

Pedestrianism.

B. 942

A CORRECT AND MINUTE
JOURNAL
OF
THE TIME OCCUPIED IN EVERY MILE
BY

MR. JOHN STOKES,

OF BRISTOL,

*During his Walk of Fifty Miles per Day for Twenty
successive Days, making One Thousand Miles,*

At Saltford, in the County of Somerset, from the 20th of
November to the 9th of December 1815.

WHICH HE ACCOMPLISHED

WITHIN TWELVE HOURS OF EACH DAY.

BY

JOSEPH GILBERT & THOS HOWELL.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

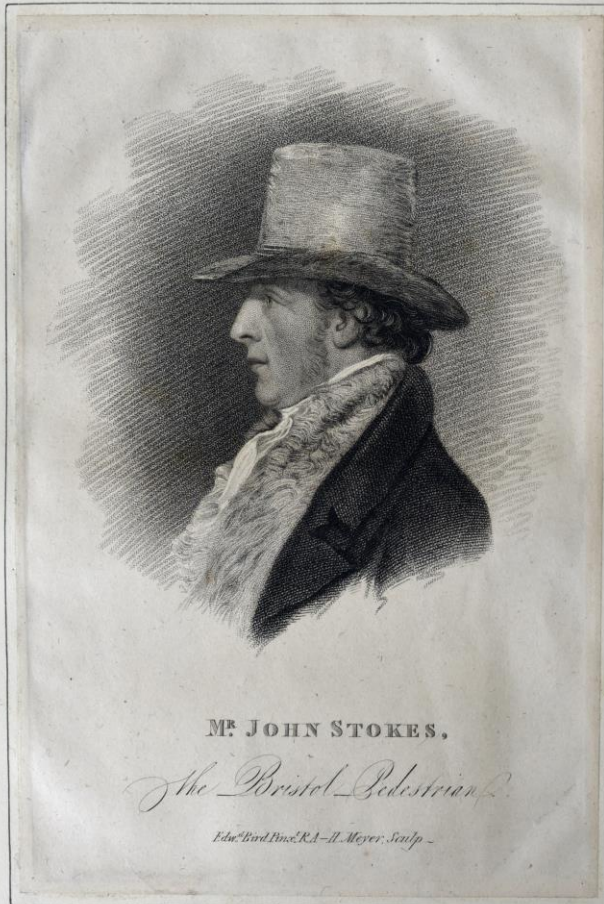
A Brief Memoir of Mr. Stokes.

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1815



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A BRIEF

Memoir

OF

MR. JOHN STOKES.

IF any apology be deemed requisite for the brevity of this notice, the Reader, we trust, will find one in his own recollection, that the life of a young man whose years are not more than five-and-twenty, has seldom furnished a combination of events worthy the honours of the press. It must be acknowledged however, that had the subject of these pages reached even his grand climacterick, he

has accomplished a deed of sufficient importance, in these our times of effeminate habits and manners, to place the succeeding proud memorial of only twenty days, in the same rank with many a ponderous volume in the history of his fellow-men.

Mr. JOHN STOKES is a younger son of one of the most ancient and respectable families in the county of Gloucester. He was born in the parish of Stapleton, which is situated about two miles from Bristol, on the first of September 1790. His father being of independant circumstances, Mr. Stokes's education was proportionately liberal. He became early distinguished among his youthful competitors for incessant activity, and ambition to shine in manly exercises; but as he grew up, the perfect liberty that pervaded his amusements, promoted by a constitutional cheer-

fulness of temper, instead of presenting, as we expected to learn, days made up of hardihood and laborious exertion, might be rather characterised as verging upon a life of ease and indolence. Notwithstanding this seemingly unpromising feature of his progress towards manhood, it happily was not aggravated by intemperate indulgence in the pleasures of the table, nor indeed by any other propensity that was likely to endanger his health or native soundness of constitution. The most serious inconvenience that threatened to overshadow the delights of this uncommon share of the blessings of Providence, was a premature inclination towards excessive corpulency, which commenced about seven years since, and increasing to a degree that in the view of parental and fraternal affection became truly alarming, he was within the last two years induced to commence a series of peregrina-

nations on foot, avowedly for the purpose of reducing his weight, which then amounted to nineteen stone and eight pounds. Accordingly, his walks from Bristol to visit a numerous circle of friends and acquaintance in Gloucestershire were gradually extended, until the suddenness of his appearance as one of their family-parties when least expected, formed matter of much agreeable speculation and notoriety, unaccompanied by any abatement to the pleasure with which the rites of hospitality were upon these occasions administered, except what arose from the erratic *shortness* of his visits. This may be asserted without the slightest disparagement to the taste of the female party in the friendly compact; for it will be seen by the Likeness of him which our highly distinguished fellow-citizen Mr. BIRD has painted, an engraving from

which will embellish this tract, that Mr. John Stokes is a 'proper *personable* man enough.'

