D. SIR EDWARD KELLEY

Carlyle in his *French Revolution* makes a contrast between two works of imagination which mark the extremes of the forces that made for the disruption of France, *Paul et Virginie* and *Le Chevalier de Faublas*. The former he calls “the swan-song of old dying France”; of the latter he says “if this wretched *Faublas* is a death-speech, it is one under the gallows, and by a felon that does not repent.” This double analogy may well serve for a comparison of Dr. Dee and the man who was at once his partner for a time, and his evil genius. The grave earnest old scholar, with instincts for good, high endeavour, and a vast intellectual strength, contrasts well with the mean-souled shifty specious rogue who fastened himself on him and leech-like drained him “dry as hay.”

Such historians as mention the existence of the latter are even a little doubtful how to spell his name. This, however, does not matter much—nay, at all, for it is probably not that to which he was born. Briefly the following is his record as far as can be discovered. He was born in 1555 to parents living in Worcester, who having tried to bring him176 up as an apothecary, sent him to Oxford when he was seventeen years of age. There he was entered at Gloucester Hall, under the name of Talbot. As however three men of that name were in the Hall at the same time, it is doubtful what family can claim the honour of his kinship. His college life was short—only lasting a year—and inconspicuous. “He left,” we are told, “abruptly.” Then, as if to complete the purely educational phase of his existence, he was for a while an attorney, eking out the tenuity of his legal practice by aid of forgery. Thus full-fledged for his work in life, he made his first properly-recorded appearance in the pillory in 1580, for an offence which is variously spoken of as forgery and coining. At any rate his ears were cropped off, a loss which necessitated for prudential reasons his wearing a skullcap for the remainder of his days. This he wore with such conspicuous success that it is said that even Doctor Dee, who was his partner for nearly seven years, did not know of his mutilation. Kelley’s next recorded offence was one which in a later age when subjects for dissection (necessary for purposes of education in anatomy) were difficult to obtain, was popularly known as “body-snatching.” The commission of this offence though a serious breach of the law, came to be regarded as a necessary condition of study; and even if punishment was meted out, it was not looked upon as dishonour. But in Kelley’s case the offence was committed not for the purpose of177 scientific education but for one of sorcery. It took place in Walton-le-dale in Lancashire, where Kelley dug up a body buried on the previous day, for purposes of necromancy, which, it will be remembered, was, as the etymology of the word implies, divination by means of the dead.

From this time on, he seemed to see his way clear to the final choice of a profession. He had tasted crime and punishment, and considered himself well qualified to accept the risks as well as the benefits; and so chose fraud as his life work. He was still under twenty-five years of age when he began to look about him for his next means or occasion of turning his special talents to profit. After some deliberation he fixed on the existence and qualities of the famous (as he had then become) Doctor Dee, and carefully commenced operations. He called on the mathematician at his house at Mortlake and made his acquaintance. Dee was naturally impressed by the conversation and ostensible qualities of the young man, who had the plausibility of the born rogue and laid himself out to captivate the old man, more than double his companion's age and worn by arduous study. He fostered all Dee's natural weaknesses, humoured his fads, was enthusiastic regarding his beliefs which he appeared to share, and urged on his personal ambitions. The belief in occultism which the philosopher cherished in secret, though he had openly and formally repudiated it a dozen years before in his preface to178 Sir Henry Billingsley's translation of Euclid, gave the parasitic rogue his cue for further ingratiating himself, and before long he entered Dee's service at an annual salary of fifty pounds. His special function was that of "skryer," which was his own or Dee's reading of "seer." His contribution to the general result was to see the figures which did—or did not—appear in the so-called "magic" crystal, an office for which his useful imagination, his unblushing assurance, and his utter unscrupulousness eminently fitted him. In fact he was in his designs of fraud a perfect complement of the simple-minded scientist. Of course as days went on and opportunities offered themselves, through Dee's growing madness and Kelley's social enlargements, the horizon of chicanery widened. This was largely assisted by the opportune arrival in England of the Palatine Albert Laski in 1583. Laski was just the man that Kelley was waiting for. A rich man with a taste for occult science; sufficiently learned to keep in touch with the theories of occultism of that time; sufficiently vain to be used by an unscrupulous adventurer who tickled his intellectual palate whilst he matured his frauds upon him.

Kelley having worked on Dee's feelings sufficiently to secure his acquiescence, procured that Laski should be allowed to aid in such operations and experiments as appealed to him. The result was that the Palatine took the two men with him, promising a free field for them both, each according179 to his bent. At Prague, in 1583, Laski presented Dee and his companion to the Emperor Rudolph II. Encouraged by the royal approval, Dee looked for a longer sojourn in eastern Europe, and brought thither his wife and children from Poland, where he had left them at Laskoe, the seat of the Palatine. Later on, in 1585,—again through the influence of the credulous

Laski—Dee with his companion was presented to Stephen, King of Poland. Stephen was much interested, and attended a *séance* that he might see the spirits of which he had heard so much. He saw too much, however, as far as Kelley was concerned, for he penetrated the imposture. Thereupon Kelley, unequal to carrying on the business single-handed, for he dared not let Dee's eyes be opened and he knew he could not induce him to be other than a blind partner, contrived that a new confederate should be added to the firm. This was one Francis Pucci, a Florentine, possessed of all the address and subtlety of his race. But after the experience of a year he was removed on suspicion of bad faith. Before that year was out, the Bishop of Piacenza, Apostolic Nuncio at the Emperor's Court, had a decree issued that the two Englishmen should quit Prague within six days. From Prague they went to Erfurt, in Thuringia; but despite letters of recommendation from high quarters the Municipal Authorities would not allow them to remain. So they moved on to Hesse-Cassel and thence to Tribau180 in Bohemia, where the fraud of making spirits appear was renewed. In 1586, it was intimated to Dee that the Emperor of Russia wished to receive him in that country. He would receive a fee of two thousand pounds per annum and would be treated with honour; but the scholar did not see his way to accept the flattering offer. At Tribau, Kelley experimented, but unsuccessfully, with some powder found at Glastonbury, Dee's young son being the medium. It was noticeable that whenever Dee or his family failed in these experiments, Kelley always succeeded. At this stage Kelley, who was a man of evil life, fell madly in love with Dee's wife. He was married himself, but that did not seem to matter. His own wife was ugly and unattractive, whereas the second Mrs. Dee was well-favoured and winning. In the madness of his lust he tried to work on the husband's credulity by telling him that it had been conveyed to him through angels that it was the Divine wish that the two men should hold their wives in common. Dee was naturally sceptical and annoyed, and his wife was furious. Kelley, however, was persistent, and stuck to his point so stedfastly that after a while the woman's resolution began to give way, and for a time some sort of working arrangement came about. Kelley's story, as elaborated to his partner, was that at Tribau, in 1587, the crystal showed him a vision of a naked woman who conveyed to him the divine message. To Dee's unhinged181 mind this seemed all natural and correct—probably even to the suitable costume adopted by the angelic messenger: so the worthy doctor gave way. After a time however the matron recovered her sanity, and the vulture and the pigeon parted. Dee gave up to his late partner all the "tools of trade" and "properties" of the fraud, and the two never met again.

Kelley went to Prague where he was thrown into prison in 1589. He remained in durance for four years after which he was released. From thence on till 1595, he

became a vagabond as well as a rogue, and wandered about Germany. He again fell into the hands of Rudolph, to be again imprisoned by him. He was killed whilst making a desperate effort to escape.

There seems to be no record of Edward Kelley—or Talbot—having been knighted, no authority save his own wish for the use of the title. It may of course be possible that he was knighted by the Emperor in some moment of absurd credulity; but there is no record of it. He had no children.

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E. MOTHER DAMNABLE

Owing to a want of accord among historians, the searcher after historic truth in our own day can hardly be quite sure of the identity of the worthy lady who passed under the above enchanting title. To later generations the district of Camden Town—formerly a suburb of London but now a fairly central part of it—is best known through a public house, the *Mother Red-Cap*. But before controversy can cease we are called on to decide if Mother Red-Cap and Mother Damnable were one and the same person. A hundred years ago a writer who had made such subjects his own, came to the conclusion that the soubriquet Mother Damnable was synonymous with Mother Black-Cap whom he spoke of as of local fame. But in the century that has elapsed historical research has been more scientifically organised and the field from which conclusions can be drawn has been enlarged as well as explored. The fact is that a century ago the northern suburb had two well-known public houses, *Mother Red-Cap* and *Mother Black-Cap*. It is possible that both the worthy vintners who offered "entertainment for man and beast" meant one and the same person,183 though who that person was remains to be seen. The distinctive colour line of the two hostelries was also possibly due to considerations of business rather than of art. *Red-cap* and *Black-cap* are, as names, drawn from these varying sign-boards; the term *Mother* held in common is simply a title given without any pretence of doing honour to the alleged practices of the person whom it is intended to designate.

There were in fact two notorious witches, either of whom might have been in the mind of either artistic designer. One was of Yorkshire fame in the time of Henry VII. The other was of very much later date and of purely local notoriety. The two publicans who exploited these identities under pictorial garb were open and avowed trade rivals. The earlier established of the two had evidently commissioned a painter to create a striking sign-board on a given subject, and the artist had fulfilled his task by an alleged

portrait of sufficiently fearsome import to fix the attention of the passer-by, at the same time conveying to him some hint of the calling of the archetype on which her fame was based. Prosperity in the venture begot rivalry; and the owner of the new house of refreshment, wishing to outshine his rival in trade whilst at the same time availing himself of the publicity and local fame already achieved, commissioned another artist to commit another pictorial atrocity under the name of art. So far as the purpose of publicity184 went, the ideas were similar; the only differences being in the colour scheme and the measure of attractiveness of the alleged prototype. From the indications thus given one may form some opinion—based solely on probability—as to which was the earlier and which the later artistic creation, for it is by this means—and this means only—that we may after the lapse of at least a century bring tradition to our aid, and guess at the original of Mother Damnable.

Of the two signs it seems probable that the black one is the older. After all, the main purpose of a sign-board is to catch the eye, and unless Titian and all who followed him are wrong, red has an attractive value beyond all other hues. The dictum of the great Italian is unassailable: “Red catches the eye; yellow holds it; blue gives distance.” A free-souled artist with the choice of the whole palette open to him might choose black since historical accuracy was a matter to be valued; but in a question of competition a painter would wisely choose red—especially when his rival had confined himself to black. So far as attractiveness is concerned, it must be borne in mind that the object of the painter and his patron was to bring customers to a London suburban public house in the days of George III. To-day there is a cult of horrors in Paris which has produced some choice specimens of decorative art, such for instance as the café known as *Le Rat Mort*.

185Such places lure their customers by curiosity and sheer horror; but the persons lured are from a class dominated by “Gallic effervescence” and attracted by anything that is *bizarre*, and not of the class of the stolid beer-drinking Briton. But even the most stolid of men is pleased by the beauty of a woman; so the sign-painter—who knows his art well, and has evolved from the ranks of his calling such a man as Franz Hals—we may be sure, when he wished to please, took for his model some gracious personality.

Now the artist of the lady of dark headgear let his imagination run free and produced a face typical of all the sins of the Decalogue. We may therefore take it on the ground of form as well as that of colour that priority of date is to be given to Mother Black-Cap. There is good ground for belief that this deduction is correct. Naturally the owner of the earliest public-house wished to make it as attractive as possible; and as Camden Town was a suburb through which the northern traffic passed on its way to and from

London, it was wise to use for publicity and entertainment names that were familiar to north country ears. Before the railways were organised the great wheeled and horse-traffic between London and the North—especially Yorkshire which was one of the first Counties to take up manufacturing and had already most of the wool trade—went through Camden Town. So it was wise forethought to take186 as an inn sign a Yorkshire name. The name of Mother Shipton had been in men's mouths and ears for about two hundred years, and as the times had so changed that the old stigma of witchcraft was not then understood, the association of the name with Knaresborough alone remained. And so Mother Shipton of Knaresborough was intended as the prototype of the inn portrait with black headgear at Camden Town. In the ordinary course of development and business one of the two inns succeeded and lasted better than the other. And as Mother Red-Cap has as a name supplanted Mother Damnable, we may with some understanding discuss who that lady was.

She was a well-known shrew of Kentish Town, daughter of one Jacob Bingham, a local brickmaker, who had married the daughter of a Scotch pedlar manifestly not of any high moral character as shown by her later acts and the general mistrust which attended them. They had one daughter, Jinny, who in wickedness outdid her parents. She was naturally warm-blooded and had a child when she was sixteen by a man of no account, George Coulter, known as Gipsy George. Whatever affection may have existed between them was cut short by his arrest—and subsequent execution at Tyburn—for sheepstealing. In her second quasi-matrimonial venture Jinny lived a cat-and-dog life with a man called Darby who spent his time in getting drunk and trying to get over it. Number Two's187 end was also tragic. After a violent quarrel with his companion he disappeared. Then there was domestic calm for a while, possibly due to the fact that Bingham and his wife were being tried also on a charge of witchcraft, complicated with another capital charge of procuring the death of a young woman. They were both hanged and thereafter Jinny found time for another episode of love-making and took up with a man called Pitcher. He too disappeared, but his body, burned almost to a cinder, was discovered in a neighbouring oven. Jinny was tried for murder, but escaped on the plea that the man often took refuge in the oven when he wished to get beyond reach of the woman's venomous tongue, to which fact witness was borne by certain staunch companions of Miss Bingham.

Jinny's third venture towards happy companionship, though it lasted much longer, was attended with endless bitter quarrelling, and came to an equally tragic end, had at the beginning a spice of romance. This individual, whose name has seemingly not been recorded, being pursued in Commonwealth times for some unknown offence, had

sought her aid in attempting to escape. This she had graciously accorded, with the consequence that they lived together some years in the greatest unhappiness.

At length he died—of poison, but by whom administered did not transpire at the inquest. For the rest of her life Miss Bingham, who was now188 old, lived under the suspicion of being a witch. Her ostensible occupation was as a teller of fortunes and a healer of odd diseases—occupations which singly or together make neither for personal esteem or general confidence. Her public appearances were usually attended by hounding and baiting by the rabble; and whenever anything went wrong in her neighbourhood the blame was, with overt violence of demeanour, attributed to her. She did not even receive any of the respect usually shown to a freeholder—which she was, having by her father's death become owner of a house which he had built for himself with his own hands on waste ground. Her only protector was that usual favourite of witches, a black cat, whose devotion to her and whose savage nature, accompanied by the public fear shown for an animal which was deemed her "familiar," caused the mob to flee before its appearance.

The tragedy and mystery of her life were even exceeded by those of her death. When, having been missed for some time, her house was entered she, attended only by her cat and with her crutch by her side, was found crouching beside the cold ashes of her extinct fire. In the tea-pot beside her was some liquid, seemingly brewed from herbs. Willing hands administered some of this to the black cat, whose hair, within a very short time, fell off. The cat forthwith died. Then the clamour began. Very many people suddenly remembered189 having seen, after her last appearance in public, the Devil entering her house. No one, however, had seen him come out again. What a pity it was that no veracious scribe or draughtsman was present in the crowd which had noticed the Devil's entry to the house. In such case we might have got a real likeness of His Satanic Majesty—a thing which has long been wanted—and the opportunities of obtaining which are few.

One peculiar fact is recorded of Madame Damnable's burial; her body was so stiff from the *rigor mortis*—or from some other cause—that the undertakers had to break her limbs before they could put her body in the coffin.

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F. MATTHEW HOPKINS

There is one thing more evil than oppression in the shape of wrong-doing, and that is oppression in the guise of good. Tennyson, in one of his poems, speaks of the

dishonest pharmacist who “pestles a poison’d poison.” This is a refinement of iniquity; a poisoned poison is not even an enlargement of evil but a structural change eliminating the intention of good and replacing it with evil intent. Witches were quite bad enough; or rather they would have been, had that which was alleged of them been true. But a man who got his living by creating suspicion regarding them and following it out to the practical consummation of a hideous death, was a thousand times worse. To-day such a functionary as a witch-finder exists, it is true; but only amongst the very lowest and most debased savages. And it is only by the recorded types made known to us that it is possible even to guess at the iniquity of their measures, the vileness of their actions. In the full tally of the two centuries during which the witch mania existed in England, it is impossible to parallel the baseness of the one man who distinguished himself in this191 loathsome occupation. The facts of his history speak for themselves. Matthew Hopkins was born in Suffolk early in the seventeenth century. He was the son of a minister, James Hopkins of Wenham. He was brought up for the law, and when enrolled as an attorney, practised in Ipswich; but after a while he moved to Manningtree where, after he had given up the law, he took to the calling of witch-finder, being the first person in England to follow that honourable trade.

