

Miscellaneous.

[From Reynolds's Newspaper, Nov. 25.]

FEARFUL FLOODS AND GREAT LOSS OF LIFE.—A RAILWAY VIADUCT WASHED AWAY.

From the accounts which reach us of the floods in Yorkshire, Derby, Lancashire, and the adjoining counties, they appear to have been more fatal and destructive than any which have occurred for many years in England.

The flood at Leeds on Friday week was the highest ever known. The valley of the Aire to a very great width was inundated nearly throughout the whole of its length, from above Skipton to Keighley, Bradford, Appleby bridge, Kirkstall, Leeds, and on to the Humber. The river inundated houses and warehouses at Leeds. It destroyed a large amount of property, rendering many dwellings uninhabitable in their basement storeys, and making several of the streets impassable by foot passengers. Carts, wagons, and other vehicles were brought into requisition to enable them to go from one part of the town to another. Several persons were driven from their dwellings and sought succour at the central police office at the Town-hall, where temporary accommodation and refreshments were provided for them.

Among the premises inundated in Swinegate were those of the *Leeds Express* newspaper. The water entered the lower story of the building to the depth of about five feet, and did considerable damage, besides putting a stop to the printing of the paper, which was going on at the time.

The flood was at its height shortly before midnight on the Friday, and had diminished about 4ft. or 5ft. at Leeds-bridge at daylight on the Saturday morning. Still the river was several feet above its usual level. And at this point we have to record one very distressing fatality. About a quarter to seven o'clock on the Saturday morning from twenty to thirty persons were standing on a landing or jetty near Leeds bridge, at the bottom of Briggate, watching the flood in the river, and the wreck on the surface, when the foundation on which they were standing gave way, and they fell into the torrent. Several were drowned.

According to the investigations which have so far been made, it appears that but ten out of the thirty people who were precipitated from the jetty have been saved, and from the rapidity with which the water was flowing it is probable that some time must elapse before the whole of the missing bodies will be recovered, and even then at a considerable distance down the river. The damage done to the various craft moored in the river has been very serious. At one o'clock in the morning the water stood about three feet above the landing wharfs, and the man Stones, who has been employed on the river for forty years, pronounces this to have been the highest flood within his recollection. He was obliged to sit up the whole of the night to watch his vessel, and he states that from seven o'clock on Friday evening until about three o'clock on the following morning a very large number of oil casks were washed away, which could not be estimated at a less number than 200.

A great deal of damage was done in the outskirts of Leeds. The local *Mercury* says:—In Kirkstall-road the flood rose to a great height, persons who travelled over it in cabs having to undergo the unpleasant ordeal of riding in some parts as high as the seats of their conveyances. Witham's Forge was completely flooded, all work was suspended, and the horses had to be removed from the stables. At Kirkstall a culvert burst at the top of the bank and the water rushed down the declivity, inundating the lower parts of the houses in its course, and necessitating the tenants seeking some securer abode. The scene at the railway-station at Kirkstall baffles description. The river, which flows by the side of it, burst all its boundaries, and, embracing the whole of the tramway in its folds, flowed on free and unfettered, leaving no other distinction between its natural and its adopted course than here an overturned porter's box, and there the remains of what had served to give the passengers accommodation, while waiting for the trains. The water flowed along the line in a deep rapid stream, as far as the eye could reach, while the fields in the vicinity were at one time flooded as high

