Bonnie Blanchland

A DESCRIPTIVE POEM. by GEO. CARR

George Carr was born in Blanchland in 1850 and brought up by his grandmother Hannah. He married Elizabeth Oyston when he was 24 years old and spent the rest of his life as a coke yard worker in Crook, County Durham. George had a lifelong love of the village he grew up in, and *Bonnie Blanchland,* although definitely not a great piece of literature, is a faithful record of the history, customs, people and places of Blanchland and the surrounding area in the second half of the 19th Century. George died in 1916. This pdf version of his poem is intended as a resource for local historians and people researching their Blanchland ancestors. From time to time it will be updated with further illustrations and annotations.

PREFACE.

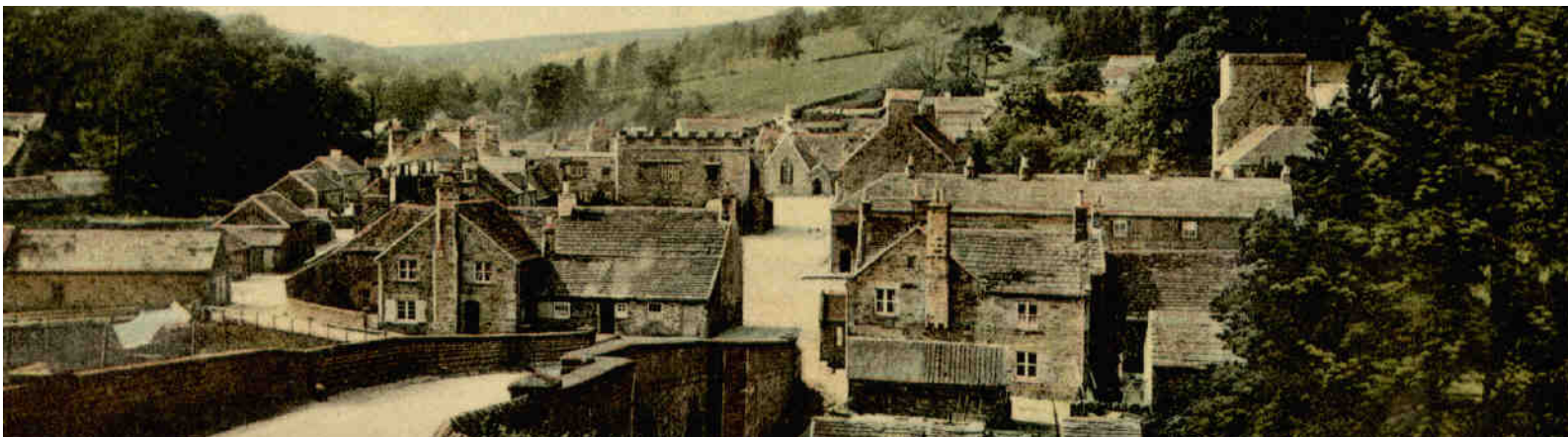
When I started to write “Bonnie Blanchland” I had no idea of writing anything more than a few verses. I simply wrote a verse of two on a piece of waste paper, and after a while I added others to them, until, bye and bye, I began to realize that I had undertaken a big job. But being started, and the work being pleasant, I had no desire to stop writing, especially as some of my friends, to whom I had shown it, spoke well of it, and said it was an exact description of the place, as well as a correct record of the incidents described therein; also that they would like to see me finish it and print it, which I was more especially encouraged to do because Blanchland is really a pretty place, and also because no other writer has ever written anything like a description of it.

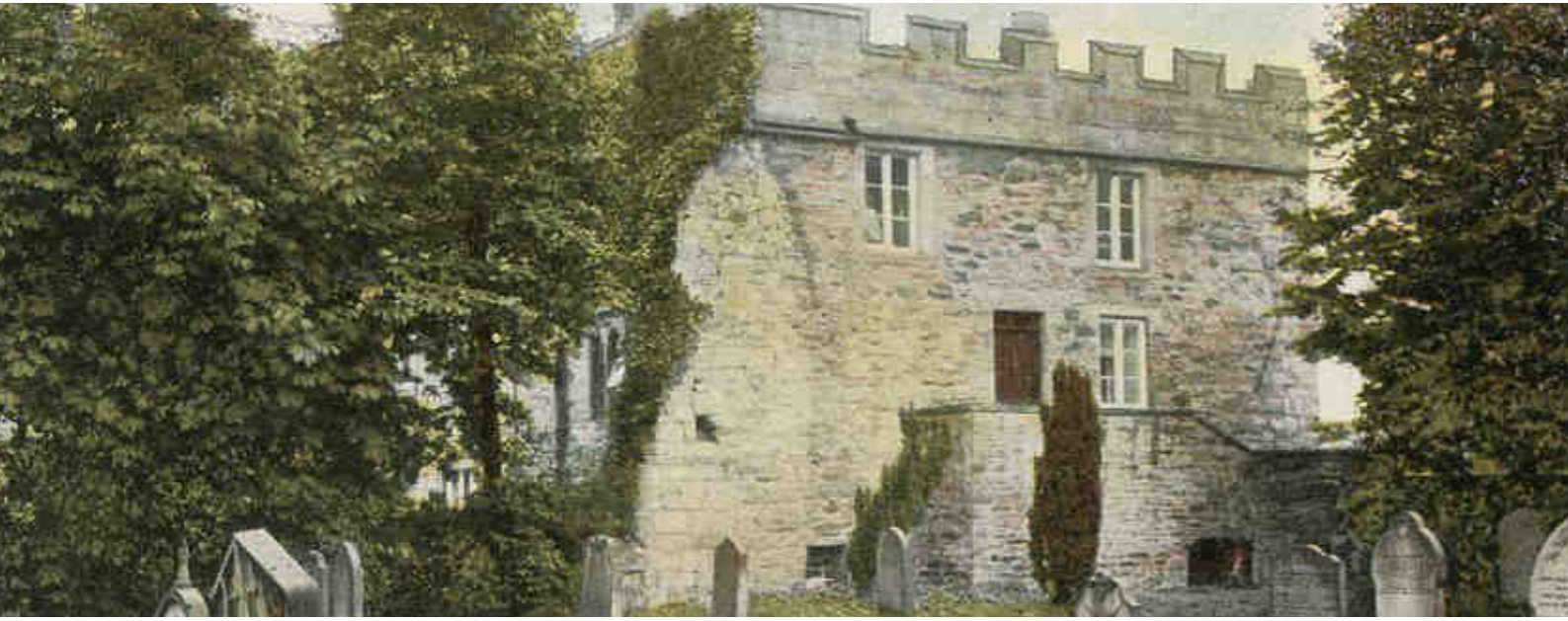
I have certainly please myself in writing it, although I have not been able to write everything just as I would like, yet I know it will please a very large number of people who have at one time lived in the place or its neighbourhood, but who have now, like myself, gone elsewhere. But one cannot please everybody –

For some will say I’ve made a mess,
And treat my words with scorn –
But he who pleases all, I guess,
Has never yet been born.

Grammatical errors I have no doubt will abound as thickly as weeds in a garden; but there are many people who will read it with pleasure, as it will recall to their memories the incidents of long ago, and also bring before their mind’s eye scenes on which they never look, or never even think of, but with pleasure. It is to these people that I most especially commend “Bonnie Blanchland”.

GEO. CARR.





