

ROADS OUT OF MANCHESTER.

BY EDWIN WAUGH.

ROCHDALE ROAD.

(In continuation.)

ancient sylvan beauty. Leaving the clough, I will now return to the highway, at the point called "Entwistle Brow," which dips down to the old village of Blackley. And now I must pause a little before I go any farther; for here, about half-way down this brow, an accident happened on Thursday evening, the 8th of February, 1798, which led to the death of James Leach, of Rochdale, the composer of the once well-known set of psalm tunes and anthems, called "Leach's Psalmody,"—a man who, though very popular in Lancashire and Cheshire about the end of last century, is now almost forgotten, except among local musicians. James Leach was my mother's maternal uncle; and I have often listened to her singing of his plaintive tunes when I was a lad, and when there was nobody in the house but my little sister and myself. In those days, too, I was sometimes taken up by my mother on a Sunday to visit the breezy little hamlet in the hills, called "Wardle Fold," where she was born; and where, more than once, John Wesley preached in her father's cottage, standing upon a table, with a long stool upon the table for a desk, or bookstand. Sometimes, during his preaching, stones were thrown through the cottage window. My mother's relatives, both on the father's and on the mother's side, were all ardent lovers of music, and they used to go in succession to one another's houses amongst the hills to practise sacred music together. They were all proud of their relative, James Leach, the composer of the "Psalmody;" and I can very well remember that in those days of my early youth, when I accompanied my mother to her native village, and we went from one house to another amongst her kinsfolk, I have often heard them sing and play James Leach's touching melodies, with tears in their eyes. I remember some of these tunes still, and I think I shall never forget them. Though nearly 80 years have passed since his tunes were first published, many of them are still in use; others, by the lapse of time, are getting out of print—some of these, too, his best melodies—have insensibly dropped out of notice. James Leach was a self-taught musician; but he was a man of susceptible spirit and creative mind. His style of melody is quaint and original. The general character of his tunes is that of plaintiveness and melancholy. They abound in phrases which show a keen sense of the emotional in man's nature, whether in the expression of pleasurable or painful feeling. "He fortunately lived just at the period when Sunday schools took hold of the phil-

anthropic mind, and he did much by his music to establish the organisation. His music is like himself—thoroughly English, and has all the florid merriness and somewhat painful melancholy which characterises John Bull and his family." John Leach, one of Wesley's earliest preachers, whose name is mentioned in Southey's "Life of Wesley," was a brother of this Jas. Leach, the musician. The remembrances of Jas. Leach and his music have been suddenly revived in my mind by a letter received three days ago, from Mr. John Butterworth, an old friend and schoolfellow of mine; and lingering here upon the shady brow near Blackley, where the musician met with his death, I can truly say, with the writer of that letter, "to me, the memory of James Leach is a loving memory." The letter runs as follows:—

91, Heywood-street, Moss Side, Manchester,
20th June, 1881.

Mr. Edwin Waugh.—My dear sir,—I have been much interested in your notes, "Roads out of Manchester," which are appearing in the *Weekly Times*. Like yourself I was a sturdy walker in youth, and in 1836-7-8, while living in Manchester, would walk home to Rochdale, stay there all night, and find myself back again at my brother's house in Red Bank soon after eight o'clock in the morning. This I did twice or thrice a week, in anything like walking weather. In my frequent passings of Blackley Brow, just beyond Burnes Green, up and down it, I have at that time tried to discover the place where James Leach, the psalm-tune composer, was killed. The tradition of 45 years since settled it to be about the middle of the then brow, where the wheel of the Leeds coach coming to Manchester came off. Now, you are a relative (collateral descendant), I believe, of the once much-admired and still-admired James Leach, whose sun went down while it was yet day, and I shall hope you will find it a labour of love to give your readers as much account and estimate of him as can be got at. It is strange so little is known of his personal life. About eleven years since I made considerable labour in Rochdale; but it then seemed all wore gone who had seen him in the flesh, and the traditions of his career were lost. Fifty years ago I had heard my father speak of knowing him personally, but then he was only 11 years old when James Leach was killed, and consequently could have no recollections of interest. A little while ago, in conversation with a Manchester gentleman about the place where the accident happened, he suggested that it must have been on the old road at the opposite side of Blackley, as in 1798 possibly the now road was not cut. Is this so? My information, in 1836, was that it was near to a small chapel, or school (I have not been on that road for over 30 years, and cannot say precisely), which stood about half way in the brow below Barnes Green. I enclose you a copy of the memorial on the gravestone under which James Leach lies buried in the Wesleyan Chapel yard, Union-street, Rochdale. It is surmounted by the tune "Egypt," S.M., one of his most plaintive tunes, in G minor. I have several copies of his psalm tunes—one lacking preface—another a title page and index; but among them I can have these complete, except a preface to the first volume. They are all second or third editions. The preface to the second volume, published 1797, is humorous, and characteristic of a sound and healthy moral nature. He must have been a genuine Lancashire humourist. Is it in the family? One of my copies of "Leach's Tunes" has a manuscript note by John Steele Higgins, formerly organist at St. George's Church, Rochdale Road—and evidently the copy was then his property—as follows: "James Leach, of Rochdale, Lancashire, published several sets of original hymn tunes and sacred odes about 1780-90. The melodies are of a very florid character, and the harmonies, though not scientifically accurate, rather elaborate, some of the pieces being written in eight parts. Leach's music was long pre-eminently popular in Lancashire and Cheshire. He met his death by a fall from the top of a coach before 1800." "On Thursday evening, 8th Feb., 1798, Mr. James Leach, of Salford, musician, was killed by the overturning of a chaise caused by a wheel coming suddenly off. He has left a large family to lament his loss."—*Manchester Mercury*, Tuesday, Feb. 13th, 1798. Shortly after his death a third edition of the two volumes of psalmody was published. To me the memory of James Leach is a loving memory. I hope this long epistle will not be too much outside the scope of your delightful notes on the "Roads out of Manchester;" and I shall esteem it fortunate if it possesses any interest to you.—I am, yours respectfully,
JOHN BUTTERWORTH.