

BARING-GOULD SABINE

**DEVONSHIRE  
CHARACTERS AND  
STRANGE EVENTS**

Sabine Baring-Gould

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and Strange Events**

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# S. Baring-Gould

## Devonshire Characters and Strange Events

### PREFACE

In treating of Devonshire Characters, I have had to put aside the chief Worthies and those Devonians famous in history, as George Duke of Albemarle, Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir Francis Drake, Sir Joshua Reynolds, the Coleridges, Sir Stafford Northcote, first Earl of Iddesleigh, and many another; and to content myself with those who lie on a lower plane. So also I have had to set aside several remarkable characters, whose lives I have given elsewhere, as the Herrings of Langstone (whom I have called Grym or Grymstone) and Madame Drake, George Spurle the Post-boy, etc. Also I have had to pretermit several great rascals, as Thomas Gray and Nicholas Horner. But even so, I find an *embarras de richesses*, and have had to content myself with such as have had careers of some general interest. Moreover, it has not been possible to say all that might have been said relative to these, so as to economize space, and afford room for others.

So also, with regard to strange incidents, some limitation has been necessary, and such have been selected as are less generally known.

I have to thank the kind help of many Devonshire friends for the loan of rare pamphlets, portraits, or for information not otherwise acquirable – as the Earl of Iddesleigh, Lady Rosamond Christie, Mrs. Chichester of Hall, Mrs. Ford of Pencarrow, Dr. Linnington Ash, Dr. Brushfield, Capt. Pentecost, Miss M. P. Willcocks, Mr. Andrew Iredale, Mr. W. H. K. Wright, Mr. A. B. Collier, Mr. Charles T. Harbeck, Mr. H. Tapley Soper, Miss Lega-Weekes, who has contributed the article on Richard Weekes; Mrs. G. Radford, Mr. R. Pearse Chope, Mr. Rennie Manderson, Mr. M. Bawden, the Rev. J. B. Wollocombe, the Rev. W. H. Thornton, Mr. A. M. Broadley, Mr. Samuel Gillespie Prout, Mr. S. H. Slade, Mr. W. Fleming, Mrs. A. H. Wilson, Fleet-Surgeon Lloyd Thomas, the Rev. W. T. Wellacott, Mr. S. Raby, Mr. Samuel Harper, Mr. John Avery, Mr. Thomas Wainwright, Mr. A. F. Steuart, Mr. S. T. Whiteford, and last, but not least, Mr. John Lane, the publisher of this volume, who has taken the liveliest interest in its production.

Also to Messrs. Macmillan for kindly allowing the use of an engraving of Newcomen's steam engine, and to Messrs. Vinton & Co. for allowing the use of the portrait of the Rev. John Russell that appeared in *Bailey's Magazine*.

I am likewise indebted to Miss M. Windeatt Roberts for having undertaken to prepare the exhaustive Index, and to Mr. J. G. Commin for placing at my disposal many rare illustrations.

For myself I may say that it has been a labour of love to grope among the characters and incidents of the past in my own county, and with Cordatus, in the Introduction to Ben Jonson's *Every Man out of his Humour*, I may say that it has been "a work that hath bounteously pleased me; how it will answer the general expectation, I know not."

I am desired by my publisher to state that he will be glad to receive any information as to the whereabouts of pictures by another "Devonshire Character," James Gandy, born at Exeter in 1619, and a pupil of Vandyck. He was retained in the service of the Duke of Ormond, whom he accompanied to Ireland, where he died in 1689. It is said that his chief works will be found in that country and the West of England.

Jackson of Exeter, in his volume *The Four Ages*, says: "About the beginning of the eighteenth century was a painter in Exeter called Gandy, of whose colouring Sir Joshua Reynolds thought highly. I heard him say that on his return from Italy, when he was fresh from seeing the pictures of the Venetian school, he again looked at the works of Gandy, and that they had lost nothing in his estimation. There are many pictures of this artist in Exeter and its neighbourhood. The portrait Sir

Joshua seemed most to value is in the Hall belonging to the College of Vicars in that city, but I have seen some very much superior to it.”

Since then, however, the original picture has been taken from the College of Vicars, and has been lost; but a copy, I believe, is still exhibited there, and no one seems to know what has become of the original.

Not only is Mr. Lane anxious to trace this picture, but any others in Devon or Ireland, as also letters, documents, or references to this artist and his work.

## HUGH STAFFORD AND THE ROYAL WILDING

Hugh Stafford, Esq., of Pynes, born 1674, was the last of the Staffords of Pynes. His daughter, Bridget Maria, carried the estate to her husband, Sir Henry Northcote, Bart., from whom is descended the present Earl of Iddesleigh. Hugh Stafford died in 1734. He is noted as an enthusiastic apple-grower and lover of cyder.

He wrote a “Dissertation on Cyder and Cyder-Fruit” in a letter to a friend in 1727, but this was not published till 1753, and a second edition in 1769. The family of Stafford was originally Stowford, of Stowford, in the parish of Dolton. The name changed to Stoford and then to Stafford. One branch married into the family of Wollocombe, of Wollocombe. But the name of Stowford or Stafford was not the most ancient designation of the family, which was Kelloway, and bore as its arms four pears. The last Stafford turned from pears to apples, to which he devoted his attention and became a connoisseur not in apples only, but in the qualities of cyder as already intimated.

To a branch of this family belonged Sir John Stowford, Lord Chief Baron in the reign of Edward III, who built Pilton Bridge over the little stream of the Yeo or Yaw, up which the tide flows, and over which the passage was occasionally dangerous. The story goes that the judge one day saw a poor market woman with her child on a mudbank in the stream crying for aid, which none could afford her, caught and drowned by the rising flood, whereupon he vowed to build the bridge to prevent further accident. The rhyme ran: —

Yet Barnstaple, graced though thou be by brackish Taw,  
In all thy glory see that thou not forget the little Yaw.

Camden asserts that Judge Stowford also constructed the long bridge over the Taw consisting of sixteen piers. Tradition will have it, however, that towards the building of this latter two spinster ladies (sisters) contributed by the profits of their distaffs and the pennies they earned by keeping a little school.

I was travelling on the South Devon line some years ago after there had been a Church Congress at Plymouth, and in the same carriage with me were some London reporters. Said one of these gentry to another: “Did you ever see anything like Devonshire parsons and pious ladies? They were munching apples all the time that the speeches were being made. Honour was being done to the admirable fruit by these worthy Devonians. I was dotting down my notes during an eloquent harangue on ‘How to Bring Religion to Bear upon the People’ when chump, chump went a parson on my left; and the snapping of jaws on apples, rending off shreds for mastication, punctuated the periods of a bishop who spoke next. At an ensuing meeting on the ‘Deepening of Personal Religion’ my neighbour was munching a Cornish gilliflower, which he informed me in taste and aroma surpassed every other apple. I asked in a low tone whether Devonshire people did not peel their fruit before eating. He answered *leni susurro* that the flavour was in the rind.”

Cyder was anciently the main drink of the country people in the West of England. Every old farmhouse had its granite trough (circular) in which rolled a stone wheel that pounded the fruit to a “pummice,” and the juice flowed away through a lip into a keeve. Now, neglected and cast aside, may be seen the huge masses of stone with an iron crook fastened in them, which in the earliest stage of cyder-making were employed for pressing the fruit into pummice. But these weights were superseded by the screw-press that extracted more of the juice.

In 1763 Lord Bute, the Prime Minister, imposed a tax of 10s. per hogshead on cyder and perry, to be paid by the first buyer. The country gentlemen, without reference to party, were violent in their opposition, and Bute then condescended to reduce the sum and the mode of levying it, proposing 4s. per hogshead, to be paid, not by the first buyer, but by the grower, who was to be made liable to the

regulations of the excise and the domiciliary visits of excisemen. Pitt thundered against this cyder Bill, inveighing against the intrusion of excise officers into private dwellings, quoting the old proud maxim, that every Englishman's house was his castle, and showing the hardship of rendering every country gentleman, every individual that owned a few fruit trees and made a little cyder, liable to have his premises invaded by officers. The City of London petitioned the Commons, the Lords, the throne, against the Bill; in the House of Lords forty-nine peers divided against the Minister; the cities of Exeter and Worcester, the counties of Devonshire and Herefordshire, more nearly concerned in the question about cyder than the City of London, followed the example of the capital, and implored their representatives to resist the tax to the utmost; and an indignant and general threat was made that the apples should be suffered to fall and rot under the trees rather than be made into cyder, subject to such a duty and such annoyances. No fiscal question had raised such a tempest since Sir Robert Walpole's Excise Bill in 1733. But Walpole, in the plenitude of his power and abilities, and with wondrous resources at command, was constrained to bow to the storm he had roused, and to shelve his scheme. Bute, on the other hand, with a power that lasted but a day, with a position already undermined, with slender abilities and no resources, but with Scotch stubbornness, was resolved that his Bill should pass. And it passed, with all its imperfections; and although there were different sorts of cyder, varying in price from 5s. to 50s. per hogshead, they were all taxed alike – the poor man having thus to pay as heavy a duty for his thin beverage as the affluent man paid for the choicest kind. The agitation against Lord Bute grew. In some rural districts he was burnt under the effigy of a *jack-boot*, a rustic allusion to his name (Bute); and on more than one occasion when he walked the streets he was accused of being surrounded by prize-fighters to protect him against the violence of the mob. Numerous squibs, caricatures, and pamphlets appeared. He was represented as hung on the gallows above a fire, in which a jack-boot fed the flames and a farmer was throwing an excised cyder-barrel into the conflagration, whilst a Scotchman, in Highland costume, in the background, commented, "It's aw over with us now, and aw our aspiring hopes are gone"; whilst an English mob advanced waving the banners of Magna Charta, and "Liberty, Property, and No Excise."

I give one of the ballads printed on this occasion: it is entitled, "The Scotch Yoke, and English Resentment. To the tune of *The Queen's Ass*."

Of Freedom no longer let Englishmen boast,  
Nor Liberty more be their favourite Toast;  
The Hydra Oppression your Charta defies,  
And galls English Necks with the Yoke of Excise,  
The Yoke of Excise, the Yoke of Excise,  
And galls English Necks with the Yoke of Excise.

In vain have you conquer'd, my brave Hearts of Oak,  
Your Laurels, your Conquests are all but a Joke;  
Let a rascally Peace serve to open your Eyes,  
And the d – nable Scheme of a Cyder-Excise,  
A Cyder-Excise, etc.

What though on your Porter a Duty was laid,  
Your Light double-tax'd, and encroach'd on your Trade;  
Who e'er could have thought that a Briton so wise  
Would admit such a Tax as the Cyder-Excise,  
The Cyder-Excise, etc.

I appeal to the Fox, or his Friend John a-Boot,

If tax'd thus the Juice, then how soon may the Fruit?  
Adieu then to good Apple-puddings and Pyes,  
If e'er they should taste of a cursed Excise,  
A cursed Excise, etc.

Let those at the Helm, who have sought to enslave  
A Nation so glorious, a People so brave,  
At once be convinced that their Scheme you despise,  
And shed your last Blood to oppose the Excise,  
Oppose the Excise, etc.

Come on then, my Lads, who have fought and have bled,  
A Tax may, perhaps, soon be laid on your Bread;  
Ye Natives of Worc'ster and Devon arise,  
And strike at the Root of the Cyder-Excise,  
The Cyder-Excise, etc.

No longer let K – s at the H – m of the St – e,  
With fleecing and grinding pursue Britain's Fate;  
Let Power no longer your Wishes disguise,  
But off with their Heads – by the Way of Excise,  
The Way of Excise, etc.

From two Latin words, *ex* and *scindo*, I ween,  
Came the hard Word Excise, which to *Cut off* does mean.  
Take the Hint then, my Lads, let your Freedom advise,  
And give them a Taste of their fav'rite Excise,  
Their fav'rite Excise, etc.

Then toss off your Bumpers, my Lads, while you may,  
To Pitt and Lord Temple, Huzza, Boys, huzza!  
Here's the King that to tax his poor Subjects denies,  
But Pox o' the Schemer that plann'd the Excise,  
That plann'd the Excise, etc.

The apple trees were too many and too deep-rooted and too stout for the Scotch thistle. The symptoms of popular dislike drove Bute to resign (8 April, 1763), to the surprise of all. The duty, however, was not repealed till 1830. In my *Book of the West* (Devon), I have given an account of cyder-making in the county, and I will not repeat it here. But I may mention the curious Devonshire saying about Francemass, or St. Franken Days. These are the 19th, 20th, and 21st May, at which time very often a frost comes that injures the apple blossom. The story goes that there was an Exeter brewer, of the name of Frankin, who found that cyder ran his ale so hard that he vowed his soul to the devil on the condition that his Satanic Majesty should send three frosty nights in May annually to cut off the apple blossom.

And now to return to Hugh Stafford. He opens his letter with an account of the origin of the Royal Wilding, one of the finest sorts of apple for the making of choice cyder.

“Since you have seen the Royal Wilding apple, which is so very much celebrated (and so deservedly) in our county, the history of its being first taken notice of, which is fresh in everybody's memory, may not be unacceptable to you. The single and only tree from which the apple was first

propagated is very tall, fair, and stout; I believe about twenty feet high. It stands in a very little quillet (as we call it) of gardening, adjoining to the post-road that leads from Exeter to Oakhampton, in the parish of St. Thomas, but near the borders of another parish called Whitestone. A walk of a mile from Exeter will gratify any one, who has curiosity, with the sight of it.

“It appears to be properly a wilding, that is, a tree raised from the kernel of an apple, without having been grafted, and (which seems well worth observing) has, in all probability, stood there much more than seventy years, for two ancient persons of the parish of Whitestone, who died several years since, each aged upwards of the number of years before mentioned, declared, that when they were boys, probably twelve or thirteen years of age, and first went the road, it was not only growing there, but, what is worth notice, was as tall and stout as it now appears, nor do there at this time appear any marks of decay upon it that I could perceive.

“It is a very constant and plentiful bearer every other year, and then usually produces apples enough to make one of our hogsheads of cyder, which contains sixty-four gallons, and this was one occasion of its being first taken notice of, and of its affording an history which, I believe, no other tree ever did: For the little cot-house to which it belongs, together with the little quillet in which it stands, being several years since mortgaged for ten pounds, the fruit of this tree alone, in a course of some years, freed the house and garden, and its more valuable self, from that burden.

“Mr. Francis Oliver (a gentleman of the neighbourhood, and, if I mistake not, the gentleman who had the mortgage just now mentioned) was one of the first persons about Exeter that affected rough cyder, and, for that reason, purchased the fruit of this tree every bearing year. However, I cannot learn that he ever made cyder of it alone, but mix’d with other apples, which added to the flavour of his cyder, in the opinion of those who had a true relish for that liquor.

“Whether this, or any other consideration, brought on the more happy experiment upon this apple, the Rev. Robert Wollocombe, Rector of Whitestone, who used to amuse himself with a nursery, put on some heads of this wilding; and in a few years after being in his nursery, about March, a person came to him on some business, and feeling something roll under his feet, took it up, and it proved one of those precious apples, which Mr. Wollocombe receiving from him, finding it perfectly sound after it had lain in the long stragle of the nursery during all the rain, frost, and snow of the foregoing winter, thought it must be a fruit of more than common value; and having tasted it, found the juices, not only in a most perfect soundness and quickness, but such likewise as seemed to promise a body, as well as the roughness and flavour that the wise cyder drinkers in Devon now begin to desire. He observed the graft from which it had fallen, and searching about found some more of the apples, and all of the same soundness; upon which, without hesitation, he resolved to graft a greater quantity of them, which he accordingly did; but waited with impatience for the experiment, which you know must be the work of some years. They came at length, and his just reward was a barrel of the juice, which, though it was small, was of great value for its excellency, and far exceeded all his expectations.

**The *TYBURN* INTERVIEW:**

**A New SONG**

**By a CYDER MERCHANT, of South-Ham, Devonshire**

**Dedicated to *JACK KETCH***

**To the Tune *A Cobler there was, &c***

As Sawney from *Tweed* was a trudging to Town,  
To rest his tir'd Limbs on the Grass he sat down;  
When growsing his Oatmeal, he turn'd up his Eyes,  
And kenn'd a strange Pile on three Pillars arise.

*Derry down, &c.*

Amaz'd he starts up, "Thou Thing of odd Form,  
That stand'st here defying each turbulent Storm;  
What art thou? Thy Office declare at my Word,  
Or thou shalt not escape this strong Arm and broad Sword."

*Derry down, &c.*

Quoth the Structure, "Altho' I'm not known unto thee,  
Thy Countrymens Lives have been shorten'd by me;  
To strike thee at once, know that *Tyburn's* my Name,  
In *Scotland*, no doubt, you have heard of my Fame.

*Derry down, &c.*

When arm'd all rebellious, like Vultures you rose,  
A Set of such Shahrags, you frighten'd the Crows;  
To rid the tir'd land of such Vermin as you,  
I groan'd with receiving but barely my Due.

*Derry down, &c.*

And still I'm in Hopes of another to come,  
For *Tyburn* will certain at last be his Home;  
He'll come from the Summit of Honour's vast Height,  
With a Star and a Garter to dubb me a Knight."

*Derry down, &c.*

His Passion now *Sawney* no more could contain,  
“My Sword shall strait prove all thy Hopes are in vain”;  
So saying; he brandish’d it high in the Air,  
When strait a *Scotch* Voice cry’d out —*Sawney* forbear!

*Derry down, &c.*

The Phantom that spoke now appear’d in a trice,  
And to the fear’d *Scotsman* thus gave his Advice:  
“Calm thy Breast that now boils with Vexation and Rage,  
And let what I speak thy Attention engage.

*Derry down, &c.*

No longer with Fury pursue this old Tree,  
His Back shall bear Vengeance for you and for me;  
For know, my dear Friend, the Time is at Hand,  
When with *Englishmen*, *Tyburn* shall thin half the Land.

*Derry down, &c.*

The Case is revers’d by a good Friend of ours,  
All Treason is *English*, and Loyalty yours:  
Posts, Honour, and Profit all *Scotsmen* await,  
While the Natives shall tremble and curse their hard Fate.

*Derry down, &c.*

The War is no more, and each Soldier and Tar,  
The Strength and the Bulwark of *England* in War,  
Are coming to prove our Friend’s deep Penetration,  
As the first Sacrifice to our *Scotch Exaltation*.”

*Derry down, &c.*

Here ended the Phantom, and sunk in the Ground,  
While the blue Flames of Hell glar’d terrible round;  
When for *London* young *Sawney* around turn’d his Eyes,  
Where he march’d for a Place in the *new-rais’d* EXCISE.

*Derry down, &c.*

Ye National Schemers, come tell me, I pray,  
Your Intention in this. *To bring more Scotch in play!*  
For this must the Tax be enforc’d with all Speed,  
For Thousands are coming between *here* and *Tweed*.

*Derry down, &c.*

Ah! hapless *Old England*, no longer be merry,  
Since *B* — has thus tax'd your Beer, Cyder and Perry;  
Look sullen and sad, for now this is done,  
No doubt in short Time they'll tax *Laughing* and *Fun*.

*Derry down, &c.*

Yet let the Proud Laird, who presides at the Helm,  
Extend his Excise to each Thing in the Realm:  
A Tax on *Spring-Water* I think would be right,  
For *Water*, 'tis known, is as common as *Light*.

*Derry down, &c.*

*Meat, Butter, and Cheese*, “By my Saul that will do!  
’Twill affect all the *Land*, and bring *Money* in too;”  
Proceed, my good Laird, and may the *H-lt-r* or *A – e*,  
Reward you for saying each *infamous T – x*.

*Derry down, &c.*

“Mr. Wollocombe was not a little pleased with it, and talked of it in all conversations; it created amusement at first, but when time produced an hogshead of it, from raillery it came to seriousness, and every one from laughter fell to admiration. In the meantime he had thought of a name for his British wine, and as it appeared to be in the original tree a fruit not grafted, it retained the name of a Wilding, and as he thought it superior to all other apples, he gave it the title of the Royal Wilding.

“This was about sixteen years since (i.e. about 1710). The gentlemen of our county are now busy almost everywhere in promoting it, and some of the wiser farmers. But we have not yet enough for sale. I have known five guineas refused for one of our hogsheads of it, though the common cyder sells for twenty shillings, and the South Ham for twenty-five to thirty.

“I must add, that Mr. Wollocombe hath reserved some of them for hoard; I have tasted the tarts of them, and they come nearer to the quince than any other tart I ever eat of.

“Wherever it has been tried as yet, the juices are perfectly good (but better in some soils than others), and when the gentlemen of the South-Hams will condescend to give it a place in their orchards, they will undoubtedly exceed us in this liquor, because we must yield to them in the apple soil. But it is happy for us, that at present they are so wrapt up in their own sufficiency, that they do not entertain any thoughts of raising apples from us; and when they shall, it must be another twenty years before they can do anything to the purpose, though some of their thinking gentlemen, I am told, begin to get some of them transported thither, (by night you may suppose, partly for shame and partly for fear of being mobbed by their neighbours) and will, I am well assured, much rejoice in the production.

“The colour of the Royal Wilding cyder, without any assistance from art, is of a bright yellow, rather than a reddish beerish tincture; its other qualities are a noble body, an excellent bitter, a delicate (excuse the expression) roughness, and a fine vinous flavour. All the other qualities you may meet with in some of the best South-Ham cyder, but the last is peculiar to the White-Sour and the Royal Wilding only, and you will in vain look for it in any other.”

Mr. Stafford goes on to speak of his second favourite, the White Sour of the South Hams.

“The qualities of the juices are precisely the same with those of the Royal Wilding, nay, so very near one to the other, that they are perfectly rivals, and created such a contest, as is very uncommon, and to which I was an eye-witness. A gentleman of the South-Hams, whose White-Sour cyders, for the year, were very celebrated, (for our cyder vintages, like those of clarets and ports, are very different in different years) and had been drank of by another gentleman, who was a happy possessor, an uncontested lord, *facile princeps*, of the Royal Wilding, met at the house of the latter gentleman a year or two after: the famed Royal Wilding, you may be sure, was produced, as the best return for the White-Sour that had been tasted at the other gentleman’s; and what was the effect? Each gentleman did not contend, as is usual, that his was the best cyder; but such was the equilibrium of the juices, and such the generosity of their breasts (for finer gentlemen we have not in our country) that each affirmed his own was the worst; the gentleman of the South-Hams declared in favour of the Royal Wilding, and the gentleman of our parts in favour of the White-Sour.”

As to the sweet cyder, Mr. Stafford despises it. “It may be acceptable to a female, or a Londoner, it is ever offensive to a bold and generous West Saxon,” says he.

Mr. Stafford flattered himself one year that he had beaten the Royal Wilding. He had planted pips, and after many years brewed a pipe of the apples of his wildings in 1724. Mr. Wollocombe was invited to taste it. “The surprise (and even almost silence) with which he was seized at first tasting it was plainly perceived by everyone present, and occasioned no small diversion.” But, alas! after it was bottled this “Super-Celestial,” as it had been named, as the year advanced, appeared thin compared with the cyder of the Royal Wilding, and Hugh Stafford was constrained after a first flush of triumph to allow that the Royal Wilding maintained pre-eminence.

According to our author, the addition of a little sage or clary to thin cyder gives it a taste as of a good Rhenish wine; and he advises the crushing to powder of angelica roots to add to cyder, as is done in Oporto by those who prepare port for the English market. It gives a flavour and a bouquet truly delicious.

At the English Revolution, when William of Orange came to the throne, the introduction of French wines into the country was prohibited, and this gave a great impetus to the manufacture of cyder, and care in the production of cyder of the best description. But the imposition of a duty of ten shillings a hogshead on cyder that was not repealed, as already said, till 1830, killed the industry. Farmers no longer cared to keep up their orchards, and grew apples only for home consumption. They gave the cyder to their labourers, and as these were not particular as to the quality, no pains were taken to produce such as would suit men’s refined palates. The workman liked a rough beverage, one that almost cut his throat as it passed down; and this produced the evil effect that the farmers, who were bound by their leases to keep up their orchards, planted only the coarsest sort of apples, and the higher quality of fruit was allowed to die out. The orchards fell into, and in most cases remain still in a deplorable condition of neglect. Hear what is the report of the Special Commissioner of the *Gardeners’ Magazine*, as to the state of the orchards in Devon. “They will not, as a rule, bear critical examination. As a matter of fact Devonshire, compared with other counties, has made little or no progress of late years, and there are hundreds of orchards in that county that are little short of a disgrace to those who own or rent them. The majority of the orchards are rented by farmers, who too often are the worst of gardeners and the poorest of fruit growers, and they cannot be induced to improve on their methods.” The writer goes on to say, that so long as the farmers have enough trees standing or blown over, to bear fruit that suffices for their home consumption, they are content, and with complete indifference, they suffer the cattle to roam about the orchards, bite off the bark, and rend the branches and tender shoots from the trees.

“If you tackle the farmers on the subject, and in particular strongly advise them to see what can be done towards improving their old orchards and forming new ones, they will become uncivil at once.”

It is sad to have to state that the famous “Royal Wilding” is no longer known, not even at Pynes, where it was extensively planted by Hugh Stafford.

Messrs. Veitch, the well-known nurserymen at Exeter and growers of the finest sorts of apples, inform me that they have not heard of it for many years. Mr. H. Whiteway, who produces some of the best cyder in North Devon, writes to me: “With regard to the *Royal Wilding* mentioned in Mr. Hugh Stafford’s book, I have made diligent inquiry in and about the neighbourhood in which it was grown at the time stated, but up to now have been unable to find any trace of it, and this also applies to the *White-Sour*. I am, however, not without hope of discovering some day a solitary remnant of the variety.”

This loss is due to the utter neglect of the orchards in consequence of the passing and maintenance of Lord Bute’s mischievous Bill. This Bill was the more deplorable in its results because in and about 1750 cyder had replaced the lighter clarets in the affections of all classes, and was esteemed as good a drink as the finest Rhenish, and much more wholesome. Rudolphus Austen, who introduced it at the tables of the dons of Oxford, undertook to “raise cyder that shall compare and excel the wine of many provinces nearer the sun, where they abound with fruitful vineyards.” And he further asserted: “A seasonable and moderate use of good cyder is the surest remedy and preservative against the diseases which do frequently afflict the sedentary life of them that are seriously studious.” He died in 1666.

Considerable difference of opinion exists as to the advantage or disadvantage of cyder for those liable to rheumatism. But this difference of opinion is due largely, if not wholly, to the kinds of cyder drunk. The sweet cyder is unquestionably bad in such cases, but that in which there is not so much sugar is a corrective to the uric acid that causes rheumatism. In Noake’s *Worcestershire Relics* appears the following extract from the journal of a seventeenth-century parson. “This parish (Dilwyn), wherein syder [*sic*] is plentiful, hath and doth afford many people that have and do enjoy the blessing of long life, neither are the aged here bed-ridden or decrepit as elsewhere, but for the most part lively and vigorous. Next to God, wee ascribe it to our flourishing orchards, which are not only the ornament but the pride of our country, yielding us rich and winy liquors.” At Whimple, in Devon, the rectors, like their contemporary, the Rev. Robert Wollocombe, the discoverer of the Royal Wilding a century or so later than the Dilwyn parson, were both cyder makers and cyder drinkers. The tenure of office of two of them covered a period of over a century, and the last of these worthy divines lived to tell the story of how the Exeter coach set down the bent and crippled dean at his door, who, after three weeks ‘cyder cure’ at the hospitable rectory, had thrown his crutches to the dogs and turned his face homewards “upright as a bolt.”<sup>1</sup>

The apple is in request now for three purposes quite distinct: the dessert apple, to rival those introduced from America; that largely employed for the manufacture of jams – the basis, apple, flavoured to turn it into raspberry, apricot, etc.; and last, but not least, the cyder-producing apple which is unsuited for either of the former requirements.

In my *Book of the West* I have given a lengthy ballad of instruction on the growth of apple trees, and the gathering of apples and the making of cyder, which I heard sung by an old man at Washfield, near Tiverton. The following song was sung to me by an aged tanner of Launceston, some twenty years ago, which he professed to have composed himself: —

In a nice little village not far from the sea,  
Still lives my old uncle aged eighty and three;  
Of orchards and meadows he owns a good lot,  
Such cyder as his – not another has got.

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<sup>1</sup> Whiteway’s *Wine of the West Country*.

Then fill up the jug, boys, and let it go round,  
Of drinks not the equal in England is found.  
So pass round the jug, boys, and pull at it free,  
There's nothing like cyder, sparkling cyder, for me.

My uncle is lusty, is nimble and spry,  
As ribstones his cheeks, clear as crystal his eye,  
His head snowy white as the flowering may,  
And he drinks only cyder by night and by day.

Then fill up the jug, etc.

O'er the wall of the churchyard the apple trees lean  
And ripen their burdens, red, golden, and green.  
In autumn the apples among the graves lie;  
"There I'll sleep well," says uncle, "when fated to die."

Then fill up the jug, etc.

"My heart as an apple, sound, juicy, has been,  
My limbs and my trunk have been sturdy and clean;  
Uncankered I've thriven, in heart and in head,  
So under the apple trees lay me when dead."

Then fill up the jug, etc.

## THE ALPHINGTON PONIES

During the forties of last century, every visitor to Torquay noticed two young ladies of very singular appearance. Their residence was in one of the two thatched cottages on the left of Tor Abbey Avenue, looking seaward, very near the Torgate of the avenue. Their chief places of promenade were the Strand and Victoria Parade, but they were often seen in other parts of the town. Bad weather was the only thing that kept them from frequenting their usual beat. They were two Misses Durnford, and their costume was peculiar. The style varied only in tone and colour. Their shoes were generally green, but sometimes red. They were by no means bad-looking girls when young, but they were so berouged as to present the appearance of painted dolls. Their brown hair worn in curls was fastened with blue ribbon, and they wore felt or straw hats, usually tall in the crown and curled up at the sides. About their throats they had very broad frilled or lace collars that fell down over their backs and breasts a long way. But in summer their necks were bare, and adorned with chains of coral or bead. Their gowns were short, so short indeed as to display about the ankles a good deal more than was necessary of certain heavily-frilled cotton investitures of their lower limbs. In winter over their gowns were worn check jackets of a "loud" pattern reaching to their knees, and of a different colour from their gowns, and with lace cuffs. They were never seen, winter or summer, without their sunshades. The only variation to the jacket was a gay-coloured shawl crossed over the bosom and tied behind at the waist.

The sisters dressed exactly alike, and were so much alike in face as to appear to be twins. They were remarkably good walkers, kept perfectly in step, were always arm in arm, and spoke to no one but each other.

They lived with their mother, and kept no servant. All the work of the house was done by the three, so that in the morning they made no appearance in the town; only in the afternoon had they assumed their war-paint, when, about 3 p.m., they sallied forth; but, however highly they rouged and powdered, and however strange was their dress, they carried back home no captured hearts. Indeed, the visitors to Torquay looked upon them with some contempt as not being in society and not dressing in the fashion; only some of the residents felt for them in their solitude some compassion. They were the daughters of a Colonel Durnford, and had lived at Alphington. The mother was of an inferior social rank. They had a brother, a major in the Army, 10th Regiment, who was much annoyed at their singularity of costume, and offered to increase their allowance if they would discontinue it; but this they refused to do.

When first they came to Torquay, they drove a pair of pretty ponies they had brought with them from Alphington; but their allowance being reduced, and being in straitened circumstances, they had to dispose of ponies and carriage. By an easy transfer the name of Alphington Ponies passed on from the beasts to their former owners.

As they were not well off, they occasionally got into debt, and were summoned before the Court of Requests; and could be impertinent even to the judge. On one occasion, when he had made an order for payment, one of them said, "Oh, Mr. Praed, we cannot pay now; but my sister is about to be married to the Duke of Wellington, and then we shall be in funds and be able to pay for all we have had and are likely to want!" Once the two visited a shop and gave an order, but, instead of paying, flourished what appeared to be the half of a £5 note, saying, that when they had received the other half, they would be pleased to call and discharge the debt. But the tradesman was not to be taken in, and declined to execute the order. Indeed, the Torquay shopkeepers were very shy of them, and insisted on the money being handed over the counter before they would serve the ladies with the goods that they required.

They made no acquaintances in Torquay or in the neighbourhood, nor did any friends come from a distance to stay with them. They would now and then take a book out of the circulating

library, but seemed to have no literary tastes, and no special pursuits. There was a look of intelligence, however, in their eyes, and the expression of their faces was decidedly amiable and pleasing.

They received very few letters; those that did arrive probably contained remittances of money, and were eagerly taken in at the door, but there was sometimes a difficulty about finding the money to pay for the postage. It is to be feared that the butcher was obdurate, and that often they had to go without meat. Fish, however, was cheap.

