and a brig, which had been watched all the morning struggling against the storm, and vainly endeavouring to beat out, so as to weather Hartland, was observed at last to be making for the entrance to the harbour. The sea was running heavily, in tumbling billows, breaking far outside the farthest reef of rocks. It was doubtful whether the captain knew the coast or not. If he did, the gale and sea were too great to leave much hope ; if he did not, his chance of escape was nothing. Every signal which might direct him, however, was made, and in a very short time the brig was inside the breakers. In such a storm she seemed in half a minute to have been driven through them ; the captain was at the helm and clung to it : the vessel, as it were by a miracle, escaped the rock and passed up the little channel. As she swept by, the captain left the helm, dashed down into the cabin and up again, holding high in the air, between his arms, his little child. It was no wonder that the shouts of the people on the breakwater could be heard so far in reply, even through the storm. In another moment the ship had swung round and run up high upon the beach ; and the crew and the woman and child were saved.

We have said that the breakwater runs half across the harbour, between the opposing cliffs. The face of the cliffs upon the south, the side to which the breakwater is joined, has a grand and noble aspect. They rise boldly, and towards the sea nearly perpendicularly, increasing in height, with occasional dips where the land valleys approach the coast, for some miles, until they drop altogether to a low shore, extending perhaps a mile, called Widemouth Bay. After this they rise again suddenly and are continued, abounding in scenery of matchless grandeur and beauty for ten miles on, to Boscastle and Tintagel.

At low water the walk below these cliffs is full of interest. No doubt it is a rough one, over pebbles at the best, and by far the greatest part over broken rocks and reefs. But the labour such as it is, is amply rewarded by the beauty of the sea face of the cliffs, the variety of light and shade, dark caverns here and there, the fantastic shapes of the disjointed rocks and jutting points, and the brilliant foam of the waves, whether rippling in under the calm of a summer's sunshine, or rolling heavily and angrily with a ground swell from the ocean, promising a storm.

And every hollow of the reefs, every crevice of the rocks, is filled with life : in pools of water, clear and transparent as crystal, swim thousands of marine animals, amidst waving forests of seaweed, endless in colour and variety. Probably in no part of the English shores is so wide a field open to the inquiry of the naturalist as this

portion of the coast of Cornwall. Rare plants, and rarer seaweeds, will reward his search ; but, for the conchologist, very little. Scarcely a shell, even broken in half, will be gathered in a day ; a perfect one hardly ever. We cannot have everything, and if we want fine shells, we must go to the edge of smoother sea and by the wash of lighter waves than what we find in the full face of the great Atlantic. Yet, in justice, it must be added that very perfect specimens in one of the most fragile and uncommon of English shells, the purple Helix, have, twice or thrice, been picked up amongst the rocks or on the sands at Bude.

If the conchologist should be disappointed, there is ample scope for not only the student but the professor of geology. For some miles along the shores, on either side of Bude, the broken sea-face of the cliffs furnishes a constant succession of rare examples of strata, well worthy of examination. In many places these are twisted into most curious forms ; in others, not only slanting at unequal angles but even perpendicular. And, at one spot, in the beautiful little cove at Melhuach, there are a contortion and mixture of various strata, which no theory (we believe) has, as yet, satisfactorily accounted for.

On either side of the harbour, whether upon that which we have been speaking of towards the south, or upon the other to the north, the tops of the cliffs are covered with admirable turf, and fine open downs stretch onward and onward to Hartland in the one direction, to Tintagel in the other.

Nothing can exceed the charm of a walk along these downs and cliffs. The immense expanse of sea, the broken headlands, the glittering surf below, and the hollow murmur filling the ear from the breaking waves ; a few white sails near land or far out on the distant horizon ; a sweeping gull or soaring hawk upon the wing ; the purple of the thyme with which the turf abounds, crushed under the tread and filling the whole air with perfume ; or the yellow fragrant blossoms of the furze winding in large patches here and there, and gilding the more distant slopes ; the spread of country, often visible inland, with waving corn growing in a few spots to the very edge of the cliff, and a white farmhouse or church tower of some neighbouring village just showing above a cluster of low trees ; --- all these, bathed in an autumn sunshine, in the purest air, form a picture which, we do not hesitate to say, is unequalled upon any other part of the coast of England.

