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Instructed by the Antiquary times,
He must, he is, he cannot but be wise.
TROILUS AND CRESSIDA, Act ii., sc. 3.

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The Tissington MSS and the Rebellion of '45.*

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IN the old and picturesque hall at Tissington there is preserved a large collection of historical documents of very great interest and value. They have lately been examined in detail by the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, and part of them for the first time made public. It is from a small portion only of the documents thus calendared that the present paper has been written, and the FitzHerbert collection is large enough to provide material for several other papers of great interest.

With the many notices of the earlier years of the present century and the later years of the last the Commissioners express a hope to deal at some future time. As yet they have only reported fully on the following four classes, which deal with the latter half of the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth centuries.

1. Letters of, and orders signed by, Monck, the general who did more than anyone else to bring about the Restoration.
2. Private correspondence of George Treby, afterwards Lord Chief Justice. The news letters are interesting, and many of the writers are of note. Among them may be named the infamous Titus Oates, and the famous Bishop Burnett, William Penn, and John Locke.
3. The Popish Plot documents, which also must have belonged to Treby, as he was Chairman of the Committee of Secrecy, and in other official positions at the time. How they came to Tissington does not appear.

In the first twenty letters of this third class we have an unusually curious and interesting set of documents, for they are evidently the original letters of the secret correspondence between the Courts of France and England in the latter part of the reign of Charles II. Ciphers are made use of in these letters, and the body of each letter seems to have been written with sympathetic ink, probably with lemon juice, which having been once brought to light by being held before the fire is still legible, though oftentimes faint. Sometimes the whole of a letter has been written in this light brown ink; sometimes the secret writing occurs as a part only of a letter, of which the rest is written in common black ink upon ordinary harmless topics; sometimes it appears as interlineations throughout a letter written with common black ink.

It seems probable that these were the actual letters which were seized in the house of Colman, the Duchess of York's secretary, and made use of in his prosecution.

4. The fourth class of manuscripts is the one which at present most concerns us. It consists of a series of letters written at the end of 1745-46, describing the Young Pretender's march upon England, some of the skirmishes which took place, the feeling of the inhabitants at various points, the means of defence adopted, and many other details, altogether forming a most graphic picture of a critical time. Perhaps of no district of England are more graphic details given than of our own immediate neighbourhood, and as these Tissington letters have never before been made public, it is hoped the following extracts from them will be of interest, and will add something to previous knowledge of local history.

Of course there is no need to give any detailed account of the Young Pretender's rebellion. The general history of his romantic and daring expedition is sufficiently well known to enable us to pass over the earlier portion of his famous march into England,

* This paper was recently read before the Denstone College Archæological Society.

and it will be enough if we meet him on the borders of Staffordshire. He marched along the ordinary route from Macclesfield to Leek, where he arrived on December 3.

Throughout the long journey from Scotland, Charles Edward had striven to keep his followers from alienating the sympathies of the inhabitants of the English counties through which they had passed. Discipline was enforced as rigidly as possible, and orders were issued that looting and plundering were to be sternly repressed. These regulations were carried out with very considerable completeness, and surprisingly little animosity was shown by the country-people as they passed along. But on the other hand, absolutely no active sympathy towards them was evinced. The attitude of the nation was one of mere negation, though this very apathy was at one time a serious danger to the Government. Added to this source of danger was the feeling of mystery which accompanied the Pretender's movements, and which ultimately developed into the extraordinary panic which gave the name of "Black Friday" to the day of its greatest culmination.

The mystery which hung over the advancing army originated probably in the amazing ignorance which prevailed of the habits and manners of Scotsmen of that date.

The Highlanders were regarded much as most people now think of a South Sea Islander. They were thought by Englishmen to be savages and cannibals, and strange stories are told of the hiding away of children along their line of march.

The defective means of inter-communication only heightened the mystery. The Tissington letters show this very plainly. The "rebells" are now reported to be at one place and now at another, and nothing certain can be ascertained apparently as to the present movements or future intentions of the visitors.

As they won their way southwards they seem to have grown on the one hand more confident, and on the other less orderly. "They marched at a prodigious rate." "Several marched all night," and "in high spirits." Wild rumours spread abroad. "There were several Manchester gentlemen that joined the rebels, who informed me that 20,000 French were actually landed in England, which account came to the Pretender this morning (not to be credited); they are full of money, they give out they are 20,000, and one-fifth more which follows them."

To oppose them Cumberland was collecting an army. He got it to Stone, supposing the Pretender was bound for Wales. Thence he advanced to Stafford. A little later he had to remove to Lichfield, that he might cover the high road to London. The Duke of Devonshire had collected forces at Mansfield. The valour of these troops was not actually put to the proof, perhaps fortunately. A letter from Mansfield, December 6, says, "We were much alarmed here last night with a report of the rebels being within a few miles of this place. The Derbyshire forces left us in no small hurry and confusion, *which contributed a good deal to encrease the allarm."*