If he had had no suitable opportunities of earning an honest livelihood and been graced with no education, some excuse might have been offered for his despicable calling. But when we remember that he passed his youth in a household practising religion, and was a member of a learned profession, it is difficult to find words sufficiently comprehensive for the fit expression of our natural indignation against him. If picturesque profanity were allowable, it might be well applied to this despicable wretch and his nefarious labours. In no imaginable circumstances could there possibly be anything to be said in mitigation of his infamy. When we think that the whole ritual of oppression was in his own hands—that he began with lying and perjury, and ended with murder; that he showed, throughout, ruthless callousness for the mental and physical torture of great numbers of the most helpless class of the community, the poor, the weak, the suffering, the192 helpless and hopeless; that when once his foul imagination had consecrated any poor wretch to destruction, or his baleful glance had unhappily lighted on some unsuspecting victim there was for such only the refuge of death, and that by some means of prolonged torture, we cannot find any hope or prospect even in evil dreams of the nether world, of any adequate punishment for his dreadful sins. When we remember that this one man—if man he can be called—was in himself responsible for what amounted to the murder of some two hundred women whom he pursued to the death, the magnitude of his guilt can be guessed but not realised.

He occupied three whole years in his fell work; and in those years, 1644, 1645 and 1646, he caused a regular reign of terror throughout the counties of Huntingdon, Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex. He had a gang of his own to help him in his gruesome work of "discovering" witches; amongst whom was a wretch called John Stern and—to her shame—a woman, whose name is unrecorded. These three had a sort of mock assize of their own. They made regular tours of discovery, at a charge of twenty shillings for expenses at each place they visited. There appears to have been a fee paid or exacted for each witch "bagged"; and such was his greed that after a while he actually lowered the price. In 1645, which was perhaps his "best" year, the price declined to a shilling a head. Hopkins193 and his gang took comfort, however, from the fact that the industry was a growing one. The trade had only been initiated in 1644, and already in a year's time he had in one day procured the execution of eighteen alleged witches; and at the end of that assize, after the gaol delivery had been effected, one hundred and twenty suspects still awaited trial. In the skilful hands of Matthew Hopkins, trial was only a step on the road to certain execution by one of the forms in use. Here came in, not only the witchfinder's legal knowledge, but also his gift of invention—the latter being used in the formulation of so-called "tests" which were bound to be effective. Of these the simplest was the water test. The subject's thumbs were tied together and she was then thrown into water of sufficient depth. If she did not drown, it was taken as a proof of guilt; and she was hanged by form of law. In some cases, as an alternative, she was burned. If she did not stand the test her friends had the pleasure of knowing that she was pronounced to have died innocent. In any case there was no further trouble with her. Such was the accuracy as well as the simplicity of similar "tests" that, in the twenty years previous to the Restoration, between three and four thousand alleged witches perished in England from one cause or another. Hopkins professed to be both just and merciful. He seemed generally willing to afford a "test" to the accused; though, truth to tell, the194 result was always the same. In such cases the test was eminently calculated to evoke confession, and such confession, no matter how ridiculous or extravagant it might be, was simply a curved road to the rope or the torch instead of a straight one. One of these pleasing "tests" was to place the old woman—they were all women and all old—sitting cross-legged on a stool or table where she could be well watched. She was generally kept in that position under inspection, without food or water, for twenty-four hours. At the end of that time such resolution as had remained disappeared, and in the vain blind hope of some change for the better, some alleviation however slight of the grinding misery, of the agony of body and mind and soul, they confessed. And such confessions! The very consideration of such of them as now remain in the cold third-person method of a mere recorder, almost makes one weep; there is hardly a word that is not almost a

certificate of character. With every desire to confess—for such was the last hope of pleasing their torturers—their utter ignorance of confessional matter is almost a proof of innocence.

Just imagine the scene—a village or hamlet, or the poorer quarter of a small country town with squalid surroundings, marking a poverty which in this age has no equal; a poor, old, lonely woman whose long life of sordid misery, of hunger and the diseases that huddle closely around want, hopeless,195 despairing, recognising her fate through the prolonged physical torture with which age and infirmity rendered her unable even to attempt to cope. Round her gathered, in a sickly ring, a crowd of creatures debased by the exercise of greed and cruelty to a lower level than the beasts. Their object is not to inquire, to test, to judge; but only to condemn, to wreck, to break, to shatter. Some of them, she realises even in her agony, are spurred on by the same zeal which animated the cruelty of followers of Ignatius in the grim torture-chambers of the Inquisition.

The poor dazed, suffering old creature, racked with pains prolonged beyond endurance, tries to rally such glimmerings of invention as are possible to her untaught, unfed mind; but finds herself at every failure fluttering helplessly against a wall of spiritual granite which gives back not even an echo to her despairing cry. At last she comes to that stage where even fright and fear have no standing room, and where the blank misery of suffering ceases to be effective. Then the last flicker of desire for truth or rectitude of purpose dies away, and she receives in feeble acquiescence such suggestions as are shouted or whispered to her, in the hope that by accepting them she may win a moment's ease of body or mind, even if it be her last on earth. Driven beyond mortal limits her untutored mind gives way; and with the last remnants of her strength she yields her very soul to her persecutors.196 The end does not matter to her now. Life has no more to offer her—even of pain, which is the last conscious tie to existence. And through it all, ghoul-like, watching and waiting for the collapse, whilst outwardly he goes through the mechanical ritual of prayer, we see in the background the sinister figure of the attorney, preparing in his mind such evidence as he may procure or invent for his work of the next day.

It needs the imagination of a Dante to consider what should be the place of such an one in history, and any eternity of punishment that that imagination could suggest must be inadequate. Even pity itself which rests on sympathy and is kin to the eternal spirit of justice, would have imagined with satisfaction the wretched soul going through a baleful eternity clinging in perpetual agony of fear to the very King of Terrors.

In judging Matthew Hopkins one must not, in justice to others, accord him any of the consideration which is the due of good intent. Not a score of years after his shameful death, a man was born in a newer land far beyond the separating sea, who through his influence, his teaching, the expression of his honest conviction, was the cause of perhaps more deaths than the English anti-witch. We refer to Cotton Mather, who believed he wrought for the Lord—in his own way—in New England. But guilt does not attach to him. He was an earnest, though mistaken man, and the results of his mistaken197 teaching were at variance with the trend of his kindly, godly life.

It must be pleasing to the spirit of the Old Adam which is in us all in some form, to think of the manner of the death of Matthew Hopkins. Three years had exhausted not only the material available for his chosen work, but, what was worse for him, the patience of the community. Moreover, he had given cause for scandal in even his own degraded trade and in himself, the filthiest thing in connection with it. Not content with dealing with the poor, helpless folk, whom he had come to regard as his natural prey, he went on fancy flights of oppression. At last he went too far. He ventured to denounce an aged clergyman of blameless life. The witch-fever was too strong for justice in any form, and neither age, high character, nor sacred office could protect this gentleman of eighty years of age. He too was tortured, till in a moment of unhinged mind, he confessed as he was ordered, and was duly hanged. This was in 1645. The old man's death was not in vain, for it was made the occasion of much necessary plain speaking. Presently the public conscience was wakened; chiefly by another cleric, the Rev. John Caule, vicar of Great Staughton, Huntingdonshire—all honour to him!—who, though strange to say he believed in witchcraft, realised the greater evil wrought by men like Hopkins. He published a pamphlet in which he denounced Hopkins as a common198 nuisance. The result, if slow, was sure. The witch-finder never recovered from the shock of Caule's vigorous attack. In 1647, on information based on Hopkins' own rules, he was arrested and subjected to the test which he had devised: he was tied by the thumbs and thrown into the water. Unfortunately for himself he withstood the test—drowning, except for a short period of pangs, is an easy death—and so was by process of Law duly hanged.

One can imagine how the whole atmosphere of the country—surcharged with suspicion, fear, oppression, torture, perjury or crime—was cleared by the execration which followed the removal of this vile wretch.

VI. ARTHUR ORTON
(The Tichborne Claimant.)

In the annals of crime, Arthur Orton, the notorious claimant to the rich estates and title of Tichborne, takes a foremost place; not only as the originator of one of the most colossal attempts at fraud on record, but also from his remarkable success in duping the public. It would be difficult indeed to furnish a more striking example of the height to which the blind credulity of people will occasionally attain. Of pretenders, who by pertinacious and unscrupulous lying have sought to bolster up fictitious claims, there have been many before Orton; but he certainly surpassed all his predecessors in working out the lie circumstantial in such a way as to divide the country for years into two great parties—those who believed in the Claimant, and those who did not. Over one hundred persons, drawn from every class, and for the most part honest in their belief, swore to the identity of this illiterate butcher's son—this stockman, mail-rider and probably bushranger and thief—as the long-lost son and heir of the ancient house of Tichborne of Titchborne. To gain his own selfish ends this individual was ready202 to rob a gentlewoman of her fair fame, to destroy the peace of a great family who, to free themselves from a persecution, as cruel as it was vicious, had to be pilloried before a ruthless and unsympathising mob, to have the privacy of their home invaded, and to hear their women's names banded from one coarse mouth to another. Thus, and through no fault of their own, they were compelled to endure a mental torture far worse than any physical suffering, besides having to expend vast sums of money, as well as time and labour, in order to protect themselves from the would-be depredations of an unscrupulous adventurer. It has been estimated that the resistance of this fictitious claim cost the Tichborne estate not far short of one hundred thousand pounds.

Photo. by Maull & Fox. Copyright.

ARTHUR ORTON

The baronetcy of Tichborne, now Doughty-Tichborne, is one of the oldest. It has been claimed that the family held possession of the Manor of Tichborne for two hundred years before the Conquest. Be this as it may—and, in the light of J. H. Round's revelations, some scepticism as to these pre-Norman pedigrees is permissible—their ancestors may be traced back to one Walter de Tichborne who held the manor, from which he took his name, as early as 1135. Their names too, are interwoven with the history of the country. Sir Benjamin, the first baronet—for the earlier de Tichbornes were knights,—as Sheriff of Southhampton, on the death of Queen Elizabeth,

repaired203 instantly to Winchester and on his own initiative proclaimed the accession of James VI of Scotland as King of England, for which service he was made a baronet, and his four sons received the honour of knighthood. His successor, Sir Richard, was a zealous supporter of the Royal cause during the civil wars. Sir Henry, the third baronet, hazarded his life in the defence of Charles I and had his estates sequestered by the Parliamentarians though he was recompensed at the Restoration.

Believers in occultism might see in the trials and tribulations brought down upon the unfortunate heads of the Tichborne family by the machinations of the Claimant, the realisation of the doom pronounced by a certain Dame Ticheborne away back in the days of Henry II.

Sir Roger de Ticheborne of those days married Mabell, the daughter and heiress of Ralph de Lamerston, of Lamerston, in the Isle of Wight, by whom he acquired that estate. This good wife played the part of lady bountiful of the neighbourhood. After a life spent in acts of charity and goodness, as her end drew nigh and she lay on her death bed, her thoughts went out to her beloved poor. She begged her husband, that in order to have her memory kept green the countryside round, he would grant a bequest sufficient to ensure, once a year, a dole of bread to all comers to the gates of Tichborne. To gratify her whim Sir Roger promised204 her as much land as she could encompass while a brand plucked from the fire should continue to burn. As the poor lady had been bedridden for years her husband may have had no idea that she could, even if she would, take his promise seriously. However, the venerable dame, after being carried out upon the ground, seemed to regain her strength in a miraculous fashion, and, to the surprise of all, managed to crawl round several rich and goodly acres which to this day are known as “the Crawls.”

Carried to her bed again after making this last supreme effort and summoning her family to her bedside, Lady Ticheborne predicted with her dying breath, that, as long as this annual dole was continued, so long should the house of Tichborne prosper; but, should it be neglected, their fortunes would fail and the family name become extinct from want of male issue. As a sure sign by which these disasters might be looked for, she foretold that a generation of seven sons would be immediately followed by one of seven daughters.

The benevolent custom thus established was faithfully observed for centuries. On every Lady Day crowds of humble folk came from near and far to partake of the famous dole which consisted of hundreds of small loaves. But ultimately the occasion degenerated into a noisy merry-making, a sort of fair, until it was finally discontinued in 1796, owing to the complaints of the magistrates and local gentry that

the practice encouraged vagabonds,205 gipsies and idlers of all sorts to swarm into the neighbourhood under pretence of receiving the dole.

Strangely enough Sir Henry Tichborne, the baronet of that day (the original name of de Ticheborne had by this time been reduced to Tichborne), had seven sons, while his eldest son who succeeded him in 1821, had seven daughters. The extinction of the family name, too, came to pass, for in the absence of male issue, Sir Henry, the eighth baronet, was succeeded by his brother, who had taken the surname of Doughty on coming into the estates bequeathed to him on these terms, by a distant relative, Miss Doughty; though, in after years, his brother, who in turn succeeded him, obtained the royal licence to couple the old family name with that of Doughty. Following this repeated lapse of direct male heirs came other troubles; but it is to be hoped that the successful defeat of the fraudulent claim of Arthur Orton set a period to the doom pronounced long years ago by the Lady Mabell.

Most families, great and small, have their secret troubles and unpleasantness, and the Tichbornes seem to have had their share of them. To this may be traced the actual, if remote, cause of the Claimant's imposture. James Tichborne, afterwards the tenth baronet, the father of the missing Roger, who was drowned in the mysterious loss of the *Bella*, off the coast of South America, in the spring of 1854, lived abroad for many years; but, while his wife was French in every sentiment, he himself from206 time to time exhibited a keen desire to return to his native land. When Roger was born there was small likelihood of his ever succeeding to either title or estates, and so his education was almost entirely a foreign one.

Sir Henry Tichborne, who had succeeded in 1821, though blessed with seven beautiful daughters, had no son. Still there was their uncle Edward, who had taken the name of Doughty, and he, after Sir Henry, was the next heir. Edward, too, had a son and daughter. But, one day, news came to James and his wife, in France, that their little nephew was dead; and with the possibilities which this change opened up, it brought home to the father the error he had committed in permitting Roger to grow up ignorant of the English tongue and habits. It was manifest that Mr. James F. Tichborne was not unlikely to become the next baronet, and he felt it his bounden duty to make good his previous neglect, by providing his son with an English education, such as would fit him for his probable position as head of the house of Tichborne. In this praiseworthy intention he met with strong opposition from his wife whose great aim it was to see her son grow up a Frenchman. To her, France was the only land worth living in. She cared nought for family traditions; her dream was that her darling boy should marry into some distinguished family in France or Italy. If he was to enter the army, then it

should be in some foreign207 service. But to England he should not go if she could prevent it.

James Tichborne, like many weak men with self-willed wives, put off the inevitable day as long as he could; and in the end only achieved his purpose by strategy. Roger was sixteen years of age when news arrived of the death of Sir Henry. Naturally James arranged to be present at his brother's funeral and it was only reasonable that he should be accompanied by his son Roger, whom everyone now regarded as the heir. Accordingly the boy took leave of his mother, but under the solemn injunction to return quickly. However, his father had determined otherwise. After attending the funeral of his uncle, at the old chapel at Tichborne, Roger was, by the advice of relatives and friends, and with the consent of the boy himself, taken down to the Jesuit College at Stonyhurst. When Mrs. Tichborne learned of this step, her fury knew no bounds. She upbraided her husband violently; and there was a renewal of the old scenes in the Tichborne establishment. Roger wrote his mother filial, if ill-spelt, letters in French; but, for a year, the son, though ardently looking for a letter, got no token of affection from the incensed and indignant lady.

During his three years' stay at Stonyhurst, Roger seems to have applied himself diligently to the study of English; but, though he made fair progress, he was never able to speak it with as much208 purity and command of words as when conversing in French. In Latin, mathematics, and chemistry, too, he contrived to make fair headway; while his letters evidenced an inclination for the study of polite literature. If not highly accomplished, he was of a refined and sensitive nature. During this period he made many friends, spending his vacation with his English relatives in turn. His great delight was to stay at Tichborne, then in possession of his father's brother, Sir Edward Doughty. Withal, the shy, pale-faced boy steadily gained in favour, for he had a nature which disarmed ill-feeling. As time wore on it became necessary to determine on some profession for the lad; and needless to say his father's choice of the army added fuel to the fire of his wife's anger. After some delay a commission was obtained and Mr. Roger Charles Tichborne was gazetted a coronet in the Sixth Dragoons, better known as the Carbineers.

Defeated in her purpose of making a Frenchman of her boy, Roger's mother yet continued to harp upon her old desire to marry him to one of the Italian princesses of whom he had heard so much. But Roger had other ideas, for he had fallen passionately in love with his cousin—Miss Katharine Doughty afterwards Lady Radcliffe. However, the course of love was not to run smooth. The Tichbornes had always been Roman Catholic, and the marriage of first cousins was discountenanced by that church. Consequently when some little209 token incidentally revealed to the

father the secret and yet unspoken love of the young people, their dream was rudely shattered.