To stand upon the brow of one of the lofty cliffs near Bude and look forward over the expanse of waters, is suggestive of many solemn thoughts, even in our own time, when the world has been so careful mapped out, and weighed, and measured ; when we know exactly what is before us, though at the distance of a thousand leagues, and could put our finger (as it were) upon the capes and bays of North America, or bending southwards on the Gulf of Florida and the islands of the Caribbean Sea. But, four hundred years ago, how different were the thoughts, and with what a far more serious and eager eye must the thoughtful wanderer along these shores have gazed across the sea ! He must have dreamt then of Atlantis and of the glories of Cathay ; he

must have longed to enquire of the strange fragments of foreign woods or cane which might be found upon the beach, and of every wave which rolled in upon the sand, and of every breath which blew upon his cheek, the truth and history of the marvellous lands which he had been told of in song or fable ; or the fate of some of the many ships which had sailed out into that unknown ocean, with the reckless courage of mad adventure, never to return. There was bliss in that medieval ignorance : we are very wise and learned in our own day, and we have lost all the old imaginations and romance.

A few words must suffice for a description of the shore which lies to the north. The base of the last cliff opposite to the breakwater, across the harbour, ends in a dangerous reef of rocks, running out above the sand for about a hundred yards. There is a small iron cross at the extreme point of this reef, which marks a half-tide, under every condition of it, spring tide or neap. It is a very useful mark, for there are several places where it is not safe to remain when the tide is flowing, beyond a certain time. This point therefore, if within sight, is a guide even to people who are almost strangers. The sands shift occasionally to a slight extent, and vary in depth by some feet perhaps below the cliffs, as at most places on an exposed coast ; sometimes they cover every low rock ; sometimes they are carried away by a strong outset of the tide, and fifty patches of rock may be seen which were all buried yesterday. But it is a curious fact, and one not easily to be accounted for, that this iron cross, since it was first fixed twenty years ago, has never once been covered by the sand. If the decision of placing it where it is was an accident, it was a most happy one.

The cliffs on this side have at low water at their base not only rocks, but, outside them, a superb range of firm sand, more than three miles in length. This gives to Bude its great variety : on the one hand you have rocks only ; upon the other, sand ; you may choose your walk, and the whole character of the one is as different from the other as if they were fifty miles apart. A little way further on, during the summer months, two or three jutting reefs of rock are appropriated as “the ladies' bathing place.” And there may be seen --- of course by strange eyes only from a very great distance and very indistinctly --- numerous gleaming, moving, creatures, running in and out, and shining white garments spread upon the rocks, and a little mob of figures, in clinging robes, amidst the last ripples of the last waves. But where are the bathing machines? Where, indeed. Such little huts on wheels are well enough perhaps on sands like those at Ryde or Weymouth : but the first tide which washed the cliffs at Bude would leave behind it but a very dismal account of them : a broken wheel or a few fragments of the sides.

The bathing at Bude is excellent, but not without risk, and always requires caution. The rise of a swell of the sea, even on a calm day, is sometimes so sudden that people are carried off, if taken unawares ; and the outset, or drag, of the retiring wave is frequently so strong that powerful swimmers cannot get back within their depth. It is a common remark that bathers who are drowned at Bude are those who can swim : and it is true. Swimmers are tempted by the beauty and clearness and buoyancy of the

water, or by the apparent absence of all danger or difficulty, and venture out too far or stay too long. They find it hard to swim in again ; they almost touch the sand or rock, and yet miss it at every effort by a foot or two ; they get wearied ; they get alarmed ; and they are lost. As a general rule you seldom see people who know Bude well go in deeper than their hips ; and they run back as every wave rolls in.