A gentleman writes: “Mr. Garrow’s house, The Braddons, was on my father’s hands to let. One day the gardener, Tosse, came in hot haste to father and complained that the Alphington Ponies kept coming into the grounds and picking the flowers, that when remonstrated with they declared that they were related to the owner, and had permission. ‘Well,’ said father, ‘the next time you see them entering the gate run down and tell me.’ In a few days Tosse hastened to say that the ladies were again there. Father hurried up to the grounds, where he found them flower-picking. Without the least ceremony he insisted on their leaving the grounds at once. They began the same story to him of their relationship to the owner, adding thereto, that they were cousins of the Duke of Wellington. ‘Come,’ said father, ‘I can believe *one* person can go mad to any extent in any direction whatever, but the improbability of *two* persons going mad in identically the same direction and manner at the same time is a little too much for my credulity. Ladies, I beg you to proceed.’ And proceed they did.”

After some years they moved to Exeter, and took lodgings in St. Sidwell’s parish. For a while they continued to dress in the same strange fashion; but they came into some money, and then were able to indulge in trinkets, to which they had always a liking, but which previously they could not afford to purchase. At a large fancy ball, given in Exeter, two young Oxonians dressed up to represent these ladies; they entered the ballroom solemnly, arm in arm, with their parasols spread, paced round the room, and finished their perambulation with a waltz together. This caused much amusement; but several ladies felt that it was not in good taste, and might wound the poor crazy Misses Durnford. This, however, was not the case. So far from being offended at being caricatured, they were vastly pleased, accepting this as the highest flattery. Were not princesses and queens also represented at the ball? Why, then, not they?

One public ball they did attend together, at which, amongst others, were Lady Rolle and Mr. Palk, son of the then Sir Lawrence Palk. Owing to their conspicuous attire, they drew on them the attention of Lady Rolle, who challenged Mr. Palk to ask one of the sisters for a dance, and offered him a set of gold and diamond shirt studs if he could prevail on either of them to be his partner. Mr. Palk accepted the challenge, but on asking for a dance was met in each case by the reply, “I never dance except my sister be also dancing.” Mr. Palk then gallantly offered to dance with both sisters at once, or in succession. He won and wore the studs.

A gentleman writes: “In their early days they made themselves conspicuous by introducing the bloomer arrangement in the nether latitude.<sup>2</sup> This, as you may well suppose, was regarded as a scandal; but these ladies, who were never known to speak to any one, or to each other out of doors, went on their way quite unruffled. Years and years after this, you may imagine my surprise at meeting them in Exeter, old and grey, but the same singular silent pair. Then, after an interval of a year or two, only one appeared. I assure you, it gave me pain to look at that poor lonely, very lonely soul; but it was not for long. Kind Heaven took her also, and so a tiny ripple was made, and there was an end of the Alphington Ponies.”

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<sup>2</sup> They are not so represented in the three lithographs that were published at Torquay. But two others beside this correspondent mention their appearance in “bloomers.”

## MARIA FOOTE

If there was ever a creature who merited the sympathy of the world, it is Maria Foote. If there was ever a wife who deserved its commiseration, it is her mother.” With these words begins a notice of the actress in *The Examiner* for 1825.

About the year 1796 an actor appeared in Plymouth under the name of Freeman, but whose real name was Foote, and who claimed relationship with Samuel Foote, the dramatist and performer. He was of a respectable family, and his brother was a clergyman at Salisbury. Whilst on a visit to his brother, he met the sister of his brother’s wife, both daughters of a Mr. Charles Hart; she was then a girl of seventeen, in a boarding-school, and to the disgrace of all parties concerned therein, this simple boarding-school maid was induced to marry a man twenty-five years older than herself, and to give great offence to her parents, who withdrew all interest in her they had hitherto shown. Foote returned to Plymouth with his wife, a sweet innocent girl. He was at the time proprietor and manager of the Plymouth Theatre; and as, in country towns, actors and actresses were looked down upon by society, no respectable family paid Mrs. Foote the least attention, and although the whole town was interested in her appearance, it regarded her simply with pity.

Deserted by the reputable of one sex, she threw herself into the society of the other; and in Plymouth, her good humour, fascinating manner, long silken hair, and white hat and feather made havoc among the young bloods. The husband was too apathetic to care who hovered about his wife, with whom she flirted; and she, without being vicious, finding herself slighted causelessly, became indifferent to the world’s opinion. Her elderly husband, seeing that she was not visited, began himself to neglect her.

The produce of this ill-assorted union was Maria Foote, ushered into the world without a friend on the maternal, and very few on the paternal side, who took any interest in her welfare, and she was brought up amid scenes little calculated to give her self-respect, sense of propriety, or any idea of domestic love and happiness.

From the disappointment and weariness of mind that weighed on the slighted wife, Mrs. Foote sought relief in attending the theatre nightly and acting on the stage. Daily and hourly seeing, hearing, and talking of little else but the stage, as might be expected, a wish to become an actress took possession of the child’s mind at an early age.

When Maria was twelve years of age, her mother was so far lost to all delicacy of feeling, and her father so insensible to the duties of a father, that he suffered his only daughter to act Juliet to the Romeo of his wife.

Plymouth was disgusted, thoroughly disgusted, and whatever claims Mr. Foote had before to the notice of some private friends, they now considered these as forfeited for ever. From this moment a sort of reckless indifference seemed to possess the whole family. Nothing came amiss, so that money could be obtained; and Foote, who had been brought up as a gentleman, and his wife as a lady, took a small inn in Exeter, in 1811, lost his wife’s fortune, became the dupe of rogues, and was ruined.

The fame of Maria Foote’s beauty and charm of manner had reached London, and in May, 1814, she made her first appearance at Covent Garden Theatre, and personated Amanthis in “The Child of Nature” with such grace and effect that the manager complimented her with an immediate engagement. Young, beautiful, intelligent, and with natural refinement, she was almost the creature she represented. A liberal salary was assigned to her, and the managers always considered the announcement of her name as certain of obtaining for them a crowded house. That she had no pretensions to a rank higher than that of a second-rate actress must, perhaps, be allowed. “I was never a great actress,” she used to say in later life, “though people thought me fascinating, and that I suppose I was.”

She was always dressed tastefully, looked charming, and was a universal favourite among the lobby loungers. A writer in *The Drama* for 1825 says: “To those who know nothing of a theatre, it may be new to tell them that an interesting girl is in the jaws of ruin, who enters it as an actress, unless watched and protected by her family and friends. Constantly exposed to the gaze of men – inflaming a hundred heads, and agitating a thousand hearts, if she be as Maria was, fascinating and amiable – surrounded by old wretches as dressers, who are the constant conveyers of letters, sonnets and flattery – dazzled by the thunders of public applause, and softened by the incense of a thousand sighs, breathed audibly from the front of the pit or the stage boxes – associating in the green-room with licensed married strumpets, because she must not be affected! Or supping on the stage, after the curtain is dropped, with titled infamy or grey-headed lechery! – Let the reader fancy an innocent girl, from a country town, plunged at once into the furnace of depravity – let him fancy her father sanctioning her by his indifference or helping her by his example, and then let him say, if she be ultimately seduced and abandoned, whether it ought not to be a wonder she was innocent so long.”

In spite of an education that never cherished the best feelings of a child, Maria had a far sounder understanding than her parents, and an instinctive modesty that withstood the evil with which she was surrounded.

In the summer of 1815, Maria Foote was engaged as a star to perform at Cheltenham, and there attracted the attention of Fitzharding Berkeley, better known as Colonel Berkeley. This gentleman was the son of Frederick Augustus, fifth Earl of Berkeley, by Mary Cole, the beautiful daughter of a butcher at Gloucester, to whom he was married in 1796. The Colonel was born in 1786. The Earl, indeed, affirmed that a private marriage had taken place in 1785; the House of Lords disallowed the proofs, in consequence of which one of the Colonel's younger brothers, born after 1796, became entitled to the earldom; he, however, always refused to assume the title. Colonel Berkeley was an enthusiastic amateur of the stage, and he offered his services to perform at the benefit of Miss Foote, and she accepted his offer. The house was full to the ceiling, and Maria, of course, felt grateful for the aid thus lent her. After thus ingratiating himself, he seized the opportunity to plead the passion with which she had inspired him. The old Earl, his father, had died in 1810, and the Colonel was endeavouring to establish his claim to the earldom. He pleaded with her, that till his claim was allowed he could not well marry her, as such a marriage, he asserted, would prejudice his suit to recover the forfeited earldom of Berkeley, but he solemnly vowed his intention to make her his wife the moment that he could do so without injuring his cause. By this means he deluded the unfortunate girl into a connexion with him that lasted for five years, and during all that time he made her no allowance beyond the payment of those expenses which he himself had led her to incur, and the presents he made to her did not in all that time amount to £100. In 1821, Maria bore the Colonel a child, and had again expectations of becoming a mother in 1824, and in the June of that year all connexion ceased between them.

In the spring of 1823, Mr. Joseph Hayne, a young man of fortune, commonly known, from the colour of his coat, as “Pea-green” Hayne, saw Maria Foote at Covent Garden Theatre, was struck with her beauty, called at her house in Keppel Street, and invited Mr. Foote to spend some days with him at Kitson Hall in Staffordshire, one of his seats. The invitation was accepted, and there Hayne informed the father that he desired to pay his addresses to his charming daughter. Mr. Foote hurried back to town, and as Maria was expecting her confinement, sent off his wife with her into the country under the feigned name of Forbes, to remain in concealment till after that event.

In the following January, Hayne again called at Keppel Street, and announced to Mrs. Foote that he seriously desired to be united in marriage to her daughter. Mrs. Foote informed him that Maria was engaged to be married to Colonel Berkeley, and that her daughter could not listen to his suit unless the Colonel failed to fulfil his promise. Hayne then said that he was about to go into the country, and asked permission to escort Mrs. and Miss Foote to the opera, and to tender to them his private box. To this the lady consented. As it happened, Colonel Berkeley with a Mr. Manse

happened to be in the pit that evening, and the Colonel at once dispatched his friend to the box to request Hayne to speak with him in the pit. When the young buck came to him, Berkeley asked him for an explanation of his conduct with respect to Miss Foote, and desired a meeting on the following day. When they met the Colonel disclosed to Hayne everything relative to his connexion with Maria Foote, and told him that he was the father by her of two children. On hearing this Mr. Hayne at once wrote to the lady to withdraw his proposal of marriage. She, in reply, requested an interview with him in order to explain the circumstances. This took place at Marlborough in the presence of Mrs. Foote. The young man (he was aged only twenty-two) was moved by her sad story, and on his return to town found that his flame had not been quenched by the revelation. So he penned a letter to Maria, stating that his feelings remained unaltered, and begging her to marry him. After some negotiation she agreed to this, and at Hayne's advice the children were sent to Colonel Berkeley, who had asked for them. Hayne proposed to settle £40,000 on Miss Foote, for himself and her to receive the dividends during their joint lives, and after the death of the survivor of them, to be distributed equally among the children of the marriage, if any; and if, at the death of Mr. Hayne, his wife should survive him, but have no children, then £20,000 was to become the absolute property of the widow. The day for the wedding was fixed to take place on the ensuing 4th September, and "May God strike me dead," asseverated the young man, "if ever I consent to separate myself from you, dearest Maria."

A few days later, Mr. Bebb, "Pea-green" Hayne's solicitor, called in Keppel Street, at Mr. Foote's house, and left a verbal message to the effect "that Mr. Hayne would never see Miss Foote again." Great consternation was produced in the family, and the young actress at once wrote to her new lover to entreat an interview and an explanation. The bearer of the letter encountered Hayne in Bond Street, and he returned with the servant in a coach to Keppel Street. Hayne informed Maria that it was not his fault that he had acted in so strange a manner towards her; that it had been his firm intention to fulfil his engagement, but that, on his return home on Sunday, some persons had first plied him with liquor, so as to make him in such a beastly state of intoxication that he knew not what he did; that they afterwards locked him up in a little back room, from which he had only that moment made his escape, which his exhausted appearance would prove, and that when he met the servant with the letter he was on his way to see his dearest Maria. The explanation was received, a reconciliation was effected, and as "Pea-green" was so evidently a weak young man, liable to be swayed this way or that according to whom he was with, it was resolved that a special licence should at once be procured, and that the marriage should take place on the following morning at nine o'clock.

The night passed anxiously enough on the part of Miss Foote, who realized that there was many a slip between the cup and the lip. At length the morning arrived, everything was prepared, the bride's maid was in attendance, as were also Mr. Gill, the lawyer with the marriage settlement, and Mr. Robins, the trustee; but the bridegroom did not turn up, or send any notice that he was kept away. The parties waited till three o'clock, and then a note was dispatched to him at Long's Hotel, where he was staying. The servant who took it was ushered into a private room, and was there detained, under one pretext or another, for a considerable time, and was finally informed that Joseph Hayne, Esq., had gone into the country, to his seat at Burdeson Park, Wiltshire. For six days did the young lady wait in anxious expectation of receiving some communication from the defaulting bridegroom. At length, on the sixth day, she wrote to him a distressed and piteous appeal. To this she received an answer: "My dearest Maria, you are perfectly correct when you say that my heart and thoughts are still with you." Hayne then stated that the world was censorious, that he was divided between love for her and esteem for his friends and dread of their disapproval. The letter then went on to state, "I am resolved to sacrifice friends to affection; I cannot, will not lose you."

After a short interval, Hayne returned to London and called on Miss Foote, at her father's residence, and they became perfectly reconciled, and the 28th September was finally fixed for the day of their marriage. This fell on the Tuesday, and Monday was appointed for the execution of the marriage settlement. On Saturday, Hayne, accompanied by Mr. Foote, went to Doctors' Commons,

and there procured the marriage licence, which Hayne himself delivered into the hands of his intended bride, and solicited leave to wait on her the following morning. But instead of calling himself, a gentleman named Manning appeared at the house of the Footes, and brought a letter from Mr. Hayne to the father of Maria, which stated that poor Joseph was so wretched as to be unable himself to call, but that the bearer would explain everything, and finally concluded by breaking off the match.

After this, Miss Foote received another letter from Hayne: “My dearest Maria, – We know each other well; but with all my faults, you have a regard for my honour, – my attachment to you is unabated. I entreat you to grant me an interview in any other place than Keppel Street.”

To this letter the fair Maria replied: “Is this the way of proving your love and regard for me? To my honour and your shame be it spoken, that I am now suffering under a painful illness, brought on entirely by your conduct; but that you are actuated by the advice of bad counsels, I have no doubt. I will, however, once more consent to see you, but it must be in the presence of my family: if I am well enough, on Saturday, at one o’clock, it will be convenient to me to grant you an interview.” In reply “Pea-green” wrote: “Farewell for ever. – Hayne.”

For his breach of promise, Miss Foote brought an action for damages. The Attorney-General was retained on behalf of the plaintiff; and Mr. Scarlett on behalf of the defendant. The case was heard on 21 December, 1824.

It then transpired that Mr. Foote, the father, had been given by Mr. Hayne, to secure his goodwill, the sum of £1150; that Miss Foote had received presents from the defendant to the value of £1000. It was shown that gross deception had been practised on Hayne, at the time of Maria’s expected confinement, to conceal from him her condition, and it had been represented to him that she had been taken into the country as suffering from a pulmonary complaint.

However, after he had learned all the circumstances, and knew that she had been “under the protection” of Colonel Berkeley and had borne him two children, he renewed his offer of marriage. Miss Foote demanded £20,000 damages. The jury, after a brief consultation, agreed to accord her £3000; a large slice of which sum, if not the largest portion of it, was eaten up by the lawyers employed in the case by her.

None came out well in the matter. As the Attorney-General remarked: “He could not trust himself in using language he thought sufficient to express his detestation of Colonel Berkeley’s conduct.” Joseph Hayne appeared as a public fop who did not know his own mind from one day to another.

Mrs. Foote was revealed to be a scheming unprincipled woman, but Mr. Foote came out worst of all. As *The Examiner* said of him: “There is scarcely a family living, or a family dead, that he has not treated with the dirtiest selfishness, whatever were his obligations – spunging till he was insulted, lying till he was discovered, puffing till he was the butt of the town. The people of Plymouth can relate a thousand instances of this description.”

Maria Foote came out best of all. She, brought up by such detestably mean parents, without protection, exposed to temptation at every turn, was more to be pitied than blamed. This the town felt, and when, on 5 February, 1825, her benefit was given at Covent Garden Theatre, the house was packed. *The Drama, or Theatrical Magazine*, says: “The fullest house of this season, indeed of any season within our experience, assembled this evening. The performance was not the attraction; the overruling anxiety was to be present at the reappearance of Miss Foote. A more intense interest could not have been displayed; it was without parallel in the records of theatrical history. For many weeks past every seat in the boxes – in the dress circle – of the first circle – in the slips – all were engaged, and would have been engaged had the theatre been double its dimensions. Even part of the orchestra was appropriated to the accommodation of visitors with guinea tickets; and an additional *douceur* was in the course of the evening given even for tolerable sight-room. Not the fraction of a seat was to be had; and before the rising of the curtain the whole interior of the theatre was crowded almost to suffocation. During the first scenes of the performance (*The Belle’s Stratagem*) little else

was heard than the din and bustle consequent on the adjustment and regulation of places. At length, at an advanced period of the first act, Miss Foote appeared. The utmost stillness prevailed in the house immediately previous to her expected entrée; she at length appeared, and was received with a burst of loud, continued, and enthusiastic acclamation, such as we never remember to have heard or known to have been equalled at any theatre. All the persons in the pit and, with scarcely an exception, in the boxes and other parts of the house, stood up and welcomed her return to the stage with the most marked and emphatic kindness. The waving of hats, handkerchiefs, was resorted to. There was something, too, in the manner of her appearance, which contributed greatly to enhance, while it seemed to entreat, the indulgent consideration with which the audience were inclined to receive her. She advanced with downcast look and faltering step to the front of the stage, and became affected even to tears. There was a diffidence, a timidity, and a truly distressing embarrassment in her mode of coming forward, which, together with her beauty and the recollection of her sufferings, was calculated to compel pity. It was a scene which did equal honour to the audience, who duly appreciated the distress of her situation, and to the object of their sympathy, who gave such a pathetic attestation of her consciousness of it. Many ladies – and there were many present – could not refrain from tears. Those parts, and there were several throughout the play, capable of being applied to Miss Foote's peculiar situation, were seized on by the audience, and followed by loud plaudits. At the delivery of the lines

What is your fortune, my pretty maid?  
My face is my fortune, sir, she said,

a burst of acclamation was sent forth, almost equal to that which greeted her entrance. The two lines which succeeded were, if possible, still more applicable to recent events, which have occupied so much of the attention of the Bar and of the public.

Then I'll not marry you, my pretty maid.  
There's nobody asking you, sir, she said.

The good-humoured approval that followed these lines, which was in no degree abated by the arch air with which Miss Foote gave them, cannot be conveyed by verbal description. At the expression of the sentence, 'This moment is worth a whole existence,' Miss Foote bowed to the audience in grateful acknowledgment of the reception she had met with. Altogether Miss Foote's reappearance has been most gratifying. She has been hailed as a favourite of the public, who has been basely lured from virtue, but who is not on that account treated as an alien from its path."

The total receipts that evening amounted to £900. 16s. At the latter end of 1830, Madame Vestris took the Olympic Theatre, and opened it, on 3 January of the following year, with a drama on the subject of Mary Queen of Scots, in which Miss Foote, who appears for a time to have been in partnership with her, played the heroine. But she soon after quitted the stage, and on 7 April, 1831, was married to the eccentric Charles Stanhope, eighth Earl of Harrington and Viscount Petersham. He was aged fifty-one and she aged thirty-three. They had one daughter; he died in 1851, and she, as Dowager Countess of Harrington, lived until 27 December, 1867.

Mrs. Bancroft, in *On and Off the Stage* (London, 1888), gives us a pleasant recollection of Maria Foote in her old age as Dowager Countess of Harrington.

"My father had known her slightly when she was in her zenith, and would often speak of her as one of the loveliest and most amiable of women. He would often recall not only the charm she possessed as an accomplished actress, but her good-nature to everybody, high and low, in the theatre... My mother had never met Lady Harrington, but she soon grew much attached to one who became a true friend to me, and as time went on seemed more and more endeared to me. She must

have been very beautiful when young, being still extremely handsome as an old lady. She was as good, too, as she was handsome; and I can never forget her kindness to me. When I was once seriously ill with an attack of bronchitis, Lady Harrington was unwearied in her attention to me, and would, day after day, sit by my bedside reading to me, and would bring with her all the delicacies she could think of. When I had sufficiently recovered my strength, she sent me to the seaside to recruit my health. To record all the kindnesses she bestowed on me and mine would fill up many pages, but my gratitude is indelibly written on my heart. She gave me a portrait of herself, as Maria Darlington in *A Roland for an Oliver*, and by it one can see how lovely she must have been. Among her other gifts was a beautiful old-fashioned diamond and ruby ring, which she told me was given to her by the Earl when he was engaged to be married to her... Lady Harrington was much attached to (her old butler) Payne, and also to her maid, who, I believe, had been in her service since she was quite young, and often spoke of them as Romeo and Juliet. I recall many a happy visit to Richmond Terrace, and until her last illness I had no better friend than Lady Harrington.

“On the afternoon of Friday, 27 December, 1867, my mind was unaccountably full of thoughts about her. I had been making some purchases in Regent Street, and on my way home in a cab was wondering, as I was driven through the crowd of vehicles, if I should ever see her in her well-known carriage again, with its snuff-coloured ‘Petersham brown’ body, the long brown coats, the silver hat cords of the coachman and footman, the half-crescents of white leather which formed part of the harness across the foreheads of the horses.

“On the following day I received the sorrowful news that Lady Harrington was dead at the time I had thought so much of her, and that I had lost a friendship for which Time can never lessen my gratitude.”

## CARABOO

On Thursday evening, 3 April, 1817, the overseer of the parish of Almondsbury, in Gloucestershire, called at Knole Park, the residence of Samuel Worall, Esq., to inform him that a young female had entered a cottage in the village, and had made signs to express her desire to sleep there; but not understanding her language, the good folk of the cottage communicated with the overseer, and he, as perplexed as the cottagers, went for counsel to the magistrate. Mr. Worall ordered that she should be brought to Knole, and presently the overseer returned with a slim damsel, dressed poorly but quaintly, with a sort of turban about her head, not precisely beautiful, but with very intelligent speaking eyes.

Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Worall could make heads or tails of what she said. He had a Greek valet who knew or could recognize most of the languages spoken in the Levant, but he also was at fault; he could not catch a single word of her speech that was familiar to him. By signs she was questioned as to whether she had any papers, and she produced from her pocket a bad sixpence and a few halfpence. Under her arm she carried a small bundle containing some necessaries, and a piece of soap wound up in a bit of linen. Her dress consisted of a black stuff gown with a muslin frill round her neck, a black cotton shawl twisted about her head, and a red and black shawl thrown over her shoulders, leather shoes, and black worsted stockings.

The general impression produced from her person and manners was favourable. Her head was small, her eyes black, hair also black; the forehead was low, nose short, in complexion a brunette. The cheeks were faintly tinged with red. The mouth was rather wide, teeth pearly white, lips large and full, the underlip slightly projecting. The chin small and round. Her height was 5 ft. 2 in. Her hands were clean and small and well cared for. Obviously they had not been accustomed to labour. She wore no ear-rings, but the marks of having worn them remained. Her age appeared to be twenty-five.

After consultation, it was thought advisable to send her to the village inn; and as Mrs. Worall was interested in her, she sent her own maid and the footman to attend the stranger to the public-house, it being late in the evening, and to request the landlady to give her a private room and a comfortable bed.

The young woman seemed to be greatly fatigued and walked with difficulty. When shown the room in which she was to sleep, she prepared to lie down on the mat upon the floor; whereupon the landlady put her own little girl into the bed, so as to explain its purport to her guest. The stranger then undressed and went to bed.

Next morning Mrs. Worall went to the inn at seven o'clock and found her sitting dejectedly by the fire. The clergyman of the parish had brought some books of travel and illustrated geographies to show her, so that she might give some clue as to whence she came. She manifested pleasure at the pictures of China and the Chinese.

Mrs. Worall now took her to Knole, where by signs, pointing to herself and uttering the word Caraboo, she explained to her hostess that this was her name. At dinner she declined all animal food, and took nothing to drink but water, showing marked disgust at beer, cyder, and meat.

Next day she was conveyed to Bristol and examined before the mayor and magistrates, but nothing was made out concerning her, and she was consigned to St. Peter's Hospital for Vagrants.

There she remained till the ensuing Monday – three days – refusing food of every description. On that day Mrs. Worall went into Bristol and visited her at the hospital. The friendless situation of the foreign lady had in the interim become public, and several gentlemen had called upon her, bringing with them foreigners of their acquaintance, in the hope of discovering who she was. Caraboo expressed lively delight at seeing Mrs. Worall again, and that lady, deeply touched, removed her from the hospital to the office of Mr. Worall, in Bristol, where she remained for ten days under the care of the housekeeper.

Daily efforts were made to discover her language and country, but without effect. At last a Portuguese of the name of Manuel Eynesso, who happened to be in Bristol, had an interview, and he professed that he was able to interpret what she said. The tale he revealed was that she was a person of consequence in her own country, and had been decoyed from an island in the East Indies, brought to England against her wishes, and then deserted. He further added that her language was not a pure dialect, but was a mixture of several tongues spoken in Sumatra. On this Mrs. Worall removed Caraboo to Knole, and from 3 April to 6 June her hostess, the whole family, and the domestics treated her with the utmost consideration and regard.

Among the visitors at Knole was a gentleman who had made many voyages in the East Indies, and he took a lively interest in the girl, and conversed with her, partly by word of mouth and partly – when at fault for words – by signs.

It must have been an interesting sight, the travelled gentleman interrogating Caraboo and taking notes of her reply, with an admiring circle around of the family and visitors, wondering at his linguistic acquirements and facility of speech in Oriental tongues. This traveller committed to writing the following particulars obtained from Caraboo.

She was daughter of a person of high rank, of Chinese origin, by a *Mandin*, or Malay woman, who was killed in war between the Boogoos (cannibals) and the Mandins (Malays). Whilst walking in her garden at Javasu attended by three *sammen* (women), she was seized by pirates commanded by a man named Chee-ming, bound hand and foot, her mouth covered, and carried off. She herself in her struggles wounded two of Chee-ming's men with her creese; one of these died, the other recovered by the assistance of a *justee* (surgeon). After eleven days she was sold to the captain of a brig called the *Tappa-Boo*. A month later she arrived at a port, presumably Batavia, remained there two days, and then started for England, which was reached in eleven weeks. In consequence of ill-usage by the crew, she made her escape to shore. She had had a dress of silk embroidered and interwoven with gold, but she had been induced to exchange this with a woman in a cottage whose doors were painted green, but the situation of which she could not describe. The garments she now wore were those she had received from the cottager.

After wandering over the country for six weeks, she had arrived at Almondsbury. She spoke of her mother's teeth as artificially blackened (i.e. by chewing betelnut); her face and arms were painted, and she wore a jewel in her nose, and a gold chain from it was attached to her left temple. Her father had three more wives, and he was usually borne upon the shoulders of *macratoos* (common men) in a palanquin.

She described the dress she wore at home. Seven peacock's feathers adorned the right side of her cap or turban. Upon being furnished with calico, she made herself a dress in the style she had been accustomed to. It was short in the skirt, the sleeves wide and long enough to reach to the ground. A broad embroidered band passed round her waist, and the fringe of the skirt, of the sleeves and the bosom, was embroidered. She wore no stockings, and was furnished with sandals of Roman fashion. She sometimes twisted her hair and rolled it up at the top of her head and fastened it with a skewer.

During the ten weeks she resided at Knole and in Bristol, she was never heard to pronounce a word or syllable that at all resembled a European tongue. Mrs. Worall's housekeeper, who slept with her, never heard on any occasion any other language, any tone of voice other than those she had employed when she first entered the house.

She was equally constant in her choice of food, and showed great nicety as to her diet. She dressed everything herself, preferring rice to anything else, did not care for bread, rejected meat, and drank only water or tea. She refused a pigeon, which she called a *rampue*, that had been dressed by the cook; but when given a bird that was alive, she pulled off the head, poured the blood into the earth and covered it up, then cooked the bird herself and ate it. This was the only animal food she could be induced to touch, except fish, which she treated in the same manner.

On every Tuesday she fasted rigidly, on which day she contrived to ascend to the roof of the house, frequently at the imminent peril of her life. Ablutions she was particularly fond of; she regularly knelt by the pond in Knole Park and washed her face and hands in it.

After three weeks' residence at Knole, she was one morning missing. But she returned in the evening with a bundle of clothes, her shoes and hands dirty. Then she fell seriously ill.

On Saturday, 6 June, she again took flight. She had not taken with her a pin or needle or ribbon but what had been given to her. She bent her way to Bath, and on the following Sunday, Mrs. Worall received information of the place to which her protégée had flown. She determined to reclaim her, and started for Bath, which she reached on Sunday afternoon.

Here she found the Princess of Javasu, as she was called, at the pinnacle of her glory, in the drawing-room of a lady of the *haut ton*, one fair lady kneeling at her feet and taking her hand, and another imploring to be allowed the honour of a kiss.

Dr. Wilkinson, of Bath, was completely bewildered when he visited her, and wrote to the *Bath Chronicle* a glowing account of Caraboo, in full belief that she was all she pretended to be. "Nothing has yet transpired to authorize the slightest suspicion of Caraboo, nor has such ever been entertained except by those whose souls feel not the spirit of benevolence, and wish to convert into ridicule that amiable disposition in others."

Dr. Wilkinson resolved on going to London to consult the Foreign Office, and to obtain funds for the present relief of the Princess, and her restoration to her native land.

Mrs. Worall left Bath, taking Caraboo with her. But the wide circulation of the story led to her detection.

On the following Monday, a Mrs. Neale called on a Mr. Mortimer, and urged him to go to Knole and tell Mrs. Worall that she knew the girl very well, for she had lodged in her house in the suburbs of Bristol. At the same time a youth arrived from Westbury, a wheelwright's son, who had met her upon her first expedition to Almondsbury, and remembered seeing her at a public-house by the roadside, where a gentleman, feeling compassion for her weariness, had taken her in and treated her to beefsteak and hot rum and water.

Mrs. Worall was much disconcerted, but wisely said nothing to her guest of what she had heard, and took Caraboo next day in her carriage to Bristol under the plea that she was going to have Mr. Bird, the artist, complete the portrait of the princess on which he was engaged, and desired a final sitting. But instead of driving to Mr. Bird's studio, the princess was conveyed to the house of Mr. Mortimer, where she was shown into a room by herself, whilst Mrs. Worall had an interview with Mrs. Neale elsewhere. This lady was attended by her daughter, and their story both surprised and confounded the kind magistrate's wife. After a protracted discussion, she returned to Caraboo, and told her plainly that she was convinced that she was an impostor. When Caraboo heard that Mrs. Neale had denounced her, she burst into tears and her fortitude gave way. She made a few feeble attempts to keep up the deception, but finally made a full confession.

Her name was Mary Baker. She was born at Witheridge in Devonshire in 1791, and had received no education, being of a wild disposition and impatient of study. At the age of eight she was employed spinning wool during the winter, and in summer she drove her father's horses, weeded the corn, etc. At the age of sixteen her father and mother procured a situation for her at a farmhouse with a Mr. Moon, at Brushford, near Witheridge. She remained there two years as nurse and general help, but left because paid only tenpence a week, and she demanded that her wage should be raised to a shilling, which Mr. Moon refused.

Her father and mother were highly incensed at her leaving, and treated her so ill that she ran away from home and went to Exeter, where she knew no one, but had a written character from her former mistress. She was engaged by a shoemaker named Brooke at the wage of £8 per annum. But she remained in this situation only two months. She spent her wage on fine clothes, especially a white gown, and went home in it. Her father was angry at seeing her dressed in white like a lady,

and peremptorily ordered her to take the gown off. She refused and left, returned to Exeter, and went about begging. She wandered to Taunton and thence to Bristol, begging from house to house. From Bristol she made her way to London, where she fell ill with fever, and was taken into St. Giles's Hospital. There she enlisted the pity and sympathy of a dissenting preacher, who, when she was well enough to leave, recommended her to a Mrs. Matthews, 1 Clapham Road Place, and with her she tarried for three years. Mrs. Matthews was very kind to her, and taught her to read; but she was a strict woman, and of the straitest sect of Calvinists. One day Mary heard that there was to be a Jews' wedding in the synagogue near by, and she asked leave to be allowed to witness it. Her mistress refused, but Mary was resolved not to be debarred the spectacle, so she persuaded a servant in a neighbouring house to write a letter to Mrs. Matthews, as if from a friend of hers, to say that she was hourly expecting her confinement and was short of domestics: would Mrs. Matthews lend her the aid of Mary Baker for a while? Mrs. Matthews could not refuse the favour and sent Mary out of the house, and Mary went to the synagogue and saw what was to be seen there.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Matthews had sent to inquire how her dear friend was getting through with her troubles, and expressed a hope that Mary had been of assistance in the house. To her unbounded surprise, she learned that the good lady was not in particular trouble just then, and that she really did not comprehend what Mrs. Matthews meant about Mary's assistance. When Mary returned to the house, having seen the breaking of the goblet and heard some psalm singing, she found that a storm was lowering. Her mistress had sent for the dissenting minister to give it hot and strong to the naughty girl. To escape this harangue Mary ran away, wandered about the streets, and seeing a Magdalen Reformatory, applied at the door for admission. "What! so young and so depraved!" was the exclamation with which she was received. She was admitted and remained in the institution some time, and was confirmed by the Bishop of London. Then it was discovered that she had all along not been qualified for admission, and was expelled.

