

THE
TOWN AND TRADE
OF
ALTRINCHAM.

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THE TOWN AND TRADE OF ALTRINCHAM.

THE object of this sketch is to rescue some few facts concerning our town from the rapidly fading traces of the past, and to give short histories and descriptions of the leading businesses of the place, which may serve to furnish some notion of the present condition of trade in Altrincham, and the rapid development which it has made during the last forty or fifty years.

In common with hosts of other suburban districts in the country, Altrincham has, within the memory of man, undergone a complete transformation, and has been changed from a mere village forming a picturesque landmark in the placid country side, into a bustling town, the seat of a considerable trade, and one of the centres of the ever-increasing activities which are characteristic of the times. The Rev. Samuel Smith, whose portrait appears on another page, remembers the town when there were only about three shops between the foot of the Downs and the Malt Shovels, and when George Street consisted almost entirely of thatched cottages, and Mr. Rowland Fletcher, who came here in 1850, describes it as consisting of the remains of an ancient village and forming a roughly picturesque scene. Looking across the moss, which came up to the old railway station at Bowdon, he saw a delightful stretch of green sward on which all sorts of cattle were grazing, and beyond it a plain of golden gorse. Boys were chasing donkeys, or playing on the sandhills, and the whole made a picture of Arcadian peace and beauty. Old natives speak of it as being at this time, and prior to it, a perfect garden. The town was embosomed by orchards. In the spring the clusters of apple blossoms encircled it like a bridal garland, and in the still, mellow days of September the sound of voices from the enclosures where the ripe fruit was being plucked from the boughs was pleasant to hear. Those were the days when the stage coach, with its red-coated coachman and guard, dashed into the Market Place morning and evening in its journeys between Manchester and Liverpool, the horn twanging merrily, as it rattled along Church Street. Its passage, afforded a welcome interruption to the monotony of the day, and other diversion was furnished by the, constant

arrival of companies of soldiers marching through the town, their presence being gratifying to everyone but the innkeepers on whom they were billeted. On Tuesdays came a great influx of farmers into the place to attend the Market, where handfuls of corn were exhibited and examined with looks of gravity, after which, exhausted by their labours, the burly-shouldered visitors sought relaxation at the hostelryes, not without a modicum of beer. The imposing form of Nathaniel Pass, constable, bailiff, local preacher and singer, was often to be seen in those days, carrying with it the assurance that, notwithstanding the efforts of reformers and discontented Radicals, the constitution of the land was still unimpaired, and old Parson Leicester, with powdered hair, knee-breeches, and large shoe buckles, passed in and out, among the people, the object of universal regard. At night deep peace settled upon the scene. The oil lamps were lit, and dimly illuminated the narrow, cobble-paved streets, where, as the evening wore on, nothing was to be heard but the voices of the two watchmen calling the hours.

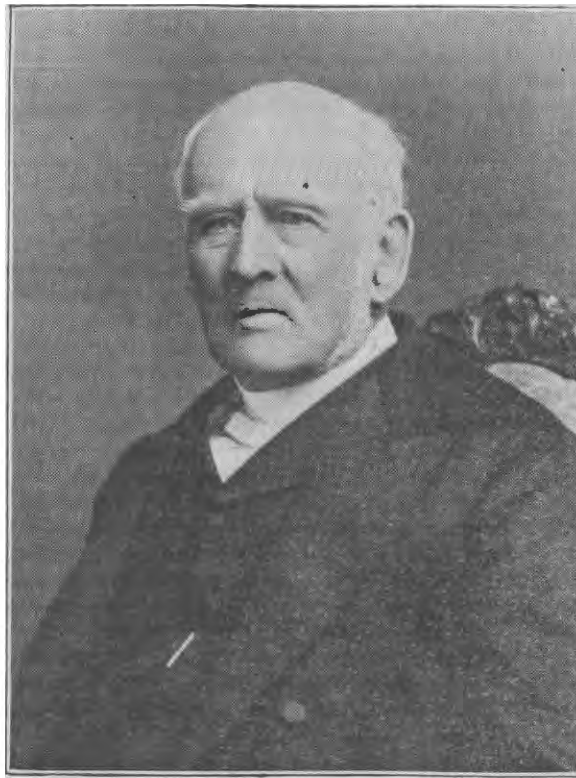
Great have been the alterations which have taken place since those primitive times, and the portentous appearance of the tall chimney at Broadheath is the ominous sign of the approach of still greater and more forbidding changes. Many will regret the advent of this advance guard of manufacturing enterprise, and will wonder at its curious choice of location. For, twenty-five years ago it would have seemed as improbable that great industries should deposit themselves in the despised hamlet of Broadheath as to the mind of Macbeth it appeared that "great Birnam wood" should ever come "to high Dunsinane hill." But it is useless to complain, for the world refuses to stand still, nor will the change be without its advantages if it shall result in an increase of activity, a keener intellectual life, and a higher view of the duties and responsibilities of citizenship. A start has already been made towards progress in this direction by the establishment of the Free Library and Technical Schools, and a further advance is in prospect through the movement which is being pushed forward by Mr. Killick, in connection with the County Council, for establishing Continuation Schools. Thus, although the old order has vanished, with the charms that belonged to it, there is hope that in the resources of the new dispensation there may be things that will more than atone for the delights that have gone.

On the next page is a portrait of the Rev. Samuel Smith, the oldest inhabitant of Altrincham. Mr. Smith was born at Altrincham in September, 1806, so that he is now in his 91st year. He remembers an old man named Peter Bailey, who lived at Sandiway, and who died at the age of 97, while Mr. Smith was still young, and was interred at Bowdon. When Mr. Smith was a boy of ten old Peter would be not less than eighty years of age, so that he would be born not later than 1736, in the early part of the reign of George II. He in his time may have known a man who had lived through the reigns of Charles II., James II., William and Mary, Queen Anne, and George I. Another such life would stretch back to the days of Shakspeare.

In Mr. Smith's early days the staple industry of the town was hand-loom weaving, and all the houses in Chapel Street were fitted up with looms. He remembers the battle of Waterloo, which took place when

lie was nine years of age. An ox was roasted in Town Fields to celebrate the event, and some of the well-to-do residents provided beer for all comers, which they injudiciously pressed on Mr. Smith, with disastrous results.

The Wesleyans were a strong body in Altrincham at that time. There was a bass fiddle in the choir, and amongst the singers was John Barrow, the founder of Messrs. Coupe and Hilkirk's business, William Worsley, who kept a shop in the Market Place ; old Thomas Potts, tailor,



AN ALTRINCHAM NONAGENARIAN.

and his sons; and Mr. Potter, solicitor. Mr. Smith says there was better preaching then than we have now, although he admits there are some good men at the present time.

A schoolmaster named Newton kept a school in Altrincham then, and the people, with that singular disposition towards satirical effort which seems to have distinguished them, revenged themselves upon him for having more book knowledge than they by circulating a legend, which is no doubt apoclyryphal, to the effect that he planted some" potatoes

in his garden and lay down in his overcoat beside them to watch them grow.

Mr. Smith was 43 years in the New Connexion ministry, and was five years at Barnsley, which is considered to be the head circuit in that body. His retirement nineteen years ago was not brought about by failing powers or by a desire to escape the labours of his calling, but was due to the severe domestic bereavement he sustained by the loss, within a few months, of his only son and his wife. The former died on his way back from the South of France, and his mother followed him to the grave in seven or eight months afterwards. Overpowered by the double blow Mr. Smith returned for repose to the home of his youth, and has ever since resided in Broomfield Lane. He retains the possession of all his faculties, and until recently his upright, well-knit figure was a familiar sight in the streets, where he might be seen moving sturdily along, his handsome features beaming with cheerfulness and goodwill. That he may be spared for many years in health and strength to continue to shed around him the sunshine of his serene and beautiful disposition will be the earnest desire of his host of friends.



OLD COTTAGES IN ASHLEY ROAD, ON THE SITE OF MR. BKOOKFIELD'S SHOP,
AND THOSE ADJOINING IT. PULLED DOWN IN 1876.

(From a Photograph of a Drawing in possession of Mr. H. H. Balshaw).

One of the oldest of Altrincham tradesmen is Mr. William Smith, of 7, Ashley Road, who has been established over forty years in the same shop. Nearly every tradesman in Altrincham who was in business when he commenced has passed away, and the town itself has changed enormously, and nowhere more so than in the neighbourhood of his

place. For many years the cottage and farm-yard of Mr. Hough stood opposite to him at the end of John Street, and fields and gardens extended in unbroken order from the site of Mr. Brookfield's shop to St. John's Road on one side and to the Downs on the other. In those days the empty sugar cask at Mr. Smith's door often aroused the predatory instincts of the youthful *gourmand* returning from the British School, and the imbecile boy, "Teddy Bow," came and begged string from him with which to fasten old tin cans to the branches of the trees standing in the disused orchard where Oxford Road now is. Teddy was a consummate marksman with the weapons of primitive man, and would practise for hours shying stones at the pieces of dangling tin, which when they were struck gave forth a metallic report that interrupted the plaintive and monotonous chant he never ceased to croon while so employed. And famously did the poor fellow's art protect him from the assaults of the ruffianly youth who infested the neighbourhood, to whom otherwise his afflicted condition would have afforded a certain source of annoyance and torment, but the rowdy crew knew well the unerring skill of that arm, and Teddy was in consequence allowed to wander in peace.

Mr. Smith is a native of Altrincham, as was his father before him. The latter stirred so little from the town that he never saw the sea in his life, which was a pretty long one, for he died at the age of 93. The fact would seem to show that the air of Altrincham is not without its invigorating qualities, notwithstanding the reputation which the place has for being relaxing in its effects. Probably there has been a deterioration in recent years owing to the increase of building and the excessive planting of trees and shrubberies, for the old race of Altrincham men were of fine physique, strong, healthy, and long-lived. These are qualities distinguishing Cheshire men generally, according to the dictum of old Mr. Carter, of Ashley Mills, who used to say that old Field-Marshal Lord Cotnamere, whom he had known, had a preference for Cheshire men in the army, and was in the habit of declaring, to use Mr. Carter's words, that they were "th' ablest-boddest men i' England." Old Mr. Smith was a successful grower of the famous Bowdon Downs potatoes, long celebrated through the country, and one lot he produced, which were taken in panniers by a horse to Smithy Door Market, in Manchester, were sold for sixteen shillings the score there. The late Mr. William Walton indeed averred that Mr. Smith once sold his potatoes for twenty shillings a score.

The present Mr. Smith went to school at Oldfield, and afterwards to Mr. John Latham's school in Moss Lane. Mr. Latham was a severe disciplinarian, and used to administer punishment to recalcitrant scholars by beating with a ruler the tips of their fingers, which he held upwards, in a bunch, with his left hand. The effects of this ingenious method of torture are said to have been very unpleasant, and one of Mr. Latham's pupils, having lively recollections of its infliction, recently told the writer that going some years after he had left school to hear Mr. Latham preach (for he was a local preacher), he was much disgusted to hear him expatiate, with great fervour of approval, upon the text, "Blessed are the merciful."

Mr. Smith also went to Mr. John Clarke's school in Hale Barns,

and coming home in the winter evenings was often terrified by the fear of the appearance of the Long Lane Boggart, as it was called. The road, which was then bounded by high, overhanging hedges, ^ as very lonely, for Hale Carr was not yet built, and there was not a single house by the roadside from Hale Barns to Ashley Road. So much were the imaginations of children affected by the stories of this ghost, that for fear of falling into its clutches Mr. Smith remembers running one evening all the way from Hale Barns to Altrincham. with two companions, one of whom in consequence of his exertions broke a blood vessel, and soon after died.

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Mr. Smith served his apprenticeship with Mr. John Royle, who had a grocery business in the shop now occupied by Mr. Graham on the Downs. After leaving him, Mr. Smith took a situation at Southport, but soon returned to Altrincham and opened his present shop. There was living in those days in Langham road a fine old gentleman, Mr. Robinson, a notable member of the Society of Friends, whose dignified bearing, handsome, ruddy features, beaming with the most benevolent of smiles, and broad-brimmed Quaker hat, combined to make a very pleasing and striking figure in the place. He was the last of the old school of Friends residing in the neighbourhood. Mr. Smith, who was well acquainted with him, and ever received from him the kindest notice, loves to recall how he was one morning sweeping his shop front when Mr. Robinson stepped up to him, and tapping him on the shoulder, said: "I am glad to see that thou art not above sweeping thy own shop front. So long as thou doest it well, there is no disgrace in it. Continue on these lines, with diligence and industry, and thou wilt make thy way in the world."

