

# A Holiday Ramble round Brighton and up Fox's River.

By W. TOWNSON.

*Illustrated by the Author.*

**M**Y friend Boswell and I having a few weeks to spare in January last, in which to botanize, sketch and do some mountaineering, decided to explore one of the least known beauty spots of the district some thirty miles down the coast from Westport. Rumours of its beautiful caverns and marvellous river gorge had often reached us, and on viewing it we came to the conclusion that from a scenic point of view it was a most valuable national asset, and one which the Tourist Department should most certainly develop and render more accessible.

We drove the twenty miles to Charleston, the terminus of the coach road, and then transferred our baggage to O'Brien's pack-horse, whilst we continued our journey on foot, the road being little more than a good pack track, where it crosses the saddles in places the grade resembles the pitch on the roof of a house. It is a picturesque journey, and as we were not tied for time we strolled leisurely along, admiring the changing scene and enjoying the walk amazingly.

We were joined on the road by two more friends who came down for a couple of days, and had then to return to town. We reached the St. Kilda Hotel at sundown, and were introduced to its smiling proprietor, an Alloa man named William Robertson, generally known through the Brighton district by the name of "Billy."

In the golden days of the district

he had been harbour-master, and is now the local oracle on all matters nautical, and not only dispenses refreshments to the travelling public, but works a claim on the terrace at the back of the house. As he may be busy in his claim when a thirsty traveller chances along, the following notice is posted up:—"I am to be found on the terrace, at work, at the back of, and a little north of the house; three minutes will find me."

It is quite usual for anyone journeying that way, who knows the run of the house and finds Billy absent, to save the three minutes by strolling into the bar, helping himself to whatever beverage is on tap at the time, placing his sixpence on the counter and continuing his journey; but the landlord assured us that this primitive method of hotel-keeping has its drawbacks, and that he has at times suffered losses through the want of supervision in the charging of the glasses.

We were to put up at McCarthy's house, nearly a mile further on, but before leaving the St. Kilda Hotel we were pressed to have a taste with our new acquaintance, and sing a verse or two of "Auld-Lang-Syne," with its attendant hand-clasp, before resuming our march, and needless to say, the invitation was accepted in the spirit in which it was given. The house where we were entertained during our stay was all that we could have desired, and the kindness with which we were treated greatly enhanced the pleasure of our holiday. It was