Perhaps the most magnificent sea-sight which the world can show, is a ground sea coming in, with the flood of a spring tide, upon these sands. There will be, probably, little if any wind ; and far at sea not a breaker, not a glimmer of white foam, is visible ; only long, low, undulations, reaching miles in length. But, some mile or two from where we stand, these undulations seem, at short regular intervals, to grow out of the sea ; as they roll in, nine or ten, it may be, following each other, they lift higher and higher : they begin to tip, in parts, and slightly break ; but still roll in and gather as they roll, until the horizon is completely hid ; then, one after another, in succession, the whole mass thunders in upon the sands, a perfect cataract of foam. It is no exaggeration to say that these waves frequently sweep up over the sands a full mile from the place where they may first be seen to break and top their edge with white. Or, to give another proof of the weight and power of these seas : a short time ago, a schooner of about eighty tons was lying near the lock-gates in the little channel, waiting for high water ; her boat lay alongside her ; a heavy swell was rolling in ; and the run of one of the waves was so great that both schooner and boat were floated, and when the wave retired both were again left aground.

These ground seas never come with a north wind, or to the north of west ; but they frequently occur, in autumn, right in the teeth of a strong easterly breeze. You will then see another sight : as each wave breaks at last, the foam is tossed high up in the air, twenty or thirty feet, and blown back, a perfect arch, towards the sea again. And in the early morning, against a brilliant sun, these arches are covered in all directions with dazzling prismatic colours ; often with a distinct spray-bow over every wave.

If we would, we might speak long of the glorious sunsets which are enjoyed at Bude. There, over the great Western Ocean, as evening comes on, the clouds may be seen to gather, in long lines or fleecy strips, or rolling up in heavy masses with the threatenings of a storm, and the sun, breaking through them as he sinks, lighting up the whole sea and cliffs with the most brilliant and blazing colour.

Or, we might give a dissertation upon the healthiness of the neighbourhood and the excellence of its climate ; but on this point it is enough to say that it may challenge comparison with any place, however famous, in the south. Not as cold as Ilfracombe or Weymouth, nor so relaxing as Torquay, nor so damp as Penzance, it unites the bracing qualities of the one with the mildness of the others. With a more equal temperature than either, it is also less subject to rain. From whatever cause it may be, it is well known that the West of England may have a succession of rainy days, and yet the district which lies between Bideford, Launceston, and Tintagel may escape them. It is a large basin surrounded by lofty hills. Row Tor and Brown Willy,

Dartmoor and Exmoor, these seem to attract the clouds ; and many a time when not a drop has fallen near Bude, the heavy showers may be seen hanging all day long and pouring down over the whole country in the distance between Exeter and Plymouth. More than all, this part of the coast is, from some cause which we cannot explain, entirely free from those depressing sea fogs which are so common along the southern shores of England. Misty and gloomy skies must come in their due course ; but, we may truly assert, never the thick overwhelming dreary fog which continues hour after hour, sometimes day after day, as though it would never lift again and let a ray of sunshine through.

It is probably to this clearness and purity of the atmosphere upon the western coast of Cornwall that we must attribute, after all, the chief cause of that great partiality which so many visitors feel for Bude. People, utter strangers, have often been known to come there ; and for the first two or three days, the apparent sameness and solitude of the place weary them. There is no reading-room ; no public amusement of any kind ; no esplanade or mall to lounge along ; no balls, no regattas. But a few days go by, and the seeming monotony has gone also ; the air, so to say, begins to tell, and without knowing why or wherefore there comes a sense of increased strength and cheerfulness ; the first impressions of loneliness and sameness have turned to interest and pleasure in much of novelty and strangeness ; the freedom and freshness of the sands, the rocks, the whole country round, force by degrees a charm which cannot be resisted ; constant changes of the sea, in colour, in waves, in brilliance, --- never seen two days alike, --- follow one another in quick variety ; until at last old recollections of what “watering-places” are or ought to be have passed away, and enjoyment of oneself by the seaside is found to spring from sources very different indeed from those which, for years past, we have been stupidly contented with. And the consequence of it all is, that the proposed stay of a week or two lengthens often into as many months, and Bude, out of the world and quiet and lonely though it be, is left at last with regret, and with the full purpose of return.