Mr. Smith's great success offers the best comment that could be made on this story. His shop, in which from 1,800 to 2,000 articles are regularly kept in stock, has for many years been looked upon as the leading place for the supply of groceries to Bowdon families. He attributes his success to good judgment, attention, and civility. He is considered to be one of the keenest tasters of butter in the Manchester market, and has for six successive years held the post of judge of butter and cheese at the Worsley Agricultural Show.

At the opposite end of the town to Mr. Smith is the business of Mr. William Shuttleworth, grocer, 28, George Street. Mr. Shuttleworth is a native of Altrincham, and a son of the late Mr. William Shuttleworth, who for many years carried on the business of boot and shoe maker in George Street. The latter, who came to Altrincham from Knutsford about 50 years ago, was long a member of the Cheshire Yeomanry, and his tall and somewhat military figure will be well remembered by many people in the town.

The present Mr. Shuttleworth served his apprenticeship with Mr. John Royle on the Downs, in the shop now occupied by Mr. Graham, and started for himself in 1871. The business has gradually grown, and is now classed with the old-established firms and as one of the first in the town. Besides the home trade, a large business is done in the out-lying districts for eight or ten miles round.

General groceries are supplied, and amongst specialities are Wiltshire smoked bacon and hams, dairies of the finest Danish and Irish butters,

which are received weekly, and Cheshire, American, Cheddar, and Gorgonzola cheese. Mr. Shuttleworth is also a wine and spirit merchant, and the local agent for the European Wine Company.

There is a branch establishment at the corner of Mersey Road, Sale.

One of the oldest businesses in the place is that of Messrs. Coupe and Hilkirk (late W. Collins), Italian Warehousemen, 58, George Street. This business was founded towards the end of the last century by John Barrow, a prominent Wesleyan, a local preacher, and a contemporary of Nathaniel Pass. Those who remember him speak of him as a most admirable character. He had two apprentices, William Collins and Samuel Warren, to whom he eventually turned over his business, which they carried on under the title of Collins and Warren. Like Mr. Barrow, both Mr. Collins and Mr. Warren belonged to the Wesleyan body, and Mr. Warren was for many years the most noted local preacher in the district. A man after the style of the Rev. Peter Mackenzie, quaint and original, witty, outspoken, and with a considerable dash of humour in his composition, his sermons generally contained something spicy and incisive which his hearers could carry away with them. He sometimes shocked the sedate in his congregations by his violations of the conventionalities, for he had none of that fear of the Damocles' sword of respectability which Carlyle says intimidates English biographers, and which is by no means confined to that class of persons. A lady has described the amazement with which, coming fresh into the neighbourhood many years ago, she heard him engage in prayer at a public tea meeting. The meeting being large and comprised of well-dressed people, great was her astonishment when Mr. Warren, being called upon to open the proceedings with prayer, began in what struck her as a queer voice and with a rather broad accent as follows :— " Oh, Lord, we are thy vineyard, and thou knowest there is a power of stubble amongst us," and as he continued with more after the same stamp it would be difficult to say whether consternation or amusement had the greater sway in her mind. But although to those who were unfamiliar with his style there might be something disturbing in his sayings, it cannot be denied that there was a rough vigour and delightful freshness of thought about them. Another instance of his quaintness in prayer is given in the story of his being at a meeting of his brother preachers, when a discourse took place in which something was said about fire. Having to engage in prayer at a subsequent part of the proceedings, he exclaimed, " We want fire to burn up all the devil's lubbish in us." It is said that this completely upset the gravity of the superintendent of the circuit, who was present.

Some of the comments he made in his sermons were shrewd and penetrating, as for instance when preaching at Heyhead on the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, referring to the prayer of Dives that Lazarus might be sent to his father's house to testify to his five brethren, he said that if Lazarus had gone the brethren would have set their dogs at him. Another sermon on the same subject gave rise to a piece of drollery. He was preaching at the Old Wesleyan Chapel in Chapel Walks, or what is now Regent Road, and took for his text the words, " And it came to pass that the beggar died." He said that he had some knowledge of beggars, for he

had not lived for the previous forty years in the neighbourhood of Beggars' Square without having had opportunities of becoming acquainted with the class. He then described different types, and told a good story of one of them. It may not be original—it sounds rather like a Joe Miller—but being invested with appropriate local colouring it has all the freshness desirable. A beggar, supposed to be deaf and dumb, called at Woodcote Farm in Sinderland Lane, or off Sinderland Lane. He carried with him a slate on which was an intimation of his infirmity, and whScli provided a means of communication between him and the charitable. The farmer's wife came to the door, and after reading the announcement on the slate, beckoned the mendicant inside and motioned him to a seat. She was engaged in preparations for baking at the moment, and pursued her labours for some time without noticing the visitor, until suddenly turning round she said : " And how long have you been deaf and dumb ?" " Six months, ma'am," said the beggar, with too admirable promptitude. The story indicates that Mr. Warren was not averse to providing a little wholesome amusement for his audiences, and another instance of the kind is told about a sermon he preached at Booth Bank. His subject there was repentance, and he said that there were two kinds of repentance. One was repentance unto life, but, he said, if a man married a bad wife it was then a case of repentance unto death. But there was usually a moral in the train of his sallies, and although the humour in them might raise a laugh, there was something behind them that did not fail to reach the conscience. Thus preaching at Ashton-on-Mersey 011 the words, "Is not my word like as a fire ? saith the Lord ; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" he said, "It would need a hammer with a stale (shaft) a mile long to reach some of your hearts, for you've left them with the girls behind you."

As has been indicated, he was quite fearless in his declarations of what he considered to be the truth, and dealt faithfully with his hearers, whoever they might be. S> when after ministering in the highways and byeways he was at length called upon to preach at Bowdon Chapel, the invitation appeared to him iu the light of a summons to scourge sinners in high places. " This," he said to Mr. Israel Street, " is the opportunity I have long looked for, and they shall have it" Accordingly, taking his text from the words, " While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen," &c., he began with the following unflattering exordium : " When you send your samples to market, you put the best on the top. They are the things that are seen. But if your customers don't look underneath at the things which are not seen they will be done !" Surely a more uncompromising criticism of the Manchester trade was never delivered.

If all the good things he said in his sermons had been collected they would probably have filled a decent sized book, and the collection would have been materially increased if it had contained his conversational *bon mots*. One of the examples recorded of the latter is the story of his taking the train one Sunday to Partington, where he had an engagement to preach. Someone seeing him alight expressed his surprise that he should ride on the train on a Sunday. " I'd ride on the devil's back," he replied, " if he'd let me get off at the right place."

It is satisfactory to know that Mr. Warren not only left behind him a reputation for wit and quaint originality, but that his daily life and many acts of charity abundantly proved him to be the possessor of a good and generous heart.

Resuming the history of the business, Mr. Warren survived his partner, and the latter was succeeded in the partnership by his son, the late Mr. W. Collins. Mr. Warren retired in 1871 or 1872, and the business was then left in the hands of Mr. Collins, who carried it on in his own name until his death in April, 1896. Then history repeated itself, for as Mr. Barrow's business was transferred to his two assistants, Messrs. Collins and Warren, so on the death of the second Mr. Collins, the concern was taken over by Mr. James Coupe and Mr. John Hil Kirk, who had been in Mr. Collins' employment over ten years. The new partners, both of them young men, have shown considerable energy and enterprise since assuming control of the business, and no doubt their efforts will command the support they deserve. They publish a book of 36 pages containing price lists of the articles they supply, which besides general groceries include patent medicines, brushes, corn, clover, and grass seeds, Bass' and Allsopp's ales, Allsopp's stout, Findlater's stout, and the Cornbrook Brewery Company's ales and stouts. They announce that they will forward general orders of £2 and upwards carriage paid and packages free to any railway station within twenty miles of Altrincham, and for £5 and upwards to any railway station in England or Wales.

The firm do a considerable out-district trade in the direction of Styal, of which Mr. Coupe is a native. Mr. Hil Kirk is a native of Altrincham.

Amongst other leading grocers is the firm of Messrs. Burston and Nixon, Altrincham, Peelcauseway, and Stretford. It was established in May, 1881, the proprietors conceiving the idea of working a grocery business in Altrincham on the advanced lines of the large firms in Manchester, for which they were well qualified, Mr. Burston having served his time with Mr. John Walton, of Oxford Street and Market Street, Manchester; and Mr. Nixon having been for many years manager for Messrs. Nat. Gould and Co., of that city. The result has amply justified the undertaking, the rapidity with which the business has increased from the commencement having surprised the proprietors themselves.

They supply almost everything that grocers and wine merchants sell, including patent medicines, brushes, &c., and are the local agents for W. and A. Gilbey's wines and spirits. They do a large outside trade, and send out goods as far as Sale and Old Trafford in one direction, Urmston in a second, and Lymm in a third. In addition to the shops mentioned above, they have recently opened a branch establishment at Southport.

Messrs. COWSILL AND SON, 119, George Street, combine with the business of Grocers and Provision Dealers that of Bakers. The firm was established about 40 years ago by Mr. James Cowsill in the old block of buildings which stood where the "Criterion" tobacco shop now is. Some years later he removed to his present premises, where the trade has developed into one of the largest in the town.

Mr. Cowsill is a native of Thelwall, where his father farmed his own

laud. As a youth Mr. Cowsill himself worked on the farm, and recalls with some satisfaction the fact that, when taking a cartload of produce to Manchester Market, he usually saved sixpence or a shilling out of the eighteenpence allowed him for expenses, and that he once spent only twopence on the journey to Manchester and back. He also declares that up to the age of twenty-six he never had more wages than five shillings a week, and that he contrived to save money out of that ! This curious bit of autobiography would make an interesting contribution to the discussion as to what constitutes a minimum wage. It ought to be explained, however, that Mr. Cowsill occasionally increased his income by the proceeds of a little poaching (on his father's land), as to which he volunteers the statement that "there is no harm in catching a hare if no one sees you," a proposition the ethical soundness of which he challenges the clergy and the ministers of all the denominations to dispute.

Mr. Cowsill learned baking at his uncle John Clare's, in Salford, and afterwards served some time in Mr. Catenby's shop, opposite the old Wesleyan Chapel, in Oldham Street, Manchester. When he commenced business in Altrincham he worked on lines of Spartan severity, opening in the morning at seven and not closing until ten at night, while on Fridays the shop was open until eleven, and on Saturdays until twelve. The whole of the holiday time throughout the year consisted of one half-day on Whit-Thursday, except, of course, on Christmas Day and Good Friday, though even the latter occasion was partly devoted to work, the morning being spent in dispensing hot cross buns.

Mr. Cowsill's shop has long been celebrated for its cheese, butter, and bacon, and he has obtained a great number of prizes for the two former at agricultural shows. He avers that there is as good Cheshire cheese produced as ever there was, and that it commands as high a price as ever. But the best quality, he says, is not put upon the market, but is sold privately. He accounts for Cheshire cheese not being able to be obtained in London, as is complained, by the fact that Londoners will not pay the prices required. Most of the best Cheshire goes into Lancashire and Yorkshire, where the consumers are more liberal, and consequently get a better article. The neighbourhood of Nantwich, according to Mr. Cowsill, is the most suitable to the production of the best cheese, on account of the custom there of keeping up the old-fashioned big hedges, which afford a shelter for cattle both in summer and winter. This theory accords with that recently enunciated by the Rev. S. Baring Gould in a magazine article in reference to the high hedges of Devonshire. It is pleasant to find that the more picturesque hedgerows of the past were also the more useful, and that there are substantial reasons why the country should not be given over to fields enclosed by spiked railings.

Mr. Cowsill bakes and sells a great quantity of bread.

The senior baker in the district is Mr. Silas Southern, Baker, Confectioner, and Flour Dealer, Peelcauseway. The business was established in 1820 by Mr. Southern's father, Mr. John Southern, who was born at Millington. The latter began life as a grocer at the Unicorn Hotel, opposite which, after he was married, he opened a little shop. Being a Wesleyan, he came into contact with the famous Nathaniel Pass, who offered to build him a house and

bakehouse in Chapel Street. The offer was accepted, and Mr. Southern launched into the bakery trade, heating his ovens with gorse got from Hale Moss. As he sold milk, as well as bread, he kept a donkey, for which the moss provided also. He built a hut for it there with gorse, but the misguided animal, thinking it was fodder, ate it, and destroyed his own shelter.

As the people among whom he lived in Chapel Street were mostly poor, he had opportunities for acts of benevolence, of which he freely availed himself, and was consequently the object of his neighbours' affectionate regard. There were not wanting in those days amongst the tradesmen of Altrincham other men of unostentatious philanthropy, and of these may be mentioned the late Thomas Partington, who, twice a week, held classes for poor men, at which he taught reading and writing.