She then exchanged her female garments for a boy's suit at a Jew's pawnshop, and started to walk back to Devonshire, begging her way. On Salisbury Plain she fell in with highwaymen, who offered to take her into their company if she could fire a pistol. A pistol was put into her hand, but when she pulled the trigger and it was discharged, she screamed and threw the weapon down. Thereupon the highwaymen turned her off, as a white-livered poltroon unfit for their service. She made her way back to Witheridge to her father, and then went into service at Crediton to a tanner, but left her place at the end of three months, unable further to endure the tedium. Then she passed through a succession of services, never staying in any situation longer than three months, and found her way back to London. There, according to her account, she married a foreign gentleman at a Roman Catholic chapel, where the priest officiated to tie the knot. She accompanied her husband to Brighton and thence to Dover, where he gave her the slip, and she had not seen him or heard from him since. She returned to London, was eventually confined, and placed her child in the Foundling Institution; then took a situation not far off and visited the child once a week till it died. After a while she again appeared at Witheridge, but her reception was so far from cordial that she left it and associated with gipsies, travelling about with them, telling fortunes.

It was now, according to her account, that the idea entered her head of playing the part of a distinguished stranger from the East, and when she quitted the gipsies, she assumed that part – with what success we have seen.

Mrs. Worall sent into Devon to ascertain what amount of truth was in this story. It turned out that her father was named Willcocks, and was a cobbler at Witheridge, and badly off. He confirmed Mary's tale as far as he knew it. She had had an illness when young, and had been odd, restless, and flighty ever since; especially in spring and autumn did she become most impatient and uncontrollable. He denied that he had treated her cruelly, but he had taken the stick to her occasionally, as she was specially aggravating by throwing up every situation obtained for her after staying in it for but a short while.

Finally Mrs. Worall got her embarked on board a vessel, the *Robert and Anne*, at Bristol, Captain Richardson, under her mother's maiden name of Burgess, for the United States, in the hopes that she might be able to find a situation in Philadelphia.

The reason why she was entered in her mother's name was to prevent her from being overwhelmed by the visits and attentions of the curious. As it was, the Earl of Cork and the Marquess of Salisbury obtained interviews, got the girl to tell her story, speak her lingo, and doubtless did not leave without having put gold into her palm.

She was certainly a remarkable character, with astounding self-possession. Once or twice the housekeeper at Knole would rouse her by some startling cry or call when she was asleep, but even then she never passed out of her assumed character.

At Bath, the lady who had received her into her house proposed that a collection should be made to defray her expenses in returning home to Javasú. Bank-notes were thrown on the table, and some fell off on the floor. Caraboo looked on with stolid indifference. If she picked one up she replaced it on the table without glancing at the note to see how much it was worth; in fact, she acted as if she did not understand that bank-notes were other than valueless scraps of paper.

She was, moreover, insensible to flattery. A young gentleman seated himself by her one day and said, "I think that you are the loveliest creature I ever set eyes on!" She remained quite unmoved, not a flutter of colour was in her cheek.

The Greek valet mistrusted her at first, but after a while was completely won over to believe that she was a genuine Oriental princess. She was entirely free from vicious propensities beyond that of feigning to be what she was not. She never purloined anything; never showed any token of wantonness. Vanity and the love of hoaxing people were her prevailing passions; there was nothing worse behind.

So over the blue sea she passed to the West, and what became of her there, whether there she gulled the Americans into believing her to be an English countess or marchioness, is unknown.

Of one thing we may be pretty certain, that the gentleman who had visited the Far East, and who pretended to understand her language and thereby drew out her history, never again dared to show his face at Knole.

The authority for this story is: "A narrative of a Singular Imposition practiced ... by a young woman of the name of Mary Willcocks *alias* Baker, ... *alias* Caraboo, Princess of Javasú." Published by Gutch, of Bristol, in 1817. This contains two portraits, one by E. Bird, R.A., the other a full-length sketch of her in her costume as a princess.

## JOHN ARSCOTT, OF TETCOTT

The family of Arscott, of Dunsland, is one of the most ancient in the county. Its certified pedigree goes back to 1300, when they were Arscotts, of Arscott, in the parish of Holsworthy. The elder branch remained at Dunsland, one of the finest houses in North Devon, or rather cluster of houses, for it consists of the early mansion of the reign, at latest, of Henry VII, probably much earlier, of another portion erected in the reign of James I, and of a stately more modern mansion erected in the seventeenth century. Dunsland came into the possession of the Arscotts through marriage with the heiress of Battyn in 1522. In 1634 the heiress of Arscott married William Bickford, and it remained in the Bickford family till 1790, when the heiress conveyed it to her husband, William Holland Coham. In 1827 the heiress of Coham conveyed Arscott and Dunsland to her husband, Captain Harvey Dickenson, of the Madras Army, whose son now owns the estate and resides at Dunsland.

So far the elder branch. The junior branch of Arscott was settled at Tetcott in 1550, where it continued till 1783, when died John Arscott, of Tetcott, the last of that stock, whereupon the Tetcott estate passed to the Molesworths through the descendant of a great-aunt.

Tetcott House – the older – remains, turned into stables and residence for coachmen and grooms. A stately new mansion was erected in the reign of Queen Anne. But when the property passed to the Molesworths this was pulled down, and all its contents dispersed. The family portraits, the carved oak furniture, the china fell to the contractor who demolished the mansion. But the park remains with its noble oak trees, and of this more anon.

John Arscott, of Tetcott, was born in 1718 or 1719; he lived all his life at the family mansion, and was a mighty hunter before the Lord.

On the presentation of Sir W. Molesworth, Bart., the Rev. Paul W. Molesworth was presented to the living of Tetcott, and he, in 1855, succeeded to the baronetcy.

In the register of Tetcott he made the following entry in Latin, which is here given in translation:

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“Of the Rectors who preceded me I know almost nothing. John Holmes, whose name appears first in the list of Rectors, was inducted by ‘Quare impedit’ – to use the legal term – in face of the Bishop’s objection. Of this I was assured by the Rev. G. C. Gorham, who about the year 1848, as the Bishop of Exeter – H. Phillpotts – refused to institute him to a benefice on account of his unsoundness on Baptism, attempted to get himself instituted compulsorily in the same manner.

“James Sanxay, whose name comes lower down in the list, was a man of no small classical learning, as is proved by his editing a Lexicon of Aristophanes.

“I have heard it said of him, that on the title page of a book he added after his name the letters – O.T.D., and on being asked what these signified, he replied: ‘I have noticed that most Authors, when publishing their writings, have the greatest objection to their bare name, always add something to it, such as – F.R.S., LL.D., M.A. So to keep up the old custom, I myself have added O.T.D., that is – Of Tetcott, Devon.’”

[Between the above and what follows a leaf has been cut out of the register. Perhaps other rectors were told of on this missing leaf.]

“Of the ‘Lords’ who have held the manor of Tetcott in an unbroken line, there are not many surviving memories.

“I have heard a story told by the old parishioners of one known as ‘The wicked Arscott,’ so named because he used to keep poor people and beggars from his doors by big dogs. He still, they say, pays the penalty of his cruelty in an old oak near the Church.

“He was succeeded, though I cannot say whether at once or after an interval, by John Arscott, the last of that name in Tetcott, and the most famous. You will find him described with no small

literary skill on a following page. He was benevolent to poor children, and a generous and attentive host. He kept open house, as they say, thinking more of love than of money. An eager student of the laws of nature, and at the same time a devoted follower of the chase, whether of stag, or fox, or any other such beast, he was at once the enemy and the patron of dumb animals. He used to keep a toad on the doorsteps of his house with such care, that that hateful and loathsome animal, moved by such unusual kindness, used to come out of its hiding place, when its master called it, and take its food on the table before his astonished guests, until it lost its life through the peck of a tame raven. This fact, I believe, has escaped the notice of every writer on British reptiles. May the toad be revered in Tetcott for ever. Not even the rapacious spider was forgotten. For when one had spun its fatal toils in a corner of a pew in the Church, our Knight used to bring a bottle full of flies into the sacred building itself, that he might while away the tediousness of Divine Service by feeding his Church pet. He used to go in an old soiled coat into a wood where the ravens nested, and the birds would come down and settle on his shoulder, looking for the favours of a bountiful hand.

“When he had to go to the neighbouring town of Holsworthy on judicial business, it was his custom to take a bag containing fighting cocks. The present inhabitants would smile at such a proceeding, but a certain simple rudeness is excusable in our forefathers.

“Nor may I be silent about an irreverence which an otherwise upright man used to show in the House of God. He would accost the country people he knew in a friendly manner. If a Clergyman was reading the Bible badly [for it was customary for a Cleric to read the Lessons now and then] when he finished with, ‘Here endeth the second lesson’ – our Knight would call out, ‘Thee’st better never begun it.’ He would throw apples at the Priest in the middle of Divine Service.

“Like Ajax and Peleus and other heroes he was not ashamed to woo a handmaid, and married one of his father’s servants. He died without issue, most widely mourned. His estate went to his kinsman, William Molesworth. The poor people, I believe, still cherish the memory of so dear a man, and give his name to their little ones in Baptism, as they might the name of a Saint.

“If in these brief narratives, gathered here and there, I have in any way transgressed the rules of more classical Latin, I beg the kind reader to pardon me. If in any way I have departed from the truth, I have done so unwittingly. God be merciful.

### **[John Arscott died in 1788.]”**

Sir Paul W. Molesworth has dealt with John Arscott more tenderly than that man deserved.

A modern writer<sup>3</sup> thus describes the sort of man that John Arscott was: —

“A familiar figure in the eighteenth century was the country squire, familiar the long wig, long coat, silver buttons, breeches and top-boots, the bluff, red face, the couple of greyhounds and the pointer at heel. When not hunting the fox, the popular sport of the day, he settled the disputes of the parish, or repaired to the nearest ale-house to get drunk in as short a space of time as possible. Usually he only drank ale, but on festive occasions a bowl of strong brandy punch, with toast and nutmeg, added to his already boisterous spirits. On Sundays he donned his best suit, which often descended from father to son through several generations, repaired to the parish church, and entered the family pew, where he slumbered during a great part of the somewhat dismal service. He seldom went further than his own country town, for a journey to London was still full of danger and discomfort.”

Who that has read Fielding and other novelists of the period does not know the figure, full-blooded, coarse to brutality, with a certain amount of kindness in his disposition, whose talk is of bullocks or horses or dogs, and who, after the ladies had withdrawn, spent the rest of the evening at his hospitable table singing ribald songs and telling obscene stories? I possess, myself, a little book in MS. of the after-dinner stories told by a great-great-uncle, that has to be kept under lock and key,

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<sup>3</sup> M. B. Syngé, *A Short History of Social Life in England*. London, 1906.

so unfit is it for perusal by clean-minded persons. The songs were from Tom D'Urfey's *Pills to Purge Melancholy*, or other collections of the sort. I had a collection of them that belonged to an *ancestress*, or rather near kinswoman of an ancestor, engraved on copper plate. I gave the volume to the British Museum. It was not a book to be kept on one's shelves when there were children in the house.

John Arscott was never married, or if he did marry, no trace of such a ceremony is forthcoming. He lived with a certain Thomasine Spry as his mistress. If he did "make an honest woman of her," it was, as reported, on his death-bed. She survived him, and was buried at Tetcott in 1796, aged seventy-six. They had no issue.

Mr. Hawker, in his *Footprints of Former Men in Far Cornwall*, has told several stories of John Arscott's favourite, the last of the jester dwarfs, Black John, one of whose jokes, that entertained the company after dinner, was to tie together by the legs several live mice and swallow them one by one, and then, by means of a string, pull them up from his interior parts again. Another of his tricks was to mumble a sparrow. The living bird was gripped by the legs by his teeth, and then with his lips and teeth he would rip off the feathers, till he had plucked the unfortunate sparrow bare. A couple of projecting fangs were of especial value as sparrow-holders to Black John. His hands all the while were knotted or tied behind his back.

One evening he fell asleep by the hearth in the hall at Tetcott. Suddenly he started up with a cry, "Oh, Master," said he, "I was in a sog [sleep] and I thought I was dead and in hell."

"Well, John," said Arscott, "and what did you see there?"

"Sir, everything very much like what it is here in Tetcott Hall, the gentlefolks nearest the fire."

John Arscott had, as already related, an enormous tame toad that came out on the doorstep to be fed every morning, and went by the name of "Old Dawty." The country people thought that it was John Arscott's "familiar." When he whistled, the creature would hop up to him, and leap to his hand or to his knee. One day a visitor with his stick killed it; but seeing this Black John flew at him and knocked him down and belaboured him soundly. John Arscott came out, and when he heard what the visitor had done, turned on his heel, and when the gentleman had picked himself up and drew near, slammed the house door in his face.

This is Mr. Hawker's version of the story of the end of the pet toad, which is at variance with that related by the Rev. P. W. Molesworth, whose authority is more trustworthy than that of Mr. Hawker, a gentleman given to romancing.

"Black John's lair was a rude hut, which he had wattled for a snug abode close to the kennels. He loved to retire to it, and sleep near his chosen companions, the hounds. When they were unkennelled he accompanied and ran with them on foot, and so sinewy and so swift was his stunted form that he was very often in their midst at the death."

John Arscott had another follower called Dogget. "My son Simon" or simply "Simon" he was wont to call him. He also ran after the foxhounds.

There exists a fine ballad on the "Hunting of Arscott, of Tetcott," in which Simon is mentioned. Mr. Frank Abbott, gamekeeper at Pencarrow, but born at Tetcott, informed me, concerning Dogget:

—  
"Once they unkennelled in the immediate neighbourhood of Tetcott, and killed at Hatherleigh. This runner was in at the death, as was his wont. John Arscott ordered him a bed at Hatherleigh, but to his astonishment, when he returned to Tetcott, his 'wife' told him all the particulars of the run. 'Then,' said Arscott, 'this must be the doing of none other than Dogget: where be he?'"

Dogget was soon found in the servants' hall, drinking ale, having outstripped his master and run all the way home.

The ballad above mentioned begins as follows: —

In the month of November, in the year fifty-two,  
Three jolly Fox-hunters, all sons of the Blue,

Came o'er from Pencarrow, not fearing a wet coat,  
To take their diversion with Arscott of Tetcott.  
Sing fol-de-rol, lol-de-rol, etc.

The daylight was dawning, right radiant the morn  
When Arscott of Tetcott he winded his horn;  
He blew such a flourish, so loud in the hall,  
The rafters resounded, and danced to the call.  
Sing fol-de-rol, etc.

In the kitchen the servants, in kennel the hounds,  
In the stable the horses were roused by the sounds,  
On Black-Bird in saddle sat Arscott, "To-day  
I will show you good sport; lads, hark, follow, away!"  
Sing fol-de-rol, etc.

To return to Black John. His wonted couch when he could not get back to Tetcott at night was a bed among the reeds or fern of some sheltering brake or wood, and he slept, as he himself used to express it, "rolled up, as warm as a hedge-boar, round his own nose." One day he was covered with snow, and found to all appearance dead. He was conveyed to Tetcott and put in a coffin. But as he was about to be buried, and whilst the service was proceeding, a loud thumping noise was heard within the coffin. The lid was removed, and he sat up. He had been in a long trance, but the funeral ride and jolting had revived him, and, said he, "When I heard the pa'sson say 'Earth to earth and dust to dust,' I thought it high time to bumpy."

After that he had no love for parsons of the Church or indeed ministers of any denomination, for every one of them, he said, would bury him alive, if they could. Once an itinerant Methodist preacher came across him and asked his way. Black John volunteered to show him a short cut across the park, and led him to a paddock, in which his master kept a favourite bull. He thrust the preacher into it and fastened the gate. What ensued is matter of guess-work. A yell and a bellow were heard, and some object was seen projected into the air over the hedge. Soon after Black John appeared at the Hall with a white tie in his hands, which he gave to his master, and said, "This be the vag-ends of the minister – all I could recover."

"When gout and old age had imprisoned Mr. Arscott in his easy chair, Black John nuzzled among the ashes of the vast wood fires of the hearth, or lay coiled upon his rug like some faithful mastiff watching every look and gesture of his master; starting up to fill the pipe or tankard of old ale, and then crouching again. At the squire's death and funeral, the agony of the misshapen retainer was unappeasable. He had to be removed by force from the door of the vault, and then he utterly refused to depart from the neighbourhood of the grave. He made himself another lair, near the churchyard wall, and there he sobbed away the brief remnant of his days."

The story goes that on one long and tremendous chase, Dogget running by his master's horse —

"How far do you make it?" said Simon the son.  
"The day that's declining will shortly be done."  
"We'll follow till Doomsday," quoth Arscott, – before  
They hear the Atlantic with menacing roar.

On this occasion the chase continued to Penkenner.

Through Whitstone, and Poundstock, St. Genny's they run,

Like a fire-ball, red, in the sea set the sun.  
Then out on Penkenner – a leap, and they go,  
Full five hundred feet to the ocean below.

In this memorable run, the fox went over the cliffs and the hounds after him; but Arscott and the rest of the hunters drew up, and though he lost his hounds, he did not lose his life. Penkenner is a magnificent and sheer cliff, west of St. Genny's Church. A deep cleft is on one side, and Crackington Cove on the other. There was no possible escape for the fox. As to the "sons of the Blue" who were in this memorable run with Arscott, of Tetcott, opinions differ.

The versions of the ballad vary greatly. I have had a copy, written in 1820, with explanatory notes. The date of the song is sometimes set down as 1752, sometimes as 1772. The "sons of the Blue" are taken to have been Sir John Molesworth, of Pencarrow, Bart., William Morshead, of Blisland, and Braddon Clode, of Skisdon. But neither Sir John Molesworth nor Mr. Morshead was, as it happens, a naval man. If the date were either 1652 or 1672, it would fit an earlier John Arscott, of Tetcott, who died in 1708; and Sir John Molesworth of the period was Vice-Admiral of Cornwall; and the sons of the blue were his sons, Hender, Sparke, and John. The second John Molesworth married Jane, daughter of the elder John Arscott, in 1704. It seems probable, accordingly, that the ballad belonged originally to the earlier John Arscott, and that it was adapted a century later to the last John Arscott. The melody to which it is still sung at the rent-audit of the Molesworth estate at Tetcott is a very ancient one, which was employed by Tom D'Urfey, in his *Pills to Purge Melancholy*, 1719, for a song entitled "Dear Catholic Brother." I have given it in my *Songs of the West*.

Since the death of Arscott, he still hunts.

When the full moon is shining as clear as the day,  
John Arscott still hunteth the country, they say;  
You may see him on Black-Bird, and hear in full cry,  
The pack from Pencarrow to Dazzard go by.

When the tempest is howling, his horn you may hear,  
And the bay of his hounds in their headlong career;  
For Arscott of Tetcott loves hunting so well,  
That he breaks for the pastime from Heaven or Hell.

The belief that he is to be heard winding his horn and in full gallop in chase through the park at Tetcott is still prevalent, and there are those alive who assert positively that they have heard and seen him.

Curiously enough much the same belief adheres to Dunsland, and there one of the Bickfords is thought to be the Wild Huntsman. I know of one who is so convinced that he and his hounds rushed past her through the grounds along a certain drive, that nothing afterwards would induce her on any consideration to go along that drive at night.

## WIFE-SALES

There is no myth relative to the manners and customs of the English that in my experience is more tenaciously held by the ordinary Frenchman than that the sale of a wife in the market-place is an habitual and an accepted fact in English life.

It is – so far as my experience goes – quite useless to assure a Frenchman that such transfer of wives is not a matter of everyday occurrence, and is not legal: he replies with an expression of incredulity, that of course English people endeavour to make light of, or deny, a fact that is “notorious.”

In a book by the antiquary Colin de Plancy, on *Legends and Superstitions connected with the Sacraments*, he gives up some pages to an account of the prevalent English custom. I heard a country curé once preach on marriage, and contrast its indissolubility in Catholic France with the laxity in Protestant England, where “any one, when tired of his wife, puts a halter round her neck, takes her to the next market town and sells her for what she will fetch.” I ventured to call on this curé and remonstrate, but he answered me he had seen the fact stated in books of the highest authority, and that my disputing the statement did not prove that his authorities were wrong, but that my experience was limited, and he asked me point blank whether I had never known such cases. There, unhappily, he had me on the hip. And when I was obliged to confess that I *did* know of one such case, “Mais, voilà, mon Dieu,” said he, and shrugged his shoulders with a triumphant smile.

Now it must be allowed that such sales have taken place, and that this is so is due to rooted conviction in the rustic mind that such a transaction is legal and morally permissible.

The case I knew was this.

When I was a boy there lived a tall, thin man in the parish who was the village poet. Whenever an event of any consequence took place within the confines of the parish, such as the marriage of the squire’s daughter, he came down to the manor-house with a copy of verses he had composed on the occasion, and was then given his dinner and a crown. Now this man had actually bought his wife for half a crown. Her husband had led her into Okehampton and had sold her there in the market. The poet purchased her for half the sum he had received for one of his poems, and led her home with him a distance of twelve miles, by the halter, he holding it in his hand, she placidly, contentedly wearing the loop about her neck.

The report that Henry Frise was leading home his half-crown wife preceded the arrival of the couple, and when they entered the village all the inhabitants turned out to see the spectacle.

Now this arrangement was not very satisfactory to my grandfather, who was squire, or to my uncle, who was rector of the parish, and both intervened. Henry Frise maintained that Anne was his legitimate wife, for “he had not only bought her in the market, but had led her home, with the halter in his hand, and he’d take his Bible oath that he never took the halter off her till she had crossed his doorstep and he had shut the door.”

The parson took down the Bible, the squire opened Burns’ *Justice of the Peace*, and strove to convince Harry that his conduct was warranted by neither Scripture nor the law of the land. “I don’t care,” he said, “her’s my wife, as sure as if we was spliced at the altar, for and because I paid half a crown, and I never took off the halter till her was in my house; lor’ bless yer honours, you may ask any one if that ain’t marriage, good, sound, and Christian, and every one will tell you it is.”

Mr. Henry Frise lived in a cottage that was on lives, so the squire was unable to bring compulsion to bear on him. But when Anne died, then a difficulty arose: under what name was she to be entered in the register? The parson insisted that he could not and he would not enter her as Anne Frise, for that was not her legal name. Then Henry was angry, and carried her off to be buried in another parish, where the parson was unacquainted with the circumstances. I must say that Anne proved an excellent

“wife.” She was thrifty, clean, and managed a rough-tempered and rough-tongued man with great tact, and was generally respected. She died in or about 1843.

Much later than that, there lived a publican some miles off, whom I knew very well; indeed, he was the namesake of and first cousin to a carpenter in my constant employ. He bought his wife for a stone two-gallon jar of Plymouth gin, if I was informed aright. She had belonged to a stonecutter, but as he was dissatisfied with her, he put up a written notice in several public places to this effect: —

### NOTICE

This here be to hinform the publick as how James Cole be dispozed to sell his wife by Auction. Her be a dacent, clanelly woman, and be of age twenty-five ears. The sale be to take place in the New Inn, Thursday next at seven o'clock.

In this case I do not give the name of the purchaser, as the woman is, I believe, still alive. I believe – so I was told – that the foreman of the neighbouring granite-works remonstrated, and insisted that such a sale would be illegal. He was not, however, clear as to the points of law, and he believed that it would be illegal unless the husband held an auctioneer’s licence, and if money passed. This was rather a damper. However, the husband was desirous to be freed from his wife, and he held the sale as had been advertised, making the woman stand on a table, and he armed himself with a little hammer. The biddings were to be in kind and not in money. One man offered a coat, but as he was a small man and the seller was stout, when he found that the coat would not fit him, he refused it. Another offered a “phisgie,” i.e. a pick, but this also was declined, as the husband possessed a “phisgie” of his own. Finally, the landlord offered a two-gallon jar of gin, and down fell the hammer with “Gone.”

I knew the woman; she was not bad-looking. The new husband drank, and treated her very roughly, and on one occasion she had a black eye when I was lurching at the inn. I asked her how she had hurt herself. She replied that she had knocked her face against the door, but I was told that this was a result of a domestic brawl. Now the remarkable feature in these cases is that it is impossible to drive the idea out of the heads of those who thus deal in wives that such a transaction is not sanctioned by law and religion. In Marytavy parish register is the following entry: —

1756. Robert Elford was baptized, child of Susanna Elford by her sister’s husband. She was married with the consent of her sister, the wife, who was at the wedding.

In this instance there is no evidence of a *sale*, but we may be sure that money did pass, and that the contractor of the new marriage believed it was a right and proper union, although perhaps irregular; and the first wife unquestionably believed that she was acting in observance of a legal right in transferring her husband to her sister. There are instances in which country people have gone before a local solicitor and have had a contract of sale drawn up for the disposal of their wives. The Birmingham police court in 1853 had to adjudicate on such a case, and the astounding thing in this instance was that a lawyer could be found to draw up the contract. It is no wonder that the magistrates administered a very severe reprimand. But there was a far earlier case than this, that of Sir William de Paganel; the lady stoutly and indignantly resisted the transfer and appealed against the contract to the law, which declared the sale to be null and void.

Mr. Whitfeld, in his *Plymouth and Devonport, in Times of War and Peace*, mentions a case that occurred at the former, but without giving the date, of one John Codmore, who was indicted for burglary and for having married without his father’s consent, and then tiring of his wife, having sold her for five pounds – which was a large sum as the price of wives went – to a miller. In December, 1822, the Plymouth crier announced to all and singular: Oh yes! Oh yes! that James Brooks was

about to dispose of his wife by public auction. The lady was advertised as young and handsome, and as likely to succeed to an inheritance of £700.

Expectation was whetted by the intimation that the lady would attend the sale herself, that all might judge of her personal charm, and that she would be mounted on horseback. A curious and babbling crowd assembled to witness the transaction, and precisely at midday, according to the announcement, she rode up, attended by the ostler of the “Lord Exmouth.” The husband, James Brooks, officiated as auctioneer. The first bid was five shillings, then the sums offered mounted to ten and to fifteen; but none rose, and that slowly, over two pound. Whereupon the ostler called out “Three pounds,” and she would have been knocked down to him had not at this conjuncture a couple of watchmen intervened, one laying hands on the husband and the other on the wife, and escorted the pair to the Guildhall, followed by the rabble.

When the mayor took them to task, the husband declared that for the life of him he could not see that he was doing wrong. He and his wife had agreed to the sale, as they had not lived together for long, and were ill-assorted, and therefore desired fresh partners. The ostler was prepared to pay twenty pounds for her – three pounds down and the balance at Christmas – and the woman was quite agreeable. What, then, was wrong? He assured the mayor that there was nothing “below board” in the transaction; the auction had been “called” three times in Modbury Market, and the wife also considered that she ought and would like to be sold in a public fair.

The mayor now examined the woman. She admitted that the ostler was buying her in at a reserved price, at which she had valued herself. There was a gentleman, a Mr. K., who she expected would have attended and bid for her, and with whom she had intended to go. But Mr. K. had not turned up, much to her annoyance. “I was very much annoyed,” said she, “to find that he had not kept his promise. But I was so determined to be loosed from Mr. Brooks, that when Mr. K. did not attend, I asked the ostler to buy me with my own money, unless I went for more than twenty pounds.”

The justices bound them over in sureties to be of good behaviour, and dismissed them.

In 1823, an army sergeant in residence in Devonport Dock tracked his faithless wife to Liskeard, and there engaged the bell-man to announce that it was his intention to dispose of her by sale to the highest bidder. Procuring a rope, he placed it round the neck of his spouse, and led her unresisting to the Higher Cross, opposite the Market, where the offers were taking a spirited turn when the police interfered. In the same year, William Hodge was indicted at Plymouth for putting his wife up to auction, and William Andrews for purchasing her. It was shown that Hodge had repeatedly threatened to sell his wife, that she had cheerfully welcomed the proposition, and that Andrews had anticipated the transaction of the sale by abducting her. At the Quarter Sessions “the auctioneer” was conspicuous by his absence; the wife pleaded that he had frequently assaulted her; and Andrews was condemned to prison “by way of warning.”<sup>4</sup>

The Rev. W. H. Thornton, vicar of North Bovey, in *Devon Notes and Queries*, Vol. IV, 1906, writes: “A sale may apparently be effected either by private arrangement or by public auction, and in neither case do the prices obtainable seem, as a rule, to run high. The husband naturally considers the result more satisfactory if a good sum can be obtained for his wife, but when the course of matrimony has arrived at a crisis, he commonly feels that it is better to accept the market price of the day than it is to lead her home again to resume conjugal life.

“My attention was recently called to the matter, when, in March of this year (1906), I was investigating in North Devon a remarkable instance of suicide, and a still more remarkable verdict thereon. My informant was an old poacher and fisherman, and speaking of the deceased, he said casually that he came of a curious family, and that he himself could well remember to have seen the dead man’s grandfather leading his grandmother on a halter to be sold by public auction in Great Torrington Market. The reserve price was, in this instance, fixed at eighteen pence, but as no one

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<sup>4</sup> Whitfeld, *Plymouth and Devonport, in Times of War and Peace*, 1890, pp. 296–7.

would give so much money, the husband had to take his wife home again and resume matrimonial intercourse. Children were born to them, and the ultimate result was the suicide.

“On being asked whether, in such instances, the neighbours generally considered the transaction legitimate, old John Badger replied in the affirmative; he declared that the vendor was held to be free to wed again, and the purchaser to be liable for the maintenance of the woman, but not till the money had changed hands over the bargain.

“This statement reminded me of a case which occurred at North Bovey shortly before I became incumbent of the living in 1868. This can easily be verified. A man, whose name I can give, walked into Chagford, and there by private agreement sold his wife to another man for a quart of beer. When he returned home with the purchaser the woman repudiated the transaction, and, taking her two children with her, went off at once to Exeter, and only came back to attend her husband’s funeral, at which, unless I am mistaken, I officiated.

“Mr. Roberts, the present old clerk at Wolborough, tells me that he has heard his father say that he knew of several instances of the kind now under consideration, but that he does not think that in South Devon the arrangement was often considered legal. In the north of the county people were less enlightened.”

Devon was not alone the scene of these wife-sales, though they were probably more common there than elsewhere. Still, there is evidence that such transactions went on elsewhere, and one or two instances may be quoted, to relieve Devon of exclusive discredit in such matters.

The story is well known of the Silesian noble whose house was raided by Tartars, one of whom carried off the nobleman’s wife on his horse behind him. The Silesian looked after the disappearing bandit, rubbed his hands, and said, “Alas, poor Tartar!” Doubtless there were many husbands who would have been glad to be rid of their wives at any price, even for nothing at all.

In 1815, a man held a regular auction in the market-place at Pontefract, offering his wife at a minimum bidding of one shilling, but he managed to excite a competition, and she was finally knocked down for eleven shillings.

In 1820, a man named Brouchet led his wife, a decent, pleasant-looking woman, but with a tongue in her mouth, into the cattle market at Canterbury from the neighbouring village of Broughton. He required a salesman to dispose of her, but the salesman replied that his dealings were with cattle only, and not with women. Brouchet, not to be beaten, thereupon hired a cattle-pen, paying sixpence for the hire, and led his wife into it by the halter that was round her neck. She did not fetch a high figure, being disposed of to a young man of Canterbury for five shillings.

