

JOHN ASHTON

EIGHTEENTH
CENTURY
WAIFS

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Eighteenth Century Waifs

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Eighteenth Century Waifs:

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PREFACE

It was probably Solomon, who, in Ecclesiastes, cap. 12, v. 12, said, 'Of making many books there is no end.' But, if this book had to have been written by him, he might, probably, have modified his opinion.

I have read some books in my life-time, *re* the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, and therefore was not taken aback when I was advised by a learned friend, whom I consulted as to the subject of a new book, to try the 'Musgrave Tracts,' in the British Museum. I thanked him, and wrote for them, when I was politely asked, 'Did I want them all?' 'Of course,' was my reply; when I was told, with the courtesy that particularly distinguishes the establishment, that I had better come into an inner room, and have them down shelf by shelf.

The books came in a continuous stream, until I asked if there were any more. 'Oh, yes,' was the reply; and, when I had finished my job, I found I had gone through more than 1760 volumes. Add to this over 200 other books and newspapers used for reference, &c., and that will represent some amount of the labour employed in writing a book.

I have strung together a series of chapters of different phases of social life and biography of the last century, none of which have (as far as I am concerned) appeared in any magazine, but which have all been specially written for this book. And this I have done so that the book may be taken up at any time, and laid down again at the end of an article; and perhaps the best reason for my publishing this book is, that it gives the reader a brief *résumé* of each subject treated, taken from sources, thoroughly original, which are usually inaccessible to the general public, and known but to few students.

They are diverse, to suit all tastes; and if this, my venture, is successful, I may bashfully hint that my store is not yet exhausted.

JOHN ASHTON.

A FORGOTTEN FANATIC.¹

One of the most curious phases of religious mania is that where the patient is under the impression that he is divinely inspired, and has a special mission to his fellow-men, which he is impelled to fulfil at all costs and under all circumstances.

From the earliest ages of Christianity *pseudo-Christoi*, or false Christs, existed. Simon Magus, Dositheus, and the famous Barcochab were among the first of them, and they were followed by Moses, in Crete, in the fifth century; Julian, in Palestine, *circa* A.D. 530; and Serenus, in Spain, *circa* A.D. 714. There were, in the twelfth century, some seven or eight in France, Spain, and Persia; and, coming to more modern times, there was Sabbatai Zewi, a native of Aleppo, or Smyrna, who proclaimed himself to be the Messiah, in Jerusalem, *circa* 1666. The list of religious fanatics is a long one. Mahomet, Munzer, John of Leyden, Brothers, Matthews, Joanna Southcott, 'Courtenay,' or Thomas, and Joe Smith are among them, and are well-known; but there are hundreds of others whose work has not been on so grand a scale, or whose influence has not been of the national importance of the above; and it is of one of these forgotten fanatics that I now treat.

¹ It may be objected that this story pertains more to the seventeenth than the eighteenth century; but, as the man Roderick was alive in the last century, I claim him as belonging to it.

Well out in the Atlantic Ocean, far west, indeed, even of the Western Isles, stands the lonely island of St. Kilda, or Hirta, as it used to be called, from *h-Iar-tir*, the Gaelic for West land, or West country. Its rocky sides are inaccessible, except at one landing-place, at a bay on the south-east, and it is the home and breeding-place of millions of sea-birds, whose flesh and eggs form the main supply of food for the inhabitants, and whose feathers, together with a few sheep and cattle, and what little barley can be grown, or butter can be made, pay the trifling rent required, and help to provide the bare necessities of civilized existence.

The inhabitants are not healthy, so many dying, as young children, of a disease locally known as the ‘eight day sickness,’ a disease which generally attacks them on the eighth or ninth day after birth, and mostly proves fatal in the course of a day or two. From this and other causes, including falls from cliffs, the population has remained nearly stationary, as is evidenced by the fact that for the last hundred years the inhabitants have averaged under a hundred. Indeed, at one time, in 1724, small-pox attacked the islanders, being imported by one of them on his return from a visit to Harris, and all the adults died except four, who were left to take care of twenty-six orphans, all that were left of twenty-four families.

Lying out of the ordinary track of boats, even of yachts, it is, even now, seldom visited, and in the last century no one except the steward of Macleod (whose family have been the

possessors of St. Kilda for hundreds of years), who made an annual pilgrimage to collect the rent, ever came near the place. Its loneliness was proverbial, so much so that it was an article of faith that the arrival of strangers brought with them a kind of influenza called boat-cough, which was sometimes fatal. This singular disease does not seem to be confined to St. Kilda, for Bates, in 'The Naturalist on the River Amazon,' mentions certain tribes near Ega who are gradually becoming extinct from a slow fever and cold, which attacks them after they have been visited by civilised people. And in the 'Cruise of H.M.S. Galatea,' in 1867-68, it says, 'Tristan d'Acunha is a remarkably healthy island; but it is a singular fact that any vessel touching there from St. Helena invariably brings with it a disease resembling influenza.'

This belief is amusingly illustrated in Boswell's 'Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides.' 'This evening he (Dr. Johnson) disputed the truth of what is said as to the people of St. Kilda catching cold whenever strangers come. "How can there," said he, "be a physical effect without a physical cause?" He added, laughing, "The arrival of a ship full of strangers would kill them; for, if one stranger gives them one cold, two strangers must give them two colds, and so on in proportion." I wondered to hear him ridicule this, as he had praised McAulay for putting it in his book,² saying that it was manly in him to tell a fact, however strange, if he himself believed it. They said it was annually

² 'The History of St. Kilda,' etc. By the Rev. Mr. Kenneth Macaulay. London, 1764.

proved by Macleod's steward, on whose arrival all the inhabitants caught cold. He jocularly remarked, "The steward always comes to demand something from them, and so they fall a-coughing. I suppose the people in Skye all take a cold when – " (naming a certain person) "comes." They said he only came in summer. *Johnson*— "That is out of tenderness to you. Bad weather and he at the same time would be too much."

The first printed account of this poor lonely island is, probably, in a little book by Donald Monro, High Dean of the Isles,³ 1594. He there says, 'The inhabitants therof ar simple poor people, scarce learnit in aney religion, but McCloyd of Herryay,⁴ his stewart, or he quhom he deputs in sic office, sailes anes in the zeir ther at midsummer, with some chaplaine to baptize bairns ther, and if they want⁵ a chaplaine, they baptize their bairns themselves.'

At the end of the seventeenth century, when Roderick, the religious impostor, or fanatic, lived, things spiritual were somewhat improved, although they only had the annual clerical visit. There were three chapels on the island, to serve a population of one hundred and eighty. One was called Christ's Chapel, hardly discernible from one of their dwellings, being built and thatched in a similar manner; but it contained one of their chief treasures, a brass crucifix, which lay upon an altar therein. They

³ 'Description of the Western Isles of Scotland, called Hebrides,' etc.

⁴ Harris.

⁵ *Scottice*, are without.

paid no adoration or worship to this, but it was their most precious possession, being used, as are the gospels elsewhere, for the purpose of solemn asseveration, and it was also made use of at marriages and the healing of strife.

The people observed as Holy-days Christmas, Easter, Good Friday, St. Columba's Day, and All Saints. They ceased all work at midnight on Saturday, and kept the Sabbath, in this respect, very strictly, only resuming their ordinary avocations on Monday morning. They believed in the Trinity, and in a future state of happiness and misery, and that God ordains all things. They took great care with their churchyard, which they fenced round with stone, so that no cattle should desecrate God's Acre, and they had a peculiar belief in the embodiment of spirits, and fancied that they could, at will, incorporate themselves with the rocks, hills, etc.

Of the three chapels, one only seems to have been used, and this, not being large enough to accommodate the islanders, the whole of the inhabitants would assemble, on every Sunday morning, in the churchyard, and there devoutly say the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments. This form of worship was simple enough; but it seems to have been of recent introduction —*i. e.*, about the beginning of the seventeenth century; when, somehow or other, there was a man upon the island who passed for a Roman Catholic priest, but who was so ignorant that he did not know the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, or the Decalogue correctly; and, consequently, he taught the poor

people an incorrect version, but to him they owed the crucifix, and the observance of the Holy-days before mentioned, and with this teacher they were content until the year 1641, when one Coll McDonald, or Ketoch, fled from Ireland, and, with a few men, landed at St. Kilda, where he lived in amity with the inhabitants for nearly a year. He rebuked the so-called priest for his ignorance, and he taught the poor simple folk the correct version of the text of their very primitive worship – in fine, he was considered so far superior to the priest, that the natives would fain have deposed the latter; but this McDonald would not suffer.

Martin Martin,⁶ writing in 1698, describes the happy condition of the islanders at that date. ‘The Inhabitants of St. Kilda are much happier than the generality of Mankind, as being almost the only People in the World who feel the sweetness of true Liberty: What the Condition of the People in the Golden Age is feign’d by the Poets to be, that theirs really is; I mean, in Innocency and Simplicity, Purity, Mutual Love, and Cordial Friendship, free from solicitous Cares and anxious Covetousness; from Envy, Deceit, and Dissimulation; from Ambition and Pride, and the Consequences that attend them. They are altogether ignorant of the Vices of Foreigners, and governed by the Dictates of Reason and Christianity, as it was first delivered to them by those Heroick Souls whose Zeal moved them to undergo danger and trouble, to plant Religion here in one of the remotest Corners of the World.’

⁶ ‘A Late Voyage to St. Kilda, the Remotest of all the Hebrides,’ etc., London, 1698.

This Eden, however, was doomed to have its Serpent, and these simple folk were fated to be led into error by a man who seems to have been physically above the average of the islanders, for he is described as ‘a Comely, well-proportioned fellow, Red-hair’d, and exceeding all the Inhabitants of St. Kilda in Strength, Climbing, &c.’ Naturally he was illiterate, for the means of culture were altogether lacking in that lonely isle; but he was above his fellows, inasmuch as he was a poet, and, moreover, he claimed to have the gift of ‘second sight,’ a pretension which would naturally cause him to be looked up to by these Gaelic islanders. These qualifications which Roderick (for such was his name) claimed, naturally pointed to his becoming a leader of some sort; and he seems to have entered upon his vocation early in life, for, when we first hear of him in his public capacity, he was but eighteen years of age.

We have read how strictly the islands kept the Sabbath, and Roderick seems to have been the first to break through their customs – by going fishing on that day. As, according to all moral ethics, something dreadful will surely overtake the Sabbath breaker, it is comforting to know that Roderick formed no exception to the rule. One Sunday he committed the heinous and, hitherto, unknown sin of fishing – and, on his return, he declared that, as he was coming home, a ‘Man, dressed in a Cloak and Hat,’ suddenly appeared in the road before him. Needless to say, this apparition frightened him, and he fell upon his face before the supernatural being, but the Man desired him not to be afraid, for

he was John the Baptist, who had come specially from Heaven, the bearer of good tidings to the inhabitants of St. Kilda, and with a divine commission to instruct Roderick in religious matters, which instruction he was to impart to his neighbours for their spiritual welfare.

Roderick diffidently objected to thus being made a medium, and alleged his incapacity to receive such revelations and act upon them; but the pseudo-saint cheered him, and bade him be of good courage, declaring that he would immediately make him fit for his predestined purpose, and, according to the poor fanatic's account, gave him the following instructions:

It was to be of primary importance, and as a visible sign of their belief, that his followers should observe Friday as a strict fast – so strict, indeed, that not a particle of food of any description must pass their lips on that day, nor might they even indulge in a pinch of snuff – a small luxury which they dearly loved. He next promulgated the comforting assurance that many of the deceased islanders were Saints in Heaven, and there interceded for those living; that everyone had his own particular advocate, and, on the anniversary of the day peculiar to each Saint, his *protégé* on earth was to make a feast to his neighbours of the very best of his substance, such as mutton, fowls, &c., Roderick, of course, to be the chief and honoured guest on the occasion.

A sheep was to be sacrificed on the threshold of each house by every family (presumably only once a year), and this was to

be done in a specially cruel manner, for no knife was to touch it, but its throat was to be hacked with the crooked spades they used in husbandry, whose edges were about half-an-inch thick. This was to be done at night, but no one might partake of the mutton that night under penalty of similarly slaughtering a sheep the next day for every person that had eaten of it. It is difficult to see what was his object in these ordinances – except to make sure of good living at the expense of his poor dupes, who, if they turned refractory, and disobeyed his injunctions, were threatened with the most awful Judgment to come.

That he was keen enough in his own interests is exemplified in one of his promulgations. He picked out a bush upon a rising ground, which he christened ‘John the Baptist’s Bush,’ for there, he declared, the Saint had appeared to him; and this he ordered should be holy ground, which must never be defiled by the tread of sheep or cattle. He also built a wall – certainly not a high one – round it: and should, by chance, any unhappy sheep, in the lightsomeness of its heart, or succumbing to the temptation of the herbage, overleap this wall, and dare to browse upon the sacred soil, it was straightway to be slain – and Roderick and its owner were to eat its carcase. But, as the Saint evidently foresaw that some stiff-necked, and not properly-converted proselyte, might object to this disposition of his personal property and might refuse to have the sheep slaughtered, he commanded that such a recusant should be Anathema, cast out, and excluded from all fellowship, until such time as he saw the error of his ways,

recanted, and expiated his sin by permitting the sacrifice.

For discipline must be maintained in a religious body, as well as in a purely secular society; and Roderick had no intention of having his authority disputed. For minor offences he had a cheerful penance. No matter what was the weather, the sinner must strip, and forthwith walk or jump into the water, there to stand until the divinely-inspired one chose to release him, and, if more than one were thus punished at the same time, they were to beguile the moments, and somewhat increase their penance, by pouring cold water upon each other's heads.

He was for no half-measures. This new Divine revelation must thoroughly supersede and root out the old superstitions; so he forbade the use of the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments – the whole formulary of the islanders' simple faith – and substituted forms of his own. His prayers are described as rhapsodical productions, in which, in spite of the abolition of the old form of worship, he introduced the names of God, our Saviour, and the immaculate Virgin, together with words unintelligible either to himself or his hearers, but which he declared to have received direct from the Baptist, and delivered to his hearers, as in duty bound.

He kept up his connection with St. John, and used to assert that every night, when the people were assembled, he heard a voice, saying, 'Come you out, and then he lost all control over himself, and was constrained to go. Then would the Baptist meet him, and instruct him in what he was to say to the people. St. John

evidently expected his disciple to exercise all his intelligence, for he would only say his message once, and never could be got to repeat it. On one occasion, Roderick could not understand it, or hardly remember a sentence; so he naturally inquired of the Saint how he was to behave. He got no comfort, however, only a brusque, 'Go, you have it,' with which he was fain to be content, and, wonderful to relate, on his return to his flock, he remembered every word he had been told, and could retail it fluently – but, as a rule, his discourses were discursive, and apt to send his auditors to sleep.

Naturally the women flocked to him, and he took them specially (some said too specially) under his protection. To them he revealed that, if they followed him faithfully, eternal bliss should be their portion, and that they should go to heaven in glorious state, riding upon milk-white steeds. For them he exercised his poetic talents (for he composed long, rhapsodical rhymes, which he called psalms, and which were sung by his flock), and he taught them a devout hymn, called the 'Virgin Mary's,' which he declared she had sent specially to them, and that it was of such wonderful efficacy, that whoever could repeat it by heart would not die in child-bearing; but, of course, so valuable a gift could not be imparted gratis, so every scholar was mulcted in a sheep before she was instructed in the potent hymn.

