

What reply the Duke made to this letter we know not, nor what became of Pipers' Meadow. We do know that a petition from the inhabitants of Tutbury was forwarded to his Grace protesting against the continuance of the minstrels' feast and bull-running, which had degenerated into a scene of drunkenness and vulgar revelry, faction fights between the men of Staffordshire and the men of Derbyshire constantly occurring; the white wands of office had developed into cudgels, and instead of promoting "jollity, peace, honesty, sweetness, gaiety, and love," "rancour, felonies, and all manner of vice" were instigated at this feast. On receipt of this petition, the duke made enquiries, and finding that the annual festival had lost all its original significance and become a public nuisance, suppressed it in 1778.

Dr. Johnson in Derbyshire.

By HENRY KIRKE, M.A., B.C.L.

The bicentenary of the birth of Dr. Samuel Johnson has been celebrated with much enthusiasm a few months ago at Lichfield. Everywhere Lord Rosebery's panegyric has aroused popular interest in that remarkable man, and a greater appreciation of his works and character. Although born at Lichfield in the neighbouring county of Stafford, we might claim Johnson as a Derbyshire man, his father having been born at Cubley in our county; and it was only the accident of poverty which drove him to set up the shop at Lichfield, over which the great lexicographer was born. In his mature years Johnson never forgot that his ancestors were Derbyshire men, and he always visited the county with much interest and enthusiasm; yea, when he was about to be married to Mrs. Porter, he refused to allow the ceremony to take place in Birmingham, where the lady resided, but insisted upon being married at Derby.

Mrs. Porter's maiden name was Jervis, and she was a daughter of William Jervis, who was Squire of Great Peatling, in Leicestershire. She was much older than Johnson, having been born on the 4th February, 1688, and her appearance was not calculated to attract admirers. She was described by Garrick as "very fat, with a bosom of more than ordinary protuberance, with swelled cheeks of a florid red, produced by thick painting and increased by the liberal use of cordials; flaring and fantastic in her dress, and affected both in her speech and general behaviour." Not such a person one would have thought to attract a student and literary man; but Johnson simply adored her, and his tumultuous and awkward fondness for his "Tetsey," as he called her, was often a source of amusement to his friends.

The wedding journey from Birmingham to Derby was performed on horseback. What a pity that no chronicler like Boswell accompanied the happy couple—the description of this celebrated ride would have been a joy to future generations. Johnson himself lifted the veil, and, in answer to the curiosity of Boswell, gave a humorous description of the last part of the journey on the very morning of the wedding, July 9th, 1735. "Sir, she had read the old romances, and had got into her head the fantastical notion that a woman of spirit should use her lover like a dog. So, sir, at the first she told me that I rode too fast, and she could not keep up with me; and when I rode a little slower she passed me, and complained I lagged behind. I was not to be made the slave of caprice, and I resolved to begin as I meant to end. I therefore pushed on briskly, till I was out of her sight. The road lay between two hedges, so I was sure she could not miss it, and I contrived that she should soon come up with me. When she did, I observed her to be in tears." So this strangely mated pair rode up to the door of the ancient church of St. Werburgh, in Derby, and were there married.

The entry of the wedding in the parish registers of St. Werburgh is as follows: "July 9, 1735.—Mar' Sam^{ll}

Johnson of y^e parish S. Mary's in Lichfield and Eliz^h Porter of y^e parish of S. Phillip in Birmingham."¹

One of his old schoolfellows at Lichfield Grammar School, under Mr. Hunter, was Dr. Taylor, who resided at Ashbourne, and it was in his house that Johnson stayed during his periodical visits to that ancient town. The friendship between these two men was somewhat curious. Johnson was a stout Tory; Taylor was a Whig. Johnson hated a Whig. "Sir, the dog is a Whig," was his not unusual description of a man for whom he had a contempt. Johnson told Boswell that "Taylor was a very sensible, acute man, with a strong understanding; that he had great activity in some respects, and yet such a sort of indolence that if you should put a pebble upon his chimney-piece, you would find it there in the same state a year afterwards." This is one of the learned doctor's exaggerations, which he frequently used to illustrate his meaning. It has been suggested that Johnson had hopes of being Dr. Taylor's heir, and it is certain that he paid great attention to his host; but with equal age and greater infirmity of body, his hope must in any case have been very small. Talking of Taylor, he remarked to Boswell: "Sir, I love him; but I do not love him more; my regard for him does not increase. As it is said in the Apocrypha, 'his talk is of bullocks.' I don't suppose he is very fond of my company. His habits are by no means sufficiently clerical; this he knows that I see, and no man likes to live under the eye of perpetual disapprobation."