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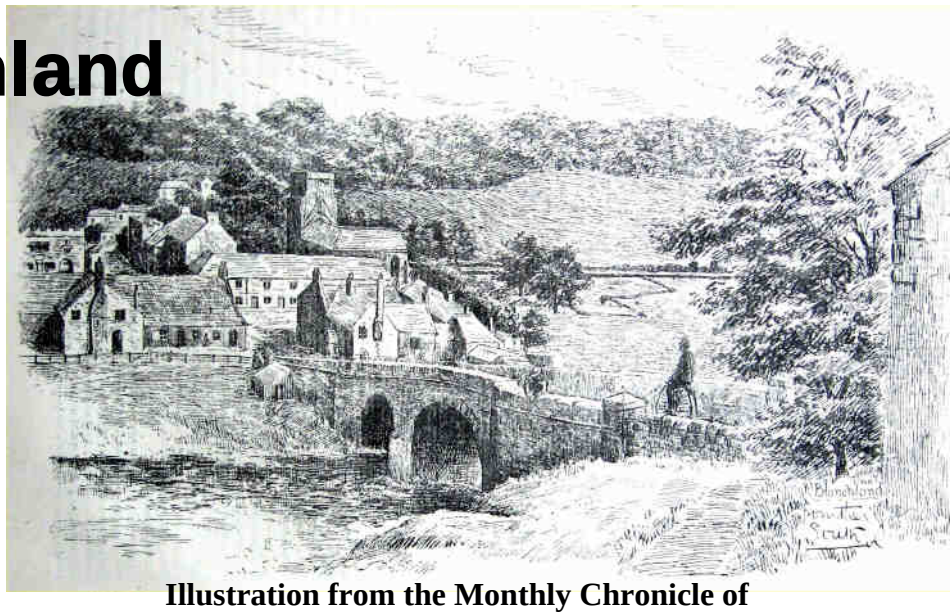

Illustration from the Monthly Chronicle of Lore and Legend, 1889

A DESCRIPTIVE POEM.

By GEO. CARR

In Derwent's bright and sunny vale,
All curtained round with trees,
Stands Blanchland, village of my tale,
Safe sheltered from the breeze.

Between the wood and riverside,
Right beautiful it stands;
Above, below, outstretching wide,
Are fertile meadow lands.

On every side the lasting hills
Stand forth, a noble band,
As if they would from earthly ills
Guard her on every hand.

A home of peace, of joy, and flowers,
A picture fair and sweet:
Here daily pass the happy hours,
In bliss that seems complete.

A place of rest from toil and care,
"Far from the madding throng,"
A second Eden, wondrous fair,
That breathes of love and song.

Its woodlands fair with life abound –
With bird, and beauteous flower
Their scented breezes far around
Make sweet each leafy bower.

The squirrel bounds from tree to tree,
Enjoying life with zest,
With plenteous food and liberty
Not by proud man possessed.

The rabbit browses on the mead,
Until some passer by
Disturbs his meal, then he with speed
Unto his hole doth hie.

The ant, that pattern unto man
Of patient, slothless toil,
Works out some unknown wondrous plan
Within his mound of soil.

The busy bee flits here and there,
And from each blooming flower
Sips sweetest food in nature's fare,
In each sunshiny hour.

Each tree stands clad in lovely dress,
Well pleasing to the sight,
A contrast to a wilderness,
That fills me with delight.

The grass grows green as green can be,
And makes a carpet fair;
While ferns in vast variety
Are scattered everywhere.

And yonder is a tangled maze
Of brake and underwood;
Where birds of song in joyful lays
Proclaim that God is good,

And here we have the hazel clad
In golden leaves and green,
With ripe brown nuts, for lass and lad,
To crack and talk between.

And here we have the rustic walk,
Where youth and lovely maid,
With arms entwined and sweetest talk,
Enjoy the woodland glade.

And now we pass the waterfall,
Down which, in stormy weather,
The water rushes, once for all
"Frae up amang the heather."

The busy bee flits here and there,
And from each blooming flower
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With arms entwined and sweetest talk,
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And now we pass the waterfall,
Down which, in stormy weather,
The water rushes, once for all
"Frae up amang the heather."

And farther on we pass the burn
Where speckled trout are seen;
The rasp here grows where'er we turn,
And berries blae between.

But in the woods we must not stay,
We've other scenes to view,
So wend we now our upward way,
'Mid grasses wet with dew.

And roam we now through pasture land,
"Reet thro' amang the kye,"
No scene called up by fairies' wand
Could more enchant the eye

Than that, which now before us lies,
Outspreading far around,
A scene, an artist's heart would prize,
Replete with life and sound.

There's woodland here, and farmhouse there,
There's pasture, field, and fell,
There's so much beauty everywhere,
Past power of words to tell.

And still as on and up we go,
From pasture land to moor,
The scene doth fairer, wider, grow,
Past my description poor.

From 'neath our feet the moorcock springs,
On whirring wings to fly,
And with a voice which loudly rings,
"Beck! beck! cubeck!" doth cry.

The plover, too, is soaring round,
And loudly doth us greet;
She has her nest upon the ground,
This is her call "pea weet."

The curlew's voice is also heard
In imitation true
Of song his sire sund as a bird –
This is the song "curlew."

Beneath us, in the fields below,
The cuckoo on the wing,
With time and tune, in pleasant flow,
Melodiously doth sing.

There, too, the lark doth upward fly,
With song so glad and bright,
We hear him singing in the sky,
When he is lost to sight.

The startled, tim'rous, black-faced sheep
Anticipating harm,
With many a bound, and backward peep,
Spring off in great alarm.

While o'er the hills, the ozoned breeze
All heather-scented blows;
Both sight and sound combine to please,
And time most sweetly flows.

Now stand we here, and I will show
The places out to you;
For I'm at home, and well I know
Each place within our view.

Far to the west is Riddlehamhope,
There's Shildon to the north,
And here, upon the southern slope,
Is lovely Hunstanworth.

There's Espershields and Winnowshill,
There's Acton and Cowbyre,
And Pennypie, where leave the gill
The road to Hexhamshire.

And Paradise, seen from the north,
Behind those woods immense,
Where Adam and where Eve came forth
In naked innocence.

The Roughside, to the Derwent near,
Though safe from all its floods,
Does not unto our sight appear,
But's hid among the woods.

But on the slope, below the fell,
High Roughside comes in sight,
And Staniburn, though sad to tell
'Tis now in ruinous plight.

A look we cast below, reveals,
With fields extending wide,
Bale Hill, Bucks Hot, and Allenshields,
On Derwent's southern side.

Then at the top of Cuddies Banks,
Not far from Cuddies wood,
Is Coathouse, where our youthful pranks
Provoked the Johnsons good.

'Twas there to catch the birds we went
When winter storms did blow,
And down those banks our powers were bent
To roll big balls of snow.

In moonlight, when the wind was still,
And frozen hard the snow,
We took our "skees" right up yon hill,
Then sliding down did go.

Riddlehamhope, 2008

I must not now tell all the pranks
Played in our youthful days,
Proceeding, I would earn your thanks
Describing scene and place.

There's Reading, too, and Birkside bright
High up the Baybridge Burn,
There Stott Hill rears its wooded height,
All lonely and forlorn.

And looking down the Derwent vale,
Fair Newbiggen doth stand,
Where Stephenson's ne'er yet did fail
To manage well the land.

Newbiggin Hall, early 1900s.

And near to it – though his by trees
From each intruder's gaze, -
Its lovely hall, a sight to please,
Stands far from public ways.

