

HISTORY AND TRADITIONS
OF
DARWEN AND ITS PEOPLE

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COMPRISING
AN HISTORICAL AND TRADITIONAL NARRATIVE
OF THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF THE BOROUGH OF DARWEN,
AND SOME INTERESTING
RECOLLECTIONS OF OLD DARWEN FAMILIES
DICTATED TO THE AUTHOR BY
THE LATE JEREMY HUNT.

"And year by year our memory fades
From all the circle of the hills."
—IN MEMORIAM

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CALICO-PRINTING AND BLEACHING.

Calico-printing was commenced in Lancashire in the year 1764, on the banks of the River Darwen in Walton-le-Dale, and in 1776 it was introduced into Darwen by Mr. James Greenway. The antiquary Pennant, after his visit to Blackburn in 1773, wrote:—"The manufactures are cottons; considerable quantities are printed here; others are sent to London. The fields around are whitened with the materials which are bleached from them. The thread, which must be ranked with them, is brought from Ireland." At first the bleached calico had the coloured pattern printed on it by means of blocks of wood engraved by hand, but so early as 1784 block-printing was succeeded by cylinder-printing at Mosney, near Walton-le-Dale. Mr. James Greenway, who established calico-printing in Darwen in 1776, is believed to have come from the south of England. He commenced business at Livesey Fold—a homestead once occupied by the Livesey family,—and extended it in 1808 to Dob Meadows. At this time Mr. Greenway took into partnership his relatives Mr. Charles Potter and Mr. Maude, and soon afterwards retired, when the firm became known as Potter, Maude, and Co., and existed as such until about 1830. This firm also built the Print Shop

on Bury Fold Brook, which is now used as cottage dwellings. In 1832 the Dob Meadow Works were leased by Mr. Greenway, junior, to Messrs. Charles Potter and William Ross, but in 1841 Mr. Charles Potter retired from this firm, and, along with his brother Harold, founded the prosperous paper-making and printing business now carried on by Messrs. Potter and Co. at Hollins Mill in Lower Darwen and at Belgrave and Livesey Mills in Over Darwen. Mr. Ross continued the calico-printing business alone for five years, and in 1847 retired in favour of Messrs. Heron, Baron, and Eddlestone, who continued the business as co-partners until 1872, when Mr. Eddlestone died. The business was then carried on by Messrs. Heron and Baron, who gave up business in 1878 and had their machinery sold by auction and removed. The success with which the business of Messrs. Greenway, Potter, and Co. was carried on was not alone due to the partners in the firm, for they were greatly aided by Mr. W. Henrey, their superintendent or manager. On his death in August, 1823, the *Blackburn Mail* published an extremely laudatory article, stating that he was distinguished for his scientific knowledge and its application to the art of calico-printing. He was followed to his grave in St. Peter's Churchyard, Blackburn, by his employers, many friends, and a large concourse of people. Two of Mr. Henrey's daughters married into old and well-known Darwen families, now represented by Mr. Christopher Shorrocks and Mr. Richard Henrey Smalley.

Mr. Greenway, the founder of the Livesey Fold and Dob Meadow business resided at Livesey Fold. He was a shrewd, persevering man, exceedingly plain in manners and habits, but much esteemed by his friends. Many curious anecdotes are told of him, one of which is well worth preserving. Being about to undertake some large operations, requiring many out-door labourers, he engaged several men for one day in removing stones from one side of a road to the other. He stood by all day watching the work, which went on with great spirit and was finished in the evening. On its conclusion he expressed himself dissatisfied with what had been done and told the men to begin in the morning and carry the stones back to their original position. The men began on the following day as directed, but Mr. Greenway did not appear on the scene until the day's work was nearly over, and then he found that only half the stones had been carried back. He thereupon paid the men three days' wages, and dismissed them, saying that "men who only did half the work when left to themselves that they would do when overlooked would not suit him."¹ He was succeeded in his

¹ *The Heart of Lancashire*, chap. vii.

business and in his Darwen property by his son, the late James Greenway, Esq., who built and for many years resided at Darwen Bank. His gentlemanly bearing, handsome appearance, and quiet retiring habits will be well remembered. He died without issue, in the 90th year of his age, on July 8th, 1866, leaving the bulk of his property to his nephew, the Rev. Charles Greenway, M.A., J.P., of Darwen Bank (at one time incumbent of St. James's Church), who in 1878 sold the old bleaching croft and adjoining property to the Corporation for the site of a Town Hall and Market House.

The following prices of cattle and manufactured goods are culled from a stock-taking account of Mr. James Greenway, dated 1795:—Horses, £17 17s. od., £15. £12 12s. od., £10, £7, £5, £4 10s.; cows, from £6 to £7 7s. od.; calico prints, 32 inches wide by 95 yards in length, one piece of 9-8ths. chintz print, £2 8s. 4d.; one piece of black and purple, £2 3s. 4d.; one piece of light chintz, £2 5s. 11d.

Calico bleaching was introduced into the township before the year 1800 by Mr. Richard Hilton, a native of Blackburn, and one of his bleaching works was rented, in 1812, by Mr. Samuel Crompton. The Hiltons were still engaged in bleaching in 1818, but soon afterward gave it up and embarked in paper-making. With the £5,000 granted by Parliament in June 1812, Samuel Crompton, the inventor of the spinning mule, came to Darwen from Bolton and began bleaching at Hilton's Higher Works, now known as Spring Vale Paper Works. He took into partnership his eldest and youngest sons, George and James. Many circumstances conspired to make Crompton's Darwen business unsuccessful, especially the conduct of his sons. George left his father and made an unsuccessful attempt to carry on the business of bleacher at Huddlesden, where Vale Rock Mill now stands, and soon afterward both places were given up and the family left the town. Crompton was also crippled by a costly lawsuit arising out of the sinking of coal-pits near his works, which diverted the supply of spring water on which his business was dependent. That "pleasant dwelling place," Low Hill House, was built by Mr. Crompton, and occupied by him for five years. He was an industrious, kindly man; thoughtful, unobtrusive, and fond of music. The late Mr. G. H. Openshaw remembered that when he was a little boy his father came home late one evening, accompanied by Mr. Crompton and another friend, and he (the boy Openshaw) was roused from bed in order to join them in a new quartette which Crompton had just received, and the friends were anxious to perform.¹ George Crompton, Samuel's eldest son, resided when an old man in Blackburn, and was for some years cashier at Messrs. Yates's Foundry. Crompton's unselfish genius and lifelong disappointments are matters

¹ *The Heart of Lancashire*, chap. ii.

of history. Others have reaped the benefit of his inventions. In 1834 the Rev. Gilmour Robinson, M.A., Vicar of Tockholes, with the aid of Sir Robert Peel, was instrumental in obtaining a grant of £200 from the Royal Bounty fund for division between George Crompton and his brother and sister, as a reward for their father's meritorious invention of the spinning mule. George at that time lived at Fearnhurst, Lower Darwen; the brother and sister resided in Bolton.

Sir Robert Peel, the statesman upon whose recommendation this grant was made, was the chief representative of a family intimately connected with the development both of the cotton trade and of calico-printing in this part of Lancashire, and the grandson of "William Peel, of Darwen," who in 1713 married Jane, daughter of Lawrence Walmsley, of Over Darwen, gent., and subsequently inherited Peel Fold.

The trades of calico-printing and bleaching in Darwen are now extinct.