That the girl warmly reciprocated her cousin's affection was beyond question, and Lady Doughty was certainly sympathetic though she took exception to certain of her nephew's habits. He was an inveterate smoker besides drinking too freely. These and other little failings seem to have aroused some fear in her anxious mother's heart, though she quite recognised the boy's kind disposition, and the fact that he was truthful, honourable and scrupulous in points of duty. Still she would not oppose the wishes of the young lovers—except to the extent of pleading and encouraging Roger to master his weaknesses. It was Christmas time in 1851 when the *dénoument* came and the eyes of Sir Edward were opened to what was going on. He was both vexed and angry, and was resolved that the engagement should be broken off before it grew more serious. One last interview was permitted to the cousins and, this over, the young man was to leave the house forever. The great hope of his life extinguished, there was nothing left for Roger but to rejoin his regiment, then expecting orders for India, and to endeavour to forget the past. Still even in those dark days neither Roger nor Kate quite gave up hope of some change. Lady Doughty, despite her dread of her nephew's habits, had a warm regard for him, and could be relied210 upon to plead his cause; and in a short time circumstances unexpectedly favoured him. Sir Edward was ill and, fearing that death was approaching, he sent for his nephew and revived the subject. He explained that if it were not for the close relationship he should have no objection to the marriage and begged Roger to wait for three years. If then the affection, one for the other, remained unaltered, and providing that Roger obtained his own father's consent and that of the Church, he would accept things as the will of God and agree to the union. As might be expected, Roger gratefully promised loyally to observe the sick man's wishes.

However, Sir Edward, instead of dying, slowly mended, and Roger returned to his regiment. Occasionally he would spend his leave with his aunt and uncle, when the young people loved to walk together in the beautiful gardens of Tichborne exchanging sweet confidences and weaving plans for the future. On what proved to be his last visit to his ancestral home, in the midsummer of 1852, Roger, to comfort his cousin, confided a secret to her—a copy of a vow, which he had written out and signed, solemnly pledging himself, in the event of their being married before three years had passed, to build a church or chapel at Tichborne as a thanks offering to the Holy Virgin for the protection shown by her in praying God that their wishes might be fulfilled.

His leave up, Roger went back to his regiment211 more than ever a prey to his habitual melancholy. To his great regret the orders for the Carbineers to go to India were

countermanded. He accordingly determined to throw up his commission and travel abroad until his period of probation had passed. South America had long been the subject of his dreams, and so thither he would make his way; and in travelling through that vast continent he hoped to find occupation for his mind and so get through the trying period of waiting. His plan was to spend a year in Chili, Guayaquil and Peru, and thence to visit Mexico, and so, by way of the United States, to return home. Having come to this resolution he lost no time in putting it into execution. Being of business-like habits he made his will, in which he purposely omitted any mention of the "church or chapel." This secret had already been committed to paper, and with other precious souvenirs of his love for his cousin, had been confided to his most trusted friend—Mr. Gosford, the steward of the family estate. After paying a round of farewell visits to his parents and old friends in Paris, Roger finally set sail from Havre, on March 21, 1853, in a French vessel named *La Pauline*, for Valparaiso, at which port she arrived on the 19th of the following June, when Roger set out on his wanderings. During his travels Roger continued to write home regularly; but the first news he received was bad. Sir Edward Doughty had died almost before the *Pauline* had lost sight212 of the English shores; and Roger's father and mother were now Sir James and Lady Tichborne.

Presently the wanderer began to retrace his steps, making his way to Rio de Janeiro. Here, he found a vessel called the *Bella* hailing from Liverpool, about to sail for Kingston, Jamaica, and as he had directed his letters and remittances to be forwarded there, he prevailed upon the captain to give him a passage. On the 20th of April, 1854, the *Bella* passed from the port of Rio into the ocean. From that day no one ever set eyes upon her. Six days after she left harbour, a ship traversing her path found, amongst other ominous tokens of a wreck, a capsized long-boat bearing the name "*Bella*, Liverpool."

These were taken into Rio and forthwith the authorities caused the neighbouring seas to be scoured in quest of survivors; but none were ever found. That the *Bella* had foundered there was little room to doubt. It was supposed that she had been caught in a sudden squall, that her cargo had shifted, and that, unable to right herself, the vessel had gone down in deep water, giving but little warning to those on board. In a few months the sad news reached Tichborne, where the absence of letters from the previously diligent correspondent had already raised grave fears. The sorrow-stricken father caused enquiries to be made in America and elsewhere. For a time, there was a faint hope that some one aboard the *Bella* might213 have been picked up by some passing vessel; but, as months wore on, even these small hopes dwindled away. The letters which poor Roger had so anxiously asked might be directed to him at the post office, Kingston, Jamaica, remained there till the ink grew faded; the banker's bill

which lay at the agents' remained unclaimed. At last the unfortunate vessel was finally written off at Lloyd's as lost, the insurance money paid, and gradually the *Bella* faded from the memories of all but those who had lost friends or relatives in her. Lady Tichborne alone, refused to abandon hope.

Her obstinate disregard of such conclusive evidence of the fate of her unfortunate son preyed upon her mind to such an extent as to make her an easy victim for any scheming rascal pretending to have news of her lost son; and "sailors," who told all sorts of wild stories of how some of the survivors of the *Bella* had been rescued and landed in a foreign port, became constant visitors at Tichborne Park and profited handsomely from the weak-minded lady's credulity. Sir James, himself, made short work of these tramping "sailors," but after his death, in 1862, the lady became even more ready to be victimised by their specious lies.

Firm in her belief that Roger was still alive, Lady Tichborne now caused advertisements to be inserted in numerous papers; and in November, 1865, she learnt through an agency in Sydney that a man answering the description of her son had been214 found in Wagga Wagga, New South Wales. A long correspondence ensued, the tone and character of which ought to have put her on her guard; but, over-anxious to believe that she had indeed found her long-lost son, any wavering doubts she may have had, were swept from her mind by the evidence of an aged negro servant named Boyle, an old pensioner of the Tichborne family. Boyle, who lived in New South Wales, professed to recognise the Claimant as his dear young master, and he certainly remained one of his most devoted adherents to the end. Undoubtedly this man's simplicity proved a very valuable asset to Orton. His intimate knowledge of the arrangements of Tichborne Park was pumped dry by his new master, who, aided by a most tenacious memory, was afterwards able to use the information thus obtained with startling effect.

As to the identity of the Claimant with Arthur Orton there can be absolutely no doubt. As a result of the enquiries made by the trustees of the Tichborne estate nearly the whole of his history was unmasked. He was born, in 1834, at Wapping where his father kept a butcher's shop. In 1848 he took passage to Valparaiso, whence he made his way up country to Melipilla. Here he stayed some eighteen months receiving much kindness from a family named Castro, and it was their name he went under at Wagga Wagga. In 1851 he returned home and entering his father's business became an expert slaughterman. The following year he emigrated215 to Australia; but after the spring of 1854 he ceased to correspond with his family. He had evidently led a life of hardship and adventure—probably not unattended with crime, and certainly with poverty. At Wagga Wagga he carried on a small butcher's business, and it was from

here that he got into communication with Lady Tichborne just after his marriage to an illiterate servant girl.

According to his subsequent confession, until his attention was drawn to the advertisement for the missing Roger, he had never even heard of the name of Tichborne, and it was only his success when, by way of a joke upon a chum, he claimed to be the missing baronet, that led him to pursue the matter in sober earnest. Indeed he seemed at first very reluctant to leave Australia, and probably he was only driven to accede to Lady Tichborne's request, to return "home" at once, by the fact that he had raised large sums of money on his expectations. His original intention was probably to obtain some sort of recognition, and then to return to Australia with whatever money he had succeeded in collecting.

After wasting much time he left Australia and arrived in England, by a very circuitous route, on Christmas Day, 1866. His first step on landing, it was subsequently discovered, was to make a mysterious visit to Wapping. His parents were dead, but his enquiries showed a knowledge, both of the Orton family and the locality, which was afterwards216 used against him with very damaging effect. His next proceeding was to make a flying and surreptitious excursion to Tichborne House, where, as far as possible, he acquainted himself with the bearings of the place. In this he was greatly assisted by one Rous, a former clerk to the old Tichborne attorney, who was then keeping a public house in the place. From this man, who became his staunch ally, he had no doubt acquired much useful information; and it is significant that he sedulously kept clear of Mr. Gosford, the agent to whom the real Roger had confided his sealed packet before leaving England.

Lady Tichborne was living in Paris at this time and it was here, in his hotel bedroom, on a dark January afternoon, that their first interview took place for, curiously enough, the gentleman was too ill to leave his bed! The deluded woman professed to recognise him at once. As she sat beside his bed, "Roger" keeping his face turned to the wall, the conversation took a wide range, the sick man showing himself strangely astray. He talked to her of his grandfather, whom the real Roger had never seen; he said he had served in the ranks; referred to Stonyhurst as Winchester; spoke of his suffering as a lad from St. Vitus's dance—a complaint which first led to young Arthur Orton being sent on a sea voyage; but did not speak of the rheumatism from which Roger had suffered. But it was all one to the infatuated woman—"He confuses everything217 as if in a dream," she wrote in exculpating him; but unsatisfactory as this identification was, she never departed from her belief. She lived under the same roof with him for weeks, accepted his wife and children, and allowed him £1,000 a year. It did not weigh

with her that the rest of the family unanimously declared him to be an impostor, or that he failed to recognise them or to recall any incident in Roger's life.

Nearly four years elapsed before the Claimant commenced his suit of ejectment against the trustees of the infant Sir Alfred Tichborne—the posthumous son of Roger's younger brother; but he utilised the time to good purpose. He had taken into his service a couple of old Carbineers who had been Roger's servants and before long so completely mastered small details of regimental life that some thirty of Roger's old brother-officers and men were convinced of his identity. He went everywhere, called upon all Roger's old friends, visited the Carbineers' mess and generally left no stone unturned to get together evidence in support of his identity. As a result of his strenuous activity and plausibility he produced at the first trial over one hundred witnesses who, on oath, identified him as Roger Tichborne; and these witnesses included Lady Tichborne, the family solicitor, magistrates, officers and men from Roger's old regiment besides various Tichborne tenants and friends of the family. On the other hand, there were only seventeen218 witnesses arraigned against him; and, in his own opinion, it was his own evidence that lost him the case. He would have won, he said, "if only he could have kept his mouth shut."

The trial of this action lasted 102 days. Sergeant Ballantine led for the Claimant; and Sir John Coleridge (afterwards Lord Chief-justice), and Mr. Hawkins, Q. C. (afterwards Lord Brampton), for the trustees of the estates of Tichborne. The cross-examination of the Claimant at the hands of Sir John Coleridge lasted twenty-two days, during which the colossal ignorance he displayed was only equalled by his boldness, dexterity and the bull-dog tenacity with which he faced the ordeal. To quote Sir John's own words: "The first sixteen years of his life he has absolutely forgotten; the few facts he had told the jury were already proved, or would hereafter be shown, to be absolutely false and fabricated. Of his college life he could recollect nothing. About his amusements, his books, his music, his games, he could tell nothing. Not a word of his family, of the people with whom he lived, their habits, their persons, their very names. He had forgotten his mother's maiden name; he was ignorant of all particulars of the family estate; he remembered nothing of Stonyhurst; and in military matters he was equally deficient. Roger, born and educated in France, spoke and wrote French like a native and his favourite reading was French literature; but the Claimant knew nothing of219 French. Of the 'sealed' packet he knew nothing and, when pressed, his interpretation of its contents contained the foulest and blackest calumny of the cousin whom Roger had so fondly loved. This was proved by Mr. Gosford, to whom the packet had been originally entrusted, and by the production of the duplicate which Roger had given to Miss Doughty herself. The physical discrepancy, too, was no less

remarkable; for, while Roger, who took after his mother was slight and delicate, with narrow sloping shoulders, a long narrow face and thin straight dark hair, the Claimant was of enormous bulk, scaling over twenty-four stone, big-framed and burly, with a large round face and an abundance of fair and rather wavy hair. And yet, curiously enough, the Claimant undoubtedly possessed a strong likeness to several male members of the Tichborne family."

When questioned as to the impressive episode of Roger's love for his cousin, the Claimant showed himself hopelessly at sea. His answers were confused and irreconcilable. Not only could he give no precise dates, but even the broad outline of the story was beyond him. Yet, for good reasons, the Solicitor-General persisted in pressing him as to the contents of the sealed packet and compelled him to repeat the slanderous version of the incident which he had long ago given when interrogated on the point. Mrs. Radcliffe (she was not then Lady) sat in court beside her husband, and thus had the220 satisfaction of seeing the infamous charges brought against the fair fame of her girlhood recoil on the head of the wretch who had resorted to such villainous devices. Unfortunately, some years after Roger's disappearance, Mr. Gosford, feeling that he was neither justified in keeping the precious packet, nor in handing it to any other person, had burnt it; but, fortunately his testimony as to its contents was proved in the most complete manner by the production of the duplicate which poor Roger had given to his cousin on his last visit to Tichborne.

Where the case broke down most completely was in the matter of tattoo marks. Roger had been freely tattooed. Among other marks he bore, on his left arm, a cross, an anchor, and a heart which was testified to by the persons who had pricked them in. Orton, too, it was found out, had also been tattooed on his left arm with his initials, "A. O.," and, though neither remained, there was a mark which was sworn to be the obliteration of those letters. Small wonder then that, on the top of this damning piece of evidence, the jury declared they required to hear nothing further, upon which the Claimant's counsel, to avoid the inevitable verdict for their opponents, elected to be nonsuited. But these tactics did not save their client, for he was at once arrested, on the judge's warrant, on the charge of wilful and corrupt perjury, and committed to221 Newgate where he remained until bail for £10,000 was forthcoming.

A year later, on April 23, 1873, the Claimant was arraigned before a special jury in the Court of Queen's Bench. The proceedings were of a most prolix and unusual character. Practically the same ground was covered as in the civil trial, only the process was reversed: the Claimant having now to defend instead of to attack. Many of the better-class witnesses, including the majority of Roger's brother-officers, now forsook the Claimant. There was a deal of cross-swearing. The climax of the long trial

was the production by the defence of a witness to support the Claimant's account of his wreck and rescue. This was a man who called himself Jean Luie and claimed to be a Danish seaman. With a wealth of picturesque detail he told how he was one of the crew of the *Osprey* which had picked up a boat of the shipwrecked *Bella*, in which was the claimant and some of the crew, and how when the *Osprey* arrived at Melbourne, in the height of the gold fever, every man of the crew from the captain downwards had deserted the ship and gone up country. According to his story from that time forth he had seen nothing of any of the castaways; but having come to England in search of his wife he had heard of the trial. When Luie was first brought into the presence of the Claimant that astute person immediately claimed him with222 the greeting in Spanish "*Como esta, Luie*?"—"How are you, Luie?" The sailor with equal readiness recognised Orton as the man he had helped to rescue years before. All this sounded very convincing; but it would not stand investigation. From the beginning to end the thing was an invention; an examination of shipping records failed to find the *Osprey* so that she must have escaped the notice of the authorities in every port she had entered from the day she was launched! Of "Sailor" Luie, however, a very complete record was established. Not only were the police able to prove that, at the time he swore he was a seaman on board the *Osprey*, he was actually employed by a firm at Hull; that he had never been a seaman at all; but that he was a well-known habitual criminal and convict only recently released on a ticket-of-leave. This made things very awkward for the defence who made every effort to shake free from the taint of such perjured evidence. Dr. Kenealy, seeing his dilemma, contended that it had been concocted by Luie himself. But the damning and unanswerable fact remained—that, by his recognition of the man, the Claimant had acknowledged a previous acquaintance with him which he could only have had by being privy to the fraud.

On February 28, 1874, the one hundred and eighty-eighth day of the trial, the jury after half-an-hour's deliberation returned their verdict. They found that the defendant was not Roger223 Charles Tichborne; that he was Arthur Orton; and finally that the charges made against Miss Catherine Doughty were not supported by the slightest evidence. Orton was sentenced to fourteen years' penal servitude which, assuredly, was none too heavy for offences so enormous. The trial was remarkable, not only for its inordinate length, but also for the extraordinary scenes by which it was characterised and for which Dr. Kenealy, leading counsel for the defence, was primarily responsible. His conduct was sternly denounced by the Lord Chief Justice in his summing up as: "the torrent of undisguised and unlimited abuse in which the learned counsel for the defence has thought fit to indulge," and he declared that "there never was in the history of jurisprudence a case in which such an amount of

imputation and invective had been used before.” After the trial was over, Dr. Kenealy tried to turn the case into a national question through the medium of a virulent paper he started with the title of the *Englishman*; and undeterred by being disbarred for his flagrant breaches of professional etiquette, he went about the country delivering the most extravagant speeches concerning the trial. He was elected Member of Parliament for Stoke, and, on April 23, 1875, moved for a royal commission of inquiry into the conduct of the Tichborne Case; but his motion was defeated by 433 votes to 1.

The verdict and sentence created enormous excitement224 throughout the country, for all classes, more or less, had subscribed to the defence fund. But, by the time Orton was released, in 1884, practically all interest had died away, and his effort to resuscitate it was a miserable failure. In the sworn confession which he published in the *People*, in 1895, he told the whole story of the fraud from its inception to its final denouement. Orton survived his release from prison for fourteen years, but gradually sinking into poverty, he died in obscure lodgings in Shouldham Street, Marylebone, on April 1, 1898. To the end he was a fraud and impostor for, before his death, he is said to have recanted his sworn confession, which nevertheless bore the stamp of truth and was in perfect accord with the information obtained by the prosecution, while his coffin bore the lying inscription: “Sir Roger Charles Doughty Tichborne; born 5th January, 1829; died 1st April, 1898.”