Dr. Taylor was a well-endowed Church dignitary; he was Rector of Bosworth and a prebendary of Westminster. He had a good estate, and amused himself with a farm, on which he reared pedigree cattle. He was a diligent magistrate, and a man of great influence in Ashbourne and of considerable political interest in the county. He was, in fact, what Sydney Smith called a squarson. Boswell was much impressed by

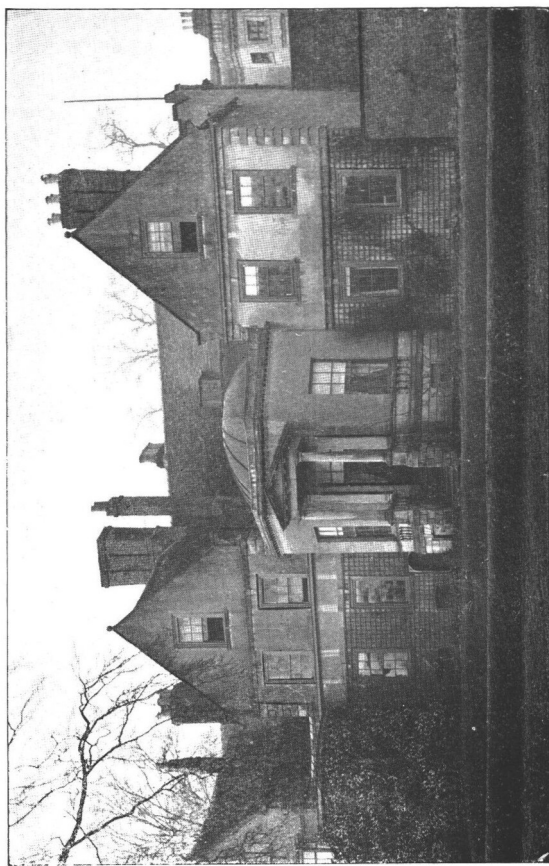
¹ Cox's *Derbyshire Churches*, vol. iv., p. 180.

his butler, Mr. Peters—"a decent, grave man, in purple clothes and a large white wig, like the butler or major-domo of a bishop."

Dr. Taylor's house at Ashbourne is still in existence, and precisely as it was in Johnson's time. It stands immediately opposite the old grammar school, and close to the parish church, in which the sermons were preached by his friends which Johnson himself is stated to have written.

Johnson knew Derbyshire well, and he made Dr. Taylor's house at Ashbourne his headquarters when he visited the county. We find him there in 1737 and 1740, from whence he made frequent visits to Bradley Hall, the residence of Mrs. Meynell and her daughters, "who were perhaps in point of elegance and accomplishments inferior to few of those with whom he was afterwards acquainted," especially the eldest daughter, who married one of the Fitzherberts of Tissington, and of whom Johnson said that "she had the best understanding he had ever met with in any human being." At Bradley he also initiated a friendship with Mrs. Hill Boothby, sister of Sir Brooke Boothby, which lasted all his life.

Johnson visited Ashbourne in 1770 and 1771, as we learn from his letters to different persons; but as Boswell was not present at these visits, no notice of them, except the most casual, appears in his incomparable biography. Fortunately, on his subsequent visit in 1776, Boswell accompanied his revered friend, so we hear that "on Tuesday, March 26th, there came for us an equipage properly suited to a wealthy, well-beneficed clergyman. Dr. Taylor's large, roomy postchaise, drawn by four stout, plump horses, and driven by two steady, jolly postilions, which conveyed us to Ashbourne, where I found my friend's schoolfellow living upon an establishment perfectly corresponding with his substantial, creditable equipage; his house, garden, pleasure grounds, table, in short, everything good, and no scantiness appearing." Here the friends lived in clover at this and other times.



DR. TAYLOR'S HOUSE. GARDEN SIDE.

Dr. Taylor welcomed his old friend with great cordiality ; many a talk was enjoyed over old school-days and school-fellows, especially Congreve and Garrick. But, unfortunately, the visit on this occasion was a short one, as Johnson had special reasons for wishing to return to London ; but both he and Boswell were invited to revisit Ashbourne shortly, an invitation which was eagerly accepted. On their journey they stopped to change horses at Derby, where they called upon Dr. Butter, and had some conversation with him.

In 1777 Johnson visited Oxford and Lichfield, and set out from thence to Ashbourne, where he arrived on the 30th August. Here he was joined, under Dr. Taylor's hospitable roof, on the 14th September, by Boswell, much excited by an earthquake which had disturbed his sleep at Leek.

"On the 15th," we read in the Biography, "Dr. Johnson carried me after breakfast to see the garden belonging to the school at Ashbourne, which is very prettily formed upon a bank rising gradually behind the house. The Rev. Mr. Langley, the head-master, accompanied us." Tuesday was devoted to an inspection of Dr. Taylor's farm, where Boswell, accustomed to the small Scotch cattle, was astounded at the size and quality of the cows, one of which had been sold for one hundred and twenty guineas, and another for one hundred and thirty.