Yet, as with many another, a woman was the primary cause of his downfall. It was his behaviour to a woman that first opened the eyes of his deluded followers, and showed them that their

idol was fallible, and that his feet were ‘part of iron, and part of clay.’ The wife of Macleod’s representative found favour in his sight; but, being a virtuous woman, she told her husband of the Prophet’s wicked advances; and these two laid a little trap, into which the unsuspecting, but naughty, Roderick walked.

It was very simple: the husband hid himself until he judged proper to appear – confronted the guilty man – spoke burning words of reproof to him – thoroughly disorganised him, and brought him very low – made him beg his pardon, and promise he would never so sin again. But although a hollow peace was patched up between them, and the injured husband even gave the greatest sign of friendship possible, according to their notions (*i. e.*, taking Roderick’s place as sponsor at the baptism of one of his own children), yet the story leaked out. The Prophet’s father plainly and openly told him he was a deceiver, and would come to a bad end; and the thinking portion of the community began to have serious doubts of the Divine origin of his mission.

These doubts were further confirmed by one or two little facts which led the people to somewhat distrust his infallibility, especially in one case in which his cousin-german Lewis was concerned. This man had an ewe which had brought forth three lambs at one time, and these wicked sheep actually browsed upon the sacred bush! Of course we know the Baptist had decreed their slaughter, and Lewis was promptly reminded of the fact – but he did not see it in that light. His heart was hard, and his sheep were dear to him. He argued that, from his point of view, it was

unreasonable to kill so many animals, and inflict such serious damage to their proprietor, for so trivial a fault – and, besides, he would not. Of course there was nothing to be done with such an hardened sinner but to carry out the law, and excommunicate him; which was accordingly done – with the usual result. The poor simple folk, in their faith, looked for a speedy and awful judgment to fall upon Lewis and his sheep.

‘But what gave rise
To no little surprise,
Nobody seem’d one penny the worse!’

And then they bethought them that, if it were their own case, they might as well treat the matter as Lewis had done – seeing he was none the worse, and four sheep to the good; and so his authority over them gradually grew laxer and laxer: and, when the steward paid his annual visit in 1697, they denounced Roderick as an impostor, and expressed contrition for their own backslidings.

The chaplain who accompanied the steward, and who was sent over from Harris by Macleod, purposely to look into this matter, made the Prophet publicly proclaim himself an impostor, compelled him to commence with his own hands the destruction of the enclosure round the sacred bush, and scatter the stones broadcast – and, finally, the steward, whose word was absolute law to these poor people, took him away, never to return. The poor credulous dupes, on being reproved for so easily complying

to this impostor, with one voice answered that what they did was unaccountable; but, seeing one of their own number and stamp in all respects endued, as they fancied, with a powerful faculty of preaching so fluently and frequently, and pretending to converse with John the Baptist, they were induced to believe in his mission from Heaven, and therefore complied with his commands without dispute.

Of his ultimate fate nothing is known, the last record of him being that, after having been taken to Harris, he was brought before the awful Macleod, to be judged, 'who, being informed of this Fellow's Impostures, did forbid him from that time forward to Preach any more on pain of Death. This was a great mortification, as well as disappointment, to the Impostor, who was possessed with a fancy that *Mack-Leod* would hear him preach, and expected no less than to persuade him to become one of his Proselytes, as he has since confessed.' He was sent to Skye, where he made public recantation of his errors, and confessed in several churches that it was the Devil, and not St. John, with whom he conversed – and, arguing from that fact, he probably was docile, and lived the remainder of his life in Skye – a harmless lunatic.

In October, 1885, public attention was particularly directed to St. Kilda, and the story cannot be better told than by reproducing some contemporary newspaper paragraphs.

Morning Post, October 9, 1885. – 'A letter has been received by Principal Rainy, Edinburgh, and has been forwarded to the

Home Secretary from St. Kilda. The letter was found on the shore of Harris, having been floated from St. Kilda in a little boat made of a piece of plank. The letter was written by the clergyman of St. Kilda, by direction of the islanders, asking that the Government should be informed that their corn, barley, and potatoes were destroyed by a great storm, in the hope that Government would send a supply of corn-seed, barley, and potatoes, as the crop was quite useless.'

Ibid, October 21, 1885. – 'The steamer from Glasgow, carrying supplies to the starving people of St. Kilda, reached the island on Monday, and safely landed the stores. The islanders were in good health, but their crops have been swept away, and, but for the supplies sent by the steamer, they would have been in very perilous straits for food. Intelligence of the distress of St. Kilda was first made known by bottles thrown into the sea.'

Times, April 8, 1886. – 'A Parliamentary paper has been issued containing a report of Mr. Malcolm McNeill, inspecting officer of the Board of Supervision, on the alleged destitution in the island of St. Kilda, in October, 1885, with supplementary reports by Lieutenant Osborne, R.N., commanding officer, and by the medical officer of H.M.S. *Jackal*. The report shows that, news from St. Kilda having reached Harris by means of letters enclosed in a small boat a yard long, found on the shore, to the effect that the corn, barley, and potatoes of the inhabitants had been destroyed by a great storm that had passed over the island early in September, and that, in consequence, the crofters of St.

Kilda were suffering great privations, a steamer, the *Hebridean*, was despatched from Glasgow to the island with stores on the 13th of October, and, by arrangement with the Admiralty, H.M.S. *Jackal*, conveying Mr. McNeill, left Rothesay Bay for St. Kilda on Wednesday, October 21, 1885. Mr. McNeill reported that, so far from being destitute, the inhabitants of the island were amply, indeed luxuriously, supplied with food, and in possession of sums of money said to average not less than £20 a family. Dr. Acheson, of H.M.S. *Jackal*, reported that the inhabitants of St. Kilda were well-clad and well-fed, being much better off in these respects than the peasants in many other parts of Great Britain.’

Another newspaper paragraph not only confirms this, but adds to our knowledge of the island and its inhabitants. ‘Mr. Malcolm McNeill ... reported on the 24th of October that the population of St. Kilda – seventy-seven souls in all – were amply, “indeed, luxuriously,” supplied with food for the winter. The supplies included sheep, fulmar, solan geese, meal, potatoes, milk, fish, tea, and sugar; and a large sum of money, said to average not less than £20 a family, was known to be hoarded in the island – a large profit being derived from tourists. Mr. McNeill states that a former emigrant, who returned from Australia for a few months in 1884, spread discontent among the people, who now showed a strong desire to emigrate, and in this he suggested that the Government should assist them. Dr. Acheson of the *Jackal*, reporting on visits paid both then and in 1884, notes that the people seemed to be better clad and fed than

the peasants of many other parts of Great Britain. He was struck by the comparatively large number of infirm persons – by the large number of women compared with men, and by the comparatively small number of children. The food was abundant, but lacked variety; was rather indigestible, and was nearly devoid of vegetables for six months each year. He saw no signs of vinegar, pepper, mustard, pickles, or other condiments, but there was a great liking for tobacco and spirits. The diet he pronounces quite unfit for children, aged persons, or invalids; and, to remedy this, he suggests that an endeavour should be made to grow cabbages, turnips, carrots, and other vegetables on the island; that fowls should be introduced, and that pressed vegetables and lime juice might be issued when no fresh vegetables are procurable. Judging from the amount of clothing worn, the doctor thinks the people are more likely to suffer from excess than from the other extreme, for, on September 14th, 1884, with the thermometer sixty-eight degrees Fahrenheit in the shade, he found a healthy adult male wearing “a thick tweed waistcoat, with flannel back and sleeves, two thick flannel undervests, tweed trousers, a flannel shirt, flannel drawers, boots, and stockings, Tam o’ Shanter cap, and a thick, scarlet worsted muffler around his neck.” The furniture he found scanty, and very rough, and the houses very dirty. St. Kilda is not a desirable retreat, for Dr. Acheson reports that at present there are no games nor music in the island, and – strangest fact of all in this official document – “whistling is strictly forbidden.”

A FASHIONABLE LADY'S LIFE

There is a little poem by Dean Swift, published by him in Dublin, in 1728, and reprinted in London, in 1729. Its price was only fourpence, and it is called, 'The Journal of a Modern Lady, in a Letter to a Person of Quality.' It is so small, that it is absolutely lost in the Dean's voluminous works, yet it is very amusing, and, as far as I can judge (having made an especial study of the Social Life of the Eighteenth Century), it is not at all exaggerated; and for this reason I have ventured to reproduce it. It is borne out in similar descriptions both in the early and latter portions of the century; as, for instance, in 'The English Lady's Catechism,' 1703, of which the following is a portion:

HOW DO YOU EMPLOY YOUR TIME NOW?

'I lie in Bed till Noon, dress all the Afternoon, Dine in the Evening, and Play at Cards till Midnight.'

'How do you spend the Sabbath?'

'In Chit-Chat.'

'What do you talk of?'

'New Fashions and New Plays.'

'How often do you go to Church?'

'Twice a year or oftener, according as my Husband gives me

new Cloaths.’

‘Why do you go to Church when you have new Cloaths?’

‘To see other People’s Finery, and to show my own, and to laugh at those scurvy, out-of-fashion Creatures that come there for Devotion.’

‘Pray, Madam, what Books do you read?’

‘I read lewd Plays and winning Romances.’

‘Who is it you love?’

‘Myself.’

‘What! nobody else?’

‘My Page, my Monkey, and my Lap Dog.’

‘Why do you love them?’

‘Why, because I am an English lady, and they are Foreign Creatures: my Page from Genoa, my Monkey from the East Indies, and my Lap Dog from Vigo.’

‘Would they not have pleased you as well if they had been English?’

‘No, for I hate everything that Old England brings forth, except it be the temper of an English Husband, and the liberty of an English Wife. I love the French Bread, French Wines, French Sauces, and a French Cook; in short, I have all about me French or Foreign, from my Waiting Woman to my Parrot.’

‘How do you pay your debts?’

‘Some with money, and some with fair promises. I seldom pay anybody’s bills, but run more into their debt. I give poor Tradesmen ill words, and the rich I treat civilly, in hopes to get

further in their debt.’

Addison, in the *Spectator* (No. 323, March 11th, 1712), gives Clarinda’s Journal for a week, from which I will only extract one day as a sample.

‘Wednesday. *From Eight to Ten.* Drank two Dishes of Chocolate in Bed, and fell asleep after ’em.

‘*From Ten to Eleven.* Eat a Slice of Bread and Butter, drank a Dish of Bohea, read the *Spectator*.

‘*From Eleven to One.* At my Toilet, try’d a new Head.⁷ Gave orders for Veney⁸ to be combed and washed. *Mem.* I look best in Blue.

‘*From One till Half an Hour after Two.* Drove to the Change. Cheapened a couple of Fans.

‘*Till Four.* At Dinner. *Mem.* Mr. Frost passed by in his new Liveries.

‘*From Four to Six.* Dressed, paid a visit to old Lady Blithe and her Sister, having heard they were gone out of Town that Day.

‘*From Six to Eleven.* At Basset.⁹ *Mem.* Never sit again upon the Ace of Diamond.’

Gambling was one of the curses of the Eighteenth Century. From Royalty downwards, all played Cards – the men, perhaps,

⁷ Head-dress.

⁸ Venus, her lap dog.

⁹ A game at cards introduced into France by Signor Justiniani, Ambassador of Venice in 1674. The players are the dealer or banker, his assistant, who looks after the losing cards – a *croupier*, in fact – and the punters, or anyone who plays against the banker.

preferred dice, and ‘Casting a Main’ – but the women were inveterate card-players, until, in the latter part of the century, it became a national scandal, owing to the number of ladies who, from their social position, should have acted better, who kept Faro-tables, and to whom the nickname of *Faro’s Daughters* was applied. There were Ladies Buckinghamshire and Archer, Mrs. Concannon, Mrs. Hobart, Mrs. Sturt, and others, whose houses were neither more nor less than gaming-houses. The evil was so great, that Lord Kenyon, in delivering judgment in a trial to recover £15 won at card-playing, said that the higher classes set a bad example in this matter to the lower, and, he added, ‘They think they are too great for the law; I wish they could be punished. If any prosecutions of this kind are fairly brought before me, and the parties are justly convicted, whatever be their rank or station in the country – though they be the first ladies in the land – they shall certainly exhibit themselves in the pillory.’

The caricaturists got hold of his Lordship’s speech, and depicted Lady Archer and others in the pillory, and Lady Buckinghamshire being whipped at a cart’s-tail by Lord Kenyon. With the century this kind of play died out; but some mention of it was necessary in order to show that Swift’s description of ladies gambling was not exaggerated.

THE JOURNAL OF A MODERN LADY

Sir,
It was a most unfriendly Part
In you who ought to know my Heart;
And well acquainted with my Zeal
For all the Females' Common-weal.
How cou'd it come into your Mind
To pitch on me of all Mankind,
Against the Sex to write a Satire,
And brand me for a Woman-Hater?
On me, who think them all so fair,
They rival Venus to a Hair:
Their Virtues never ceas'd to sing,
Since first I learn'd to tune a String.
Methinks I hear the Ladies cry,
Will he his Character belye?
Must never our Misfortunes end?
And have we lost our only Friend?
Ah! lovely Nymph, remove your Fears,
No more let fall those precious Tears,
Sooner shall, etc.

(Here several verses are omitted.)

The Hound be hunted by the Hare,
Than I turn Rebel to the Fair.

