

WALKS

ROUND NOTTINGHAM,

BY

A WANDERER.



GATEWAY TO BROXTOWE HALL.

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conquest, in this county alone; and it may, consequently, be inferred, how very much the papal authority was extended through that event.



WALK FIRST.

West Bridgeford.

“Lo! where the rosy-bosom'd Hours
 Fair Venus' train, appear,
 Disclose the long expected flowers,
 And wake the purple year!
 The Attic warbler pours her throat,
 Responsive to the cuckoo's note,
 The untaught harmony of Spring:
 While whispering pleasure as they fly,
 Cool Zephyrs through the clear blue sky
 Their gather'd fragrance fling.”

GRAY.

I DEARLY love the rosy mornings of spring—they have a freshness and a beauty which belongs to no other season of the year. The grass in the meadows luxuriant in the richness of its verdure, and spangled with the king-cups and daisies. The trees putting forth their foliage, and variegated with the bright blossoms teeming with abundance. The lambs sporting in the fields, and the birds rejoicing in the air. Oh, there is no month in the year like the month of May!—its very breath is hope and joy. It is delightful at such a time to quit the crowded town, and remote from the busy sons of toil, to taste the coolness of the breeze as it revels amongst the opening flowers and steals away their fragrance, blending its own purity with their mellifluous odours.

The spirit feels an elasticity which May alone imparts, and whilst bounding in its vigour, shakes off, as it were, "the mortal coil" that drags it down to earth—the heart exults, for nature is triumphant.

It was with such feelings that a few days since I turned my back upon the town, and sought the calm solitude of the green fields. Old father Trent rolled on his way, confined within his proper bounds, and sparkling in the early beams of the glowing sun. The hills looked luxuriant and the valleys seemed to rejoice in the sweet refreshment of the cold night dew which still hung glistening on the herbage. After passing over the Trent bridge, I took the direct road from it (which no doubt has formerly been the only highway to London,) and strolling by the side of the hedge—sometimes stopping to listen to the notes of the blackbird, at others trying to discover the warbling lark, as he fluttered in mid-air, diminished to a mere speck. I could not help being amused, too, with the sparrows—their greediness for food involved them in many quarrels, and presented an apt picture of those who sacrifice all the better feelings of the heart to sordid gain. Amongst the usual emblems of the country walk, I like to see the old sort of stile, low and convenient for getting over, with a thick and well-cut hedge on each side, and not unfrequently overhung at top with the embracing branches of two aged oaks. But these are relics of the last century, modern improvements have swept them away, and now the lofty five-barred gate, secured with lock and key, give warning to the wanderer that ingress is *de-barred* in that direction.

There is something of the kind of stile which I have mentioned on the right-hand side of the Melton road, and I went towards it as if to hail an old familiar friend, but was struck by the appearance of a strange uncouth figure

that stood a few paces within the field. I was soon close to the spot, and on inspection found it was the remains of the sculptured form of a cross-legged knight, but so miserably mutilated, as to render any attempts to discover the design entirely fruitless. Its height is about five feet seven inches; part of the shield yet remains on the left arm, as well as the impression of the folded hands upon the breast. The armour, as far as it can be delineated, is of very early origin, and it very probably had a lion at the feet. This statue had, no doubt, been taken from some sepulchre, perhaps originally in Bridgeford church, as I afterwards discovered a place from which something of the kind had been removed, but the only intelligence I could gain was, that it had been dug up from the earth when excavating a pond, close to where it stands, between thirty and forty years ago, and this proud memorial of ancient valour, perhaps designed to represent one of those who planted the banner of the cross upon the walls of the holy city—was now a rubbing post for cattle—

“To what base uses may we come at last.”

When first found, I am informed that it was but little defaced, and it is much to be regretted that, what with the wilfulness of thoughtless individuals who assault the warrior without the fear of a return, and I suppose the injury sustained from the cows, who are no respecters of persons, that its strong frame is nearly destroyed. It gives, however, a name to the place; and “Stoneman Close” will possibly retain the appellation when every vestige of him has been swept away.