In 1832, on 7 April, a farmer named Joseph Thomson came into Carlisle with his wife, to whom he had been married three years before; he sent the bell-man round the town to announce a sale, and this attracted a great crowd. At noon the sale took place. Thomson placed his wife on a chair, with a rope of straw round her neck. He then said – according to the report in the *Annual Register*– “Gentlemen, I have to offer to your notice, my wife, Mary Anne Thomson, otherwise Williams, whom I mean to sell to the highest and fairest bidder. Gentlemen, it is her wish as well as mine to part for ever. She has been to me only a born serpent. I took her for my comfort, and the good of my home; but she became my tormentor, a domestic curse. Gentlemen, I speak the truth from my heart when I say may God deliver us from troublesome wives and frolicsome women! Avoid them as you would a mad dog, or a roaring lion, a loaded pistol, cholera morbus, Mount Etna, or any other pestilential thing in nature. Now I have shown you the dark side of my wife, and told you her faults and failings, I will introduce the bright and sunny side of her, and explain her qualifications and goodness. She can read novels and milk cows; she can laugh and weep with the same ease that you could take a glass of ale when thirsty. Indeed, gentlemen, she reminds me of what the poet says of women in general: —

Heaven gave to women the peculiar grace  
To laugh, to weep, to cheat the human race.

She can make butter and scold the maid; she can sing Moore's melodies, and plait her frills and caps; she cannot make rum, gin, or whisky, but she is a good judge of the quality from long experience in tasting them. I therefore offer her with all her perfections and imperfections for the sum of fifty shillings."

That this address was spoken by Thomson is most improbable – it is doubtless put into his mouth by the editor of the *Annual Register*; it was not to his interest to depreciate the article he desired to sell. After about an hour, the woman was knocked down to one Henry Mears, for twenty shillings and a Newfoundland dog. They then parted company in perfect good humour, each satisfied with his bargain; Mears and the woman went one way, and Thomson and the dog another.

In 1835 a man led his wife by a halter, in precisely the same way, into the market at Birmingham, and sold her for fifteen pounds. She at once went home with the purchaser. She survived both buyer and seller, and then married again. Some property came to her in the course of years from her first husband; for notwithstanding claims put forth by his relatives she was able to maintain in a court of law that the sale did not and could not vitiate her rights as his widow.

Much astonishment was caused in 1837 in the West Riding of Yorkshire by a man being committed to prison for a month with hard labour for selling or attempting to sell his wife by auction in the manner already described. It was generally and firmly believed that he was acting within his rights.

In 1858, in a tavern at Little Horton, near Bradford, a man named Hartley Thompson put up his wife, who is described by the local journals as a pretty young woman, for sale by auction, and he had the sale previously announced by sending round the bell-man. He led her into the market with a ribbon round her neck, which exhibits an advance in refinement over the straw halter; and again in 1859, a man at Dudley disposed of his wife in a somewhat similar manner for sixpence. A feature in all these instances is the docility with which the wife submitted to be haltered and sold. She would seem to have been equally imbued with the idea that there was nothing to be ashamed of in the transaction, and that it was perfectly legal.

If we look to discover whence originated the idea, we shall probably find it in the conception of marriage as a purchase. Among savage races, the candidate for marriage is expected to pay the father for his daughter. A marriageable girl is worth so many cows or so many reindeer. The man pays over a sum of money or its equivalent to the father, and in exchange receives the girl. If he desires to be separated from her he has no idea of giving her away, but receives what is calculated to be her market value from the man who is disposed to relieve him of her. In all dealings for cattle, or horses, or sheep, a handsel is paid, half a crown to clinch the bargain, and the transfer of coin constitutes a legal transfer of authority and property over the animal. This is applied to a woman, and when a coin, even a sixpence, is paid over and received, the receiver regards this as releasing him from all further responsibility for the wife, who at once passes under the hand of the purchaser. There is probably no trace in our laws of women having been thus regarded as negotiable properties, but it is unquestionable that at an early period, before Christianity invaded the island, such a view was held, and if here and there the rustic mind is unable to rise to a higher conception of the marriage state, it shows how extremely slow it is for opinions to alter when education has been neglected.

## WHITE WITCHES

Some years ago I wrote a little account of “White Witches” in the *Daily Graphic*, in which I narrated some of my experiences and my acquaintance with their proceedings. This brought me at the lowest computation fifty letters from all parts of the country from patients who had spent much of their substance upon medical practitioners, and, like the woman with the issue of blood in the Gospel, “had suffered many things of many physicians and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse.” These entreated me to furnish them with the addresses of some of these irregular practitioners, that they might try them. I did not send what was desired, and that for a very good reason, that I regard these individuals as impostors and the occasion of a good deal of mischief.

At the same time *distinguez*, as the French would say. They are not all so, and I have seen and can testify to very notable and undeniable cures that they have effected. That they believe in their powers and their cures is true in a good many cases, and I quite admit that they may be in possession of a large number of valuable herbal recipes, doubtless of real efficacy. Some of our surgeons are far too fond of using the knife, and the majority of them employ strong mineral medicines that, though they may produce an immediate effect, do injury in the long run. I take it that one reason why our teeth are so bad in the present generation is due largely to the way in which calomel was administered in times past, a medicine that touches the liver but is rottenness to the bones.

What Jesus the son of Sirach said centuries ago is true still: “The Lord hath created medicines out of the earth, and he that is wise will not abhor them . . . by such doth he heal men, and taketh away their pains. Of such doth the apothecary make a confection” (Ecclus. XXXVIII. 4, 7, 8). What the writer meant was herbs and not minerals. The simples employed by the wise old women in our villages were admirable in most cases, but they were slow, if sure of action, and in these days when we go at a gallop we want cures to be rapid, almost instantaneous.

But the professed herbalist in our country towns is very often not a herbalist at all, but a mere impostor. He puts up “herbalist” on a brass plate at his door, but his procedure is mere quackery.

Moreover, the true White Witch is consulted not for maladies only, but for the discovery of who has cast the evil eye, “overlooked” and “ill-wished” some one who has lost a cow, or has been out of sorts, or has sickness in his pig-sty. The mode of proceeding was amusingly described in the *Letters of Nathan Hogg*, in 1847. Nathan in the form of a story gives an account of what was the general method of the White Witch Tucker in Exeter. A farmer whose conviction was that disorders and disasters at home were the result of the ill-wishing of a red-cloaked Nan Tap, consulted Tucker as to how the old woman was to be “driven” and rendered powerless.

I modify the broad dialect, which would not be generally intelligible.

When into Exeter he had got  
To Master Tucker’s door he sot;  
He rung’d the bell, the message sent,  
Pulled off his hat, and in he went,  
And seed a fellow in a room  
That seem’d in such a fret and fume.  
He said he’d lost a calf and cow,  
And com’d in there to know as how,  
For Master T., at little cost,  
Had often found the things he’d lost.

Thereupon the farmer opened his own trouble, and told how he and his were bewitched by Nan Tap. And as he told his tale, it seemed so sad that the man in the room bade him go in first to consult the White Witch.

Now this fuming man was employed by Tucker to draw out from the gulls what their trouble was, and there was but a sham wall of paper between the room where the interview took place and that in which he received the farmer, whom he greatly astonished by informing him of all the circumstances that led to the visit. The remedy he prescribed was to carry a little bag he gave him, in which were some stones, and to dash water in the direction of the old woman, and say, "I do it in the name of Tucker," and if this did not answer, he was to put a faggot up his chimney, set fire to it, and say a prayer he taught him while it was burning. We need not follow the account any further.

There was a few years ago a notable White Witch of the name of Snow, at Tiverton, who did great business. In a case with which I am well acquainted, he certainly was the means of curing a substantial farmer. The man had caught a severe chill one night of storm, when a torrent threatened to inundate his house. He had stood for hours endeavouring to divert the stream from his door. The chill settled on his chest, and he became a wreck; he drew his breath with difficulty, walked bent, almost double, and as I was convinced would not live out the twelve months. He consulted the most famous and experienced physicians, and they did him no good. Then in desperation he went to "Old Snow." From that day he mended. What the White Witch gave him I do not know; but the man is now robust, hearty, and looks as if many years were before him.

I know another case, but this is of a different nature. A young farmer, curious as to the future, visited a White Witch to learn who his future wife would be. Said she – this witch was a woman, and an old one: there are female witches who are young and exercise very powerful charms – said she: "Next Sunday, you go along Narracott lane, and the first young woman you see pass, look her well in the face, and when you've gone by, turn your head and look, and if she's also turned her head and is looking at you, that's the one."

"Well now," said this farmer in later years, "it were a coorious thing it were, but as I were goin' along thickey lane there I seed Bessie Baker, and I turn'd, and sure enough her were lookin' over her shoulder to me, and wot's most coorious of all – her's my missus now. After that, don't ee go and tell me as how White Witches knows nothin'. But there's somethin' more to the tale. I heerd afterwards as Bessie, her'd consulted old Nan, and Nan had said to her, 'Go along Narracott lane, and the first man as you sees, when you've past, turn and look; and if he's lookin' over his shoulder to you, that's the one.' There's facts; and wi' them facts staring of you in the face, don't you go and say White Witches is nort."

There is an old woman I know – she is still alive. It was six years since she bought a bar of yellow or any other soap. But that is neither here nor there. She was esteemed a witch – a white one of course. She was a God-fearing woman, and had no relations with the Evil One, of that one may be sure. How she subsisted was a puzzle to the whole parish. But, then, she was generally feared. She received presents from every farm and cottage. Sometimes she would meet a child coming from school, and stay it, and fixing her wild dark eye on it, say, "My dear, I knawed a child jist like you – same age, red rosy cheeks, and curlin' black hair. And that child shrivelled up, shrumped like an apple as is picked in the third quarter of the moon. The cheeks grew white, the hair went out of curl, and she jist died right on end and away."

Before the day was out, a chicken or a basket of eggs as a present from the mother of that child was sure to arrive.

I have given an account of this same old woman in my *An Old English Home*, and will here add a few more particulars about her. She possessed of her own a two-storied house, thatched, built mainly of cob, but with two chimneys of brick. Some five-and-twenty years ago the house was habitable enough. The thatch had given way in several places, but she could not or would not have it repaired. Perhaps she had not the means; but the farmers offered her straw, and a thatcher would have done

the work for her gratis, or only for her blessing. She would not. “God made the sky,” she said, “and that is the best roof of all.” After a while, however, the roof became leaky everywhere. Then she sought shelter for her head by stuffing up the chimney of her bedroom fireplace with a sack filled with chaff, and pushing her bed to the hearth, she slept with her head and pillow under the sack. But access to this bedroom became difficult, as the stairs, exposed to the rain, rotted and gave way, and she was compelled to ascend and descend by an improvised ladder.

The rector of the parish went to her and remonstrated at the dangerous condition of the tenement.

“My dear,” said she, “there be two angels every night sits on the rungs of the ladder and watches there, that nobody comes nigh me, and they be ready to hold up the timbers that they don’t fall on me.”

The rector’s daughter carried her some food every now and then. One day the woman made her a present of some fine old lace. This was gratefully accepted. As the young lady was departing, “Old Marianne” called after her from the bedroom door, “Come back, my dear, I want that lace again. If any one else be so gude as to give me aught, I shall want it to make an acknowledgment of the kindness.” The lace was often given as acknowledgment, and as often reclaimed.

After a while the ladder collapsed. Then the old woman descended for good and all, and took up her abode on the ground floor – kitchen and parlour, dining-room and bedroom all in one.

Finally the whole roof fell in and carried down the flooring of the upper story, but in such manner that the “planchin” rested at one end against the wall, but blocked up door and fireplace. Then she lived under it as a lean-to roof, and without a fire for several winters, amongst others that bitter one of 1893–4, and her only means of egress and ingress was through the window. Of that half the number of panes was broken and patched with rags. As the water poured into her room she finally took refuge in an old oak chest, keeping the lid up with a brick.

I knew her very well; she was a picturesque object. Once she and I were photographed together standing among the ruins of her house. She must have been handsome in her day, with a finely-cut profile, and piercing dark eyes. She usually wore a red kerchief about her head or neck and an old scarlet petticoat. But she was dirty – indescribably so. Her hands were the colour of mahogany. She promised me her book of charms. I never got it, and this was how. The huntsmen were wont, whenever passing her wretched house, to shout “Marianne! Marianne!” and draw up. Then from amidst the ruins came a muffled response, “Coming, my dears, coming!” Presently she appeared. She was obliged to crawl out of her window that opened into the garden and orchard at the back of the house, go round it, and unlace a gate of thorns she had erected as a protection to her garden; there she always received presents. One day as usual the fox-hunters halted and called for her; she happened at the time to have kindled a fire on the floor of her room to boil a little water in a kettle for tea, and she left the fire burning when she issued forth to converse with the gentlemen and extend her hand for half-crowns. Whilst thus engaged the flames caught some straw that littered the ground, they spread, set fire to the woodwork, and the room was in a blaze. Everything was consumed, her chest-bed, her lace, her book of charms. After that she was conveyed to the workhouse, where she is still, and now is kept clean.

Once, before this catastrophe, I drove over to see her, taking my youngest daughter with me. The child had breakings-out on her face; Marianne noticed this. “Ah, my dear,” said she, “I see you want my help. You must bring the little maiden to me, she must be fasting, and then I will bless her face, and in two days she will be well.” Her cure for whooping-cough was to cut the hair off the cross on a donkey’s back, fasten it in silk bags, and tie these round the children’s necks. “You see,” she said, “Christ Jesus rode into Jerusalem on an ass, and ever since then asses have the cross on their backs, and the hair of those crosses is holy and cures maladies.”

Although I did not obtain her book of charms, she gave me many of her recipes. For fits one was to swallow wood-lice, pounded if one liked, better swallowed *au naturel*.

*For Burns or Scalds.*— Recite over the place: —

There were three Angels who came from the North,  
One bringing Fire, the other brought Frost,  
The other he was the Holy Ghost.  
In Frost, out Fire! In the Name, etc.

*For a Sprain.*— Recite: “As Christ was riding over Crolly Bridge, His horse slid and sprained his leg. He alighted and spake the words: Bone to bone, and sinew to sinew! and blessed it and it became well, and so shall ... become well. In the Name, etc.” Repeat thrice.

*For Stanching Blood.*— Recite: “Jesus was born in Bethlehem, baptized in the river of Jordan. The water was wide and the river was rude against the Holy Child. And He smote it with a rod, and it stood still, and so shall your blood stand still. In the Name, etc.” Repeat thrice.

*Cure for Toothache.*— “As our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ were walking in the garden of Jerusalem, Jesus said unto Peter, Why weepst thou? Peter answered and said, Lord, I be terrible tormented with the toothache. Jesus said unto Peter, If thou wilt believe in Me and My words abide in thee, thou shall never more fill [*sic*] the pain in thy tooth. Peter cried out with tears, Lord, I believe, help thou my onbelieve [*sic*].”

*Another receipt for a Sprain.*

2 oz. of oil of turpentine.

2 oz. of swillowes.

2 oz. of oil of earthworms.

2 oz. of nerve.

2 oz. of oil of spideldock (? opodeldoc).

2 oz. of Spanish flies.

I recommend this recipe to be taken to an apothecary. Order it to be made up, and observe his face as he reads it.

Marianne had the gift of stanching blood even at a distance. On one occasion when hay was being cut, a man wounded himself at Kelly, some eight miles distant, and the blood flowed in streams. At once the farmer bade a man take a kerchief dipped in his blood and gallop as hard as he could to the tumble-down cottage, and get Marianne to bless the blood. He did so, and was gone some three hours. As soon as the old woman had charmed the kerchief the blood ceased to flow.

At one time, now thirty to forty years ago, it was not by any means uncommon for one to meet the village postman walking with one hand extended holding a kerchief that was sent to the White Witch to be blessed. The rag must touch no other human being till it reached her. Moreover, at my own village inn, people from a distance frequently lodged so as to be able to consult the White Witch, and my tenant, the landlady of the inn, was absolutely convinced of the efficacy of the cures wrought.

The rector's son went to call on Marianne, and she brought out for him a filthy glass with poppy wine she had made, thick and muddy, and offered it to him. “I am almost a teetotaler,” said he; “and so can do no more than just sip this to your health and happiness,” and he put his lips to the glass.

“Ah! Mr. Edward, dear,” said she, “I've offered thickey glass o' wine to some, and they'm so proud and haughty as they wouldn't titch it; but you'm no so – and now my blessing shall be wi' you night and day – and gude fortune shall ever attend you – that I promise you.”

A writer in *Devon Notes and Queries*, October, 1906, writes: —

“Fifty-nine years ago, two years after breaking my arm, I evidently chilled it by violent exercise and perspiring in a lengthened snowball battle on Northernhay (Exeter). This caused a large surface wound which neither doctor nor chemist could heal for months, but I had to renew on all opportunities daily the application of bandages wetted with Goulard's Extract (acetate of lead and water). Months went by, still no cure, and at last, in sheer despair, my mother, who had not long left the country to live in Exeter, resolved to take me to a Seventh Son whose fame was current in Exeter. He was at

the time the carrier to and from Moretonhampstead. He saw my arm as he stood by his wagon, and bade my mother bring me the following Friday, when something was said over the wound, and I was invested with a small velvet amulet, which I believe contained the leg of a toad.

“The wet bandages were continued, and from that day to this I have never been able to tell which effected the ultimate cure, the wet bandages or the toad.

“About thirty years later I had of my own a seventh daughter, born in succession. The news got about, and within a fortnight we had two applications from troubled mothers. Would we let our dear baby lay her hand on their child’s arm or leg, as may be, for it would not harm mine and might cure theirs of King’s Evil?

“During the early years that I have named, there were several notable white witches in Exeter who took lots of good fees for pretended good services. Superstition dies slowly, for within the last seven years a friend of mine with the same surname as the White Witch of 1840–50, but a comparative new-comer to Exeter, was startled by an application of which he, knowing nothing of old wives’ stories of Devon, could not fathom the meaning until asking the writer if he could explain. About 1880 my wife was met at the door by a man who might by appearance have been a small farmer. ‘Missus, be I gwain right?’ ‘Where do you want to go?’ (A little hesitation.) ‘I waant to vind thickey wuman that tells things. My cows be wished and I waant to vind out who dood it.’ So he was told to go to a cottage behind Friars’ Green, where old Mrs. – had a crop of fools for clients every Friday, and told them their fortunes by tea-grounds and cards, much to her and their satisfaction; but I certainly was amused to hear my wife say, ‘Oh, Jenny So-and-so, Polly What’s-her-name, and various others, and I, have gone there lots of times, and had our fortunes told for twopence.’”

At the beginning of this article I mentioned a farmer, a tenant of mine, who professed to have been cured by “Old Snow,” of Tiverton.

Nine years after this I wrote the article on our Devonshire White Witches in the *Daily Graphic*. This was transferred to one or two Plymouth papers. Shortly after that, at our harvest festival, the farmer turned up. He had left my farm and taken another elsewhere; but he had a hankering after Lew Trenchard, and at our festival he appeared, robust and hearty. He came to me and said, “Why, sir, you have been putting me in the papers.” “Well, old friend,” said I, “I said in it nothing but what was true.” “True, aye, aye, sir, true as gospel. The doctors in Plymouth and Mr. Budd, of North Tawton, gave me up, but Old Snow cured me. I met him on the platform of Tiverton station, and told him my case. He looked me hard in the eye, and said some words, and bade me go home and I was cured. Well, sir, from that day I mended. You see now what I am.”

A friend wrote to me: “In 1891, my head man had an attack of influenza, and this fell on his nerves, and convinced that he had been ill-wished, he consulted a White Witch at Callington, who informed him that he had been ‘overlooked’ by one of his own profession, and that he had applied too late for a cure to be effected.”

Now the person who exhorted him to have recourse to the White Witch was his daughter, who was mistress at the school of the parish.

The man eventually recovered, but not through the aid of the White Witch.

I know a farmer, a God-fearing, sensible man, and thriving in his farm and piling up money, to whom recourse is continually had to stanch wounds, and to cure abscesses, by striking the place and reciting certain mystic sentences.

A witch, white or black, must communicate the secret of power to one of an opposite sex before he or she can die – that is well known.

That in many cases the imagination acting on the nervous system acts curatively “goes without saying.” It is that which really operates in the faith cures and in the Lourdes miracles. What a bad time witches, white or black, must have had when the short way with any one suspected was to throw her into a pond! If she sank, why she sank and was drowned, but had the satisfaction of being aware that her character was cleared, whereas if she floated, she was a convicted witch and was burnt.

I am not, however, sure that we are not too lenient with the professional White Witch nowadays, as the following incident will show. I do not name the locality, certainly not the persons, for nothing was proved.

A certain cattle-dealer three years ago was much troubled because his daughter who had had influenza did not rally, but was rather strange in her head. He went to the county capital to consult the White Witch. The latter showed him a glass of water, and said that the person who had overlooked his child was fair-haired and stout. Further, that she had never been inside his doors, but that she would enter them on the following Saturday.

The cattle-jobber looking into the glass of water thought he saw a face – it was that of a woman who lived not far from him. What he really saw was, of course, his own reflected, but with the words of the witch ringing in his ears and guided by his imagination he conceived that he saw a neighbour.

He returned home full of conviction and wrath. Next night the husband of the fair-haired, stout woman woke after midnight, and heard a strange crackling sound. He hastily dressed, and went outside his door, when he saw that the thatch of his house was in flames. He hastened to rouse his wife and family, there were six who slept in the house, and he had barely drawn them outside, before the roof fell in and the cottage was converted into one great bonfire. By the merest accident it was that six persons were not burned in their beds. Next morning the police, who investigated the matter, found evidence that the house had been wilfully and deliberately set fire to. Some one had stepped on to a hedge, and had lighted three lucifer matches, and in drawing them from his pocket had drawn out and dropped at the same time two halfpenny stamps. The first two matches had failed. The third took effect. Who had been the incendiary was not discovered.

Of course the circumstance first mentioned may be entirely unconnected with the second. But there can be no doubt that bitter animosities are bred by the charges of “ill-wishing” and “overlooking” which are made by the White Witches. They are far too shrewd to name names, but they contrive to kindle and direct suspicions in their dupes which may lead to serious results.

It is very difficult to bring these cases home, and on this immunity they trade. But it is devoutly to be hoped that some day certain of these gentry will be tripped up, and then, though magistrates can no more send them to the stake, they will send them to cool their heels in gaol, and richly they will deserve the punishment.

## MANLY PEEKE

The pirates of Algiers had for some years been very troublesome, not in the Mediterranean only, but also along the European coasts of the Atlantic. Several English vessels trading to Smyrna had been plundered, and the corsairs had even made descents on the coasts of England and Ireland and had swept away people into slavery. James I proposed that the different Christian powers should unite to destroy Algiers, the principal port of these pirates. Spain, whose subjects suffered most, engaged to co-operate, but withdrew at the last moment. Sir Robert Mansell was placed in command of the English fleet, but provided with an inefficient force, and given strict orders from the timid and parsimonious James not on any account to endanger his vessels.

On 24 May, 1621, Sir Thomas sailed into the harbour of Algiers and set fire to the Moorish ships and galleys; but had scarcely retired – unwilling to follow up the advantage – when “a great cataract of rain” hindered the spread of the fire; and the Algerines succeeded in recovering all their ships with the exception of two, which burnt to the water’s edge. The enemy brought their artillery to bear on the English fleet, mounted batteries on the mole, and threw booms across the mouth of the harbour. Mansell, hampered by his instructions, dared not expose his vessels further and withdrew, having lost only eight men; and returned to England. Among those who had sailed with him was Richard Peeke, of Tavistock, who returned home much disgusted, “My Body more wasted and weather-beaten, but my purse never the fuller nor my pockets thicker lyled.”

Charles I came to the throne in 1625; and one of his first acts was to organize and start an expedition against the Spanish. It was devised for the sake of plunder. His treasury was empty; he was obliged to borrow £3000 to procure provisions for his own table. Plate ships, heavy-laden argosies, were arriving in the port of Spain from the New World, and Buckingham suggested to him to fill his empty coffers by the capture of these vessels. The English fleet counted eighty sail; the Dutch contributed a squadron of sixteen sail; it was the greatest joint naval power that had ever spread sail upon salt water – and this made the world abroad wonder what the purpose was for which it was assembled. Ten thousand men were embarked on the English vessels, and the command of both fleet and army was given to Sir Edward Cecil, now created Lord Wimbledon, a general who had served with very little success in the Palatinate and the Low Countries. This appointment of a mere landsman surprised and vexed the seamen. The position belonged to Sir Robert Mansell, Vice-Admiral of England, in case the Admiral did not go; but Buckingham had made the choice and persisted in it. The fleet set sail in the month of October, and shaped its course for the coast of Spain.

Richard Peeke had remained in Tavistock after his return from Algiers till October, 1625, when – “The Drumbe beating up for a New Expedition in which many noble Gentlemen, and Heroical Spirits, were to venture their Honors, Lives and Fortunes: Cables could not hold me, for away I would, and along I vowed to goe, and did so.” Peeke entered as sailor on board the *Convertine*, under Captain Thomas Porter.

In the Bay of Biscay the ships were damaged and in part scattered by a storm. One vessel foundered with a hundred and seventy men on board. This was the beginning of misadventure. The confusion of orders was such that the officers and soldiers scarcely knew who were in command and whom they were to order about. When Wimbledon got in sight of the Spanish shores, he summoned a council of war, the usual and dangerous resource of an incompetent commander. His instructions were to intercept the plate ships from America, to scour the Spanish shores and destroy the shipping in the ports. But where should he begin? In the council of war some recommended one point, some another; in the end it was resolved to make for Cadiz Bay. But whilst they were consulting, the Spaniards had got wind of their approach, and prepared to receive them. Moreover, Wimbledon allowed seven large and rich Spanish vessels to sail into the bay under his nose, and these afterwards did him much

damage. "Tis thought," says Howell, who had many friends with the expedition, "that they being rich would have defrayed well near the charge of our fleet."

A sudden attack on the shipping at Cadiz and Port St. Maria could hardly have failed even now, but the blundering and incompetent Wimbledon preferred to land all his troops, and he succeeded in capturing the paltry fort of Puntal, whilst his fleet remained inactive outside the bay. Then he moved towards the bridge which connects the Isle de Laon with the continent, to cut off communications. No enemy was visible; but in the wine-cellars of the country, which were broken open and plundered, a foe was found which has ever been more dangerous to undisciplined English troops than bullets and sabres. The men, under no control, got drunk, and became totally unmanageable; and if the Spaniards had been on the alert they might have cut them to pieces. Lord Wimbledon then ordered a retreat, but this was conducted in such a manner that hundreds of stragglers were left behind to fall under the knives of the enraged peasantry.

Richard Peeke, not being a soldier, did not accompany the army; but at midday thought that he might as well also go ashore to refresh himself. He did so, and met some of the men laden with oranges and lemons. He inquired of them where the enemy was. They replied that they had not seen a Spaniard. Thereupon "we parted, they to the shippes, I forward, and before I reached a mile, I found three Englishmen starke dead, being slayne, lying in the way, and one, some small distance off, not fully dead." Whilst Peeke was assisting the wounded man, a Spanish cavaliero, whose name he afterwards learned was Don Juan de Cadiz, came up and attacked him, but Peeke flapped his cloak in the eyes of the horse, which swerved, and Peeke mastered the Don, and threw him down. The Spaniard pleaded for mercy, and Peeke, after emptying the Don's pocket of a few coins, bade him depart. At that moment, however, up came fourteen Spanish musketeers. "Thus farre, my Voyage for Oranges sped well, but in the end proved sower sauce to me." The musketeers overpowered Peeke, and the ungrateful Don stabbed at him, "and wounded me through the face from eare to eare, and had there killed me, had not the foureteen muskatiers rescued me from his rage. Upon this I was led in triumph into the town of Cales [Cadiz]; an owl not more wondered and hooted at, a dog not more cursed. In my being ledde thus along the streets, a Flemming spying me cryed out alowde, Whither do you leade this English dogge? Kill him, kill him, he's no Christian. And with that, breaking through the crowde, in upon those who held mee, ranne me into the body with a halbert, at the reynes of my back, at least foure inches."

He was taken before the Governor, who had him well treated and attended by surgeons, and when he was better, dispatched him to Xeres, which he calls Sherrys. Meanwhile his captain, Porter, induced Lord Wimbledon to send a messenger on shore and offer to ransom Peeke at any reasonable price; but the Spanish Governor, supposing him to be a man of far greater consequence than he was, refused this, and at Xeres he was had up on 15 November before a council of war, consisting of three dukes, four counts, four marquesses, and other great persons. Two Irish friars attended as interpreters. These men had been in England the year before acting as spies and bringing to Spain reports of the number of guns and troops in Plymouth. "At my first appearing before the Lordes my sword lying before them on a table, the Duke of Medina asked me if I knew that weapon. It was reached to me, I tooke it, and embraced it in mine armes, and with tears in mine eyes kist the pomell of it. He then demanded, how many men I had kild with that weapon. I told him if I had kild one I had not bene there now, before that princely Assembly, for when I had him at my foote begging for mercy, I gave him life, yet he then very poorely did me a mischief. Then they asked Don John what wounds I gave him. He sayd, None. Upon this he was rebuked and told that if upon our first encounter he had run me through, it had been a faire and noble triumph, but so to wound me being in the hands of others, they held it base."

He was now closely questioned as to the fleet, the number of guns in the vessels, the fortifications of Plymouth, the garrison and the ordnance there, and was greatly surprised to find how accurately the Council was informed on every point.

“By the common people who encompass me round, many jeerings, mockeries, scorns and bitter jests were to my face thrown upon our Nation. At the length one of the Spaniards called Englishmen *gallinas* (hens); at which the great lords fell a laughing. Hereupon one of the Dukes, poynting to the Spanish soldiers, bid me note how their King kept them. And indeed, they were all wondrous brave in apparell, hattes, bandes, cuffes, garters, etc., and some of them in chaines of gold. And asked further if I thought these would prove such hennes as our English, when next year they should come into England? I sayd no. But being somewhat emboldened by his merry countenance, I told him as merrily, I thought they would be within one degree of hennes, and would prove pullets or chickens. Darst thou then (quoth Duke Medina, with a brow half angry) fight with one of these Spanish pullets?

“O my Lord, said I, I am a prisoner, and my life is at stake, and therefore dare not be so bold to adventure upon any such action; yet with the license of this princely Assembly, I dare hazard the breaking of a rapier; and withall told him, he was unworthy the name of an Englishman that should refuse to fight with one man of any nation whatsoever. Hereupon my shackells were knocked off, and my iron ring and chayne taken from my neck.

“Roome was made for the combatants, rapier and dagger the weapons. A Spanish champion presents himselfe, named Signior Tiago, Whom after we had played some reasonable good time, I disarmed, as thus – I caught his rapier betwixt the barr of my poignard and there held it, till I closed in with him, and tripping up his heeles, I tooke his weapons out of his hands, and delivered them to the Dukes.

“I was then demanded, If I durst fight against another. I told them, my heart was good to adventure, but humbly requested them to give me pardon if I refused, for I too well knew that the Spaniard is haughty, impatient of the least affront, and when he receives but a touch of any dishonour, his revenge is implacable, mortall and bloody.

“Yet being by the noblemen pressed again and again to try my fortune with another, I sayd, That if their Graces and Greatnesses would give me leave to play at mine owne Countrey weapon, called the Quarter-staffe, I was then ready there, an opposite against any comer, whom they would call foorth; and would willingly lay doune my life before those princes, to doe them service, provided my life might by no foule means be taken from me.

“Hereupon, the head of a halbert which went with a screw was taken off, and the steall [staff] delivered to me; the other but-end of the staffe having a short iron pike in it. This was my armor, and in my place I stood, expecting an opponent.

“At last, a handsome and well-spirited Spaniard steps foorth with his rapier and poignard. They asked me what I sayd to him. I told them I had a sure friend in my hand that never failed me, and made little account of that one to play with. Then a second, armed as before, presents himselfe. I demanded if there would come no more. The Duke asked, how many I desired. I told them any number under six. Which resolution of mine they smiling at it in a kind of scorne, held it not manly nor fit for their own honors and glory of their nation, to worry one man with a multitude; and therefore appointed three only to enter the lists.

“The rapier men traversed their ground, I mine. Dangerous thrusts were put in, and with dangerous hazard avoyded. Showtes echoed to heaven, to encourage the Spaniards, not a shoute nor a hand to hearten the poore Englishman; only Heaven I had in mine eye, the honour of my Countrey in my heart, my fame at the stake, my life on a narrow bridge, and death both before me and behind me.

“Plucking up a good heart, seeing myself faint and wearied, I vowed to my soule to do something ere she departed from me; and so setting all upon one cast, it was my good fortune with the but-end where the iron pike was to kill one of the three; and within a few bouts after, to disarme the other two, causing one of them to fly into the armie of soldiers then present, and the other for refuge fled behind the bench.

“Now was I in greater danger; for a generall murmure filled the ayre, with threatenings at me; the soldiers especially bit their thumbes, and how was it possible for me to scape?

“Which the noble Duke of Medina Sidonia seeing called me to him, and instantly caused proclamation to be made, that none, on paine of death, should meddle with mee. And by his honourable protection I got off. And not off, only, with safety, but with money, for by the Dukes and Condes were given me in gold to the value of foure pounds tenne shillings sterling, and by the Marquesse Alquezez himself as much; he embracing me in his armes and bestowing upon me that long Spanish russet cloake I now weare, which he tooke from one of his men’s backs; and withall furnished me with a cleane band and cuffes.”