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VII. WOMEN AS MEN

A. THE MOTIVE FOR DISGUISE

One of the commonest forms of imposture—so common that it seems rooted in a phase of human nature—is that of women who disguise themselves as men. It is not to be wondered at that such attempts are made; or that they were made more often formerly when social advancement had not enlarged the scope of work available for women. The legal and economic disabilities of the gentler sex stood then so fixedly in the way of working opportunity that women desirous of making an honest livelihood took desperate chances to achieve their object. We have read of very many cases in the past; and even now the hum-drum of life is broken by the fact or the echo of some startling revelation of the kind. Only very lately the death of a person who had for many years occupied a worthy though humble position in London caused a post-mortem sensation by the discovery that the deceased individual, though looked on for about a

quarter of a century as a man, a widower, and the father of a grown-up daughter, was in reality a woman. She was actually buried under the name228 of the man she had professed to be, Harry Lloyd.

It is not to be wondered at that in more strenuous times, when the spirit of adventure was less curbed, and initial difficulties were less deadened by convention, cases of concealment of sex were far more numerous and more easily prolonged. In an age of foreign wars, many existing barriers against success in this respect were removed by general laxity of social conditions. Perhaps I may be allowed to say at the outset that, for my own part, my mind refuses absolutely to accept that which is generally alleged in each case, that the male comrades of women concealing their proper sex were, all through, ignorant of the true facts. Human nature is opposed to such a supposition, and experience bears out the shrewdness of nature. On occasions, or even for a time, it is possible to make such successful concealments. But when we are told that a woman has gone through a whole campaign or a prolonged voyage in all the overcrowded intimacy of tent and bivouac or of cabin and forecastle, without such a secret being suspected or discovered, the narrator makes an overlarge draft on human credulity. That such comrades, and many of them, forbore to give away the secret, no matter how it had come into their possession, we may well believe. Comradeship is a strong factor in such matters, and it has its own loyalty, which is never stronger than when the various persons interested are held together by the knowledge229 of a common danger. But even to this there is a contra; the whole spirit of romance, even when it binds man to woman and woman to man, stands side by side with love, affection, passion—call it what you will—which opportunity can fan into flame. Never more so than in the strenuous days of fighting, when day and night are full of varying fears—when the mad turmoil of working hours and loneliness of the night forge new fetters for the binding together of the sexes.

In real life, when a man or a woman tries to escape from capture or the fear of it in the guise of the opposite sex, it is a never-ending struggle to sustain the rôle successfully. If this is so, when the whole of the energies of mind and body are devoted in singleness of purpose to the task, how then can the imposture be successfully prolonged when the mind is eternally occupied with the pressing things of the passing moments? There must infallibly be moments of self-betrayal; and there is sufficient curiosity in the average person to insure that the opportunities of such moments are not lost. Be this as it may, we must in the first instance stick to matters of fact; the record is our sheet-anchor. After all, when we learn of a case where an imposture of the kind has been successfully carried out, it is time enough to argue with convincing perspicacity that it should not have been possible.

As to record, there are quite sufficient cases to convince any reader as to the fact that, allowing for230 all possible error and wastage, there have been a sufficient number undetected at the time of their happening, and only made known by after-confession and by the force of ulterior circumstances. Whatever opinion we may form of the women who carried out the venture, there is neither occasion nor need to doubt the fact they were so carried out. The consideration of a few cases culled from the records of this class of successful imposture will make this plain. It would be useless, if not impossible, to make full lists of the names of women who have passed themselves off as men in the fighting world—soldiers and sailors, with side interests such as piracy, duelling, highway robbery, etc. Amongst the female soldiers are the names of Christian Davis (known as Mother Ross), Hannah Snell, Phœbe Hessel. Amongst the sailors those of Mary Talbot, Ann Mills, Hannah Whitney, Charles Waddell. In the ranks of the pirates are Mary Reid and Ann Bonney. In many of these cases are underlying romances, as of women making search for lost or absconding husbands, or of lovers making endeavours to regain the lost paradise of life together.

If there were nothing else in these little histories, their perusal in detail would well repay attention as affording proof of the boundless devotion of woman's love. No matter how badly the man may have treated the woman, no matter how heartlessly or badly he may have behaved towards her, her affection231 was proof against all. Indeed it makes one believe that there is some subtle self-sustaining, self-ennobling quality in womanhood which her initial self-surrender makes a constant force towards good. Even a nature which took new strength from the turmoil of battle, from the harrowing suspense of perpetual vigil, from the strain of physical weakness bravely borne, from pain and want and hunger, instead of hardening into obstinate indifference, seems to have softened as to sentiment, and been made gentle as to memory, as though the sense of wrong had been purged by the forces of affliction. All this, though the stress of campaigning may have blunted some of the conventional susceptibility of womanhood. For the after life of some of these warlike heroines showed that they had lost none of the love of admiration which marks their sex, none of their satisfaction in posing as characters other than their own. Several of them found pleasure in a new excitement different from that of battle, in the art of the stage. Whenever any of them made any effort to settle down in life after their excitement in the life of the camp or the sea, such did so at some place, and in some way congenial to herself and consistent with the life which she was leaving.

B. HANNAH SNELL

Hannah Snell is a good instance of how the life of a woman who was not by nature averse from adventure232 was moulded by chance in the direction which suited her

individuality. Of course, liking for a militant life, whether in conventional or exceptional form, presupposes a natural boldness of spirit, resolution, and physical hardihood—all of which this woman possessed in an eminent degree.

She was born at Worcester in 1723, one of the family of a hosier who had three sons and six daughters. In 1740, when her father and mother were dead, she went to live at Wapping with a sister who had married a ship carpenter named Gray. There she married a Dutch sailor, who before her baby was born, had squandered such little property as her father had left her, and then deserted her. She went back to her sister, in whose house the baby died. In 1743, she made up her mind to search for her husband. To this end she put on man's clothes and a man's name (that of her brother-in-law) and enlisted in General Guise's regiment. At Carlisle, whither the regiment was sent she learned something of a soldier's duties. In doing so she was selected by her sergeant, a man called Davis, to help him in carrying out a criminal love affair. In order to be able to warn the girl she pretended acquiescence. In revenge the sergeant reported her for an alleged neglect of some duty for which according to the barbarous system of the time she was sentenced to 600 lashes; of these she had actually received 500 when on the intervention of some of the officers the remaining hundred were foregone.233 After this, fearing further aggression on the part of the revengeful petty officer she deserted. She walked all the way to Portsmouth—a journey which occupied a whole month—where she again enlisted as a marine in Fraser's regiment, which was shortly ordered on foreign service to the East Indies. There was a storm on the way out, during which she worked manfully at the pumps. When the ship had passed Gibraltar there was another bad storm in which she was wrecked. Hannah Snell found her way to Madeira and thence to the Cape of Good Hope. Her ship joined in the taking of Arcacopong on the Coromandel Coast; in which action Hannah fought so bravely that she was praised by her officers. Later on she assisted in the siege of Pondicherry which lasted nearly three months before it had to be abandoned. In the final attempt she served on picket duty and had to ford, under fire, a river breast high. During the struggle she received six bullets in the right leg, five in the left leg, and one in the abdomen. Her fear was not of death but discovery of her sex through the last-named wound. By the friendly aid of a black woman, however, she avoided this danger. She managed to extract the bullet herself, with her finger and thumb, and the wound made a good cure. This wound caused her a delay of some weeks during which her ship had to leave for Bombay and was delayed five weeks by a leak. Poor Hannah was again unfortunate in her officers;234 one of them to whom she had refused to sing had her put in irons and given a dozen lashes. In 1749 she went to Lisbon, where she learned by chance that her husband had met at Genoa the death penalty by

drowning, for a murder which he had committed. Discovery of her sex and her identity would have been doubly dangerous now; but happily she was able to conceal her alarm and so escaped detection. She got back to London through Spithead and once more found shelter in the house of her sister who at once recognised her in spite of her disguise. Her fine singing voice, which had already caused her to be flogged, now stood her in good stead. She applied for and obtained an engagement at the Royalty theatre, Wellclose square; and appeared with success as *Bill Bobstay* a sailor and *Firelock* a soldier. She remained on the stage for some months, always wearing male dress. The government of the day gave her, on account of the hardships she had endured, a pension of £20 per annum. Later on she took a public-house at Wapping. The sign of her hostelry became noted. On one side of it was painted in effigy *The British Tar* and on the other *The Valiant Marine*, and underneath *The Widow in masquerade*, or the *Female Warrior*.

As Hannah appeared during her adventurous career as both soldier and sailor she affords, in herself, an illustrious example of female courage as well as female duplicity in both of the services.

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C. LA MAUPIN

The majority of the readers of the English-speaking race who enjoy Théophile Gautier's fascinating romance *Mademoiselle de Maupin* are not aware that the heroine was a real person. The novelist has of course made such alterations as are required to translate crude fact into more elegant fiction, and to obliterate so far as can be done the criminal or partly-criminal aspect of the lady's venturous career. But such is one of the chief duties of an artist in fiction. Though he may be an historian, in a sense, he is not limited to the occasional bareness of truth. His object is not that his work shall be true but rather what the French call *vraisemblable*. In narrative, as in most arts, crudeness is rather a fault than a virtue, so that the writer who looks for excellence in his work has without losing force, to fill up the blanks left by the necessary excision of fact by subtleties of thought and graces of description, so that the fulness or rotundity of the natural curves shall always be maintained. In truth the story of *La Maupin* is so laden with passages of excitement and interest that any writer on the subject has only to make an agreeable choice of episodes sufficiently dramatic, and consistent with each other, to form a cohesive narrative. Such a work has in it possibilities of great success—if only the author has the genius of a Théophile Gautier to set it forth. The236 real difficulty which such an one would have to contend

against would be to remove the sordidness, the reckless passion, the unscrupulousness, the criminal intent which lies behind such a character.

The Mademoiselle de Maupin of real life was a singer at the Opera in Paris at the end of the seventeenth century. She was the daughter of a man of somewhat humble extraction engaged in secretarial work with the Count d'Armagnac; and whilst only a girl married a man named Maupin employed in the province. With him she had lived only a few months when she ran away with a maitre d'armes (*anglicè*, a fencing master) named Serane. If this individual had no other good quality in matters human or divine, he was at least a good teacher of the sword. His professional arts were used in the service of his inamorata, who became herself an excellent swordsman even in an age when swordsmanship had an important place in social life. It may have been the sexual equality implied by the name which gave the young woman the idea, but thenceforth she became a man in appearance;—in reality, in so far as such a metamorphosis can be accomplished by courage, recklessness, hardihood, unscrupulousness, and a willing obedience to all the ideas which passion and sensuality can originate and a greed of notoriety carry into execution.

In a professional tour from Paris to Marseilles, in which she as an actress took the part of a man,237 she gained the affections of the flighty daughter of a rich merchant of Marseilles; and, as a man, ran away with her. Being pursued, they sought refuge in a convent—a place which at that age it was manifestly easier to get into than to get out of. Here the two remained for a few days, during which, by the aid of histrionic and other arts, the actress obviated the necessary suspicions of her foolish companion and kept danger away. All the while La Maupin was conscious that an irate and rich father was in hot search for his missing daughter, and she knew that any talk about the venture would infallibly lose her the girl's fortune, besides getting herself within the grip of the law. So she decided on a bold scheme of escape from the convent, whereby she might obliterate her tracks. A nun of the convent had died and her body was awaiting burial. In the night La Maupin exchanged the body of the dead nun for the living one of her own victim. Having thus got her companion out of the convent, she set the building on fire to cover up everything, and escaped in secret to a neighbouring village, taking with her by force the girl, who naturally enough was disillusioned and began to have scruples as to the wisdom of her conduct. In the village they remained hidden for a few weeks, during which time the repentance of the poor girl became a fixed quantity. An attempt, well supported, was made to arrest the ostensible man; but this was foiled by the female swordsman238 who killed one of the would-be captors and dangerously wounded two others. The girl, however, made good her escape; secretly she fled from her deceiver and reached her parents in safety. But

the hue and cry was out after La Maupin, whose identity was now known. She was pursued, captured, and placed in gaol to await trial. The law was strong and inexorable; the erring woman who had thus outraged so many conventions was condemned to be burned alive.

But abstract law and the executive are quite different things—at least they were in France at the close of the seventeenth century: as indeed they are occasionally in other countries and at varying times. La Maupin, being a woman and a clever one, procured sufficient influence to have the execution postponed, and so had the full punishment delayed, if not entirely avoided. More than this, she managed to get back to Paris and so to begin her noxious career all over again. Of course she had strong help from her popularity. She was a favourite at the opera, and the class which patronises and supports this kind of artistic effort is a rich and powerful one, which governments do not care to displease by the refusal of such a small favour as making the law hold its hand with regard to an erring favourite.

But La Maupin's truculent tendencies were not to be restrained. In Paris in 1695 whilst she was one of the audience at a theatre she took umbrage239 at some act or speech of one of the comedians playing in the piece, and leaving her seat went round to the stage and caned him in the presence of the audience. The actor, M. Dumenil, an accomplished and favourite performer but a man of peaceful disposition, submitted to the affront and took no action in the matter. La Maupin, however, suffered, through herself, the penalty of her conduct. She had entered on a course of violence which became a habit. For some years she flourished and exercised all the tyrannies of her own sex and in addition those habitual to men which came from expert use of the sword. Thus she went attired as a man to a ball given by a Prince of the blood. In that garb she treated a fellow-guest, a woman, with indecency; and she was challenged by three different men—each of whom, when the consequent fight came on, she ran through the body, after which she returned to the ball. Shortly afterwards she fought and wounded a man, M. de Servan, who had affronted a woman. For these escapades she was again pardoned. She then went to Brussels where she lived under the protection of Count Albert of Bavaria, the Elector. With him she remained until the quarrel, inevitable in such a life, came. After much bickering he agreed to her demand of a settlement, but in order to show his anger by affronting her he sent the large amount of his involuntary bequest by the servile hand of the husband of his mistress, Countess d'Arcos, who240 had supplanted her, with a curt message that she must leave Brussels at once. The bearer of such a message to such a woman as La Maupin had probably reckoned on an unfriendly reception; but he evidently underestimated her anger. Not contented with flinging at his head the large *douceur* of which he was

the bearer, she expressed in her direct way her unfavourable opinion, of him, of his master, and of the message which he had carried for the latter. She ended her tirade by kicking him downstairs, with the justification for her form of physical violence that she would not sully her sword with his blood.

From Brussels she went to Spain as *femme de chambre* to the Countess Marino but returned to Paris in 1704. Once more she took up her work as an opera singer; or rather she tried to take it up, but she had lost her vogue, and the public would have none of her. As a matter of fact, she was only just above thirty years of age, which should under normal circumstances be the beginning of a woman's prime. But the life she had been leading since her early girlhood was not one which made for true happiness or for physical health; she was prematurely old, and her artistic powers were worn out.

Still, her pluck, and the obstinacy on which it was grafted, remained. For a whole year she maintained a never-failing struggle for her old supremacy, but without avail. Seeing that all was241 lost, she left the stage and returned to her husband who, realising that she was rich, managed to reconcile whatever shreds of honour he had to her infamous record. The Church, too, accepted her—and her riches—within its sheltering portals. By the aid of a tolerant priest she got absolution, and two years after her retirement from the opera she died in a convent in all the odour of sanctity.

D. MARY EAST

The story of Mary East is a pitiful one, and gives a picture of the civil life of the eighteenth century which cannot be lightly forgotten. The condition of things has so changed that already we almost need a new terminology in order that we may understand as our great-grandfathers did. Take for instance the following sentence and try individually how many points in it there are, the full meaning of which we are unable to understand:

"A young fellow courted one Mary East, and for him she conceived the greatest liking; but he going upon the highway, was tried for a robbery and cast, but was afterwards transported."

The above was written by an accomplished scholar, a Doctor of Divinity, rector of an English parish. At the time of its writing, 1825, every word of it was entirely comprehensible. If a242 reader of that time could see it translated into modern phraseology he would be almost as much surprised as we are when we look back upon an age holding possibilities no longer imaginable.

“Going upon the highway” was in Mary East’s time and a hundred years later a euphemism for becoming a highway robber; “cast” meant condemned to death; “transported” meant exiled to a far distant place where one was guarded, and escape from which was punishable with death. Moreover robbery was at this time a capital offence.

In 1736, when Mary East was sixteen, life was especially hard on women. Few honest occupations were open to them, and they were subject to all the hardships consequent on a system in which physical weakness was handicapped to a frightful extent. When this poor girl was bereft of her natural hope of a settlement in life she determined, as the least unattractive form of living open to her, to remain single. About the same time a friend of hers arrived at the same resolution but by a different road, her course being guided thereto by having “met with many crosses in love.” The two girls determined to join forces; and on consulting as to ways and means decided that the likeliest way to avoid suspicion was to live together under the guise of man and wife. The toss of a coin decided their respective rôles, the “breeches part” as it is called in the argot of the theatre, falling to East.243 The combined resources of the girls totalled some thirty pounds sterling, so after buying masculine garb for Mary they set out to find a place where they were unknown and so might settle down in peace. They found the sort of place they sought in the neighbourhood of Epping Forest where, there being a little public-house vacant, Mary—now under the name of James How—became the tenant. For some time they lived in peace at Epping, with the exception of a quarrel forced by a young gentleman on the alleged James How in which the latter was wounded in the hand. It must have been a very one-sided affair, for when the injured “man” took action he was awarded £500 damages—a large sum in those days and for such a cause. With this increase to their capital the two women moved to Limehouse on the east side of London where they took at Limehouse-hole a more important public-house. This they managed in so excellent a manner that they won the respect of their neighbours and throve exceedingly.

