

# VARIOUS

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**Various**  
**The Mirror of Literature,**  
**Amusement, and**  
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**No. 475, February 5, 1831**

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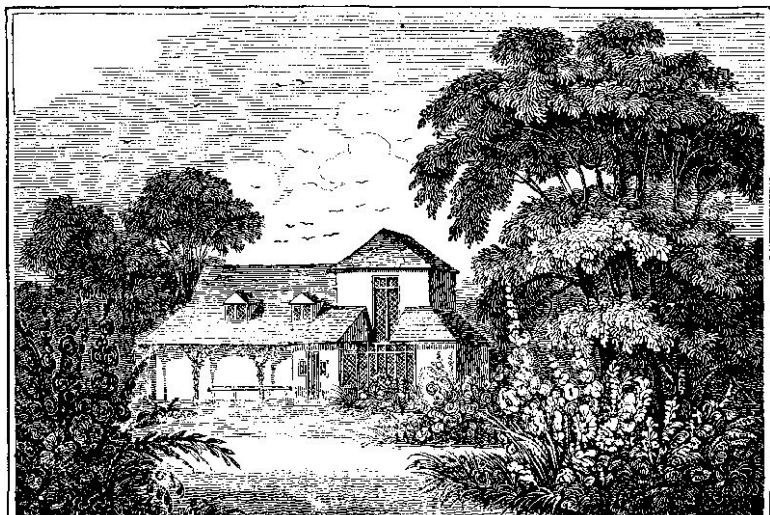
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**THE PRINCESS ELIZABETH'S  
COTTAGE, WINDSOR**



They who draw their notions of royal enjoyment from the tinsel of its external trappings, will scarcely believe the above cottage to have been the residence of an English princess. Yet such was the rank of its occupant but a few years since, distant as may be the contrast of courts and cottages, and the natural enjoyment of rural life from the artificial luxury—the painted pomp and idle glitter of regal state.

The above cottage stands in the grounds of Grove House, adjoining the churchyard of Old Windsor. It was built under the superintendent taste of the Princess Elizabeth,<sup>1</sup> second sister of the present King, and now known as the Landgravine of Hesse Homburg. To the decoration of this cottage the Princess paid much attention: it is quite in the *ornée* style; and its situation is so beautiful as to baffle all embellishment.

Grove House, the seat of Lady Dowager Onslow, of whom the Princess purchased the whole property, was built by Mr. Bateman, uncle to the eccentric Lord Bateman. This gentleman made it a point in his travels to notice everything that pleased him in the monasteries abroad; and, on his return to England, he built this house; the bedchamber being contrived, like the cells of monks, with a refectory, and every other appendage of a monastery; even to a cemetery, and a coffin, inscribed with the name of a supposititious ancient bishop. Some curious Gothic chairs, bought at a sale of the curiosities in this house, are now

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<sup>1</sup> Born May 22, 1770; married April 7, 1818, to Frederick Joseph Lewis, Landgrave of Hesse Homburg, who died April 2, 1829 aged 61.

at Strawberry Hill.

Old Windsor gives rise to many more interesting reminiscences; and few who "suck melancholy from a song" would exchange its sombre churchyard for the gayest field of fancy. We may be there anon.

# ENGLISH SUPERSTITION

(For the Mirror.)

Sir Walter Scott, in his history of *Demonology and Witchcraft*, has omitted a tradition which is still popular in Cheshire, and which from its close resemblance to one of the Scottish legends related by that writer, gives rise to many interesting conjectures respecting the probable causes of such a superstition being believed in countries with apparently so little connexion or intercourse, as Cheshire and Scotland. The facts of Sir Walter's narration are as follow: vide *Demonology and Witchcraft*, p. 133.

"A daring horse jockey having sold a horse to a man of venerable and antique appearance, had a remarkable hillock on the Eildon Hills, called Lucken Hare, appointed as the place where, at twelve o'clock at night, he should receive the price. He came, the money was paid in an ancient coin, and he was invited by the purchaser to view his residence. The trader followed his guide through several long ranges of stalls, in each of which a horse stood motionless, while an armed warrior lay equally still at his charger's feet. 'All these men,' said the wizard in a whisper, 'will awaken at the battle of Sheriffmoor.' A horn and a sword hung suspended together at one extremity of the chamber. The former the jockey seized, and having sounded it, the horses

stamped, the men arose and clashed their armour; while a voice like that of a giant pronounced these words:—

"Woe to the coward that ever he was born,  
Who did not draw the sword before he blew the horn."