Dr. Taylor was especially proud of a great bull, which fact afforded Johnson much scope for his somewhat elephantine drollery. In a letter to Mrs. Thrale he expresses a hope that he may be like the big bull, and have no disease but age ; and he asserts that a man who wanted to rent a farm under Dr. Taylor lost his chance by asserting that he had seen a bigger bull. Such an offence could not be pardoned, as Johnson says, "We yet hate the man who had seen a bigger bull."

We have heard Johnson's opinion of Taylor ; hearken to Taylor on Johnson. "He is a man of a very clear head, great power of words, and a very gay imagination ; but

there is no disputing with him. He will not hear you, and, having a louder voice than you, must roar you down."

In the evening the Rev. Mr. Seward, of Lichfield, passing through Ashbourne, had tea with these distinguished men. As usual, when he left his character was discussed, and Johnson described him thus: "Sir, his ambition is to be a fine talker, so he goes to Buxton and such places where he may find companies to listen to him. And, sir, he is a valetudinarian—one of those who are always mending themselves. I do not know a more disagreeable character than a valetudinarian, who thinks that he may do anything that is for his ease, and indulges himself in the greatest freedoms. Sir, he brings himself to the state of a hog in a sty." Good gracious! What would Anna, the Swan of Lichfield, have said to all this?

Johnson got somewhat tired of the monotony of his life at Ashbourne. He missed the roar of Fleet Street and the witty sallies at "the Club," so he welcomed a visit from Dr. Butter, a physician living at Derby, who drank tea with them on the 17th September. In fact, the sage was somewhat ruffled at this period. In a great argument upon the rights of the House of Stuart, he and his host "bellowed" at each other for some time; also, Johnson having expressed a wish to see the great crystal chandelier in Dr. Taylor's large room lighted up, Boswell imprudently suggested the next day as suitable, being Johnson's birthday. This angered his friend, who disliked having his birthday noticed, so he sternly replied "he would not have the lustre lighted the next day."

Things brightened up on Friday, the 19th September, when Johnson and Boswell set off in Dr. Taylor's chaise to visit Derby. On their way they called in at Kedleston. Johnson had been here before, when he had attacked it violently. "It would do excellently well for a Town Hall. The large room with the pillars would do for the judges to sit in at the assizes; the circular room for a jury chamber; the room

above for prisoners.” He was more gracious on this occasion, but still he thought “the large room ill-lighted, and of no use for dancing in, and the bedchambers but indifferent rooms, and that the immense sum that it cost was injudiciously laid out.” They inspected the pictures and the library, and Johnson was gratified by seeing a copy of his Dictionary in Lord Scarsdale’s dressing-room, and exclaimed, “*Quæ regio in terris nostri non plena laboris.*” Dr. Butter met them at Derby, and took them to see the china manufactory. Johnson thought the china beautiful, but too dear—as dear, he said, as silver. Boswell walked about Derby with pleasure, so he says; but his enjoyment was apparently metaphysical—speculating on the way in which the inhabitants spent their lives, and the minute diversities of life everywhere. The friends dined with Dr. Butter (an eminent physician, who afterwards removed to London, where he died), and Johnson and his host discussed medical methods. After dinner, Mrs. Butter, who was a daughter of Boswell’s cousin, Sir John Douglas, took him to see Lombe’s silk-mill, leaving the elders to their medical discourses. Johnson hated a Whig, but he paid a just tribute to the Duke of Devonshire, grandfather of the then reigning duke, saying: “He was not a man of superior abilities, but he was a man strictly faithful to his word. If, for instance, he had promised you an acorn, and none had grown that year in his woods, he would not have contented himself with that excuse—he would have sent to Denmark for it, so unconditional was he in keeping his word—so high as to the point of honour.” But why Denmark? Surely there were other oak-trees nearer than that!

Johnson conducted Boswell to Ilam, “a romantic scene now belonging to a family of the name of Port, but formerly the seat of the Congreves. I recollect a very fine amphitheatre, surrounded with hills covered with woods, and walks neatly formed along the side of a rocky steep on the quarter next the house, with recesses under projections of rock overshadowed with trees, in one of which recesses we are told

Congreve wrote his *Old Bachelor*. We viewed a remarkable natural curiosity at Ilam—two rivers bursting near each other from the rock, not from intermediate springs, but having run for many miles underground. Plot, in his *History of Staffordshire*, gives an account of this curiosity; but Johnson would not believe it, though we had the attestation of the gardener, who said he had put in corks where the river Manyfold sinks into the ground, and had caught them in a net before one of the openings where the water bursts out."

