

was a jerky sort of movement; then a stop. In a little while, some weight having been taken off, a fresh start was made; but no, it would not do; stop she must, and stop she did. The order went round to go home until breakfast time. Away at once we went, making for the river side. And what a sight it was! Just here the river would be about 300 yards wide, and at ordinary times would be seven or eight yards from the top of the embankment to the surface of the water. We were also just at the head, or centre, of a bend of the river, so that we had a fine view, both up and down stream. It was now full to the brim; rolling along, angry and impetuous, carrying everything before it that was at all weak, and in many cases strong things fell before it. We heard it had been "rough" higher up stream, and soon we had evidence of this. Branches of trees, whole trees, tubs, casks, boxes, planks, old boats, dead dogs, fowls, and a sheep, passed on with the swift and swelling torrent. At once we realised that the state of affairs was serious indeed. After breakfast we essayed to reach the bank of the river, but our way was barred. Over the edge the water had come, and was now pouring into the yard through the doorway, and up the drains. At once all hands were set to work to strip the cloth off the machines, the warp and weft off the looms, and the pieces out of the "stocks" and dyepans. While thus engaged, on came the waters; nay, before the last piece was got out: at one door, in rushed the water at another door. On it came, and still on, until every man and boy, woman and girl, had to retreat out of the yard, for soon the whole of the ground floors were under water. Even the most jovial of us were somewhat "scared" at the sight of this invasion; certainly it was with subdued feelings that we retraced our steps homewards. Never was such a flood seen as this before by the oldest amongst us. Every mill was stopped; at that time there would be some seven or eight, all situated on the river bank.

All day long we watched the water rise. By three in the afternoon the highway was covered. At five no vehicle could pass either to Leeds or Huddersfield. At about six darkness had come on, and still the river was rising, and by seven o'clock the whole village was under water.

Now came the testing time. What should be done? Some people from Mirfield, which was about a mile away, on higher ground, and consequently did not suffer from the flood, brought some boats and carts to take any away who wished, and to be in readiness if required. Singular to say, not a soul left the place. By nine o'clock every man, woman, and child was in his or her own house. The houses where we resided were slightly elevated from the main road, and consequently were the last to be surrounded or flooded by the water.

The position of affairs had indeed become alarming. Still we hoped the flood would abate. Amid all our anxiety, I remember well we never lost heart. Now and again portions of a wall would give way, letting in the water from the adjoining fields. The rising of the water to the pavement before the house, then the rush of the water through the coal-grates into the cellars, made a horrible noise. Many persons said that for weeks they did not get the sound out of their ears. Then came the rising of the water step by step to the "cellar-head;" then the fear, would it rise and come on to the horse floor?

And now I will relate an incident, the memory of which will last while memory remains. In the village resided a widow and her two sons. They were not of these parts, but came hither some five or six years before these events occurred. They were very quiet, unobtrusive, yet cheerful, affable, and kindly towards their neighbours. By some they were thought to be "stuck up," "proud," and "hoity-toity kind o' folk;" but by the generality of the people were well respected. The mother had seen "better days." At an early period of her life she had resided on the sea coast—a fact that stood her in good stead in this instance, as will be seen presently. She was acquainted with the different nautical terms; had learned something of the moods of the winds and tides; the clouds, and the various phases and influences of the moon on the sea, &c. As the waters continued to rise and had now filled the cellars, and were fast coming to the level of the house floors, the widow and her boys, like their neighbours, felt that the position was very grave indeed. Still there was no trace of excitement or alarm, much less panic. Some of the neighbours were calling out to the woman, "When will it stop?" "Shall we call for 't boats?" meaning the boats brought from Mirfield. "No, I think there will be no occasion; wait a little longer," was the reply. This was at 9.30 p.m. The almanac stated that at the nearest seaport it would be high tide that day at 9.55 p.m. The widow had read that, and she was persuaded that the waters would stop rising at that hour. Still the waters rose. Again came appeals. "Mrs. —, what shall we do?" Addressing her eldest son, she said, "Tell them to wait while ten o'clock." The word was passed from door to door, "Wait till ten o'clock." And now the trial began. At a quarter to ten the eldest son drew a chalk mark just above the water's surface at the cellar-head; at ten minutes to ten the line was covered with water. Again, another line was drawn above the water, about a quarter of an inch above—one, two, three minutes—the water rose perceptibly; four minutes, 'tis five minutes to ten, "Where is the chalk mark?" "It's there, mother, but I can't see it." "Wait"—one, two, three, four, ten o'clock. "Can you see the mark?" "Yes, it's not up to it." "Thank God, it has stopped; the tide has ceased to flow." "Shall I tell them, mother?" "Wait another five minutes." Anxiously they watched that mark. The waters stood still. At five minutes past ten they were still below the mark. "Go, tell them the flood has stopped; that they can go to bed now," said the mother. To the door bounded the son; then, as loud as he could, he cried out, "The water's stop't, the water's stop't." The news flew from house to house, from street to street; then came back on the air sounds of joy, native congratulations, mingled with hymns of praise. After a while the voices became hushed; the doors one after another were closed one by one; the lights went out; then the hush and stillness of night came on all the village.