After a time they moved from Limehouse to Poplar where they bought another house and added to their little estate by the purchase of other houses.

Peace, hard work, and prosperity marked their life thence-forward, till fourteen years had passed since the beginning of their joint venture.

Peace and prosperity are, however, but feeble guardians to weakness. Nay, rather are they incentive to evil doing. For all these years the two244 young women had conducted themselves with such rectitude, and observed so much discretion, that even envy could not assail them through the web of good repute which they had

woven round their masquerade. Alone they lived, keeping neither female servant nor male assistant. They were scrupulously honest in their many commercial dealings and, absolutely punctual in their agreements and obligations. James How took a part in the public life of his locality, filling in turn every parish office except those of Constable and Churchwarden. From the former he was excused on account of the injury to his hand from which he had never completely recovered. Regarding the other his time had not yet come, but he was named for Churchwarden in the year following to that in which a bolt fell from the blue, 1730. It came in this wise: A woman whose name of coverture was Bently, and who was now resident in Poplar, had known the alleged James How in the days when they were both young. Her own present circumstances were poor and she looked on the prosperity of her old acquaintance as a means to her own betterment. It was but another instance of the old crime of "blackmail." She sent to the former Mary East for a loan of £10, intimating that if the latter did not send it she would make known the secret of her sex. The poor panic-stricken woman foolishly complied with the demand, thus forcing herself deeper into the mire of the other woman's unscrupulousness. The245 forced loan, together with Bently's fears for her own misdeed procured immunity for some fifteen years from further aggression. At the end of that time, however, under the renewed pressure of need Bently repeated her demand. "James How" had not the sum by her, but she sent £5—another link in the chain of her thraldom.

From that time on there was no more peace for poor Mary East. Her companion of nearly thirty-five years died and she, having a secret to guard and no assistance being possible, was more helpless than ever and more than ever under the merciless yoke of the blackmailer. Mrs. Bently had a fair idea of how to play her own despicable game. As her victim's fear was her own stock-in-trade she supplemented the sense of fear which she knew to exist by a conspiracy strengthened by all sorts of schemes to support its seeming *bona fides*. She took in two male accomplices and, thus enforced, began operations. Her confederates called on James How, one armed with a constable's staff, the other appearing as one of the "thief-takers" of the gang of the notorious magistrate, Fielding—an evil product of an evil time. Having confronted How they told him that they had come by order of Mr. Justice Fielding to arrest him for the commission of a robbery over forty years before, alleging that they were aware of his being a woman. Mary East, though quite innocent of any such offence but acutely conscious of her imposture of246 manhood, in her dismay sought the aid of a friend called Williams who understood and helped her. He went to the magistrates of the district and then to Sir John Fielding to make inquiries and claim protection. During his absence the two villains took Mary East from her house and by threats secured from

her a draft on Williams for £100. With this in hand they released their victim who was even more anxious than themselves not to let the matter have greater publicity than it had already obtained. However, Justice demanded a further investigation, and one of the men being captured—the other had escaped—was tried, and being found guilty, was sentenced to imprisonment for four years together with four appearances in the pillory.

Altogether Mary East and her companion had lived together as husband and wife for nearly thirty-five years, during which time they had honestly earned, and by self-denial saved, over four thousand pounds sterling and won the good opinion of all with whom they had come in contact. They were never known to cook a joint of meat for their own use, to employ any help, or to entertain private friends in their house. They were cautious, careful, and discreet in every way and seemed to live their lives in exceeding blamelessness.

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VIII. HOAXES, ETC.

There is a class of imposture which must be kept apart from others of its kind, or at least ear-marked in such wise that there can be no confusion of ideas regarding it. This includes all sorts of acts which, though often attended with something of the same result as other efforts to mislead, are yet distinguished from them by intention. They have—whatever may be their results—a jocular and humorous intention. Such performances are called hoaxes. These, though amusing to their perpetrators and to certain sportive persons, and though generally causing a due amount of pain and loss to those on whom they are inflicted, usually escape the condign and swift punishment which they deserve. It is generally held that humour, like charity, covereth a multitude of sins. So be it. We are all grateful for a laugh no matter who may suffer.

A. TWO LONDON HOAXES

Not many years ago, in one of the popular dairy-refreshment shops in Holborn, the prim manageress and her white-capped waitresses were just commencing their day’s work when a couple of sturdy green-aproned men swooped250 down on the place from a large pantechnicon van, and to the amazement of the young ladies commenced to clear the shop.

“There you are Bill. Hand up them chairs, and look slippy.”

“Right o’, mate.”

“Good gracious me, what are you men doing?” shrieked the alarmed manageress.

“Doing, miss, doing? Why moving the furniture. This is the lot ain’t it?”

“No, no, no; there must be some mistake. You must have come to the wrong place.”

“Mistake, wrong place? No miss. ’Ere, look where’s that letter?” And Jack placed a begrimed document before the lady.

The letter seemed right enough. It read beautifully, a plain direction to clear the shop and remove the stuff elsewhere; it only lacked the official heading of the company. But the joint inspection was rudely broken in upon by the arrival of a couple of the knights of the brush who had come “to do the chimbley, maam”; and ere they could be disposed of vans of coals began to draw up, more pantechnicons, more sweeps, loads of furniture, butchers with prime joints, plump birds from the poulterers, fish of every conceivable kind, noisy green-grocer boys, staggering under huge loads of vegetables; florists “to decorate,” gasfitters, carpenters “to take down the counter, miss”; others “to put it up.”

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Pandemonium is quiet compared with that shop. The poor manageress was in tears, deafened with the exasperated, swearing representatives of, apparently, all the tradesmen for miles around. The thing had been well done. No sooner had the provision merchants worked clear and the streams of vans, waggons and carts been backed away to the accompaniment of much lurid language, than ladies began to arrive with boxes of mysterious long garments which, they assured the indignant lady in charge, they were instructed were urgently needed for an event they referred to as “interesting.” There was no monotony, for fast and furious—very furious sometimes—came other maidens laden with more boxes and still more boxes, filled with costumes, bonnets, and other creations dear to the feminine mind. Then came servants “in answer to your advertisement, madam.” They flocked in from all directions, north, south, east and west. Never was seen such a concourse of servants: dignified housekeepers, housemaids, parlourmaids, and every other sort of maid, seemed to be making for that unfortunate manageress. Sleek-looking butlers popped in, as uniformed nurses popped out. Window-cleaners had to be torn from the windows they insisted they had got orders to clean; carpet beaters sought carpets which did not exist. Never had mortal—aye and immortal—requirements been thought out with more thoughtful care. From the needs of the unborn baby, to the252 “poor departed one,” whom melancholy gentlemen in seedy black came to

measure, all were remembered, and the man for whose especial benefit presumably were intended beautiful wreaths, crosses, harps, etc., which kept constantly arriving. Throughout that live-long day to the "dewy eve" beloved of the poet the game went merrily on.

As a hoax the thing was worked for all it was worth. Not only had shoals of letters evidently been sent out, but advertisements, too, had been freely distributed among the press. Needless to say that, despite the closest investigations, its author or authors, discreetly silent, remained unknown.

The joke was not new by any means. Well nigh a century before mischief-loving Theodore Hook had stirred all London by a similar prank—the famous Berners Street Hoax. In those days Berners Street was a quiet thoroughfare inhabited by fairly well-to-do families. Indeed it was this very sedate quietness which drew upon it Hook's unwelcome attention. Fixing on one of the houses, which happened to be adorned with a brass plate, he made a wager with a brother wag that he would cause that particular house to become the talk of the town: and he certainly did—for not only the town, but all England shrieked with laughter when the result of his little manœuvre became known.

One morning, soon after breakfast, waggons laden with coals began to draw up before the house253 with the brass plate, No. 54. These were quickly succeeded with tradespeople by the dozen with various commodities. These in turn were followed by van loads of furniture; followed by a hearse with a coffin and a number of mourning coaches. Soon the street became choked: for, what with the goods dumped down as near as possible to the house—pianos, organs, and cart loads of furniture of all descriptions, the anxious tradesmen, and the laughing mob of people quickly attracted to the scene, confusion reigned supreme. About this time the Lord Mayor and other notabilities began to arrive in their carriages. His Lordship's stay was short. He was driven to Marlborough Street police office where he informed the magistrate that he had received a note purporting to come from Mrs. T., the victimised widow resident at No. 54, saying she was confined to her room and begging his lordship to do her the favour of calling on her on important business. Meanwhile, the trouble in Berners Street was growing serious, and officers belonging to the Marlborough Street office were at once sent to keep order. For a time even they were helpless. Never was such a strange meeting: barbers with wigs; mantlemakers with band-boxes; opticians with their various articles of trade. Presently there arrived a couple of fashionable physicians, an accoucheur, and a dentist. There were clockmakers, carpet manufacturers and wine merchants, all loaded with specimens of their trade; brewers with254 barrels of ale, curiosity dealers with sundry knickknacks; cartloads of

potatoes; books, prints, jewellery, feathers and furbelows of all kinds; ices and jellies; conjuring tricks; never was such a conglomeration. Then, about five o'clock servants of all kinds began to troop in to apply for situations. For a time the police officers were powerless. Vehicles were jammed and interlocked; the exasperated drivers were swearing, and the disappointed tradesmen were maddened by the malicious fun of the crowd who were enjoying the joke. Some of the vans were overturned and many of the tradesmens' goods came to grief; while some of the casks of ale became the prey of the delighted spectators. All through the day and late into the night this extraordinary state of things continued, to the dismay and terror of the poor lady and the other inmates of the house with the brass plate.

Theodore Hook had taken precautions to secure a good seat for the performance, having taken furnished-apartments just opposite the house of his victim, where he posted himself with one or two companions to enjoy the scene. Hook's connection with the mad joke was, fortunately for him, not known until long afterwards; it seems he had devoted three or four whole days to writing the letters, all couched in ladylike style. In the end the novelist seems to have been rather frightened at the result of his little joke, for he made a speedy departure to the country; and there is no doubt255 that, had he been publicly known as its author, he would have fared badly.

B. THE CAT HOAX

One very amusing variation of the countless imitations, which the success of this trick gave rise to, was the "cat hoax" at Chester, in August, 1815. It was at the time when it had been determined to send Napoleon to St. Helena. One morning, a number of hand bills were distributed in and around Chester, stating that, owing to the island of St. Helena being invested with rats, the government required a number of cats for deportation. Sixteen shillings were offered for "every athletic full-grown tom cat, ten shillings for every adult female puss, and a half-crown for every thriving kitten that could swill milk, pursue a ball of thread, or fasten its young fangs in a dying mouse." An address was given at which the cats were to be delivered; but it proved to be an empty house. The advertisement resulted in the victimisation of hundreds of people. Men, women, and children streamed into the city from miles around laden with cats of every description. Some hundreds were brought in, and the scene before the door of the empty house is said to have baffled description. When the hoax was discovered many of the cats were liberated; the following morning no less than five hundred dead cats were counted floating down the river Dee.

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C. THE MILITARY REVIEW

Practical jokes of this nature have more than once led to serious results. In the summer of 1812 a report was extensively circulated that a grand military review was to be held on the 19th of June. Booths were erected and as many as twenty thousand people assembled, despite the efforts of the authorities who, when they learned what was happening, posted men in the several roads leading to the heath to warn the people that they had been hoaxed. But their efforts were useless. The rumour was believed and the contradiction ignored; vehicles, horsemen and pedestrians pushed on to their destination. When, however, the day wore on without any appearance of the promised military pageant, the crowd grew angry and then broke out in acts of violence. The heath was set on fire. Messengers were sent off express to London, and a detachment of the guards had to be marched down to quell the mob. In the disorder one poor woman was thrown out of a chaise and picked up in an unconscious condition.

D. THE TOLL-GATE

Many distinguished actors have been very fond of playing practical jokes and perpetrating hoaxes. Young, the tragedian, was one day driving in a gig with a friend on the outskirts of London. Pulling up at a turn-pike257 gate he noticed the name of the toll-collector written up over the door. Calling to him the woman, the wife of that functionary, who appeared to be in charge of the gate, he politely told her that he particularly wished to see Mr. ——, naming the toll-collector, on a matter of importance. Impressed by Young's manner, she promptly sent for her husband, who was working in a neighbouring field. Hastily washing himself and putting on a clean coat he presented himself. The actor gravely said: "I paid for a ticket at the last gate, and was told that it would free me through this one. As I wish to be scrupulously exact, will you kindly tell me whether such is the case?" "Why of course it is?" "Can I then pass through without paying?" The toll-collector's reply and his vituperation as the travellers passed on had better, perhaps, be left to the imagination.

E. THE MARRIAGE HOAX

Hoaxes are sometimes malicious, and often cruel, as the following instance will show: A young couple were about to be married in Birmingham when those officiating—it was a Jewish wedding—were startled by the delivery of a telegram from London with the message: "Stop marriage at once. His wife and children have arrived in London and will come on to Birmingham." The bride fainted and the bridegroom was frantically perturbed at thus summarily being258 provided with a wife and family. But it was useless; the unhappy man had to make the best of his way through an exasperated crowd full of sympathy for the wronged girl. Inquiry, however, showed her

friends that the whole thing was a hoax—possibly worked by some revengeful rival of the man whose happiness had been so unexpectedly deferred.

F. BURIED TREASURE

Most people have heard of the “Spanish Treasure swindle” and, though less elaborate than the original, a variation of it practised on a French merchant was rather “cute.” One morning he received an anonymous communication advising him that a box of treasure was buried in his garden the exact position of which would be pointed out to him, if he agreed to divide the spoil. He rose at once to the bait, met his generous informant, and before long the pair were merrily at work with pickaxe and shovel. Sure enough before long their exertions were awarded by the unearthing of a box full of silver coins. The hoard proved to consist of sixteen hundred five-franc pieces; and the delighted merchant, after carefully counting them out into two piles, offered one lot to his partner as his share. That worthy, after contemplating the heap for a minute or two, observed that it would be rather a heavy load to carry to the railway station, and said he would prefer,259 if it could be managed, to have the amount in gold or notes. “Certainly, certainly!” was the reply. The two men walked up to the house and the business was settled to their mutual satisfaction. Twenty-four hours later, the merchant took a very different view of the transaction; for examination discovered there was not one genuine five-franc piece among the whole lot.

G. DEAN SWIFT’S HOAX

One of the most beautiful hoaxes ever perpetrated was one for which Swift was responsible. He caused a broad-sheet to be printed and circulated which purported to be the “last dying speech” of one Elliston, a street robber, in which the condemned thief was made to say: “Now as I am a dying man, I have done something which may be of use to the public. I have left with an honest man—the only honest man I was ever acquainted with—the names of all my wicked brethren, the places of their abode, with a short account of the chief crimes they have committed, in many of which I have been their accomplice, and heard the rest from their own mouths. I have likewise set down names of those we call our setters, of the wicked houses we frequent, and all of those who receive and buy our stolen goods. I have solemnly charged this honest man, and have received his promise upon oath, that whenever he hears of any rogue to be tried for robbery or housebreaking,260 he will look into his list, and if he finds the name there of the thief concerned, to send the whole paper to the Government. Of this I here give my companions fair and public warning, and hope they will take it.” So successful, we are told, was the Dean’s ruse that, for many years afterwards, street robberies were almost unknown.

H. HOAXED BURGLARS

The above ingenious device recalls another occasion when some gentlemen who made burglary their profession, and who had been paying a midnight visit to the house of a Hull tradesman were sadly "sold." They found the cash-box lying handy, and, to their delight, weighty; so heavy indeed that they did not stay to help themselves to anything further. Next morning the cash-box was found not far from the shop and its contents in an ash-pit close by. After all the trouble they had taken, to say nothing of the risks they had run, the burglars found their prize consisted only of a lump of lead, and that their intended victim had been too artful for them.

I. BOGUS SAUSAGES

As an example of how a dishonest penny may be turned the following incident would be hard to beat.