Subsequent to this, Sir Walter proceeds to the relation of another kindred tradition, the incidents of which do not materially differ from those of the preceding. The scene of the Cheshire legend is placed in the neighbourhood of Macclesfield, in that county, and the sign of a public-house on Monk's Heath may have arrested the attention of many travellers from London to Liverpool. This village hostel is known by the designation of the Iron Gates. The sign represents a pair of ponderous gates of that metal, opening at the bidding of a figure, enveloped in a cowl; before whom kneels another, more resembling a modern yeoman than one of the 12th or 13th century, to which period this legend is attributed. Behind this person is a white horse rearing, and in the back ground a view of Alderley Edge. The story is thus told of the tradition to which the sign relates:

### **The Iron Gates, or the Cheshire Enchanter**

A farmer from Mobberley was riding on a white horse over the heath, which skirts Alderley Edge. Of the good qualities of his steed he was justly proud; and while stooping down to adjust

its mane, previously to his offering it for sale at Macclesfield, he was surprised by the sudden starting of the animal. On looking up he perceived a figure of more than common height, enveloped in a cowl, and extending a staff of black wood across his path. The figure addressed him in a commanding voice; told him that he would seek in vain to dispose of his steed, for whom a nobler destiny was in store, and bade him meet him when the sun had set, with his horse, at the same place. He then disappeared. The farmer resolving to put the truth of this prediction to the test, hastened on to Macclesfield Fair, but no purchaser could be obtained for his horse. In vain he reduced his price to half; many admired, but no one was willing to be the possessor of so promising a steed. Summoning, therefore, all his courage, he determined to brave the worst, and at sunset reached the appointed place. The monk was punctual to his appointment. Follow me, said he, and led the way by the *Golden Stone, Stormy Point, to Saddle Bole*.<sup>2</sup> On their arrival at this last named spot, the neigh of horses seemed to arise from beneath their feet. The stranger waved his wand, the earth opened and disclosed a pair of ponderous iron gates. Terrified at this, the horse plunged and threw his rider, who kneeling at the feet of his fearful companion, prayed earnestly for mercy. The monk bade him fear nothing, but enter the cavern, and see what no mortal eye ever yet beheld. On passing the gates he found himself in a spacious cavern, on each side of which were horses, resembling his own, in size and

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<sup>2</sup> All places in the neighbourhood of Alderley Edge and Mobberley.

colour. Near these lay soldiers accoutred in ancient armour, and in the chasms of the rock were arms, and piles of gold and silver. From one of these the enchanter took the price of the horse in ancient coin, and on the farmer asking the meaning of these subterranean armies, exclaimed, "These are caverned warriors preserved by the good genius of England, until that eventful day, when distracted by intestine broils, England shall be thrice won and lost between sunrise and sunset. Then we awakening from our sleep, shall rise to turn the fate of Britain. This shall be when George, the son of George, shall reign. When the Forests of Delamere shall wave their arms over the slaughtered sons of Albion. Then shall the eagle drink the blood of princes from the headless *cross* (query *corse*.) Now haste thee home, for it is not in thy time these things shall be. A Cestrian shall speak it, and be believed." The farmer left the cavern, the iron gates closed, and though often sought for, the place has never again been found.

The latter part of the monk's prophecy has been fulfilled. Nixon, the well-known Cheshire seer foretold the same events in nearly the same words; but the belief in his dreams of futurity, has been much diminished by the decease of our late monarch. Recourse has been had, as in other works of greater moment, to various readings, and the probable mistakes of early transcribers, and many emendations have been proposed to supply the place of the name of George, but *adhuc sub judice lis est*. The Cestrian rustics of the neighbouring villages, still believe that at midnight the neighing of horses is audible under Alderley Edge.

*H.*

# ANTIQUARIAN SCRAPS

(To the Editor.)