Encircled round by pleasant ground,
It is a lovely spot,
And Joicey, who's its owners bound
To have a happy lot.

The cottage Newbiggen doth stand
Right boldly on the hill;
Rock cottage lies below it, and
Is peaceful, calm and still.

A pretty home – the Garden House –
Lies hid among those trees,
Whose lofty and outspreading boughs
Are waving in the breeze.

Two cottages – though not so old –
Stand on what's called "The Flat,"
With fine appearance, bright, and bold,
Can I say more than that?

From here, the Old Park runs away
Right up to Deborah Wood,
And, where we see stone heaps to-day,
There Deborah Washing stood.

A busy place it used to be
With mills, and noisy jiggers,
Here tronking, hotching, you might see
Small boys who worked like niggers.

The water used to run down here,
It used to run down there,
But still or running, foul or clear,
'Twas working everywhere.

It drew the work from out the mine,
It washed it at the grate,
It carried off the small and fine,
The ore to separate.

It turned the many water-wheels,
It settled in the races,
To slecky pits the fine stuff deals,
The rest to other places.

But all is changed, the boys are gone,
The place is dull and drear
Where all was lively, now 'tis lone,
No living soul is near.

The water still runs on I see,
The water-wheels are gone,
Where tubs and buddles used to be,
We look, and see there's none.

The jiggers, mill, and tronking box,
Are not now to be seen,
Events, now held in memory's locks,
Are as they had not been.

And so it is, through all the dale,
From Deborah to White Heaps,
From whence Boltsburn its way doth wale
Through shallows and through deeps.


Miss Margaret, 78–and one of the last 12–looks out and sees . . .

Ramshaw ghost village

THE DEPARTED LEAD MINERS

HAPPY—AND WILL STAY

and this is what greets her

The Evening Chronicle, 1961

The houses are no longer homes,
They stand all tenantless;
Those gardens, where grew flowery blooms,
Are now a wilderness.

The deep and darksome mine is full
Of water to the brim;
Of all that used, there's not a soul
To face its terrors grim.

There is a dam upon the fell,
Far off from field and wood,
Which burst, and rushing down the dell
Was called “The Ramshaw Flood.”

An incident which Thomas Lough
Made famous in a poem,
Though he, poor soul, so badly off,
Had neither house nor home.

And yet he was a genius great,
Still many live that know it,
An artist, clever to create,
A fiddler and a poet.

But, O! erratic was his course, -
He loved to much the drink,
He trod his course from bad to worse,
And never seemed to think.

Now when we mount to Boltslow’s height
The view grows wider still,
Both backward, forward, left and right,
We look o’er vale and hill.

Just o’er yon hill is Hexhamshire,
And then the vale of Tyne,
Where foemen met in conflict dire,
In days of “Auld Lang Syne.”

Look further still, and view the scene
Of many a Scottish raid,
Where in the days of old, I ween,
Men fought and women prayed.

Away, away, o’er hill and dale,
O’er rivers and o’er rills,
Looms forth from out yon misty veil,
The mighty Cheviot Hills.

Turn to the left, and you will see
The hill called Killhope Law:
A place I would not like to be
When stormy winds do blow.

There, starting from its base, begins
The vale called Allendale;
West Allen lies beyond, and wins
Brief mention in my tale.

The Bolts Burn which runs through Ramshaw.

And Rookhope lies just o’er the hill,
The hill on which we stand,
Behind vast moors the landscape fill,
And make the picture grand.

There Weardale runs, from moss and fen
On Killhope, to the sea,
Whose miners for the moorland hen
“Wad fight until they dee.”

With gun in hand, o’er field and fell,
All unrestrained they roam,
Win game and sport, to show and tell
Their rising kin at home.

Look where the moor and meadow meet,
There lies bold Edmondbyers,
Fair Castleside the eye doth greet,
And Consett with its fires.

You see Bellmount just down below,
The middle house of three;
A murder done there years ago
Is still a mystery.

The murderer's name is still unknown,
No eye looked on the deed,
But he, or she, may quake and groan,
For vengeance comes with speed.

The sands of life are running fast,
And vengeance is the Lord's,
And all must give account at last
Of thoughts, and deeds, and words.

The bloody deed, the wicked act,
Will then be hid no more.
And God will measure out exact
The judgment, shunned before.

Belmount, scene of the murder of Robert Snowball in 1880.

Exposed to every blast that blows,
Behold Makepeace's Park,
Where little else but heather grows,
Its outlook drear and dark.

And now the time has come at last
To point out Barras Hill,
Where, after "Windy Monday's" blast
No tree was standing still.

Now past Syke Head's deserted mine,
And down by Jeffries Rake,
Where sparry heaps like diamonds shine,
Our homeward way we take.

Burnbottom on the left we leave,
With Ramshaw and the Mill,
Hardstruggle and the Terrace cleave
To Townfield, on the hill.

Past the High House and Hunstanworth,
Where once a famous tower
Kept cattle safe, when from the north,
Scotch raiders came with power.

On Taylor's Shaft we now look back,
On Pressor and Sun Vein;
This thought awhile our minds doth rack,
Will e'er they go again?

Will future generations work
The treasure from those hills,
Where hidden dangers darkly lurk,
With hosts of earthly ills?

O! could we learn the happy art
Of yoking nature's powers,
To cause yon hill to yield its heart,
And make its treasure ours!

But who can say what will be done,
Or who can say what not,
But those who live beneath the sun,
When we are all forgot?

Down, steeply down this meadow fair,
Step firmly, do not falter,
We sniff the clover-scented air,
View through the trees – Gibraltar.

We climb the stile, and downward tread,
The pathway through the wood,
Where spruce and fir, above our head,
Speak things not understood.

We reach the vale where two burns meet,
And Derwent takes its name,
'Mid scenes romantic, fair, and sweet,
By lovers held in fame.

They love to roan its wooded slope,
Drink from its sparkling well,
And oft they here, ‘twixt fear and hope,
The sweet old story tell.

They stand on Water Meeting’s brink,
Full many a handsome pair,
They view the Derwent’s course, and think
Their course may be as fair.

We leave them there, and turn to see
The famed Gibraltar Rock,
Where foreign ship shall never be,
To give it battle shock.

Then turn again, where Derwent flows
All rippling to the sea,
‘Twixt banks where wood abundant grows,
A rocky bed hath he.

But round about and in between,
Till stones and rocks are pass’d,
Through many a bright and changeful scene,
He’ll reach the sea at last.

Soon to the vale, from out the wood
A rill comes down with force,
Then Derwent, as a river should,
Begins to grow, of course.

Soon, too, the vale doth wider grow
When rushing round a turn,
There come and join, for weal or woe,
The waters of Boltsburn.

Still downward to that bridge we see,
And then Baybridge is reached,
Where, underneath a spreading tree,
The pious Wesley preached.

The miners came from Allendale,
Weardale and Derwent Head;
They came to hear, in Derwent Vale,
The Gospel preached and read.

And now, a hundred years are fled,
A chapel here doth stand,
Where very many have been led
To seek a better land.

Popular spot for recreation... Gibraltar, near Blanchland.

It bears the name of Providence,
Has beauty all its own,
And as years pass there’s evidence
It hath in beauty grown.

My happiest memories centre here,
For here I learnt to love
Full many friends, to memory dear,
Now gone to joys above.

Grove Cottages are standing near,
A quiet, pleasant place,
Just where the rippling burn runs clear,
Between two carriage ways.

Where Baybridge Burn is covered up,
There is a wayside inn,
Where travellers may call and sup,
Ere journeying begin.