Such was the state of the country and its inhabitants when Charles Edward entered Leek at nine o'clock on the morning of December 3. They are reported as "determined to make the best of their way to London." The letter of that date, written from "Warslow, five miles from Leek," says "they were yesterday pushing for Wales, but took the sudden turn, as I guess to avoid the Duke of Cumberland's army. I expect they will march for Ashbourn for Darby, but hope the army will be able to give 'em battle soon." The inhabitants of Leek were, however, prepared for the visit in spite of the Pretender's sudden change of plans, as the postscript to the above letter says "the Duke of Cumberland sent sixteen men to Leek, to order the people to get their effects and send him an express on their approach, and he would attack them there." But Charles Edward continued to outwit him. Instead of London his immediate object was Derby, between the forces of Cumberland and Devonshire. He at once proceeded therefore to Ashbourne, where he arrived at three

o'clock on the same day, having on his way "surprised and taken prisoners 11 Light horse belonging to his Grace of Kingston, one of which is an officer, and seven Light horse belonging to his Grace of Cumberland, that the men have their hands tied behind them, and are obliged to march with the rebels." These soldiers were probably scouts, and their capture was important, as it apparently frustrated Cumberland's design of attacking the rebels in the Leek and Ashbourne district, and enabled Charles Edward to pass safely by the Duke, though a letter of December 4 says, "it's supposed the King's army wasn't above eight or ten miles from 'em."

But the haste with which the Pretender was now marching, rendered necessary probably by the gathering troops, was beginning to tell on his followers. We now read "People who now are in this house (at Warslow), who have seen them at Macclesfield, say they seem lame with their march and cramble much. . . . No baggage come up. This looks well."

Our documents add nothing to our previous knowledge of the Pretender's reception at Ashbourne. On Thursday, December 5, our Warslow correspondent reports, "The rebells were the last night at Derby, Ashbourne, and Wirksworth. It's thought their route is southward by Nottingham or Loughborough." Evidently they were getting scattered, and the strict discipline was already relaxing. However, Derby was entered with great state. As is so well known, it was here that the momentous resolve was taken to retreat. Our letters give no details of the visit to Derby, but bring before us very vividly the rapidity with which the decay in discipline, of which traces had already been seen, now set in. One of the letters reports "there was not above 3,000 well-armed, the others with rusty guns and a brace of pistols each man, the boys pitchforks."

Charles's army evidently very much resembled Falstaff's "ragged regiment" But he himself was wholly confident of success. However, his advisers thought otherwise, and the retreat began on the morning of December 6. On that day they marched back to Ashbourne. Next day, the 7th, they reached Leek in miserable plight, "much dispirited and tir'd with marching." We have a couple of letters which very distinctly picture to us the disjointed condition of straggling disorder into which they had fallen. The first says, "At one o'clock yesterday morning the rebels began to march from Ashburn, Leek Road. Parties continued marching till seven, when the artillery moved. The Pretender went about seven. They plundered very much, were more abusive than in their first visit, and lived altogether on free quarter." The second says, "By an express just arrived (Sunday evening, December 9), from Leek, I have the following particulars. A thousand rebels marched last night from thence for Macclesfield; at six this morning the remaining body began to march the same way. At eight the artillery marched. A coach-and-six, with about 40 horse, left Mr. Mills's house about eleven. Twelve horsemen returned presently into town demanding horses at three or four places, and threatening to shoot people if not produced. After an hour's search left the town. Mr. Mills's, Mr. Lockett's, and the houses of the principal inhabitants . . . have been totally stripped and plundered, taking their linen apparell and everything valuable, and ransacked and disfigured houses entirely. Mr. Lockett, sen., was detained prisoner a time, and ordered to be shot if he did not produce his son. It is apprehended these outrages arise from the town apprehending two rebels who stayed after the rest in their first visit to steal horse, and were sent to Stafford jail."

This fortunately takes the main body safely out of Staffordshire. When immediate success ceased, at once the tide of misfortune began to flow. The country people began to awaken from their apathy, and to pluck up courage to attack any stragglers. There remains a curious relic of one of these at the Ship Inn at Swythamley, through the rugged neighbourhood of which the rebels struggled rather than marched. It consists of an original copy of the *Manchester Magazine* for December 24, 1745. It is said to have been

taken from one of the Pretender's followers who had entered the Ship with the object of plundering the house. He was overpowered by "mine host"; and his gun, together with this interesting old news-sheet which he had in his possession, is preserved at the ancient hostelry. Not always were the people so valorous and fortunate as this. There is at Okeover Hall a most quaint letter from the chaplain to the Mr. Okeover of that date, which throws curious light on the manner of the retreat, and is well worth printing, though it is not one of the documents from which we have drawn our preceding information.

"GOOD SIR,

"We have had a dreadful time the last week. Upon Tuesday night we had five lay with us; and upon Friday night, as they returned from Derby, four lay with us, and about seven o'clock at night came three (six) horsemen and said they wanted armour, and plundered the house and stables and barns, and the church. They have taken your best saddle trimmed with gold lace and furniture belonging to it, and your lady's bridle, and two other saddles and two other bridles and two pair of boots, and upon Tuesday the young mare, and upon Saturday morning the gray pad both at Christopher Tomkinsons, and they have taken all your horses at Okeover. We kept out of their way and saved them all. Upon Saturday morning, after they was gone, came three ruffians, and said they wanted money, and took from me eighteenpence, and picked the servants pockets of their money, and my silver tobacco-box; they killed none of us, but threatened us much. My humble service to your good lady, your good brother Nicol, and his good niece, and pray God send us a happy meeting.

"I am, good sir,

"Your most obedient servant,

"JER. WITCHING.

"Okeover, Staffordshire,

"December 9, 1745."

The subsequent history and failure of the movement is well known. Therefore, with this last characteristic notice of the Rebellion of '45 in our immediate neighbourhood, we conclude this paper.