I went the other day over the ruins of St. Dunstan's, and whilst gaping about, saw over one of the portals (inside) an old harp, with an inscription, which, as far as I could make it out, ran thus:

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St. Dunstan's harp against a wall,  
Upon a pin did hang'a,  
The harp itself, with ly' and all,  
Untouched by hand did twang'a.

The harp was supposed to play by itself on St. Dunstan's Day: ly' means lyre.

Can any of your intelligent correspondents inform me why there is an elder tree in all the Palace Gardens?

There is at the back of Old London Bridge, on this side, a street called "Labour in Vain Hill:" not from the height, but from a stone, on which are engraved two figures washing a blackamoor.

*GEO. ST. CLAIR.*

*Dean-street, Soho.*

I do not know where your indefatigable correspondent *Zanga* discovered his curious "Historical Fact," detailed in No. 471 of *The Mirror*: it is highly amusing, but unfortunately void of truth. The wife of the first Earl of Clarendon was Frances, daughter of Sir Thomas Aylesbury, Bart. (now extinct) one of the Masters of Request; by whom he had issue four sons—viz. Henry, his successor; Lawrence, created Earl of Rochester; Edward, who died unmarried; and James, who was drowned while going to Scotland in the Gloucester frigate: also two daughters—viz. Ann, wife of James, Duke of York, afterwards James II., and Frances, married to Thomas Knightly, created a Knight of the Bath.

*HENRY CARR.*

# SELECT BIOGRAPHY

## MEMOIR OF TAM O'SHANTER

(For the Mirror.)

Thomas Reid, so celebrated as Tam O'Shanter by Burns, was born in the Kyle of Ayrshire. His first entrance into active life was in the capacity of ploughboy to William Burns, the father of the poet, whom Thomas described as a man of great capacity, as being very fond of an argument, of rigid morals, and a strict disciplinarian—so much so, that when the labours of the day were over, the whole family sat down by the blazing "ha' ingle," and upon no pretence whatever could any of the inmates leave the house after night. This was a circumstance that was not altogether to Thomas's liking. He had heard other ploughboys with rapture recount scenes of rustic jollity, which had fallen in their way, while out on nocturnal visits to the fair daughters or servant girls of the neighbouring farmers—scenes of which he was practically ignorant. And more—he had become acquainted with a young woman he had met at Maybole Fair; and having promised to call upon her at her father's house, owing to his master's regularity

of housekeeping, he had found it totally impracticable.

To have one night's sport was his nightly and daily study for a long time. It so happened that his mistress about this time was brought to bed. Thomas hailed the bustle of that happy period as a fit time to compass his long meditated visit. Mrs. Burns lay in the *spence*. The gossips were met around the kitchen fire, listening to the howling of the storm which raged without, and thundered down the chimney: it was a January blast. Thomas kept his eye upon his master, who, with clasped "hands and uplifted eyes, sat in the muckle chair in the ingle neuk," as if engaged in supplication at the Throne of Grace for the safety of his wife and child. Thomas drew his chair nearer the door, and upon some little bustle in the kitchen, he reached the hallen, and was just emerging into darkness, when the hoarse voice of the angry Burns rung in the ears of the almost petrified ploughboy, "Where awa', Tam?"

"The auld doure whalp," muttered Tam, as he shut the door and resumed his stocking; "I was gaun to the door to see if the win' was tiring the thack aff the riggin."

"Thou needs na gang to look the night," cried the rigid overseer of Doonholm, "when it is sae mirk, thou coudna' see thy finger afore thee." It was indeed "a waefu' nicht." Such a night as this might give rise to these admirable lines of that bard, about to be ushered into the world—

"That night a child might understand

The deil had business on his hand."

It was a little before the now pensive and thoughtful Burns was given to understand that a son was born unto him, as

"The wind blew as 'twad blawn its last,

that a horrid crash was heard; a shriek rose from the affrighted women, as they drew their chairs nearer the fire. "The ghaists and howlets that nightly cry about the ruins o' Alloway's auld haunted kirk" rose on every imagination. The gudeman rose from his chair, lighted a lantern, commanded Thomas to follow him, and left the house. The case was this—the gable of the byre had been blown down, which, as it was of his own building, was not of the most durable nature.