I heard a story when a boy,
Told by an aged man,
Who gave to me my first employ –
His story thus began: -

"The miners coming from the store,
With candles and with powder,
Called here to drink, drank more and more,
Their talk grew lous and louder.

They talked of this, they talked of that,
Of one thing and another,
But all the while, among them sat
A very devil's brother.

Up from the floor, with angry snarl,
When something raised his ire,
He seized in haste, a quarter-bar'l
And threw it on the fire.

And while each man among them stares,
And drinking joys did wither,
He says, 'Me lads, dow' up yer chairs,
We'll gan ti hell tegither.'"

No need to tell them in that hour,
There were in dreadful danger,
To powder and its fearful power
The miner is no stranger.

Their former talk is all forgot,
Of fiction and of fact,
And their's is now a cruel lot,
They must and quickly act.

To time to reason or to chide,
They knew that, in a minute,
That hell itself might open wide
And they, poor souls, be in it.

About the bar'l, with hungry clutch,
The flames began to curl;
And soon they may the powder touch,
And dire destruction hurl.

So quick from out the house they ran,
The pale horse rider dodging,
But left one bold heroic man,
Whose name was Simey Hodgin.

And he, by all his friends forsook,
Seized hope that seemed forlorn, -
The powder from the fire he took,
To carry to the burn.

Baybridge and the Miner's Arms - not always a tranquil scene.

The choking smoke did upward rise,
It made him hold his breath,
It filled his mouth, it filled his eyes,
He marched, and with him death.

Across the floor, and through the door,
Along the passage way,
While face to face with evermore.
And the great judgment day.

He quickly 'cross the roadway stept,
As in a frightful dream,
The to the burn side nimbly leapt,
And plunged it in the stream.

'Twas thus the Baybridge Inn was saved
To combat wind and storm,
By Simey Hodgin, when he braved
Death in its direst form.

Restricted not to high or low,
Live those who do and dare,
For up, and down, where'er we go,
We find them everywhere.

But honour them we can, and will,
Wherever they are found,
By flood or field, by vale or hill,
Or underneath the ground.

The Inn was seen a later day
With all its windows smashed;
Its furniture in dreadful way
Unmercifully bashed,

With everything turned upside down,
With broken rifled bar,
Its crockery shattered, white and brown,
As if there had been war.

The Cornies came one dreadful night,
In overwhelming force,
Attacked the place with all their might,
Let vengeance run its course.

And few there were within the house
To stem the anger's tide,
And these assailed with words and blows
Got more than they could bide.

And some ran here, and some ran there,
Some crept beneath the bed
While some had courage fight to dare,
Some ran away instead.

When Beattie came upon the scene,
They threw him on the fire:
The blue-coat servant of the Queen
No reverence could inspire.

But there he did not want to be;
For he was getting warm,
And in his efforts to get free,
I guess they took some harm.

He reasoned thus: "If numbers great
Gives them the upper hand,
I'll go to Blanchland, and checkmate
Them with a bigger band."

So off he rushed, but fearful sounds
Had reached that village fair,
For shouts and blows, suggesting wounds,
Were carried on the air.

He met a force upon the road,
All eager for the fray;
They heard his tale, and with him strode
To drive the foe away.

The soon the scene was chang'd, and those
Who valiant were before,
Fell down before their victors' blows,
Besmeared with streaming gore.

And now, it was their turn to run,
And those of them that could
Rushed from the fray, themselves begun,
And hid within a wood.

And some ran up the Stott Hill Bank,
And some ran up the Yex,
Where nursery banks, trees rank on rank,
The pretty landscape decks.

But two were in the roadway laid,
All battered and forlorn,
They for their vengeance dearly paid,
And now were treat with scorn.

When Beattie took and locked them up
His victory was complete;
He vengeance drank, a well-filled cup,
And felt that it was sweet.

Now, why the Cornies acted so
I may not tell you now,
But ever after this, you know,
'Twas called the "Cornie Row."

'Twas talked about in after days,
As of a great event,
And feelings bad, in various ways,
Showed till the Cornies went.

Fair Blanchland now appears in view,
Though partly hid by trees,
Its lazy smoke, towards the blue,
Upcurling by degrees.

So now we'll ramble down the haugh,
Where ran the old mill race,
With silent joy, or merry laugh,
View each familiar place,

'Twas here we picked the * "bumlerkite"
And there we gathered nuts,
Or branches broke wasp nests to fight,
Among the old tree roots.

A "shuggy" broke on this hill side,
And nearly broke my neck –
Here lads and lasses went to slide
In the field of Sally Beck.

To Derwent, from the other side
In ebb or when in flood,
Come three How Burns, in tumbling tide,
From out the deep green wood.

'Four houses... Which from the rest stand off...'

And when they turned the water off –
As frequent was the case, -
We often here our clothes would doff,
Go fishing in the race.

Here flows close to the "Miller's Haugh,"
In front of Clapshaw Planting,
A well where you may water quaff,
So cold, 'twill leave you panting.

And in the planting we may trace,
As plain as heart can wish,
Three ponds, which in the ancient days,
Held good supplies of fish.

Here are four houses fair to see,
Which from the rest stand off,
This one, I'm told, once used to be
The cottage home of Lough.

O strange the course! and strange the way
In which great genius runs!
This man, though poor, the old folks say,
Was rich in gifted sons.

To Shildon Bridge fond memory clings,
Where young and old convene
To talk about the various things
That they have heard and seen.

How oft I've heard, while sitting here,
The blacksmith's anvil ring –
His song and whistle ringing clear –
His ring, tang, ting, tang, ting.

I've watched here in the daylight bright
The skimming swallow fly;
I've heard here in the silent night
The hooting owlet's cry.

I've sat here as the sun went down
And heard the ringing quoit;
With patience worthy of renown,
Here borne the midges' bite.

We pass on to the master's house,
With pear and cherry trees,
In summer time their blossom'd boughs
A harvest field for bees.

Where Shildon Road doth northward tend
There stands the village school,
Where Iley used to break or bend
Our will unto his rule.

The doctor's house, and otheres, too,
Here face the churchyard end;
And here lived Betty Waterloo
Where children learnt to spend.

** Bumlerkite - NE dialect word for blackberry*

And in this house which stands alone,
With woodbine round its porch,
They sang in sweet melodious tone,
The songs they sing at church.

All terraced on the hillside there,
Beneath those hanging trees,
Its front bedecked with flowerets fair,
The Cadger courts the breeze.

Still on the hill, but yet apart,
The Vicarage doth show
Fit subject for the painter's art –
A Paradise below.

The Church is standing down below
Beside the grand old steeple,
Whose bell, with solemn tone and slow,
To worship calls the people.

It speaks of rest, of calm and peace,
In majesty replete:
The dead of many centuries
Lie sleeping at its feet.

An archway, called the Curtain Gate,
Sole entrance to the place
When raiding bands marched through the state,
Stands now before our face.

