

DERBYSHIRE.

HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS IN DERBYSHIRE. By J. B. Firth. With illustrations by Nelly Erichsen. 12mo. Pp. 500. New York: The Macmillan Company. \$2.

Derbyshire, though by the author's admission not within the arena of the greater historic events of English history, is yet rich enough in associations to make the reading of Mr. Firth's book a very pleasant thing. The author's method is a sort of strolling one, not very different from that adopted by E. V. Lucas in treating of Sussex in a previous volume of this series. Mr. Firth wanders with you in the pleasant valleys of the little streams our British cousins dignify into rivers—the Dove, the Derwent, the Wye, the Amber. He crosses fields by foot-paths alongside hedgerows and visits villages and churches and gentlemen's gardens and the ruins of old seats. He leads you across the bleak moors, too, and to the famous Peak of Derby associated in most people's mind with Sir Walter's Peveril of that same.

Mr. Firth takes you to Melbourne Hall, with wonderful old gardens, and tells you it was the seat of the Lambs, of whom was that Lady Caroline, whose name is linked with Byron's, and how at an earlier date (when the Cokes dwelt there) Samuel Baxter began at the hall "The Saints' Everlasting Rest," whereof now "new editions are rare," though "it would be rash to say the vogue of the book is over." Then he is your guide to Tutbury, (on the Staffordshire bank of the Dove,) where Mary of Scotland was kept prisoner "in a walled inclosure on the top of a hill, exposed to all the winds and inclemencies of heaven." So Mary herself wrote, and it appears the old castle was a draughty place at best. You will remember (and if you forget Mr. Firth will remind you) that Mary's jailer was the politic old Earl of Shrewsbury, who was fourth subservient husband of that able woman of affairs and families Bess of Hardwicke. Of this lady, progenitress of three ducal families, you find further reminiscence when you come to Chatsworth, "perhaps the most beautiful as well as the most imposing of the great houses and great parks of England." It is the seat of the Dukes of Devonshire, descendants of Bess of Hardwicke, and the house of which the present is the successor (planned by William Talman, surveyed by Sir Christopher Wren in 1698,) was another of the prisons of Mary of Scotland while she enjoyed the hospitality of her royal kinswoman, Elizabeth. In the Devonshires' time Dr. Johnson had been guest at Chatsworth, and David Garrick and Tom Moore.

Of Dr. Johnson Mr. Firth has more to say while he is pottering about Ashbourne, where the lexicographer used to stay at the house of his schoolmate and friend, Dr. Taylor, a "warm man" of the Church who enjoyed several fat benefices at once—he was rector of Market Bosworth and of St. Margaret's, Westminster, and a Prebendary of the Abbey—while at home at Ashbourne he was "a diligent Justice of the Peace." Boswell, who used to be Dr. Johnson's companion at Ashbourne, can tell you all about it—as about the great bull which was the rector's pride, and the strawberries and cream, of which the admired doctor ate such quantities.

In the same region are memories of George Eliot, for Ashbourne is the Oakbourne of "Adam Bede," and near by is Norbury, which she calls Norbourne, and Ellaston, which she calls Hayslope. Mary Ann Evans's father, Robert Evans, was a wheelwright of Ellaston, and Dr. Johnson's father came from Great Cubley, midway between Ashbourne and Sudbury.

Thus as you ramble across the fields you are taught how your feet lie in the footsteps of familiar friends—it was in Beresford Dale that Izaak Walton angled—there is the Fishing House. Then you read of Haddon Hall, which the romancers have taken for their own; of the baths at Buxton, and of the shire town of Derby itself, famous for the great ram so celebrated in song, famous also for Crown Derby porcelain and for the coming thither of Prince Charlie and his Highland men in 1745.

The drawings of old gardens, old ruins, old churches, old bridges, by Nelly Erichsen, are singularly charming—are, in fact, when all is said, the best part of a very good book.