In due time the joyful father had his first-born son laid in his arms: his joy knew no bounds. The *bicker* was now sent round with increasing rapidity; and Thomas, then in his fourteenth year, was carried to his bed, to use his own words, "between the late and the early, in a gude way, for the first time."—Such was the birth-night of the poet.

How long Thomas Reid remained in the service of William Burns does not appear. It is certain, however, that he was with him when Robert first went to plough, as Thomas has repeatedly told, as an instance of Burns's early addiction to reading, that he has seen him go to, and return from plough, with a book in his hand, and at meal-times "*supping his parritch*" with one hand and

holding the book in the other.

It would appear that he had, in process of time, got better acquainted with his sweetheart at Maybole Fair, for he married her. It was on this occasion that he rented the Shanter farm, which, with the assistance of his father-in-law, he stocked and furnished. But fortune went against him:

"His cattle died, and blighted was his corn;"

and an unfortunate friend, for whom he had become security for 150*l.*, failed. Under such a load of ill, he, like many others, sought for consolation in the "yill cups;" and any errand which served as a pretext to visit the town of Ayr, renewed his worship to the "inspiring, bold John Barleycorn;" and he usually returned, like the Laird of Snotterston,

"O'er a' the ills o' life victorious."

But Thomas had many a domestic squabble. His wife, naturally not of the sweetest temper, was doubly soured by the misfortunes of the world, and the dissipation of her helpmate; and often when Tam

"Was gettin' fu' and unco happy,"

she sat at home,

"Gathering her brows like gathering storm,  
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm."

She, like too many in that district at that time, was very superstitious. Thomas took her by the weak side, and usually arrested her "light-horse gallop of clish ma-claver" by some specious story of ghost or hobgoblin adventures, with which he had been detained.

He had now got into such a continued state of dissipation and irregularity, that he was obliged to leave the farm to the mercy of his creditors, and opened a small public-house, at the end of the old bridge on the water of Doon. It was while he was here that Tam O'Shanter made its appearance. A manuscript copy was sent to Thomas, by post, with this motto—

Change the name, and the  
Story may be told of yourself.

The celebrity of the poem brought numbers to his house, and he sold a great deal. But his spirit could not brook the brutal taunts and jeers which every day he was obliged to bear from his customers. He left off business, and commenced labourer, at which he continued till he got an offer of a situation as overseer of hedges, on the large estate of Castle Semple, at that time belonging to William M'Dowall, Esq., M.P. for Renfrewshire, which he accepted. With short intervals, he remained there till the day of his death. He was of such a character, that he

considered no man, or class of men, his superior, and no man his inferior.

Feeling the infirmities of old age approach, Mr. Harvey placed him at his west gate, as gate-keeper, where he fell into a lingering disease, which soon put a period to his mortal career. As he had no friends nor relations (his wife having died about two years before) Thomas had never cared for to-morrow: he was destitute of the means to support himself during his illness. The night before he died, he called for a half-mutchkin of whisky; and (as an acquaintance of his sat by his bed-side, and who personally informed me) he, taking a glass of it in his hand, held it between him and the light, and eyed it for some time with a peculiarly exhilarated expression of countenance, even at such a crisis;— then, while pleasure sparkled in his eyes, he took his friend by the hand, and pressing it warmly, exclaimed, "This is the last whisky I, in all probability, will ever drink, and many and often is the times I have felt its power. Here's to thee, Jamie, and may thou never want a drap when thou art dry!" He died the next morning, about eight o'clock.

*J.R.S.*

# THE SKETCH-BOOK

## RECOLLECTIONS OF A WANDERER. NO. V

### Dawlish's Hole:—An Incident

The eye looked out upon the watery world—  
With fearful glance looked east and west, but all  
Was wild and solitary, and the surge  
Dashed on the groaning cliff, and foaming rose  
And roared, as 'twere triumphing.