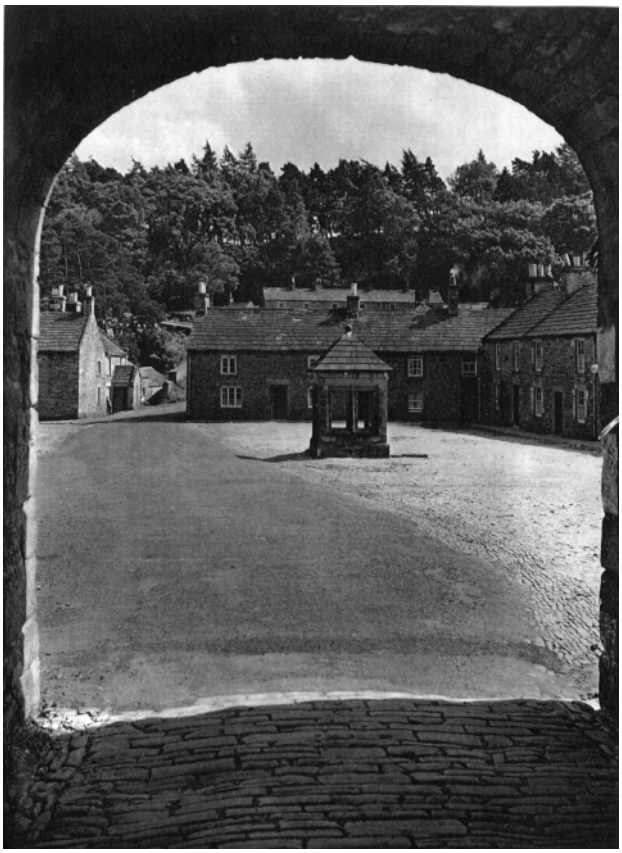
Tom Forster rode from out this arch,
When Stewart claimed the throne,
With rebel hosts did southward march,
And lost for aye his own.

He lost his liberty and lands,
And Bamborough's Castle fair –
Fair Blanchland passed to other hands,
With woodlands rich and rare.

Locked in a dungeon dark and strong,
Redhanded from the strife,
Tormented with the throught ere long
That he would lose his life.

And so he would, but woman's wit
Unbarred his prison door,
And gave him means the land to quit,
To come back never more.

The Vicarage, Blanchland.



Blanchland's arch - once the entrance to the abbey.

O had Tom Forster been but wise,
And turned his deafest ear
To those who urged him thus to rise,
He'd had no cause for fear.

But Tom was rash and easy led,
And so was made a fool –
His high-placed friends found him, ‘tis said,
A far too willing tool.

But they themselves took greatest care
To keep in safety’s bounds,
For while they ran with hunted hare,
They hunted with the hounds.

But not alone Tom Forster fell,
His brother none to blame,
Retired to a lonely dell
To hide himself for shame.

Became an honest, working man,
Brought up his children so;
And such his earthly course he ran,
Nor suffered them to know.

His children’s children lived and died,
As did their father’s sire;
They with the poor lived side by side,
Nor seemed to look up higher.

And their descendants live to-day,
Each filling well his place,
As did ‘neath fortune’s brighter ray
The elders of their race.

Yet loud the northern people may
The name of Forster sing:
No matter what rude critics say –
For great is England’s King.

His clemency if hard to gain,
Still may be gained at last;
His mighty pen, ne’er used in vain,
Obliterate the past:

Restore to lands, and place, and power
The heirs of Forster’s line –
On them his kingly blessings shower,
And bid them rise and shine.

And now we stand within the square,
With houses all around,
Which to the bands of music there
Still echo back the sound.

The Square, the water fountain in the foreground.

A fountain in the centre stands
Where water greets the day,
Which comes through woods and meadow lands,
Unseen, from far away.

See dainty maidens, one by one,
Come tripping fresh and fair,
Who scarcely tread the ground upon,
But sees to tread on air.

And portly matrons, old men grey,
And youthful “boudikite”
Come here for water every day,
And get it pure and bright.

The mill doth now attention call,
Yet here no mill we see,
Only a mark upon the wall
Shows where it used to be.

Yet from the dim and distant past
Its sound swells on my ear;
Distinct to-day, as when seen last,
Its picture rises clear.

I see the miller at the door,
His cuddy standing by;
And clear as in the days of yore
I hear that cuddy’s cry.

Here is a bridge, with arches two,
Through which the Derwent flows;
The things that here boys used to do,
Each lad in Blanchland knows.

I've waded in the summer time
The Derwent through and through;
Plucked from its banks, with joy sublime,
The wild flowers which there grew.

And often, when I've thirsty been,
I've drunk from Derwent Well;
But all I've done here, heard, and seen,
Will take me long to tell.

The bridge into Blanchland from the south bank of the River Derwent.

I've played among the stones and sand
Close to the river side,
And when 'twas frozen felt it grand
Upon the ice to slide.

One day we got an awful scare -
The ice was only thin –
Bill Fairlamb ventured over far,
It broke and he fell in.

We boys were in an awful strait,
We knew not what to do,
If one should go to help his mate,
Then he, too, might fall through.

But Beattie the policeman's son,
Right brave beyond a doubt,
Joined hand to hand and made it fun
To reach and get him out.

No more to tread the thinnest ice
Bill screwed up courage bold;
His winter bath felt aught but nice, -
It was so awful cold.

I've seen the Derwent flow along
As gentle as a child,
As slowly as an old church song,
As placid and as mild.

I've seen its flood with awful roar
Come rushing loud and deep;
I've wondered deeply when I o'er
The parapet did peep.

Saw not the waters rushing by
In haste to reach the sea,
The bridge and I seemed up to fly
As quick as quick could be.

I mind one day 'twas awful wet,
It rained and never stayed –
The flood that day I'll ne'er forget,
For I was sore afraid.

The arches they were running full,
The haughs were flooded o'er,
The waters, angry as a bull,
The bridge and o'er did pour.

A dam of sods was built to guide
The water in its course,
Lest to the square its flood should glide,
And make a bad state worse.

The postman came from Riding Mill,
He'd walked full twenty miles,
He came bedraggled down the hill,
His face bereft of smiles.

For he was weary, worn, and wet,
His tired steps were slow,
But 'twixt him and his home did yet
Those rushing waters flow.

But Palliser, in love supreme
(Now dead – we mourn his loss),
Stepped in and waded through the stream
And carried him across.

Two houses at the southern end
Possess a charming view –
The village, fields and woods all blend
To keep an old scene new.

And here a little house doth stand,
Where steeply bends the hill,
Where oft I've heard the village band
The place with music fill.

The Banktop and the Banktop Well
Here overlook the place,
Whose charms my efforts fail to tell –
So fair so full of grace.


The Blanchland Band About 35 Years Ago.

NAMES—Top Row (left to right): Mr John Westgarth, Mr Oliver Murray, Mr Wm. Waggott, Mr John Whitfield, Willie Westgarth.
Bottom Row: Mr John Brown, Mr William Brown, Mr Wm. Brown, Mr Wm. Mawson-Bell, Mr Edmund Oliver, Mr Adam Murray.

The Hexham Courant - date unknown but possibly 1920s.

From here, close to the churchyard side,
We see a group of trees –
One hollow: here there came to bide
The parson's swarm of bees.

They stayed all through the summer time
And made a lot of honey,
All sweet, and in condition prime,
And worth a lot of money.

But when the summer time was o'er,
And autumn days began,
To take their hardwon winter store,
The parson sent his man.

It was a Saturday when he,
To do his work with ease,
Made fire of brimstone in the tree
To stove and kill the bees.

But, ah! He failed to kill them all
Some angry bees were left,
Who sternly used their weapons small,
Lest they should be bereft.

The made him at safe distance keep –
They made him go away;
He thought, as he did backward peep,
I'll come another day.

But vain the thought, the giddy boys
Got wit of it on Sunday –
Took all the store with smallest noise,
Left none for him on Monday.