'Twas you engaged me first to write,
Then gave the Subject out of Spite.
The Journal of a Modern Dame,
Is by my Promise what you claim;
My Word is past, I must submit,
And yet perhaps you may be bit.
I but transcribe, for not a Line
Of all the Satire shall be mine.
Compell'd by you to tag in Rhimes
The common Slanders of the Times,
Of modern Times, the Guilt is yours
And me my Innocence secures:
Unwilling Muse, begin thy Lay,
The Annals of a Female Day.
By Nature turn'd to play the Rake well,
As we shall shew you in the Sequel;
The modern Dame is wak'd by Noon,
Some authors say not quite so soon;
Because, though sore against her Will,
She sat all Night up at Quadrill.¹⁰

¹⁰ To understand the numerous allusions to the game of cards called Quadrill, it is necessary that the principles of the game should be given. It was played by four persons, each having ten cards dealt to them. The general laws of this game are, 1. It is not permitted to deal the cards otherwise than four by three, the dealer being at liberty to begin with which of those numbers he pleases. 2. If he who plays either *sans prendre*, or calling a king, names a trump of a different suit from that his game is in, or names two several suits, that which he first named must be the trump. 3. He who plays must name the trump by its proper name, as he likewise must the king he calls. 4. He who has said 'I pass,' must not be again admitted to play, except he plays by force, upon account of his having Spadille. 5. He who has asked the question, and has leave

She stretches, gapes, unglues her Eyes,

given him to play, is obliged to do it: but he must not play *sans prendre* except he is forced to do it. 6. He who has the four kings may call the queen of either of his kings. 7. Neither the king nor queen of the suit which is trumps must be called. 8. He who has one or several kings may call any king he has in his hand; in such case, if he wins he alone must make six tricks; if he wins, it is all his own, and if he loses, he pays all by himself. 9. Everyone ought to play in his turn, but for having done otherwise, no one must be beasted. 10. He, however, whose turn is not to play, having in his hand the king the ombre has called, and who shall tramp about with either spadille, manille, or basto, or shall even play down the king that was called, to give notice of his being the friend, must not pretend to undertake the vole; nay, he must be condemned to be beasted if it appears that he did it with any fraudulent design. 11. He who has drawn a card from his game, and presented it openly in order to play it, is obliged so to do, if his retaining it may be either prejudicial to his game, or give any information to his friend, especially if the card is a matadore; but he who plays *sans prendre*, or calls upon his own king, is not subject to this law. 12. None ought to look upon the tricks, nor to count aloud what has been played, except when it is his turn to play, but to let everyone reckon for himself. 13. He who, instead of turning up the tricks before any one of his players, shall turn up and discover his game, must be equally beasted with him whose cards he has so discovered, the one paying one half, and the other the like. 14. He who renounces must be beasted, as many times as he has so done, but, if the cards are mixed, he is to pay but one beast. 15. If the renounce prejudices the game, and the deal is not played out, everyone may take up his cards, beginning at the trick where the renounce was made, and play them over again. 16. He who shows the game before the deal is out must be beasted, except he plays *sans prendre*. 17. None of the three matadores can be commanded down by an inferior trump. 18. If he who plays *sans prendre* with the matadores in his hand, demands only one of them, he must receive only that he mentioned. 19. He who, instead of *sans prendre*, shall demand matadores, not having them, or he who shall demand *sans prendre* instead of matadores, cannot compel the players to pay him what is really his due. 20. Matadores are only paid when they are in the hands of the ombre, or of the king his ally, whether all in one hand, or separately in both. 21. He who undertakes the vole, and does not make it, must pay as much as he would have received had he won it. 22. He who plays and does not make three tricks is to be beasted alone, and must pay all that is to be paid; and, if he makes

And asks if it be time to rise.
Of Head-ach and the Spleen complains;
And then to cool her heated Brains,
Her Night-gown!¹¹ and her Slippers brought her,
Takes a large Dram of Citron Water.
Then to her Glass; and, Betty, pray
Don't I look frightfully to-Day?
But, was it not confounded hard?
Well, if I ever touch a Card;
Four Mattadores, and lose Codill;
Depend upon't I never will!
But run to Tom, and bid him fix
The Ladies here to-Night by Six.
Madam, the Goldsmith waits below,
He says his Business is to know
If you'll redeem the Silver Cup
You pawn'd to him. First, shew him up.
Your Dressing Plate he'll be content
To take for Interest Cent. per Cent.
And, Madam, there's my Lady Spade
Hath sent this Letter by her Maid.
Well, I remember what she won;
And hath she sent so soon to dun?
Here, carry down those ten Pistoles
My Husband left to pay for Coals:
I thank my Stars they are all light;

no tricks at all, he must also pay to his two adversaries the vole, but not to his friend.'
—*The Oxford Encyclopædia*, 1828.

¹¹ Dressing-gown.

And I may have Revenge to-Night.
Now, loitering o'er her Tea and Cream,
She enters on her usual Theme;
Her last Night's ill Success repeats,
Calls Lady Spade a hundred Cheats.
She slipt Spadillo in her Breast,
Then thought to turn it to a Jest.
There's Mrs. Cut and she combine,
And to each other give the Sign.
Through ev'ry Game pursues her Tale,
Like Hunters o'er their Evening Ale.
Now to another Scene give Place,
Enter the Folks with Silks and Lace;
Fresh Matter for a World of Chat,
Right Indian this, right Macklin that;
Observe this Pattern; there's a Stuff,
I can have Customers enough.
Dear Madam, you are grown so hard,
This Lace is worth twelve Pounds a Yard
Madam, if there be Truth in Man,
I never sold so cheap a Fan.
This Business of Importance o'er,
And Madam, almost dress'd by Four;
The Footman, in his usual Phrase,
Comes up with: Madam, Dinner stays;
She answers in her usual Style,
The Cook must keep it back a while;
I never can have time to Dress,
No Woman breathing takes up less;

I'm hurried so, it makes me sick,
I wish the dinner at Old Nick.
At Table now she acts her part,
Has all the Dinner Cant by Heart:
I thought we were to Dine alone,
My Dear, for sure if I had known
This Company would come to-Day,
But really 'tis my Spouse's Way;
He's so unkind, he never sends
To tell, when he invites his Friends:
I wish ye may but have enough;
And while, with all this paultry Stuff,
She sits tormenting every Guest,
Nor gives her Tongue one Moment's Rest,
In Phrases batter'd stale and trite,
Which modern Ladies call polite;
You see the Booby Husband sit
In Admiration at her Wit.
But let me now a while Survey
Our Madam o'er her Ev'ning Tea;
Surrounded with her Noisy Clans
Of Prudes, Coquets, and Harridans;
When frightened at the clamorous Crew,
Away the God of Silence flew;
And fair Discretion left the Place,
And Modesty with blushing Face;
Now enters over-weening Pride,
And Scandal ever gaping wide,
Hypocrisy with Frown severe,

Scurrility with gibing Air;
Rude Laughter seeming like to burst,
And Malice always judging worst;
And Vanity with Pocket-Glass,
And Impudence, with Front of Brass;
And studied Affectation came,
Each Limb and Feature out of Frame;
While Ignorance, with Brain of Lead,
Flew hov'ring o'er each Female Head.
Why should I ask of thee, my Muse,
An Hundred Tongues, as Poets use,
When, to give ev'ry Dame her due,
An Hundred Thousand were too few!
Or how should I, alas! relate,
The Sum of all their Senseless Prate,
Their Inuendo's, Hints, and Slanders,
Their Meanings lewd, and double Entanders.¹²
Now comes the general Scandal Charge,
What some invent, the rest enlarge;
And, Madam, if it be a Lye,
You have the tale as cheap as I:
I must conceal my Author's Name,
But now 'tis known to common Fame.
Say, foolish Females, Old and Blind,
Say, by what fatal Turn of Mind,
Are you on Vices most severe,
Wherein yourselves have greatest Share?
Thus every Fool herself deludes,

¹² Entendres.

The Prudes condemn the absent Prudes.
Mopsa who stinks her Spouse to Death,
Accuses Chloe's tainted Breath:
Hircina, rank with Sweat, presumes
To censure Phillis for Perfumes:
While crooked Cynthia swearing, says,
That Florimel wears Iron Stays.
Chloe's of ev'ry Coxcomb jealous,
Admires¹³ how Girls can talk with Fellows,
And, full of Indignation, frets
That Women should be such Coquets.
Iris, for Scandal most notorious,
Cries, Lord, the world is so censorious;
And Rufa, with her Combs of Lead,¹⁴
Whispers that Sappho's Hair is Red.
Aura, whose Tongue you hear a Mile hence,
Talks half a day in Praise of Silence:
And Silvia, full of inward Guilt,
Calls Amoret an arrant Jilt.
Now Voices over Voices rise;
While each to be the loudest vies,
They contradict, affirm, dispute,
No single Tongue one Moment mute;
All mad to speak, and none to hearken,
They set the very Lap-Dog barking;
Their Chattering makes a louder Din
Than Fish-Wives o'er a Cup of Gin;

¹³ Wonders.

¹⁴ These leaden combs were used for darkening the hair.

Not School-boys at a Barring-out,
Raised ever such incessant Rout:
The Shumbling (*sic*) Particles of Matter
In Chaos make not such a Clatter;
Far less the Rabble roar and rail,
When Drunk with sour Election Ale.
Nor do they trust their Tongue alone,
To speak a Language of their own;
Can read a Nod, a Shrug, a Look;
Far better than a printed Book;
Convey a Libel in a Frown,
And wink a Reputation down;
Or, by the tossing of the Fan,
Describe the Lady and the Man.
But, see the Female Club disbands,
Each, twenty Visits on her Hands:
Now, all alone, poor Madam sits,
In Vapours and Hysterick Fits;
And was not Tom this Morning sent?
I'd lay my Life he never went:
Past Six, and not a living Soul!
I might by this have won a Vole.
A dreadful Interval of Spleen!
How shall we pass the Time between?
Here, Betty, let me take my Drops,
And feel my Pulse, I know it stops:
This Head of mine, Lord, how it Swims!
And such a Pain in all my Limbs!
Dear Madam, try to take a Nap:

But now they hear a Foot-Man's Rap;
Go, run, and light the Ladies up;
It must be One before we Sup.
The Table, Cards, and Counters set,
And all the Gamester Ladies met,
Her Spleen and Fits recover'd quite,
Our Madam can sit up all Night;
Whoever comes, I'm not within,
Quadrill the Word, and so begin.
How can the Muse her Aid impart,
Unskill'd in all the Terms of Art?
Or, in harmonious Numbers, put
The Deal, the Shuffle, and the Cut?
The Superfluous Whims relate,
That fill a Female Gamester's Pate:
What Agony of Soul she feels
To see a Knave's inverted Heels;
She draws up Card by Card, to find
Good Fortune peeping from behind;
With panting Heart and earnest Eyes,
In hope to see Spadillo rise;
In vain, alas! her Hope is fed,
She draws an Ace, and sees it red.
In ready Counters never pays,
But pawns her Snuff-Box, Rings, and Keys.
Ever with some new Fancy struck,
Tries twenty Charms to mend her Luck.
This Morning when the Parson came,
I said I could not win a Game.

This odious Chair, how came I stuck in't?
I think I've never had good Luck in't.
I'm so uneasy in my Stays:
Your Fan, a Moment, if you please.
Stand further, Girl, or get you gone,
I always lose when you look on.
Lord! Madam, you have lost Codill;
I never saw you play so ill.
Nay, Madam, give me leave to say
'Twas you that threw the game away;
When Lady Tricksy play'd a Four,
You took it with a Matadore;
I saw you touch your Wedding-Ring
Before my Lady call'd a King.
You spoke a Word began with H,
And I know whom you mean to teach,
Because you held the King of Hearts;
Fie, Madam, leave these little Arts.
That's not so bad as one that rubs
Her Chair to call the King of Clubs,
And makes her Partner understand
A Matadore is in her Hand.
Madam, you have no Cause to flounce,
I swear I saw you twice renounce.
And truly, Madam, I know when
Instead of Five you scor'd me Ten.
Spadillo here has got a Mark,
A Child may know it in the Dark:
I Guess the Hand, it seldom fails,

I wish some Folks would pare their Nails.
While thus they rail, and scold, and storm,
It passes but for common Form;
Are conscious that they all speak true,
And give each other but their due;
It never interrupts the Game,
Or makes 'em sensible of Shame.
Time too precious now to waste,
The Supper gobbled up in haste:
Again a-fresh to Cards they run,
As if they had but just begun;
Yet shall I not again repeat
How oft they Squabble, Snarl, and Cheat:
At last they hear the Watchman Knock,
A frosty Morn ... Past Four a-clock.
The Chair-men are not to be found,
Come, let us play the t'other Round.
Now all in haste they huddle on
Their Hoods, their Cloaks, and get them gone;
But first, the Winner must invite
The Company to-morrow Night.
Unlucky Madam left in Tears,
Who now again Quadrill forswears,
With empty Purse and aching Head,
Steals to her sleeping Spouse to Bed.

GEORGE BARRINGTON

There is much and curious food for reflection, in the tendency that mankind has ever shown to sympathise with the daring and ingenious depredators who relieve the rich of their superfluity, which may possibly be owing to the romantic adventures and hair-breadth escapes which the robbers, in their career, have undergone. But, be the cause what it may, it is certain that the populace of all nations view with admiration great and successful thieves: for instance, what greater popular hero, and one that has been popular for centuries, could be found than Robin Hood?

Almost every country in Europe has its traditional thief, whose exploits are recorded both in prose and poetry. In England, Claude Duval, Captain Hind, Dick Turpin, Jonathan Wild, and Jack Sheppard have each in their turn occupied a prominent place in the annals of crime; whilst in France, amongst the light-fingered heroes that have, from time to time, extorted respect from the multitude, Cartouche and Vidocq take first rank. Germany is proud of its Schinderhannes, the Robber of the Rhine, the stories of whose generosity and courage still render his memory a favourite on the banks of that river, the travellers on which he so long kept in awe. In Italy and Spain, those homes of brigands and banditti, the inhabitants have ever-ready sympathy for the men whose names and exploits are as familiar among them as 'household words.'

Cartouche, however, is the only rival to Barrington in their particular line, and Barrington, certainly, was no mere common pick-pocket, only fit to figure in the 'Newgate Calendar,' but he possessed talents which, had they been properly directed on his first setting out in life, might have enabled him to have played a distinguished part either in literature or in business. But, unfortunately, very early in his youth, poverty led him to adopt theft as his professed vocation; and, by his ingenuity and constant practice, he contrived to render himself so expert, as almost to have conducted his depredations on systematic rules, and elevated his crime into a 'high art.' Barrington, too, by his winning manners, gentlemanly address, and the fair education he contrived to pick up, was a man eminently fitted (if such an expression may be allowed) for his profession! his personal appearance was almost sufficient to disarm suspicion, and this, in all probability, contributed greatly to the success which he met with in his career.

George Barrington, or Waldron (for it is not known which was his right name), was born on the 14th of May, 1755, at the village of Maynooth, county Kildare, in Ireland, now famous for the Royal College of St. Patrick, which is there situated. His reputed father was Henry Waldron, who was a working silversmith, and his mother, whose maiden name was Naish, was a dressmaker, or mantua-maker, as it was then called (also occasionally acting as midwife), in the same village; but, whether they had ever been legally united, is a matter open to doubt.

To have their parentage disputed is a fate which the great ones of the earth have frequently to undergo, and George Barrington, or Waldron, is an instance of this, for more than one of his historians assert that he was the son of a Captain Barrington, an officer in a marching regiment quartered at Rush, and the date of his birth is given as 1758; but the most trustworthy evidence places it on record as above stated.

His parents' characters stood high among their neighbours for integrity and industry, but they were, unfortunately, always behindhand with the world, and never able to extricate themselves from the state of abject poverty in which they were sunk, in consequence of unsuccessful litigation with a wealthy relation. This want of means prevented them from giving George any education until he was seven years of age, when he was sent to the village school, and there was taught to read and write. A benevolent surgeon in the neighbourhood afterwards instructed him in arithmetic, geography, and grammar; but, if the anecdote related of him is true, he repaid the kindness by the blackest ingratitude in stealing some coins from his benefactor's daughter.

Young Waldron was lucky enough to attract the notice of the Rev. Dr. Westropp, a dignitary of the Church of Ireland, who placed him, when he was sixteen years of age, at a grammar-school in Dublin, and this patron proposed that he should fit himself for the university. But fate had decreed otherwise and he enjoyed the benefits of this gentleman's kindness but a short time, for, in a moment of passion, when quarrelling with another

boy, he stabbed his antagonist with a pen-knife, wounding him severely. Instead of making the matter one for legal investigation, the boy received a thorough good flogging, a degradation he could by no means forgive, and he resolved to run away from school, and leave family, friends, and all his fair prospects behind him. But, previous to carrying his plan of escape into action, he found means to appropriate ten or twelve guineas belonging to the master of the school, and a gold repeating-watch, which was the property of his master's sister. Not content with this booty, he took a few shirts and pairs of stockings, and safely effected his retreat, one still night in 1771, starting off for Drogheda.