Mr. Southern was the first Methodist local preacher put on the plan in this district, and was very zealous in his discharge of the duties attaching to that position. He used the broad Cheshire dialect in his discourses, and many stories are told of his humorous proceedings in the pulpit, such as starting a hymn on perceiving that any of his congregation had fallen asleep, and his exhortation to the erring members on such occasions, "Dunno let the devil rock you to sleep." His spiritual enthusiasm even infused itself into his business proceedings, and found a rather curious outlet in that direction. He made funeral cakes, which had a great reputation over all the country side, and on the back of the papers enclosing which, there were printed verses expressing appropriate religious sentiment, which he had composed. He was regarded by the people as holding a sort of clerical position, and when children were ailing, and likely to die, he was often called in to baptize them.

Since Mr. John Southern's death, his son, Mr. Silas Southern, the present proprietor, has carried on the business, which was transferred from Chapel Street to Church Street, then to Oxford Road, and afterwards to Peelcauseway, where it now continues in a thriving condition, the bread baked there having a high reputation.

Other leading bakery businesses are those of Mr. JOHN LEWIS, 18, Station Road, and THE BOWDEN BREAD COMPANY, Oxford Road and 18, John Street.

Mr. Lewis is a Westmorland man by birth, and was apprenticed to the corn trade with a firm of corn merchants at Liverpool. His business was established in Altrincham in August, 1874, in succession to Mr. John Davenport, in Church Street, Mr. Davenport retaining his mill at Bollington, while Mr. Lewis took over the retail business, and in combination with the mill carried on the bakery. Mr. Lewis removed to his present premises about twelve years ago, and has found the change of situation very advantageous.

The bread-baking business is of a purely family character, the object sought being the patronage of individuals rather than that of supplying the trade. The bread, made from the very best flour that can be obtained, is supplied direct to customers, who consist largely of the better-class families.

Besides bread, corn, flour, provender, cheese, &c., are supplied, the retail department being altogether under the superintendence of Mrs. Lewis.

Though possessing exceptional gifts of elocution and undoubted ability, Mr. Lewis has never taken any part in the public life of the town, but he occupies a unique position in the Masonic body, his recital of the ritual being said to be impressive to a degree to which no competitor within a radius of many miles can approach.

The Bowdon Bread Company, Oxford Road, and 18, John Street, was established in January, 1886, by Mr. Robert Martin, who learned his business at his father's bakery. He was nine years in the bakehouse at home, has had experience in other towns, and has visited many of the largest bakehouses in England.

This, the first machine bakery set up in the district, is fitted with Werner and Pfeiderer's patent kneading machine, and the ovens are heated externally, so that no smoke or dirt is produced in the bakehouse. Bread made by machinery is said not only to be better made than by the old process, but is a more cleanly method.

The business is particularly a retail one in its character, and is sustained by a large family trade. A speciality is made of wheatmeal bread, and all the wheatmeal bread baked here is made from Lincolnshire flour, got direct from the mill and ground on old-fashioned stones. Mr. Martin also sells a large quantity of household flour, the quality of which is maintained by his knowledge of the sources of supply and of the best way to blend flour for household purposes.

Baking is now more scientifically practised than it was formerly, and to make himself acquainted with the most advanced systems in vogue Mr. Martin some years ago joined the National Association of Master Bakers, and is now a member of the Manchester Association of that order, the members of which meet regularly together to read papers and discuss questions connected with baking.

There are several high-class confectionery firms in Altrincham, and probably none which surpasses that of Mr. Charles H. Skipper, Oxford House, Stamford New Road. Mr. Skipper is a native of Suffolk, and was apprenticed at Woodbridge in that county with Mr. Gammage, a man of some note in his day, "one of the good old school," Mr. Skipper describes him. After leaving Mr. Gammage, Mr. Skipper had experience at Nottingham and at Mr. Thomas Parker's, at Manchester. He was afterwards three or four years with the Misses Inman, at Altrincham, and in January, 1881, commenced for himself on the Downs. In December, 1895, he removed to his present handsome shop, which has brought about an important change in the character of his business, which is now largely concerned with catering for Bowdon families. At Easter and Christmas he provides a large assortment of novelties in bon-bons, sweets, and fancy chocolates, and makes a speciality of high-class cakes.

Mr. Skipper, describes himself as cook, confectioner, and caterer. He does a large business in catering, both here and in outside districts, and is well-equipped for the accommodation of parties at his own place, having two rooms in which he can dine 100 people.

The bakehouse here, which Mr. Skipper claims to be the best in the town, is lined with glazed bricks and fitted with patent steam ovens above the ground level.

Mr. Joseph Hill carries on the business of fishmonger and poulterer at 18, Railway Street. Mr. Hill is a native of Howden, in Yorkshire, at which town he was, at the age of 14, articled to a solicitor, but after four years of office work he was compelled by the delicate state of his health to seek a less sedentary occupation, and in 1870 came to Altrincham. His uncle, the late Mr. Tasker, having acquired the fish and poultry business belonging to Mr. Milnes, in Ashley Road, Mr. Hill joined him as assistant. At first, as may be imagined, he found the trade very uncongenial, but, mastering his inclinations, he threw himself into the work with the thoroughness which characterises him, and succeeded in coming to actually like it.

After eight years with Mr. Tasker Mr. Hill started business in Bolton on his own account, but returned to Altrincham a year later, on the death of his uncle, to manage the business for Mrs. Tasker. In 1885 he launched out for himself at his present premises, and has done a very prosperous business from the beginning. It is regarded as the leading establishment in the town in that line. A large family trade is done, of which a great portion is by order. During the late winter Mr. Hill, within eight days, received and disposed of about 3,000 head of pheasants from the shooting of one estate alone.

Mr. Hill takes a pride in meeting emergencies which may be sprung suddenly upon him in the way of orders requiring activity and enterprise. An illustration in point is one relating to a lady who came to him at half-past twelve in the day in search of snipe for a dinner party she was giving the same evening. None were to be had in the town, and there was a dreadful prospect lest the snipe, which already figured on the printed list of dishes, should not corporally manifest themselves at the appointed time, for to be absent in the body but present on the menu cards is not exactly the thing for a dinner party. The famous cook of the Prince of Conde committed suicide on account of such a contretemps, and although nothing so sinister was to be anticipated in this particular case, the non-appearance of the desired delicacy would have been a catastrophe. Mr. Hill undertook to avert it. Some people would have spent the afternoon in trudging about Manchester in search of the article wanted, with the possible result of not finding it, and the ultimate calamity of a snipeless banquet. Mr. Hill, better advised, calmly wired an order to a leading firm at London and received an answering telegram in the afternoon informing him that the snipe had been sent off by the 2 o'clock train from King's Cross. Meeting the train at London Road he got the parcel, caught the 6.25 to Altrincham, plucked the birds in the railway carriage, and handed them to a man on horseback at Altrincham Station, who galloped on to the shop, where the dressing was completed. The snipe were then delivered and cooked, and at 7.30 were placed upon the table to the gratification of the beaming hostess. Thus were the resources of civilization vindicated, and Altrincham shown to be a suburb of the Metropolis.

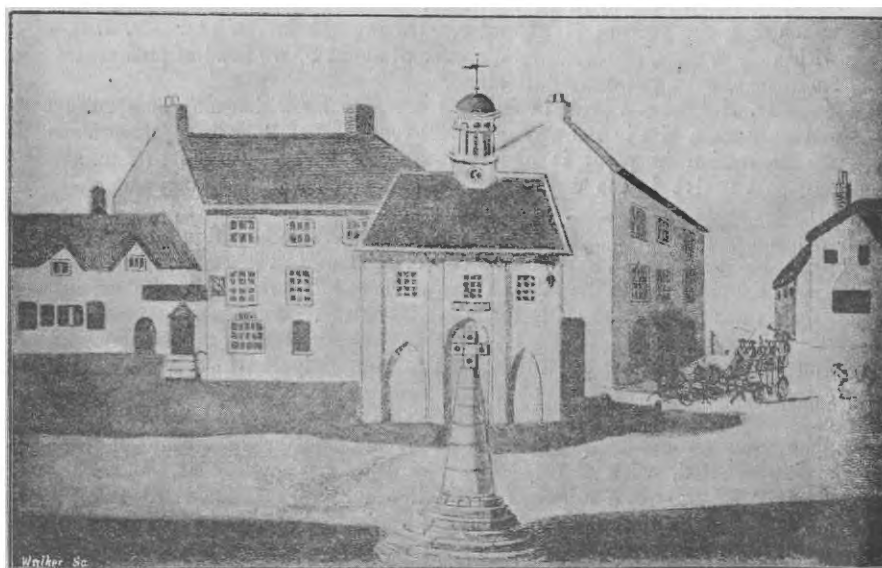
Mr. Hill is a member of the District Council, and is one of the few members of the old Local Board who were returned to the new authority on its formation in December, 1894.

Mr. JOHN MARSLAND, Regent Road and George Street, has been

established 17 years. Mr. Marsland is a greengrocer, poulterer, and licensed dealer in game, the trade he does being one of the largest in the town. The great success he has had is due not merely to the close application he gives to his business, but to the fact that his shop is noted for the low prices charged for the articles he sells.

Mr. John Sumner, 11, the Downs, commenced his present business of fruiterer and greengrocer twelve years ago, and during that time has done and continues to do an extensive business with Bowdon families, the large stock which he keeps of both French and English vegetables and the best classes of fruit being an undoubted attraction to customers, besides which he has an advantage in being the nearest of any Altrincham fruiterer to the Bowdon neighbourhood.

He also does a considerable business as a florist, and having had from a boy an intimate acquaintance with the dairy trade, he, soon after opening, took over the old-established dairy supplied by Mr. Norbury, of the Dairy House Farm, which he has still in his hands.



THE OLD MARKET PLACE, ALTRINCHAM, AS IT WAS 100 YEARS AGO.

(From a Photograph, of a Drawing in the possession of Mr. H. H. Balshaw.)

The oldest established chemist's business in Altrincham is that of Mr. Edward Hughes, of 14, Old Market Place. A chemist of the name of Stubbs commenced there in 1840, and in 1845 Mr. Edward Hughes, father of the present proprietor, took the business. He had for some time before acted as assistant to Mr. Broadbent, surgeon, in Dunham Road.

Mr. Hughes succeeded his father in 1882, and has carried on the business on the old lines, ever seeking to maintain the high reputation which it has always held.

The business of Mr. Joel Foden, 80, Church Street, ranks next in seniority to that of Mr. Hughes, having been established in 1859 by Mr. John Stdeley. Mr. Fodeu served his apprenticeship with Mr. Siddeley, and as the latter was an apprentice with Mr. Paulden at the same time as Mr. E. C. Holt and Mr. Joseph Hardy, Mr. Fodeu may be considered a sort of successor of that celebrated Altrincham chemist. It may be interesting to many people who remember Mr. Paulden to know that his only surviving son went to Australia, and for the last 14 or 15 years has dispensed medicines at some important hospital there.

When Mr. Foden went up to London to pass his examination, he met three other young men from this district who were there on the same errand. Mr. Foden is now the only survivor of the group, but what is more remarkable is the three others all in succession carried on business in the same premises. They were Mr. E. C. Holt, Mr. Nixon, and Mr. J. T. Clarke, the predecessors of Mr. Burgess, at 18, Ashley Road.

Mr. Foden commenced business in 1871, and has since then pursued a successful career as a chemist. He was Mayor of Altrincham in 1890.

Mr. A. H. Burgess, of 18, Ashley Road, is among the more recent chemists, though the business he carries on was founded by Mr. E. C. Holt not far from thirty years ago. Mr. Burgess succeeded Mr. Clarke in 1891, and as he had then been six years in the same shop as an assistant, he has had eleven years there altogether. He is thus thoroughly acquainted with the style of trade required there, and has been very successful in maintaining the former standard of the business. He does a good dispensing trade, and makes a speciality of photographic requirements.

The oldest firm of butchers is that of Mr. William Harrison, 14, Railway Street. The business was founded over fifty years ago by Mr. James Harrison, father of the present proprietor. On his death in 1889 the firm was carried on by his sons, Messrs. Frank and William Harrison, and is now in the hands of the latter. From its commencement this has been a very prosperous concern, and still holds the position it maintained so long. Mr. Harrison, from his many years' experience in the shop which now belongs to him, being acquainted with every detail of the trade.

Another son of Mr. James Harrison carries on a similar business at 3, Oxford Road, and 29, Railway Street. After some years' successful operations in Oxford Road, Mr. John Harrison has recently opened another shop in Railway Street, and is doing a prosperous trade at both establishments.