Two weary porters at the King's Cross terminus of the Great Northern Railway were thinking261 about going home, when a breathless, simple-looking countryman rushed up to them with anxious enquiries for a certain train. It had gone. He was crushed. "Whatever was he to do? He had been sent up from Cambridge with a big hamper of those sausages for which the University town is celebrated—a very special order. Was there no other train?" "No." The poor fellow seemed overwhelmed. "As it is too late to find another market," he complained, "the whole lot will be lost." Then a happy thought seemed to strike him as more of the railway men gathered round, and he inquired ingratiatingly, "Would you care to buy the sausages; if you would, you could have them for fourpence a pound? If I keep them, they will probably go bad before I can dispose of them." The idea took—"Real Cambridge Sausages" at fourpence a pound was not to be sneezed at. The dainties, neatly packed in pounds, went like the proverbial hot cakes. Shouldering the empty basket, and bidding his customers a kindly goodnight, the yokel set off to find a humble lodging for the night. Grateful smiles greeted the purchasers when they got home. Frying pans were got out and the sausages were popped in, and never was such a sizzling heard in the railway houses—or rather never should such a sizzling have been heard. But somehow they didn't sizzle. "They are uncommon dry; seem to have no fat in 'em," said the puzzled cook. They were dry, very dry, for closer262 investigation showed that the "prime Cambridge" were nothing but skins stuffed with dry bread! The railway staff of King's Cross were long anxious to meet that simple countryman from Cambridge.

J. THE MOON HOAX

One of the most stupendous hoaxes, and one foisted on the credulity of the public with the most complete success, was the famous Moon Hoax which was published in the pages of the New York *Sun* in 1835. It purported to be an account of the great astronomical discoveries of Sir John Herschel at the Cape of Good Hope, through the medium of a mighty telescope, a single lens of which weighed nearly seven tons. It was stated to be reproduced from the Supplement to the Edinburgh *Journal of Science*, though as a matter of fact, the *Journal* had then been defunct some years. In graphic language, and with a wealth of picturesque detail, the wonders of the Moon as revealed to the great astronomer and his assistants were set forth. A great inland sea was observed, and "fairer shores never angel coasted on a tour of pleasure." The beach was "of brilliant white sand, girt with wild castellated rocks apparently of green marble, varied at chasms, occurring every two hundred feet, with grotesque blocks of chalk or gypsum, and feathered and festooned at the summit with the clustering foliage of unknown263 trees." There were hills of amethysts "of a diluted claret colour"; mountains fringed with virgin gold; herds of brown quadrupeds resembling diminutive bison fitted with a sort of "hairy veil" to protect their eyes from the extremes of light and darkness; strange monsters—a combination of unicorn and goat; pelicans, cranes, strange amphibious creatures, and a remarkable biped beaver. The last was said to resemble the beaver of the earth excepting that it had no tail and walked only upon its two feet. It carried its young in its arms like a human-being, and its huts were constructed better and higher than those of many savage tribes; and, from the smoke, there was no doubt it was acquainted with the use of fire. Another remarkable animal observed, was described as having an amazingly long neck, a head like a sheep, bearing two spiral horns, a body like a deer, but with its fore-legs disproportionately long as also its tail which was very bushy and of a snowy whiteness, curling high over its rump and hanging two or three feet by its side.

But even these marvels fade into insignificance compared with the discovery of the lunarian men "four feet in height, covered, except on the face, with short and glossy copper-coloured hair, with wings composed of a thin membrane." "In general symmetry they were infinitely superior to the orang-outang"—which statement could hardly have been regarded as complimentary; and, though described264 as "doubtless innocent and happy creatures," the praise was rather discounted by the mention that some of their amusements would "but ill comport with our terrestrial notions of decorum." In the "Vale of the Triads," with beautiful temples built of polished sapphire, a superior race of the punariant were found, "eminently happy and even polite," eating gourds and red cucumbers; and further afield yet another race of the vespertilio-homo, or man-bat, were seen through the wonderful telescope of

"infinitely greater personal beauty … scarcely less lovely than the general representation of angels."

Such were a few of the marvels told of in the Moon story; and, though one may laugh at them as they stand, shorn of their clever verbiage and quasi-scientific detail, at the time of publication they were seriously accepted, for the popular mind, even among the educated classes, was then imbued with the fanciful anticipators of vast lunar discoveries heralded in the astronomical writings of Thomas Dick, LL.D., of the Union College of New York. Scarcely anything could have been brought forward too extravagant for the general credulity on the subject then prevailing; and this well-timed satire, "out-heroding Herod" in its imaginative creations, supplied to satiety the morbid appetite for scientific wonders then raging. By its plausible display of scientific erudition it successfully duped, with few exceptions, the whole civilised world.

265At the time, the hoax was very generally attributed to a French astronomer, M. Nicollet, a legitimist who fled to America in 1830. He was said to have written it with the twofold object of raising the wind, and of "taking in" Arago, a rival astronomer. But its real author was subsequently found to be Richard Adams Locke, who declared that his original intention was to satirise the extravagances of Dick's writings, and to make certain suggestions which he had some diffidence in putting forward seriously. Whatever may have been his object, the work, as a hit, was unrivalled. For months the press of America and Europe teemed with the subject; the account was printed and published in many languages and superbly illustrated. But, finally, Sir John Herschel's signed denial gave the mad story its quietus.

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IX. THE CHEVALIER D'EON

In all the range of doubtful personalities there is hardly any one whom convention has treated worse than it has the individual known in his time—and after—as The Chevalier d'Eon. For about a hundred and fifty years he has been written of—and spoken of for the first half century of that time—simply as a man who masqueraded in woman's clothes. There seems to be just sufficient truth in this to save certain writers on the subject from the charge of deliberate lying—a record which, even if it is to be posthumous, no man of integrity aims at; but it is abundantly evident that the rumour, which in time became a charge, was originally set on foot deliberately by his political enemies, who treated him and his memory without either consideration or even the elements of honourable truth. To begin with, here are the facts of his long life.

Charles-Genevieve—Louis-Auguste-Andre—Timothée d'Eon de Beaumont was born in 1728 in Tonnerre in Yonne, a department of France in the old province of Burgundy. His father, Louis d'Eon, was a parliamentary barrister. As a youth he was so apt in his studies at the Collège Mazarin that he received by special privilege his degree of270 Doctor in Canon and Civil Law before the age appointed for the conferring of such honour, and was then enrolled in the list of parliamentary barristers in Paris. At first he had been uncertain which department of life he should undertake. He swayed on one side towards the church, on the other towards the world of letters and *beaux-arts*. He was by habit an athlete, and was so good a swordsman that later on he had no rival in fencing except the Chevalier de Saint-George. In his twenty-fifth year he published two remarkable books. One was on the political administration of ancient and modern people, and the other on Phases of Finance in France at different times. (The latter was afterwards published in German at Berlin in 1774, and so impressed the then King of Prussia that he gave orders that its ideas were to be carried into practical effect.)

THE CHEVALIER D'EON

In 1755 the Prince de Conti, to whose notice the Chevalier had been brought by the above books, asked the king (Louis XV) to send him to Russia on a secret mission with the Chevalier Douglas; and from that time till the king's death in 1774 he was his trusted, loyal agent and correspondent. D'Eon's special mission was to bring the courts of France and Russia closer than had been their wont, and also to obtain for the Prince de Conti, who was seeking the Dukedom of Finland and the Kingship of Poland, the favour of the Empress Elizabeth—a difficult task, which had already cost271 M. de Valcroissant a spell of imprisonment. In order to accomplish his mission, d'Eon disguised himself as a woman, and in this guise he was able to creep

into the good graces of the Empress. He became her “reader” and was thus enabled to prepare her for the reception of the secret purposes of his king. In the following year he returned to France whence he was immediately sent again to St. Petersburg with the title of Secretary of Embassy. But this time he went in his man’s clothes and as the brother of the pretended female reader. By this time he had been made a lieutenant of dragoons. He came in spite of the Russian Chancellor Bestuchéf, who saw in the young soldier-diplomat “*un subject dangereux et capable de boulverser l’empire*.” This time his real mission was to destroy in the mind of the Empress faith in Bestuchéf, who was trying to hold the Russian army inactive and so deprive France of the advantages of the Treaty of Versailles. This he did so well that he was in a position to prove to the Empress that her chancellor had betrayed her interests. Bestuchéf was arrested and his post conferred on Count Woronzow, whose attitude was altogether favourable to France. The gratitude of King Louis was shewn by his making d’Eon a captain of dragoons and conferring on him a pension of 2400 livres; he was also made censor of history and literature. D’Eon threw himself with his accustomed zeal into the service of the army and distinguished272 himself by his courage in the battles of Hoecht; of Ultrop, where he was wounded; of Eimbech where he put the Scotch to flight; and of Osterkirk, where at the head of 80 dragoons and 20 hussars he overthrew a battalion of the enemy.

No better conventional proof of the accepted idea of d’Eon’s military worthiness can be given than the frequency and importance of the occasions on which he was honoured by the carrying of despatches. He brought news of his successful negotiations for the peace of Versailles from Vienna in 1757. He was also sent with the Ratification of the Treaty. He carried the despatches of the great victory of the troops of Maria Theresa, forestalling the Austrian courier by a day and a half, although he had a broken leg.

When next sent to Russia, d’Eon was sent as minister plenipotentiary, an office which he held up to 1762 when to the regret of the Empress he was recalled. When he was leaving, Woronzow, the successor of Bestuchéf, said to him, “I am sorry you are going, although your first journey with Chevalier Douglas cost my sovereign 250,000 men and more than 5,000,000 roubles.” D’Eon answered: “Your excellency ought to be happy that your sovereign and his minister have gained more glory and reputation than any others in the world.” On his return d’Eon was appointed to the regiment d’Autchamp and gazetted as adjutant to Marshal de Broglie. Then he was sent to Russia273 for the fourth time as minister plenipotentiary in place of Baron de Breuteuil. But Peter III was dethroned, so the out-going Ambassador remained in

Russia, and d'Eon went to England as secretary to the Embassy of the Duke de Nivernais in 1762.

After the Peace of 1763 d'Eon was chosen by the King of England to carry the despatches. He received for this office the Star of St. Louis from the breast of the king, who on giving it said it was for the bravery which he had displayed as a soldier, and for the intelligence which he had shown in the negotiations between London and St. Petersburg.

At this time all went well with him. But his good fortune was changed by the bitter intrigues of his enemies. He was devoted to the king, but had, almost as a direct consequence, the enmity of the courtesans who surrounded him and wished for the opportunity of plucking him at their leisure. He had an astonishing knowledge on all matters of finance, and apprised the king privately of secret matters which his ministers tried to hide from him. The Court had wind of that direct correspondence with his majesty and therewith things were so managed that the diplomatist got into trouble. Madame de Pompadour surprised the direct correspondence between the king and d'Eon, with the result that the latter was persecuted by the jealous courtiers who intrigued, until in 1765 he was replaced at the Embassy of London by the Count de Guerchy and he himself became the274 mark for all sorts of vexations and persecutions. His deadly enemy, the Count de Guerchy, tried to have him poisoned, but the attempt failed. D'Eon took legal steps to punish the attempt; but every form of pressure was used to keep the case out of Court. An attempt was made to get the Attorney General to enter a *nolle prosequi*; but he refused to lend himself to the scheme, and sent the matter to the Court of King's Bench. There, despite all the difficulties of furthering such a charge against any one so protected as an ambassador, it was declared on trial that the accused was guilty of the crime charged against him. De Guerchy accordingly had to return to France; but d'Eon remained in England, though without employment. To console him King Louis gave him in 1766 a pension of 12,000 livres, and assured him that though he was ostensibly exiled this was done to cover up the protection extended to him. D'Eon, according to the report of the time, was offered a bribe of 1,200,000 livres, to give up certain state papers then in his custody; but to his honour he refused. Be the story as it may, d'Eon up to the time of the death of Louis (1774) continued to be in London the real representative of France, though without any formal appointment.

During this time one of the means employed with success by his enemies to injure the reputation of d'Eon, was to point out that he had passed himself275 as a woman; the disguise he wore on his first visit to Russia. His clean shaven face, his personal niceties, the correctness of his life, all came to the aid of that supposition. In England

bets were made and sporting companies formed for the purpose of verifying his sex. Designs were framed for the purpose of carrying him off in order to settle the vexed question by a personal examination. Some of the efforts he had to repel by violence. In 1770 and in 1772 his friends tried to arrange that he should be allowed to return to France; but he refused all offers as the Ministers insisted on making it a condition of his return that he should wear feminine apparel. After the accession of Louis XVI he obtained leave to return, free from the embarrassing restraint hitherto demanded. As he was overwhelmed with debts he placed as a guarantee in the hands of Lord Ferrers an iron casket containing important French state papers. The minister sent Beaumarcheus to redeem them, and in 1771 the Chevalier returned to France. He presented himself at Versailles in his full uniform of a captain of dragoons. The Queen (Marie Antoinette) however, wished to see him presented in female dress; so the Minister implored him to meet her wishes. He consented; and thenceforward not only wore women's clothes but called himself "La Chevalière d'Eon." In a letter addressed by him to Madame de Staël during the French revolution he spoke of himself as "citizeness of the New276 Republic of France, and of the old Republic of Literature." On 2nd September, 1777 he wrote to the Count de Maurepas, "Although I detest changes of costume, yet they are hard at work at Mademoiselle Bertin's on my future and doleful dress, which however I shall cut in pieces at the first sound of the cannon shots." As a matter of fact when war with England became imminent he demanded to be allowed to take in the army the position which he had won by bravery and as the price of honourable wounds. The only reply he got was his immurement for two months in the Castle of Dijon. In 1784 he returned to England, which he never again left. In vain he appealed to the Convention and then to the First Consul to be allowed to place his sword at the service of his country; but his prayer was not listened to. Used to the practice of the sword, his circumstances being desperate, he then found in it a source of income. He gave in public, assaults-at-arms with the Chevalier de Saint-George, one of the most notable fencers of his time. At length he was given a small pension, £40, by George III, on which he subsisted during the remainder of his life. He died 23rd May, 1810.

In very fact Chevalier d'Eon is historically a much injured man. His vocation was that of a secret-service agent of a nation surrounded with enemies, and to her advantage he used his rare powers of mind and body. He was a very gallant soldier, who won distinction in the field and was277 wounded several times; and in his endurance and his indifference to pain whilst carrying despatches of overwhelming importance he set an example that any soldier might follow with renown. As a statesman and diplomatist, and by the use of his faculties of inductive ratiocination, he averted great

dangers from his country. If there were nothing else to his credit he might well stand forth as a diplomatist who had by his own exertions overthrown a dishonest Russian Chancellor and an unscrupulous French Ambassador. Of course, as he was an agent of secret service, he had cognisance of much political and international scheming which he had at times to frustrate at the risk of all which he held dear. But, considering the time he lived in, and the dangers which he was always in the thick of, in a survey of his life the only thing a reader can find fault with is his yielding to the base idea of the flighty-minded Marie Antoinette. What, to this irresponsible butterfly of fashion, was the honour of a brave soldier or the reputation of an acute diplomatist who had deserved well of his country. Of course to her any such foolery as that to which she condemned d'Eon was but the fancy of an idle moment. But then the fancies of queens at idle moments may be altogether destructive to someone. That they may be destructive to themselves is shown in the record of the terrible atrocities of the Revolution which followed hard on the luxurious masquerades of Trianon and Versailles. Even to the278 Queen of France, the Chevalier d'Eon should have been something of a guarded, if not an honoured, person. He was altogether a "king's man." He had been for many years the trusted and loyal servant of more than one king; and from the king's immediate circle the proper consideration should have been shown.

There is something pitiful in the spectacle of this old gentleman of nearly eighty years of age, who had in his time done so much, being compelled to earn a bare livelihood by the exploitation of the most sordid page in his history—a page turned more than half a century before, and then only turned at all in response to the call of public duty.

In his retirement d'Eon showed more of his real nature than had been possible to him in the strenuous days when he had to be always vigilant and ready at an instant's notice to conceal his intentions—his very thoughts. Here he showed a sensitiveness with which even his friends did not credit him. He had been so long silent as to matters of his own concern that they had begun to think he had lost the faculty not only of making the thought known, but even of the thought itself. The following paragraph from the London *Public Advertiser* of Wednesday, 16th November, 1774, shows more of the real man than may be found in any of his business letters or diplomatic reports:—

"The Chevalier d'Eon with justice complains of our public prints; they are eternally sending him to279 France while he is in body and soul fixed in this country; they have lately confined him in the Bastille, when he fled to England as a country of liberty; and they lately made a Woman of him, when not one of his enemies dared to put his manhood to the proof. He makes no complaints of the English Ladies."

In an issue of the same paper 9th November, of the same year, it is mentioned that the Rt. Hon. Lord Ferrars, Sir John Fielding, Messrs. Addington, Wright and other worthy magistrates and gentlemen and their ladies did the Chevalier d'Eon the honour to dine with him in Brewer St., Golden Square (common proof that the Chevalier d'Eon is not confined in the Bastille). D'Eon was much too wily and too much accustomed to attack to allow diplomatic insinuations to pass unheeded. He was now beginning to apply his garnered experience to his own protection.

From the above extract of 16th November one can note how the allegation as to his sex was beginning to rankle in the soldier's mind, and how an open threat of punishment is conveyed in diplomatic form. Indeed he had reason to take umbrage at the insinuation. More than once had attempts been made to carry him off for the purpose of settling bets by a humiliating personal scrutiny. From something of the same cause his friends on his death caused an autopsy to be made before several witnesses of position and repute. Amongst280 these were several surgeons including Père Elisée, First Surgeon to Louis XVIII. The medical certificate ran as follows:

"Je certifie, par le présent, avoir inspecté le corps du chevalier d'Eon, en présénce de M. Adair, M. Wilson et du Père Elysée, et avoir trouvé les organs masculins parfaitement formés."