There happened to be staying at the obscure inn at which he put up, on his arrival at Drogheda, a set of strolling players, whose manager was one John Price, who had once been a lawyer's clerk, and had been convicted of some fraud at the Old Bailey. He soon wormed the boy's whole story out of him, and persuaded him to join the theatrical company, which he did, and he applied himself to study so diligently that he was cast for the part, and played, four days after his enrolment, Jaffier in Otway's tragedy of 'Venice Preserved,' in a barn in the suburbs of Drogheda. Both he and Price were of opinion that it would be dangerous for him to remain so near the scene of his late depredations, but were unable to move for want of money. To overcome this difficulty, Waldron, who had assumed the name of Barrington, gave Price the gold repeater he had stolen, which was sold for the benefit of the company, and they set out for

Londonderry.

But it was found that the expenses of travelling for so numerous a body, with their *impedimenta*, were too great to be balanced by the receipts of rural audiences, and, on their arrival at Londonderry, their finances were found to be at a very low ebb indeed. Under these circumstances, Price insinuated that Barrington, with his good address and appearance, could easily introduce himself to the chief places of resort in the city, and, by picking pockets, might refill their empty exchequer. This scheme he at once put into practice, with such success that, at the close of the evening, he was the possessor of about forty guineas in cash, and one hundred and fifty pounds in Irish bank-notes.

The picking of pockets being a crime almost unknown in that part of Ireland, the town took the alarm, and a great stir was made over the matter; but it being fair-time, and many strangers in the city, neither Barrington nor Price were suspected; still they thought it but prudent to leave as soon as they could with propriety, and, after playing a few more nights, they moved to Ballyshannon. For some time he continued this vagabond life, travelling about the North of Ireland, acting every Tuesday and Saturday, and picking pockets every day in the week, a business which he found more lucrative and entertaining than that of the theatre, where his fame was by no means equal to the expectation he had raised.

At Cork, Price and he came to the conclusion never to think any more of the stage, a resolution which was the more easily

executed, as the company to which they originally belonged was now broken up and dispersed. It was settled between them that Price should pass for Barrington's servant, and that Barrington should act the part of a young gentleman of large fortune and of noble family, who was not yet quite of age, travelling for his amusement. They carried out their scheme well, purchasing horses and dressing up to their parts, and, during the summer and autumn of 1772, they visited all the race-courses in the South of Ireland, making a remarkably successful campaign. Pocket-picking was a novel experience to the Irish gentry, and their unsuspecting ways made them an easy prey to Barrington's skill and nimble fingers; so much so that when, at the setting-in of winter, they returned to Cork, they found themselves in possession of a large sum of money (over £1,000), having been fortunate enough to have escaped detection or even suspicion.

At length their partnership was rudely dissolved, as, at the close of winter, Price was detected in the very act of picking a gentleman's pocket at Cork, and for this offence he was sentenced to be transported to America (as was customary then) for seven years. Barrington immediately converted all his moveable property into cash, and beat a precipitate flight to Dublin, where, for a time, he lived a very private and retired life, only stealing out occasionally of a dark night to visit some gaming-house, where he might pick up a few guineas, or a watch, etc., a mode of life which was by no means congenial to his ambitious nature, and he again frequented the race-courses. He

met with his first check at Carlow, where he was detected in picking a nobleman's pocket. It was a clear case; the stolen property was found on his person, and immediately restored to its owner, who did not prosecute, preferring to let the rascal receive the treatment known as 'the discipline of the course,' a punishment very similar to that meted out to 'Welchers' at the present day. But Ireland was getting too warm for him, and, having realised his property, he set sail for London, where he arrived in the summer of 1773, a remarkably precocious youth of eighteen.

On his voyage across the Channel, he became acquainted with several persons of respectability, with one of whom he travelled post to London, having gulled him with a specious tale about his family and fortune; and, having gained his confidence, he procured by his means introductions into the politest circles, from whom, for a long time, he extracted abundant plunder. But, in order to do this, he had to dress well, and live extravagantly, so that he very soon had to cast about for the means wherewith to supply his needs. Among the earliest visits he paid, after his arrival in London, and in his friend's company, was, of course, Ranelagh, where he found two of his acquaintance on the Irish packet talking to the Duke of Leinster. Bowing to them, and stationing himself near them, he soon eased the duke of above eighty pounds, a baronet of five-and-thirty guineas, and one of the ladies of her watch; and, with this plunder, he rejoined his party as if nothing had happened out of the ordinary course of

things.

But his proceedings had been watched by another member of the thieving fraternity, who was in the gardens, and who took a speedy opportunity of letting Barrington know that he had witnessed his crime, and threatened to denounce him to the plundered parties, unless a division of the spoil was made between them. His manner being very impressive, left Barrington no alternative but to comply; and the lady's watch and chain, with a ten-pound note, fell to his share. The two supped together, and it ended with their entering into a mutual alliance, which, for the time, suited Barrington well, as his companion knew town much better than he did, and was especially well-informed in the knowledge of those places where the plunder could be disposed of: but this partnership only continued for a short time, in consequence of their quarrels, there being nothing in common to bind these two rogues together save their crime.

In the course of his depredations, he visited Brighton, or, as it was then called, Brighthelmstone, which was beginning to be the resort of the wealthier classes, but, as yet, had not dreamed of the rise it was to take under George the Magnificent – and no conception could have been formed of the present 'London-on-the-Sea.' Here, thanks to his pleasant manners and address, as well as to the company he frequented, he became acquainted, and intimate, with the Duke of Ancaster, Lord Ferrers, Lord Lyttleton, and many other noblemen, who all considered him as a man of genius and ability (which he certainly was), and were

under the impression that he was a gentleman of fortune and family.

His manners were good, and he had a pleasant wit – so that it is not difficult to imagine that his society was welcome. As a specimen of his wit, I may relate an anecdote told of him when on a visit to Chichester from Brighton. In company of several noblemen, he was shown the curiosities and notable things in the town and cathedral. In the latter, their attention was directed to a family vault for the interment of the Dukes of Richmond, which had been erected by the late duke, and which was inscribed ‘*Domus ultima*’ (the last house). On this inscription he is said to have written the following epigram:

‘Did he, who thus inscribed this wall,
Not *read*, or not *believe*, St. Paul?
Who says, “There is, where e’er it stands,
Another house, not made with hands;”
Or shall we gather, from the words,
That *House* is not a *House* of Lords.’

After living at the expense of the pockets of his new-found friends as long as he deemed it prudent, he returned to London, and began a dissolute and profligate career; but, though his time was pretty well employed between his infamous occupation and his amusements, he yet found opportunity for intervals of study and literary pursuits, and composed several odes and poems, which are said to have been not devoid of merit.

As before stated, he broke with his partner, who retired to a monastery, where, in all probability, he ended his days in penitence and peace. But, in the winter of 1775, Barrington became acquainted with one Lowe, whom he first employed in the useful capacity of receiver of stolen goods, and afterwards went into partnership with. This Lowe was a singular character. Originally he had been a livery-servant, and after that he kept a public-house for some time, when, having saved some money, he turned usurer or money-lender, in which business he accumulated a small fortune, when he assumed the character of a gentleman, and lived in a genteel house near Bloomsbury Square, then a fashionable neighbourhood. Here he passed for a very charitable and benevolent person, and was appointed treasurer or manager of a new hospital for the blind in Kentish Town, in which capacity, it is said, he contrived to become possessed of some five thousand pounds, when he set fire to the institution. Being suspected thereof, he was apprehended at Liverpool, in 1779, when he committed suicide by taking poison, and was buried at a cross-road, in the neighbourhood of Prescott in Lancashire.

On forming his partnership with Lowe, it was resolved on between them that Barrington should repair to Court on the Queen's birthday, disguised as a clergyman, and there endeavour not only to pick the pockets of the company, but, what was a far bolder and more novel attempt, to cut off the diamond stars of the Knights of the Garter, Bath, or Thistle, who on such days

generally wore the ribands of their respective orders over their coats. In this enterprise he succeeded beyond the most sanguine expectations that could have been formed, either by himself or his partner; for he managed to take a diamond star from a nobleman, and to get away from St. James's unsuspected. But this prize was too valuable to dispose of in England, and it is said to have been sold to a Dutch Jew, who came over from Holland twice a year on purpose to buy stolen goods, for eight hundred pounds. This haul only whetted his appetite for yet more profitable plunder, and a chance of his skill shortly presented itself.

In the course of the winter of 1775, Prince Orloff, a Russian nobleman of the first rank and consequence, visited England. The splendour in which he lived, and the stories of his immense wealth, were frequently noticed and commented on in the public prints, and attention was particularly drawn to a gold snuff-box, set with brilliants, which was one of the many marks of favour showered upon him by Catherine, Empress of Russia, and which was generally valued at the enormous sum of between thirty and forty thousand pounds. This precious trinket excited Barrington's cupidity in an extraordinary degree, and he determined to exert himself, in order, by some means or other, to get it into his possession.

A favourable opportunity occurred one night at Covent Garden Theatre, where he contrived to get near the prince, and dexterously conveyed the treasure from his excellency's

waistcoat pocket (in which, according to Russian custom, it was usually carried) into his own. This operation was not, however, performed with sufficient delicacy to escape detection, for the prince felt the attack that was so impudently made upon his property, and, having reason to entertain some suspicion of Barrington, he immediately seized him by the collar. During the confusion that naturally ensued upon such an unusual scene, Barrington slipped the box into the hand of the prince, who, doubtless, was only too rejoiced to recover it with so much ease. The thief, however, was secured, and committed to Tothill Fields Bridewell.¹⁵

When examined before Sir John Fielding, Barrington trumped up a story that he was a native of Ireland, of an affluent and respectable family; that he had been educated for the medical profession, and had come to England to improve himself by means of his connections. This story, which was told with extreme modesty and many tears, induced the prince to think of him more as an unfortunate gentleman than a guilty culprit, and he declined to proceed against him, so that he was dismissed, with an admonition from Sir John to amend his future conduct; and he must have left the court congratulating himself on his narrow, but lucky, escape. The publicity which was given to this attempt lost him the society of most of his friends, as he was held up to view in the disgraceful light of an impostor; and it also was the means of giving him a further taste of prison discipline.

¹⁵ Pulled down 1885.

In the pursuit of his peculiar industry, he frequented both Houses of Parliament, where he acquired considerable plunder. Some weeks after the Covent Garden affair, he was in the House of Lords during an interesting debate that attracted a great number of people, amongst whom was a gentleman who recognised Barrington, and who informed the Deputy Usher of the Black Rod of his probable business there. That official promptly ejected him, though, perhaps, not with the gentleness that he considered his due, and he uttered such threats of vengeance against his accuser that the latter made application to a magistrate, who granted a warrant to take Barrington into custody, and to bind him over to keep the peace. But his credit was now sunk so low that none of his former companions would come forward with the necessary sureties, and Barrington, in default, was relegated to his former place of detention, Tothill Fields Bridewell, where he remained a considerable time before he was released.

During his incarceration, the story of his misdeeds was industriously circulated, and his character as *bon camarade* was completely destroyed, so that the entry to all decent company was absolutely shut against him, and from this time forward he was obliged to abandon the *rôle* of a 'gentleman' pickpocket, and descend to all the mean artifices of a common pilferer. Even in this humble branch of his infamous industry, his good fortune seems to have deserted him, for he was detected in picking the pocket of a low woman at Drury Lane Theatre in December,

1776, and, though he made a remarkably clever speech in his defence, he was sentenced to three years of ballast-heaving, or hard labour in the hulks at Woolwich. Here, herded with the vilest of the vile, he kept as much as possible from them, and, by his good conduct, attracted the attention of the superintendents of convicts, and by their intervention he was set free, after having sustained an imprisonment of somewhat less than twelve months.

On his liberation, he lost no time in re-commencing his vicious occupation, under various disguises, sometimes as a quack doctor, or as a clergyman; or he would assume the character of a grave commercial traveller, only to appear, a few days later on, as the keeper of a gambling-house, and he had many a narrow escape from capture.

Justice, however, again laid her hands upon him, for, less than six months after his liberation, he was detected in picking the pocket of one, Elizabeth Ironmonger, of a watch, was convicted on the clearest evidence, and, in spite of the very eloquent and skilful defence he made, he was a second time sentenced to the hulks with hard labour, this time for five years. His speeches to the court, which were remarked in the public prints, as well as the letters that he wrote seeking mitigation of his punishment, display such talent that it is a matter of great regret that it was not turned to more honest account. On one occasion, when tried for stealing Sir G. Webster's purse at the opera, in February, 1784, he was able, by his eloquence, to influence the jury to return a verdict of not guilty; and a similar piece of good fortune was

vouchsafed to him a year after, when arraigned for the robbery of a gentleman's watch at Drury Lane Theatre, when his most ingenious and well-chosen address to the jury resulted in his acquittal.

He could not stand his second imprisonment on the hulks, and to end it he attempted suicide by stabbing himself in the breast with a pen-knife. Medical aid was at hand, and the wound slowly healed, but he still continued to linger in a miserable state, until he came under the notice of a gentleman of position, who used his influence with the government so successfully that he obtained Barrington's release, subject to the condition that he should leave the country. His benefactor also gave him money for that purpose, and he was soon on the Chester coach, *en route* for Ireland. When he arrived in Dublin, he found his character had preceded him, and he was so closely watched that it was not long before he was again arrested, and acquitted only from want of evidence. The judge admonished him most seriously, which gave Barrington an opportunity of airing his eloquence, and he delivered an oration on the unaccountable force of prejudice that existed against him; but, when once he got away, he came to the conclusion that the Irish capital was not a desirable place of residence for him, so he travelled northwards, and ultimately reached Edinburgh.

However, the police of that city knew all about him, and were more vigilant than their *confrères* in London and Dublin, so that Barrington, finding himself both suspected and watched, came

to the conclusion that the air of Scotland was not good for him, and turned his face southward. Unmindful of the terms of his liberation, or careless as to the result of his return, he again sought London, where, once more, he frequented the theatres, the opera-house, and the Pantheon, for some little time, with tolerable success – but he was now too notorious to be long secure; he was closely watched, and well-nigh detected at the latter of these places; and, such strong suspicions of his behaviour were entertained by the magistrates, he was committed to Newgate, though on his trial he was acquitted.

But he only escaped Scylla to be engulfed in Charybdis, for one of the superintendents of convicts had him detained for violating the conditions under which he was liberated, and the consequence was that he was made what was called ‘a fine in Newgate,’ that is, he had to serve out his unexpired term of imprisonment there. This punishment he duly suffered, and when he was once more set free, he at once re-commenced his old practices, and lived a life of shifts and roguery, until, in January, 1787, he was detected in picking the pocket of a Mrs. Le Mesurier, at Drury Lane Theatre, and was at once apprehended. He was given in charge of a constable named Blandy, but by some means, either by negligence of his custodian, or by bribing him, he made his escape.