*N.T. CARRINGTON.*

The coast scene near Landwithiel<sup>3</sup> was of so varied and interesting a character that I was irresistibly led on to examine it very fully in detail. My sojourn therefore at Mr. Habbakuk Sheepshanks', of the "Ship-Aground"; (whom I have formerly introduced to the reader) was prolonged to an extent which sometimes surprised myself, and the various local stories and

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<sup>3</sup> Printed by mistake Tor-withiel, in No. II. of these Recollections: see *Mirror*, vol. xv. p. 356.

traditions of times past, with which mine host, especially when under the exciting influence of an extra glass of grog, almost nightly entertained me, essentially contributed to while away the time. The spot too was so secluded—comparatively unknown: there is something inseparable from a temperament like mine in so deep a retirement. To its inhabitants the world and its busy haunts are but as a tale; yet man in all his varieties is essentially the same. Many a day have I wandered along the sea-beaten coast—dining perhaps on a headland stretching far into the sea—or in some secluded little bay, by the side of a gushing spring; the ocean spread out before me—what object is so boundlessly or beautifully inspiring? It may be mighty fine philosophy for those who have passed through the current of life in one untroubled and unvaried stream, and who have no perception or idea of the deeper (if I may so express it) feelings of our nature, to call all this romance; but those who have tasted bitterly of the ills of this world, and who look back upon times past as doth the traveller in the desert on viewing from afar the oasis he has left—upon their transitory existence as a troubled dream—these can feel how deeply solitude amidst the sublimities of Nature will heal the troubled mind. Is there not a responsive chord in the hearts of such of my readers? Early one morning, soon after my arrival at Landwithiel, I proceeded over land to a distant part of the parish, to visit a ruin situated in a wild and remote spot, which possessed some degree of historical interest. In the evening I decided on returning by the coast in order to vary my route. The day had

been clear and sultry, and though the wind blew fresh from the southward, yet its refreshing influence seemed exhausted by the intense heat of the sun. In my progress along shore, though it was getting late, and I was somewhat fatigued, I could not resist the opportunity of exploring a sort of natural opening or cove in a part of the coast where the cliffs were unusually precipitous; affording the geologist the highest gratification; you were reminded indeed of the flat surface of a stone wall in many parts, which effect the regular stratification of the rocks contributed to produce; and it required no great stretch of fancy to imagine it one vast fortification, with loop-holes at regular intervals—at a short distance from seaward certainly it would be difficult to divest a stranger of the idea that it was something artificial. Two high points of rock contracting at their extremities in a circular direction so as almost to meet, ran into the sandy beach, and you found on advancing beyond the narrow entrance, a considerable space, which gradually extended to something like an oblong square, with a sandy bottom everywhere, surrounded by the same lofty cliffs which composed the adjacent coast. I was much surprised that I had never heard of this place before; it had apparently been more the effect of some natural convulsion than of the encroachment of the sea, and at the further end was a high mass of shingles, seaweed, and fragments of rock packed closely together by the tide. On examination I discovered, about the centre of the shingles, a large stone cross, carved out of a projecting part near the base of the cliff. It bore simply

the initials W.D. and though the surrounding rocks were thickly covered with seaweed and barnacles, yet the cross itself was perfectly clean, and bore marks of recent care. Some singular event had evidently occurred in this retired and desolate place. I loitered a considerable time in musing and examining the spot, regardless of the whining and uneasiness of my Newfoundland dog, Retriever, when I was suddenly and fully aroused by the sharp echo and plashing of the tide against the rock, within the entrance of the cove. I now recollected with alarm that it was a spring flood, and that I had heard the tide sets in on this part of the coast with extraordinary velocity. I ran hastily forward, expecting to escape with a mere wetting, along the base of the rocks to an opening which I had passed about half a mile to the westward. I had just grounds of alarm. The mouth of the cove as I have already stated, extended some way abruptly into the beach. On wading to its extremity I found the tide already breaking in impetuous surf towards the foot of the cliffs, and it was now so far advanced as to preclude any hope of escape from that quarter; for the sands shelved in for some way on each side of the projecting entrance, and if I gained the foot of the cliffs I feared that I must inevitably be dashed to pieces before reaching the opening. In the calmest weather on the coast, exposed to all the fury of the Atlantic, the spring tides come in with a heavy swell; on this occasion they were aided by the wind, and I had to retreat with precipitation before an angry and threatening mass of waves, which broke many feet over the spot I occupied the

moment before, with a noise like a discharge of artillery.

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