I continued my walk to the village, which certainly presents a picture of rural neatness. The cottages, with their gardens in front filled with plants and flowers, had a show of gladness about them that told a tale of industrious

tranquillity, united to calm simplicity. The village is rather straggling and detached, but it comes very near the beau-ideal of those pleasant spots which the poet and the painter love to trace. A neat house has recently been erected on the right hand, and the cropped yews, which formed a sort of arch in the back ground, had a fantastic, though not an unpleasing effect.

WEST BRIDGEFORD, according to Camden, was built in the time of Edward the Elder. Dr. Thoroton seems to doubt this, as well as the precise spot on which it stood, but the following extract from the Harleian collection seems, in some measure, to confirm Camden's opinion:—
 “The Trent goes from Clifton to the bridge of Nottingham, called Trent Bridge, and anciently, Hethe-bete Bridge; at the South end whereof is the town of Bridgeford, built by Elfrida, (the mother of Edward the Elder,) the famous lady of Mercia, to repress the violence of the Danes who possessed Nottingham.” The family of Lutterel held lands here from the time of Richard the First, 1194, to that of Henry the Fifth, 1418, and had its residence here. Andrew Lutterel of this place gave the king, Henry the Third, three marks of gold, to have the liberty not to be justice, sheriff, or any other bailiff for the king during his whole life, and that he should not be in assizes, juries, or recognizances. He married the daughter of Philip de Marc, a considerable heiress, and left a son Geoffry his heir, who being *non compos mentis*, his son Robert was summoned amongst the barons of the realm in the 23d Edward the First, being then in possession of the Barony of Irnham, in Lincolnshire, but none of his descendants had a like summons.

But to the church yard, there all human grandeur fails.
 Yet—

“Who needs a teacher to admonish him
 That flesh is grass, that earthly things are mists?
 Where are the heroes of the ages past?
 Where the brave chieftains? where the mighty ones
 Who flourish'd in the infancy of days?
 All to the grave gone down.”

And still the numbers are increasing, death is daily slaying his thousands, and the insatiate jaws of the charnel house are ever yawning for the prey. How applicable then is the petition of the Psalmist, who exclaims—“So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”

The Church has every appearance of antiquity; it is dedicated to Saint Giles, and the first mention made of it in history, is during the reign of Edward the First, about the year 1240. The burial ground is very low and swampy, and, indeed, the anomaly of a watery grave in a village church yard is here fully confirmed. A drain passes through it. The memorials of the dead are not very numerous, but they are thickly clustered together. In the days when education was unknown and ignorance prevailed, we might naturally expect something unrefined and illiterate:

“Their name, their years, spelt by the unletter'd muse,
 The place of fame and elegy supply;
 And many a holy text around she strews,
 That teach the rustic moralist to die.”

But I hardly expected to have found such a specimen of bad taste and bad spelling as the following record of the interment of Samuel Daykin, July 18, 1800, aged 21. The stone an upright one, stands near the chancel window:—

“A sore disease my life did survey
 And raze'd my tender heart
 Just in the flower of my age
 Pale death did end the smart

Grive not dear parents nor Lament
 Dont thus express your Love
 But rather rejoice and be content
 In Hops to meet in heaven above."

Near this (the sepulchre before the chancel door in the engraving,) is a raised flat stone, to the memory of William Aikin, who died the 5th January, 1707, in his 63d year, and bears the following verse:—

" Spectators all Who ere you be,
 You all must die as sure as he ;
 And though, under this stone he'es laid,
 He surely nature's debt hath paid.
 Lo here he is laid in the dust,
 Waiting the rising with the just ;
 As He'el be judg'd so must we all,
 When God Almighty please to call."