For this he was outlawed, and, whilst the offended majesty of the law was thus seeking to vindicate itself, he was making a progress of the northern counties under various disguises,

sometimes appearing as a quack doctor, or a clergyman, then in connection with a gaming-table, and occasionally playing the *rôle* of a rider (as commercial travellers were then called) for some manufacturing firm. Although frequently meeting with people who knew him, he was never molested by them, until he was recognised at Newcastle (whilst being examined in the justice-room there, regarding a theft he had committed) by a gentleman from London as being 'wanted' for the robbery at Drury Lane Theatre, and he was promptly despatched to Bow Street once more. On his arrival, he was committed to Newgate as an outlaw, and, miserable and dejected, his spirits sank within him. His friends, however (for even he had friends) made up a purse of a hundred guineas for his defence. His trial took place in November, 1789, when he conducted his own defence, as usual, with extraordinary ability, arguing the various points of law with the judge with surprising acuteness and elegant language, till, eventually, being aided by the absence of a material witness, he made such an impression upon the court that a verdict of acquittal was recorded.

All these escapes, however, seem to have had no deterrent effect upon him, and he again set off for Ireland, where he joined an accomplice named Hubert, who was speedily apprehended, in the act of picking a pocket, and sentenced to seven years transportation. Dublin after this was far too hot for Barrington, so he adroitly made his escape to England, where, after rambling about the country for some time, he re-appeared in London.

But he had not been in the metropolis very long before he was apprehended, as his indictment says, for ‘stealing on the 1st of September, 1780, in the parish of Enfield, in the county of Middlesex, a gold watch, chain, seals, and a metal key, the property of Henry Hare Townsend.’ The case was very clear, but Barrington defended himself very ingeniously, and with a certain amount of oratory, of which the following is a sample:

‘I am well convinced of the noble nature of a British Court of Justice; the dignified and benign principles of its judges, and the liberal and candid spirit of its jurors.

‘Gentlemen, life is the gift of God, and liberty its greatest blessing; the power of disposing of both or either is the greatest man can enjoy. It is also adventitious that, great as that power is, it cannot be better placed than in the hands of an English jury; for they will not exercise it like tyrants, who delight in blood, but like generous and brave men, who delight to spare rather than destroy; and who, forgetting they are men themselves, lean, when they can, to the side of compassion. It may be thought, gentlemen of the jury, that I am appealing to your passions, and, if I had the power to do it, I would not fail to employ it. The passions animate the heart, and to the passions we are indebted for the noblest actions, and to the passions we owe our dearest and finest feelings; and, when it is considered, the mighty power you now possess, whatever leads to a cautious and tender discharge of it, must be thought of great consequence: as long as the passions conduct us on the side of benevolence, they are our best, our

safest, and our most friendly guides.’

But all his eloquence was thrown away on a jury of practical men, and they found him guilty. His trial took place on the 15th of September, 1790, and on the 22nd of September he received his sentence, which was seven years’ transportation. He took his leave dramatically, and made a speech lamenting his hard fate throughout life.

‘The world, my Lord, has given me credit for abilities, indeed much greater than I possess, and, therefore, much more than I deserved; but I have never found any kind hand to foster those abilities.

‘I might ask, where was the generous and powerful hand that was ever stretched forth to rescue George Barrington from infamy? In an age like this, which, in several respects, is so justly famed for liberal sentiments, it was my severe lot that no noble-minded gentleman stepped forward and said to me, “Barrington, you are possessed of talents which may be useful to society. I feel for your situation, and, as long as you act the part of a good citizen, I will be your protector; you will then have time and opportunity to rescue yourself from the obloquy of your former conduct.”

‘Alas, my Lord, George Barrington had never the supreme felicity of having such comfort administered to his wounded spirit. As matters have unfortunately turned out, the die is cast; and, as it is, I bend, resigned to my fate, without one murmur or complaint.’

Thus ended his life in England, which he was never to see again, and it is with pleasure that we can turn to a brighter page in his history.

In his account of his voyage to New South Wales, he says that it was with unspeakable satisfaction that he received orders to embark, agreeably to his sentence; and it is pleasing to observe that, under his adverse circumstances, the friends he had made in his prosperity did not forsake him in his adversity, for many of them came to bid him adieu, and not one of them came empty-handed; in fact, their generosity was so great, that he had difficulty in getting permission to take all their gifts on board.

His account of their embarkation gives us an extremely graphic description not only of the treatment of convicts, but of the unhappy wretches themselves.

‘About a quarter before five, a general muster took place, and, having bid farewell to my fellow-prisoners, we were escorted from the prison to Blackfriars Bridge by the City Guard, where two lighters were waiting to receive us. This procession, though early, and but few spectators, made a deep impression on my mind, and the ignominy of being thus mingled with felons of all descriptions, many scarce a degree above the brute creation, intoxicated with liquor, and shocking the ears of those they passed with blasphemy, oaths, and songs, the most offensive to modesty, inflicted a punishment more severe than the sentence of my country, and fully avenged that society I had so much wronged.’

And there is little doubt but that the moral repugnance to his miserable, and vicious companions was mainly the cause of the reformation which took place in him.

The condition of convicts at that day was not enviable. There were two hundred and fifty of them in the ship with Barrington, all packed in the hold, their hammocks being slung within seventeen inches of each other: being encumbered with their irons, and deprived of fresh air, their condition was soon rendered deplorable. To alleviate their sufferings as much as possible, they were permitted to walk the deck (as much as was consistent with the safety of the ship), ten at a time; and the women, of whom there were six on board, had a snug berth to themselves. But, in spite of this humane and considerate treatment, thirty-six of them died on the voyage.

Barrington, however, was not in such evil case, for a friend had accompanied him on board, and, by his influence and exertions, had not only procured stowage for his packages, but also liberty to walk the deck unencumbered with irons. Nor did his help stop here, for he prevailed upon the boatswain to admit him into his mess, which consisted of the second mate, carpenter, and gunner, on condition that he paid his proportion towards defraying the extra requisites for the mess during the voyage. The boatswain, too, had his hammock slung next to his own, so that his life was made as comfortable as it could be, under the circumstances, and he had not to herd with the convicts.

Soon after leaving the Bay of Biscay, these gentlemen began

to give trouble. The captain, very humanely, had released many of the weaker convicts of their galling chains, and allowed them to walk on deck, ten at a time. Two of them, who were Americans, and had some knowledge of navigation, prevailed upon the majority of their comrades to attempt to seize the ship, impressing upon them that it would be an easy task, and that when captured, they would sail to America, where every man would not only obtain his liberty, but receive a tract of land from Congress, besides a share of the money arising from the sale of the ship and cargo.

The poor dupes swallowed the bait, and the mutineers determined that on the first opportunity, whilst the officers were at dinner, those convicts who were on deck should force the arm-chest, which was kept on the quarter-deck, and, at the same time, would make a signal to two of them to attack the sentinels, and obtain possession of their arms, while word was passed for those below to come on deck. And, as they planned, so they carried out the mutiny: when the captain and officers were below examining the stowage of some wine – a cask, in the spirit-room, being leaky – and the only persons on deck were Barrington and the man at the helm.

Barrington was going forward, but was stopped by one of the Americans, followed by another convict, who struck at him with a sword, which luckily hit against a pistol that the American had pointed at him. Barrington snatched up a handspike, and felled one of them, and the steersman left his

wheel and called up the captain and crew. For a few moments Barrington kept the mutineers at bay, when assistance came – and a blunderbuss being fired amongst the convicts, wounding several, they retreated, and were all driven into the hold. An attempt of this kind required the most exemplary punishment, and two of the ring-leaders, with very short shrift, were soon dangling at the yard-arm, whilst others were tasting the cat-o'-nine-tails at the gangway.

The mutiny having been thus quelled, and the convicts re-ironed, the captain had leisure to thank Barrington, and to compliment him on his gallant behaviour in the emergency. He assured Barrington that, when they arrived at the Cape, he would reward him, and that, meanwhile, he was to have every liberty; and orders were given to the steward to supply him with anything he might have occasion for during the voyage. As Barrington observes:

‘I soon experienced the good effects of my late behaviour; as seldom a day passed but some fresh meat or poultry was sent to me by the captain, which considerably raised me in the estimation of my messmates, who were no ways displeased at the substitution of a sea-pie of fowl or fresh meat to a dish of lobscouse, or a piece of salt-junk.’

On the ship's arrival at the Cape, the captain gave Barrington an order on a merchant there for one hundred dollars, telling him he might at any time avail himself of the ship's boat going ashore, and visit the town as often as he pleased, if he would only tell

the officers when he felt so inclined. It is needless to say he fully availed himself of his privilege, and laid out his money in the purchase of goods most in demand in New South Wales.

On reaching Port Jackson, in consequence of the captain's report, he had a most gracious reception from the governor, who, finding him a man of ability and intelligence, almost immediately appointed him superintendent of the convicts at Paramatta: his business being chiefly to report the progress made in the different works that were carried on there. Here he had ample leisure and opportunities of studying the natives and their habits and customs, and in his 'History of New South Wales,' he gives an interesting account of the aborigines of Australia, now so rapidly approaching extinction. The governor, Philip, made unceasing efforts to win their friendship, and even went to the extent of forcing his acquaintance on them, by the summary method of capturing a few, and keeping them in friendly durance; hoping thus to gain their good-will, so that, on their release, they might report to their friends that the white man was not so bad as he was represented. But it was all in vain; for, beyond a very few converts to civilisation, the savage remained untameable.

By the purchases which Barrington had made at the Cape, as well as the presents he had brought from England, he was enabled to furnish his house in a rather better style than his neighbours, and, moreover, he managed to collect around him a few farm-yard animals, which, together with his great love for horticulture, made his life far from unendurable. His position, as peace-officer

of the district, was no sinecure; for the criminal population over whom he had jurisdiction gave him very considerable trouble, more especially after the introduction into the settlement, by some American vessels, of New England rum, the baneful effects of which were very soon apparent: the partiality of the convicts for it being incredible, for they preferred receiving it as the price of their labour to any other article, either of provisions or clothing.

Barrington's tact and good management in the numerous disturbances that arose, as more convicts were poured into the station, were very conspicuous, and his conduct was altogether such as compensated, in a great measure, for his former misdeeds. His domestic matters improved by degrees, so that his situation was equal, if not preferable, to that of most of the settlers there, and, to crown all, in September, 1799, the Governor – Hunter – presented him with an absolute pardon, complimenting him on his faithful discharge of the duties which had been entrusted to him, and the integrity and uniform uprightness of his conduct, and, furthermore, said that his general behaviour, during his whole residence, perfectly obliterated every trace of his former indiscretions.

Barrington was further appointed a principal superintendent of the district of Paramatta, with a permanent salary of £50 per annum (his situation having been, hitherto, only provisional) and, eventually, the confidence he inspired was such that he was raised to the office of Chief of the constabulary force of the Colony,

on the principle, it may be presumed, of 'setting a thief to catch a thief.' In this post he gave great satisfaction, and died, much respected by all who knew him, at Botany Bay.

He wrote 'The History of New South Wales,' &c. London, 1802; a most valuable and interesting book. 'An Account of a Voyage to New South Wales,' London, 1803. 'The History of New Holland,' London, 1808; and a book was published with his name as author, 'The London Spy,' which went through several editions.

MILTON'S BONES

In the first series of *Notes and Queries*, vol. v. p. 369 (April 17, 1852), is a note from which the following is an extract: 'In vol. v, p. 275, mention is made of Cromwell's skull; so it may not be out of place to tell you that I have handled one of Milton's ribs. Cowper speaks indignantly of the desecration of our divine poet's grave, on which shameful occurrence some of the bones were clandestinely distributed. One fell to the lot of an old and esteemed friend, and between forty-five and fifty years ago, at his house, not many miles from London, I have often examined the said rib-bone.'

The lines of Cowper's to which he refers were written in August, 1790, and are entitled

STANZAS

**On the late indecent Liberties taken with
the remains of the great Milton. Anno 1790**

'Me too, perchance, in future days,
The sculptured stone shall show,

With Paphian myrtle or with bays
Parnassian on my brow.

But I, or ere that season come,
Escaped from every care,
Shall reach my refuge in the tomb,
And sleep securely there.’¹⁶

So sang, in Roman tone and style,
The youthful bard, ere long
Ordain’d to grace his native isle
With her sublimest song.

Who then but must conceive disdain,
Hearing the deed unblest,
Of wretches who have dared profane
His dread sepulchral rest?

Ill fare the hands that heaved the stones
Where Milton’s ashes lay,
That trembled not to grasp his bones
And steal his dust away!

O ill-requited bard! neglect
Thy living worth repaid,
And blind idolatrous respect
As much affronts thee dead.

¹⁶ Forsitan et nostros ducat de marmore vultus Nectens aut Paphia myrti aut Parnasside lauri Fronde comas – At ego segura pace quiescam. *Milton in Manso*.

Leigh Hunt possessed a lock of Milton's hair which had been given to him by a physician – and over which he went into such rhapsodies that he composed no less than three sonnets addressed to the donor – which may be found in his 'Foliage,' ed. 1818, pp. 131, 132, 133. The following is the best: —

TO – MD.,

On his giving me a lock of Milton's hair

It lies before me there, and my own breath
Stirs its thin outer threads, as though beside
The living head I stood in honoured pride,
Talking of lovely things that conquered death.
Perhaps he pressed it once, or underneath
Ran his fine fingers, when he leant, blank-eyed,
And saw, in fancy, Adam and his bride
With their heaped locks, or his own Delphic wreath.
There seems a love in hair, though it be dead.
It is the gentlest, yet the strongest thread
Of our frail plant – a blossom from the tree
Surviving the proud trunk; – as if it said,
Patience and Gentleness is Power. In me
Behold affectionate eternity.

How were these personal relics obtained? By rifling his tomb. Shakespeare solemnly cursed anyone who should dare to meddle with his dead body, and his remains are believed to be intact.

‘Good friend, for Jesus’ sake, forbear
To dig the dust inclosed here:
Blest be the man who spares these stones,
And cursed be he who moves my bones.’

But Milton laid no such interdict upon his poor dead body – and it was not very long after his burial, which took place in 1674, that the stone which covered it, and indicated his resting-place, was removed, as Aubrey tells us in his ‘Lives’ (vol. iii, p. 450). ‘His stone is now removed. About two years since (1681) the two steppes to the communion-table were rayised, Ighesse, Jo. Speed,¹⁷ and he lie together.’ And so it came to pass that, in the church of St. Giles’, Cripplegate, where he was buried, there was no memorial of the place where he was laid, nor, indeed, anything to mark the fact of his burial in that church until, in 1793, Samuel Whitbread set up a fine marble bust of the poet, by Bacon, with an inscription giving the dates of his birth and death, and recording the fact that his father was also interred there.

It is probable that Mr. Whitbread was moved thereto by the alleged desecration of Milton’s tomb in 1790, of which there is

¹⁷ John Speed, the historian, died 1629, and was buried in the church of St. Giles’, Cripplegate.

a good account written by Philip Neve, of Furnival's Inn, which is entitled, 'A Narrative of the Disinterment of Milton's coffin, in the Parish-Church of St. Giles, Cripplegate, on Wednesday, August 4th, 1790; and the Treatment of the Corpse during that and the following day.'