Mr. John H. Nehdham, 34, Railway Street, was established in 1875. He learned the business in Deansgate, Manchester, with his father, who was one of the most successful butchers in the city. His predecessor in the shop he occupies was Mr. John Oulton, who succeeded Mr. R. Garner. Mr. Oulton was a rather picturesque figure in the town, and distinguished for his sporting proclivities. He rode regularly to hounds, kept badgers and pigeons, and had his shop hung round with bird cages.

Mr. Needham does a very large trade, which he has built up by his own energy and capability. At the beginning of his career in Altrincham his labour was most exacting, and required the greatest determination and

effort. He regularly at that time, after rising, killed a beast and two or three sheep, then went to Manchester to buy, and was back in his shop by nine o'clock in the morning. It is not surprising that by such exertions, and having a thorough knowledge of the trade, his business has grown to large dimensions.

Mr. Robert Gatley, 67, George Street and Moss Lane, served his time with Mr. Pollitt, and after being with him for 18 years, started business for himself in 1884. His family, which is well-known for forty miles round this centre, is closely connected with Altrincham, his ancestors, who have followed the occupation of cattle dealers for generations, having lived in or about the town for over 150 years.

Mr. Gatley has always a large supply of home killed meat of every description at reasonable prices, with special terms to schools and large consumers, and fresh killed meat every Tuesday.

In 1894 Mr. Gatley, who had been for some years a member of the Local Board, was returned at the head of the poll by the Central Ward as a representative to the District Council. He holds the position of Chairman of the Farm Committee, and in February of this year was appointed by the Council a member of the governing body of the Mayor's Land Charity.

Mr. George Roberts, 6, Railway Street, has been established seven years. Mr. Roberts supplies families at the lowest prices for cash, and has special prices for schools.

Amongst other prominent firms of butchers is that of Steel and Cleaver, Railway Street.

Mr. John Balshaw, Printer and Stationer and Bookbinder, 2, Station Road, may be regarded as the senior tradesman of Altrincham, having been in business here for a longer period than any other person. Mr. Balshaw is a native of Altrincham, and belongs to one of the oldest and most respected families in the town. He succeeded his father, Mr. Thomas Balshaw, in the business, which has existed now for a period of 74 years. His reminiscences of Altrincham are very interesting, amongst them being that of going as a boy every morning at six o'clock to meet the mail coach at the old "Round-about" house in the old Market Place, to get the parcel of "Manchester Guardians," which had just then commenced its publication. The round-about house was a six-sided building surrounded with palisades, with an upper and lower room, the former of which was used as a Court room and general Assembly room of the town, and the latter as a Butter Market. He recollects the two note 1 characters "Carrington Jack" and "Pee Weasel," and remembers seeing the latter obtain a prize at Bowdon Wakes for grinning through a hors3 collar, the enormous capacity of his mouth enabling him to surpass all rivals in the singular competition.

Mr. Balshaw for some years kept the Post Office here, succeeding Mr. Geoffrey Wild. During the early part of that time Mr. Adam Shaw was the only postman in the town, and would take about a week to get through the district, charging fourpence or fivepence for delivering a letter in the country.

Mr. Balshaw does a general printing business, consisting mostly of commercial work. A revolution has taken place in printing since he

started, when he used one of the primitive Stanhope presses, and when the biggest order he took was one for about 1,000 way bills for the coaches. His printing office since those days has been entirely remodelled, and is now complete with machinery and driven by a powerful gas engine. The premises are lighted throughout by the electric light, which is generated by his own plant.

In addition to stationery, newspapers and periodicals are regularly supplied. Bookbinding is made a special feature, and Mr. Balshaw, who is the only practical binder in the town, gives this department his personal attention.

The firm of Mr. Samuel Butler, 105, George Street, General Printer and Stationer, Bookbinder and Relief Stamper, was established in 1852 by the late Mr. Samuel Butler, and continued by him until his death in November, 1892, but the business has been practically carried on for the last 15 or 20 years by his son, Mr. J. Butler, and daughter, Miss I. Butler, who are the present proprietors. The business was originally that of bookseller, stationer, and hosier, but the bookselling and hosiery have been recently dropped, so as to bring greater concentration and energy to bear upon the printing and stationery.

The present head of the firm, Mr. J. Butler, a native of Altrincham and an old British School boy, has been for many years one of the most familiar figures in the district. He was for a long time the Captain of the Altrincham Amateur Fire Brigade, succeeding Mr. O. S. Holt in this capacity, and was a member of the famous "Grapplers" Football Club, which subsequently merged into the Altrincham Club. "Joe" was one of the most capable forwards of his day, and took part in most of the matches which were played by the Club in the early years of its history, including the memorable match with Birch, when Mr. G. Dunsmuir, who was playing for Altrincham, quietly remarked to his comrades during an interlude in the game that his collar bone was broken "as clean as a whistle," which, on examination, proved to be quite true, although exception might be taken to the accuracy of the metaphor he used.

Mr. Butler has thrown himself into business with the same ardour that marked his pursuit of sport. Many years he determined to learn printing, and having soon accomplished his purpose, introduced the department into his father's business, and with such success that it is now the predominant feature of the firm. All kinds of commercial work are done, and Mr. Butler will execute orders for any sort of general printing whatever. Good work is a feature aimed at, and everything is personally supervised by the proprietor.

A gratifying feature in the business has been the creation and development of a trade in manufacturing stationery. In the last three years Mr. Butler has done a large business in supplying a number of leading wholesale drapery establishments in some of the large towns, including London, with drapers' tickets. The "Diamond," "Heal," and "Crescent" series of tickets, of which he is the inventor, have become very popular, and he is naturally encouraged by the success of this entirely new departure on his part, which promises great developments in the future.

"Butler's Almanack," which the firm produces annually, has now

reached its twenty-first year of issue. Containing in its first copy only 16 pages of matter, it has grown to its present dimensions, and has become a fixture in the commercial life of the town.

The oldest-established " Watchmaking and Jewellery business in the town is that of Mr. EUSTACE G. PARKER, of 80, George Street, Mr. Parker having in 1864 succeeded Mr. Boddington, in Church Street. Mr. Parker served his apprenticeship at Birmingham, partly with his father, and subsequently with two of the leading manufacturers of that town, with the first of whom he spent his time in learning the manufacture of watches, and with the second in the manufacture of jewellery.

Mr. Parker styles himself a jewellery expert and precious stone dealer. He justifies the former term by the fact that he has brought out scores of new designs of art jewellery, that he is engaged in supplying dealers in all parts of the country with *recherche* articles, and that he will undertake to make in fact any article in jewellery which a customer may require. He is the originator of the popular " Birthday " ring, which is an engagement ring set with a stone that is supposed to correspond with the month in which the wearer was born. Thus there is a garnet for January, an amethyst for February, a bloodstone for March, and so on, and lest anyone should fail to understand this language of jewels, Mr. Parker has written a set of rather ingenious verses, for the literary merit of which he puts forward no claim, but is satisfied to know that, judging by results, they have hit the sentiment of the public. The following is one of the verses, the whole of which, it may be mentioned, are copyright:—

MAY.—Who first beholds the light of day

In Spring's sweet flowery month of May,
And bears an *Emerald* all her life,
Shall be a loved and happy wife.

The unpretentious appearance of Mr. Parker's shop gives no indication of the treasures it contains. These, it may without exaggeration be said, consist of thousands of articles, some of them of great value, and many of them of exquisite design and workmanship.

It may be added that Mr. Parker has supplied about 500 Silver Cups to Agricultural Societies, including the first prizes presented by different County Societies and the Royal Society of England; that he designed, sank the dies for, and manufactured the gold, silver and bronze medals for the British Beekeepers' Association, and that he designed the original die from which the Agricultural Silver Medal was struck, which has been copied and used by medallists and jewellers all over the country.

Besides being a dealer in precious stones, Mr. Parker is a dealer and a judge of antiques, and has frequently submitted to him for valuation family heirlooms from different parts of the country.

Mr. Parker was Mayor of Altrincham in 1889, and has had about twenty years' experience of public life. He was the originator of the Cheshire Beekeepers' Association, was Vice-Chairman of the Ratepayers' Association which existed in Altrincham a few years since, and is now the senior Vice-Chairman of the Altrincham Agricultural Society, in the

resuscitation of which he, in conjunction with Mr. G. Bowen and Mr. Alfred Wilde, took an active part.

Mr. G. J. PLIMMER, 5, Station Road, began business at Altrincham in 1886 as a Watch and Clock Maker, Jeweller, Gold and Silversmith, &c. He was born at Uttoxeter, Staffordshire, where his father has carried on the business of watch and clockmaker for the last 50 years. Mr. Plimmer learned his trade at home, but has enlarged his experience by working in most of the large towns in England, including London and Birmingham, and as a result, possesses a large number of testimonials as to character and ability as a watch jobber. For some years he was in business at the West Indies. He was at St. Vincent a long time, and was at Barbadoes wlieu the first railway was opened there, on which occasion he was entrusted with the responsibility of fitting all the stations on the line with clocks. Since he has been iu Altrincham he has done the same for the Altrincham and South Junction Line. It has fallen to his lot to have to do with the fixing and repair of a considerable number of public clocks since the time when, mauny years ago, he assisted his father in putting a clock in the turret of Marchington Church, (Staffordshire). He has cleaned and repaired the clocks in Mobberley Church Tower, and the turret clock of the prison at Knutsford, and has placed clocks in the police stations at Altrincham, Sale, and Lymm, at the British Schools, and at the Altrincham Free Library. Among the private clocks he has cleaned and repaired are those of Lewisham Hall and Agden Hall. Clocks are kept in order by him by yearly contract or otherwise, as may be desired.

A speciality of Mr. Plimmer's business is in diamond jewellery, of which department he has had a large and extensive experience.

Mr. F. R. NOBLE, Piau and Organ Factor, 19, Railway Street, first commenced business for himself about twelve years ago, in Church Street. There was then only one music shop in the town, and Mr. Noble's acquaintances all encouraged him by the cheerful prediction that iu opening a second he was doomed to a certain failure. His energy and business capacity have, however, enabled him to falsify the forecast, and the rapid growth in the population and prosperity of the district have made it possible, during the last few years, for three music establishments to flourish, where only one formerly existed. About two years since he gave a new impulse to the business, by removing it to the present more central premises.

A large part ot Mr. Noble's success is due to his recognition of the fact that there was room for a popular music shop in the town, and that by tact and persistent effort it would be possible for a considerable pianoforte trade to be done with the people. By energetic action iu this direction, aud by meaus of the hire system, he has sold a great number of instruments, and it is not too much to say that in many a workman's home there is a piano which but for his enterprise would not have been there.

Mr. Noble obtains pianos from various makers, and has a ten years' guarautee with every instrument. He is the sole agent in Altrincham for Hilton and Hilton and the famous "Cremona" piano. He gives a prominent place in his stock to the pianos of Collard and Collard, which firm, carried on by Mr. John Collard having purchased the goodwill of the now

extinct firm of Kirkman, is exceptionally qualified to produce superior instruments.

The upper floor of Mr. Noble's premises contains the studio of the Crown Photographic Company, and specimens of the admirable work done here are shown at the entrance on the ground floor.

As may be seen from a perusal of these notices, there are persons from all parts of the country engaged in the trade of Altrincham. Mr. Noble is a native of Ramsey in the Fen district of Huntingdonshire, and his descriptions of the old-world life that still lingers in those parts are very interesting.

Mr. C. Edwards, of Jubilee Buildings, Stamford Road, commenced business in 1890 for the sale and repair of musical instruments. Mr. Edwards is a pianoforte maker and tuner, and has served in that capacity with some of the better class houses in London. He belongs to the fourth generation of members of his family who have been engaged in the business, his grandfather, Mr. Richard Edwards, having been apprenticed to an uncle who was a pianoforte maker in 1822. The grandfather afterwards kept a pianoforte warehouse at Judd Street, London, and subsequently at Euston Square, and dying in 1889, was succeeded by his son John, who carried on the business until his death, which occurred in October of last year. Mr. C. Edwards' brother is also established in London.

Mr. C. Edwards has given a striking instance of proficiency in his trade by making an exquisite little model of a grand piano, which is perfect in every particular. He is constantly repairing pianos on the premises, and besides a workshop has a room which he calls "the hospital," in which are several pianos in various stages of infirmity awaiting a process of rehabilitation. Among them is one which is kept as a curiosity because of its singular construction, having a movable back. It was made by Robert Wornum, a singularly clever pianoforte maker, at London, of the firm of Wornum and Son, established in 1777. Mr. Edwards was acquainted with this artist, and describes him as being possessed of a sort of genius and as having a tremendous enthusiasm for his art.

Mr. Edwards keeps in stock a number of choice pianos, besides other musical instruments. He is an agent for Messrs. Broadwood and Sons, Brinsmead and Sons, Collard and Collard, Erard, Rud, Ibach and Sohn, Gors and Kallman, &c.