Boswell describes a somewhat ludicrous episode that occurred during this visit to Dr. Taylor. "One morning," he says, "after breakfast, when the sun shone bright, we walked out together, and posed for some time with placid indolence upon an artificial waterfall which Dr. Taylor had made by building a strong dyke of stone across the river behind the garden. It was now somewhat obstructed by branches of trees and other rubbish, which had come down the river and settled close to it. Johnson, partly from a desire to see it play more freely, and partly from that inclination to activity which will animate at times the most inert and sluggish mortal, took a long pole which was lying on the bank and pushed down several parcels of the wreck with painful assiduity, whilst I stood quietly by, wondering to see the sage thus curiously employed, and smiling with a humorous satisfaction each time when he carried his point. He worked till he was quite out of breath, and having found a large dead cat so heavy that he could not move it after several efforts, 'Come,' said he, throwing down the pole, 'you shall take it now,' which I accordingly did, and, being a fresh man, soon made the cat tumble over the cascade." Johnson struggling with the dead cat provides an amusing picture which might appeal to some of our artists of domestic subjects.

Dr. Taylor kept a bountiful table, and well deserved Boswell's praise of his hospitality. Though Johnson was fond of eating to the verge of gluttony, he valued Taylor's friendship and conversation more than his food. One evening

Frank delivered this message: "Sir, Dr. Taylor sends his compliments to you, and begs you to dine with him to-morrow—he has got a hare." "My compliments," said Dr. Johnson, "and I'll dine with him—hare or rabbit."

On Wednesday, the 24th September, Boswell departed on his return to Scotland. He took his postchaise from the Green Man, "a very good inn at Ashbourne" (now the Green Man and Black Boy's Head Royal Hotel), the landlady being "a highly civil gentlewoman." Attracted by the glories of Chatsworth, he diverged from his road to pay it a visit. At Edensor Hotel he was much amused by Malton, the landlord, who told him that the celebrated Dr. Johnson had stayed in his house—"the great writer, Oddity, as they call him. He's the greatest writer in England; he writes for the ministry; he has a correspondence abroad, and lets them know what is going on." This description of himself amused Johnson vastly when he heard it.

After Boswell left him, Johnson became very ill, and was not able to leave Ashbourne for some time. However, he journeyed at last to Lichfield, where he became worse; in fact, he never recovered his health until after a sojourn at Brighton.

In 1784, the last year of Johnson's life, he was struggling against illness and increasing infirmity. In the hope that change would do him good, he turned his steps to the home of his childhood, and from thence to the ever hospitable roof of his friend Taylor, where he arrived on the 19th July. His five days' stay in Lichfield had given him no pleasure, as he was unable to walk and revisit his old haunts. He became very despondent. "The asthma," he writes to his friend and physician, Dr. Brocklesby, "has no abatement. Opiates stop the fit so that I can sit and sometimes lie easy, but they do not now procure me the power of motion, and I am afraid that my general strength of body does not increase." During his stay at Ashbourne his strength improved; he was able to walk to church, and on the 6th

September he paid a visit to Chatsworth. He had been to Chatsworth before. Once in 1772, when he described it as "a very fine house." The fountains and cascades were played in his honour, but did not impress him. "I am of my friend's opinion," he said, "that when one has seen the ocean, cascades are little things." Such artificial trivialities seemed childish to his great mind. On this last visit "Young Mr. Burke" was a guest in the house, and introduced him to the Duke and Duchess, with whom he had a pleasant conversation, and dined with them in public. "I was at Chatsworth," he writes, "on Monday. I had seen it before, but never when its owners were at home. I was very kindly received and honestly pressed to stay, but I told them that a sick man is not a fit inmate of a great house; but I hope to go again some time." Alas! it was not to be; he would never see Derbyshire again. Returning in October to Lichfield through Birmingham to Oxford, from "magna parens" to "alma mater," he reached London in November, and on the 13th December the great sage breathed his last. *Ultimus Romanorum!*—as Carlyle calls him.

A Derbyshire Cavalier (Addenda).

By HENRY KIRKE, M.A., B.C.L.

Since the publication of my article in last year's *Journal*, certain facts have been brought to my notice which I think ought to be put on record.

It seems that I underrated the loyalty of our Derbyshire miners, as in Harl. MS. 6833, p. 67*a*, we find an account of Thomas Bushell, Esq.: "For raising 1,000 Derbyshire myners for His Majestie at 10*s*. per man, and conducting them to Shrewsbury, £500." And, moreover, the King wrote from Oxford on June 12th, 1643, to Thomas Bushell, master-worker of the mines royal, acknowledging his many services, and among them that of "raising us the Derbyshire miners for our life-guard at our first entrance to this war for our own defence when the Lord-Lieutenant of the County refused to