As this narrative is not long, I propose to give it in its entirety, because to condense it would be to spoil it, and, by giving it *in extenso*, the reader will be better able to judge whether it was really Milton's body which was exhumed.

A NARRATIVE, &c

Having read in the *Public Advertiser*, on Saturday, the 7th of August, 1790, that *Milton's* coffin had been dug up in the parish church of St. Giles, Cripplegate, and was there to be seen, I went immediately to the church, and found the latter part of the information to be untrue; but, from conversations on that day, on Monday, the 9th, and on Tuesday, the 10th of August, with Mr. Thomas *Strong*, Solicitor and F.A.S., Red Cross Street, *Vestry-Clerk*; Mr. John *Cole*, Barbican, Silversmith, *Churchwarden*; Mr. John *Laming*, Barbican, *Pawnbroker*; and Mr. *Fountain*, Beech Lane, Publican, *Overseers*; Mr. *Taylor*, of Stanton, Derbyshire, *Surgeon*; a friend of Mr. *Laming*, and a visitor in his house; Mr. William *Ascough*, Coffin-maker, Fore Street, *Parish Clerk*; Benjamin *Holmes* and Thomas *Hawkesworth*, journeymen to Mr. *Ascough*; Mrs. *Hoppey*, Fore Street, *Sexton*; Mr. *Ellis*, No. 9,

Lamb's Chapel, comedian of the Royalty-theatre; and John *Poole* (son of Rowland Poole), Watch-spring maker, Jacob's Passage, Barbican, the following facts are established:

It being in the contemplation of some persons to bestow a considerable sum of money in erecting a monument, in the parish church of *St. Giles*, Cripplegate, to the memory of *Milton*, and the particular spot of his interment in that church having for many years past been ascertained only by tradition, several of the principal parishioners have, at their meetings, frequently expressed a wish that his coffin should be dug for, that incontestable evidence of its exact situation might be established, before the said monument should be erected. The entry, among the burials, in the register-book, 12th of November, 1674, is '*John Milton*, Gentleman, consumption, *chancell.*' The church of *St. Giles*, Cripplegate, was built in 1030, was burnt down (except the steeple) and rebuilt in 1545; was repaired in 1682; and again in 1710. In the repair of 1782, an alteration took place in the disposition of the inside of the church; the pulpit was removed from the second pillar, against which it stood, north of the chancel, to the south side of the present chancel, which was then formed, and pews were built over the old chancel. The tradition has always been that *Milton* was buried in the chancel, under the clerk's desk; but the circumstance of the alteration in the church, not having, of late years, been attended to, the clerk, sexton, and other officers of the parish have misguided inquirers, by showing the spot under the clerk's desk, in the

present chancel, as the place of *Milton's* interment. I have twice, at different periods, been shown that spot as the place where *Milton* lay. Even Mr. *Baskerville*, who died a few years ago, and who had requested, in his will, to be buried by *Milton*, was deposited in the above-mentioned spot of the present chancel, in pious intention of compliance with his request. The church is now, August, 1790, under a general repair, by contract, for £1,350, and Mr. *Strong*, Mr. *Cole*, and other parishioners, having very prudently judged that the search would be made with much less inconvenience to the parish at this time, when the church is under repair, than at any period after the said repair should be completed, Mr. *Cole*, in the last days of July, ordered the workmen to dig in search of the coffin. Mr. *Ascough*, his father, and grandfather, have been parish clerks of *St. Giles* for upwards of ninety years past. His grandfather, who died in February, 1759-60, aged eighty-four, used often to say that *Milton* had been buried under the clerk's desk in the chancel. John *Poole*, aged seventy, used to hear his father talk of *Milton's* person, from those who had seen him; and also, that he lay under the common-councilmen's pew. The common-councilmen's pew is built over that very part of the old chancel, where the former clerk's desk stood. These traditions in the parish reported to Mr. *Strong* and Mr. *Cole* readily directed them to dig from the present chancel, northwards, towards the pillar, against which the former pulpit and desk had stood. On Tuesday afternoon, August 3rd, notice was brought to Messrs. *Strong* and *Cole* that the coffin was

discovered. They went immediately to the church, and, by help of a candle, proceeded under the common-councilmen's pew to the place where the coffin lay. It was in a chalky soil, and directly over a wooden coffin, supposed to be that of *Milton's* father; tradition having always reported that *Milton* was buried next to his father. The registry of the father of *Milton*, among the burials, in the parish-book, is '*John Melton, Gentleman, 15th of March, 1646-7.*' In digging through the whole space from the present chancel, where the ground was opened, to the situation of the former clerk's desk, there was not found any other coffin, which could raise the smallest doubt of this being *Milton's*. The two oldest found in the ground had inscriptions, which Mr. *Strong* copied; they were of as late dates as 1727 and 1739. When he and Mr. *Cole* had examined the coffin, they ordered water and a brush to be brought, that they might wash it, in search of an inscription, or initials, or date; but, upon its being carefully cleansed, none was found.

The following particulars were given me in writing by Mr. *Strong*, and they contain the admeasurement of the coffin, as taken by him, with a rule. 'A leaden coffin, found under the common-councilmen's pew, on the north side of the chancel, nearly under the place where the old pulpit and clerk's desk stood. The coffin appeared to be old, much corroded, and without any inscription or plate upon it. It was, in length, five feet ten inches, and in width, at the broadest part, over the shoulders, one foot four inches.' Conjecture naturally pointed out, both to Mr. *Strong*

and Mr. *Cole*, that, by moving the leaden coffin, there would be a great chance of finding some inscription on the wooden one underneath; but, with a just and laudable piety, they disdained to disturb the sacred ashes, after a requiem of one hundred and sixteen years; and having satisfied their curiosity, and ascertained the fact, which was the subject of it, Mr. *Cole* ordered the ground to be closed. This was on the afternoon of Tuesday, August the 3rd; and, when I waited on Mr. *Strong*, on Saturday morning, the 7th, he informed me that the coffin had been found on the Tuesday, had been examined, washed, and measured by him and Mr. *Cole*; but that the ground had been immediately closed, when they left the church; – not doubting that Mr. *Cole*'s order had been punctually obeyed. But the direct contrary appears to have been the fact.

On Tuesday evening, the 3rd, Mr. *Cole*, Messrs. *Laming* and *Taylor*, *Holmes*, &c., had a *merry meeting*, as Mr. *Cole* expresses himself, at Fountain's house; the conversation there turned upon *Milton's* coffin having been discovered; and, in the course of the evening, several of those present expressing a desire to see it, Mr. *Cole* assented that, if the ground was not already closed, the closing of it should be deferred until they should have satisfied their curiosity. Between eight and nine on Wednesday morning, the 4th, the two overseers (*Laming* and *Fountain*) and Mr. *Taylor*, went to the house of *Ascough*, the clerk, which leads into the church-yard, and asked for *Holmes*; they then went with *Holmes* into the church, and pulled the coffin, which lay deep in the

ground, from its original station to the edge of the excavation, into day-light. Mr. *Laming* told me that, to assist in thus removing it, he put his hand into a corroded hole, which he saw in the lead, at the coffin foot. When they had thus removed it, the overseers asked *Holmes* if he could open it, that they might see the body. *Holmes* immediately fetched a mallet and a chisel, and cut open the top of the coffin, slantwise from the head, as low as the breast; so that the top, being doubled backward, they could see the corpse; he cut it open also at the foot. Upon first view of the body, it appeared perfect, and completely enveloped in the shroud, which was of many folds; the ribs standing up regularly. When they disturbed the shroud, the ribs fell. Mr. *Fountain* told me that he pulled hard at the teeth, which resisted, until some one hit them a knock with a stone, when they easily came out. There were but five in the upper jaw, which were all perfectly sound and white, and all taken by Mr. *Fountain*; he gave one of them to Mr. *Laming*; Mr. *Laming* also took one from the lower jaw; and Mr. *Taylor* took two from it. Mr. *Laming* told me that he had, at one time, a mind to bring away the whole under-jaw, with the teeth in it; he had it in his hand, but tossed it back again. Also that he lifted up the head, and saw a great quantity of hair, which lay straight and even behind the head, and in the state of hair which had been combed and tied together before interment; but it was wet, the coffin having considerable corroded holes, both at the head and foot, and a great part of the water with which it had been washed on the Tuesday afternoon

having run into it. The overseers and Mr. *Taylor* went away soon afterwards, and Messrs. *Laming* and *Taylor* went home to get scissors to cut off some of the hair: they returned about ten, when Mr. *Laming* poked his stick against the head, and brought some of the hair over the forehead; but, as they saw the scissors were not necessary, Mr. *Taylor* took up the hair, as it lay on the forehead, and carried it home. The water, which had got into the coffin on the Tuesday afternoon, had made a sludge at the bottom of it, emitting a nauseous smell, and which occasioned Mr. *Laming* to use his stick to procure the hair, and not to lift up the head a second time. Mr. *Laming* also took out one of the leg-bones, but threw it in again. *Holmes* went out of church, whilst Messrs. *Laming*, *Taylor*, and *Fountain* were there the first time, and he returned when the two former were come the second time. When Messrs. *Laming* and *Taylor* had finally quitted the church, the coffin was removed from the edge of the excavation back to its original station; but was no otherwise closed than by the lid, where it had been cut and reversed, being bent down again. Mr. *Ascough*, the clerk, was from home the greater part of that day, and Mrs. *Hoppey*, the sexton, was from home the whole day. Elizabeth *Grant*, the grave-digger, who is servant to Mrs. *Hoppey*, therefore now took possession of the coffin; and, as its situation under the common-councilmen's pew would not admit of its being seen without the help of a candle, she kept a tinder-box in the excavation, and, when any persons came, struck a light, and conducted them under the pew, where, by reversing the part

of the lid which had been cut, she exhibited the body, at first for sixpence, and afterwards for threepence and twopence each person. The workers in the church kept the doors locked to all those who would not pay the price of a pot of beer for entrance, and many, to avoid that payment, got in at a window at the west end of the church, near to Mr. *Ascough's* counting-house.

I went on Saturday, the 7th, to Mr. *Laming's* house, to request a lock of the hair; but, not meeting with Mr. *Taylor* at home, went again on Monday, the 9th, when Mr. *Taylor* gave me part of what hair he had reserved for himself. *Hawkesworth* having informed me, on the Saturday, that Mr. *Ellis*, the player, had taken some hair, and that he had seen him take a rib-bone, and carry it away in paper under his coat, I went from Mr. *Laming's* on Monday to Mr. *Ellis*, who told me that he had paid 6d. to Elizabeth *Grant* for seeing the body; and that he had lifted up the head, and taken from the sludge under it a small quantity of hair, with which was a piece of the shroud, and, adhering to the hair, a bit of the skin of the skull, of about the size of a shilling. He then put them all into my hands, with the rib-bone, which appeared to be one of the upper ribs. The piece of the shroud was of coarse linen. The hair which he had taken was short; a small part of it he had washed, and the remainder was in the clotted state in which he had taken it. He told me that he had tried to reach down as low as the hands of the corpse, but had not been able to effect it. The washed hair corresponded exactly with that in my possession, and which I had just received from Mr. *Taylor*. *Ellis* is a very ingenious worker in

hair, and he said that, thinking it would be of great advantage to him to possess a quantity of Milton's hair, he had returned to the church on Thursday, and had made his endeavours to get access a second time to the body; but had been refused admittance. *Hawkesworth* took a tooth, and broke a bit off the coffin; of which I was informed by Mr. *Ascough*. I purchased them both of *Hawkesworth*, on Saturday the 7th, for 2s.; and he told me that, when he took the tooth out, there were but two more remaining; one of which was afterwards taken by another of Mr. *Ascough's* men. And *Ellis* informed me that, at the time when he was there, on Wednesday, the teeth were all gone; but the overseers say they think that all the teeth were not taken out of the coffin, though displaced from the jaws, but that some of them must have fallen among the other bones, as they very readily came out, after the first were drawn. *Haslib*, son of William *Haslib*, of Jewin Street, undertaker, took one of the small bones, which I purchased of him, on Monday, the 9th, for 2s.

With respect to the identity of the person; anyone must be a skeptic against violent presumptions to entertain a doubt of its being that of *Milton*. The parish traditions of the spot; the age of the coffin – none other found in the ground which can at all contest with it, or render it suspicious — *Poole's* tradition that those who had conversed with his father about *Milton's* person always described him to have been thin, with long hair; the entry in the register-book that *Milton* died of consumption, are all strong confirmations, with the size of the coffin, of the identity

of the person. If it be objected that, against the pillar where the pulpit formerly stood, and immediately over the common-councilmen's pew, is a monument to the family of *Smith*, which shows that 'near that place' were buried, in 1653, *Richard Smith*, aged 17; in 1655, *John Smith*, aged 32; and in 1664, *Elizabeth Smith*, the mother, aged 64; and in 1675, *Richard Smith*, the father, aged 85; it may be answered that, if the coffin in question be one of these, the others should be there also. The corpse is certainly not that of a man of 85; and, if it be supposed one of the first named males of the *Smith* family, certainly the two later coffins should appear; but none such were found, nor could that monument have been erected until many years after the death of the last person mentioned in the inscription; and it was then placed there, as it expresses, not by any of the family, but at the expense of friends. The flatness of the pillar, after the pulpit had been removed, offered an advantageous situation for it; and '*near this place*,' upon a mural monument, will always admit of a liberal construction. *Holmes*, who is much respected in that parish, and very ingenious and intelligent in his business, says that a leaden coffin, when the inner wooden-case is perished, must, from pressure and its own weight, shrink in breadth, and that, therefore, more than the present admeasurement of this coffin across the shoulders must have been its original breadth. There is evidence, also, that it was incurvated, both on the top and at the sides, at the time when it was discovered. But the strongest of all confirmations is the hair, both in its length and

colour. Behold *Faithorne's* quarto-print of *Milton* taken *ad vivum* in 1760, five years before *Milton's* death. Observe the short locks growing towards the forehead, and the long ones flowing from the same place down the sides of the face. The whole quantity of hair which Mr. *Taylor* took was from the forehead, and all taken at one grasp. I measured on Monday morning, the 9th, that lock of it which he had given to Mr. *Laming*, six inches and a half by a rule; and the lock of it which he gave to me, taken at the same time, and from the same place, measures only two inches and a half. In the reign of *Charles II.* how few, besides *Milton*, wore their own hair! *Wood* says *Milton* had light-brown hair, the very description of that which we possess; and, what may seem extraordinary, it is yet so strong that Mr. *Laming*, to cleanse it from its clotted state, let the cistern-cock run on it for near a minute, and then rubbed it between his fingers without injury.

Milton's coffin lay open from Wednesday morning, the 4th, at 9 o'clock until 4 o'clock in the afternoon of the following day, when the ground was closed.

With respect to there being no inscriptions on the coffin, *Holmes* says that inscription-plates were not used, nor invented at the time when *Milton* was buried; that the practice then was to paint the inscription on the outside wooden coffin, which in this case was entirely perished.