The Spaniards, nobly appreciating the bravery of their captive, and discovering that instead of being a man of great consequence he was a mere sailor before the mast, and not likely to be redeemed at a great price, resolved to give him liberty, and under the conduct of four gentlemen attached to the suite of the Marquess Alquezez, he was sent to Madrid to be presented to the King. During Peeke’s stay in Madrid, which he calls Madrill, he was the guest of the Marquess. The Marchioness showed him great kindness, and on his leaving presented him with a gold chain and jewels for his wife, and pretty things for his children. On Christmas Day he was presented to the King, the Queen, and Don Carlos, the Infante.

“Being brought before him, I fell (as it was fitt) on my knees. Many questions were demanded of me, which so well as my plaine witte directed me, I resolved.

“In the end, his Majesty offered me a yearly pension (to a good vallew) if I would serve him, eyther at land or at sea; for which his royal favour, I confessing myself infinitely bound, most humbly intreated, that with his princely leave, I might be suffered to returne into mine own Countrey, being a subject onely to the King of England my sovereign.

“And besides that bond of allegiance there was another obligation due from me, to a wife and children. And therefore most submissively beg’d, that his Majesty would be so princely minded as to pittie my estate and to let me goe. To which he at last granted, bestowing upon me, one hundred pistoletts, to beare my charges.

“Having thus left Spaine, I took my way through some part of France, and hoisting sail for England I landed on the 23rd day of Aprill, 1626, at Foy in Cornwall.”

Whilst Peeke was in Spain, Lord Wimbledon had been blundering with his fleet and army worse than before. After he had reshipped his army, there still remained the hope of intercepting the plate fleet, but an infectious disorder broke out in the ships of Lord Delaware, and in consequence of an insane order given by Wimbledon, that the sick should be distributed into the healthy ships, the malady spread. After beating about for eighteen days with a dreadful mortality on board, and without catching a glimpse of the treasure vessels from the New World, Lord Wimbledon resolved to carry his dishonoured flag home again, “which was done in a confused manner, and without any observance of sea orders.” The plate fleet, which had been hugging the coast of Barbary, appeared off the coast of Spain two or three days after his departure, and entered safely into the harbour of Cadiz. Moreover, whilst he was master of these seas, a fleet of fifty sail, laden with treasure, got safe into Lisbon, from Brazil. With the troops and crews dreadfully reduced in numbers, with sickness and discontent in every vessel, and without a single prize of the least value, Lord Wimbledon arrived in Plymouth Sound, to be hissed and hooted by the indignant people, and to have his name of Cecil ridiculed as Sit-still. This sorry and unsuccessful expedition which had cost Charles so much was a grievous blow to him. A thousand men had perished in the expedition, a great sum of money had been thrown away, and the whole country was roused to anger. The Privy Council was convened and an examination into the miscarriage was instituted, but the statements of the officers were discordant, their complaints reciprocal, and after a long investigation, it was deemed expedient to bury the whole matter in silence.

It has been well said, that the only man who of the whole expedition came out with credit to himself and to his country was Richard Peeke, of Tavistock, who earned for himself the epithet of “Manly.”

What became of Peeke afterwards we do not know; in the troubles of the Civil War he doubtless played a part, and almost certainly on the side of the Crown. The authority for the story is a rare pamphlet by Peeke himself, entitled, “Three to One, Being, An English-Spanish Combat, Performed by a Westerne Gentleman, of Tavystoke in Devonshire, with an English Quarter-Staffe, against Three Spanish Rapiers and Poniards, at Sherries in Spaine, The fifteene day of November, 1625 ... the Author of this Booke, and Actor in this Encounter, *Richard Peeke*.” There is no date to it. This has been reprinted by Mr. Arber in his *English Garner*, and large extracts have been given by Mr. Brooking-Rowe in his article, “Manly Peeke, of Tavistock,” in the *Transactions* of the Devonshire Association, 1879. Reprinted also as supplement to *Devon Notes and Queries*, 1905. I have not in the above extracts strictly confined myself to the spelling, nor have I reproduced the capital letters employed profusely that are somewhat teasing to the eye of the modern reader.

## EULALIA PAGE

Mrs. Bray, in her *Borders of the Tamar and the Tavy*, written in 1832–3, quoting a letter from her husband, the Rev. E. Atkins Bray, to Mr. Lysons, dated 16 January, 1819, tells the following story relative to Judge Glanville, of Kilworthy, near Tavistock: —

“The Judge’s daughter was attached to George Stanwich, a young man of Tavistock, lieutenant of a man-of-war, whose letters, the father disapproving of the attachment, were intercepted. An old miser of Plymouth, of the name of Page, wishing to have an heir to disappoint his relations, who perhaps were too confident in calculating upon sharing his wealth, availed himself of the apparent neglect of the young sailor, and settling on her a good jointure obtained her hand. She took with her a maid-servant from Tavistock; but her husband was so penurious that he dismissed all the other servants, and caused his wife and her maid to do all the work themselves. On an interview subsequently taking place between her and Stanwich, she accused him of neglecting to write to her; and then discovered that his letters had been intercepted. The maid advised them to get rid of the old gentleman, and Stanwich at length, with great reluctance, consented to their putting an end to him. Page lived in what was afterwards the Mayoralty House (at Plymouth), and a woman who lived opposite hearing at night some sand thrown against a window, thinking it was her own, arose, and, looking out, saw a young gentleman near Page’s window, and heard him say, ‘For God’s sake stay your hand!’ A female replied, ‘Tis too late, the deed is done.’ On the following morning it was given out that Page had died suddenly in the night, and as soon as possible he was buried. On the testimony, however, of his neighbour, the body was taken up again; and it appearing that he had been strangled, his wife, Stanwich, and the maid, were tried and executed. It is current among the common people here, that Judge Glanville, her own father, pronounced her sentence.”

In another place, Mrs. Bray says: —

“Respecting Sir John, or ‘Old Page,’ I am informed by Mr. Hughes (who is well acquainted with many locally interesting stories and traditions) that he was an eminent merchant in his day, commonly called ‘Wealthy Page.’ He lived in Woolster Street, Plymouth, in the house since known by the name of the Mayoralty. It stood untouched till the rebuilding of the Guildhall, when it was taken down. The old house was long an object of curiosity on account of the atrocious murder there committed. Mr. Hughes likewise tells me that some years ago, previous to the repairs in St. Andrew’s Church, Plymouth, Page’s coffin was discovered, on breaking the ground near the communion table for the interment of a lady named Lovell. The inscription on the coffin proved it to contain the body of the ‘wealthy Page.’ It was opened; the remains were found in a remarkably perfect state, but crumbled to dust on being exposed to the air. So great was the curiosity of the populace, that during several days hundreds pressed in to gratify it, and every relic that could be stolen, if but a nail from the coffin, was carried off.”

Judge Glanville, M.P. for Tavistock in 1586, was the third son of John Glanville, of Tavistock, merchant. The family had been settled at Holwell, in Whitchurch, hard by, where they had been tanners, and though the house has been pulled down and rebuilt, yet the old tan-pits remain.

Judge Glanville married Alice, daughter of John Skirett, of Tavistock, and widow of Sir Francis Godolphin. By her he had a numerous family, but Mistress Page, whose Christian name was Eulalia, is not recorded in the *Heralds’ Visitation* as one of them. This, however, is in itself no evidence against her having been his daughter, as having disgraced the family she would be omitted from the pedigree. Thus, in the family of Langford, of Langford, in Bratton Clovelly, Margaret, daughter of Moses Langford, born in February, 1605, had a base child who was christened Hilary, in January, 1618, when she was aged thirteen, and married Hilary Hill, of Chimsworthy, presumedly the father, in 1619. When the family recorded their pedigree in 1620, they omitted Margaret from it altogether.

It is therefore no evidence that Eulalia was not Judge Glanville's daughter that her name does not appear in the recorded pedigree. We shall see presently, however, that she was his niece, and not his daughter.

The whole of the portion relating to Page is printed in the *Shakespeare Society's Papers*, II (1845, 80–5). From this we learn that Mrs. Page made an attempt to poison her husband, and when that failed, induced “one of her servants, named Robert Priddis [i.e. Prideaux],” to murder him, and “she so corrupted him . . . that he solemnly undertook and vowed to performe the task to her contentment. On the other side, Strangwidge hired one Tom Stone to be an actor in this tragick action.” The deed was accomplished about ten o'clock on the night of 11 February, 1590–1.

A full and particular account of the murder is in “A true discourse of a cruel and inhumane murder, committed upon M. Padge, of Plimouth, the 11th day of February last, 1591, by the consent of his own wife and sundry others.” From this we learn that a Mr. Glandfeeld, a man of good wealth and account as any in the county, lived at Tavistock, and that he favoured a young man named George Strangwidge, and turned over to him his shop and wares, as an experienced man in business, having learned it in the shop of Mr. Powell, of Bread Street, London. Mr. Glandfeeld was so pleased with him, that he proposed taking Strangwidge into partnership and marrying his daughter to him. But he changed his mind, being moved by ambition and avarice, and he and his wife insisted on her marrying a widower named Page, of Plymouth, an elderly man and a miser, and as Glandfeeld purposed himself removing to Plymouth, he thought that it would be best to have his daughter near him. This daughter was with difficulty persuaded to consent, but did so in the end. The result was that she took the old husband in detestation, and plotted with Strangwidge how to get rid of him. For about a year she made sundry attempts to poison him, but his good constitution prevailed. She on her part worked on one of her servants, Robert Priddis or Prideaux, and induced him for the sum of £140 reward, to murder the old man. On the other hand, Strangwidge induced one Tom Stone to assist in the deed, also for the sake of payment. “These two instruments wickedly prepared themselves to effect this desperate and villainous deed on the 11th February, being Wednesday, on which night following the act was committed; but it is to be remembered that this Mistress Page lay not then with her husband, by reason of the untimely birth of a child . . . dead born; upon which cause she kept her chamber, having before sworn that she would never bear child of his getting that should prosper; which argued a most ungodly mind in this woman, for in that sort she had been the death of two of her own children.

“About ten of the clock at night, Mr. Page being in bed slumbering, could not happen upon a sound sleep, and lay musing to himself, Tom Stone came softly and knocked at the door, whereupon Priddis, his companion, did let him in; and by reason that Mistress Page gave them straight charge to dispatch it that night, whatsoever came of it, they drew towards the bed, intending immediately to go about it. Mr. Page, being not asleep, asked who came in, whereat Priddis leaped upon his master, being in his bed, who roused himself and got upon his feet, and had been hard enough for his man, but that Stone flew upon him, and took the kerchief from his head, and knitting the same about his neck, they immediately stifled him; and, as it appeareth, even in the anguish of death, Mr. Page greatly laboured to put the kerchief from about his neck, by reason of the marks and scratches which he had made with his nails upon his throat, but therewith he could not prevail, for they would not slip their hold until he was full dead. This done, they laid him overthwart the bed, and against the bedside broke his neck; and when they saw he was surely dead, they stretched him and laid him on his bed again, spreading the clothes in ordinary sort, as though no such act had been attempted, but that he had died on God's hand.

“Whereupon Priddis immediately went to Mistress Page's chamber and told her that all was dispatched; and about an hour after he came to his mistress's chamber door, and called aloud, ‘Mistress, let somebody look into my master's chamber, methinks I heard him groan.’ With that she called her maid, who was not privy to anything, and had her light a candle, whereupon she slipped on a petticoat and went thither likewise, sending her maid first into the chamber, when she herself

stood at the door. The maid simply felt on her master's face and found him cold and stiff, and told her mistress so; whereat she bade the maid warm a cloth and wrap it about his feet, which she did; and when she felt his legs, they were as cold as clay; whereat she cried out, saying her master was dead.

“Whereupon her mistress got her to bed, and caused her man Priddis to go call her father, Mr. Glandfeeld, then dwelling in Plymouth, and sent for one of her husband's sisters likewise, to make haste if ever she would see her brother alive, for he was taken with the disease called the pull (palsy), as they call it in that country. These persons being sent for came immediately; whereat Mistress Page arose, and in a counterfeit manner swooned; whereby there was no suspicion a long time concerning any murder performed upon him, until Mrs. Harris, his sister, spied blood about his bosom, which he had with his nails procured by scratching for the kerchief when it was about his throat. They then moved his head, and found his neck broken, and on both knees the skin beaten off, by striving with them to save his life. Mistress Harris hereupon perceiving how he was made away, went to the Mayor and the worshipful of the town, desiring of them justice, and entreated them to come and behold this lamentable spectacle, which they immediately performed, and by searching him found that he was murdered the same night.

“Upon this the Mayor committed Priddis to prison, who, being examined, did impeach Tom Stone, showing that he was a chief actor in the same. This Thomas Stone was married upon the next day after the murder was committed, and being in the midst of his jollity, was suddenly attached and committed to prison to bear his fellow company.

“Thus did the Lord unfold this wretched deed, whereby immediately the said Mistress Page attached upon murder, and examined before Sir Francis Drake, Knight, with the Mayor and other magistrates of Plymouth, who denied not the same, but said she had rather die with Strangwidge than live with Page.

“At the same time also the said George Strangwidge was nearly come to Plymouth, being very heavy and doubtful by reason he had given consent to the murder; who, being in company with some of London, was apprehended and called before the justices for the same, whereupon he confessed the truth of all and offered to prove that he had written a letter to Plymouth before coming thither, that at any hand they should not perform the act. Nevertheless, Mr. Page was murdered before the coming of this letter, and therefore he was sent to prison with the rest to Exeter; and at the Assizes holden this last Lent, the said George Strangwidge, Mistress Page, Priddis, and Tom Stone, were condemned and adjudged to die for the said fact, and were all executed accordingly upon Saturday the 20th February last, 1591.”

This is circumstantial enough, and contemporary, and it shows how that the story travelling down traditionally has been altered.

The tract above quoted – we have modernized the spelling – does not, however, give the Christian name of Mistress Page, and gives us the name of her father, Glandfeeld, a merchant tradesman of Tavistock. Glandfeeld is the same as Glanville, just as Priddis is the same as Prideaux, and as Grenville appears in the registers and in deeds as Grenfeeld and Greenfield.

That she was not the daughter of Justice Glanville is plain from the above account, but she was a niece, for Eulalia was the daughter of Nicolas, the eldest son of John Glanville, merchant, of Tavistock; he and another brother, Thomas, were in trade at Tavistock, and they were both brothers of Judge Glanville. This we learn from the Heralds' Visitation of Cornwall for 1620, where Eulalia is entered as daughter of Nicolas, but with no details concerning her.

There appeared several ballads concerning the tragedy.

1. “The Lamentation of Master Page's wife of Plimouth, who being enforced by her parents to wed against her will, did most wickedly consent to his murther, for the love of *George Strangwidge*, for which fact she suffered death at Bar[n]staple in Devonshire. Written with her own hand a little before her death.” This is, of course, untrue. It is one of those supposititious confessions written by the common ballad monger. By this we know that her Christian name was *Ulalia*.

2. “The Lamentation of *George Strangwidge*, who for consenting to the death of Master *Page of Plimouth*, suffered Death at Bar[n]staple.” In this occurs the statement that she was the daughter of “Glandfield.”

O Glandfield, cause of my committed crime,  
Snared in wealth, as Birds in bush of lime,

\* \* \* \* \*

I would to God thy wisdome had been more,  
Or that I had not entered in the door;  
Or that thou hadst a kinder Father beene  
Unto thy Child, whose yeares are yet but greene.

The match unmeete which thou for much didst make,  
When aged *Page* thy Daughter home did take,  
Well maist thou rue with teares that cannot dry.  
Which was the cause that foure of us must dye.

*Ulalia* faire, more bright than Summer’s sunne,  
Whose beauty hath my heart for ever won,  
My soule more sobs to thinke of thy disgrace,  
Than to behold mine own untimely race.

In this also, as will be seen, Mistress Page is Eulalia, and her father Glandfield is said to have been rich.

3. “The Sorrowful Complaint of *Mistress Page* for causing her husband to be murdered, for the love of *George Strangwidge*, who were executed together.” This contains no particulars relative to her relationship to the Glanvilles.

It may at first sight seem strange that a crime committed at Plymouth should be expiated at Barnstaple, but the reason is simple enough. In September, 1589, the plague broke out in Exeter, and it was very fatal in that year, according to Lysons. Under ordinary circumstances the murderers of Page would have been tried at Exeter; but with the terrible remembrance of the “Black Assize” in that city in 1586, when the judge, eight justices, and all the jury except one, fell victims to the gaol fever; and the plague continuing there, the assizes of 1590 (o.s.) were removed to Barnstaple.

The Diary of Philip Wyot, town clerk of Barnstaple from 1586 to 1608, has been printed by Mr. J. R. Chanter in his *Literary History of Barnstaple*, and he records that the assize was held in 1590 at Honiton and at Great Torrington, “the plague being much at Exeter,” and he gives particulars of the assizes held at Barnstaple in the ensuing March, 1591 (n.s.), and he terminates thus: —

“The gibbet was set up on the Castle Green and xvii prisoners hanged, whereof iiij of Plymouth for a murder.”

The parish register gives the particulars and the names: —

“Here ffolloweth the names of the Prysoners w<sup>ch</sup> were Buryed in the Church yeard of Barnistaple ye syce [assize] week.

“March 1590–1.

.....

“George Strongewithe, Buryed the xx<sup>th</sup> daye.

“Thomas Stone, Buryed the xx<sup>th</sup> daye.

“Robert Preidyox, Buryed at Bishopstawton y<sup>e</sup> xx<sup>th</sup> daye.”

The three men were hanged, but Eulalia Page was burnt alive, as guilty of petty treason. Moreover, her uncle, Justice Glanville, did not condemn her to the stake. He was serjeant-at-law, and was not made a Justice of the Common Pleas till 1598, when he was knighted. He died in 1600, and his stately monument is in Tavistock Church.

The judge who sentenced Eulalia Page was, as Wyot tells us, “Lord Anderson,” who tried all the cases “and gave judgment upon those who were to be executed.” But John Glanville, serjeant-at-law, was present at these assizes; for Wyot gives the list of the lawyers present at the time, and he names “Sergt. Glandyl” as lodging at Roy Cades. Glandyl is a mistake for Glandvyl.

As the crime of Eulalia Page was one of petty treason, she would be burnt alive, and not hanged. Petty treason, according to a statute 25 Edward III, consists in (1) a servant killing his master; (2) a wife her husband; (3) an ecclesiastic his superior, to whom he owes faith and obedience. The punishment of petty treason in a man was to be drawn and hanged, and in a woman to be drawn and burned.

Catherine Hayes was burned alive in 1726 for the murder of her husband. She is the Catherine whom Thackeray took as heroine of the story under that name. In 1769 Susanna Lott was burned for the murder of her husband at Canterbury. A poor girl, aged fifteen, was burnt at Heavitree by Exeter, in 1782, for poisoning her master. A woman was burnt for causing the death of her husband, at Winchester, in 1783.

A writer in *Notes and Queries*, August 10, 1850, says: “I will state a circumstance that occurred to myself in 1788. Passing in a hackney coach up the Old Bailey to West Smithfield, I saw unquenched embers of a fire opposite Newgate. On my alighting, I asked the coachman, ‘What was that fire in the Old Bailey over which the wheel of your coach passed?’ ‘Oh, sir,’ he replied, ‘they have been burning a woman for murdering her husband.’”

In 1790, Sir Benjamin Hammett in the House of Commons called attention to the then state of the law. He said that it had been his painful office and duty in the previous year to attend the burning of a female, he being at the time Sheriff of London; and he moved to bring in a Bill to alter the law. He showed that the sheriff who shrank from executing the sentence of burning alive was liable to a prosecution, but he thanked Heaven that there was not a man in England who would carry such a sentence literally into execution. The executioner was allowed to strangle the woman condemned to the stake before flames were applied; but such an act of humanity was a violation of the law, subjecting executioner and sheriff to penalties. The Act was passed 30 George III, c. 48.

Popular tradition has erred on many points. It has made Eulalia the daughter instead of the niece of John Glanville, it has represented him as a judge to try her seven years before he was created a judge. Tradition will have it that after the sentence of Eulalia he never smiled again. That is possible enough, as he may have defended her at the assizes, and may have witnessed her execution.

Information concerning, and republication of tracts and ballads relative to the murder of Page are in H. F. Whitfeld’s *Plymouth and Devonport, in Times of War and Peace*, Plymouth, 1900. This also gives extracts from, and mention of, plays founded on the story.

## JAMES WYATT

James Wyatt was born at Woodbury on the Exe in the year 1707. His father was a shoemaker, but James lost both him and his mother when he was very young. He had a brother and two sisters, and he was the youngest of the four. After the death of his parents his eldest sister took care of him, sent him to school, and when old enough to work got him employment on a farm, where he remained till he was fourteen years of age; but, not liking farm work, his sister apprenticed him to a woolcomber and dyer at Wembury. His master was a very honest, good-natured man, and taught him his business well, and this, as we shall see in the sequel, was of the highest advantage to him.

As soon as his time of apprenticeship was up he entered as gunner's server on board the *York* man-of-war. In 1726 he went with Sir John Jennings to Lisbon and Gibraltar. Next he served on board the *Experiment* under Captain Radish; but his taste for the sea failed for a while, and he was lured by the superior attractions of a puppet-show to engage with the proprietor, named Churchill, and to play the trumpet at his performances. During four years he travelled with the show, then tiring of dancing dolls, reverted to woolcombing and dyeing at Trowbridge. But a travelling menagerie was too much for him, and he followed that as trumpeter for four years. In 1741, he left the wild beasts and entered as trumpeter on board the *Revenge* privateer, Captain Wemble, commander, who was going on a cruise against the Spaniards. The privateer fell in with a Spanish vessel from Malaga, and gave chase. She made all the sail she could, but in four or five hours the *Revenge* came up with her. "We fir'd five times at her. She had made everything ready to fight us, but seeing the number of our hands (which were one hundred in all, though three parts of them were boys) she at length brought to. We brought the captain and mate on board our ship, and put twelve men on board theirs, one of which was the master, and our captain gave him orders to carry her into Plymouth." Of the prize-money Wyatt got forty shillings. The capture did not prove to be as richly laden as had been anticipated.

We need not follow his adventures in the privateer, though they are interesting enough, and give a lively picture of the audacity of these venturers, till we come to his capture. The *Revenge* was cruising about among the Canary Islands, when a Spanish vessel ran for Teneriffe from Palma, and was at once pursued. She sped for Gomera, but unable to weather the point came to anchor within half a cable's length of the shore. She was a bark of sixty tons burthen, and as the *Revenge* drew more water and the captain feared sunken rocks, he ordered the yawl to be hoisted out and to be manned with eleven hands.

"We were three hours after we left the ship before we got within musket-shot of the bark. Our master ask'd us if we were all willing to board her. We answered, one and all, we were. We saw twelve men ashore, and made directly towards them. Our master said, 'My boys, the bark's our own, for these men belong'd to her, but have left her; let us give them one volley, and then board the bark.' We had two brass blunderbusses, mounted on swivels, in the bow of the boat. Our master stepp'd forward to one of them himself, and order'd me to the other. We had no sooner discharged the blunderbusses, but two or three hundred men came from behind the rocks. We had been so long getting to the bark that the men belonging to her, unknown to us, had got out of her, gone up country, and brought these people to their assistance. Our blunderbusses being discharged, the men from behind the rocks kept up a constant fire at us; and, at the very first fire, our master received a ball just above his right eye, and another went almost through my right shoulder. We rowed directly to the bark. The lieutenant, myself, and four more leapt into her, and those that were in the boat handed in our arms. As soon as we were in the bark, the lieutenant order'd one of our men to take a pole-axe and cut the cable, saying she would drive off. I told him if the cable was cut she would certainly drive ashore, for she was then almost upon the breakers. He seem'd a little angry at what I said, though had my advice been followed, it had been better for us all; for, as soon as the cable was cut, she turn'd broadside to the sea, and in a few minutes after struck ashore against the rocks.

“By the bark’s swinging round, our boat was exposed to the fire of the enemy; upon which Mr. Perry, our master-at-arms (he had been organist at Ross parish church) order’d the three men in the boat to row off. In less than a minute I saw Mr. Perry drop to the bottom of the boat, shot through the heart.

“While the Spaniards were firing at our boat, we that were in the bark kept firing at them. We fired as fast as possible, and threw all our hand-granades ashore, which did some execution. Our lieutenant being shot, and our powder almost exhausted, we laid down our arms. As soon as the Spaniards saw this, they came on board us. The first man they saw was our lieutenant, who, although he was dead, they began to cut in a very cruel manner. The next man they came to was William Knock, whom they butcher’d in a most barbarous manner, several of them cutting him with their long hooks at once, though he cry’d out for mercy all the time. In the same manner they serv’d all in the bark but myself.

“Being in the bow of the bark, seeing their cruelty to our men, and expecting the same fate every moment, I took the blunderbuss which I had in one hand, and laid it on a pease cask, being unable to hold it high enough to fire, as the ball remain’d still in my right shoulder. When I saw them coming towards me, I rais’d it up with all my might, as though I was going to fire it at them, upon which they all ran to the other side of the bark, and from thence leapt ashore.

“At that very instant a great sea came in, and turned the bark on one side, with her keel towards the shore. This gave me an opportunity of pulling off my clothes and jumping into the water, in order to swim to my ship. As soon as they saw me they began to fire at me from every side. Five small shot lodg’d between my shoulders, three in the poll of my neck, and one ball graz’d my left shoulder; besides the ball which I had before receiv’d in my right shoulder.

“I kept on swimming till I was out of the reach of their balls; and I should have been able to have swam to our own ship, had not the Spaniards launch’d their boat and come after me. As soon as they came up to me, one of the men who stood in the bow of the boat, and had a half-pike in his hand, pointed towards me and said in the Spanish language, ‘Down, down, you English dog.’ Then they pulled me into the boat. As I stood upright in the boat, one of the Spaniards struck me a blow on the breast with such violence, that it beat me backwards, and I fell to the bottom of the boat; after which they row’d ashore. When they came ashore, they haul’d me out of the boat as though I had been a dog; which I regarded not at the time, being very weak and faint with swimming and the loss of blood. On their bringing me ashore, the enraged multitude crowded round me, and carried me a little way from the place where they had landed; they placed me against a rock to shoot me, and threatened to run me through with a half-pike if I offered to stir.

“While I was plac’d against the rock, and expecting death every moment, I saw a gentleman expostulating with the mob, and endeavouring to prevail with them to spare my life. After a small time he came directly to me and said in English, ‘Countryman, don’t be afraid; they want to kill you, but they shall not.’ He then turn’d his back to me, stood close before me, opened his breast, and said if they shot me they should shoot him likewise.”

His preserver was an Irishman, named William Ryan, who spoke Spanish fluently, and had been in the bark on his way to Santa Cruz in Teneriffe. He was apparently a man who had lived some time in the Canaries, and had been a trader. He was very kind to James Wyatt, gave him some clothes, and washed his wounds with brandy.

After that he was taken to Gomera, where the deputy-governor lived, and by means of an interpreter Wyatt was able to explain to him that he was in great pain and had a ball in his shoulder. The deputy-governor sent for a barber, who with a razor cut across the wound this way and that till he saw the ball, which he hooked out with a bent nail. The ball had gone eight inches through the fleshy part of the shoulder and was lodged against the bone. From Gomera Wyatt was sent by boat to Teneriffe to the head governor, who received and examined him. The governor’s mother took compassion on him, saw that he was well fed, and sent a proper surgeon to dress his wounds, and

made him a present of three shirts and two handkerchiefs to make into a sling for his arm. Next day the kind old lady sent him a pair of silk stockings, a hat, a black silk waistcoat, and a dollar in money.

Wyatt was now transferred to the castle at Laguna, above Santa Cruz, where he found five-and-twenty English prisoners, among whom was a physician, Dr. Ross. It was some time before he was healed of his wounds, but eventually did recover.

One day a man came to the castle with a drum on his back, and Wyatt at once asked him to be allowed to beat it. To this he consented, and Wyatt beat a march. Though not a skilled drummer, his performance greatly delighted the owner of the drum, and he rushed off to an acquaintance, a gentleman, to announce that among the English prisoners was the first drummer in the world.

The gentleman was much excited and sent for him, and was delighted. After that at every dinner party, entertainment, gathering, Wyatt was in requisition to rattle the drum, on which occasions he received little sums of money, which he employed in relieving the needs of his fellow prisoners.

After he had been twenty-eight days in the castle he was sent for to Santa Cruz to the general, who had heard that he drummed, and was eager to hear the performance. This pleased him so well that he asked Wyatt if he would teach the black boy of a friend of his how to handle the drum-sticks. Wyatt consented, and thus obtained much liberty, for the owner of the black boy, whom he called Don Mathias Caster, took him into his own house. As instructing the boy did not occupy the whole of Wyatt's time, he resolved on turning his knowledge of dyeing to advantage. The Spanish love black; and as the gentleman told him, black cloaks and dresses in the sun and with the dust soon turned rusty. He gave him an old kettle and lent him an outhouse, and Wyatt converted the latter into a dye-house and re-dyed the cloth garments of most of the gentlemen of Santa Cruz, and received from each a remuneration.

Dr. Ross had been released from prison on condition that he set up as a physician in Santa Cruz, where the Spanish doctors were ignorant and unsuccessful. But Ross had no house to go into. He consulted Wyatt. "I will build you one of wood," said this Jack-of-all-trades. "I know something of carpentering." Accordingly he set to work, built a shanty, painted it gaily, enclosed a garden, surrounded it with a palisade, and dug the ground up for flowers and vegetables and herbs.

A Spanish gentleman was so delighted with the house of Dr. Ross that he asked Wyatt to build him one. Wyatt agreed, but in the midst of the work was arrested by soldiers from Grand Canary and conveyed thither to be examined by the Inquisition, which supposed him to be a Freemason. He had happily provided himself with letters of recommendation from a number of leading men in the isle of Teneriffe to whom he had done services, and in return for blackening their suits they did their best to whiten his character. After several hearings he was discharged, but one unfortunate Englishman languished for two years in their dungeons, labouring under the suspicion of being a Freemason.

On his return to Santa Cruz, Wyatt completed the house on which he had begun, and then looked about for more work. Don Mathias Caster said to him one day, "Our hats cost us a deal of money and soon get shabby." "I know how to dye, and I know something about the hatting trade," said Wyatt promptly, "for when I was an apprentice, there was a hatter next door, and I kept my eyes open and watched his proceedings."

Accordingly Don Mathias gave him one of his old hats to dress. Wyatt immediately had a hat-block made, dyed the hat, cleaned the lace, and carried it to the Don the same day.

"When I show'd it to him, he was surpriz'd to see how well I had made it look. He told me, if I would do other gentlemen's hats as well as I had done his, I might get an estate in a few years, and that he would help me to business enough." That same evening in came two hats, next morning five – and then they rained on him, and he charged half a dollar for renovating each. He had soon realized £20.

One night he was roused by the cry of fire, and running out saw a crowd standing gaping at the house of the Portuguese consul that was on fire in the top story. No one did anything – there was no one to take the lead, and the family was fast asleep within. Wyatt got a crowbar and an axe, broke down the door, and rescued the consul and his wife and all the family save one child that was

burnt. The fire rapidly spread, as the houses were of wood, to the next house belonging to the French consul. He and his were rescued. The next, but not adjoining, house was that of the general. But what intervened made its destruction probable, for this was a cellar full of brandy and rum casks. The general's house had a flat roof. Wyatt organized a chain of water carriers, and standing on the roof poured water incessantly over the side of the house licked by the flames, and this he continued to do till the fire burnt itself out.

Next day the general sent for him, thanked him for having saved his house, and presented him with a passport authorizing him to carry on his trade and travel freely between the seven islands.

