

EARBY

II

OUR VILLAGE BLACKSMITH

(CONTINUED)

With reference to Mr. Dodgson's family, his son Henry, who was for a long time associated with the father in the Earby business, is entitled to special honour as he was the pioneer in this district as a cyclist. He made in his own shop a machine of the very best type, and he was known to all the "wheelers" in the West Riding and East Lancashire. He was a well known competitor in the sports field of forty to fifty years ago, before the advent of the "safety" machine. Later he established a successful business at Colne, where he now resides.

Mr. Dodgson had also two daughters, Ellen, who married the well-known and highly respected dentist, John Hodgson, and Susannah, who became the wife of the late Mr. Mason Moorhouse, also of a highly respected family.

Another character, most worthy of honoured remembrance, is the blacksmith of the old Victoria Mill, John Taylor, who also came from Marton, and was a nephew of Thomas Dodgson. He and four other children were left orphans at an early age, the father William Taylor, a shoemaker, dying when John was six years old, the mother three years earlier. Kind friends took the children under their care, and John lived as a boy with his uncle, Henry Robinson, farmer, of Harrop. When he was eleven years of age he came back to Marton and was apprenticed to his blacksmith uncle. He never went to a day school, but attended a night school at Marton. He had, however, remarkable natural abilities, and he not only became a first class workman, but a self-educated man of eminent usefulness. As a boy and a youth he was a chorister at Marton Church, and on Sunday evenings he and other boys had to go to Gledstone Hall to "say their catechism" to Miss Roundell. Thomas Varley, the late estate agent was one of the number.

It may be stated that a great-uncle of John Taylor's, William Tayler, was a schoolmaster for forty years and was the clerk of Marton Church. He was sworn in at York, and he continued to serve in that capacity from 1763 to 1793, when he died. The family have in their possession the book of Common Prayer which Wm. Tayler used at the church services, also a copy-book containing samples of writing almost like copper plate.

At one time there was a flax mill near the Cross Keys Inn, which belonged to the Taylor family, and Thomas Varley's mother worked there as a girl.

There was a pew in Marton Church which was assigned to "William Tayler and his seed for ever."

As a youth John Taylor began to attend the Wesleyan Chapel at Barnoldswick and became a teacher in the Sunday school. Some of the servants at Gledstone Hall also accompanied him occasionally to Barnoldswick, with the almost inevitable result that one of them, Sarah Weatherall, became his wife. They were both held in high esteem at the "Hall" and Mr. Taylor was allowed to visit the hall to pay his attentions to his sweetheart. Miss Weatherall was the

housemaid, and her services were especially prized because she was such an excellent seamstress. The happy pair were united in holy wedlock at Skipton Parish Church on February 18th 1849, the officiating clergyman being the Rev. P.C.Kidd. They were both 21 years of age.

After his marriage the young blacksmith removed to Barnoldswick, and he was the first blacksmith at Butts Mill. The Roundells, however, liked his shoeing of the horses so much that they arranged with Mr. William Bracewell for the Gledstone farm horses to be brought to Butts Mill to be shod. The old blacksmith said "he could not have shod horses like John Taylor if he gave him all the world."

The Wesleyans at Barnoldswick were not slow to recognise his character and talents, and yielding to persuasion he became a local preacher, his first service being at Foulridge. He quickly gained acceptance, and was in much demand in the Colne, Skipton and Crosshills Circuits.

At a Colne Quarterly Meeting which he attended he took part in a discussion in support of a proposal made by the late William Tunstall, of Brierfield Mills. He impressed Mr. Tunstall very much, although he was unknown to him, and immediately after the meeting he asked where the young man came from and was told "It is the young blacksmith from Barnoldswick." He went and made the young man's acquaintance, and admitted to him "You just said what I wanted to say, but I could not have done it." The result was a life-long friendship which was much prized.

After eight years he went to Trawden to start business on his own account, but the venture was not successful, as many of the people were more ready to have work done than to pay for it.

In December, 1856, he came to Earby to be the blacksmith at the Victoria Mill for Mr. Christopher Bracewell, which position he retained to the end of his life.

For more than a quarter of a century he was an outstanding figure in our village life, known to and respected by all. He was a veritable tower of strength to the Wesleyan cause, as local preacher, class leader, society steward and Sunday School superintendent.

Of James Dodgson it could be said "He goes on Sunday to the Church and sits among his boys."

But of John Taylor it required to be "He goes on Sunday to the Church and sits among his girls."

He had a large family, all daughters with the exception of his son William who will be remembered as a day school teacher, musician and cricketer.

He passed away in the full tide of his powers, and was outlived by his widow by about thirty years, and their last resting place is in the lovely quietness of Marton Church burial ground.

Hartley Wilkinson

who was an apprentice of James Dodgson's and who for nearly fifty years had a blacksmith's shop in the older part of the village, is also deserving of special reference. He was a typical

old Earby resident - shrewd, practical, humorous and untiringly industrious. He was very popular with lads, and children coming home from school.

“Looked in at the open door;
They loved to see the flaming forge
And hear the bellows roar.

“Hartley Smithy,” as his place was usually called, was a veritable camp for the “Keb Brig” and “Top o’ Town” lads. They used to go to get their clog irons put on, and nothing suited them better than to blow the bellows and watch them being made. Happy indeed was the lad who was permitted to do a bit of striking.

He had two hobbies, one was poultry rearing and the other was music. He was a frequent exhibitor at poultry shows, and a notable prize-winner.

From being a youth he was a member of the Baptist choir, and one of the leading spirits in the old Earby Glee Party. He was a light tenor, and he simply revelled in musical performances.

A Blacksmith Story

One of the stories which occasionally Hartley liked to tell related to the farmers who came down to Earby from the Lothersdale side to have their horses shod. Two of them arrived one morning and they were joined by a third. The last comer looked very downcast, and on enquiry they ascertained that the man’s wife had passed away the day before, and he was left with a family of children.

“A’ll tell thi what a’ll do,” said one of his farmer friends, “a’ll swop thi wi’ a wick un, and gi’ thine a good burying”!

Hartley Wilkinson passed away on January 2nd, 1903, having lived three years over the allotted span.

J.H.

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