It has never been pretended that any hair was taken except by Mr. *Taylor*, and by *Ellis* the player; and all which the latter took would, when cleansed, easily lie in a small locket. Mr. *Taylor* has

divided his share into many small parcels; and the lock which I saw in Mr. *Laming's* hands on Saturday morning, the 7th, and which then measured six inches and a half, had been so cut and reduced by divisions among Mr. *Laming's* friends, at noon, on Monday, the 9th, that he thus possessed only a small bit, from two to three inches in length.

All the teeth are remarkably short, below the gums. The five which were in the upper jaw, and the middle teeth of the lower, are perfect and white. Mr. *Fountain* took the five upper jaw teeth; Mr. *Laming* one from the lower jaw; Mr. *Taylor* two from it; *Hawkesworth* one; and another of Mr. *Ascough's* men one; besides these, I have not been able to trace any, nor have I heard that any more were taken. It is not probable that more than ten should have been brought away, if the conjecture of the overseers, that some dropped among the other bones, be founded.

In recording a transaction which will strike every liberal mind with horror and disgust, I cannot omit to declare that I have procured those relics which I possess, only in hope of bearing part in a pious and honourable restitution of all that has been taken; the sole atonement which can now be made to the violated rights of the dead; to the insulted parishioners at large; and to the feelings of all good men. During the present repair of the church, the mode is obvious and easy. Unless that be done, in vain will the parish hereafter boast a sumptuous monument to the memory of *Milton*; it will but display their shame in proportion

to its magnificence.

I collected this account from the mouths of those who were immediate actors in this most sacrilegious scene; and before the voice of charity had reproached them with their impiety. By it those are exculpated whose just and liberal sentiments restrained their hands from an act of violation, and the blood of the lamb is dashed against the door-posts of the perpetrators, not to save, but to mark them to posterity.

Philip Neve.

Furnival's Inn,
14th of August, 1790.

This Mr. Neve, whose pious horror at the sacrilegious desecration of the poet's tomb seems only to have been awakened at the eleventh hour, and whose restitution of the relics he obtained does not appear, was probably the P.N. who was the author, in 1789, of 'Cursory Remarks on some of the Ancient English Poets, particularly Milton.' It is a work of some erudition, but the hero of the book, as its title plainly shows, was Milton. Neve places him in the first rank, and can hardly find words with which to extol his genius and intellect, so that, probably, some hero-worship was interwoven in the foregoing relation of the discovery of Milton's body; and it may be as well if the other side were heard, although the attempt at refutation is by no means as well authenticated as Neve's narrative. It is anonymous, and appeared in the *St. James's Chronicle*, September 4-7th,

1790, and in the *European Magazine*, vol. xviii, pp. 206-7, for September, 1790, and is as follows:

MILTON

Reasons why it is impossible that the Coffin lately dug up in the Parish Church of St. Giles, Cripplegate, should contain the reliques of Milton

First. Because *Milton* was buried in 1674, and this coffin was found in a situation previously allotted to a wealthy family, unconnected with his own. – See the mural monument of the *Smiths*, dated 1653, &c., immediately over the place of the supposed *Milton's* interment. – In the time that the fragments of several other sarcophagi were found; together with two skulls, many bones, and a leaden coffin, which was left untouched because it lay further to the north, and (for some reason, or no reason at all) was unsuspected of being the *Miltonic* reservoir.

Secondly. The hair of *Milton* is uniformly described and represented as of a light hue; but far the greater part of the ornament of his pretended skull is of the darkest brown, without any mixture of gray.¹⁸ This difference is irreconcilable to

¹⁸ The few hairs of a lighter colour, are supposed to have been such as had grown on the sides of the cheeks after the corpse had been interred.

probability. Our hair, after childhood, is rarely found to undergo a total change of colour, and Milton was 66 years old when he died, a period at which human locks, in a greater or less degree, are interspersed with white. Why did the Overseers, &c., bring away only such hair as corresponded with the description of *Milton's*? Of the light hair there was little; of the dark a considerable quantity. But this circumstance would have been wholly suppressed, had not a second scrutiny taken place.

Thirdly. Because the skull in question is remarkably flat and small, and with the lowest of all possible foreheads; whereas the head of Milton was large, and his brow conspicuously high. See his portrait so often engraved by the accurate *Vertue*, who was completely satisfied with the authenticity of his original. We are assured that the surgeon who attended at the second disinterment of the corpse only remarked, 'that the little forehead there was, was prominent.'

Fourthly. Because the hands of Milton were full of chalk stones. Now it chanced that his substitute's left hand had been undisturbed, and therefore was in a condition to be properly examined. No vestige, however, of cretaceous substances was visible in it, although they are of a lasting nature, and have been found on the fingers of a dead person almost coeval with Milton.

Fifthly. Because there is reason to believe that the aforesaid remains are those of a young female (one of the three Miss *Smiths*); for the bones are delicate, the teeth small, slightly inserted in the jaw, and perfectly white, even, and sound. From

the corroded state of the pelvis, nothing could, with certainty, be inferred; nor would the surgeon already mentioned pronounce *absolutely* on the sex of the deceased. Admitting, however, that the body was a male one, its very situation points it out to be a male of the *Smith* family; perhaps the favourite son *John*, whom *Richard Smith*, Esq., his father, so feelingly laments. (See Peck's '*Desiderata Curiosa*,' p. 536).¹⁹ To this darling child a receptacle of lead might have been allotted, though many other relatives of the same house were left to putrefy in wood.

Sixthly. Because Milton was not in affluence²⁰— expired in an emaciated state, in a cold month, and was interred by direction of his widow. An expensive outward coffin of lead, therefore, was needless, and unlikely to have been provided by a rapacious woman who oppressed her husband's children while he was living, and cheated them after he was dead.

Seventhly. Because it is improbable that the circumstance of Milton's having been deposited under the desk should, if true, have been so effectually concealed from the whole

¹⁹ 'MDCLV. May vi, died my (now) only and eldest son, John Smith (*Proh Dolor*, beloved of all men!) at Mitcham in Surrey. Buried May ix in St. Giles, Cripplegate.'

²⁰ Edward Philips or Phillips, in his life of Milton, attached to 'Letters of State, written by Mr. John Milton,' &c., London, 1694, (p. 43), says: 'He is said to have dyed worth £1,500 in Money (a considerable Estate, all things considered), besides Household Goods; for he sustained such losses as might well have broke any person less frugal and temperate than himself; no less than £2,000 which he had put for Security and Improvement into the Excise Office, but, neglecting to recal it in time, could never after get it out, with all the Power and Interest he had in the Great ones of those Times; besides another great Sum by mismanagement and for want of good advice.'

train of his biographers. It was, nevertheless, produced as an ancient and well-known tradition, as soon as the parishioners of Cripplegate were aware that such an incident was gaped for by antiquarian appetite, and would be swallowed by antiquarian credulity. How happened it that Bishop *Newton*, who urged similar inquiries concerning Milton above forty years ago in the same parish, could obtain no such information?²¹

Eighthly. Because Mr. *Laming* (see Mr. *Neve's* pamphlet,

²¹ Thomas Newton, Bishop of Bristol, thus writes in his life of Milton, prefixed to his edition of 'Paradise Lost,' London, 1749: 'His body was decently interred near that of his father (who had died very aged about the year 1647) in the chancel of the church of St. Giles, Cripplegate; and all his great and learned friends in London, not without a friendly concourse of the common people, paid their last respects in attending it to the grave. Mr. Fenton, in his short but elegant account of the life of Milton, speaking of our author's having no monument, says that "he desired a friend to inquire at St. Giles's Church, where the sexton showed him a small monument, which he said was supposed to be Milton's; but the inscription had never been legible since he was employed in that office, which he has possessed about forty years. This sure could never have happened in so short a space of time, unless the epitaph had been industriously erased; and that supposition, says Mr. Fenton, carries with it so much inhumanity that I think we ought to believe it was not erected to his memory." It is evident that it was not erected to his memory, and that the sexton was mistaken. For Mr. Toland, in his account of the life of Milton, says that he was buried in the chancel of St. Giles's Church, "where the piety of his admirers will shortly erect a monument becoming his worth, and the encouragement of letters in King William's reign." This plainly implies that no monument was erected to him at that time, and this was written in 1698, and Mr. Fenton's account was first published, I think, in 1725; so that not above twenty-seven years intervened from the one account to the other; and consequently the sexton, who it is said was possessed of his office about forty years, must have been mistaken, and the monument must have been designed for some other person, and not for Milton.'

second edition, p. 19) observes that the 'sludge' at the bottom of the coffin 'emitted a nauseous smell.' But, had this corpse been as old as that of Milton, it must have been disarmed of its power to offend, nor would have supplied the least effluvium to disgust the nostrils of our delicate inquirer into the secrets of the grave. The last remark will seem to militate against a foregoing one. The whole difficulty, however, may be solved by a resolution not to believe a single word said on such an occasion by any of those who invaded the presumptive sepulchre of Milton. The man who can handle pawned stays, breeches, and petticoats without disgust may be supposed to have his organs of smelling in no very high state of perfection.

Ninthly. Because we have not been told by *Wood, Philips, Richardson, Toland*, etc., that Nature, among her other partialities to Milton, had indulged him with an uncommon share of teeth. And yet above a hundred have been sold as the furniture of his mouth by the conscientious worthies who assisted in the plunder of his supposed carcase, and finally submitted it to every insult that brutal vulgarity could devise and express. Thanks to fortune, however, his corpse has hitherto been violated but by proxy! May his genuine reliques (if aught of him remains unmingled with common earth) continue to elude research, at least while the present overseers of the poor of Cripplegate are in office. Hard, indeed, would have been the fate of the author of 'Paradise Lost' to have received shelter in a chancel, that a hundred and sixteen years after his interment his *domus*

ultima might be ransacked by two of the lowest human beings, a retailer of spirituous liquors, and a man who lends sixpences to beggars on such despicable securities as tattered bed-gowns, cankered porridge-pots, and rusty gridirons.²² *Cape saxa manu, cape robora, pastor!* But an Ecclesiastical Court may yet have cognisance of this more than savage transaction. It will then be determined whether our tombs are our own, or may be robbed with impunity by the little tyrants of a workhouse.

‘If charnel-houses, and our graves, must send
Those that we bury back, our monuments
Shall be the maws of kites.’

It should be added that our Pawnbroker, Gin-seller, and Company, by deranging the contents of their ideal Milton’s coffin, by carrying away his lower jaw, ribs, and right hand – and by employing one bone as an instrument to batter the rest – by tearing the shroud and winding-sheet to pieces, &c., &c., had annihilated all such further evidence as might have been collected from a skilful and complete examination of these nameless fragments of mortality. So far, indeed, were they mutilated that, had they been genuine, we could not have said with Horace,

²² Between the creditable trades of pawnbroker and dram-seller there is a strict alliance. As Hogarth observes, the money lent by Mr. Gripe is immediately conveyed to the shop of Mr. Killman, who, in return for the produce of rags, distributes poison under the specious name of cordials. See Hogarth’s celebrated print called *Gin Lane*.

‘Invenies etiam disjecti membra Poetae.’

Who, after a perusal of the foregoing remarks (which are founded on circumstantial truth), will congratulate the parishioners of St. Giles, Cripplegate, on their discovery and treatment of the imaginary dust of Milton? His favourite, *Shakespeare*, most fortunately reposes at a secure distance from the paws of Messieurs *Laming* and *Fountain*, who, otherwise, might have provoked the vengeance imprecated by our great dramatic poet on the remover of his bones.

From the preceding censures, however, Mr. *Cole* (Churchwarden), and Messrs. *Strong* and *Ascough* (Vestry and Parish Clerks), should, in the most distinguished manner, be exempted. Throughout the whole of this extraordinary business, they conducted themselves with the strictest decency and propriety. It should also be confessed, by those whom curiosity has since attracted to the place of Milton's supposed disinterment, that the politeness of the same parish officers could only be exceeded by their respect for our illustrious author's memory, and their concern at the complicated indignity which his nominal ashes have sustained.'

Now it was hardly likely that Mr. Neve, with the extremely plausible case that he had, would sit still and see his pet theory knocked on the head, so he issued a second edition of his pamphlet with this

POSTSCRIPT

As some reports have been circulated, and some anonymous papers have appeared, since the publication of this pamphlet, with intent to induce a belief that the corpse mentioned in it is that of a woman, and as the curiosity of the public now calls for a second impression of it, an opportunity is offered of relating a few circumstances which have happened since the 14th of August, and which, in some degree, may confirm the opinion that the corpse is that of *Milton*.

On Monday, the 16th, I called upon the overseer, Mr. *Fountain*, when he told me that the parish officers had then seen a surgeon who, on Wednesday the 4th, had got through a window into the church, and who had, upon inspection, pronounced the corpse to be that of a woman. I thought it very improbable that a surgeon should creep through a window, who could go through a door for a few half-pence; but I no otherwise expressed my doubts of the truth of the information than by asking for the surgeon's address. I was answered 'that the gentleman begged not to have it known, that he might not be interrupted by enquiries.' A trifling relic was, nevertheless, at the same time witholden, which I had expected to receive through Mr. *Fountain's* hands; by which it appeared that those in possession of them were, still tenacious of the spoils of the coffin, although they affected to be convinced they were not those of *Milton*. These contradictions,

however, I reserved for the test of an inquiry elsewhere.

In the course of that week I was informed that some gentlemen had, on Tuesday, the 17th, prevailed on the churchwardens to suffer a second disinterment of the coffin, which had taken place on that day. On Saturday, the 21st, I waited on Mr. *Strong*, who told me that he had been present at such second disinterment, and that he had then sent for an experienced surgeon of the neighbourhood, who, upon inspection and examination of the corpse, had pronounced it to be that of a man. I was also informed, on that day, the 21st, by a principal person of the parish, whose information cannot be suspected, that the parish officers had agreed among themselves that, from my frequent visits and inquiries, I must have an intention of delivering some account of the transaction to the world; and that, therefore, to stop the narrative from going forth, they must invent some story of a surgeon's inspection on the 4th, and of his declaration that the corpse was that of a woman. From this information it was easy to judge what would be the fate of any personal application to the parish officers, with intent to obtain a restitution of what had been taken from the coffin I, therefore, on Wednesday, the 25th, addressed the following letter to Mr. *Strong*: —

‘Dear Sir,

‘The reflection of a few moments, after I left you on Saturday, clearly showed me that the probability of the coffin in question being *Milton's* was not at all weakened, either by the dates, or the number of persons on the *Smiths'* monument; but that it was

rather confirmed by the latter circumstance. By the evidence which you told me was given by the surgeon, called in on Tuesday, the 17th, the corpse is that of a male; it is certainly not that of a man of eighty-five; if, therefore, it be one of the earlier buried *Smiths*, all the later coffins of that family should appear, but not one of them is found. I, then, suppose the monument to have been put there because the flat pillar, after the pulpit was removed, offered a convenient situation for it, and “*near this place*” to be open, as it is in almost every case where it appears, to very liberal interpretation.