In the beginning of June, 1742, an English vessel was brought into harbour, the *Young Neptune*, Captain Winter, that had been captured by a Spanish privateer. Wyatt soon became intimate with the captain and his mate, and after a while they confided to him a plan they had discussed of escaping to Madeira, whence they could easily obtain a passage to England or Holland. The scheme was that he, Winter, the captain, Burroughs, the mate, and four other Englishmen should steal a boat from a galleon laid up in the bay and make their escape in the night. Wyatt eagerly agreed to be one of the party; and the plan was carried into effect on the 29th of June. There were seven in the boat, the captain and mate aforementioned, Smith, Swanwick, Larder, Newell, and Wyatt. The boat had five oars and a sprit-sail. The captain had a compass, but no quadrant. At first the wind blew fair, but speedily turned to the contrary direction desired, so that all hopes of making Madeira had to be abandoned. The wind rose to a gale and the men were worn out with bailing. They had to clear the boat of water with two pails and their hats. On 2 July they sighted a point of land which they took to be Cape Bojadore, and they steered south in hopes of reaching Gambia. On 7 July they saw a low sandy island, and a sloop ashore, and made at once for land. On disembarking they were surrounded by a swarm of Moors and negroes, the former of whom could speak a little Portuguese, and two of them spoke broken English. Wyatt and the rest were conducted inland to where there was a village of squalid huts. Here they were given some fish and a little water. They speedily discovered that the Moors had no intention of letting them go to Gambia, but purposed making off with their boat and leaving them to perish on the island where there was no water, all that was used having to be brought in skins from the mainland. Presently a number of the Moors departed in the boat of the Europeans, leaving behind only one large boat that was rotten, and a small one; and some of the Moors remained to see that the English carpenter repaired the decayed vessel, intending when that was done to leave the Europeans behind. These consulted and resolved on getting possession of the little boat and escaping in it. As a precaution they contrived to get hold of the fishing spears of the Moors, so that these might have as few weapons as possible, should it come to a fight.

The carpenter then, with the tools that had been given to him for the purpose of repairing the large boat, set to work to knock holes in her bottom, so that she might not be used in pursuit.

Then the little party, having got together, made for the small boat. "I had got the hammer and the adze, the carpenter had the hatchet, and the rest of our people had fishing spears. The Moors, perceiving us make towards the boat, ran between that and us, in order to prevent our getting into her. This began the fight, for the carpenter beat Marta into the water, which was about three feet deep, with the hatchet, and Duckamar presently after him. I struck Mahomet with the adze, and took off a piece of flesh and part of his ear. In an instant every one was out of their huts, and pulling them down in order to get sticks to fight us. Seeing this, we ran to the assistance of our countrymen as fast as we could, leaving the two Moors that fell into the water for dead.

"The Moors came very near us with the sticks they pulled out of their huts, and threw them at us, one of which hit Robert Larder and broke his thumb. One of our men, looking round, saw the two Moors who we thought were dead standing up against the side of the boat. Upon his saying they were there, I ran towards them, having still the hammer in one hand and the adze in the other. When they saw me coming, they ran round the boat, got to their companions, and fought as well as though they had not been hurt.

“We were obliged to keep our ground, for fear some of the Moors should get into the little boat, in which we intended to make our escape, and which was not an hundred yards behind us. At length one of the Moors came running behind Mr. Burroughs, and gave him a terrible blow on the head with a stick. Mr. Burroughs immediately turned round and struck at him, but missed him. The man ran directly up the island; and Mr. Burroughs, in the hurry not thinking of the consequence, ran after him. We kept calling to him to come back to us, when, on a sudden, the Moors took to their heels and ran after him. Some of them presently came up with him, knocked him down with their sticks, and cut his throat from ear to ear. Some of them then turned back and made towards their little boat, thinking to have got her off in order to prevent our escape. As soon as we saw that, we all ran as fast as possible to secure the boat. As I was the nearest to the boat I got soonest to her; but there was one of the Moors had got to the boat before me, and was getting up her side. I gave him a blow on his back with the hammer; upon which he let go his hold and fell into the water. As he was falling I hit him another blow on the head; upon which he fell under the boat, and rose on the other side.

“While we were in the fight, three of our men got into the boat, and kept calling to the rest to come in likewise; which at length we did, retreating all the way with our faces towards the Moors. When we came to the boat, the other three, with the fishing spears, kept off the Moors till we got in, cut the grappling loose, and drove away with the tide.”

It was not possible to get far in this little boat, and the party made for the mainland, where they were at once set upon by other Moors, who stripped them of their shirts, and held them prisoners till those from the island arrived, and these latter fell on them and beat and trampled on them unmercifully, and would have cut their throats had not the mainland Moors restrained them by saying that the King or Sultan of the Gum Coast must be informed that there were European prisoners there, and that he would decide what was to be done with them. They were then tied in pairs back to back and carried back to the island, where they were cast on the floor of a tent, and left thus without food or water for four days. After that they were sparingly fed, untied, and made to work as slaves. After some weeks an officer called Abede arrived with nineteen men, reviewed them, and left. As soon as he was gone Swanwick, the carpenter, was taken away by the island Moors, and no tidings of what became of him ever reached the rest. Sixteen days after the officer had left he returned with orders from the King or Sultan that all who remained of the prisoners were to be transferred to the mainland and conducted across the desert to the French factory at Senegal, where he hoped to receive pay from the French for surrendering them.

The party had been taken prisoners by the Moors on 7 July, 1742, and they were not released and committed to the charge of Abede till 13 November, so that they had remained in durance and in miserable condition for four months and six days. At one time, when deprived of their shirts and exposed to the sun, their faces and bodies were so blistered that they were unable to recognize each other, save by their voices. They had now a long and painful journey over the desert, under the charge of Abede, that lasted till the 23rd December, when they were near Senegal, and Abede dispatched a messenger to the French factors to announce that the European prisoners were at hand, and to bargain for a sum to be paid for their release. They had been tramping over burning sands, insufficiently fed, for forty days. Whilst waiting for news from the factory the Moors killed an ox, and gave the head and guts to the English prisoners. They boiled the meat on the sand and devoured it greedily – it was the first flesh they had tasted for upwards of six months.

“Sometime after we got some caravances. Having eaten no pulse for several months, we hardly knew when we had enough. But we suffered severely for it, for we were presently afterwards taken extremely ill. The Moors seeing we were very bad, gave us the urine of goats to drink. This purged us prodigiously, and we remained ill for several hours; but, when it had worked off, we grew speedily well.”

Five days more elapsed before an answer arrived from the factory. On 28 December the messenger returned in a sloop sent from the factory to bring the prisoners to Senegal. The captain

brought clothes for them, and gave them “an elegant entertainment, consisting of fowls, fresh meat, etc.”

On 29 December they were conveyed to the factory at Senegal, and were most kindly received by the French, and they remained there for a month all but a day; and then were sent in a French sloop to Gambia, on 28 January, 1743, which they reached on 31 January. Gambia was an English settlement, a fort, and a factory; and there also the poor fellows were kindly and hospitably entertained, provided with money and all they required.

The time of their sufferings was now over.

“The 1st February I went on board the *Robert*, Captain Dent, commander, lying in Gambia River. He was hir’d by the African Company and was laden with gum arabick, elephants’ teeth, bees-wax, &c. I told him our case, and that I wanted to come to England; upon which he kindly promised me, or all of us, if we were so disposed, our passage to England *gratis*, provided we would work our way home. Captain Winter, however, had business to transact in Jamaica, and preferred to wait till a vessel would take him thither; two of the men remained at Gambia, and the rest, saying that they had no homes or friends in England, preferred to go to the West Indies and earn some money before they returned to the right and tight little island.

“It was an unfortunate decision of Captain Winter. He and Larder sailed in a schooner bound for Jamaica, but never reached his destination, as the vessel was lost, and every one of the crew and passengers was drowned.

“We set sail from Gambia the 3rd of February, 1743, and arrived in the river Thames on the 16th of April following; so that we were just two months and thirteen days in our passage to England.”

On the 29th May, 1741, James Wyatt had entered as trumpeter on board the *Revenge*, privateer, and was away on her almost two years, during which time he had undergone as many hardships as ever man did – enough to break down the health of one who did not possess a constitution of iron.

Wyatt now visited his friends, and was warmly welcomed, and all would have given him money to start him in some business. One gentleman offered to advance him a thousand pounds; but he declined these generous offers. The French at Senegal and the English at Gambia had been so liberal that he had enough for his purpose. He now bought an electrical machine, and turned showman in London, giving people shocks at a shilling a head. This answered for a while, and then public interest in the machine slackened there, so he toured in the country.

“At some towns I scarce took money enough to bear my expenses, the people not knowing the meaning of the word Electricity; nor would they give the price I usually got in London; for, talking of a shilling each person, frightened them out of their wits. In some towns in Kent I had very good business, and saved a pretty deal of money; but, even then, I was forced to lower my price. In these towns the people knew what it meant, and that the thing was very curious and surprising. They came, when the price was not so high, in great numbers, and sometimes many miles, to be electrified.”

He remained in Kent two months and made twelve pounds. Then it occurred to him that he would go with his battery to Jamaica, where the novelty of the machine was certain to create a stir.

Whilst preparing for the voyage, he undertook to manufacture an optical contrivance for a gentleman, and was well paid for it.

Then he bought a pair of gloves and abundance of clothes, as clothes he learned were very dear in the West Indies.

“At length the time of the ship’s sailing being near at hand, I settled my affairs, took my leave of my friends, and went on board the ship on the 25th April, 1747.

“After having experienced various vicissitudes of fortune, I am once more going into a strange land: for, though there is nothing new under the sun, yet the eye is never satisfied with seeing.”

Wyatt had committed his adventures to paper before starting, and had disposed of the MS. to a publisher. The book sold well, and the sixth edition was called for in 1755, but in it no further

particulars are given of Wyatt, so that it must be assumed either that he was then dead or that he was still abroad.

What strikes one in reading his Memoirs is the indefatigable energy and the resourcefulness of the man. He could turn his hand to anything. He kept his eyes open, and was ever eager to acquire information.

His *Life and Surprising Adventures* has his portrait in copper plate prefixed to it. He wears a wig, and a laced and embroidered waistcoat, open at the breast to display his fine frilled shirt.

## THE REV. W. DAVY

This is the story of the life of an able, versatile, and learned man, neglected, and his “unregarded age in corners thrown.”

He was born 4 March, 1743, at Downhouse, in the parish of Tavistock, of respectable parents. They moved whilst he was still an infant to a farm belonging to them, Knighton, in the parish of Hennock. As a child he was fond of mechanics, and amused himself with contriving various pieces of machinery. When aged eight years he watched the construction of a mill, and imitated it in small in wood, thoroughly grasping all the points in the mechanism. After a while the workmen engaged on the mill came to a difficulty, and the mill stopped, nor could they rectify the fault. Little Will Davy pointed out the defects; they saw that he was right, remedied the defects, and the mill ran “suently.”

He was educated at the Exeter Grammar School, and at the age of eighteen matriculated at Balliol College, Oxford. Whilst there the idea came into his head to produce a great work of divinity, a compendium of evidence of the origin of the Christian Faith; but the idea lay dormant for a few years.

On leaving college he was ordained to the curacy of Moreton Hampstead, and married Sarah, daughter of a Mr. Gilbert, of Longabrook, near Kingsbridge. When settled into his curacy he began to reduce to order the plan he had devised of writing a *General System of Theology*, and wrote twelve volumes of MS. on the subject.

Then he shifted to Drewsteignton. His preaching was complained of to the Bishop of Exeter, who sent for him. He took his twelve volumes of MS. with him and showed them to the Bishop, and bade him look through them and mark any lapse from orthodoxy.

This was more than the Bishop was disposed to do; he ran his fingers through the pages, he could do no more. “What the parishioners objected to,” said Davy, “was not that I taught false doctrine, but that I rebuke vicious habits that prevail.” Actually, doubtless, it was his long-winded discourses on the evidence for a God, and for the immortality of the soul, that the people objected to. They, simple souls, no more needed these evidences than they did that they themselves lived and talked and listened.

The Bishop was courteous, and promised Davy that he would give him any living that fell vacant, and asked him if he had a preference for one. Davy humbly replied that there was a certain benefice likely to be vacated very shortly that would suit him exactly. The Bishop promised to remember this, and of course forgot, and appointed some one else, one more of a toady, or better connected.

Davy continued his mechanical work and executed several ingenious pieces of machinery.

Then he was appointed to the curacy of Lustleigh at £40 per annum; but from that sum was deducted £5 for the rent of the rectory in which he had to live, the incumbent being non-resident.

Whilst at Lustleigh he published by subscription six volumes of sermons and lost £100 by the transaction, as many of the subscribers failed to pay for the books sent to them.

Then he took to farming, but he had no experience and lost money by it, and had to abandon the farm.

The ambition of his life was to publish his *System of Divinity*, which would utterly refute atheism, deism, and every *ism* under the sun, and establish the doctrine of the Church on a sound basis. But no publisher or printer would undertake the mighty work unless sure of payment; and the price asked was far beyond the means of Davy. Determined to bring his great work before the world, he constructed his own printing press, and bought type, but could not afford to purchase more than would enable him to set up four pages of his book at a time.

Accordingly he did this, struck off forty copies, broke up the type and printed four more, and so on. He taught his servant, Mary Hole, to compose type, and these two worked together, and at last completed the work in twenty-six volumes, each of nearly five hundred pages. When the first volume was completed he sent copies to the Bishop, the Dean and Chapter, the Archdeacon, the Universities, and other persons of repute for learning. But he received no encouragement. Some of those to whom

he sent his book did not trouble to acknowledge having received it. When the vast work was complete in twenty-six volumes, he sent a copy to his diocesan, Dr. Fisher, who ungraciously said to Davy, when he called at the Palace, "I cannot be supposed to be able to notice every trifle that appears in print." To this Davy replied, "If your Lordship considers twenty-six volumes 8vo, the labour of fifty years in collecting, compiling, and printing, to be a trifle, I most certainly cannot allow myself to expect from your Lordship either approbation or encouragement."

At last he retired from the parsonage of Lustleigh, discountenanced and discouraged, to a small farm of his own, called Willmead. His curacy was now advanced to £60, and he had not to keep up the large rectory. At Willmead he amused his leisure hours with gardening. He moved the granite boulders, arranged terraces among the rocks, and formed a herbaceous garden, in which he took the liveliest interest. Whilst here he invented a diving-bell, and prepared his contrivance for use to raise the guns and other property lost in the *Royal George* (1782), but he had not the means to cause a model of his machine to be made, and his idea was taken up and carried out by others. But Davy was by no means the first inventor of the diving-bell, Dr. Halley had made one in or about 1720; it was of wood covered with lead, and air was supplied through barrels attached to it. But the plan proposed by Davy was far in advance of this, and was, in fact, practically that of the diving-bell as now in use. It was not till 1817 that the *Royal George* was surveyed by means of a diving-bell, and portions of the cargo, the guns, etc., were not raised till 1839–42. At length, at the age of eighty-two, Davy was presented in 1825 to the vicarage of Winkleigh, and that not by either the Bishop or the Dean and Chapter. But this preferment coming so late in life was rather a cruelty to him than a favour granted. It removed him from his garden, in which he had spent such happy hours, and which was crowded with his collections of rare plants procured with difficulty and from distances, from all his little contrivances, and from the comforts of his own residence. He had to shift quarters in December, caught a chill in the raw damp vicarage to which he removed, and after holding the benefice for five months, expired there on 13 June, 1826, and was laid in the chancel of Winkleigh.

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After his death three volumes of extracts from his *System of Divinity* were published, together with a Memoir, by the Rev. C. Davy, Exeter, 1827, and fell as flat as had the twenty-six volumes from which these withered arguments were culled, and no man – not a theologian even – would think it worth his while now to read a dozen pages of the work. But the intention was good – he was persistent in carrying it out, he had the honour and glory of God before his eyes, and he worked for that, and certainly will receive the commendation, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," though bishops and deans and archdeacons and the well-beneficed clergy, "bene nati, bene vestiti et moderate docti," showed him the cold shoulder here below.

But one cannot fail to regret that, placed where he had been, at Moreton, at Drewsteignton, at Lustleigh, his active mind had not been turned to more profitable pursuits. What might he not have gleaned, then, among the traditions of the people! What stores of ballads might he not have collected! What careful plans and descriptions he might have made of the prehistoric relics that then abounded around him, then almost intact, now to such a large extent wrecked and swept away.

At Drewsteignton there was a most remarkable collection of stone circles and avenues and menhirs, and all have gone, not one is now left, only the dolmen of Shilstone remains. One accurate plan drawn by Davy, and draw and plan he could, would have been worth all his twenty-six volumes of *System of Divinity*.

## THE GREY WOMAN

The following curious story is from the pen of the lady whose experience is recorded. I know both her and the localities; also a good many of the particulars, and all the names; but for good reasons it has been thought advisable to disguise both the name of the place and of the persons mentioned. Every particular is absolutely true, excepting the names that are fictitious.

“On the 1st August, 1904, we heard that we had succeeded by the death of an aunt of my husband to a considerable property in South Devon, and as bad luck would have it, the mansion on the estate had been let just two months before on a short lease. It was our duty to make Devonshire our home at once and for the future, and the wearying undertaking was before us of looking out for a suitable house.

“A few days after this I had a dream remarkably distinct and impressive, so impressive was it that on awaking every particular therein was stamped indelibly on my mind.

“I thought that I was looking over a large empty house, and I was conscious at the time that it was in Devonshire. A man was showing me through it, and we had just reached the top of the front and principal staircase, and stood on a broad landing, with many bedroom doors opening on to it. I observed one short narrow passage that led down to a door, and in that doorway, at the end of the passage, I saw a tall handsome woman in grey, deadly pale, with clean-cut features, carrying a little child of about two years of age or under upon her arm. The thought struck me, ‘Who can she be?’ But I almost immediately said to myself, ‘What can it matter to me who she is?’

“The caretaker of the house immediately, and without noticing her, led me to that very room, and went past her without a word or turning his head towards her. I followed, and in so doing brushed past the Grey Woman, also without a word.

“On entering the room I saw that in it was a second door in the same end wall in which was that by which I had come in, and that between these two doors was a broad space. I at once decided that this should be my bedchamber, and that I would place my bed between the two doors, as most convenient for the light and for the fireplace.

“Then, suddenly, without awaking, my dream shifted, and I thought that I was in that identical room, and in my own bed, placed where I had designed to place it; that all my belongings were about me.

“Next, the second door, that by which I had not entered, was opened, and again I saw the Grey Woman come in, with the little one toddling before her pushing before it a round wheel-toy with coloured beads on the spokes. I nudged my husband and said, ‘Alex, there is a nurse with a child in the room.’ True to life he answered, ‘*Bosh!*’ Nevertheless, I repeated, ‘Alex, look there – a nurse and child really are in the room.’

By this time the pair had walked round the foot of the bed, almost to his side. He raised himself on one arm, and exclaimed, ‘Good Lord! so there is.’ Then I said, ‘And they have both been dead long years ago.’

“After that I remember nothing further till I awoke in the morning.

“The dream had made such an impression on me, that at breakfast I told my daughter, and in the afternoon some friends came in to tea, and I again repeated my story, provoking great interest in the sweet ghost babe – much more so than in the nurse.

“I forgot to state that in my dream I felt quite aware that the doorway through which the Grey Woman and the child had passed did not open out of another bedroom, but communicated with the back part of the house.

“Weeks went by, and the dream, without being forgotten in any single particular, passed from my thoughts, now occupied with more practical matters – considering the lists of houses sent to us by various agents. One of these gentry had forwarded to us a special notice of a house that read like

the description of a palace. We, having no ambition that way, put it down, without considering it for a moment.

“Some days later I called on the agent, and then put down the palatial notice on his table, with the remark that this was not at all the sort of mansion that we required.

“Towards the end of September we made another expedition to Devon to see a particular house near B – . I took the train to the station and visited this house, but in ten minutes satisfied myself that it would not do. We had about five hours on hand before the train was due that would take us back to Exeter, and we were at a loss how to spend the time. Suddenly the thought struck me that the impossible house was somewhere in the neighbourhood, and rather than spend hours dawdling on the railway platform, I proposed to my daughter that we should go and see it. The driver of the carriage we had hired said that the distance was seven miles, but that he could very well take us there and back so as to catch the up train. We thought so too – but speedily discovered that his horse was extremely leisurely in its movements, and that we should not be able to spend much time in viewing the house. The day was beautiful, the sun was bright, the sky blue, and the trees just touched with autumn frost, and turning every colour.

“We traversed a maze of lanes and finally reached a lonely house, shut up, and standing in something of a jungle, trees all round it. A farm was near by, and we sent to ask if the keys were kept there. They were, and we were soon inside. We were delighted, and said at once, ‘This is just what we want; the very house to suit us.’ We returned full of it, but it must be admitted after a very hurried run through the inside. There was an entrance hall, thence led a staircase to a broad landing, out of which opened many bedroom doors, and there was a passage leading a short way to another room. But that all this was precisely like my dream did not occur to me at the time. We were in a hurry, afraid to miss our train, and my mind was occupied with house-hunting and the dream was temporarily forgotten. In my dream, it must be remembered, I had *not* seen the exterior of the house in which appeared the Grey Woman.

“On our return to Exeter we made a full report to my husband of what we had seen and decided; he had been kept from accompanying us by illness.

“We now entered into negotiations, and speedily all was settled. The drains had all to be looked to and put in order before we could take possession, which was not till the first week in December.

“About a fortnight before we moved into the house, after it had been repainted and furnished, my daughter rushed to my room one morning exclaiming, ‘Mother – you have after all taken the Ghost-dream House,’ and so it was in every particular, and I had chosen the very room for mine and arranged to place my bed in the very position I had determined on in my dream.

“At last the move was made, I feeling sure that the Grey Nurse and Little Child were part and parcel of the house.

“In coming into the property an astonishing number of old deeds in many chests had been handed over to us, and demanded sorting and investigation. A large number of them pertained to the estates that my husband owned, some of them going back five hundred years and impossible for those inexperienced in court-hand and legal documents full of contractions to decipher. But there were others that did not belong to our property, that had come into the hands of a collateral great-great-uncle, a noted lawyer, who had taken the remainder of a lease for ninety-nine years of manors and estates, and which manors and estates on the termination of the lease had reverted to the proprietors; nevertheless, the deeds had been retained relative to this particular lease.

“Whilst I was engaged along with an upholsterer daily in hanging curtains, arranging carpets, choosing wall-papers, hanging pictures and the like, my husband and daughter occupied themselves in wading through and cataloguing and assorting the vast accumulation of deeds, to the best of their ability.

“At the end of a fortnight they both came to me in great excitement, to inform me that they had come across all the papers, deeds, and parchments for generations back concerning the very house

we had just rented, and into which we had settled. This was strange indeed. Till this moment we had entertained not the smallest suspicion that this particular house and manor had ever in any way belonged to one of the family from which my husband had inherited his estate.

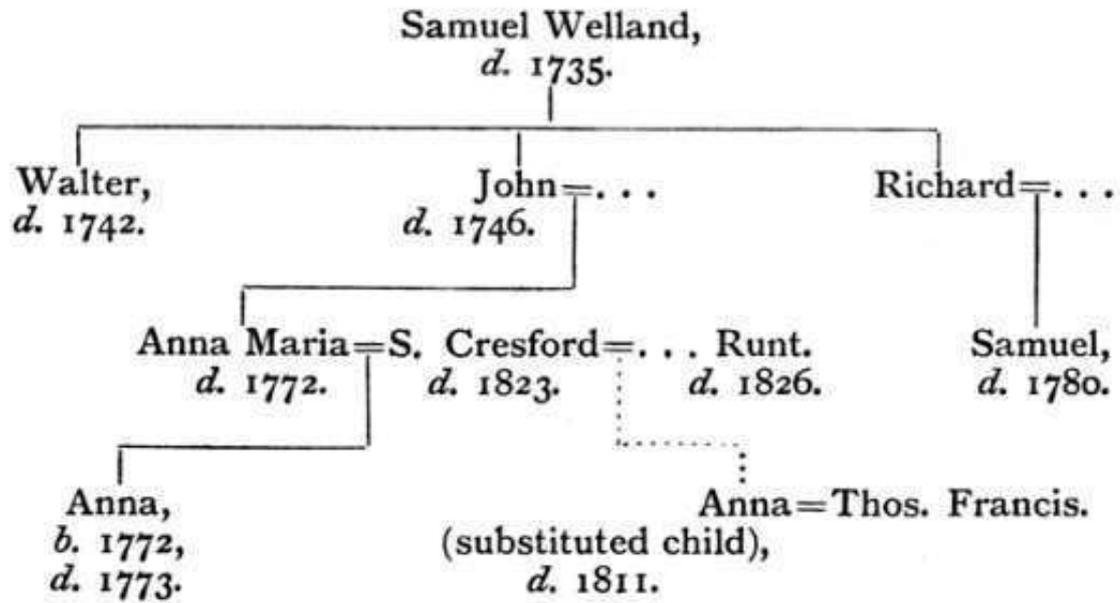
“The deeds showed that in 1747, the great-great-uncle – if he may be so termed, there being no blood-relationship – had taken this particular house and property along with another much larger for the rest of the term of ninety-nine years, i.e. for the remaining eighty-eight years. The lease had terminated in 1835. The old parchments had been locked up and probably had never been looked at since.

“A week later, a new surprise. My husband and daughter in overhauling these deeds had come, as they declared, on the nurse. On the margin of an old deed were written these words: —

“Anna Maria Welland, daughter of John Welland, married Mr. Cresford in 1771, and died in 1772, having only been married fourteen months. She left an only child, born March 8th, 1772, died the following year. Mrs. Lock, of Old Bond Street, took the body in a box to Barclay, in Gloucestershire; Mrs. Runt, who nursed the child that died, had two herself by Mr. Cresford, one of whom she substituted for the dead child of Anna Maria, the wife of Mr. Cresford. Harkett, a servant of Mr. Cresford, on a search being made about two years ago at Barclay, admitted in the presence of the Hon. Mr. Maxwell and others, the fact of the child having been placed there for that purpose, and then went to the spot under Mr. Cresford’s [word illegible] room, and found the box which is now in London. Mrs. Runt (the nurse) died in 1826. She married a miller named Harris, and she admitted to Miss Birdwood (who is now living) that she had bastard children, and that one of such was Mrs. Francis.”

This substituted child grew up and inherited the Welland property and married a Mr. Francis, to whom the estate went after her death. There were no children. Here is the pedigree: —

In the above account and in the pedigree all the names are fictitious except those of Mrs. Runt and the servant, Harkett. Now, was Mr. Cresford in the plot? Did Mrs. Runt make away with Anna, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Cresford? That he should have connived at the murder of his child is improbable. When he heard that Anna was dead, did he agree to have the body smuggled away in a box to his own family seat in Gloucestershire, and hidden under the floor in his room? That is not so unlikely. That he was an utterly unprincipled man is clear. At the same time that he married the heiress of the Wellands, he was carrying on an intrigue with Mrs. Runt, and he had a daughter by her of the same age – or thereabouts – as his legitimate daughter by his wife. It may be suspected with some probability that Mrs. Runt did purposely make away with the little heiress, and then, having told Mr. Cresford that it had died a natural death, induced him to agree to the substitution of his bastard daughter for his legitimate child who was dead, so that this bastard might inherit the Welland estate.



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It may be suspected with some probability that Mrs. Runt did purposely make away with the little heiress, and then, having told Mr. Cresford that it had died a natural death, induced him to agree to the substitution of his bastard daughter for his legitimate child who was dead, so that this bastard might inherit the Welland estate.

The stay of the lady who wrote the above, and her husband and daughter, at this Welland House was short. Unexpectedly their own mansion became vacant, and they moved at once to it. But during the time they were at Welland she never saw the Grey Woman.

## ROBERT LYDE AND THE “FRIEND’S ADVENTURE”

A True and Exact Account of the Retaking a ship, called the *Friend’s Adventure* of Topsham, from the French; after She had been taken six days, and they were upon the Coasts of France with it four days. When one Englishman and a Boy set upon seven Frenchmen, killed two of them, took the other Five prisoners, and brought the said Ship and them safe to England. Their Majesties’ Customs of the said Ship amounted to £1000 and upwards. Performed and written by Robert Lyde, Mate of the same ship.” London, 1693.

In February, 1689, Robert Lyde, of Topsham, shipped on board a pink of the same port, eighty tons, Isaac Stoneham, master, bound for Virginia, and on 18 May following arrived there, took in a lading, and set sail in company with a hundred merchantmen for home under convoy of two men-of-war. A fortnight after, storms separated the Topsham boat from the convoy, so that she had to make the best of her way home alone, and on 19 October came up with two Plymouth vessels of the fleet about forty leagues west of Scilly, the wind easterly. On the 21st the crew saw four other ships to leeward which they took to be some of their consorts, but which proved to be French privateers. They managed to escape them, but were captured by a privateer of St. Malo, of twenty-two guns and over a hundred men, on 24 October, and were taken to St. Malo as prisoners, where they were detained and treated with gross inhumanity, during seventeen days. Lyde says: “If we had been taken by Turks, we could not have been used worse. For bread we had 6 lbs. and one cheek of a Bullock for every 25 men for a day; and it fell out that he that had half a Bullock’s eye for his lot, had the greatest share.” After seventeen days they were all removed to Dinan, where were many other English prisoners confined in the cramped tower of the fortification that is still standing, with its small cells. Here they were herded together in a place not fit to contain one quarter of the number, and there they were retained for three months and ten days. “Our allowance was 3 lb. of old Cow-Beef without any Salt to flavour it, for seven men a day; but I think we had 2 lbs. of Bread for each Man, but it was so bad that Dogs would not eat it, neither could we eat but very little, and that that we did eat did us more hurt than good, for ’twas more Orts than Bread, so we gave some of it to the Hogs, and made Pillows of the rest to lay our Heads on, for they allowed us fresh Straw but once every five weeks, so that we bred such swarms of lice in our Rags that one Man had a great Hole eaten through his Throat by them, which was not perceived till after his Death, and I myself was so weak that it was 14 weeks after my releasement before I recovered any tolerable strength in me.

“They plundered us of our Clothes when we were taken, and some of us that had Money purchased Rugs to cover our Rags by day, and keep us warm by night; but upon our return home from France, the Deputy Governor of Dinan was so cruel as to order our said Rugs to be taken from us, and staid himself and saw it performed; and when some of our fellow Prisoners lay a dying they inhumanly stript off some of their Cloaths, three or four days before they were quite dead. These and other Barbarities made so great an Impression upon me, as that I did then resolve never to go a Prisoner there again, and this Resolution I did ever after continue in and by the Assistance of God always will.”

Lyde returned to his home at Topsham, an exchange of prisoners having been effected, but not till four hundred out of the six hundred English prisoners crowded into the dungeons at Dinan had perished of disease and starvation.

In his Preface, Lyde says: “I here present you with a Token of God Almighty’s Goodness in relieving me from the Barbarity, Inhumanity and most cruel Slavery of the Most Christian Turk of France, whose Delight it was to make his own Subjects Slaves, and his chief Study to put Prisoners of War to the most tedious and cruel lingering Death of Hunger and Cold, as I have been experimentally (to my own Damage both felt and seen), by a five Months’ Confinement in this Country.”

Shortly after his return to Topsham Lyde shipped as mate of a vessel, the *Friend's Adventure*, eighty tons, bound for Oporto, and sailed on 30 September, 1691. Oporto was reached in safety, but on the way back, off Cape Finisterre, the vessel was taken by a French privateer. Resistance had been impossible, at all events must have been unavailing, but before surrendering Lyde concealed a blunderbuss and ammunition between decks among the pipes of wine. When the *Friend's Adventure* was boarded the lieutenant ordered Lyde and a boy to remain on her, and the master, four men, and another boy were conveyed on board the privateer. Seven Frenchmen were left on the *Friend's Adventure* to navigate her and take her to St. Malo. This done, the privateer departed. Lyde was determined not to go through his former experiences as a prisoner in France, and he endeavoured to induce the boy to assist him against the French crew, but the lad was timorous, thought such an attempt as Lyde promised must fail, and repeatedly refused to take any part in it. The boat was not very seaworthy, and needed much bailing. As the boy represented to the mate, even if they did overmaster the French crew, how could they navigate the vessel and keep the pumps going till they reached England?

After a few days they approached St. Malo, and the repugnance in Lyde's mind against renewing his experiences there and at Dinan became overmastering.

“At 8 in the morning all the Frenchmen sat round the Cabbin's Table at Breakfast, and they call'd me to eat with them, and accordingly I accepted, but the Sight of the Frenchmen did immediately take away my Stomach, and made me sweat as if I had been in a Stove, and was ready to faint with eagerness to encounter them. Which the Master perceiving, and seeing me in that condition, asked me (in French) if I were sick, and I answered Yes! But could stay no longer in sight of them, and so went immediately down between Decks to the Boy and did earnestly intreat him to go presently with me into the Cabbin, and to stand behind me, and I would kill and command all the rest presently. For now I told him was the best Time for me to attack them, while they were round the Table, and knock down but one man in case Two laid hold upon me, and it may be never the like opportunity again. After many importunities, the Boy asked me after what manner I intended to encounter them; I told him I would take the Crow of Iron and hold it in the Middle with both Hands, and I would go into the Cabbin and knock down him that stood at the end of the Table on my right Hand, and stick the point of the Crow into him that sat at the end of the Table, on my left Hand, and then for the other five that sat behind the Table. But still he not consenting, I had second thoughts of undertaking it without him, but the Cabbin was so low that I could not stand upright in it by a foot, which made me at that time desist.

