TROTTER "OF BYERS HALL."

The pedigree of this family in Burke's "Landed Gentry" is a good example of those misleading accounts which are now so largely and so cleverly produced chiefly for insertion in its pages.

It was in 1863, I believe, that this pedigree first made its appearance, and as it has since undergone considerable modification, I append, from the editions of 1863 and 1894, the opening paragraphs :—

"This family, the only one of the name long settled in England, is of great antiquity in the county of Durham. The surname is Saxon, and Robert Trotar is mentioned in Doomesday Book as holding a house at the royal city of Winchester, of King Edward the Confessor, at a rent of £5 yearly. The earliest county records in the 14th century show the present family to have been then seated at Byers Green."

"In 1380 a complete survey of co. Durham was taken by order of Bishop Hatfield, and Roger Trotter was then seated at Byers. In 1344, on the death of Robert, Lord Clifford, Lord of the manors o. Brougham in Westmorland, and Hart and Hartlepool, Durham, it is stated in Nicolson and Burn's *History of Westmorland* that John Trotter and others held the manor of Brougham."

Now we are concerned here neither with Winchester nor Westmorland, but with Byers, co. Durham. Reference to Hatfield's "Survey" shews at once that the Roger Trotter in question is not even entered as a "libere tenens," but was a small holder, as we should say, farming some forty-five acres. Three men of the same class, in the little township, had larger holdings. So much for the family being "seated" at Byers in 1380.

That "George Trotter, gent., of Byers Green," who is found among the Redworth freeholders in 1685 was a descendant of the above Roger is possible enough ; and the long continuance of the name in the township is worth recording. But the pedigree-maker has brought ridicule on the house he sought to exalt by endeavouring to convert its members into a line of country gentlemen. The continuous pedigree begins in the time of Elizabeth with an individual described originally as "George Trotter, gent.," but now as George Trotter, of Byers Hall, from whom are made to descend a long line of "esquires." No pedigree of this family is found in the County Visitations, which indeed do not even mention one of its members. Surtees, unfortunately, did not live to write an account of this locality, so that we have not his assistance. The authority of the pedigree, however, may be gauged from the character of the statements I now append.

The virtual founder of the present family was a medical man who practised at Darlington. His epitaph runs :—

"Near this place lies the body of John Trotter M.D. an honest and humane man who, during a residence of 23 years in Darlington, practised medicine with reputation and success. He departed this life Feb. 8th 1781, aged 53."

In the present edition of the "Landed Gentry," the profession, the residence, and the first marriage of this worthy man are all alike ignored; and we have only an elaborate flourish about his (second) wife. Now his marriage with his first wife Sarah, and the birth of their son, are duly recorded in the Quaker registers;[1] for, be it revealed, the honest doctor came of Quaker stock. And not only on the father's side. His mother, we read, was "Elizabeth, dau. and coheir of John Hall, Esq., of Monk Hesilden Hall (who brought the Gordon estate into the family)." Now here Surtees comes to our assistance, and helps us to disestablish another country gentleman, by shewing that John Hall was not of "Monk Hesilden Hall" (then in the possession of the Tweddells), but was a yeoman in the parish, and "a noted Quaker preacher." Elizabeth is not mentioned among his daughters, but doubtless was one.

The special glory of the pedigree, however, is the marriage of the doctor's son and namesake in 1793 ("1797" in the "Landed Gentry"). Here are the earlier and the later descriptions of his wife's family:—

"Margaret, only child and heir of John Dale, Esq., of the Deanery House, Staindrop . . . sole representative of the family of Dale, owners of Gillfield, Yorks, and Staindrop, Durham, for between two and three centuries—a cadet branch of the Dales of Dale Hall, Essex—among the many distinguished members of that ancient family being Sir Thomas de Dale, knighted in Gascony, 12 Nov. 1363, by King Edward III, etc., etc."

"Margaret, 'a lady of famous beauty and sole heir of her ancient family,' only child of John Dale, Esq., of Staindrop, co. Durham (where the Dales had been seated for six centuries), Capt. 84th Regt. By this lady, who brought into the family some of the oldest baronial descents in the north, and the royal blood of England and Scotland, etc., etc."

Now the earliest pedigree of these Dales that I can find, is that which was compiled with great care for Surtees' "Durham" (iv, 145). It is quite untrue that they owned Staindrop, and it is startling to learn from this source that the above John Dale was the first of his family entitled to be styled "Esquire," and that his sister was married to "William Charnley, of Newcastle-on-Tyne, bookseller." In this pedigree the family are traced as freeholders in Staindrop to about the year 1600, beyond which all is blank.

The old "baronial descents" require separate examination. Here we must again collate the "arms" assigned to the family in the 1863 and 1894 editions:—

Arms. As in use and allowed at the Heralds' Visitations by the Skelton Castle, Yorkshire, and co. Durham families in the 16th century, both being precisely the same, and without 'difference.' Arg. a

Arms. Arg. a chief erm., over all a lion rampant az.; quartering among many other coats, DALE, BLACKETT, CONYERS, TEMPEST, ATON, BARON DE ATON, BERTRAM, BARON BERTRAM, UMFRAVILLE, BARON UM-

[1] I am indebted for this fact to Mr. Joseph Foster.

chief erm : over all a lion rampant az. quartering the ensigns (*sic*) of MARCH, HEIGHINGTON, DALE, WILDBORE, etc.

FRAVILLE, AND EARL OF ANGUS (Baronetcies [*sic*] still in abeyance among the coheirs), DE VESCI, DE VERE, and SCROPE. *Crest.* A lion's head erased arg., collared erm.

If we turn to Burke's "Armory," from Burke's "Landed Gentry," we find that, so far from the Yorkshire and Durham families using the same coat, "without 'difference,'" the Skelton Castle (Yorks.) Trotters bore the arms (and crest) now assumed by the Byers Green family, which arms were "granted 16 Feb. 1587," while the Helmden (Durham) Trotters bore, in 1615, "Ar. a lion rampant sa., a chief erm." We find the same blazon in Foster's "Visitations of Durham" (p. 308), with the note that "no arms are given in the copy of the Visitation in the Heralds' College." As the "Byers" Trotters do not even claim descent from Trotter of Skelton Castle, it is obvious, even on their own shewing, that they have wrongfully assumed the arms of that house. As to the quarterings, it will, of course, be obvious to northern antiquaries that they imply a descent, through heiresses, in one line from Conyers of Sockburn, Aton, Vere, Bertram, etc., and in another through Tempest of Holmside, from the Umfravilles of Kyme. Clearly this latter descent is claimed through the marriage of John Dale, gent, with "Isabel, dau. of Thomas Blacket, of Helmington, gent.," in 1709; because a Blackett, of Woodcroft, married in the sixteenth century, a coheiress of Tempest of Holmside. But there is nothing given to shew the ancestry of the above Thomas Blacket, and his daughter, it will be seen, is not entered as an heiress or coheiress, although this is done in the case of the preceding Dale match, that with Wildbore (1687). In short, there is not even an attempt to shew on what ground these quarterings are claimed, while as for the Dales, it is evident that Surtees did not consider them entitled to any arms at all.

The climax, however, yet remains. On turning to Kelly's "Durham Directory for 1890," we find under Byers no such "seat" as "Byers Green Hall" mentioned, while the name of Trotter cannot be found either among the residents or among the landowners of the parish. When the Editors of the "Landed Gentry" tell us that "every available source of information has been exhausted" by them in preparing that work, one is surprised to learn that they could not even turn to a Post-Office Directory to see if such a "seat" as "Byers Green Hall" had any real existence.

J. H. ROUND.