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X. THE BISLEY BOY

A. PROLEGOMENON

Queen Elizabeth, the last of the House of Tudor, died unmarried. Since her death in 1603, there have been revolutions in England due to varying causes, but all more or less disruptive of family memories. The son of James I had his head cut off, and after the Commonwealth which followed, Charles I's son James II, had to quit on the coming of William III, by invitation. After William's death without issue, Anne, daughter of James II, reigned for a dozen years, and was succeeded by George I, descended through the female line from James I. His descendants still sit on the throne of England.

NO DESCENDANTS

The above facts are given not merely in the way of historical enlightenment but rather as a sort of apologetic prolegomenon to the ethical consideration of the matter immediately before us. Had Queen Elizabeth had any descendants, they need not

have feared any discussion of her claims of descent. The issue of the legality of her mother's marriage had been tried exhaustively both before284 and after her own birth, and she held the sceptre both by the will of her dead father and the consent of her dead half-sister who left no issue. But Queen Elizabeth, whatever her origin, would have been a sufficient ancestor for any King or any Dynasty. Still, had she left issue there might have been lesser people, descendants, whose feelings in the matter of personal and family pride would have required consideration; and no person entering on an analysis of historical fact would have felt quite free-handed in such an investigation.

B. THE QUEEN'S SECRET

There are quite sufficient indications throughout the early life of Queen Elizabeth that there was *some* secret which she kept religiously guarded. Various historians of the time have referred to it, and now and again in a way which is enlightening.

In a letter to the Protector Somerset in 1549, when the Princess Elizabeth was 15, Sir Robert Tyrwhitt says:

"I do verily believe that there hath been some secret promise between my Lady, Mistress Ashley, and the Cofferer" [Sir Thomas Parry] "never to confess to death, and if it be so, it will never be gotten of her, unless by the King's Majesty or else by your Grace."

In his *Girlhood of Queen Elizabeth* Mr. Frank A. Mumby writes of this:—

"Elizabeth was as loyal to Parry as to Mrs. Ashley; she reinstated him after a year's interval, in his office as Cofferer,285 and on her accession to the throne she appointed him Controller of the royal household. She continued to confer preferment upon both Parry and his daughter to the end of their lives—"conduct," remarks Miss Strickland, "which naturally induces a suspicion that secrets of great moment had been confided to him—secrets that probably would have touched not only the maiden name of his royal Mistress, but placed her life in jeopardy, and that he had preserved these inviolate. The same may be supposed with respect to Mrs. Ashley, to whom Elizabeth clung with unshaken tenacity through every storm."

Major Martin Hume in his *Courtships of Queen Elizabeth* says of the favourable treatment of the Governess and the Cofferer:—

"The confessions of Ashley and Parry are bad enough; but they probably kept back more than they told, for on Elizabeth's accession and for the rest of their lives, they were treated with marked favour. Parry was knighted and made Treasurer of the

Household, and on Mrs. Ashley's death in July 1565 the Queen visited her in person and mourned her with great grief."

The same writer says elsewhere in the book:

"Lady Harrington and Mrs. Ashley were, in fact, the only ladies about the Queen who were absolutely in her confidence."

In a letter to the Doge of Venice in 1556 Giovanni Michiel wrote:

"She" [Elizabeth] "I understand, having plainly said that she will not marry, even were they to give her the King's" [Philip of Spain] "son" [Don Carlos, Philip's son by his first286 wife] "or find any other great prince, I again respectfully remind your serenity to enjoin secrecy about this."

Count de Feria wrote in April, 1559:

"If my spies do not lie, which I believe they do not, for a certain reason which they have recently given me, I understand that she [Elizabeth] will not bear children."

At this time Elizabeth was only 26 years of age.

The following extract is taken from Mr. Mumby's *Girlhood of Queen Elizabeth* in which is given the translation taken from Leti's *La Vie d'Elizabeth*. The letter is from Princess Elizabeth to Lord Admiral Seymour, 1548 (*apropos* of his intentions regarding her):—

"It has also been said that I have only refused you because I was thinking of some one else. I therefore entreat you, my lord, to set your mind at rest on this subject, and to be persuaded by this declaration that up to this time I have not the slightest intention of being married, and, that if ever I should think of it (*which I do not believe is possible*) you would be the first to whom I should make known my resolution."

C. BISLEY

The place known to the great public as Bisley is quite other than that under present consideration. Bisley, the ground for rifle competitions, is in Surrey, thoughtfully placed in juxtaposition to an eminent cemetery. It bears every indication of newness-so far as any locality of old earth can be new.

287But the other is the original place of the name, possessing a recorded history which goes back many hundreds of years. It is in Gloucestershire high up on the eastern side of the Cotswold Hills at their southern end where they rise above the Little Avon which runs into the embouchure of the Severn to the Bristol Channel. The trace of Roman occupation is all over that part of England. When the pioneers of that

strenuous nation made their essay on Britain they came with the intention of staying; and to-day their splendid roads remain unsurpassed—almost unsurpassable. In this part of the West Country there are several of them, of which the chief are Irmin (or Ermine) Street, running from Southampton through Cirencester and Gloucester to Caerleon, and Ikenild Street running from Cirencester, entering Gloucestershire at Eastleach. I am particular about these roads as we may require to notice them carefully. There is really but one Bisley in this part of the country, but the name is spelled so variously that the simple phonetic spelling might well serve for a nucleating principle. In all sorts of papers, from Acts of Parliament and Royal Charters down to local deeds of tenancy, it is thus varied—Bisleigh, Bistlegh, Byselegh, Bussely. In this part of the Cotswolds "Over" is a common part of a name which was formerly used as a prefix. Such is not always at once apparent for the modern cartographer seems to prefer the modern word "upper" as the prefix. Attention is288 merely called to it here as later on we shall have to consider it more carefully.

The most interesting spot in the whole district is the house "Overcourt," which was once the manor-house of Bisley. It stands close to Bisley church from the grave-yard of which it is only separated by a wicket-gate. The title-deeds of this house, which is now in possession of the Gordon family show that it was a part of the dower of Queen Elizabeth. But the world went by it, and little by little the estate of which it was a portion changed hands; so that now the house remains almost as an entity. Naturally enough, the young Princess Elizabeth lived there for a time; and one can still see the room she occupied. A medium-sized room with mullioned windows, having small diamond-shaped panes set in lead after the pattern of the Tudor period. A great beam of oak, not exactly "trued" with the adze but following the natural trend of the wood, crosses the ceiling. The window looks out on a little walled-in garden, one of the flower beds of which is set in an antique stone receptacle of oblong shape which presents something of the appearance of a stone coffin of the earlier ages. Of this more anon.

Whether at the time of the birth of Elizabeth the mansion of Overcourt was itself in the King's possession is a little difficult to fathom, for, in the Confession of Thomas Parry written in 1549 concerning a period a little earlier, it is said: "And I289 told her" [Princess Elizabeth] "further how he" [Lord Admiral Thomas Seymour] "would have had her to have lands in Gloucestershire called Bisley as in parcel of exchange, and in Wales."

In addition to its natural desirability in the way of hygiene and altitude there seems to have been a wish on the part of family advisers of those having estates in the vicinity of this place, to enlarge their possessions. This was wise enough, for in the disturbed

state of affairs which ushered in the Tudor Dynasty, and the effects of which still continued, it was of distinct benefit to have communities here and there large enough for self protection. This idea held with many of the families as well as individuals whose names are associated with Bisley. Henry VIII himself, as over-lord with ownership derived from the Norman Conquest, had feudal claims on the de Bohuns who represented all the local possessions of the Dukedom of Gloucester and the Earldoms of Essex Hereford and Northampton. Also the greedy eyes of certain strong men and families who had hopes that time and influence already existing, might later on bring them benefit, were fixed on this desirable spot. Thomas Seymour, the unscrupulous brother of the future Lord Protector, was high in influence in the early days of the Princess Elizabeth, and even then must have had ambitious designs of marrying her. On the death of Henry VIII he had, when Lord Sudeley, married the king's widow within a few290 months of her widowhood, and received a grant of the royal possession at Bisley which, on his attainder, passed on to Sir Anthony Kingston, who doubtless had already marked it down as an objective of his cupidity.

The "Hundred of Bisley" was one of the seven of Cirencester which of old were farmed by the Abbey of Tewksbury. Its position was so full of possibilities of future development as to justify the acquisitive spirit of those who desired it. In its bounds were what is now the town of Stroud, as well as a whole line of mills which had in early days great effect as they were workable by both wind and water power, both of which were to be had in profusion. This little remote hamlet had a progressive industry of its own in the shape of a manufacture of woollen cloths. It also represented dyeing in scarlet and was the place of origin of Giles Gobelin, a famous dyer who gave his name to the Gobelin tapestry.

One other thing must be distinctly borne in mind regarding Bisley in the first half of the sixteenth century; it was comparatively easy of access from London for those who wished to go there. A line drawn on the map will show that on the way as *points d'appui*, were Oxford and Cirencester, both of which were surrounded with good roads as became their importance as centres. This line seems very short for its importance. To-day the journey is that of a morning; and even in the time of291 Henry VIII when horse traction was the only kind available, the points were not very distant as to time of traverse. To Henry, who commanded everything and had a myriad agents eager to display their energy in his service, all was simple; and when he went a-hunting in the forests which made a network far around Berkeley Castle his objective could be easily won between breakfast and supper. There was not any difficulty therefore, and not too much personal strain, when he chose to visit his little daughter even though at the start one should be at Nether Lypiat and the other at Greenwich or Hatfield or Eltham.

D. THE TRADITION

The Tradition is that the little Princess Elizabeth, during her childhood, was sent away with her governess for change of air to Bisley where the strong sweet air of the Cotswold Hills would brace her up. The healthy qualities of the place were known to her father and many others of those around her. Whilst she was at Overcourt, word was sent to her governess that the King was coming to see his little daughter; but shortly before the time fixed, and whilst his arrival was expected at any hour, a frightful catastrophe happened. The child, who had been ailing in a new way, developed acute fever, and before steps could be taken even to arrange for her proper attendance and nursing, she died. The governess feared to tell her father—292Henry VIII had the sort of temper which did not make for the happiness of those around him. In her despair she, having hidden the body, rushed off to the village to try to find some other child whose body could be substituted for that of the dead princess so that the evil moment of disclosure of the sad fact might be delayed till after His Majesty's departure. But the population was small and no girl child of any kind was available. The distracted woman then tried to find a living girl child who could be passed off for the princess, whose body could be hidden away for the time.

Throughout the little village and its surroundings was to be found no girl child of an age reasonably suitable for the purpose required. More than ever distracted, for time was flying by, she determined to take the greater risk of a boy substitute—if a boy could be found. Happily for the poor woman's safety, for her very life now hung in the balance, this venture was easy enough to begin. There *was* a boy available, and just such a boy as would suit the special purpose for which he was required—a boy well known to the governess, for the little Princess had taken a fancy to him and had lately been accustomed to play with him. Moreover, he was a pretty boy as might have been expected from the circumstance of the little Lady Elizabeth having chosen him as her playmate. He was close at hand and available. So he was clothed in the dress of the293 dead child, they being of about equal stature; and when the King's fore-rider appeared the poor overwrought governess was able to breathe freely.

The visit passed off successfully. Henry suspected nothing; as the whole thing had happened so swiftly, there had been no antecedent anxiety. Elizabeth had been brought up in such dread of her father that he had not, at the rare intervals of his seeing her, been accustomed to any affectionate effusiveness on her part; and in his hurried visit he had no time for baseless conjecture.

Then came the natural nemesis of such a deception. As the dead could not be brought back to life, and as the imperious monarch, who bore no thwarting of his

wishes, was under the impression that he could count on his younger daughter as a pawn in the great game of political chess which he had entered on so deeply, those who by now must have been in the secret did not and could not dare to make disclosure. Moreover the difficulties and dangers to one and all involved would of necessity grow with each day that passed. Willy nilly they must go on. Fortunately for the safety of their heads circumstances favoured them. The secret was, up to now, hidden in a remote village high up on the side of the Cotswold hills. Steep declivities guarded it from casual intrusion, and there was no trade beyond that occasional traffic necessary for a small agricultural community. The whole country as far as the eye could see was either294 royal domain or individual property owned or held by persons attached to the dynasty by blood or interest.

Facilities of intercommunication were few and slow; and above all uncertain and therefore not to be relied on.

This then was the beginning of the tradition which has existed locally ever since. In such districts change is slow, and what has been may well be taken, unless there be something to the contrary, for what is. The isolation of the hamlet in the Cotswolds where the little princess lived for a time—and is supposed to have died—is almost best exemplified by the fact that though the momentous secret has existed for between three and four centuries, no whisper of it has reached the great world without its confines. Not though the original subject of it was the very centre of the wildest and longest battle which has ever taken place since the world began—polemical, dynastic, educational, international, commercial. Anyone living in any town in our own age, where advance and expansiveness are matters of degree, not of fact, may find it hard to believe that any such story, nebulous though it may be, could exist unknown and unrecorded outside a place so tiny that its most important details will not be found even on the ordnance map of an inch to the mile. But a visit to Bisley will set aside any such doubts. The place itself has hardly295 changed, in any measure to be apparent as a change, in the three centuries and more. The same buildings stand as of yore; the same estate wall, though more picturesque with lichen, and with individual stones corrugated by weather and dislocated by arboreal growths, speak of an epoch ending with the Tudor age. The doors of the great tithe-barns which remain as souvenirs of extinct feudalism, still yawn wide on their festered hinges. Nay, even the very trees show amongst their ranks an extraordinary percentage of giants which have withstood unimpaired all the changes that have been.

Leaving busy and thriving Stroud, one climbs the long hill past Lipiat and emerges in the village, where time has suddenly ceased, and we find ourselves in the age and the surroundings which saw the House of York fade into the Tudor dynasty. Such a journey

is almost a necessity for a proper understanding of the story of the Bisley Boy, which has by the effluxion of time attained to almost the grace and strength of a legend. It is quite possible that though the place has stood still, the tradition has not, for it is in the nature of intellectual growth to advance. One must not look on the Gloucestershire people as sleepy—sleepiness is no characteristic of that breezy upland; but dreaming, whether its results be true or false, does not depend on sleep. In cases like the present, sleep is not to be looked on as a blood relation of death but rather as a preservative296 against the ravages of time—like the mysterious slumber of King Arthur and others who are destined for renewal.

It may be taken for granted that in course of time and under the process of purely oral communication, the story told in whispers lost nothing in the way of romance or credibility; that flaws or lacunæ were made good by inquiry; and that recollections of overlooked or forgotten facts were recalled or even supplemented by facile invention. But it may also be taken for granted that no statement devoid of a solid foundation could become permanently accepted. There were too many critics around, with memories unimpaired by overwork, to allow incorrect statements to pass unchallenged. There is always this in tradition, that the collective mind which rules in small communities is a child's mind, which must ever hold grimly on to fact. And that behind the child's mind is the child's nature which most delights in the recountal of what it knows, and is jealous of any addition to the story which is a part of its being.

Major Martin Hume writes in his *Courtships of Queen Elizabeth*:

"Elizabeth was only three when her mother's fall removed her from the line of the succession.... In 1542, however, the death of James V of Scotland and the simultaneous birth of his daughter Mary seemed to bring nearer Henry's idea of a union between the two crowns. He proposed to marry the baby Queen of Scots to his infant son and at the297 same time he offered the hand of Elizabeth (then nine) to a son of Arran—head of House of Hamilton, next heir to the Scottish crown.... Mary and Elizabeth were restored to their places in the line of succession.... In January 1547 Henry VIII died, leaving the succession to his two daughters in tail after Edward VI and his heirs. Queen Catherine (Parr) immediately married Sir Thomas Seymour, brother of Protector Somerset and uncle of the little king (Edward VI). To them was confided Princess Elizabeth then a girl of 14."

Elizabeth was three in 1536. The story of the Bisley Boy dates probably to 1543–4. So that if the story have any foundation at all in fact, signs of a complete change of identity in the person of Princess Elizabeth must be looked for in the period of some seven or eight years which intervened.

E. THE DIFFICULTY OF PROOF

In such a case as that before us the difficulty of proof is almost insuperable. But fortunately we are dealing with a point not of law but of history. Proof is not in the first instance required, but only surmise, to be followed by an argument of probability. Such records as still exist are all the proofs that can be adduced; and all we can do is to search for such records as still exist, without which we lack the enlightenment that waits on discovery. In the meanwhile we can deduce a just conclusion from such materials as we do possess. Failing certitude, which is under the circumstances almost impossible, we only arrive at probability; and with that until298 discovery of more reliable material we must be content.

Let us therefore sum up: first the difficulties of the task before us; then the enlightenments. "Facts," says one of the characters of Charles Dickens, "bein' stubborn and not easy drove," are at least, so far as they go, available. We are free to come to conclusions and to make critical comments. Our risk is that if we err—on whichever side does not matter—we reverse our position and become ourselves the objects of attack.