I only guess the parson's thought
When this came to his ears;
He'd call, if only they were caught,
Them anything but dears.

But did the boys get off you ask:
Well, no, the boys were sold –
They learnt the far from easy task,
That glitter is not gold.

For honey may be very nice
When what you eat is small,
But eat at once what should serve thrice,
It doth the palate pall.

And as it was so very sweet,
Their appetite was such
They ate it as 'twere bread and meat –
Alas they ate too much!

With honey daubed from top to toe
Their Sunday clothes were soiled;
They'd lost a friend and made a foe –
Their appetite was spoiled.

But this was many years ago,
The Parson's dead and gone:
The boys now grown to men, you know,
Have scattered one by one.

We see from here the Hexham road
Stretch onward to The Trows,
Then up the hillside, straight and broad,
And o'er those wooded brows.

Another view this outlook hath –
Those woods before us shield
The Marshall's Walk and upward path
That leads to 'The Hoe Field.'

Here twice a day in summer time
The milkmaids come and go;
The hill is steep and hard to climb –
You go, and find it so.

Some take their can upon their head;
Some take them in their hand;
Some take – no someone takes instead –
I think you'll understand.

Far down the haugh, by Derwent's side,
The Round Hill may be seen,
Where monks of old did treasure hide
'Neath grass and woodlands green.

A passage from the church, 'tis said,
Led downward to the place;
Although its entrance, I'm afraid,
There's no one now can trace.

And yet I've often heard it told
By some it once was known,
Who did resolve that hidden gold
To make and call their own.

They tramped along the passage way
A bold expectant band,
Because they lacked the light of day,
Took candles in their hand.

They traced its length both safe and sound
Amid the foulest air,
But when at length the end was found,
What horrid sight was there!

A kist of gold before their eyes
Upon the ground was laid
And on it, what did them surprise,
A candle lit displayed:

It showed a crow of purest white,
And while they looked thereon,
Their candles ceased to give them light
Their courage all was gone.

Most awfully that crow did seem
To threat, with vengeance dire;
Strange lights within its eyes did gleam
Its mouth was spitting fire.

They durst not take the smallest mite
Of treasure from its place;
The crow's dread sight, the candle's light,
Made them their steps retrace.

And though they'd naught to give them light,
Their footsteps were not slow –
Fear pictured, following close their flight
The candle and the crow.

At last they reached the light of day,
With blue sky overhead;
But never more that passage way
Would they consent to tread.

Some Roughside folks an effort made
To dig the golden store:
While resting, all the hole, 'tis said,
Was filled up as before.

Thus by some fearsome power unseen
Their work was all undone:
No nearer were they than they'd been
When they to dig begun.

And still the Round Hill stands to-day
'Twixt Derwent and the field:
From man in most mysterious way
Its treasure is concealed.

Two men were in the Bowling Green,
Which fronts 'The Lord Crewe's Arms'
With hack and shovel they were seen
At work amid its charms.

But, suddenly, one of them fell
Right flat upon his breast,
He writhed in pain, O sad to tell,
Which seemed to give no rest.

But meal time came, and he was left –
The other went for food:
But near was he of sense bereft
When coming back he sto

His mate was gone for good and all,
And just where he had laid
Were marks, he'd hidden by his fall,
As by a yettling made.

'Twas guessed he had a treasure found,
And blest with ready wit,
To hide it, fell upon the ground,
Then with it made exit.

The Lord Crewe Arms.

But never did he breathe a word,
Or tell what he had got:
But after he could things afford
Which he before could not.

There hid between those hills sublime
Still may be found Fell Grove,
Where Methodists in olden time
Oft held a feast of love.

Camp Meetings, too, for old and young,
From north, south, east, and west,
At which they preached and prayed and sung,
Who now sing with the blest.

The joys which are the Christian's lot,
The terrors of the Lord,
Were preached, by preachers now forgot,
According to God's Word.

Poor me, I now most sadly mourn,
For I'm ashamed to tell,
I wandered idly by the burn
Where flows the Iron Well.

The well pours forth a copious store,
The earth to enrich and bless,
In winter not one drop the more,
In summer none the less.

And in the trough in which it flows,
And in the burnlet's bed,
There may be seen, where'er it goes,
A sediment of red.

Fit type of many Christians there,
Met in the field close by,
Salvation wells, most rich and rare,
Whose source was in the sky.

They, wheresoever they may be,
Their dying Lord confess;
They live but for eternity,
And where they go they bless.

Where'er they roam on field or fell,
They, kneeling on the sod,
Make each bleak hill and lonely dell
A meeting place with God.

But there's one thing I have to say
Which gives great joy to me:
The folks that came from far away
Were asked to stay to team.

And welcomed to the choicest fare
Within the poor man's cot,
As well to food more choice and rare
With those of happier lot.

Then give the Methodists their due,
For they have hearts of gold;
They are to God and neighbour true,
Like Abraham of old.

And after tea they smoke and crack,
Or through the woodland rove,
When evening comes they gather back
To hold The Feast of Love.

They met not in a building grand
To worship God a space –
You could not find in all the land
A humbler meeting place.

'Twas in a barn above the kye,
All unadorned and plain,
But what of that when God was nigh
To bless their souls again!

They sang the ancient Lovefeast hymn,
In grand melodious way,
And many an eye was moist and dim
As they knelt down to pray.

They rose with sweet and tuneful sound,
The grace 'fore meat to sing:
The biscuits then were handed round,
With water from the spring.

And in the basket safe and sure
A penny each they lay,
To be divided 'mong the poor,
Who poorer were than they.

Though hindered by unruly boys,
For bread and mercies given,
They sung their thanks with joyful noise,
And asked the bread of Heaven.

Their fellowship with God they tell
In language quaint and droll:
The hallowed influence which fell
Was felt by one and all.

And lest the meeting should be dull,
For some would talk too much,
A friend would give their coats a pull,
Or warn them by a touch.

And while they talk and pray and sing,
To tenderness they melt,
The happiness God's love doth bring
"Is better felt than telt."

What happy memories crowd around
The service of that day;
How many souls of God were found
Who knelt that day to pray!

But Lovefeasts all must have an end,
And so in time had this;
Then each their steps do homeward bend
With hearts all steeped in bliss.

And many a soul that day is blest
Of woman, child, and man,
Who live henceforth to do their best
And all the good they can.

And now my memory doth me warm
The time has come to tell –
Here lies the Fair Hill and Rope Barn
Where Bulman dwelt, and Bell.

A faire was held here twice a year –
In August and October –
Though at the latter some folks were
More often drunk than sober.

And drunken folks are always right,
And other folds are wrong,
And there they oftimes came to fight
In conflict fierce and long.

But August was the great event
Looked forward to by all:
All hied them here on pleasure bent,
All classes great and small.

Some came to deal in lambs and sheep,
To see the village stalls
Set out with wares all good and cheap
Within its thick-built walls.

Some came to meet some dear old friend,
Some came on business bent,
Some came a holiday to spend,
And some came who were sent.

The lasses came to see the lads,
The lads to see the lasses –
To choose as did their ma's and dad's
The one whom none surpasses.

'Twas grand to see them ride the fair
In good old-fashioned way,
Their happy faces free from care,
To hear the fiddlers play.

The Master mounted up on high,
A document in hand,
The horsemen gathered round him nigh
With mounted fiddle band.

His specs upon his nose astride,
He three times cried, "O yes" –
The document he opened wide,
And thus did them address:

Whereas it is enacted that
The Lord of every fair
Within this realm shall, pit a pat,
The length thereof declare.