‘It is, therefore, to be believed that the unworthy treatment, on the 4th, was offered to the corpse of *Milton*. Knowing what I know, I must not be silent. It is a very unpleasant story to relate; but, as it has fallen to my task, I will not shrink from it. I respect nothing in this world more than truth, and the memory of *Milton*; and to swerve in a tittle from the first would offend the latter. I shall give the plain and simple narrative, as delivered by the parties themselves. If it sit heavy on any of their shoulders, it is a burthen of their own taking up, and their own backs must bear it. They are all, as I find, very fond of deriving honour to themselves from *Milton*, as their parishioner; perhaps the mode, which I have hinted, is the only one which they have now left themselves of proving an equal desire to do honour to him. If I had thought that, in personally proposing to the parish officers a general search for, and collection of, all the spoils, and to put them, together with the mangled corpse and old coffin, into a new

leaden one, I should have been attended to, I would have taken that method; but, when I found such impertinent inventions as setting up a fabulous surgeon to creep in at a window practised, I felt that so low an attempt at derision would ensure that, whatever I should afterwards propose, would be equally derided, and I had then left no other means than to call in the public opinion in aid of my own, and to hope that we should, at length, see the bones of an honest man, and the first scholar and poet our country can boast, restored to their sepulchre.

‘The narrative will appear, I believe, either to-morrow or on Friday; whenever it does, your withers are unwrung, and Mr. *Cole* has shown himself an upright churchwarden.

‘I cannot conclude without returning you many thanks for your great civilities, and am, &c.’

The corpse was found entirely mutilated by those who disinterred it on the 17th; almost all the ribs, the lower jaw, and one of the hands gone. Of all those who saw the body on Wednesday, the 4th, and on Thursday, the 5th, there is not one person who discovered a single hair of any other colour than light brown, although both Mr. *Laming* and Mr. *Ellis* lifted up the head, and although the considerable quantity of hair which Mr. *Taylor* took was from the top of the head, and that which *Ellis* took was from behind it; yet, from the accounts of those who saw it on the 17th, it appears that the hair on the back of the head was found of dark brown, nearly approaching to black, although all the front hair remaining was of the same light brown as that

taken on the 4th. It does not belong to me either to account for or to prove the fact.

On Wednesday, September the 1st, I waited on Mr. *Dyson*, who was the gentleman sent for on the 17th, to examine the corpse. I asked him simply, whether, from what had then appeared before him, he judged it to be male or female? His answer was that, having examined the pelvis and the skull, he judged the corpse to be that of a man. I asked what was the shape of the head? He said that the forehead was high and erect, though the top of the head was flat; and added that the skull was of that shape and flatness at the top which, differing from those of blacks, is observed to be common and almost peculiar to persons of very comprehensive intellects. I am a stranger to this sort of knowledge, but the opinion is a strong confirmation that, from all the premises before him, he judged the head to be that of *Milton*. On a paper, which he showed me, enclosing a bit of the hair, he had written '*Milton's hair*.'

Mr. *Dyson* is a surgeon, who received his professional education under the late Dr. *Hunter*, is in partnership with Mr. *Price*, in Fore Street, where the church stands, is of easy access, and his affability can be exceeded only by his skill in an extensive line of practice.

Mr. *Taylor*, too, who is a surgeon of considerable practice and eminence in his county, judged the corpse, on the 4th, to be that of a male.

A man, also, who has for many years acted as grave-digger in

that parish, and who was present on the 17th, decided, upon first sight of the skull, that it was male; with as little hesitation, he pronounced another, which had been thrown out of the ground in digging, to be that of a woman. Decisions obviously the result of practical, rather than of scientific knowledge; for, being asked his reasons, he could give none, but that observation had taught him to distinguish such subjects. Yet this latter sort of evidence is not to be too hastily rejected; it may not be understood by everybody, but to anyone acquainted with those who are eminently skilled in judging of the genuineness of ancient coins, it will be perfectly intelligible. In that difficult and useful art, the eye of a proficient decides at once; a novice, however, who should inquire for the reasons of such decision, would seldom receive a further answer than that the decision itself is the result of experience and observation, and that the eye can be instructed only by long familiarity with the subject; yet all numismatic knowledge rests upon this sort of judgment.

After these evidences, what proofs are there, or what probable presumptions, that the corpse is that of a woman?

It was necessary to relate these facts, not only as they belonged to the subject, but lest, from the reports and papers above mentioned, I might, otherwise, seem to have given either an unfaithful or a partial statement of the evidences before me; whereas now it will clearly be seen what facts appeared on the first disinterment, which preceded, and what are to be attributed to the second, which succeeded the date of the narrative.

I have now added every circumstance which has hitherto come to my knowledge relative to this extraordinary transaction, and conclude with this declaration, that I should be very glad if any person would, from facts, give me reason to believe that the corpse in question is rather that of *Elizabeth Smith*, whose name I know only from her monument, than that of *John Milton*.

P. N.’

‘8th of September, 1790.’

THE TRUE STORY OF EUGENE ARAM

The only knowledge which very many people possess of the life and crime of Eugene Aram has been derived from the popular romance bearing his name, written by the late Lord Lytton. And this nobleman, influenced by his individual bias, has so woven fiction with a small modicum of fact, as to render the story, as a history of a celebrated crime, totally unreliable. Stripped of the gloss Lord Lytton has given it, and revealed in its bare nakedness, it shows Eugene Aram in a very different light from the solitary scholar, surrounded by books, with high, romantic aspirations and noble thoughts, winning the love of a pure and lovely girl; it shows us instead a poor country school-master, clever, but self-taught, married to a common woman, whose very faith he doubted, struggling with poverty, and heavily weighed down with several children; it paints him as a man whose companions were sordid and dishonest, whilst he himself was a liar, a thief, and a murderer, a selfish man who scrupled not to leave wife and children to shift for themselves, a man untrustworthy in his relations of life.

Eugenius, or Eugene Aram was born in the year 1704,²³ at

²³ Probably in the month of September, as the entry of his baptism in the registry of the chapel of Middlesmoor, in Netherdale, says 'Eugenius Aram, son of Peter

Ramsgill, a little village in Netherdale, Yorkshire, and his father was a gardener, as he says, of great abilities in botany, and an excellent draughtsman, who served Dr. Compton, Bishop of London, and, afterwards, Sir Edward Blackett, of Newby, and Sir John Ingilby, of Ripley. When he was five or six years of age, the family removed to Bondgate, near Ripon, his father having purchased a little property there. Here he was sent to school, and was taught in a purely elementary manner to be capable of reading the New Testament, and this was all the education his parents gave him, with the exception of about a month's schooling some long time afterwards with the Rev. Mr. Alcock of Burnsall.

When about thirteen or fourteen, he joined his father at Newby, till the death of Sir Edward Blackett, and, his father having several books on mathematics, and the boy being of a studious turn of mind, he mastered their contents, and laid the foundation of his future scholarship. When about sixteen years of age, he went to London to be in the counting-house of Mr. Christopher Blackett as bookkeeper; but he had not been there more than a year or two when he caught the small-pox, and, on his recovery, went home into Yorkshire. His native air soon restored him to health, and he studied hard at poetry, history, and antiquities. He thus fitted himself for keeping a school, which he opened in Netherdale, and continued there for many years teaching and studying. There he married, as he says,

Aram, baptized the 2nd of October.'

‘unfortunately enough for me, for the misconduct of the wife which that place afforded me has procured for me this place, this prosecution, this infamy, and this sentence.’

During these years he read the Latin and Greek authors, and obtained such a name for scholarship that he was invited to Knaresborough to keep a school there. He removed thither in the year 1734, and continued there until about six weeks after the murder of Daniel Clark. In the meantime he had mastered Hebrew, and when he went to London he got a situation to teach Latin, and writing, at a school in Piccadilly, kept by a Monsieur Painblanc, who not only gave him a salary, but taught him French. There he remained over two years, then went to Hays as a writing-master, after which he wandered from situation to situation, at one time earning his living by copying for a law-stationer. At last, somehow, he found himself an usher at the Free School at Lynn, where he lived until he was arrested for the murder of Daniel Clark.

This man was a shoemaker at Knaresborough, and was an intimate visitor at Aram’s house – too intimate, indeed, Aram thought, with his wife, hence the reference to his wife previously quoted. He was a man of bad character, and was more than suspected of having, in company of another vagabond named Houseman, murdered a Jew boy, who travelled the country for one Levi as a pedlar, carrying a box containing watches and jewellery. The poor lad was decoyed to a place called Thistle Hill, where he was robbed, murdered, and buried. This was about

the year 1744, and his bones were not found until 1758.

Richard Houseman, who was born the same year as Aram, was a near neighbour of the latter's – in fact, he lived next door, and his occupation was that of a heckler of flax, when he gave out to the women of the village to spin for him. But, according to his own statement, he was a most unscrupulous black-guard.

Another intimate of Aram's was a publican, named Terry, but he only played a subsidiary part in the drama, and nothing was ever brought home to him.

In January, 1745, Clark married a woman with a small fortune of about two hundred pounds, and, immediately afterwards, this little nest of rogues contrived and carried out the following swindle. Clark, as he was known to have married a woman of some little money, was to obtain goods of any description from whomsoever would part with them on credit; these goods were to be deposited with, and hidden by, Aram and Houseman, and, after plundering all that was possible, Clark was to decamp, and leave his young wife to do the best she could. This was the scheme in which the noble and refined Eugene Aram of Lord Lytton was to, and did, bear his full part.

Velvet from one man, leather from another, whips from a third, table and bed linen from a fourth, money lent by a fifth – all was fish that came to their net; and, when obtained, they were hidden on the premises either of Aram or Houseman, or else in a place called St. Robert's Cave, which was situated in a field adjoining the Nid, a river near Knaresborough. When this source

was thoroughly exploited, a new scheme was hit on by this 'long firm.' Clark should pretend to be about to give a great wedding-feast, and he went about gaily, borrowing silver tankards, salvers, salts, spoons, &c., from whoever would lend them. Indeed, so multifarious were his perquisitions, that, according to one contemporary account, he got, among other goods, the following: 'three silver tankards, four silver pints, one silver milk-pot, one ring set with an emerald, and two brilliant diamonds, another with three rose diamonds, a third with an amethyst in the shape of a heart, and six plain rings, eight watches, two snuff-boxes, Chambers' Dictionary, two vols. folio, Pope's "Homer," six vols., bound.'

Having got all that could be got, it was now high time that Clark should disappear. He was last seen on the early morning of the 8th February, 1745, and from that time until August 1, 1758, nothing was heard of him. He was supposed to have gone away with all his booty – and yet not all of it, for suspicion was aroused that both Aram and Houseman, from their intimacy with Clark, were accomplices in his frauds. And so it clearly proved, for, on Aram's house being searched, several articles were found the produce of their joint roguery, and in his garden were found buried, cambric and other goods, wrapped in coarse canvas. Still, neither he, nor Houseman, nor Terry were prosecuted,²⁴ but

²⁴ Though no warrants were issued against them, Aram was arrested for debt, in order to keep him; yet he immediately discharged this debt – not only so, he paid off a mortgage on his property at Bondgate. Suspicious facts, considering he was, notably, a poor man.

Aram thought it prudent to change his residence; so one fine day he left his wife and family, and wandered forth. We have seen the roving life he led, restless, and always changing his abode; yet, during those thirteen years of shifting exile, it must be said, to his credit, that no breath of scandal attached to him; he was studious, somewhat morose, yet he was so liked by the boys at the grammar-school at Lynn, that, when he was taken thence by the officers of justice, they cried at losing him.

Whilst at Lynn, he was recognised in June, 1758, by a horse-dealer, and this recognition eventually led to his apprehension; for, during that summer, a labourer, digging for stone or gravel at a place called Thistle Hill, near Knaresborough, found, at the depth of two feet, a skeleton, which appeared to have been buried doubled up. The remembrance of Clark's disappearance was at once awakened, and the body was set down as being his.

A country town has a keen recollection of anything which has occurred disturbing its equal pace, and the connection of Aram and Houseman with Clark was duly remembered. Aram was away, but Houseman still lived among them, and he was ordered by the coroner to attend the inquest. The principal witness was Anna Aram, Eugene's wife, and she had frequently, since her husband's departure, dropped hints of her suspicion that Clark had been murdered. Her evidence is clear. She said that Daniel Clark was an intimate acquaintance of her husband's, and that they had frequent transactions together before the 8th of February, 1744-5, and that Richard Houseman was often with

them; particularly that, on the 7th of February, 1744-5, about six o'clock in the evening, Aram came home when she was washing in the kitchen, upon which he directed her to put out the fire, and make one above stairs; she accordingly did so. About two o'clock in the morning of the 8th of February, Aram, Clark, and Houseman came to Aram's house, and went upstairs to the room where she was. They stayed about an hour. Her husband asked her for a handkerchief for Dickey (meaning Richard Houseman) to tie about his head; she accordingly lent him one. Then Clark said, 'It will soon be morning, and we must get off.' After which Aram, Houseman, and Clark all went out together; that, upon Clark's going out, she observed him take a sack or wallet upon his back, which he carried along with him; whither they went she could not tell. That about five o'clock the same morning her husband and Houseman returned, but Clark did not come with them. Her husband came upstairs, and desired to have a candle that he might make a fire below. To which she objected, and said, 'There was no occasion for two fires, as there was a good one in the room above, where she then was.' To which Aram, her husband, answered, 'Dickey' (meaning Richard Houseman) 'was below, and did not choose to come upstairs.' Upon which she asked (Clark not returning with them), 'What had they done with Daniel?' To this her husband gave her no answer, but desired her to go to bed, which she refused to do, and told him, 'They had been doing something bad.' Then Aram went down with the candle.

She, being desirous to know what her husband and Houseman were doing, and being about to go downstairs, she heard Houseman say to Aram,

‘She is coming.’

Her husband replied, ‘We’ll not let her.’

Houseman then said, ‘If she does, she’ll tell.’

‘What can she tell?’ replied Aram. ‘Poor simple thing! she knows nothing.’

To which Houseman said, ‘If she tells that I am here, ‘twill be enough.’

Her husband then said, ‘I will hold the door to prevent her from coming.’

Whereupon Houseman said, ‘Something must be done to prevent her telling,’ and pressed him to it very much, and said, ‘If she does not tell now, she may at some other time.’

‘No,’ said her husband, ‘we will coax her a little until her passion be off, and then take an opportunity to shoot her.’

Upon which Houseman appeared satisfied and said, ‘What must be done with her clothes?’ Whereupon they both agreed that they would let her lie where she was shot in her clothes.

She, hearing this discourse, was much terrified, but remained quiet, until near seven o’clock in the same morning, when Aram and Houseman went out of the house. Upon which Mrs. Aram, coming down-stairs, and seeing there had been a fire below and all the ashes taken out of the grate, she went and examined the dung-hill; and, perceiving ashes of a different kind to lie upon

it, she searched amongst them, and found several pieces of linen and woollen cloth, very near burnt, which had the appearance of belonging to wearing apparel. When she returned into the house from the dung-hill, she found the handkerchief she had lent Houseman the night before; and, looking at it, she found some blood upon it, about the size of a shilling. Upon which she immediately went to Houseman, and showed him the pieces of cloth she had found, and said 'she was afraid they had done something bad to Clark.' But Houseman then pretended he was a stranger to her accusation, and said 'he knew nothing what she meant.'

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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