Amongst drapers, the firm of S. A. Smith and Son, 34 and 36, Church Street, occupies the senior position. John Mort, originally a handloom weaver, established the business in the latter part of the last century. On his death Mr. Mort was succeeded by his son, John Mort, who was one of the most prominent men in Altrincham in his day, being Mayor in 1858 and 1859. He remembered seeing about 1815 an old woman compelled to wear the "brand" or "Scold's bridle" for the offence of violently abusing her neighbours. She was ordered to be bridled and led through the town, and as she refused to walk she was put in to a barrow and wheeled through the principal streets and through the market place, escorted by a great mob.

On the death of Mr. Mort, in 1804 or 1865, the business came into the hands of his nephew, John Shelmerdine Mort, who was Mayor in 1873. All these gentlemen were highly successful, and brought the business to the

premier position amongst the drapers of the town, the shop being patronized by Bowdon families to an extent that no other place could boast of. The high reputation of the firm also enabled it to obtain a superior class of apprentices, many of whom have since distinguished themselves in commercial life.

On the death of Mr. John Slielmerdine Mort, the business was taken over by Mr. S. A. Smith, and during the last ten years has been carried on by Messrs. Watts and Worthington as managing partners, and is in a prosperous condition, its old reputation for high class goods being well maintained. Mr. Worthington was an assistant under Mr. J. S. Mort, and remained so until entering into the present partnership, while Mr. Watts has had experience in some of the best houses in London, Paris, Liverpool and Birmingham.

Besides supplying the usual articles in drapery, the firm does a large funeral business, and has one of the largest dressmaking businesses in the district. Their specialities in goods are silks, dresses and mantles, in which latter department they have during the last four years made a striking advance. They are in touch with the leading wholesale houses, and have always a new stock every season to keep pace with changing fashions. The electric light is used, and the dressmaking rooms are well lighted and under good sanitary management.

J. W. Byrom, Draper, Silk Mercer, Outfitter, &c., of 4, Stamford Street. This business was established in the early part of 1851 by the late Mr. James Byrom, in premises the site of which is now covered by the Bank of Messrs. Cunliffes, Brooks, and Co., and in which he was engaged as a boy some 14 years previously. He opened under the style of Byrom and Co., his partner being Mr. John Brownell, of Stockport, with whose father Mr. Byrom had been engaged for a number of years. The partnership existed until 1862. In March, 1868, Mr. Byrom removed to the present establishment in Stamford Street, which he had built from plans prepared by the late Mr. Peter Pons. The building has an attractive appearance, and is of rather imposing dimensions, being four stories in height, with a frontage of 34 feet and a depth of 72 feet. The interior is divided into three sections, which arrangement enables the various branches of the business to be so classified that great convenience is afforded to customers when making their purchases.

Mr. Byrom is well remembered in Altrincham from the prominent part he took in the public and social life of the town. Besides being for many years a member of the Local Board and a Guardian of the Poor, he filled several other public positions, and in 1880 was Mayor of Altrincham. Mr. Byrom remained actively engaged in business until the time of his death in February, 1886. The business, which from the first had been one of steady and uniform prosperity, has since been carried on by his son, John William Byrom, and his efforts have been directed to make it in every respect an attractive and up-to-date house. Mr. Byrom cultivates a high-class trade, and the ranges of goods submitted each season are well adapted to the requirements of a neighbourhood such as Altrincham and Bowdon claims to be.

Mr. Byrom is an old Grammar School boy, and goes back in his

experience to the time when the school was under the mastership of Mr. Turner, in George Street. He is at the present time a member of the Free Library and Technical Class Committee, and was for many years hon. secretary of the Literary institute.

Mr. ARMSTRONG COWSILL, 2 and 4 Railway Street, is a brother of Mr. James Cowsill, and like the latter spent his boyhood in the country. He was educated at the famous school kept by Mr. Reynolds at Bucklow Hill, and remembers once going in those days to Dunham Hall, where every Friday the servants stood round the courtyard and presented barley bread to all comers. In addition to that pleasant custom, there was then whenever the Earl was at home, bread and cheese and beer in the servants' hall for everybody who called.

The connection of Mr. Cowsill's family with Altrincham dates a considerable way back. His grandfather, who was a contractor, built some property in the neighbourhood, including the house in Ashle5r Road known as "Spring Bank." Mr. Cowsill himself came to Altrincham in 1854 as an apprentice to Mr. Knowles Wild, who had a draper's shop next door to the shop now occupied by Mr. Josiah Drinkwater. Mr. Cowsill was Mr. Wild's first apprentice, and Mr. Rainslen was then an assistant.

Mr. Wild's father, old Geoffrey Wild, is chiefly memorable to Mr. Cowsill by the stories he used to tell of a ghost which used to haunt the house in which his father lived in the neighbourhood of Ringway. The latter was a silk-weaver, formerly living at Rochdale, who brought his looms from that town to the Ringway house, and presumably because it was haunted obtained it, though a large and roomy place, at a rental of two and sixpence a week. But a house with a ghost is dear at any rent, as the Wilds discovered. For this was a real, veritable ghost that was continually in evidence, striking terror into all the inmates by its mysterious visitations, making doors spring open in the dead of night, pulling clothes off the beds in which people were sleeping, and generally playing upon the nerves and fears of the wretched family in the most fiendish manner. It actually spoke to Geoffrey Wild's brother. What it said no one but the brother ever knew, for he kept the communication as a solemn secret until his death; but that it had spoken everybody believed, as much as in his own identity. The brother declared that the ghost was black. This is rather curious in view of some of R. L. Stevenson's weird stories in which evil spirits are introduced, drawn probably from the folk lore of Scotland, which always make their appearance in the shape of a black man.

The "Long Lane Boggart" mentioned in the account of Mr. W. Smith's business was also in full swing at that time, and when Mr. Cowsill took out his first parcel, which was in the winter, and to Hale, he was terrified all the way there and back by the stories of this phantom, which the errand boy poured into his ears.

That Altrincham was a primitive place during the days of Mr. Cowsill's apprenticeship may be judged from the fact that he once saw a man kept in the stocks in the Market-place during market time for the offence of drunkenness. The site of his present shop was then occupied by cottages which were let at eighteenpence a week, in one of which lived

" Old Cakey Joey," who got his living by going round selling hot pies in a little pony cart or donkey cart. Joey had formerly sold cakes, nuts and oranges in public-houses, but having joined the Wesleyans, had given up the public-house practice as inconsistent with his new principles. His Wesleyan friends provided the donkey cart as an incentive to Joey to adhere to the path of virtue, and he was faithful to his trust, but from his rather regretful confession to Mr. Cowsill that the public-house business was the more remunerative of the two, it is to be feared that he sometimes cast longing looks back upon the flesh pots of Egypt.

Mr. Cowsill commenced business for himself in Mr. Knowles Wild's shop in 1866, and removed to his present premises in 1872, when he bought the stock of the former proprietor, Mr. Bellamy. He has ever since done a very prosperous trade, and now does probably as much as any shop is capable of doing for its size. A very large stock is kept. Besides the shop rooms on the ground-floor there are upstairs commodious showrooms for mantles, millinery, &c., and large work-rooms, and the storeys above these are filled with stock. The whole of the three-storeyed premises, besides cellars, are devoted to business, and lighted throughout with the electric light. The cellars, like the other rooms, are filled with stock.

Mr. Cowsill is entitled to claim the credit of being the pioneer of shorter hours in Altrincham, so far as the shops are concerned. He began the practice of opening the shops at half-past eight in the morning, instead of at seven, as had been the custom, and when, in 1886, the first movement for bringing about closing on Wednesdays at two o'clock broke down, he struck out for himself, and boldly closed his own shop, regardless of what the consequences might be. These were, happily, the reverse of injurious, for whether the people decided to reward him for his public spirit, or whatever may be the cause, the fact remains that although his business has been a continually growing one, he never made so great an advance as he did in the period immediately following his courageous, single-handed adoption of the half-holiday system. He was also the first to abolish the troublesome custom of barricading the shop windows at night with shutters. On the occasion of his buying Mr. Bellamy's stock in October, 1872, he had a big show day, which was so largely patronized that the last of the customers were not disposed of until twelve o'clock at night. The staff were by that time all so thoroughly tired, that Mr. Cowsill determined to dispense with putting up the shutters. As a result of the experiment he came to the conclusion that shutters were useless, and has never put them up since. Another of his enterprises was that of showing ready-made millinery in his shop windows. This, which was the first instance of anything of the kind being done in Altrincham, occurred in 1873. The experiment resulted in a complete loss during the first year of its trial, but subsequent experience has fully justified its adoption and continuance.

Messrs. J. B. Wilson and Son, 39 to 47, Railway Street. The founder of this business, Mr. J. B. Wilson, is a Lincolnshire man, and served his apprenticeship at Gainsborough. Subsequently, he had experience at Hull, London, and Manchester, and was then ten years with the late Mr. Mort, whose shop at that time occupied the position of the

premier drapery establishment in Altrincham. In connection with that phase of his experience, Mr. Wilson has pleasant recollections of a sort of business pic-nic, which was organized by the firm to the distant village of Carrington once a year, when an omnibus full of goods was sent and sold in a schoolroom there.

In 1877 Mr. Wilson entered into partnership with Mr. Sydney Brookfield, under the title of Wilson and Brookfield, which being dissolved by mutual consent in 1888, Mr. Wilson took premises in Stamford Road, and commenced business there for himself, subsequently taking his son into partnership. In 1896 he removed to his present establishment, which is called "The Bon Marche," and experience has already justified the wisdom of the removal, by the advantages which have been derived from the more commodious, convenient, and suitable position of the new premises.

The shop has the unusually lengthy frontage of 80 feet, and its area of 2,450 feet provides ample room for the transaction of business. Everything, moreover, is on the ground floor, and the whole of the stock is in sight. The extensive frontage provides an excellent light, and during the evening the electric light is in use, supplied by two of the "National" gas engines on the premises, of six-horse and two-horse power respectively.

The different classes of goods—drapery, millinery, mantles and hosiery—are all arranged in separate departments, and there is also a Gentlemen's Outfitting Department, which, besides being distinct from the others, has the advantage of a separate entrance, thus obviating the difficulty which arises from the curious masculine dislike to being in a shop in which there are lady customers.

The proprietors of this firm have set themselves to the task of competing in prices with Manchester houses, and of justifying the title of "Bon Marche," which they have chosen for their establishment.

Mr. Sydney Brookfield, Ashley Road and 'The Downs, is a son of a Manchester merchant, the late Mr. Samuel Brookfield, of the firm of Brookfield, Aitchison and Co., of York Street, Manchester. With these antecedents, and having received a good education at one of the best schools in the neighbourhood of Manchester, it would have been easy for him to obtain an advantageous opening in a wholesale house, but in deference to the wish of his friends he embarked in the retail trade, and for that purpose became apprenticed to Mr. Mort in Church Street, whose business was then in the heyday of its prosperity, having for his colleagues other youths of good family, some of whom have since made their mark in the commercial world.

In 1877 he entered into partnership with Mr. J. B. Wilson, under the style of Wilson and Brookfield. The new firm established themselves in Mr. Brookfield's present premises, and the partners worked together successfully until September, 1888, when they separated by mutual consent, Mr. Wilson taking a shop in the Stamford New Road, and Mr. Brookfield remaining in the original premises, which are admirably situated in the centre of a busy neighbourhood, and have excellent accommodation, the length of the shop being 60ft., and its width nearly 30ft. at the widest part, while upstairs there is a stock room and show room. Recently the electric light has been added to the other advantages of the place.

From the beginning this business has been recognized as being mostly concerned with high-class trade, but in recent years the tendency has been to make it more exclusively so, the large stock kept being all composed of the better class of stuff. General drapery goods are sold, there is a very large stock of smallwares, and a big trade is done with dressmakers.

Mr. Ernest Jackson, Family Draper, Dressmaker and Milliner, "The Manchester Warehouse," 39 and 47, George Street, commenced business in 1888, since which time his trade has developed until it has become one of the largest of the class in the town, his annual sales in particular attracting large numbers of customers. Besides the shop he has millinery show-rooms and workrooms, the whole of which are lighted by electricity. The dressmaking and millinery department is an important branch of the business, and the large stock includes all descriptions of Manchester drapery, hosiery and outfitting.

Amongst Clothiers, Mr. Joseph Brooks, of 69, George Street, occupies a leading place. Mr. Brooks is a native of Leeds, and from eight to fourteen worked at a flax mill in that town. He then went into Kitson's Engineering Works and remained until he was twenty-one, when he struck out into an entirely new line by undertaking the duties of a commercial traveller for a clothing and boot firm. This position he filled with great success for many years, and it may be mentioned that he had, while he was in work at Leeds, repaired the deficiencies in education which necessarily resulted from his leaving school at so early an age, by assiduous attendances at the evening classes at the Mechanics' Institute and by persevering devotion of his spare time to study.

