From: Reminiscenses of Rawtenstall in 1884 by Louisa Hamer.

Document in the Whitaker Museum collection

Rawtenstall Fair was held at the end of June and here let me tell you of my last visit there.

I was eleven years old and I was happy and enthralled. I was alone. I liked to be alone, but I had a rasping time; once on the dry land sailors and once on the swings, twice on the hobby horse; with a quarter of a pound of snaps and half a pound of nuts, and I still had fourpence out of the bright shining shilling my Mother had given me.

I stood before the ‘great show’ where a fine buxom lass was singing. An orchestra of two blared away on big brass instruments, some old band had thrown away. Today I would love to stand by Fred Tomlinson of the Male Voice Choir and hear him say in his quiet voice, “what is it they are playing”. For it certainly was not an accompaniment, but they blared away and the girl kept on singing:-

“Oh! Harry, Yes Harry,

There you are then Harry,

Oh! I say Harry by jove you are a bon,

Oh! Harry yes Harry,

There you are Harry,

There you are the Harry

Oh! Where you’re going on Sunday Harry now

You’ve got ‘EM’ on.”

She wore white silk tights, beautiful high shoes with little golden tassles; a black velvet bodice, a beautiful Duchess of Devonshire hat with three white feathers, lots of spangles on her bodice and grand looking white kid gloves with deep gauntlets. She kept on singing in spite of the orchestra, and slapped her leg with a fancy came on now and again.

A great board of scarlet and gold was at the top of the splendid front with ‘Baileys’ on it, and the people were thronging up the wooden steps to go to the show. I looked at the fourpence that I had left but I said “No” to myself. I had other notions for that money, so I stepped off passed (sic) all the stall of coconuts, and snaps and different kinds of nuts; I passed the blown up balloons and got outside Tup-Meadow; now passed the horse trough opposite the Rams Head Hotel and up the white stone steps of George Cunliffe’s. I passed the little counter at the door, sat down on a well scrubbed form and gave my order with pride, “a twopenny pie and a bottle of pop.”

Dear readers, in a long lifetime I have given many orders to waiters of many nationalities but never have I felt so proud as I did that day. A twopenny pie was a proper order, you weren’t bothered thinking (as you did with a penny one) that you were giving a lot of trouble – dirty saucer, dirty spoon! No, a twopenny pie and a bottle of pop was a right and proper order!

I looked at the fireplace as bright and shiny as silver with the topping fire and I felt glad I had not paid 4d to go into the show.

I still had a penny left, and I asked at the little counter for a pennyworth of Fry’s chocolate cream. There were four bars, and I stepped out to walk the mile home, I felt happy and free, for I had no more money to bother about or what to get for it.

There is a quiet sort of happiness when contentment is yours in what you possess, and no money is left – it just doesn’t matter. As my Mother so often said, “Be content with what you have.” So I age my share of the chocolate, and left the remaining three for my Mother and my two sisters who always went to the Fair together.