And publish also other things
Which Parliament commands;
To all whom it together brings
Make plain the law's demands.

The strangers and the ignorant
Inform, without a flaw,
And in their hearts most firmly plant
The statutes and the law.

Know, therefore, now and understand
The Trustees of Lord Crewe,
The Lords of Blanchland Manor, and
Its customs old and new.

Its franchise and its liberty,
Its privilege and fair,
Owned by the said Regality,
Do now to you declare.

To each one whom it may concern,
This their said fair shall last,
We publish this, that you may learn,
Until three days are past.

The Square, Blanchland.

And on behalf of England's Queen,
Those Lords give strict command,
All persons who may here convene,
Must join them heart and hand.

To keep the peace, nor buy or sell
In any way unlawful;
Abstain from riot, rout, as well
As anything so awful.

No misdemeanour must be done,
Nor anyone give cause
By word, or deed, or love of fun,
To break his country's laws.

And last, the said Lord's pleasure is,
All persons whatsoever,
How fair or ugly be their phiz,
They shall be hindered never.

But come and go as free as air,
As best may suit their pleasure;
The privileges of the fair
Enjoy as they have leisure.

All persons rendering to the Queen
The duties of their state,
Must never doing wrong be seen,
Lest punishment's their fate.

God save the Queen, he then did cry,
And the Lords of Blanchland Fair;
He then his document put by,
And mounted a white mare.

The fiddlers played a merry strain,
The cavalcade rode on,
All round the fair and back again,
Then scattered one by one.

The stalls were filled with sweets and nuts,
With fruits all ripe and nice;
Abounding most in various cuts
Was "Barney Cassel" spice.

And when the fair was all lit up,
And business in full swing,
With loud invites to eat and sup
They made the place to ring.

And each one calls his wares the best
For every sort of use –
Their razors, knives, and all the rest,
To buy some could refuse.

Here's one from Hexham who is blind,
Shouts loud as any other,
They leave him not one whit behind –
He cries "Threehoperth, mother?"

Another who has lost a leg
Cries, while he's selling nuts,
His measure large observe, I beg,
Deep in the pile he puts.

"Another lot, a right good lot,
A bigger lot than any,
A better lot than last you got,
And all this lot a penny."

Then there's a ranting auctioneer,
Who makes a lot of noise,
While all around him standing near
Are women, men, and boys.

His wares are of the very best,
At least that's what is said,
Dirt cheap and sure to stand the test –
No better could be made.

And when he is too tired to sell
He'll introduce his wife,
Who in an hour more lies can tell
Than he could in his life.

Just there observe a lad and lass,
With blushes shyly pairing,
The while a lass asks as we pass
If we will buy her fairing.

To-night the lads and lasses spend
The savings of the year,
On tools and stuffs to make and mend
On things to eat and wear.

But see those crowds now going past,
As rushing waters flow,
Until they stand in front at last
Of Tommy Elliott's Show.

See rows of peepholes near the ground
For little children small,
While higher other rows are found
For middle-sized and tall.

They see him stand uplifted high,
With ropes held in his hand,
The while he thus to people nigh
Describes his picture grand.

Your eyes now gaze on *Alma's height
Where British heroes rushed,
And from its crest, in Heaven's sight,
Their foes like flies were brushed.

Then *Balaclava, *Inkerman,
Where British heroes prest
As never since their race began,
Showed valour of the best.

Here, too, behold *Sebastapol,
Where England's thunders roared,
While on its grim embattled wall
Her shot and shell were poured.

He also showed Trafalgar's Bay –
The French – the British fleet –
All armed and eager for the fray,
In din of battle meet.

** Battles of the Crimean War 1853 – 1856*

He also showed the battle won,
The ships all stained with gore;
Victorious England's warlike son,
Brave Nelson – now no more.

He thus with pictures one by one,
Showed England's glorious past,
And never was an eye withdrawn
Until he'd shown the last.

The roundabout and monkey show
Attract our wondering gaze;
And every sight as on we go
Doth fill us with amaze.

Here is if we should want to shoot
A Shooting Gallery Range;
A "Shuggy" Boat there is to boot
Will make us feel most strange.

Was this the corner house where the Carr family lived?

And here is one doth purses sell,
With seeming silver filled,
For half-a-crown he will you tell
You may a fortune build.

They also held a Flower Show
Upon the self-same day,
Where to and fro a constant flow
Of fair folks wend their way.

At which bright flowers of varied hue
And beauty were displayed,
While fruits and fossils, fair to view,
Were on the table laid.

The village band played music sweet,
And every thing was bright;
Here croney did with croney meet
With mutual delight.

'Twere hard to say 'mid all the wealth
Of fruits and flowers there,
If lads and lasses blest with health
Were not more bright and fair.

And many met that fateful day
Who met to love for life;
And many a pair the word did say
That made them man and wife.

My grannie in this corner house
Did treat her friends to tea;
She did me in the mill race douse –
Yet good was she to me.

She carried me right out of bed,
A blanket o'er me thrown,
And plunged me in right overhead,
No dreader hour I've known.

And, O that time I mind it well,
Although I was not old:
My loudest cry, my wildest yell,
Hushed by those waters cold!

The lads and lasses coming round,
They durst not come too near,
To see the sight and hear the sound,
Kept laughing at my fear.

My Grannie's friends from all around
Have come to Blanchland Fair,
And at her table I'll be bound
We'll meet some of them there.

Her knitting gear is laid aside,
So is her darning creel;
Her churning must to-morrow bide,
Also her spinning wheel.

She has the house both neat and clean,
Her table richly spread,
While bustling around she's seen,
A cap upon her head.

And as they troop in one by one,
Her face a welcome gives –
She asks them how they're getting on,
Where this and that one lives.

She asks about the many friends
She knew in days gone by;
She messages receives and sends
To places far and nigh.

Then to the table bids them sit,
And make themselves at home,
Nor thought the boy, that little chit,
Would weave it in a poem.

But who is there dare prophesy
What's wrapped up in a boy,
To show itself in bye and bye,
To please or to annoy.

But there's an end of everything,
So was there to the fair;
The weary folks who've had their fling
Now scatter here and there.

But some too much of drink have had
Who stay until the morn:
The early morning finds them bad,
Most woeful and forlorn.

O blest is he who takes of drink
Enough, though that be small;
But more blest still is he, I think,
Who taketh none at all.

In winter when the nights were long
We all sat round the fire,
While grannie, with her knitting throng,
Told tales of Hexhamshire.

She told us how she had to work,
Though of it she'd no fear,
How she could use both rake and fork;
How she could bind and shear.

Of what took place when she was young,
While living out at place,
She told us with a ready tongue
And animated face.

Of witches of the olden days,
And fairies of the past, -
Their dreadful deeds and funny ways
Filled us with wonder vast.

She told us of the evil eye
That some folks did possess,
Which brought on all that they came nigh
Sad trouble and distress.

How folks were filled with blank concern
If they came near the door,
For then no butter yields the "kirn"
Through turned for evermore.

And oft she talked of bogles grim,
Most terrible to sight –
How woeful was the case of him
Who met with them at night!

I've sat and listened, as she talked,
With strained and listening ear:
'Twere no surprise if in they'd walked
And said to us, "we're here".

The shadows falling all around
Did but increase my fear;
Ghosts seemed the cause of every sound
That reached the listening ear.

She spoke of one, if men speak true,
Which haunted "Lord Crewe's Arms"
Which in the night to mortal view
Displayed its ghostly charms.