He travelled in nearly all parts of the United Kingdom, and became one of the best known travellers on the road. The commercial experience he gained in that capacity has been of great value to him in his present business, since it enabled him not only to obtain a thorough knowledge of the goods he supplies, but gave him an insight into the ins and outs of the trade, made him acquainted with the best sources of supply, and brought him into contact with sound business methods and customs. As in addition Mr. Brooks possesses the commercial instinct, and is active, decisive and orderly, it will be seen that he is furnished with all the equipment which is necessary to a successful tradesman.

In 1886 Mr. Brooks opened two shops side by side in Station Road, for the supply respectively of clothing and boots. The latter shop, called "The Cheshire Boot and Shoe Depot," remains in its old position, under the management of Mrs. Brooks; the clothier business, which Mr. Brooks himself superintends, was removed about four years ago to the commodious premises at 69, George Street, where it now is. Not only is the large shop on the ground floor stocked with goods, but the room above it of the same size is similarly filled, and the advantages resulting from the existence of so large an assortment of articles as is here exhibited have not been ignored by the public. The trade is large, and has steadily increased year by year.

Besides supplying ready-made garments, a considerable order trade is done. The goods in this department are made by a firm which ranks as one of the first of its kind, and which besides possessing a specially large stock of woollen goods and patterns, has exceptional facilities for

making goods according to order. The measure is taken here, and by means of a registered book of illustrations, figures of every type of person ordering can be so described that the exceptionally clever cutter employed invariably succeeds in providing a capital fit.

In April, 1896, Mr. Brooks was elected a representative for the West Ward on the Altrincham District Council in succession to Mr. Gott, who retired. He signalized his first year of office by a presentation from himself to the town of twelve handsome seats for the use of visitors to the Stamford Park. In February of this year he was appointed by the Council to be a representative on the Governing Board of the Seamon's Moss Charity.

The business of Mr. T. J. FARRELL, Tailor, Stamford New Boad, was established in George Street, in 1845, by Mr. James Mitchell, and continued by him until his death in 1875. His widow carried on the concern until May, 1881, when it came into the hands of Mr. Farrell, who had been in the business since 1873 as manager and cutter. In December, 1884, Mr. Farrell removed to his present address in Stamford New Boad, the shop being the first built in this thoroughfare.

The business is devoted to high-class tailoring, the trade being a private to order one, the names of some of the best families in the district being on the books. It is noted for liveries and breeches.

In 1875 Mr. Farrell took a prominent part in the establishment of the Altrincham Amateur Fire Brigade, under the captaincy of Mr. O. 8. Holt, and was for several years a member of the Local Board until its dissolution in 1894.

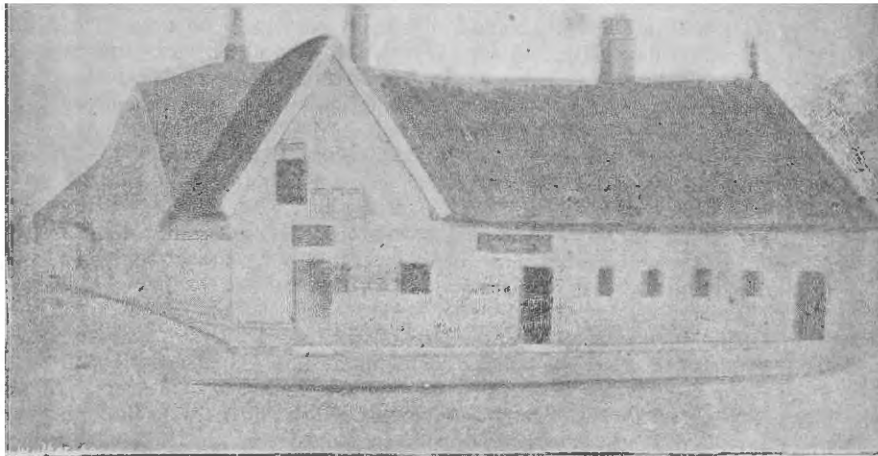
Messrs. R. and S. THOMSON, Tailors, 24, The Downs. The business was established in 1856, in George Street, opposite Shaw's Lane. Subsequently it was transferred to Railway Street, and for some years has been located in its present position. The firm do an old-fashioned to order trade, relying upon good materials and workmanship.

Mr. WILLIAM M. BLACKSHAW, 19, George Street, has the oldest boot-maker's business in Altrincham. His father, Mr. C. Blackshaw, and himself have now in succession carried it on forty-seven years, but before Mr. C. Blackshaw, Mr. James Matthews conducted it, and he was preceded by one Ogden. During the time of the latter, in the early part of the century, James Matthews, a young Irish shoemaker, came to Altrincham in search of employment, with, tradition says, fourpence in his pocket. Calling at Ogden's shop he there met his fate in the shape of Miss Ogden, who, liking his appearance, recommended her father to engage him, which was done, and the situation became a permanency. Matthews subsequently married Miss Ogden, and on the death of the father succeeded to the business, which he carried on successfully until his death in 1851. He was a Roman Catholic, yet attended the New Connexional Chapel with his wife. But when his time came to die he remembered his early faith and sent for the priest. His wife was a good Methodist, but free from sectarian prejudices; not only was the priest admitted, but after her husband's death she paid for masses to be celebrated for his benefit. She was probably blamed for tolerating superstition, but love laughs at many things besides locksmiths.

Matthews's case resembled on a small scale that of Dick Whittington.

He came to the town poor and a stranger, married his master's daughter, became a comparatively rich man, and in due time succeeded to the dignity of the Mayoralty. This was in 1846. The convivialities consequent upon the assumption of the position are charged with being the cause of his death. He died, like many others, of being Mayor of Altrincham.

He was succeeded in the business by his assistant, Mr. C. Blackshaw, who had served his apprenticeship with him. The business at this time was in the Old Market Place, where it remained until about 1860, when Mr. Blackshaw removed to George Street. During the last twenty years of his life Mr. Blackshaw was blind, but was able to serve in the shop with the greatest facility. On his death in 1878 he was succeeded by his son, Mr. William M. Blackshaw, who in 1881 removed to the premises he now occupies.



THE OLD WOOLPACK INN, PULLED DOWN IN 1865.

(From a Photograph, of a Drawing in possession of Mr. H. H. Balshaw.)

The present position of the business is worthy its old standing and history. More boots are made to order here than by any other firm in the town. Mr. Blackshaw also does a large repairing business, and is one of the local agents for the well-known "K" boots, of which he sells a considerable quantity.

Messrs. Starkey and Nield, 43, George Street. This, the premier firm of Cabinet Makers in Altrincham, was established in 1790 by John Starkey in its present position. He is described by Mr. John Brierley, who remembers him, as being at about the middle of the present century a tall, spare, old man, wearing during business hours a paper cap and walking in a bent position. He would frequently totter across to old Mr. Brierley's shop, when the following conversation would take place:—

Well, William," addressing Mr. Brierley, "and how's your friend Joe Barker getting on?" (This was in allusion to the notorious lecturer, of whom Mr. Brierley was an admirer.) "Now, John," Mr. Brierley would reply, "I should think you would take off your hat when you mention Mr. Barker." "What! Joe Barker!" was the retort, "Me take off my hat to Joe Barker? Never! Never!" And the old gentleman would turn round and totter determinedly back to his own place, well satisfied at having struck this firm blow against the heretical tendencies of the times. He was an excellent workman. Everything he turned out was well finished, substantially made, and durable. It is gratifying in coming across the memory of these old Altrincham tradesmen to find so often that they were famed for the thoroughness and high quality of the work they did. Besides John Starkey at this time there were three other Johns, all distinguished by these honourable features. They were John Sharrack, the founder of Messrs. Brierley and Filmer's business, John Worsley, and John Wyatt. Old John Worsley's chairs (he lived in a row of cottages in Railway Street, where Messrs. Hill and Whittick's shops are) are in use at this day, though some of them must be eighty or ninety years old, and are greatly valued by their possessors on account of their splendid durability. John Wyatt, of Church Street, was a clock and watchmaker, renowned for his alarums and musical clocks, who made every article required in the mechanism of his timepieces with his own file.

Reverting to Messrs. Starkey and Nield's, John Starkey, at his death, was succeeded by his son William, who subsequently took Mr. Edward Nield into partnership, under the style of Starkey and Nield. On the death of William Starkey, Mr. Nield carried on the business, which, as described in the notice of Mr. Allwood's firm, in a few years attained to a position of great prosperity. In April, 1888, the business was bought by Mr. O. Burrow, of Lancaster, and Mr. Nield retired.

Mr. Burrow served his apprenticeship with Messrs. Gillow and Co., the principal firm of cabinet makers and upholsterers in the kingdom, being seven years with them at their branch establishment at Lancaster, and two years at their London house, during which time he went through every branch of the business. With these qualifications it has necessarily followed that the reputation of this old-established firm has not suffered at Mr. Burrow's hands—on the contrary it has, if anything, been heightened. The large stock, made on the premises, of beautiful high-class cabinet work, which is to be seen in the three capacious showrooms in George Street, attests the fine quality of the work done under Mr. Burrow's superintendence, and in their issue of April 5th, 1890, the "Railway Supplies Journal" instanced the firm as an illustration of the fact that the best manufactories of household furniture are now no longer to be found in the metropolis alone, but that many provincial houses are producing specimens of artistic furniture unsurpassable for beauty of design and excellence of workmanship. The Journal also mentioned that at that time Messrs. Starkey and Nield's were furnishing a house in the neighbourhood of Grosvenor Square, London, which was pretty plain, they said, that the metropolis is not regarded as the only place where the best furniture is to be obtained. In connection with this it may be said that the firm do a

great deal of work for London, and that most of the goods made by them go out of the district.

At the rear of the showrooms are large premises in which are three workrooms, 56ft. by 20ft. each, and a room for French polishing. The mortising, moulding, turning, &c., are done by machinery; the upholstering shop is a detached building.

Mr. WILLIAM ALLWOOD, 30, The Downs and New Street, has been established in his present position eight years, but his connection with cabinet making in Altrincham dates back to 1867, in which year he entered Messrs. Starkey and Nield's business in George Street as foreman. He had before that been foreman at Mr. H. Ogden's, Manchester, and had previously been thirteen years with Mr. James Lamb, of John Dalton Street, Manchester. It was, in fact, with this high-class firm that Mr. Allwood learned his business.

At Messrs. Starkey and Nield's he had the management of the upholstery department, while Mr. Nield superintended the cabinet making. The firm had practically a monopoly of the Bowdon trade for many years, and Mr. Allwood's department increased so rapidly while he was there, that whereas at his advent there were but one man and one woman employed in it, the number of workpeople had risen to twenty when he left.

When Mr. Nield retired in 1888, Mr. Allwood set up business on his own account, and may be said to have practically carried on Messrs. Starkey and Nield's business in different premises, for, being popular with the customers, it was natural that many of them should patronize him in his new undertaking. With such antecedents it need scarcely be said that he has been very successful. His work, which is all done by hand, is known all over the country and is sent to many parts. Amongst the places of note the furnishing of which has been placed in his hauds may be mentioned the Manchester Stock Exchange, a great portion of which he furnished.

Mr. G. W. BONSON, North End, Stamford New Road, served his apprenticeship in Altrincham, and was afterwards some time with Messrs. Gillow and Co., London. Later he was with Messrs. Kendal, Milne and Co., of Manchester, and has had experience in other large towns. He commenced for himself in 1852, and in 1894 came to his present premises, which consist of a handsome shop in a good position near the Railway Station, and a commodious warehouse and workshop at the back. The large workshop is fitted with wood-working machinery and the electric light installation. There are also spacious furniture store rooms, which are well heated with hot water apparatus. Furniture removing, for which he has every appliance, is another branch of Mr. Bonson's business.

The stock is large and miscellaneous, and includes, besides drawing-room, dining-room, and bedroom suites, cottage and kitchen furniture, brass and iron bedsteads, mail carts, wringing machines, linoleum, carpets, &c.

Mr. Bonson has a large business connection with the families of the neighbourhood, and personally superintends the execution of all the orders placed in his hands.

The business of Mr. WILLIAM OKELL, Victoria House, Stamford New Road, is an instance of that rapid advance of cabinet-making in Altrincham during recent years, which has secured for the town a wide reputation in the trade, the place having become well-known as a centre for the manufacture of the better class goods in this department, and the best workmen attracted to it by the fact that the top wage is paid here.