as five or six feet. The ground on which the Abbey stands shared the same fate as its neighbours, but fortunately the flood did not reach the fine old ruin itself. Of course it was absolutely impossible for trains in the latter part of the day to reach the station; they had to be stopped some distance from it, and the passengers were left to find their way as best they could to Leeds. The bridge at Kirkstall Forge has been completely undermined. The bridge on the branch line leading to the forge has also suffered such injuries as to render it entirely useless. A huge boiler, swept from the chemical works of Messrs. Tunstall, was hurled against it, altogether destroying its supports. At the forge itself immense damage has been done, the water having extinguished the furnaces, and covered the entire works to the depth of several feet. The offices were flooded, and one end of a small weighhouse was carried away by the accumulation of material. The water appears to have played the most fantastic tricks in the works, removing heavy masses of iron to all imaginable spots, and floating in their place tar barrels, planks of wood, and other articles from the adjoining premises. Above Kirkstall Forge the valley was covered with water, and but for the devastation caused by such an inundation the scene was exceedingly picturesque in the moonlight. At the chemical works occupied by Mr. Tunstall, the flood, which had risen with great rapidity, swept everything moveable before it, and the family had to make a hurried escape. Mr. Tunstall, who was suffering from illness, being taken out of the chamber window. Two or three large tubular boilers, used for storing tar, were swept into the river, and one was carried with great force against the buttresses of the railway bridge leading to Kirkstall Forge. The wooden railway-bridges across the river at Newlay and Calverley remained, so far as could be ascertained, without material injury, and the same remark applies to the line generally up to Appleby. Beyond this point the destruction was most serious. The line, on leaving Appleby Station passes through a short cutting, and up to Friday afternoon was carried thence by a viaduct across the valley, which opens out here in a broad flat of land through which flows the Aire before reaching Appleby-bridge. This viaduct was substantial, of ten or twelve arches, and rising a considerable height above the river. It was built of stone, and not only had every appearance of strength, but it has carried for many years not fewer than 200 trains a day, including heavy mineral and goods trains. On Friday morning week it was observed that the valley was flooded, and as the day advanced the water increased, and ultimately covered the valley from one side to the other. Still no anxiety was felt on the matter, but the current swept on with great force, and the soil being light and friable, the current rapidly undermined the foundations of the buttresses, and during the afternoon there were indications that the viaduct was giving way. About four o'clock one of the buttresses sank and an arch fell. This was followed in succession by the fall of the other arches, and in a short time there were left standing only two buttresses, the solitary remnant of the ruin which had taken place. The result is most unfortunate, not only as regards the interests of the company, but the trade of the district, more especially as the restoration of such a structure must be a work of time. The engine belonging to the goods train which fell in remained in the river, but the guard's van and trucks were washed down the stream.

The inundation has been attended by great loss of life along the valley of the Calder. At Dewsbury eight or ten lives have been lost by the floods.

In the neighbourhood of Thornhill Lees, Dewsbury Mills, the flood has made great havoc, and several lives have been sacrificed. At a late hour on Friday night a terrible accident occurred. A cart, belonging to Mr. Chatesworth, maltster, and driven by a man named John Thorpe, was coming in the direction of Dewsbury, when the vehicle was swept into the river, and several persons who were riding upon it perished. The cart, containing the driver; Mr. Thomas Wild, of Thornhill; Mr. Whittaker, tailor and draper, Northgate, and his two sons Matthew and William; together with a young man, a clerk in the Saville Estate-office, was passing along the road leading from Clegford-road to Fall-lane, the water

being up to the horses' belly at the time, and rapidly rising, when the surging waves, beating against the wall on the west side, burst it down, and carried the cart and its living freight through the boundary wall of the Dewsbury Mills-yard, and hurled the whole into deep water, and some of them into the river below. Mr. Whittaker and his sons were drowned, and so, there is reason to fear, was Mr. Wild. The driver was drowned. The clerk and a person named Stead were saved by swimming on to the roof of a house. A youth named Fligg was also drowned. A boy named Hirst, from Thornhill Lees has been washed away.

The flood in the Wakefield district has turned out to be the heaviest and most disastrous ever known to have visited the neighbourhood. There was very great excitement and alarm in the town all the Friday night. People who were desirous of leaving by way of Bridge-end or Westgate-common had to hire vehicles, and even those parts of the town were highly dangerous to cross. In many streets access to dwellings was impossible. On Westgate-common any mode of conveyance was prohibited by the police after eight o'clock, as the drains had fallen in several places, and two or three carts and cabs had been upset in consequence. Towards seven or eight o'clock a rumour got abroad that a number of children had been drowned in a low-lying quarter named Brooks-bank, a locality almost wholly inhabited by Irish. The chief constable and a number of young gentlemen nobly came forward to render assistance, wading up to their armpits with the children on their backs. The crowd collected on the bank of the stream loudly cheered the party as they approached. Brooks-bank is near the prison, and Captain Armytage, the governor, placed the Industrial Home at the disposal of the authorities, and in it the homeless people were fed and housed for the night. Numerous instances of the courage, devotion and benevolence of the townspeople might easily be multiplied. Up the river towards and above Horbury, and down towards Stanley, the flood's course is marked with equally destructive effects. It would be impossible to give any detailed account of the losses sustained, but some idea may be formed of the extent of the devastation when it is stated that the damage done to Messrs. Wade's cloth mill, Mr. Lee's worsted manufactory, Messrs. Mackie and Mr. Hart's corn warehouses, and Mr. Wilson's soap works will not in any instance fall short of £1,000, and these are only on a par with the injuries done to Messrs. Bains's mill at Horbury, Messrs. Gregory and Messrs. Sander-son's corn warehouses, Messrs. Haigh's malt kilns, Mr. Cloy's agricultural implement works, Messrs. Green's iron foundry, Mr. Witham's forge, and other immense establishments situated on the Calder's shore. The district which has suffered such an awful visitation is a thickly populated one. Collieries have been flooded, vessels stranded, live stock carried off, farms, hedges, walks, and such like landmarks destroyed; in fact, all manner of things, all trades, and innumerable individuals have fallen victims to the general ruin. There is not one among the many factories standing on the bank of the river in which serious and extensive damage has not been done to the machinery, and in which, at all events, in every case, work did not cease, in several instances, not to be resumed again for weeks.