“By this time they had eat their Breakfast, and went out upon Deck; then I told the boy with much trouble, We had lost a grave opportunity, for by this time I had had the ship under my command. Nay, says the Boy, I rather believe that by this time you and I should have both been killed.”

Lyde then, to stimulate the slack fellow to action, recounted to him the miseries to which he would be subjected in prison in France.

“In a little time after they had been upon Deck, they separated from each other, viz. the Master lay down in his Cabbin and two of the Men lay down in the Great Cabbin and one in a Cabbin between Decks, and another sat down upon a low Stool by the Helm, to look after the Glass, to call the Pumps, and the other two men walked upon the Decks. Then, hoping I should prevail with the Boy to stand by me, I immediately applied myself to Prayer, desiring God to pardon my Sins, and I prayed also for my Enemies who should happen to dye by my Hands. And then I endeavoured again to persuade the Boy – but could not prevail with him to Consent.

“Then the Glass was out, it being half after eight, and the two men that were upon Deck went to pump out the Water. Then I also went upon Deck again, to see whether the Wind and Weather were like to favour my Enterprize, and casting my Eyes to Windward, I liked the Weather, and hop'd the Wind would stand. And then immediately went down to the Boy, and beg'd of him again to stand by me, while two of the men were at the Pumps (for they pumpt on the starboard side, and the Steeridge

Door open on the starboard side, so that they could not see me going aft to them in the Cabbin). But I could by no Persuasions prevail with the Boy, so that by this Time the Men had done Pumping; whereupon losing this opportunity caused me again to be a little angry with the Boy.”

Again Lyde warned the lad of the horrors before him if taken a prisoner to S. Malo. The boy replied that rather than endure such distresses he would turn Papist, and volunteer on board a French privateer. This roused Lyde’s wrath, and he said some very strong things. He told him that this would not help him; some of the English prisoners of war with himself had turned Papists, but had already become so attenuated by disease and suffering that they had died.

“The Boy asked What I would have him do? I told him to knock down that Man at the Helm, and I will kill and command all the rest. Saith the Boy, If you be sure to overcome them, how many do you count to kill? I answered that I intended to kill three of them. Then the Boy replied, Why three and no more? I answered that I would kill three for three of our men that died in Prison when I was there. And if it should please God that I should get home safe I would if I could go in a Man-of-War or Fireship, and endeavour to revenge on the Enemy for the Death of those 400 Men that died in the same Prison of Dinan. But the Boy said Four alive would be too many for us. I then replied that I would kill but three, but I would break the Legs and the Arms of the rest if they won’t take quarter and be quiet without it.”

After a long discussion and much inquiry, the boy was finally induced to give a reluctant consent to help. The attempt was to be made that day. “At 9 in the morning the two men upon Deck were pumping; then I turned out from the Sail, where the Boy and I then lay’d, and pull’d off my Coat that I might be the more nimble in the Action. I went up the Gunroom Scuttle into the Steeridge, to see what Position they were in, and being satisfied therein. Then the Boy coming to me, I leapt up the gunroom Scuttle, and said, Lord be with us! and I told the Boy that the Drive Bolt was by the Scuttle, in the Steeridge; and then I went softly aft into the Cabbin, and put my Back against the Bulkehead and took the Jam Can, and held it with both my Hands in the middle part, and put my legs abroad to shorten myself, because the Cabbin was very low. But he that lay nighest to me, hearing me, opened his eyes, and perceiving my intent, endeavoured to rise, to make resistance; but I prevented him by a Blow upon his Forehead, which mortally wounded him, and the other Man which lay with his Back to the dying Man’s side, hearing the Blow, turned about and faced me, and as he was rising with his left Elbow, very fiercely endeavouring to come against me, I struck at him, and he let himself fall from his left Arm, and held his Arm for a Guard, whereby did keep off a great part of the Blow, but still his Head received a great part of the Blow.

“The Master lying in the Cabbin on my right Hand, hearing the two Blows, rose and sate in the Cabbin and called me – bad names; but I having my eyes every way, I push’t at his Ear with the Claws of the Crow, but he, falling back for fear thereof, it seemed afterwards that I struck the Claws of the Crow into his Cheek, which Blow made him lie Still as if he had been Dead; and while I struck at the Master, the Fellow that fended off the Blow with his Arm, rose upon his Legs, and running towards me, with his Head low, to ram his Head against my Breast to overset me, but I pusht the point at his Head. It struck it an inch and a half into his Forehead, and as he was falling down, I took hold of him by the Back, and turn’d him into the Steeridge.

“I heard the Boy strike the Man at the Helm two Blows, after I had knock’d down the first Man, which two Blows made him lye very still, and as soon as I turn’d the Man out of the Cabbin, I struck one more Blow at him that I struck first and burst his Head, so that his Blood and Brains ran out upon the Deck.

“The Master all the while did not stir, which made me conclude that I had struck him under the Ear, and had killed him with the Blow.

“Then I went out to attack the two Men that were at the Pump, where they continued Pumping, without hearing or knowing what I had done; and as I was going to them, I saw that Man that I had turn’d into the Steeridge crawling out upon his Hands and Knees upon the Deck, beating his Hands

upon the Deck, to make a Noise, that the Men at the Pump might hear, for he could not cry out, nor speak. And when they heard him, and seeing his Blood running out of his Forehead, they came running aft to me, grinding their Teeth; but I met them as they came within the Steeridg Door, and struck at them, but the Steeridg being not above 4 ft. high, I could not have a ful Blow at them, whereupon they fended off the Blow, and took hold of the Crow with both their Hands close to mine, striving to hawl it from me. Then the Boy might have knockt them down with much ease, while they were contending with me, but that his heart failed him, so that he stood like a Stake at a distance on their left side, and 2 Foots length off, the Crow being behind their Hands. I called to the Boy to take hold of it, and hawl as they did, and I would let go all at once, which the Boy accordingly doing, I pusht the Crow towards them, and let it go, and was taking out my Knife to traverse amongst them, but they seeing me put my right hand into my Pocket, fearing what would follow, they both let go of the Crow to the Boy, and took hold of my right Arm with both their Hands.

“The Master, that I thought I had killed in his Cabbin, coming to himself, and hearing they had hold of me, came out of his Cabbin, and also took hold of me with both his Hands about my Middle. Then one of the Men that had hold of my right Arm let go, and put his Back to my Breast, and took hold of my left Hand and Arm, and held it close to his Breast, and the Master let go from my Middle, and took hold of my right Arm, and he with the other that had hold of my right Arm did strive to get me off my Legs; but knowing that I should not be long in one piece if they got me down, I put my right Foot against the Ship’s side, on the Deck, for a support, and with the assistance of God, I kept my Feet, when they three and one more did strive to throw me down, for the Man at the Helm that the Boy knocked down rose up and put his Hands about my Middle and strove to hawl me down. The Boy seeing that Man rise and take hold of me, cried out, fearing then that I should be overcome of them, but did not come to help me, nor did not Strike one Blow at any of them neither all the time.

“When I heard the Boy cry out, I said, ‘Do you cry, you Villain, now I am in such a condition! Come quickly, and knock this Man on the Head that hath hold of my left Arm’; the Boy perceiving that my Heart did not fail me, took some courage from thence, and endeavoured to give that man a Blow on the Head, with the Drive-Bolt, but struck so faintly that he mist his Blow, which greatly enraged me against him.

“I, feeling the Frenchman that held about my middle hang very heavy, I said to the Boy, ‘Do you miss your Blow, and I in such a Condition? Go round the Binkle and knock down that Man that hangeth upon my Back,’ which was the same Man the Boy knock’t down at the Helm. So the Boy did strike him one Blow upon the Head, which made him fall, but he rose up again immediately, but being uncapable of making any further resistance, he went out upon Deck staggering to and fro, without any further Molestance from the Boy. Then I look’t about the Beams for a Marlin-Speek, and seeing one hanging with a strap to a nail on the Larboard Side, I jerk’t my right Arm forth and back, which clear’d the two Men’s Hands from my right Arm, and took hold of the Marlin-Speek, and struck the Point four times, about a quarter of an inch deep into the Skull of that man that had hold of my left Arm, before they took hold of my right Arm again. And I struck the Marlin-Speek three times into his Head after they had hold of me, which caused him to Screech out, but they having hold of me, took off much of the force of the three Blows, and being a strong-hearted Man, he would not let go his hold of me, and the two men, finding that my right Arm was stronger than their four Arms were, and observing the Strap of the Marlin-Speek to fall up and down upon the back of my Hand, one of them let go his right Hand and Took hold of the Strap and hawl’d the Marlin-Speek out of my Hand, and I, fearing what in all likelihood would follow, I put my right Hand before my Head as a Guard, although three Hands had hold of that Arm; for I concluded he would knock me on the Head with it; – but, through God’s Providence it fell out of his Hand and so close to the Ship’s side that he could not reach it again without letting go his other Hand from mine, so he took hold of my Arm with the other Hand again.

“At this time the Almighty God gave me strength enough to take one Man in one Hand, and throw at the other’s Head. Then it pleased God to put me in mind of my Knife in my Pocket, and although two of the Men had hold of my right Arm, yet God Almighty strengthened me so that I put my right Hand into my Pocket, and took out my Knife and Sheath, holding it behind my Hand that they should not see it; but I could not draw it out of the Sheath with my left Hand, because the Man that I struck on the Head with the Marlin-Speek had still hold of it, with his Back to my Breast; so I put it between my Legs, and drew it out, and then cut the Man’s Throat with it, that had his Back to my Breast, and he immediately dropt down, and scarce ever stirr’d after. Then with my left Arm I gave both the Men a Push from me, and hawl’d my right Arm with a jerk to me, and so clear’d it of both of them; and fetching a strike with intent to cut both their Throats at once, they immediately apprehended the Danger they were in, put their Hands together and held them up, crying, *Corte, corte* (i.e. Quarter), *Mounseer, moy allay par Angleterre si vou plea*. With that I stopt my Hand, and said Good Quarter you shall have. *Alle a pro* (Go to the Fore), and then I put up my Knife into the Sheath again.

“Then I made fast the Steeridg Door, and ordered the Boy to stand by it, and to keep it fast, and to look through the Blunderbuss Holes, and if he did see any Man coming towards the Door, he should tell me of it, and come into the Cabbin for the Blunderbuss and Amunition which I had hid away before we were taken.

“After that I had loaden, I came out with it into the Steeridg and look’t forward, out of the Companion, to see if any Man did lye over the Steeridg Door – but seeing no Man there, I went out upon Deck and look’t up to the Maintop, for fear the two wounded Men were there and should throw down anything upon my Head; but seeing no Man there, I asked the Boy if he could tell what was become of the two wounded Men that came to themselves and went out upon the Deck whilst I was engaged with the three Men in the Steeridg. The Boy told me they had scrambled over-board. But I thought it very strange that they should be accessory to their own deaths. Then I ordered the Boy to stand by the Steeridg Door to see if that Man betwixt Decks did come up, and if he did, to tell me.

“Then I went forward to the Two Men that had cried for Quarter, but they, being afraid, ran forward and were going up the Fore-shrouds, but I held up the Blunderbuss at them, and said, *Veni abau et montea Cuttelia et ally abau*,<sup>5</sup> and then they put off their Hats and said, *Monsieur, moy travally pur Angleterre si vous plea*; but I answered *Alle abau*, for I don’t want any Help; and then they unlid the Scuttle, and went down. Then I went forward, and as I came before the foot of the Mainsail I look’t up to the Foretop, and seeing no Man there, I look’t down in the Forecastle, and showed the two men a Scuttle on the larboard side that went down into the Forepeak, and said: *Le Monte Cuttelia et ally abau*. They unlid the Scuttle, and put off their Hats and step’t down.

“Then I call’d down to them and asked them if they saw any Men betwixt Decks as they went down, and they answered No. Then I call’d forward the Boy and gave him the Blunderbuss and bid him present it down the Forecastle, and if he saw any Men take hold of me, or if I call’d on him for help, then he should be sure to discharge the Blunderbuss at us, and kill us all together, if he could not shoot them without me.

“Then I took the Boy’s Bolt and put my head down the Scuttle, and seeing no Man there I leap’t down in the Forecastle and laid the Scuttle and nail’d it fast, and thought myself fast, seeing two killed and two secured.

“Then I went upon Deck, and took the Blunderbuss from the Boy and gave him the Bolt, and went aft, and ordered the Boy as before to stand by the Steeridg Door, and give me an account if he saw any Man come towards him with a Handspike; and then I went aft into the Cabbin, and cut two Candles in four pieces and lighted them, one I left burning upon the Table, the other three I carried in my left Hand, and the Blunderbuss in my right Hand; and I put my Head down the Gun-room

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<sup>5</sup> “Venez en bas, et montez le ‘Scuttle’ et allez en bas.”

Scuttle and look't around, and seeing no Man there, I leap't down and went to the Man that lay all the time asleep in a Cabbin betwixt Decks, and took him by the Shoulder with my left Hand, and wakened him, and presented the Blunderbuss at him with my right Hand, and commanded him out of his Cabbin, and made him stand still, till I got up into the Steeridg. Then I call'd the Man, and he standing on the Scuttle and seeing the Man that had his Throat cut almost buried in his Blood, he wrung his Hands, crying out, O Jesu Maria! I told him I had nothing to do with Maria now. *Monte, monte et allez a pro!* Then he came up and went forward looking round to see his Companions, but I followed him, and made him go down into the Forecastle. Then I gave the Boy the Blunderbuss and ordered him to present it at the Man if he perceived him to come towards me while I was opening the Scuttle, then to shoot him.

“Then I took the Crow and leap't down with it into the Forecastle and drew the Spikes and opened the Scuttle, and bid the Man come down and joyn his Companions. And after that I nailed down the Scuttle again, and went aft and ordered the Boy to stand by the Steeridg Door again, and I took the Candles and the Blunderbuss and went down between Decks and looked in all Holes and Corners for the two wounded Men and found them not. Then I went on Deck, and told the Boy I could not find the Men, and he said they were certainly run overboard. I told him I would know what was become of them before I made sail.

“Then I told the Boy I would go up into the Maintop, and see if they were there; and so I gave him the Blunderbuss and bid him present it at the Maintop, and if he saw any man look out over the Top with anything in his Hand to throw at me, he should then shoot them. Then I took the Boy's Bolt, and went up, and when I was got to the Puddick Shrouds I look'd forwards to the Foretop, I saw the two Men were cover'd with the Foretopsail, and their Sashes bound about their Heads to keep in the Blood, and they had made a great part of the Foretopsail Bloody, and as the Ship rould, the Blood ran over the Top. Then I call'd to them, and they turn'd out and went down on their knees, and wrung their Hands, and cried, *O corte, corte, Monsieur*. Then I said, Good Quarter shall you have, And I went down and call'd to them to come down, and he that the Boy wounded came down, and kissed my Hand over and over, and went down into the Forecastle very willingly. But the other Man was one of the three that I designed to kill; he delayed his Coming. I took the Blunderbuss and said I would shoot him down, and then he came a little way and stood still, and begged me to give him Quarter. I told him if he would come down he should have quarter. Then he came down and I gave the Boy the Blunderbuss” – and then ensued the redrawing of the nails and the reopening of the scuttle, so as to thrust these two wounded men in with the others. But Lyde called up one of the men, a fellow of about four-and-twenty, and who had shown Lyde some kindness when he was a prisoner on the ship. We need not follow Lyde in his voyage home. He made the Frenchman help to navigate the vessel. But they had still many difficulties to overcome, the weather was rough, the ship leaked, and there were but Lyde and the Frenchman and the boy to handle her.

Even when he did reach the mouth of the Exe, though he signalled for a pilot, none would come out to him, as he had no English colours on board to hoist, and he was obliged to beat about all night and next day in Torbay till the tide would serve for crossing the bar at Exmouth. Again he signalled for a pilot. The boat came out, but would approach only near enough to be hailed. Only then, when the pilot was satisfied that this was not a privateer of the enemy, would he come on board, and steer her to Starcross, which Lyde calls *Stair-cross*. Thence he sent his prisoners to Topsham in the Customs House wherry. There they were examined by the doctor, who pronounced the condition of two of them hopeless.

Lyde's troubles were by no means over; for the owners of the *Friend's Adventure* were vastly angry at her having been brought safely back. She had been insured by them for £560, and when valued was knocked down for £170; and they did much to annoy and harass Lyde, and prevent him getting another ship.

However, his story got about, and the Marquess of Carmarthen introduced him to Queen Mary, who presented him with a gold medal and chain, and recommended him to the Lords of the Admiralty for preferment in the Fleet.

With this his narrative ends. He expresses his hope to serve their Majesties, and to have another whack at the Frenchmen.

## JOSEPH PITTS

Joseph Pitts, of Exeter, was the son of John Pitts of that city. When aged fourteen or fifteen he became a sailor. After two or three voyages, very short, he shipped on board the *Speedwell*, on Easter Tuesday, 1678, at Lypston, bound for the Western Islands, from thence to Newfoundland, thence to Bilbao, and so by the Canaries, home. Newfoundland was reached, but on the voyage to Bilbao the ship was boarded and taken by Algerine pirates.

“The very first words they spake, and the very first thing they did was Beating us with Ropes, saying: ‘Into Boat, you English Dogs!’ and without the least opposition, with fear, we tumbled into their Boat, we scarce knew how. They having loaded their Boat, carried us aboard their Ship, and diligent Search was made about us for Money, but they found none. We were the first Prize they had taken for that Voyage, and they had been out at Sea about six weeks. As for our vessel, after they had taken out of her what they thought fit and necessary for their use, they sunk her; for she being laden with Fish, they thought it not worth while to carry her home to Algier.

“About Four or Five Days after our being thus taken, they met with another small English Ship, with Five or Six Men aboard, which was served as ours was. And Two or Three Days after that, they espied another small English Vessel, with Five or Six men aboard laden with Fish, and coming from New England. This Vessel was at their first view of her some Leagues at Windward of them, and there being but little Wind, and so they being out of hopes of getting up to her, they us’d this cunning device, They hawled up their Sails, and hang’d out our English King’s Colours, and so appearing Man of War like decoyed her down, and sunk her also.

“Two or Three days after this, they took a fourth little English Ship with four or five Men aboard laden with Herrings, of which they took out most part, and then sunk the Ship.”

The pirates now returned to Algiers, and their captured Christians were driven to the palace of the Dey, who had a right to select an eighth of them for the public service and also to retain an eighth part of the spoils taken from the prizes. His selection being made, the rest were driven to the market-place and put up to auction.

Joseph Pitts was bought by one Mustapha, who treated him with excessive barbarity.

“Within Eight and forty Hours after I was sold, I tasted of their (Algerine) Cruelty; for I had my tender Feet tied up, and beaten Twenty or Thirty Blows, for a beginning. And thus was I beaten for a considerable Time, every two or three days, besides Blows now and then, forty, fifty, sixty, at a time. My Executioner would fill his Pipe, and then give me ten or twenty Blows, and then stop and smoak his Pipe for a while, and then he would at me again, and when weary stop again; and thus cruelly would he handle me till his Pipe was out. At other times he would hang me up by Neck and Heels, and then beat me miserably. Sometimes he would hang me up by the Armpits, beating me all over my Body. And oftentimes Hot Brine was order’d for me to put my Feet into, after they were sore with beating, which put me to intolerable Smart. Sometimes I have been beaten on my Feet so long, and cruelly, that the Blood hath run down my Feet to the Ground. I have oftentimes been beaten by my Patroon so violently on my Breech, that it hath been black all over, and very much swollen, and hard almost as a Board; insomuch, that I have not been able to sit for a considerable Time.”

After two or three months, Mustapha sent him to sea in a pirate vessel, in which he was interested, to attend on the gunner. The expedition was not very successful, as only one ship was taken, a Portuguese, with a crew of eighteen who were enslaved. On his return to Algiers, after having been a couple of months at sea, he was sold to a second “Patroon,” named Ibrahim, who had “two Brothers in Algiers and a third in Tunis. The middle Brother had designed to make a Voyage to Tunis to see his Brother there; and it seems I was bought in order to be given as a Present to him. I was then cloth’d very fine, that I might be the better accepted. The Ship being ready we put to Sea, and in about fourteen Days time we arrived at Tunis, and went forthwith to my Patroon’s Brother’s House. The

next Day my Patroon's Brother's Son, taking a Pride to have a Christian to wait upon him, made me walk after him. As I was attending upon my new Master through the Streets, I met with a Gentleman habited like a Christian, not knowing him to be an Englishman, as he was. He look'd earnestly upon me, and ask'd me whether I were not an Englishman. I answered him, Yea! How came you hither? said he. I told him I came with my Patroon. What, are you a slave? said he. I replied, Yes. But he was loath to enter into any further Discourse with me in the public Street, and therefore desired of the young Man on whom I waited, that he would please to bring me to his House. The young Man assured him he would; for being a drinker of Wine, and knowing the Plenty of it in the said Gentleman's House, he was the rather willing to go. After the Gentleman was gone from us, my young new Master told me, that he whom we talk'd to was the English Consul."

The Consul kindly invited Joseph Pitts to go to his house as often as he had an opportunity. After spending thirty days in Tunis, Pitts learned to his dismay that the "Patroon's Brother" did not care to have him, and that consequently he would have to return to Algiers. The Consul and two merchants then endeavoured to buy Pitts, but his master demanded for him five hundred dollars; they offered three hundred, which was all that they could afford, and as Ibrahim refused to sell at this price, the negotiation was broken off, and he returned with his master to Algiers.

Here he was subjected to the persecution of his master's youngest brother, who endeavoured to induce Joseph to become a renegade. As persuasion availed nothing, the young man went to his elder brother Ibrahim, and told him that he had been a profligate and debauched man in his time, as also a murderer; and that his only chance of Paradise lay in making atonement for his iniquities by obtaining or enforcing the conversion of his slave.

Ibrahim was alarmed, and being a superstitious man believed this, and began to use great cruelty towards Pitts. "He call'd two of his Servants, and commanded them to tye up my Feet with a Rope to the Post of the Tent; and when they had so done, he with a great Cudgel fell to beating of me upon my bare Feet. He being a very strong Man, and full of Passion, his Blows fell heavy indeed; and the more he beat me, the more chafed and enraged he was; and declared, that if I would not Turn, he would beat me to death. I roar'd out to feel the Pains of his cruel Strokes; but the more I cry'd, the more furiously he laid on upon me; and to stop the Noise of my Crying, he would stamp with his Feet on my Mouth; at which I beg'd him to despatch me out of the way; but he continued beating me. After I had endured this merciless Usage so long, till I was ready to faint and die under it, and saw him as mad and implacable as ever, I beg'd him to forbear and I would turn. And breathing a while, but still hanging by the Feet, he urg'd me again to speak the Words, yet loath I was, and held him in suspense awhile; and at length told him that I could not speak the Words. At which he was more enrag'd than before, and fell at me again in a most barbarous manner. After I had received a great many Blows a second Time, I beseech'd him again to hold his Hand, and gave him fresh hopes of my turning Mohammetan; and after I had taken a little more Breath, I told him as before, I could not do what he desired. And thus I held him in suspense three or four times; but, at last, seeing his Cruelty towards me insatiable, unless I did turn Mohammetan, through Terrour I did it, and spake the Words, holding up the Fore-finger of my Right-hand; and presently I was lead away to a Fire, and care was taken to heal my Feet (for they were so beaten, that I was unable to go on them for several Days), and so I was put to Bed."

Algiers was bombarded thrice by the French whilst Joseph Pitts was living there as a slave, their purpose being to obtain the surrender of French captives who had been enslaved. "They then threw but few Bombs into the Town, and that by night; nevertheless the Inhabitants were so Surprized and Terrifi'd at it, being unacquainted with Bombs, that they threw open the Gates of the City, and Men, Women, and Children left the Town. Whereupon the French had their Country-men, that were Slaves, for nothing. In a little while after the French came again to Algiers, upon other Demands, and then the Dey Surrendered up all the French Slaves, which prov'd the said Dey's Ruine. And then they came a third time (1682). There were nine Bomb-Vessels, each having two Mortars, which kept

firing Day and Night insomuch that there would be five or six Bombs flying in the air at once. At this the Algerines were horribly Enrag'd, and to be Reveng'd, fired away from the mouth of their Cannon about forty French slaves, and finding that would not do, but d'Estrée (the Marshall) was rather the more enraged. They sent for the French Consul, intending to serve him the same Sause. He pleaded his character, and that 'twas against the Law of Nations, etc. They answered, they were resolv'd, and all these complements would not serve his turn. At which he desir'd a day or two's Respite, till he should despatch a Letter to the Admiral. Which was granted him; and a Boat was sent out with a White Flag. But after the Admiral had perused and considered the Consul's Letter, he bid the Messenger return this answer (*viz.*): That his Commission was to throw 10,000 Bombs into the Town, and he would do it to the very last, and that as for the Consul, if he died, he could not die better than for his Prince.

“This was bad News to the Consul; and highly provoked the Algerines, who immediately caused the Consul to be brought down and placed him before the mouth of a Cannon, and fired him off also.”

D'Estrée's success was by no means so great as he had anticipated and as was expected. He was compelled by the stubborn defence of Algiers to content himself with an exchange of prisoners for French slaves, nor did he recover more than forty or fifty.

Meanwhile, what was the English Government doing for the protection of its subjects, for the recovery of Englishmen who were languishing as slaves in Algiers and Tunis? Nothing at all.

Under the Commonwealth, Blake in 1654 had severely chastised the nest of pirates. He had compelled the Dey to restrain his piratical subjects from further violence against the English. He had presented himself before Tunis, where, incensed by the violence of the Dey, he had destroyed the castles of Porto Farino and Goletta, had sent a numerous detachment of sailors in their long-boats into the harbour, and burned every vessel which lay there.

But now the despicable Charles II was king, and the power of England to protect its subjects was sunk to impotence. Every three years the English fleet appeared off Algiers to renew a treaty of peace with the Dey, that meant nothing; the piratical expeditions continued, and Englishmen were allowed to remain groaning in slavery, tortured into acceptance of Mohammedanism, and not a finger was raised for their protection and release. The Consuls were impotent. They could do nothing. There was no firm Government behind them.

In Algiers, Pitts met with an Englishman, James Grey, of Weymouth, with whom he became intimate. This man often appealed to Pitts for advice, whether he should turn Mussulman or not; but Pitts would give him no counsel one way or the other. Finally, he became a renegade, but moped, lost all heart, and died.

Pitts tells us how that secretly he received a letter from his father, advising him “to have a care and keep close to God, and to be sure, never, by any methods of cruelty that could be used towards him, to deny his blessed Saviour; and that he – his father – would rather hear of his son's death than of his becoming a Mahommedan.” The letter was slipped into his hands a few days after he had become a renegade. He dared to show this to his master, and told him frankly, “I am no Turk, but a Christian.” The master answered, “If you say this again, I will have a fire made, and burn you in it immediately.”

The then Dey, Baba Hasan, died in 1683, and Pitts' master being rich and having friends, attempted a revolt against Hasein “Mezzomorto,” his successor, and was killed in the attempt. This led to the sale of Pitts again, and he was bought by an old bachelor, named Eumer, a kindly old man, with whom he was happy. “My Work with him was to look after his House, to dress his Meat, to wash his Clothes; and, in short, to do all those things that are look'd on as Servant-maids' work in England.” With the old master he made the pilgrimage to Mecca, and thence went on to Medina, and he was the first Englishman to give a description of these sacred towns. Moreover, his account is remarkably exact. He was a young fellow full of observation and intelligence, and he made good use of his eyes. At Mecca, Eumer gave Pitts his freedom, and Pitts remained with him, not any longer as a slave, but as a servant.

By being granted his freedom this did not involve the liberty to return to his home and his Christian religion. But he looked out anxiously for an opportunity to do both. This came in a message arriving from Constantinople from the Sultan to demand the assistance of Algerine vessels, and Joseph Pitts volunteered as a seaman upon one of these vessels, in the vain hope of its being captured by some Christian vessel – French, for there was nothing to be expected from English ships.

At Algiers, he became acquainted with a Mr. Butler, and as Pitts was suffering from sore eyes, Mr. Butler got an English doctor, who was a slave, to attend to him and cure him. Mr. Butler introduced him to the English Consul, whom he saw once, and once only, and who could do nothing for him further than give him a letter to the English Consul at Smyrna, at the same time imploring him to conceal the letter and not let it get into the hands of the Turks, or it might cost him his life.

“Being got about thirty Days’ voyage towards Smyrna, where I design’d to make my Escape, we espied seven or eight Venetian Gallies at Anchor under the Shoar. The Turks had a great Tooth for these Gallies, but knew not how to come to them, not being able to adventure so far as Gallies safely may. At length they consulted, being fifteen Ships in number, to hoist French Colours. Having done this we haul’d up our Sails and brought to, pretending as if we were desirous of some News from the Levant. They, at this, thinking we were French Men-of-War, sent out two of their Gallies; upon which the Turks were ordered to lie close, and not stir, for fear of showing their Turbants, and such Officers, that were obliged to be moving, took off their Turbants to avoid discovery, and put on a Hat and Cap instead thereof; but the Slaves were all ordered to be upon Deck to colour the matter, and make us look more like Christians. At length one of the Gallies being within Musquet-shot, we fired upon him, and soon made him strike. The other, seeing that, turns and rows with all his Might and Main to get ashoar, the Algerines all the while making what sail they could after him, but ’twas in vain, for the Venetian got clear, the Wind being off Shoar just in our Mouth. In that Galley which we took, there were near four hundred Christians, and some few Turks that were Slaves.

“When we came to Scio, we were joyn’d with ten Sail of the Grand Turk’s Ships, carrying seventy or eighty Brass Cannon Guns each; and now being twenty-five in number, we had the Courage to cruize about the Islands of the Archipelago.

“Some time after we arrived at Scio, the Turks had liberty, for one Month’s time, to go home to visit the respective Places of their Nativity. I went to Smyrna and hired a Chamber there. And after I knew where the Consul’s House was I went thither. The Consul not knowing who I was, Complemented me much, because I was handsomely Apparel’d, and I returned the Complement to him after the Turkish manner; and then delivered him my Letter of Recommendation. The Consul, having perused the Letter, he bid the Interpreter to withdraw, because he should not understand anything of the matter. After the Interpreter was gone, the Consul ask’d me whether I was the Man mentioned in the Letter. I told him I was. He said the Design was very dangerous, and that if it should be known to the Turks that he was any way concerned in it, it was as much as his Life, and his all was worth. But after he had discours’d me further and found that I was fully resolv’d in the matter, he told me that, Truly were it not for Mr. Butler’s Request he would not meddle in such a dangerous Attempt; but for the friendship and Respect he bore to him, would do me all the kindness he could; which put Life into me.

“We had no English nor Dutch Ships at Smyrna then, but daily expected some; and he told me, I must wait till they came, and withall caution’d me not to frequent his House. A day or two after this I was sitting in a Barber’s Shop, where both Christians and Turks did Trim, and there was a-trimming then an English Man, whose Name was George Grunsell, of Deptford. He knew me no otherwise than a Turk; but when I heard him speak English, I ask’d him in English, Whether he knew any of the Western Parts of England to be in Smyrna. He told me of one, who he thought was an Exeter man, which, when I heard, I was glad at Heart. I desired him to shew me his House; which he very kindly did; but when I came to speak with Mr. Elliott, for so was his Name, I found him to be of Cornwall, who had serv’d some part of his Apprenticeship in Exon, with Mr. Henry Cudmore

a Merchant. He was very glad to see me for Country's-sake. After some Discourse, I communicated to him my Design. He was very glad to hear of it, and promised to assist me; and told me, that I need not run the hazard of going to the Consul's House, but that if I had anything of Moment to impart to him, he would do it for me.

"In a Month's time it was cry'd about the City of Smyrna, that all Algerines should repair to their Ships, which lay then at Rhodes.

"All this while no English or Dutch Ships came to Smyrna; the Consul and Mr. Elliott therefore consulted which was my best way to take; to tarry in Smyrna after all the Algerines were gone, would look suspiciously; and therefore they advised me not to tarry in Smyrna, but either to go to Scio with the Algerines, which is part of our way back to Rhodes, or else to go up to Constantinople; and when I was there, to write to the said Mr. Elliott to acquaint him where I was; and to stay there till I had directions from them to return to Smyrna, or what else to do.

"I pursued their Advice, and went with some of the Algerines to Scio, and there I made a stop till all the Algerines were gone from thence, and writ to Mr. Elliott where I was. A short Time after, he writ me, that he was very glad that I was where I was, but withal, gave a damp to my Spirits, with this bad News, that our Smyrna Fleet were said to be interrupted by the French; with the cold reserve of Comfort, that it wanted Confirmation.