What an experience was that night for all the families in Ravensthorpe! The whole place was under water. Not a house but had its cellar full of water; some had the floor of their living-room entirely submerged; and yet, as I have said, there was throughout the whole place an entire absence of panic. Never shall I forget that day and that night. It was a singular, it was a remarkable, occurrence; but that which excited at the time, and even now excites our admiration, was the calm, strong presence of mind displayed by one woman, and she a widow, which undoubtedly was the means of preventing panic and its attendant evils from spreading through the village at a critical time in its history.

## A REMINISCENCE OF RAVENSTHORPE.

Mr. J. E. Preston, Leeds, writes—

Early on in the sixties, fresh from the "Great City," the metropolis, it became my lot to live at Ravensthorpe, and to a City born and City bred lad it was a delightful place. The green fields, the sparkling stream, the shady woods—these were revelations that filled one's heart with joy and delight. Ravensthorpe of itself was not a place to attract an antiquary. There are no venerable ruins of lordly castle, or stately abbey, nor have, to my knowledge, any of its inhabitants attained to heights of eminence in the domains of literature, art, science, or politics; and yet to some it is a place of real interest. At the time of my coming to it Ravensthorpe was, as I have said, only a little village. There was no church and no chapel in the place. The only religious house or place of worship was a shed—formerly a hand-loom weaving shed. This was first used by the Wesleyans. It was their birthplace there, as it was also of the Church of England, the Primitive Methodists, and, I think, the Congregationalists, and all in the order named. It has also been day and Sunday school respectively. Many happy hours have I spent in that homely meeting house, taking part in the services of the various bodies from time to time; at one time in the fervid devotion of the Wesleyans, at another in the orderly and precise ritual of the Establishment, at another with the lively and exhilarating service of the "Prims," and anon with the grave and intellectual Independents. But this one must admit, that whether grave or exhilarating, stately or intellectual, all alike were serious and earnest, and the remembrance of those days gives rise to feelings of gratitude for the insight into truth and light which one gleaned from those varied services. At that time many of the elderly men were hand-loom weavers. Those younger who could work did so at the mills, of which there were two or three built on the banks of the river. At the present time I suppose there cannot be less than twelve mills, besides sheds, dye-houses, and works of various kinds, all of which are tending to make it a thriving town. Where now stands the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Station once was a wood, the delight of we youngsters. At the bottom of the wood ran the beck, in which you could bathe without being dyed, which you could not do to-day, if supposing you attempted!

All is now changed. From a peaceful, quiet hamlet, Ravensthorpe has grown into a thriving, busy town. There is an Episcopalian church, chapels of all denominations, day and Sunday schools, gasworks, Local Board, &c. So much is it changed that I'm afraid our grandfathers and grandmothers, if they could come back, would hardly know or recognise the place. Ravensthorpe unfortunately had, and still has, one serious defect—though, I suppose, it is not singular in that respect; the most charming place has its disadvantage. It lies so low, and being on the banks of a river, it is soon flooded. It was this defect, together with the heavy rains, that caused a disaster, some incidents of which I will endeavour to relate.

Towards the latter part of the sixties there occurred in the West Riding one of the most terrible floods known. The destruction of property on that occasion was very great, and there was also loss of life, alike of man and beast. The devastation extended for miles around, and scarcely a town or village situated near the river escaped damage. Though happily not attended with any loss of life at Ravensthorpe, yet it was an anxious, trying time. I well remember how, on the morning of that day, we got up to go to our work, and went with some amount of fear. It had been raining for several days, and the river was gradually rising. Our mill stood close to the river, and on going to the banks we were not surprised to see the waters almost level with the top. The engine commenced to run, but not for long. Soon indications of something wrong were given by the "slowing" of the machines. Then there