The Inn was just across the way –
The ghost filled folks with dread,
It wore full oft, I've heard her say,
A cap of flaming red.

And oft it made the plates to dance
At midnight's fearful hour,
When moonbeams through the window glance,
And goblins grim have power.

But few live now who spirits own,
Except they flow as liquor,
But one, a monk, himself hath shown
Just lately to the vicar.

I know not what the vicar felt,
At twilight's darkening hour,
When he beheld the monk who knelt
Beneath the old church tower.

He could not ask him how or why
It was that he was there;
He would most certainly be shy
To interrupt his prayer.

It might be that the church, so dull
And bare to mortal sight,
Seen by the monk, was bright and full
With blaze of heavenly light.

That thousands more beside him were
In worship lowly bent,
And saw God' holy presence there
In glory excellent.

Eye hath not seen, nor ear hath heard,
Nor can the heart conceive
The joys that are in Heaven prepared
For all who Christ received.

It may be that this heaven of joy
Is with us all around,
But who may look on their employ
Or hear the joyful sound?

Oft grannie told about the dread
They had of Bonaparte,
When he fair France's leagions led,
And made the nations smart.

And how that everything was dear,
And bread was made of rye,
And how Old England, void of fear,
Prepared to do or die.

How British soldiers stood the shock
Of bloody Waterloo,
As firmly fixed as granite rock,
As solid and as true.

Though death in shape of shot and shell
Mowed rows of heroes down,
They boldly did sustain and well
Old England's great renown.

I've heard her many, and many a time
Repeat this story old,
Which I will now put into rhyme
If I may be so bold –

Some monks lived here in days of old,
A godly brotherhood;
They'd flocks and herds in field and fold,
Which gave them clothes and food.

The trees fair Blanchland then did mask
The Scots, those raiding people,
To find it thought an easy task,
The could not miss a steeple.

And from the hills their searching eyes
Looked over hill and dale,
But Blanchland, though a goodly prize,
They sought without avail.

There were no roads that led thereto,
And though they got quite close,
They passed it, as they ought to do,
For they were Blanchland's foes.

They Slayley reached, I've heard her tell,
Still looking everywhere –
When, lo! The sound of ringing bell
Was carried on the air.

The monks had rung the bell for joy,
Not thinking they would rue,
The band came back to their annoy,
And then their fault they knew.

The band began to kill and slay,
Till not a monk was left;
Of goods and gold on that sad day
Poor Blanchland was bereft.

For none were left to say them nay
To aught they might desire;
And ere they took themselves away
They set the place on fire.

They took away the bell, she said,
Loud was its tone and fine,
But left it, for it them delayed,
At Hexham-on-the-Tyne.

And in the church at Hexham now
There hangs that selfsame bell,
Which rung not joy that day, I trow,
But toll'd these churchmen's knell.

Where are they now those monks of old:
Beneath the living sod
Their dust blends with the churchyard mould,
Their spirits are with God.

The stocks stood by the churchyard side
To hold unruly folks –
A punishment 'twas ill to bide,
Exposed to jeers and jokes.

The constable was very tall,
He with the parson bold,
Upheld the law in sight of all,
I've recently been told.

A strange, though not an ill-matched pair,
They were "the good and great",
Whose watchful eye and constant care,
Kept peace within the gate.

And now I think I've told enough,
See Blanchland for yourself.
And then you'll see I do not puff
To part you from your pelf.

But go not when the day is wet,
As did a choir from Crook:
Their one day's trip is talked of yet –
To them 'twas "Watery Nook".

It rained upon them from the sky,
It rained from off the trees,
The grass and bushes they passed by
Wet both their feet and knees.

Till everything they wore was wet,
Their stockings and their boots,
Viewed with dismay and sad regret,
Were like to "beggars cloots".

And so they had to go and buy
At shops they found the nearest –
Yet oft they tell, in language dry,
They found one of the dearest.

But boots and stockings must be got
Whatever be the price,
If size and colour please or not,
Or ugly are or nice.

And yet they all got home again,
And none of them were ill;
They 'scaped, what is of life the bane,
A heavy doctor's bill.

But when they meet to plan their trip,
As they do every year,
The name may slip across their lip,
To go they do not dare.

Go not there when the wintry blast
Those rugged fells blows o'er,
Lest that the journey be your last,
And you come back no more.

And go not when the nights are long
To hear my grannie talk;
Her soul has joined the happy throng
Who with the angels walk.

Her body in the churchyard lies,
That quiet peaceful spot;
But in my heart till memory dies
She'll never be forgot.

But go when summer days are bright,
When birds with joyful song,
From early morn till dewy night,
Their hymn of praise prolong.

When everything its beauty shows
Beneath the sun's bright ray,
When hawthorn blossoms, or wild rose,
Make sweet your gladsome way.

Go when the little busy bee
Brings honey from the fell,
See all, I say, there is to see,
And then come back and tell.

For there you'll see as I have seen
Its beauty and its joy,
And feel as strongly and as keen
Its peace without alloy.

I love the dale, I love the hills,
I love each woodland way,
With every bird a song which trills,
And this I still will say: -

To me, though all the world may quiz,
The place that gave me birth,
Fair Blanchland! Bonnie Blanchland! is
The bonniest place on earth!

And now, fairwell, my take is told,
My pen aside I lie,
I bid you all, both young and old,
My loving friends, - Good-bye!

FINIS.

NOTES.

1.- Paradise is a cottage by the road side, between Blanchland and Edmondbyers, where the road emerges from the woods on to the moor. A long time agao the wife of a man named Dodd, who lived at this place, presented him with twins, to who they gave the respective names of Adam and Eve.

2. – Very early in the morning of New Year's Day, 1880, a young man of the name of Snowball left Blanchland to go to his home at Bellmount, and was found later on brutally murdered in one of the outhouses of that place – his head having been smashed with a hammer. The servant girl was tried for the murder, but as there was no direct evidence against her, she was acquitted, and the murder remains a mystery unto this day.

3. – Gibraltar Rock is a rock jutting out from the land that lies between the burns of Beldon and of Knuckton, which join together in front of it, forming what is locally called the Water Meetings, from whence the stream takes the name of the Derwent.

4. – This story, though grim and terrible, is true. The old man referred to as having told me the story was the person who took the powder off the fire and carried it to the burn.

5. – I had no idea that there had been any such thing as a fish pond at Blanchland until a year ago. I was told by a friend, from Edmondbyers, that he and another, having heard of their existence, went to seek them. While going up the road towards Shildon they were met by a gentleman notorious for playing practical jokes, and who to gain his end would not stick at telling an untruth, who asked them where they were going. And on being informed, he told them they were on the wrong road altogether, and that he would show them where the fish ponds were; but my friend, knowing the man, was very dubious about going; but not liking openly to throw doubt on the man's veracity, they went, and found the man had spoken the truth for once. They found the fish ponds in Clapshaw Planting.

6. – I am indebted to Mr. Robt. Hutchinson, land steward to the trustees of Lord Crewe, for permission to take a copy of the document which Mr. Iley (who was familiarly known by the name of The Master on accound of his being school master as well as steward) used to read as a preliminary to "The Riding of the Fair." The document is very dry, and I am afraid that my rhyming version of it is so far like it that it is dry too.

7. – The actual words he used were these: - "Here's another lot, and a good lot, and a better lot than't last lot, and all this lot for a penny."

8. – I have heard varied accounts of this raid; but I have given the story as told to me by my grandmother.

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