"Now the Devil was very busy with me, tempting me to lay aside all thoughts of Escaping, and to return to Algiers, and continue Mussulman. For it was suggested to me, first, That it was a very difficult, if not a desperate Attempt, to endeavour to make my Escape; and that if I were discovered in it, I should be put to death after the most cruel and exemplary way. Also, in the next place, the Loss that I should sustain thereby, in several respects, viz. The Loss of the profitable Returns which I might make of what Money I had to Algiers; and the Loss of receiving eight Months Pay due to me in Algiers; and the frustrating of my Hopes and Expectation which I had from my Patroon, who made me large Promises of leaving me considerable Substance at his Death; and I believe he meant as he promised; for I must acknowledge he was like a father to me.

"In the midst of all I would pray to God for his Assistance, and found it. For I bless God, that after all my Acquaintance were gone from Scio to Rhodes, I grew daily better and better satisfied; though my Fears were still very great; and I was indeed afraid every-body I met did suspect my Design. And I can truly say, that I would not go through such a Labyrinth of Sorrows and Troubles again, might I gain a Kingdom.

"The first Letter that Mr. Elliott sent me while I was at Scio, he directed to a Greek at Scio, who did business with the Consul at Smyrna, to be delivered to me, naming me by my Turkish Name. I was altogether unknown to the Greek, so that he was forced to enquire among the Algerines for one of that Name; and indeed there were two Men of that Name with myself; but by good hap, they were gone to Rhodes, otherwise 'tis odds but the Letter had come to the Hands of one of them, and then my Design had been discovered, and I should undoubtedly have been put to Death.

"I receiv'd another Letter from Mr. Elliott, in which he informed me that the reported bad News concerning our Ships was true, but that he and the Consul had Conferr'd that Day what was best to be done for my safety; and were of opinion that it would be in vain for me to wait for any English Ships, and therefore they advised me to go off in a French Ship, tho' somewhat more expensive, and in order thereto, to hasten back again to Smyrna, in the first boat that came.

"Accordingly I came to Smyrna again and lodg'd at Mr. Grunsell's House, and kept myself very private for the space of twenty Days, 'till the French Ship was ready to sail.

"Now the French Ship, in which I was to make my escape, was intended to sail the next Day, and therefore in the Evening I went on Board, Apparel'd as an English Man, with my Beard shaven, a Campaign Perrywig, and a Cane in my Hand, accompanied with three or four of my Friends in the Boat. As we were going into the Boat, there were some Turks of Smyrna walking by, but they smelt nothing of the matter. My good Friend Mr. Elliott had agreed with the Captain of the Ship

to pay Four Pounds for my Passage to Leghorn, but neither the Captain nor any of the French Men knew who I was. My Friends, next Morning, brought Wine and Victuals a board; upon which they were very merry, but, for my part, I was very uneasy till the Ship had made Sail. I pretended myself Ignorant of all Foreign Languages, because I would not be known to the French, who, – if we had met with any Algerines, – I was affraid would be so far from showing me any Favour so as to Conceal me, would readily Discover me.

“We had a Month’s passage from Smyrna to Leghorne, and I was never at Rest in my Mind till we came to Leghorne, where, as soon as ever I came ashore, I prostrated myself, and kissed the earth, blessing Almighty God for his Mercy and Goodness to me, that I once more set footing on the European, Christian part of the World.”

Arrived at Leghorn, Joseph Pitts was put in quarantine, but for five-and-twenty days only. Whilst in the Lazaret he met with some Dutchmen, one of whom had been a near neighbour in Algiers. He suggested that Pitts should join company with him and his party travelling homewards by land. To this Joseph agreed, and they all set off at Christmas, in frosty weather, and travelled for twenty days through heavy snow. After a while Joseph’s leg gave way, and he could not proceed with the others. They were constrained to leave him behind, for fear that their money would run short.

After having travelled two hundred miles in their company, he was now forced to travel five hundred on foot through Germany alone. One day as he was passing through a wood he was attacked by a party of German soldiers, who robbed him of his money. Happily, they did not strip him and so discover that he had a good deal more than was in his pockets sewn into a belt about his waist.

“When I came to Franckfort, the Gates of the City were just ready to be shut, and I offering to go in, the Centinel demanded of me who I was. I told them I was an Englishman. They bid me show my Passport, but I had none. I having therefore no pass, they would not let me into the City. So the Gate was shut. I sat down upon the Ground and wept, bewailing my hard Fortune and their Unkindness, having not a bit of Bread to eat, nor Fire to warm myself in the extreme cold Season which then was.

“But there being just outside the Gate a little Hutt, where the Soldiers Kept Guard, the Corporal seeing me in such a condition as I was, called me in, where they had a good Fire, and he gave me some of his Victuals; for which seasonable Kindness I gave him some money to fetch us some good Liquor. And I told the Corporal, if he would get me into the City the next Day, I would Requite him for it. Accordingly he did. He brought me to a Frenchman’s House, who had a Son that lived in England some time, and was lately come home again, who made me very Welcome. He ask’d me what my Business was; I told him ’twas to get a Pass to go safe down the River, (for they are so strict there in time of War, that they’ll even examine their own Countrymen), and withal, desired him to change a Pistole for me, and to give me instead of it such Money as would pass current down the River. For (as I told him) I have sometimes chang’d a Pistole, and before the Exchange of it had been expended in my Travels, some of the money would not pass current. He chang’d my Pistole for me, and told me what Money would pass in such a place, and what in such a place, and what I should reserve last to pass in Holland. And he was moreover so civil, as to go to the public Office and obtain a Pass for me. After which he brought me to his House again, and caused one of his Servants to direct me to an Inn, where I should Quarter, and bid me come again to him the next Morning, when he sent his Servant to call me, and also to pay off my Host, but I had paid him before, for which he show’d Dislike. After all which, he conducted me to the River’s side where was a Boatfull of Passengers ready to go to Mentz. This obliging Gentleman (whose name was Van der Luh’r) told the Master of the Boat, that he would satisfy him for my Passage to Mentz; and moreover desired an Acquaintance of his in the Boat to take care of me; and when at Mentz, to direct me to such a Merchant, to whom he gave a Letter, and therewith a piece of Money to drink his Health.

“When we came to Mentz, we were every Man to produce his Passport; and as the Passes were looking over, the Person in the Boat, who was desired to take care of me, sent a Boy to call the Merchant to whom I was to deliver the Letter; who immediately came, and invited me to his House.

“It hap’ned that this Gentleman was a Slave in Algier at the same time I was. He enquired of me about his Patroon, whom I knew very well; and we talk’d about many other things relating to Algier. I received much kindness and Hospitality from the Gentleman; he paid off my Quarters for that Night; and also gave me Victuals and Money, and paid for my Passage from Mentz to Cologne; and moreover, sent by me a Letter of Recommendation to his Correspondent there.

“At Cologne I received the like Kindness, and had my Passage paid to Rotterdam; and if I would, I might have had a Letter of Recommendation to some Gentle-man there too; but I refus’d it (with hearty Thanks for the offer) being loath to be too troublesome to my Friends.

“I found great Kindness at Rotterdam and Helversluyce, whither our English Packquet-Boats arrive. But when I came into England, my own native Country, here I was very badly treated; for the very first Night that I lay in England, I was impressed for to go in the King’s Service. And notwithstanding that I made known my Condition, and used many Arguments for my Liberty, with Tears, yet all this would not prevail, but away I must; and was carried to Colchester Prison, where I lay some Days. While I was in Prison I Writ a Letter to Sir William Falkener, one of the Smyrna Company in London, on whom I had a Bill for a little Money; he immediately got a Protection for me, and sent it me, which was not only my present Discharge, but prevented all further Trouble to me on my Road Homeward, which otherwise I must unavoidably have met with.

“When I came from Colchester to London, I made it my Business, as in Duty bound, to go and pay my Thanks to the honourable Gentleman, from whom I received fresh Kindness. After this I made what hast I could to dear Exeter, where I safely came, to the great Joy of my Friends and Relations.

“I was in Algier above Fifteen Years. After I went out of Topsham, it was about Half a Year before I was taken a Slave. And after I came out of Algier it was well nigh Twelve Months ere I could reach home.”

This interesting narrative is from “A true and Faithful Account of the Religion and Manners of the Mohammedans. In which is a particular Relation of their Pilgrimage to Mecca ... by Joseph Pitts of Exon.” Exon, 1704. A second edition was published at Exeter in 1717; and a third edition corrected, at London, in 1731.

## THE DEMON OF SPREYTON

About the month of November last in the Parish of Spraiton, one Francis Fey (servant to Mr. Philip Furze) being in a Field near the Dwelling house of the said Master, there appeared unto him the resemblance of an old Gentleman, like his Master's Father, with a Pole or Staff in his hand, like that he was wont to carry when living, to kill Moles withal. The Specter approached near the young Man, who was not a little surprised at the Appearance of one whom he knew to be dead, but the Specter bade him have no Fear, but tell his Master that several Legacies, which by his Testament he had bequeathed were unpaid, naming ten shillings to one, ten shillings to another, both which he named. The young man replied that the party last named was dead, and so it could not be paid to him. The Ghost answered, He knew that, but it must be paid to the next relative, whom he also named. The Specter likewise ordered him to carry twenty shillings to a Gentlewoman, sister of the Deceased, living at Totnes, and promised if these things were done, to trouble him no more. At the same time the Specter speaking of his second wife (also dead) called her a wicked Woman, though the Relater knew her and esteemed her as a good Woman."

The spectre vanished. The young man did as enjoined and saw that the legacies were duly paid, and he took twenty shillings to the gentlewoman near Totnes; but she utterly refused to receive it, believing it to have been sent to her by the devil.

That same night, the young man, who was lodging in the house of his former master's sister, saw the ghost again. The youth thereupon remonstrated with it and reminded it of the promise made no more to annoy him, and he explained that the deceased man's sister refused to accept the money. Then the spirit bade the young man take horse, ride into Totnes, and buy a ring of the value of twenty shillings, and assured him that the lady would receive that.

Next day, after having delivered the ring, that was accepted, the young man was riding home to his master's, accompanied by a servant of the gentlewoman near Totnes, and as they entered the parish of Spreyton, the ghost was seen sitting on the horse behind the youth. It clasped its long arms about his waist and flung him from his saddle to the ground. This was witnessed by several persons in the road, as well as by the serving man from Totnes.

On entering the yard of Mr. P. Furze's farm, the horse made a bound of some twenty-five feet, to the amazement of all.

Soon after this a female ghost appeared in the house, and was seen by the same young man, as also by Mrs. Thomasine Gidley, Anne Langdon, and a little child. She was able to assume various shapes: sometimes she appeared as a dog, belching fire, at another she went out of the window in the shape of a horse, breaking one pane of glass and a piece of iron. It was certainly vastly considerate of her in the bulk of a horse to do so little damage! But usually she stalked along the passage and appeared in the rooms in her own form. No doubt could exist as to who this troublesome ghost was. The "specter" of the old gentleman had already hinted that his second wife was a bad woman, and could make herself unpleasant.

On one occasion, invisible hands laid hold of the young man, and rammed his head into a narrow space between the bedstead and the wall, and it took several persons to extricate him; and then, what with fright and what with the pressure, he was so unwell that a surgeon was sent for to bleed him. No sooner was this operation performed, than the ligatures about the arm were suddenly snatched at and torn off, and slung about his waist, and there drawn so tight that he was nearly suffocated. They had to be cut through with a knife to relieve him. At other times his cravat was drawn tight.

The spectre was of a playful humour sometimes, and would pluck the perukes off the heads of people, and one that was on top of a cabinet in a box, with a joint-stool on it, was drawn out and ripped to shreds – and this was the most costly wig in the house.

At another time the youth's "shoe-string" was observed without assistance of hands to come out of his shoe of its own accord and cast itself to the other side of the room, whereupon the other shoe-lace started crawling after its companion. A maid espying this, with her hand drew it back, when it clasped and curled round her hand like an eel or serpent.

The young man's clothes were taken off and torn to shreds, as were those of another servant in the house, and this while they were on their backs. A barrel of salt was seen to march out of one room and into another, untouched by human hands. When the spectre appeared in her own likeness she was habited in the ordinary garments of women at the time, especially like those worn by Mrs. Philip Furze, her daughter-in-law.

On Easter Eve the young man was returning from the town when he was caught by the female spectre by his coat and carried up into the air, head, legs, and arms dangling down.

Having been missed by his master and fellow servants, search was made for him, but it was not till half an hour later that he was found at some distance from the house plunged to his middle in a bog, and in a condition of ecstasy or trance, whistling and singing. He was with difficulty extracted and taken to the house and put to bed. All the lower part of his body was numbed with cold from long immersion in the morass. One of his shoes was found near the doorstep of the house, another at the back of the house, and his peruke was hanging among the top branches of a tree. On his recovery he protested that the spirit had carried him aloft till his master's house had seemed to him no bigger than a haycock.

As his limbs remained benumbed he was taken to Crediton on the following Saturday to be bled. After the operation he was left by himself, but when his fellows came in they found his forehead cut and swollen and bleeding. According to him, a bird with a stone in its beak had flown in at the window and dashed it at his brow. The room was searched; no stone, but a brass weight was found lying on the floor.

"This is a faithful account of the Contents of a Letter from a Person of Quality in Devon, dated 11 May, 1683. The young man will be 21 if he lives to August next."

The title of this curious pamphlet is: "A Narrative of the Demon of Spraiton. In a Letter from a Person of Quality in the County of Devon, to a Gentleman in London, with a Relation of an Apparition or Spectrum of an Ancient Gentleman of Devon who often appeared to his Son's Servant. With the Strange Actions and Discourses happening between them at divers times. As likewise, the Demon of an Ancient Woman, Wife of the Gentleman aforesaid. With unparalell'd varieties of strange Exploits performed by her: Attested under the Hands of the said Person of Quality, and likewise a Reverend Divine of the said County. With Reflections on Drollery and Atheism, and a Word to those that deny the Existence of Spirits." London, 1683.

It is pretty obvious that the mischievous and idle youth was at the bottom of all this bedevilment. This was but an instance of the Poltergeist that so exercised the minds of Körner, Mrs. Crowe, and the like, but which can all be traced back to a knavish servant.

## TOM AUSTIN

Tom Austin was a native of Collumpton, and was the son of a respectable yeoman, who, at his death, left him his little property, which was estimated at that time as worth £80 per annum. As he bore a good character, he soon got a wife with a marriage portion of £800. Unhappily this accession to his means completely turned his head. He became wild and extravagant, and in less than four years had dissipated all his wife's fortune and mortgaged his own farm. Being now somewhat pinched in circumstances, he was guilty of several frauds on his neighbours, but they did not prosecute him, out of respect for his family. Then, unable to satisfy his needs, he took to the highway, and stopped Sir Zachary Wilmot on the road between Wellington and Taunton Dean, and as the worthy knight resisted being robbed, Austin shot him dead. From Sir Zachary he got forty-six guineas and a silver-hilted sword. With this plunder he made haste home to Collumpton undiscovered. This did not last long, as he continued in the same course of riot. When it was spent he started to visit an uncle of his, living at a distance of a mile.

On reaching the house he found nobody within but his aunt and five small children, who informed him that his uncle had gone away for the day on business, and they invited him to stay and keep them company till his return. He consented, but almost immediately snatched up an axe and split the skull of his aunt with it, then cut the throats of all the children, laid their bodies in a heap, and proceeded to plunder the house of the money it contained, which amounted to sixty guineas. Then he hastened home to his wife, who, perceiving some blood on his clothes, asked whence it came. In reply he rushed upon her with a razor, cut her throat, and then murdered his own two children, the eldest of whom was not three years of age.

Hardly had he finished with these butcheries before his uncle arrived, calling on his way home. On entering the house this man saw what had been done, and though little suspecting what would meet his eyes when he returned home, with great resolution flung himself upon Tom Austin, mastered him, bound his hands, and brought him before a magistrate, who sent him to Exeter Gaol.

In August, 1694, this inhuman wretch was hanged. He seemed quite insensible as to the wickedness of his acts, as well as to the senselessness of them, and there can be little doubt that he was a victim to homicidal madness.

When on the scaffold, when asked by the chaplain if he had anything to say before he died: "Only this," was his reply, "I see yonder a woman with some curds and whey, and I wish I could have a pennyworth of them before I am hanged, as I don't know when I shall see any again." Tom Austin had many errors, many faults, many crimes to expiate, but he carried with him into the next world one merit – his undying love of Devonshire junket, the same as curds and whey.

## FRANCES FLOOD

Frances Flood was born in Gitsom (Gittisham), near Honiton in Devon, and on the 22nd January, 1723, being thirty-two years of age, I went from Philip's Norton to the town of Saltford, where I had for lodging an Inn. I arose well in the Morning, thinking to go about my Business: but being come out of the Door, I was taken very ill, and before I came to the Village I was not sensible in what condition I was in, and not able to go, was forced to hold by the Wall as I went along: With great Difficulty I got to the Overseer's House, and desired him to get me a lodging, but he denied me; whereupon I went up the Street and lay in a Hogsty, where many People came to see me. I lay there till the Evening in a sad Condition, when the Overseer's Wife of that Place led me to the Overseer's again, but he still denied me Relief; and, not being very sensible, I returned again to the same Place, but they had been so inhuman as to put some Dung into it, to prevent my lodging there again; but at last I got into another which had no Cover over it as the other had. In the Morning when I awoke, I went up the Street and with Weakness fell down, so that Streams of Water ran over me, till helped up by the Clerk of the Parish's Wife, who led me till I came to the wall, by which I held, and with great Trouble got to the Barn, but the Owner of the Barn was so barbarous as to unhang the Door the next Day; a young Man, out of Compassion, hung the Door again. The Owner was so displeased, that he came a second Time and unhung it.

"The next Day, the Small-Pox appeared on me, and was noised about; insomuch that the Overseer came and put up the Door, and then I had both Meat and Drink, but took no further Care of me for 14 days; the Small-Pox appeared very kind and favourable and might have done very well, had I not been taken in my Legs, and should have been able to go away in a Fortnight; after which I was taken on my Calfs, which turned black and cold and looked much like Scalds, and broke out. I applied to them first of all a Bathe, but the Flesh speedily parted from the small of my Legs to the Bones. I had there by me some Ointment, which was brought me by the Overseer; but had no one to dress my Wounds, but did all myself.

"I freely forgive all the Parish, and as for the Overseers, they did to the utmost of their power, when my Flesh was separated; and whatever I desired of them, they sent me, so I desire that all may be blameless of my Misfortunes. My Pains increased to a wonderful Degree and my Legs grew worse, and was driven to dismal Extremity, and lay in that Condition three Weeks.

"On the 18th Day of March about 8 o'clock in the Evening there came a Woman to the Barn-door to ask me how I did. I was going to show her how my Legs were, and how the Flesh was separated from the Bones, and leaning a little harder than Ordinary upon my left leg, it broke off as though it were a rotten Stick, a little below the Calf; the woman left me, and I was surprised, but God enabled me to bind up my Leg again with the same Medicines as before; and when most of the People of the Village were at rest, then a Man that liv'd over against the Barn came to see me, and asked me how I did. I desired him to get me some Beer at the Overseers, but he fetched me some of his own and left me; so there was no one with me. I submitted myself to God, and after some time fell asleep, and slept till the morning. And as soon as 'twas Light, dressed the wound before any came to me, and the Flesh covered the Bone, but had no Loss of Marrow, and but little of Blood, nor hardly any Pain. The Mercies there received at the Hands of God exceeded all the Punishment was due to me thro' Sin, and His Mercy I never did deserve. I was visited by abundance of People, and amongst them God sent me the Minister of Keinsham, and Mr. Brown of the same Town came along with him, and they afforded me much Comfort; they told me they never saw the like, and it was God's handy Work, and not Man's, so taking leave of me, they wished that the God of Heaven might be my Physician, and it gave me a merry Heart and cheerful Countenance, and gave them Thanks for what Favours I had received from them, and my Pains still ceased. Abundance came both far and near all the Week to see me, and amongst the rest a Surgeon, who persuaded me to have the Bone of

my right Leg taken off, to which I gave Consent. On the 25th about 6 in the Morning, when I arose and opened the Cloaths, I found my Legs were fallen from me, and the Pains I then suffered were not worthy to be called Pains; so I dressed it with the same Medicine I made use of before; within two Hours after came several People to visit me. I unbound the Cloaths and the Flesh was closed over the Bone, and the Blood was stopp'd. So I had great Reason to praise the Lord for all His Mercies and Favours I had received from Time to Time.”

## EPITAPH ON F. FLOOD'S LEGS

### Buried in Saltford Churchyard

Stop Reader, and a Wonder See,  
As strange as e'er was known!  
My Feet drop'd off from my Body,  
In the Middle of the Bone.  
I had no Surgeon for my Help  
But God Almighty's Aid,  
In Whom I ever will rely  
And never be afraid.  
Though here beneath (the Mold) they lie  
Corruption for to see,  
Yet they shall one Day reunite  
To all Eternity.

The last line might have been amended to —

And walk away with me.

This curious tract is entitled *The Devonshire Woman: or a Wonderful Narrative of Frances Flood*. It bears no date, but is of about 1724. At the end stands: “Printed for Frances Flood, and sold by Nobody but herself.”

In fact, the poor creature went about on crutches selling the story of her misfortunes. The tract is very scarce, but there is a copy in the British Museum.

## SIR WILLIAM HANKFORD

In the Second Part of *Henry IV*, Shakespeare makes his hero, Prince Hal, behave with splendid generosity to Judge Gascoigne, who had committed him to prison for striking him in open court.

The King says to him: —

How might a prince of my great hopes forget  
So great indignities you laid upon me?  
What! rate, rebuke, and roughly send to prison  
The immediate heir of England! Was this easy?  
May this be wash'd in Lethe, and forgotten?

The Chief Justice replies: —

I then did use the person of your father;  
The image of his power lay then in me:  
And, in the administration of his law,  
Whiles I was busy for the commonwealth,  
Your highness pleasèd to forget my place,  
The majesty and power of law and justice,  
The image of the king whom I presented,  
And struck me in my very seat of judgment;  
Whereon, as an offender to your father,  
I gave bold way to my authority,  
And did commit you.

Shakespeare makes King Henry V recognize that Gascoigne was in the right.

You are right, justice, and you weigh this well;  
Therefore still bear the balance and the sword.

But here Shakespeare has not been true to history. His ideal king was not so generous as he represented him. In fact, directly on his accession Henry displaced Gascoigne from the Chief-Justiceship, and elevated to his place the Devonshire lawyer Sir William Hankford, Knight of the Bath.

Prince, indeed, in his *Worthies of Devon*, claims that it was Hankford who committed Prince Hal to prison; but this is a mistake, the brave and resolute judge was Sir William Gascoigne, who was displaced, and Sir William Hankford installed as Chief Justice in his room by Henry V eight days after his accession.

Sir William was probably born at Hankford, the ancient seat of the family, in the hamlet of Bulkworthy, a chapel-of-ease to Buckland Brewer. He was made Serjeant-at-law in 1391 in the reign of Richard II, and was advanced to be one of the lords-justices in the Court of Common Pleas in 1397. He was made Knight of the Bath at the coronation of Henry IV, and, as already said, he was called up higher to be Chief Justice by Henry V on his accession to the throne. He retained his office for part of a year under Henry VI, so that he served under four kings. He moved from Hankford, the family seat, to Annery, in the parish of Monkleigh, near Great Torrington, a beautiful spot on the Torridge. Here he had a stately mansion “famous for a large upper gallery, wherein might be placed thirty standing beds, fifteen of a side, and yet not one to be seen there. Nor could you from one bed

see another: for this gallery being very long and wainscotted on each hand, there were several doors in it, which led into little alcoves or apartments, well plaistered and whited, large and convenient enough for private lodgings.”

Annery still stands in its beautiful park, but the gallery has disappeared; it was pulled down in the year 1800.

Towards the end of his days Hankford fell into deep fits of depression in retirement at Annery, where, weary of life and despondent at the prospect of the new reign with an infant as king, and with furious rivalries ready to break forth and tear the kingdom to pieces, he was impatient that death might end his troubles.

“On a fit time for the purpose, he called to him the keeper of his park, which adjoined his house at Annery, and charged him with negligence in his office, suffering his deer to be killed and stolen; whereupon he left it in strict charge with him, that he should be more careful in his rounds by night, and that if he met any one in his walk that would not stand and speak, he should shoot him, whoever he was, and that he would discharge him (i.e. free him of blame). This the keeper directly promised, and too faithfully performed. The judge having thus laid the design, meaning to end his doleful days, in a dark tempestuous night, fit for so black an action, secretly conveyed himself out of the house, and walked alone in his park, just in the keeper’s way; who being then in his round, hearing somebody coming towards him, demanded, Who was there. No answer being made, he required him to stand; the which when he refused to do, the keeper shot and killed him upon the place: and coming to see who he was, found him to be his master.”

So relates Prince, following Baker’s *Chronicle*, 1643, and Risdon and Westcote. But Sir Richard Baker’s account is full of errors: he makes Hankford die in the reign of Edward IV, whereas he died in the same year as Henry V (1422). Prince objects that the story may not be true or only partly true. That Sir William was killed by his keeper is a fact not to be disputed, but that he purposely contrived his own death is very doubtful – it is a conjecture and no more.

Sir William was a liberal and religious man: he built the chapel at Bulkworthy, as well as the Annery Aisle to Monkleigh Church. In this latter he lies interred, and a noble monument was erected over him, with the epitaph: “Hic jacet Willielmus Hankford, Miles, quondam Capitalis Justiciarius Domini Regis de Banco, qui obiit xx die mensis Decembris, Anno Domini MCCCCXXII. Cujus Animae propicietur Deus. Amen.”

He is represented kneeling in his robes alongside of his wife. Out of his mouth proceeds this prayer: “Miserere mei Deus, secundum magnam misericordiam tuam.” A book in his hand is inscribed with “Miserere mei Deus secundum magnam justiciam divinam,” and over his head is “Beati qui custodiunt judicium et faciunt justiciam omni tempore.”

## SIR JOHN FITZ

Tavistock, in the reign of Elizabeth, was a more picturesque town than it is at present. Then the abbey walls, crenellated and with towers at intervals, were still standing in complete circuit, and the abbey church, the second finest in the county and diocese, though unroofed, was still erect. The houses, slate-hung in quaint patterns representing fleurs-de-lis, oak leaves, swallow-tails, pomegranates, with gables to the street, were very different from the present houses, stuccoed drab and destitute of taste. Moreover the absurd, gaunt market hall erected last century was not a central and conspicuous disfigurement to the town.

But a few strides to the west, on the Plymouth road, stood Fitzford House, a mansion recently erected, consisting of a court, entered through a massive gate-house, and the mansion standing back, with porch and projecting wings.

In this house lived the Fitz family. They had been there for four generations and had married well. They were also well estated, with property in Cornwall, in Kent and Southwark, as well as in Devon. John Fitz, the father of the man whose tragic history we are about to relate, married Mary, daughter of Sir John Sydenham, of Brimpton, in Somerset, and had late in life one son, the “unfortunate” Sir John. The Fitzes had been a family bred to the law; the first known of them, John Fitz, had been a bencher of Lincoln’s Inn, and the John Fitz who married Mary Sydenham was also a counsellor-at-law, and he managed considerably to add to the wealth of the family. When he had got as much as he wanted out of the pockets of his clients, he retired to his family place of Fitzford and there amused himself with astrology and the casting of horoscopes. When his son John was about to be born in 1575, John Fitz studied the stars, and, says Prince, “finding at that time a very unlucky position of the heavens, he desired the midwife, if possible, to hinder the birth but for one hour; which, not being to be done, he declared that the child would come to an unhappy end and undo the family.”

John Fitz was riding over the moor one day with his wife, when they lost their direction, were, in fact, pixy-led, and they floundered through bogs, and could nowhere hit on the packhorse track that led across the moors from Moreton Hampstead to Tavistock. Exhausted and parched with thirst they lighted on a crystal stream, dismounted, and drank copiously of the water. Not only were they refreshed, but at once John Fitz’s eyes were opened, the spell on him was undone, and he knew where he was and which direction he should take. Thereupon he raised his hand and vowed he would honour that well, so that such travellers as were pixy-led might drink at it and dispel the power over them exercised by the pixies. The spring still flows and rises under a granite structure erected in fulfilment of his vow by John Fitz; it bears his initials and the date 1568 in raised figures and letters on the covering stone. Formerly it was on a slope in the midst of moorland away from the main track, near the Blackabrook. Now it is enclosed in the reclaimed tract made into meadows by the convicts of Princetown. Happily the structure has not been destroyed: it is surrounded by a protecting wall.

In the same year that John Fitz erected this well, he obtained a lease to carry water in pipes of wood or of lead through the garden of one John Northcott to his mansion at Fitzford. The little house that he built over the spring in his close, called Boughthayes, still stands, picturesquely wreathed in ivy.

He died 8 January, 1589–90, aged sixty-one, and by his will made his wife executrix and guardian of his son, who was then rather over fourteen years old. There is a stately monument in Tavistock Parish Church to John Fitz and his wife, he clothed in armour, which in life he probably never wore, as he was a man of the long robe. The effigies are recumbent, and by them is a smaller, kneeling figure of the son and heir – their only child, the “unfortunate” John Fitz. But the widow did not have charge of her son; as a ward under the Queen he was committed to Sir Arthur Gorges, “who tended more to the good of the child than his own private profit,” which was perhaps unusual. Mary Fitz retired to Walreddon, near Tavistock, another house belonging to the family, for her initials “M.

F.” and the date 1591 are cut in granite over the doorway. But presently she married Christopher Harris, of Radford, when she moved to his house near Plymouth.

The young John Fitz is described as having been “a very comlie person.” He was married, before he had attained his majority, to Bridget, sixth daughter of Sir William Courtenay. Of this marriage one child, Mary, was born 1 August, 1596, when her father was just twenty-one years old. John Fitz was now of age, considered himself free of all restraint, owner of large estates, and was without stability of character or any principle, and was inclined to a wild life. He took up his residence at Fitzford, and roystered and racketed at his will.

One day (it was 4 June, 1599) he was dining at Tavistock with some of his friends and neighbours. The hour was early, for in the account of it we are told that “with great varietie of merriments and discourse they outstript the noontide.”

John Fitz had drunk a good deal of wine, and he began to brag of his possessions, and boasted that he had not a foot of land that was not his freehold. Among those present was Nicholas Slanning, of Bickleigh. He interrupted Fitz, and said, “That is not so. You hold of me a parcel of land that is copyhold, and though of courtesy it has been intermitted, yet of due, you owe me so much a year for that land.”

John started from his seat, and told Slanning to his face that he lied, and mad with rage, drew his dagger and would have stabbed him. Slanning with a knife beat down Fitz’s blade, and the friends at the table threw themselves between them and patched up the quarrel as they supposed. Nicholas Slanning then left the apartment and departed for Bickleigh with his man, both being on horseback.

They had not ridden far when they came to a deep and rough descent, whereupon Slanning bade his man lead the horses, and he dismounting walked through a field where the way was easier.

At that moment he saw John Fitz with four attendants galloping along the lane after him. Without ado, Slanning awaited the party and inquired of John Fitz what he desired of him. Fitz replied that he had followed that he might avenge the insult offered him. Thereupon Fitz called to his men, and they drew their blades and fell on Slanning, who had to defend himself against five men. The matter might even then have been composed, but one of Fitz’s men, named Cross, twitted his master, saying, “What play is this? It is child’s play. Come, fight!” Fitz, who had sheathed his sword, drew it again and attacked Slanning. The latter had long spurs, and stepping back they caught in a tuft of grass, and as he staggered backward, Fitz ran him through the body. At the same time, one of Fitz’s men struck him from behind. Slanning fell to the ground and died. He was conveyed home, and buried in Bickleigh Church, where his monument still exists, but in a mutilated condition. It was of plaster, and when the church was “restored” fell to pieces; but the curious Latin inscription has been preserved.

Nicholas Slanning had been married to Margaret, daughter of Henry Champernowne, of Modbury, and he died leaving as his heir a child, and the administration of his estates was committed to that son’s great-uncle. Of Ley, the fine Slanning place, nothing now remains except the balls that stood on the entrance gates, that have been transferred to the vicarage garden at Bickleigh. The situation was incomparably beautiful, and it is to be regretted that the grand old Elizabethan mansion has been levelled with the dust. Sir Nicholas Slanning, created a baronet in 1663, moved to Maristowe in Tamerton Foliot, but the second and last baronet died without issue in 1700, and in 1798 John Modyford Heywood, who inherited the extensive Slanning estates through a female line, sold them all to Sir Manasseh Lopes, a Portuguese Jew diamond merchant, who had obtained a baronetcy by buying up rotten boroughs in Cornwall and putting in members whose votes could be relied on by the ministry of the day. The baronetcy was created in 1805. The first baronet was the son of Mordecai Lopes, of Jamaica.

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