At Bradford the flood was very disastrous. For five or six hours the streets were quite impassable, and the cabmen and wherry-men were busily engaged to convey people from one side of the town to the other through the deep streams. The surrounding districts shared in the calamity. Worth Valley, which communicates with Airedale at Keighley, was filled with an immense flood, and great destruction of property was the result. Considerable damage is done to a new line of railway which has for some years been in course of construction 'under difficulties,' in that valley. Many mills and dwelling-houses were flooded in several parts of the valley, and great damage to property was the consequence.

On the Saturday morning some thousands of acres of land at Doncaster were under water consequent upon the overflow of the Don. Within the memory of man there has been no such flood. In fact, the water came so speedily that many farmers were unable to remove their stock from the fields. Carcasses of beasts and sheep passed down the

stream, and the craft in the river has sustained considerable damage. Twenty-seven sheep were washed out of a field near Doncaster and perished, and it is feared that many hundreds have been lost.

On the Friday a horse and cart, and the driver, passing over the bridge from near the Assize Courts, Manchester, into Salford, were swept away by a strong, deep current of water across the bridge and were lost. A two story building belonging to Messrs. Lockett and Co., engravers close by the Irwell, fell, owing to the water weakening the foundations, and one of the men in their employ was swept away by the flood. His dead body was found near the Victoria bridge. A man in Lower Broughton was wading through the water along a footpath, when he slipped into a hole cut for the foundation of some buildings, and was drowned.

During the Friday evening week, while the flood was rising, the workshops and some of the mills on the western side of Preston had for hours before that time been inundated and closed; and as the current of water, which ran through some of the streets at ten or twelve miles an hour, continued to increase in volume and impetuosity, those who had removed their furniture and taken up their quarters in the bedrooms became more apprehensive, and several of them hailed passing boats, sailed to the bottom of Fishergate-hill, and then proceeded into the town to the houses of their friends. Those who remained in their deluged houses had of necessity to put up with every possible inconvenience. Some persons had to keep their pigs up stairs, and the tenant of Ribble Cottage had to accommodate a horse in one room during the night. In addition to the horse, he had to find places of security in his house for two or three pigs. At one of the mills in Walton all the operatives were thrown out of work, and the rising water barely allowed them time to escape. At Ribchester, a village higher up the valley, several of the inhabitants had to be carried away from their cottages, which were alarmingly inundated. Farm houses and outbuildings all along the bank of the river were swamped. At Longridge, a neighboring village which stands on considerably higher ground northwards—houses, roads, &c., were flooded to a serious extent. The highway between Garstang and Preston was nearly impassable in some parts, and much land on the banks of the Brock and the Wyre was deluged for miles! A young man named Harrison was drowned while bringing a horse and cart from Cottam to Preston. Between Preston and Kirkham miles of land were under water, and on some portions of the Preston and Wyre Railway the trains had to pass through ditches of water three feet deep. The footboards of the carriages were out of sight, and it was feared that the engine fires would be extinguished, but this was fortunately avoided. Loads of broken pieces of timber, supposed to be portions of wrecked vessels, were washed into the estuary of the Ribble at Lytham. At Blackpool there was not a very rough sea running, but the overflow of water which came from drains and rivulets flooded the cellars of many houses extensively. Many farm houses and outbuildings in the Fylde were surrounded with water, and miles of land were partially inundated. Many of the foot walks adjoining the river at Preston were nearly washed away, the embankments had in several places been broken down, and the foundations of one of the adjoining inns were laid bare to the very bottom. A man named Crock who lives at this inn has lost nearly twenty pleasure boats. At Walton, the mill of Messrs. Calvert Brothers has been damaged to the extent of 4,000l. and injury has been occasioned in and about the village, which cannot be covered for much less than 20,000l.

At Wigan the incessant rain caused a flood, the like of which has never before seen in the district. The water rose gradually and it extinguished the boiler fires at nearly the whole of the cotton mills and iron foundries situated near to the river, in the borough of Wigan, while large numbers of poor people were driven from homes and put to the direst straits to save the scanty furniture.

The river Tawd, which runs through the township of Skelmersdale, near Ormskirk, burst its banks, and rushed rapidly into the Tawd Vale coal mine. Fortunately, the men employed at this