Mr. Okell, who learned his business with his father, and who, during his thirty years' experience has become acquainted with every branch of the trade, was established eighty years ago, and during that time has built up a concern upon the most advanced lines. He has a large, handsome and well-stocked shop and a workshop which, for its size, is probably as well accoutred as any in the country. Realizing the economic advantages of machinery, he has fitted up his place with every kind of labour-saving appliance, including hair and wool carding machine in the upholstery department, the whole being under-driven by one of Crossley's gas engines and as he regularly employs a score or so of workmen, including cabinet makers, French polishers and upholsterers, a large number of articles is being constantly produced. As in the case of Messrs. Starkey and Nield's and other firms, many of the goods made in this trade are sent out of the neighbourhood. In some cases they are sent a considerable distance, articles of his manufacture having been shipped last year to every one of the five continents. It should, moreover, be said that every single piece of furniture he offers for sale is wholly of his own make, and that he has not a painted article in his stock.

Besides cabinet-making, Mr. Okell does a considerable business in removals, for which he has every facility on the premises, including horses, van and van shed. He has also a storage warehouse separate from the works, the rooms in which, enclosed by lime washed walls, are thoroughly warmed and ventilated and provided with a hoist, and in which he has furniture and other valuables from many Bowdon mansions. The families of the district are thus provided with an excellent pantechicon close to their own doors.

Mr. Okell has also a house agency. It is the custom at Torquay, Southport and many other places for such agencies to be associated with cabinet-making and upholstery businesses, and he has fallen in with the practice, which offers many advantages to householders.

The leading firm of plumbers, &c., is that of Messrs. Josiah Drinkwater and Sons, Registered Plumbers, 11, Station Road. The business was established in 1871 by Mr. J. Drinkwater in the present premises, which were built by Geoffrey Wild for his own business—that of a plumber—early in the century. Geoffrey Wild was followed by William Harrison in the same line, and on the latter's entering other premises, the shop was taken by Mr. Wood, ironmonger, who was succeeded by Mr. Bowen. Finally the shop was brought back to its original purpose by Mr. Drinkwater, who had rather curiously served his apprenticeship there with Mr. Harrison. The business has considerably developed since its commencement, and seven or eight years ago Mr. Drinkwater took his two sons into partnership.

Besides the plumber's business, the firm does a considerable trade in house decorating, painting and paper-hanging, and is the sole agent

in the district for the incandescent gas light. A branch shop has been opened at Victoria Road, Peelcauseway,

Mr. J. Drinkwater represents the Central Ward in the Urban District Council, and is the Chairman of the Highways Committee. He and Mr. J. H. Douglas are among the few remaining members of the original Volunteer Corps established in Altrincham in 1850. The Altrincham Company was one of the earliest formed in Cheshire, as its title, 12th Cheshire, showed, and it was initiated by a meeting at the Town Hall one afternoon, at which many local magnates attended, including Lords De Tabley and Egerton, Mr. T. Tatton, of Wythenshawe, and the Hon. Wilbraham Egerton. Such was the enthusiasm that 200 men were sworn in the first night. Those included many Bowdon residents, such as Messrs. Child, H. K. Balston, John Griffin, J. S. Grafton, Frank Marriot and William Milne. Mr. Hugh Fleming was the first captain, Mr. Alfred Nield lieutenant, and Mr. Stephen Robinson, principal of the Atlas Works, ensign. J. H. Douglas and Jack Dean were the youngest members of the corps. Mr. Douglas became one of its crack shots, and some time after the starting of the movement was offered an ensigncy, which he declined. Some conception of the social status of the members may be gained from the fact that the Altrincham Company supplied seventeen captains to Manchester and other regiments. The members at the outset were required to pay all expenses, including uniforms and ammunition, and in addition to subscribe a guinea a year each to the corps. Two companies were formed at Timperley by Captain Lyons soon after the establishment of the Altrincham Company, and Mr. Drinkwater elected, for convenience, to join one of these.

Mr. T. J. Farrell, Plumber, 13, Moss Lane, started business in 1881. He had served his apprenticeship with the late Mr. C. R. Walton, then of Stockport Road, than whom there was no more competent and practical master of his trade. Mr. Farrell, in addition to being a registered sanitary plumber, is an electric fitter. He has a practical knowledge of his business and personally superintends the work entrusted to him. He has successfully carried out many large contracts.

Mr. Henry Hall, House Decorator, Paperhanger, &c., George Street and Regent Road, is a native of Altrincham and has been established 25 years. His father and he have together been painters in Altrincham about 50 years. He has a large stock of paints, oils, varnishes and all painters' sundries, and has always on hand patterns of lincrusta, Japanese leathers, anaglypta, and the asbestos for ceiling and frieze decorations.

The oldest ironmongery business, that of Messrs. Brierley and Filmer, 80, George Street, was established in 1797, so that the firm is entitled this year to celebrate its centenary. The founder of the business was John Sharrock, the great-grandfather of Mr. Brierley, the present partner in the firm. Mr. Sharrock was a Lancashire man who settled at Altrincham in the year mentioned above, at which time the staple industries of the town were worsted manufacturing and handloom weaving. He had the same shop in which the business is now carried on, but in those days it was entered from the street by four steps, which by the raising of the road are now rendered unnecessary.

The trade done was principally with the farmers of the district in dairy utensils and ironmongery. Mr. Sharrock had a reputation for the honest work he put into the articles he made, and whenever an auctioneer had any of these to dispose of he encouraged buyers to bid by reminding them of the maker's name and character. The present Mr. Brierley's grandfather became an apprentice to Mr. Sharrock in 1820, subsequently married Miss Sharrock, became manager in 1833 on the death of Mr. Sharrock, and proprietor some years later when Mrs. Sharrock died.

The arrival of the railway, with the consequent opening up of the district, was almost contemporaneous with Mr. Brierley's assumption of the control of the business, which so much increased that the small shop had to be enlarged three or four times, and a large warehouse and workshop were built at the back.

Upon Mr. Brierley's death in 1878 the business passed into the hands of his sons, Messrs. William and John Brierley, by whom it was conducted till 1887, when they retired in favour of their nephew, Mr. Brierley, and he and his partner, Mr. Filmer, under the style of Brierley and Filmer, have carried on the business up to the present date.

The new blood brought into the business by both the partners has kept it well to the front, notwithstanding the strenuous competition which is characteristic of the times. The old reputation of the firm for tinsmith and black iron working is still maintained, and it provides specialities in stove piping and in grates and ranges. Much of the latter class of work is done with builders, and being ordered from samples and specifications is supplied direct from the manufacturers.

During the last few years the firm have very largely increased their stocks, and greatly added to the variety of goods formerly kept. Among the special lines are a complete stock of enamel goods, brushes, mats, household requirements, crystal lamp oil, and a first class collection of lamps.

A branch shop opened at Peelcauseway last year is an evidence of the enterprise of which these young tradesmen are capable.

Mr. George Bowen, J.P., Ironmonger, George Street, commenced business in 1859, succeeding Mr. W. Wood, ironmonger, in the shop in Station Road (then called Post Office Place), now occupied by Mr. J. Drinkwater.

Mr. Bowen was born at Cefn in Wales, and as a boy was acquainted with only the Welsh language, which he has now entirely forgotten. He learned his business at the leading ironmongers in the city of Chester, afterwards served sometime in the business at Liverpool, and while quite a youth came about forty years ago to manage Mr. Wood's business at Altrincham. Mr. Wood died soon afterwards and Mr. Bowen succeeded him. In a circular which the latter issued two or three years later he informed "the Nobility, Clergy, Gentry and Public generally" that he had for some time devoted his study to the heating and ventilating of Churches, Public Buildings, &c.; that he could supply plain and ornamental entrance gates suitable for Mansions, Churches, &c., also Palisading and Iron Hurdles, and that he had won the First Prize at the Altrincham Agricultural Show for the best collection of Agricultural Implements. The latter announcement had reference to the beginning of

a succession of triumphs, for during the 34 years of the Altrincham Society's existence, Mr. Bowen has taken no less than 32 Annual First Prizes for the best collection of Implements and Machinery, open to the United Kingdom, besides a great number of other First Prizes, Silver Medals, and Certificates.

In 1871 he removed to his present premises, and in another circular issued he returned thanks for the liberal support he had received for twelve years, and declared in the picturesque style to which he is prone that he had for years been "cabin'd, cribb'd, confined" in his old quarters, and had had to stow away an extensive stock "in nooks and corners." In effect he, in his characteristic effusion, called upon the public generally to come and rejoice with him upon his translation to a larger, happier, and more useful sphere of labour, and undoubtedly the new premises he had built, consisting of a shop or warehouse, and workshops, justified some feeling of satisfaction and pride, and remain to-day a worthy example of enterprise and of thoughtful design. The business capacity of the shop is largely increased by the two floors above being made into galleries, and the building thus open, from ground to roof, is fitted to show the large stock it contains. This consists of electro-silver plate, cutlery, Britannia Metal goods, furniture for drawing, dining, and breakfast rooms and kitchens, brushes and tinnery, chimney-pieces, stove grates, kitchen ranges, garden tools, agricultural and farming requisites, and many other articles.

Mr. Bowen has taken a prominent part in many social movements, and in the public life of the town. He was Mayor of Altrincham in 1885, and a member of the Local Board of Health from 1880 until its dissolution in 1894, at which time he was its Chairman. On the formation of the Urban District Council he was elected a member for the Central Ward, and became the first Chairman of the new body. This office constituted him an ex-officio Justice of the Peace, in which capacity he rendered such services as led to his being placed, at the beginning of the year, among the permanent Magistrates of the County, an honour which no Altrincham tradesman has ever received before.

Mr. Edwin Watson, 104, George Street, has the distinction of possessing probably the handsomest shop in Altrincham. In fact this shop, which like many others in the town is really a shop and warehouse combined, would be difficult to match in many of the largest towns in the kingdom. Built according to the proprietor's own wishes, from the designs of Messrs. Watson & Justice, of Oxford Street, Manchester, it is a model place of business. Although possessing five stories, including the cellar, three of which are taken back from the frontage to a length of 75 feet, there is not a dark corner in the place, and this not because of artificial lighting, but owing to the ingenuity of the arrangements for letting in the light of day. The finished workmanship displayed in the building, the stylish fixtures, and the beauty of many of the articles in the principal showrooms, are all attractive, but what is perhaps the most striking feature of all is the neatness and order with which the stock is arranged. The multiplicity of articles to be found in a well-equipped ironmonger's shop is notorious, but here everything is so skilfully disposed that not only can the assistants put their hands upon a given commodity in a moment, but the effect of seeing every bit of space

filled with goods so artistically arranged is very pleasing, and it is impossible to leave the place without a feeling of admiration for the mind that has thus evoked order out of chaos, and by the disposition of a crowd of miscellaneous articles of everyday use has succeeded in producing an impression of such simplicity as actually to amount to æsthetic charm. As in the case of most of the best shops in Altrincham, the electric light is fixed in every department from cellar to roof.

Mr. Watson keeps a large stock of valuable articles in copper and brass, and a stock of buckets, boilers, netting, implements, &c., and has a special hedge slasher of which he has sold a great number to farmers in the district. He is the sole agent in Altrincham for the "Sunbeam" Cycles. He has endeavoured by keeping always in hand a varied assortment of such goods to attract customers who have been in the habit of going to Manchester, and is quite satisfied with the results of his efforts in that direction, having been well supported by the large houses in the district. Mr. Watson is not the only tradesman in the town who has set himself resolutely to meet Manchester competition, and it is a gratifying feature of Altrincham trade to find that such endeavours are being crowned with success.

Mr. WILLIAM GRAHAM, Ironmonger, The Downs, is a native of Cumberland, and was for some time an assistant to Mr. George Bowen. He afterwards, for five years, managed Mrs. Wilde's business in Church Street, and in 1881 began business for himself opposite Brooks's Bank, subsequently removing to his present premises.

Mr. Graham is a general ironmonger and agent for agricultural implements. He has held the office of Secretary of the Altrincham Agricultural Society since 1891, the period being marked by a success probably greater than any the Society has known during its existence of five-and-thirty years.

Mr. JAMES GOTT, Tobacconist and Cigar Merchant, Railway Street. This business was established about 1875 by Mr. Allwood, who shortly afterwards disposed of it to Mr. Carrington, by whom it was transferred in 1879 to the present proprietor. It was for many years the only first-class tobacco shop in the town, and although it now has some competitors, its reputation for selling genuine and choice articles is as high as it ever was. A large stock is kept of foreign cigars, which are now in very good condition, and various sorts of tobacco of the best quality. Three of Mr. Gott's own mixtures are sold—the "Bowdon," "Happy Times," and "Elysium," at respectively 4d., 1s., and 5d. per ounce. A speciality is made of dark twilight flake, which is specially made for the firm, and a great variety is provided in thick twist, three kinds being kept in black and two in brown.