Pages might still be written, but our space draws shortly to its limit. We have given a true description of Bude ; and there is one side still to be presented, sad and dreadful in its aspect, yet fascinating by the very horrors which surround it.

Upon a coast so exposed shipwrecks must often happen. The term “wrecker” in old days, seems to have almost wanted to complete it “Cornish” and this, not because the people were more cruel or greedy than in other places, but because of the frequency of wrecks. Suffolk and Dorset, years ago, could have told tales of ships lured ashore by lights, and of men left to drown, quite as terrible and quite as true as those which tradition has handed down to us in Cornwall.

By the gift of a friend (at whose request it was written more than thirty years ago) the writer possesses an account, in manuscript, drawn up by an old man who, born before 1750, had lived all his life in Bude or its close neighbourhood, of the wrecks which he himself personally remembered and had seen. They are thirty-seven in all :

and a very curious account of them it is.

It begins with the following "dedication:"

"31<sup>st</sup> July,

1832.

"REV. SIR, --- This book contains all the wraks I can recollect ; I have don this troublesome Task at last. I assure you, sir, I have had a pusselling Job, I have done it as well as my age will allow me : I am sure onless the Lord's help I could not compleated the contents. I beg, good sir, you'l Rectify all folts, and put up with It ; I am, dear sir, your ever faithful and affectionate Friend and obliged humble servant, J. B.

"P. S. --- I acklage my bad spelling ; the folt was to my parrents puting me at Bodmin at a Blind poor woman at school, and at a man who was 90 years of age when he kept school."

The first wreck which the old man could remember was in the year 1759 ; the last which he describes, about 1830. He occasionally adds some particulars or accidental details, illustrating the manners of the time. As to money paid for salvage, wages and hire of cattle were undeniably high a hundred years ago. He tells us of a wreck about the year 1760 ; a very large ship bound from Turkey ; "the salvage bills was all honnerabley paid ; each plow of oxen one guinea per tyde, the labour men two shillings and sixpence a day, and three shillings and sixpence a night ; it was a merry day for the men."

Of another, about three years after, he says: "She was laden all with Port wine ; --- I well remember the old Justise Webb of Bennets was chattering very rofly with the common men, they at last begon to pilt with stones from the cleft, and soon drove him, so that he was not seen there after. I was with my father's plow, loaded with two pipes, the port officer of Bude protecting the wine ; when the officer was riding on the fore-part, and sitting on one cask, the country people drowing wine in pitchers from the same cask as he sat on, and did not know what was doing, and when there pitchers was filed all walked off very conted."

The next wreck it seems was attacked at night by a set party of eight or ten men : it was guarded by eight watchers, of whom the old man had been one. He says, "a battle Insude ; the firs man I engaged, was one Cory, a Blacksmith of Jacobstow ; I gave him a blow in the peeping holes and down he fell, his hat and wig fell on the ground. I soon don him up with a new pair of eyes, and something besides." And then follows a long description of the fight, with its consequences before the justices, &c.

We will take one extract more : "This ship was lost in the night ; I very well remembor one old Cholwill of Morwinstow ; he Informed me that night was a bitter night, of Thunder and Lightening, a storme very great. About one o'clock a very

Great Light appeared in his Bedroom, and he was much horrified, as no person was in the House besides himself ; at last he spoke and said, in the name of God what is this light For? As soon as he had said this, a man, as it appeared all in white, said ; you arise and goe down to duckpool, and you will find a dead man, be sure to bury him. Old Cholwill arose from his bed Immediately, and made good speed to Duckpool. The first thing he got his hand on, was a dead corps, which he soon had interred according as the Gost said to him.”

During the past autumn (of 1862) there were three wrecks at Bude. One of these was so great, so fatal, that henceforth no description of Bude, or even of the county, would be complete without some account of it. It was also remarkable, especially, as having occurred in full daylight, when everything could be observed, when time was given for preparation, and when all means at hand could be tried to help. With a brief record of this wreck --- of the Bencoolen, a ship of 2000 tons --- we shall end.