So little, however, was this gentleman moved by a passion for any pecuniary improvement of his prowess, that it is probable he would long have thus kept on the 'even tenor of his way,' unnoticed save by the chosen few who felt a more permanent interest in the generally unassuming and amiable traits of his character, had not that latent Love of Fame from which perhaps none of Heaven's intellectual creatures are totally exempt, been lighted up by the rage for feats of Pedestrianism which has so recently taken place in the public mind, of regard for deeds of other end and colour.

It was justly observed by the intelligent Proprietor of The Bristol Journal, that Mr. Stokes's achievement herein recorded "forms

“ the climax of what this age of Pedestrianism
“ has afforded;” and we are alike happy in
being the medium to confirm the liberal sug-
gestion of the same writer, that “ it was not the
“ feat of a speculative gambler;” as we are
assured that the sole profit derived by Mr.
Stokes, or any of his relatives, from his Herculean
labour, scarcely exceeds One Hundred Guineas
—the sum which he was pledged to lose, in the
event of failing to complete his task. Its con-
summation has indeed “ shewn what the human
“ frame is capable of undergoing,” and that
too “ when it is trained” merely “ in habits of
“ temperance;” for it must be obvious from a
preceding remark, that “ hardihood of body” had
not been a primary object of Mr. Stokes’s attain-
ment. Hence, also, it may be safely inferred,
that the constitutional “ sturdiness of the British
“ frame” is not likely, in the inevitable and we
hope general emulation of our hero’s indepen-

dence of limbs and perseverance in loco-motive energy, to become degenerated.*

In the spirit of this observation, we take the liberty to quote a stanza of a manuscript song, any further publication of which its ingenious and ingenuous writer has suppressed, because, consistently with the temporary purpose of provoking a laugh, it did not altogether express his own sober feelings upon the subject.

Should Fate once more plunge us in strife,

And our Foe, try his force or his cunning,

And finding these fail, for his Life

Shall betake himself bravely to running;

From our Fathers, in battles of yore,

That method still sav'd them at last,—

But they'll find it will save them no more

From their Sons, who walk ten times as fast.

Mr. Stokes's height is precisely five feet ten inches and a half; and his form is truly athletic

* Let us likewise indulge the hope, that an extended knowledge of the British *tongue* may be hereby promoted

and handsomely proportioned. His dress during the walk was generally a green frock jacket, a silk plush waistcoat, net-pantaloons, with a white hat, and shoes of strong calf-skin with very stout soles, thickly studded with nails.

On the last day, an immense number of all ranks of people, from Bristol, Bath, and the surrounding country, assembled to greet our Pedestrian at the goal of victory; and the quiet demesne of Saltford presented all the enthusiastic bustle and applause that may be conceived of a Roman Amphitheatre.

among the provincial classes of our fellow-countrymen. Take the following anecdote.

One day, during the progress of Mr. Stokes's feat, a rustic was heard to exclaim, but with no greater asperity of manner than might have been produced by the fatigue of his expedition,—“ I be a comm'd a matter o' aightean miles to zee thicky theng caal'd a PEE-DES-TREE-UN; an aater aal, I onnly zeed a *Mon a waalkin* !”

A few select friends were in waiting, who conducted him by a circuitous route in a coach and four to the *dulce domum* of Mr. Ambrose Dyer, in the same parish; and after partaking of the Farmer's best cheer and most hearty welcome, Mr. Stokes arrived at his residence in St. James's Square, in this city, at eleven o'clock the same night, without evincing the slightest discomposure or alteration of appearance, arising from his unparelled 'pleasure of a toil.'

The nett total of time occupied in walking the Thousand Miles was, agreeably to the following well-authenticated document which it is the design of this publication to secure from oblivion, *independently of the intervals appropriated to refreshment*, 214 hours, 7 minutes and 14 seconds; or 8 days, 22 hours, 7 minutes, 14 seconds.

Bristol, Dec. 22, 1815.