All Bell's cigarettes are kept and a large stock of Murratti's, and Mr. Gott is the local agent for the Anglo-Egyptian Cigarette Company, which was established last year at Cairo by Mr. Josef Przedecki, the Imperial Ottoman Consul at Breslau, and which has now a branch establishment in Fleet Street, London. "The repute attaching to Egyptian cigarettes," says the journal *Tobacco*, "is due not only to the excellence of the tobacco and the care exercised in the manufacture, but also to the fact that the cigarettes are favoured by the climate. This is peculiarly dry,

and as a consequence the cigarettes do not contain as much dampness as those made in more humid climates. One detail in the manufacture of the Anglo-Egyptian Company's cigarettes is worth mentioning. After being rolled they are taken into rooms which are full of shelves, where they are laid out before being packed. Here they remain for five days, at the end of which time experienced hands select and pack them. Every cigarette is not only guaranteed to be hand-made, but to be made by the most skilled workmen it is possible to obtain. Certainly the cigarettes commend themselves to the eye by the care bestowed on their get-up, and we can speak in unequivocal terms of their superior quality."

Considerable interest is attached to Mr. Gott from the fact that he was born and brought up close to the village of Haworth, in Yorkshire, the home of Charlotte Bronte. He went for a time to the day school connected with the church there, and remembers the whole family with the exception of the brilliant but dissipated son, Branwell. Charlotte he describes as being "a plain looking little thing," and says that she and her sisters, Emily and Anne, were accustomed to wander about the moors all day, associating with nobody in the world but themselves. For some time after the publication of "Jane Eyre," its authorship was unknown, and it was discovered by a gentleman from Liverpool, whose knowledge of this neighbourhood enabled him to trace the origin of the work. After the information got abroad, the little churchyard at Haworth used to be filled every Sunday morning by strangers who had come to catch a glimpse of the gifted young woman, whose genius flashing forth so suddenly had created a sensation in the reading world. The father, the Rev. Patrick Bronte was, says Mr. Gott, "a fine white-haired old gentleman, very impressive in the pulpit, and very stern in his demeanour and conduct in his own house."

Mr. Gott was for some years a member of the Local Board of Health, and in 1894 was elected by the West Ward to the new District Council, but retired in April, 1896, owing to feeble health. Since then he has had a long illness, but his numerous friends in Altrincham will be glad to hear that he is making great progress in the recovery of his health, and that the approaching spring weather is likely to bring about a complete restoration. During his illness his business has been managed by his daughter, whom a long experience has made familiar with every detail of the trade.

Mr. Gott has never fallen in with the custom which for some years has obtained in Altrincham of opening tobacco shops on Sunday. From the first day he began business until the present time his shop has been closed every Sunday in the year.

The "CRITERION" Tobacco and Cigar Shop, the proprietor of which is Mr. John Emery, has been established over ten years, at 9, Railway Street, with latterly a branch shop in Station Road, which is still going. The Railway Street shop particularly, which Mr. Emery himself superintends, has from the first done such a share of the trade of the district as almost to entitle it to be termed the "popular" tobacco shop of Altrincham. Mr. Emery seems to possess the instinct which enables a man to know how to cater for the people, and both the name "Criterion" and the place have undoubtedly struck the public taste.

One of the features of the "Criterion" consists in giving presents of tobacco, cigarettes, or cigars at the beginning of the year to those customers who have conferred the greatest patronage on the establishment during the previous year, the amount of the patronage being reckoned from the return of checks which are given with the purchases. Hitherto the system has been limited to the purchasers of Irish roll, but Mr. Emery has arranged to extend the system, commencing 1st January, 1897, to other classes of customers.

Besides the Irish Roll, which is a speciality at the "Criterion," there are here, amongst other tobaccos, the "Criterion Mixtures," the chief of which is the "Stamford Special," which is a blend of the finest Virginia and Havanna tobaccos. There are also good twopenny and threepenny cigars, the latter being labelled "The C. T. N. Special," and the "Criterion" brand of cigarettes, made from the finest selected sub-cured Virginia.

The "Criterion" also affords the luxury of a Drink Bar to its customers, at which are sold non-intoxicating beverages, such as Hop Bitters, Dandelion Stout, Mineral Waters, &c.; and the cyclist or other wayfarer may recruit his energies with a cup of Bovril and a biscuit.

The firm of J. T. and J. Gaskarth, Wine and Spirit Merchants and Importers, Dunham Road, has been in existence fully 100 years, having been established in the closing years of the last century by Mr. Isaac Gaskarth, the business being originally located in the Old Market Place, next to the old "Waggon and Horses," which was pulled down some 50 years ago. Mr. Isaac Gaskarth was followed by his three nephews, J., T., and Joseph, the latter, who had the control of the business for many years until his death in 1895, being one of the most prominent townsmen of Altrincham, his popularity being shown by the fact that he held the office of Mayor no less than four times—in 1870, 1871, 1879 and 1886.

Probably no business in Altrincham has changed so little as this during the last hundred years. As it was a century ago, so it continues now, quiet and unostentatious, depending upon the fame of the quality of its wines and spirits, rather than upon advertising, eminently respectable, secure in its old connections, sticking closely to its former traditions, and by the easy and prosperous tenor of its career recalling the time when a few shopkeepers, doctors and lawyers clustered about the Old Market Place, comprised the whole of the industry of the town.

The business is now under the proprietorship of Mr. George Podmore, who had a long experience in the office, under the management of Mr. Joseph Gaskarth. It will be sufficient to say in addition that the mantle of the former proprietors of the firm appears to have descended upon him, that he is jealous of its reputation, and determined to maintain its traditions.

Mr. David Morrison, Old Market Place, is a native of Bowdon, whither his father migrated over fifty years since, from Scotland, settling at Grange Farm, Grange Road, which in an old map of Bowdon is described as "Morrison's Lane."

Mr. Morrison made his first acquaintance with business as an apprentice to the late Mr. Byrom. He subsequently went to the late Mr. Syers, Estate Agent, with whom he served three years, and then, in 1876,

commenced business for himself as Accountant, Estate Agent, &c., on the Downs, afterwards removing to George Street, where he remained for several years. Two years ago he entered his present premises and extended his business by undertaking the work of an auctioneer, in which he at once displayed an ability that has since brought him an extensive patronage. The whole of his business has been marked by a steady growth since its commencement, and its present dimensions offer a remarkable instance of the development of Altrincham, during the last twenty years, as a centre of trade.

In 1896, Mr. Morrison held the position of Mayor of Altrincham, to which he was raised after an experience of only two years as a burgess, the rapidity of his promotion being such as the annals of the Mayoralty had probably not exhibited before. During his tenure of office, being called upon to preside at public meetings he displayed some ability as a public speaker, in connection with which it is interesting to know that he was a member of the Debating Society which used to meet in the British Schools some twenty odd years ago, and in which Mr. T. H. Vernon and other local orators first tried their 'prentice hands.

Though he has taken no prominent part in political work, Mr. Morrison has from time to time shown considerable interest in public questions, and during his Mayoralty gave a practical proof of his zeal on such subjects by inaugurating a movement for the establishment of two cab shelters in Altrincham, which is likely to be accomplished at an early date.

Mr. REUBEN PEARSON, Masseur and Hydropathist, of Hale Road, Altrincham, and the Heathside Hydro, Knutsford, has long been a familiar figure in the district. He began his career as a masseur over 30 years ago, his earliest instructor being the first Dr. Ramson, whose grandson is now practising in the neighbourhood, but massage not having then attained its present popularity it was some time before it afforded him regular employment. At one period he applied the treatment to a well-known Duke, who was long an invalid and recluse, and who by accident, discovering that Mr. Pearson, at the time a youth in his Grace's service, possessed abilities as a masseur, employed him daily in that capacity.

After studying massage for some years in other pursuits, Mr. Pearson was at length enabled to find regular employment in its application, and has now a large practice, many of his patients belonging to the county and other leading families. He is an adept in the various requirements of the practice, and knows how to vary his method according to the character of the complaint he has to treat, unlike many masseurs, who have one unvarying style for all complaints. In this he is helped by the physiological knowledge he has acquired in the practice of both massage and hydropathy.

Those who require the hydropathic treatment can have it either at the Heathside Hydro' or at Hale Road, at which latter establishment Mr. Pearson's son, Mr. Alfred Pearson, is in constant attendance.

A recent addition has been made to the firms of Altrincham by the establishment at 15, Railway Street, of a branch shop by Mr. S. Fielder, Corsetier, of Oxford Street, Manchester. Mr. Fielder is the proprietor

and maker of the patent belted corset, the "Strozona," and invites support on the ground that he is not only a retailer of corsets, but a genuine corsetier, who makes every description of corset and belt to order, and personally superintends the cutting and making.

During the last few years a complete revolution has taken place in the making of corsets. The old French ideal has been discarded, and a style which is distinctly English has been substituted for it. The "Btrozona," which is an abdominal belt and corset in one, is an outcome of this change, though Mr. Fielder does not limit himself to it, but has in stock several hundred different makes of corsets selected from the best English and foreign houses. He also makes a feature of producing stays calculated to correct deformities and to support weak spines, and his stall clean and repair corsets and belts. After a long experience in the Midlands and South of England, Mr. Fielder established himself in Manchester ten years ago. In that time he has rapidly extended his operations, and from his factory corsets are now sent to all parts of the United Kingdom and the Continent.



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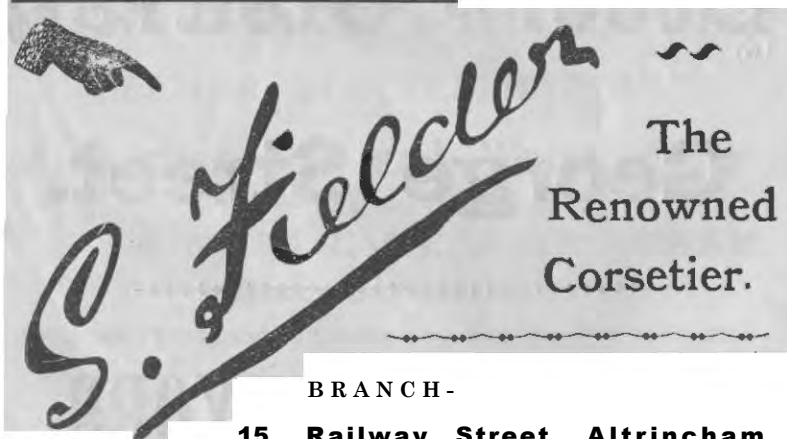
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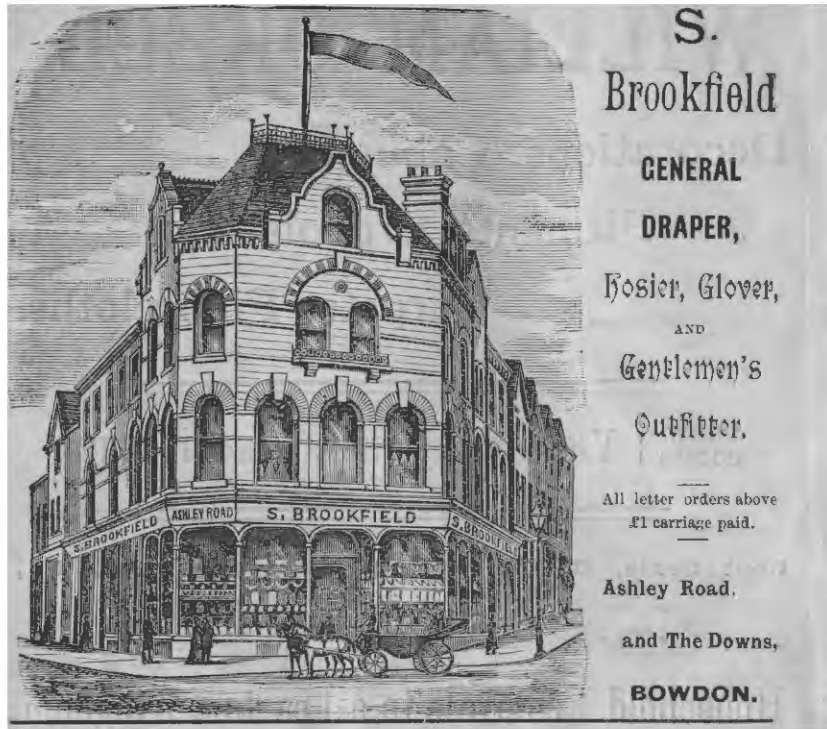
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