About the middle of the day on October 21<sup>st</sup> an alarm was given that a ship was in the offing “*coming ashore* :” the weather for four or five days past had been stormy, and it was still blowing very hard, dead on the coast. In a few minutes ten or a dozen people had collected at the Storm Tower ; and less than five miles off, the long black hull of a large vessel, deep in the water, was plainly visible. We could observe no signals : no sails were set, and her masts were gone. At this time it was about three hours flood ; the sea was high, rising higher every instant, and rolling in more and more heavily with the advancing tide. A flag was at once hoisted at the signal-staff by the Storm Tower ; and a tar-barrel was lighted upon the cliff on the opposite side of the harbour, so as to bring the vessel, if not deserted, upon the sands (her only chance) instead of on the rocks. Very shortly after, a small sail could be made out set upon the stump of her foremast ; her helm was put up, and it was evident that she was making for the smoke, and she steered straight for the entrance of the harbour.

It was now past two o'clock ; the cliffs were crowded with people, and nothing to be seen upon every face but anxiety and dismay. The old sailors said, “It will be a bad business.” In another half hour she was near enough for us to make out three or four men at the wheel, and a great number together upon the fore-castle. Slowly she rose and fell upon the waves, hidden by them as she sank between the troughs ; still rapidly drifting in with the force of the wind and the run of the tide. As yet, however, no sea broke over her.

A few minutes before three the ship struck, exactly at the entrance of the haven, broadside on ; her great length occupying and stretching more than over the whole of the small deeper channel by which the coasting vessels enter. Both the rocket apparatus and the life-boat had been brought down to the extremity of the breakwater. Unhappily there was but *one* small ship lying in the harbour at the time ; it was impossible to get an efficient crew together, and the life-boat could not be of use.

The instant that the ship struck, the seas broke over her : and there was no doubt left

that all on board were in the extremity of peril. The men at the helm ran forward ; and the whole of the crew were together on the fore-castle, holding on by anything to save being washed over. As she heeled towards the land when the waves struck her, a raft that had been got ready could now be seen lying close to where the sailors were. The vessel was about 200 yards from the end of the breakwater ; in less than five minutes the first rocket was fired, and fell short ; another five minutes, and the second was fired ; it fell on board but was swept back instantly into the sea. An interval of twenty minutes followed ; then the third rocket flashed across the foam, and the line fell fairly over the stern of the ship. Instantly a man started from among the crowd forward, to secure the line ; half-way along the deck he stopped to clear some wreck ; he had left after one sea had broken ; stopping he clung to the side ; the next huge wave swept in, broke over the ship, from stem to stern, and the man was carried over with it, and never seen again. This was the second mate. The same sea rushed up the breakwater as high as the rocket apparatus, and made it useless. There were no possible means by which aid could be given, and we could only stand and watch.

It was now half-past three : the last half hour had given frightful evidence of the rapidity with which all was going to destruction. The bulwarks were carried away, and the great seas, as they rolled in, poured no longer in mere sheets of foam as at first, but in masses of water, hiding everything, several feet deep over the heads of the miserable crew. It was becoming a question of minutes, and the whole distance from the wreck to the cliffs was already covered with beams and timbers and spars floating in every direction. At this time, as we learnt afterwards, the first mate had been brought up from his cabin, where, since the mast had gone, he had been lying with a broken leg, and was lashed in that condition to the raft. The captain had been drinking for two days past ; he was quite drunk when they were off the land ; and just before the ship struck he went into his cabin, refused to leave it, and was drowned there.