Near the entrance to the steeple is the resting place of a family named Billings, of whom there are many records. One is dedicated to John Billings, aged 82, who died November 22, 1785, and on his grave stone are the following beautiful lines from Dryden's *Ædipus*:—

" He fell like autumn fruit, that mellowed long,
 Much wondered at because he dropt no sooner,
 Fate wound him up for three score years and ten ;
 Yet freshly ran he on some winters more,
 Till like a clock worn out with beating time,
 The wheels of weary life at length stood still."

The interior of the Church has nothing very remarkable in it beyond the appearance of age, which modern improvements have endeavoured to revivify. Several of the Lutterel family are interred here, and some very ancient floor stones mark the place, but what information they were intended to convey has long since been obliterated by the hand of time. The family arms, *purpure, a bend argent, between six martlets of the same (three and three,)* on painted glass, still remain in some of the windows and prove that this was their place of sepulture. In the chancel, near to the altar, are two neat mural monuments; one bears the following inscription:—

"Underneath lie the remains of Millicent Stokes, youngest daughter of the late Rev. John Stokes, A.M., Rector of this Parish, Ob, Nov. 5, 1806, Æt. 67.—In affectionate regard to her memory this monument was erected by her adopted daughter, M. G."

The initial letters, at the end of the inscription, point out the lady of the present Andrew Gideon Fisher, Esq. of Stapleford, (Captain in the Bombay Artillery,)* whose maiden name was Guy.—The other monument is in remembrance of Robert James Fisher (a son of the above,) who died October 4, 1815, in the third year of his age.

Within the rails, near to the communion table, are the following initials and dates, all referring to different persons of the family of Stokes:—

"E. S., 1758.—R. S., 1779.—A. S., 1786.—R. S., 1802.—M. S., 1806.

The patron of the living is John Musters, Esq., who is lord of the manor, and nearly the sole owner of the lordship. The present incumbent is the Rev. L. E. Thoroton, whose residence is at Colwick, of which parish he also is rector.

The mansion, or hall, at Bridgeford, was begun to be built by Mundy Musters, Esq. in or about 1768. It continued in an unfinished state until 1774, when it was completed by the late John Musters, Esq. It was lately tenanted by Colonel Thomas Wright Vaughan, who married the only daughter of the late Mr. Musters; but is now occupied by Mrs. Smith, widow of the late Joseph Benjamin Smith, Esq., of Newark, and daughter of the late Mark Huish, Esq. of Nottingham.

The advowson of the church has regularly gone with the manor, from the Lutterel's to the Hilton's, by marriage; from them to the Thimblebie's, by the same; from the Thimblebie's to the Pierrepont's, by purchase; and in the same manner from them to the Musters' family.

* When this was written Captain Fisher was in existence, he died suddenly at Bath a few months afterwards.

The rectory is near to the church, rather a straggling building, but standing in quiet seclusion amidst green and shady trees. Thoroton notices an inhabitant residing in the village, at the advanced age of 90; and I was informed that there is one still living, who has exceeded his 90th year.

After quitting Bridgeford, I again turned into the Melton road, and ascended the hill, occasionally looking round at the prospect. At the summit, the view is extensive and beautiful, taking the town of Nottingham as a central point; but still not equal to the scene from Colwick Hill.

Edwalton.

At the distance of about four miles from the Trent bridge, and to the left of the road, is the village of Edwalton (anciently Edwald's Town,) which, on first approaching it, promises more than is afterwards realized. At the entrance is a tolerably good house, tenanted by Mrs. Clarke, the mother of the present Mrs. Musters; and also a neat dwelling, occupied by Mr. Saunders, has a pleasing effect; the rest are mere cottages. The church, dedicated to the Holy Rood, is an unsightly mass of bricks, and seems to have been erected upon the site, and with part of the materials of a former one; but, within the wall, there is not a single stone bearing an inscription. On a cross-beam, in the roof, the date 1719 is cut out, which I suppose implies that it underwent some alteration, or repairs, in that year.