

On leaving the old woman he opened his book, when behold, what should it be but an odd volume of the *Spectator*! The number which he chanced to open was—"The Vision of Mirza," which so caught his attention that he could not take it off until he got through." As Franklin was born in 1706, and as this incident took place while he was 13 years old, it happened in 1719, the very year of Addison's death. Burns died six years after Franklin (who lived to the age of 84), but was born 53 years after him, dying at the early age of 37. We must not forget what Dr. Johnson wrote in his "Life of Addison"—"Whoever wished to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the study of Addison." The ghost of Addison must surely be pleased, if it has ever learnt that "The Vision of Mirza" was the favourite composition of two men so eminent, and yet so different, as Benjamin Franklin and Robert Burns.

I find another interesting coincidence at p. 104 of the same "Life of Franklin" that I have quoted above. Ben, when a young man, had a conceited and disagreeable "chum," named Keimer, who lived in the same house with him. Ben, who had, temporarily only, become a vegetarian, had also carried his point with Keimer, and accordingly engaged an old woman to become their cook, and gave her, off-hand, written receipts for three and forty dishes—not one of which contained a single atom of fish, flesh, or fowl. "For their first day's breakfast," writes Mr. Weems, "the old woman treated them to a tureen of oatmeal gruel. Keimer was particularly fond of his breakfast, at which a nice beefsteak with onion sauce was a standing dish. It was as good as a farce to Ben to live with what an eye Keimer regarded the tureen, when, in place of his steak, hot and savoury, he beheld this pale, meagre-looking slop.

'What have you got there?' said he, with a scowling eye.

'A dish of nice, hasty pudding, sir,' replied Ben, 'made of oats.'

'Of oats!' retorted Keimer, with a voice raised to a scream.

'Yes, sir, oats,' rejoined Ben; 'oats, that precious grain which gives such elegance and fire to our noblest of quadrupeds—the horse.'

Keimer growled out that he was no horse, to eat oats.

'No matter for that,' replied Ben, 'tis equally good for men.'

Keimer denied that any human being ever ate oats. 'Aye!' said Ben, 'and pray, what's become of the Scotch? Don't they live on oats? And yet, where will you find a people so 'bonny, blythe, and gay'—a nation of such wits and warriors!'

As there was no answering this, Keimer sat down to the tureen, and, with many wry faces, swallowed a few spoonfuls."

Turning now to Boswell's "Life of Johnson," p. 97 (John Murray, 1853), we find the doctor's definition of "oats" as "a grain which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people."

Again, at p. 399 of the same volume, the following note is quoted from Sir Walter Scott:—"Lord Elihu made a happy retort on Dr. Johnson's definition of oats as the food of horses in England, and of men in Scotland. 'Yes,' said he, 'and where else will you find such horses and such men?' At p. 459 Boswell, who has been visiting Lichfield, observes:—"It was pleasant to me to find that 'oats,' the 'food of horses,' were so much used as the food of the people in Dr. Johnson's own town."

The subject is again mentioned at p. 588, when Pennant's "London" is quoted as follows:—"I brought on myself his transient rage, by observing that in his tour in Scotland, he once had long and woeful experience of oats being the food of men in Scotland, as they were of horses in England. It was a national reflection, unworthy of him, and I shot my bolt. In turn he gave me a tender hug."

Finally, at p. 713, we have what Dr. Johnson himself said about his famous definition:—"After musing for some time he said—'I wonder how I should have any enemies, for I do harm to nobody!'

Boswell—'In the first place, sir, you will be pleased to recollect that you set out with attacking the Scotch; so you got a whole nation for your enemies.'

Johnson—'Why, I own that by my definition of oats I meant to vex them.'

Boswell—'Pray, sir, can you trace the cause of your antipathy to the Scotch?'

Johnson—'I cannot, sir.'

Boswell—'O'd Mr. Sheridan says it was because they sold Charles the First.'

Johnson—'Then, sir, old Mr. Sheridan has found out a very good reason.'

I will add one more illustrative anecdote to show that "oats" had supported the Scottish people long before the Leviathan of Literature maliciously alluded to the fact. William Drummond, of Hawthornden, was born in 1585 and died in 1649. He left behind him, in manuscript, a volume, on the title-page of which he inscribed:—"Democritus, a Labyrinth of Delight, or Works Preparative for the Apologie of Democritus: containing the Pasquils, Apothemes, Impresses, Anagrams, Epitaphes, Epigrames, in French, Italiane, Spanishe, Latine, of this and the late age before." A great portion of the work is, from its licentiousness, unfit for publication; but specimens of it have been printed in the "*Archæologia Scotica*." Among them may be found the following anecdote:—"Two Low Country men being in Scotland, the one asked the other how it was possible the men were so tall and big and the horses so little? 'Do you not know,' said the other, 'that the men here eat all the horses' bread!' meaning our oat-bread, which the commons use."

The name, "Land o' Cakes," which has been given by Burns and other writers to Scotland, has no doubt often been a puzzle to foreigners. The *sobriquet* can, of course, refer only to the oatmeal cakes, which are a common national article of food, particularly among the poorer classes.

Boswell asked Johnson if he did not see meat and drink enough in Scotland when he visited it!