Before four the ship parted in the middle ; the fore part swung round a little, and stuck fast ; five-and-twenty men were now , some lashed, some clinging, upon the raft. Two men came to the side and took off their jackets and their shoes ; we could see them shake hands ; the first plunged into the water and was drowned ; the second sprang after him, and though not seen again was at last washed in and saved. The next minute the bowsprit fell into the sea ; and a tremendous wave, breaking over everything, swept the raft off clear of the ship. This was within one hour of the time she struck, and now not a living soul was left on board --- every one was at the mercy of the raging sea. The first wave that struck the raft lifted it high in the air, covered it with water whilst ten might be slowly counted, and, reappearing, it was borne back by the reflux of the sea with scarcely half the number who were at first upon it. And so, in a heaving, tossing, mass of foam and masts and spars, now visible, now invisible, the raft for twenty minutes more wavered backwards and forwards from the wreck to the land. Each time it sank beneath the breaking seas, some one or two were lost ; once, it completely capsized and all were under it for a few seconds ; until at last, when it slowly, very slowly was washed in upon the rocks, only two could still be seen clinging to it in despair.



The raft came in under the point of the low cliffs on the north side of the harbour, into a little creek, perhaps fifty yards across, by this time full of great fragments of broken timber. There were several dead and the two living men lashed to it. A line was passed down the cliff, and one by one, twelve men, six dead and six living (four having been washed ashore) were drawn up as carefully as could be, rescued as they had been with difficulty from the tangled heaps of wreck below, and laid upon the grass. So fearful was the exhaustion of all who yet survived that only one could speak ; and open bleeding wounds, caused by blows from the drifting spars, made them look still more ghastly. All were carried to the village ; and by great exertions, the six who still breathed were at last recovered.

It was a terrible wreck : out of a crew of thirty-five, six men only were saved. The cargo was a valuable one ; and some of it, during the next few weeks, was saved. The day after the wreck, a very heavy ground-sea set in ; and one of the iron masts, weighing perhaps nearly twenty tons, with a great mass of wire rigging, sails and cordage, was carried away quite three hundred yards by the force of the waves. We have given a woodcut of this.

The frontispiece represents the bed of the ship, taken five weeks after the wreck. By this time, owing to great exertions and employment of a hundred men between each tide, all the starboard side had been thoroughly cleared. A very large quantity still remained upon the other side, half buried in the sand. Both these illustrations are from photographs taken at the time of low water during very low spring-tides : at other tides the wreck could not be got at.

So, at present, no more ; some other day, we may, perhaps, write again about Bude, its scenery, and its wrecks.

W. M.

### *Notes.*

*The hovellers* are the pilots of the Cornish sea ports. At Bude they are employed, some six or eight, by the owners of a boat built for the purpose. It is their duty to watch at every tide, either to bring vessels in or to help them out. This is the only small boat kept at Bude, except the life-boat : there is no “boating” on such a shore. It is not only sea-sickness which would probably be the result of an attempt at it. A sad calamity happened about twenty years ago. The hovellers' boat put out a little distance to a ship lying off, in a strong easterly breeze ; the ship sailed away ; evening was coming on ; the boat could not pull back against wind and tide ; there was no possible means of help ; and, in sight of all, it was watched drifting out into the dark, farther and farther. Neither boat nor men were ever heard of after.

***The Storm Tower*** is a picturesque small tower (an imitation of the famous “Temple of the Winds”), built at the extreme edge of the top of the cliff, south of the breakwater. It is normally occupied by the coast-guard as their look-out. In a great storm it is almost alarming to sit in it, and listen to the terrific gusts of wind which come against it with unbroken force. Though at so great a height, the small strong windows are often broken by the stones and pebbles driven up the side of the cliff by the power of the wind.

***Drownings.*** There were four men drowned, bathing, in one summer, three years ago ; all of them could swim.

***Rocket Apparatus.*** This miserable delay was owing to an old and inexcusable rule of the Board of Trade, by which two lines only were supplied for twelve rockets. It was necessary therefore to haul back and recoil one of the lines already fired. This required great care. The fatal consequence, in the case of the Bencoolen, cannot be over-estimated. By a regulation since made, four lines are now supplied to each station upon the Cornish coast. But it was only after great delay and useless waste of quantities of very valuable red tape that the Board at last consented to the expense of a few shillings for additional lines, in order to increase the hope of saving men's lives.