Our main difficulties are two. First, that all from whom knowledge might have been obtained are dead and their lips are closed; second, that records are incomplete. This latter is the result of one of two causes—natural decay or purposed obliteration. The tradition of the Bisley Boy has several addenda due to time and thought. One of these is that some of those concerned in the story disappeared from the scene.

The story runs that on Elizabeth's accession or under circumstances antecedent to it all who were in the secret and still remained were "got rid of." The phrase is a convenient one and not unknown in history. Fortunately those who *must* have been in such a secret—if there was one—were but few. If such a thing occurred in reality, four persons were necessarily involved in addition to Elizabeth herself: (1) Mrs. Ashley, (2) Thomas Parry, (3) the parent of the living child who replaced the299 dead one; the fourth, being an unknown quantity, represents an idea rather than a person—a nucleated identity typical of family life with attendant difficulties of concealment. Of these four—three real persons and an idea—three are accounted for, so far as the "got rid of" theory is concerned. Elizabeth never told; Thomas Parry and Mrs. Ashley remained silent, in the full confidence of the (supposed) Princess who later was Queen. With regard to the last, the nucleated personality which includes the unknown parent possibly but not of certainty, contemporary record is silent; and we can only regard him or her as a mysterious entity available for conjecture in such cases of difficulty as may present themselves.

We must perforce, therefore, fall back on pure unadulterated probability, based on such rags of fact as can be produced at our inquest. Our comfort—content being an impossibility—must lie in the generally-accepted aphorism; “Truth will prevail.” In real life it is not always so; but it is a comforting belief and may remain *faut de mieux*.

A grave cause of misleading is inexact translation—whether the fault be in ignorance or intentional additions to or substractions from text referred to. A case in point is afforded by the letter already referred to from Leti’s *La Vie d’Elizabeth*. In the portion quoted Elizabeth mentioned her intention of not marrying: “I have not the slightest intention of being married, and300 … if ever I should think of it (*which I do not believe is possible*).” Now in Mr. Mumby’s book the quotation is made from Leti’s *La Vie d’Elizabeth* which is the translation into French from the original Italian, the passage marked above in italics is simply: “ce que je ne crois pas.” The addition of the words “is possible” gives what is under the circumstances quite a different meaning to the earliest record we have concerning the very point we are investigating. When I began this investigation, I looked on the passage—neither Mumby, remember, nor even Leti, but what professed to be the *ipsissima verba* of Elizabeth herself—and I was entirely misled until I had made comparison for myself—*Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* The addition of the two words, which seems at first glance merely to emphasise an expression of opinion, changes the meaning of the writer to a belief so strong that the recital of it gives it the weight of intention. Under ordinary circumstances this would not matter much; but as we have to consider it in the light of a man defending his head against danger, and in a case where absolute circumspection is a necessary condition of safety so that intention becomes a paramount force, exactness of expression is all-important.

The only way to arrive at probability is to begin with fact. Such is a base for even credulity or its opposite, and if it is our wish or intention to be just there need be no straining on either one side or the301 other. In the case of the Bisley Boy the points to be considered are:

1. The time at which the change was or could be affected.

2. The risk of discovery, (a) at first, (b) afterwards.

It will be necessary to consider these separately for manifest reasons. The first belongs to the region of Danger; the second to the region of Difficulty, with the headsman’s axe glittering ominously in the background.

F. THE TIME AND THE OPPORTUNITY

(*a*) *The time at which the change was or could have been effected.*

For several valid reasons I have come to the conclusion that the crucial period by which the Bisley story must be tested is the year ending with July 1544. No other time either earlier or later would, so far as we know, have fulfilled the necessary conditions.

First of all the question of sex has to be considered; and it is herein that, lacking suitable and full opportunity, discovery of such an imposture must have been at once detected—certainly had it commenced at an early age. In babyhood the whole of the discipline of child-life begins. The ordinary cleanliness of life has to be taught, and to this end there is no portion of the infantile body which is not subject to at least occasional inspection. This302 disciplinary inspection lasts by force of habit until another stage on the journey towards puberty has been reached. Commercial use in America fixes stages of incipient womanhood—by dry goods' advertisement—as "children's, misses' and girls' clothing," and the illustration will sufficiently serve. It seems at first glance an almost unnecessary intrusion into purely domestic life; but the present is just one of those cases where the experience of women is not only useful but necessary. In a question of identity of sex the nursemaid and the washerwoman play useful parts in the witness box. Regarding Elizabeth's childhood no question need ever or can ever arise. For at least the first ten years of her life, a woman's sex *need* not be known outside the nursery and the sick room; but then this is the very time when her attendants have direct and ample knowledge. Moreover in the case of the child of Queen Anne (Boleyn) there was every reason why the sex should have been unreservedly known. Henry VIII divorced Katherine of Aragon and married Anne in the hope of having legitimate male issue to sit on the throne of England. Later, when both Katherine and Anne had failed to satisfy him as to male issue, he divorced Anne and married Jane Seymour for the same purpose. In the interval either his views had enlarged or his patience had extended; for, when Jane's life hung in the balance, owing to an operation which the surgeons considered necessary, and the husband303 was consulted as to which life they should, in case of needful choice, try to save, his reply was peculiar—though, taken in the light of historical perspective, not at variance with his dominating idea. Gregorio Leti thus describes the incident (the quotation is made from the translation of the Italian into French and published in Amsterdam in 1694):—

"Quand les médécins demandèrent au Roi qui l'on sauverait de la mère ou de l'enfant, il répondit, qu'il auroit extremement souhait de pouvoir sauver la mère et l'enfant, mais que cel n'étant possible, il vouloit que l'on sauvat l'enfant plutôt que la mère parce qu'il trouveroit assez d'autres femmes."

It had become a monomania with Henry that he should be father of a lawful son; and when the child of his second union was expected, he so took the consummation of his

wishes for granted that those in attendance on his wife were actually afraid to tell him the truth. It would have been fortune and social honour to whosoever should bear him the glad tidings. We may be sure then that news so welcome would never have been perverted by those who had so much to gain. As it was, the “lady-mistress”—as she called herself—of the little Princess, Mrs. (afterwards Lady) Bryan, wrote in her letter to Lord Cromwell in 1536—Elizabeth being then in her third year:—

“She is as toward a child and as gentle of conditions, as ever I knew any in my life.”

304The writer could have had no ignorance as to the sex of the child, for in the same letter she gives Cromwell a list of her wants in the way of clothing; which list is of the most intimate kind, including gown, kirtle, petticoat, “no manner of linen nor smocks,” kerchiefs, rails, body stitchets, handkerchiefs, sleeves, mufflers, biggens. As in the same letter it is mentioned that the women attending the child were under the rule of Lady Bryan—an accomplished nurse who had brought up Princess Mary and had been “governess to the children his Grace have had ever since”—it can be easily understood she was well acquainted with even the smallest detail of the royal nursery. Had the trouble of the lady-mistress been with regard to superabundance of underclothing, one might have understood ignorance on the part of the responsible controller; but in the plentiful lack of almost every garment necessary for the child’s wear by day or by night there could be no question as to her ostensible sex at this age.

Thence on, there were experienced and devoted persons round the little Princess, whose value in her father’s eyes was largely enhanced since he had secured, for the time, her legitimacy by an Act of Parliament.

After Elizabeth had been legitimised, she became one of the pieces in the gigantic game of chess on which Henry had embarked. Despite the fact that the son for whom he had craved was now305 a boy of six, it was only wise to consider and be prepared for whatever might happen in case Prince Edward should not live, and if, in such a case, Mary should die without issue. The case was one of amazing complexity, and as the time wore on the religious question became structurally involved. England had declared in no uncertain voice in favour of Protestantism, and the whole forces of Rome were arrayed against her. Mary was altogether in favour of the religion of her injured mother, and behind her stood the power of Catholicism which, even in that unscrupulous age, was well ahead in the race of unscrupulousness. And as Elizabeth stood next to the young Prince Edward in the forces of Reformation, on her was focussed much of the suspicion of polemic intrigue. The papacy was all powerful in matters of secret inquiry. Indeed in such an inquest its powers were unique, for unscrupulous spies were everywhere—even, it was alleged, in the confessional. How

then could such a secret as the sex of a little girl of not a dozen years of age, who was constantly surrounded by women necessarily conversant with every detail of her life, be kept from all who wished to solve it. In such a state of affairs suspicion was equivalent to discovery. And discovery meant ruin to all concerned, death to abettors of the fraud, woe and destruction to England and a general upheaval of the fundamental ideas of Christendom. It may, I presume, be taken for granted306 without flaw or mitigation of any kind that up to July, 1543, the “Princess Elizabeth” was what she appeared to be—a girl.

At the time of her first letter to the new Queen, Catherine (Parr), she was just a trifle under ten years of age and a well-grown child, quick, clever, rather precocious, and well grounded in the learning of her time. The exact date of this letter is not given by Leti—of which more anon—but it must have been somewhere between July 12 and 31, 1543. Henry VIII married Catherine Parr on 12 July, and in her letter of 1543 Elizabeth calls Catherine “your Majesty.” In her letter of 31 July, 1544 she writes to the same correspondent:

“… has deprived me for a whole year of your most illustrious presence.”

The whereabouts of Elizabeth during this last year appears to be the centre of the mystery; and if any letter or proof is ever found of Elizabeth’s being anywhere but in her own house of Overcourt in Bisley Parish, it will go far to settle the vexed question now brought before the world for the first time.

(*b*) *The opportunity*

The year 1542 was a busy time for Henry VIII. He had on hand, either pending or going on, two momentous wars, one with Scotland the other with France. The causes of either307 of these were too complicated for mention here; suffice it to say that they were chiefly dynastic and polemic. In addition he was busy with matrimonial matters, chiefly killing off his fifth wife Catherine Howard, and casting eyes on the newmade widow of Lord Latimer. In 1543 he married the lady, as his sixth wife. She herself can hardly be said to have lacked matrimonial experience, as this was her third union. Her first venture was with the elderly Lord Borough, who, like Lord Latimer, left her wealthy. Henry had by now got what might be called in the slang of the time “the marriage habit,” and honeymoon dalliance had hardly the same charm for him as it usually is supposed to have with those blessed with a lesser succession of spouses. The consequence was that he was able to give more attention to the necessary clearing up of the Scottish war, which finished at Solway Moss on December 14th, with the consequent death from chagrin of the Scottish King James V. The cause of the war, however, continued in the shape of a war with France which went on till 1546

when peace was declared to the pecuniary benefit of the English King. For the last two years of this time Henry carried on the war singlehanded, as the Emperor Charles V, who had begun it as his ally, withdrew.

There is a paragraph in Grafton's *Chronicle* published in 1569 which throws a flood of light on Elizabeth's absence at this time, 1543: "This yeare308 was in London a great death of the pestilence, and therefore Mighelmas terme was adjourned to Saint Albones, and there it was kept to the ende."

In his *Girlhood of Queen Elizabeth*, Mr. Mumby says: "For some obscure reason Elizabeth seems to have fallen out of her father's favour again very soon after Catherine Parr had obtained his consent to her return to Court" (1543). No such cause for the removal of the Princess from London was necessary. It was probably to the presence of the pestilence in London that her removal to a remote and healthy place was due. Failing Prince Edward, then only five years of age and a weakly child, the crown must—unless some constitutional revolution be effected in the meantime or some future son be born to him—devolve on his female heirs, a matter pregnant with strife of unknown dimensions. Mary was now twenty-seven years old and of a type that did not promise much for maternity. At the same time, Mary, though his eldest living daughter, was the hope of the Catholic party, to which he was in violent opposition; whereas in Elizabeth lay the hope of the whole of the party of the Reformation. Her life was to her father far beyond the calls of parental affection or dynastic ambition, and she had to be saved at all costs from risk of health. Henry's own experience of child-life was a bitter one. Of his five children by Catherine of Aragon only one, Mary, survived childhood. Elizabeth309 was the only survivor of Anne Boleyn; Edward, of Jane Seymour. Anne of Cleves had no children, and if report spoke truly no chance of having any. Catherine Howard was executed childless. And he had only just married Catherine Parr, who had already had two husbands.

On July 12, 1543, Henry married Catherine and in due course devoted himself to the war. On the 14 July, 1544, he crossed from Dover to Calais to look after the conduct of affairs for himself, and on the 26th began the siege of Boulogne. This lasted for two months when having reduced the city he returned home. On the 8 September he wrote to his wife to that effect. During his absence Queen Catherine was vicegerent and had manifestly as much public work on hand as she could cope with. Bisley was a long way from London, and there were no organised posts in the sixteenth century. Moreover, ever since his last marriage, Henry had been an invalid. He was now fifty-two years of age, of unhealthy body, and so heavy that he had to be lifted by machinery. Catherine was a devoted wife; and as Henry was both violent and irritable she had little time at command to give to the affairs of other people. There was small

opportunity for any one then who was sufficiently in the focus of affairs to be cognisant of such an imposture as the tradition points out. Doubtless hereafter, when a story so fascinating and at first glance so incredible begins to be examined[310] and its details thoroughly threshed out, more items of evidence or surmise than are at present available will be found for the settlement of the question, one way or the other. In the meantime, be it remembered, that we are only examining offhand a tradition made known for the first time after three centuries. Our present business is to consider *possibilities*. Later on the time may come—as it surely will; if the story can in the least be accepted—for the consideration of *probabilities*. Both of these tentative examinations will lead to the final examination of possibility, of probability, and of proof *pro* or *contra*.

At this stage we must admit that neither time nor opportunity present any difficulty in itself insuperable.

G. THE IDENTITY OF ELIZABETH

(*a*) *Documents*

The next matter with which we have to deal is regarding the identity of Elizabeth. This needs (if necessary) a consideration of the facts of her life, and so far as we can realise them, from external appearance, mental and moral attitudes, and intentions. On account of space we must confine this branch of the subject to the smallest portion of time necessary to form any sort of just conclusion and accepting the available records up to 1543, take the next period from that time to[311] anywhere within the first few years of her reign—by which time her character was finally fixed and the policy on which her place in history is to be judged had been formulated and tested.

This implies in the first instance a brief (very brief) study of her physique with a corollary in the shape of a few remarks on her heredity:

Grafton's Chronicle states, under the date of 7 September 1533, "the Queene was delivered of a fayre Lady" which was his Courtly way of announcing the birth of a female princess, blond in colour. In all chronicles "fayre" means of light colour. In Wintown the reputed father of Macbeth—the Devil—is spoken of as a "fayre" man; evil qualities were in that age attributed to blondes.

In a letter dated from Greenwich Palace, 18 April, 1534, Sir William Kingston said to Lord Lisle: "To-day, the King and Queen were at Eltham" (where the royal nursery then was) "and saw my Lady Princess—as goodly a child as hath been seen. Her Grace is much in the King's favour as a goodly child should be—God save her!"

In 1536, when Elizabeth was but three years old, Lady Bryan, the "Lady-mistress" of both Mary and her half-sister, wrote from Hunsdon to Lord Cromwell regarding the baby princess. "For she is as toward a child and as gentle of conditions, as ever I knew any in my life. Jesus preserve her Grace!" In the same letter she says "Mr. Shelton would have my Lady Elizabeth to dine and sup312 every day at the board of estate. Alas! my Lord it is not meet for a child of her age to keep such rule yet. I promise you, my lord, I dare not take it upon me to keep her Grace in health an' she keep that rule. For there she shall see divers meats, and fruits, and wines, which it would be hard for me to restrain her Grace from. Ye know, my lord, there is no place of correction there; and she is yet too young to correct greatly."

Testimony is borne according to Leti to the good qualities of the Princess Elizabeth in these early years, by the affectionate regard in which she was held by two of Henry's queens, the wronged and unhappy Anne of Cleves and the happy-natured Catherine Parr. Anne, he says, though she had only seen her twice loved her much; she thought her beautiful and full of spirit ("pleine d'esprit.") Catherine, according to the same writer who had seen her often before her marriage to Henry, admired her "esprit et ses manières."

If Leti could only have spoken at first hand, his record of her would be very valuable. But unhappily he was only born nearly thirty years after her death. His history was manifestly written from records and as Elizabeth's fame was already made before he began to treat of her his work is largely a panegyric of hearsay. There is, regarding the youth of the Princess, such an overdone flood of adulation that it is out of place in a serious history of a human life. In his account of the time which313 we are considering, we find the child compared in both matters of body and mind to an angel. She is credited at the age of ten with an amount of knowledge in all branches of learning sufficient to equip the illustrious men of a century. The fact is the Italian has accepted the queen's great position, and then reconstructed her youth to accord with it, in such a way as to show that whatever remarkable abilities she possessed were the direct outcome of her own natural qualities.[2]

[2] Amongst other branches of knowledge he credits her with knowing well "Geography, Cosmography, Mathematics, Architecture, Painting, Arithmetic, History, Mechanics." She had a special facility in learning languages; spoke and wrote French, Italian, Spanish, Flemish. She loved poetry and wrote it, but regarded it as a useless amusement and, as it was distasteful to her, turned to history and politics. Finally he adds: "She was naturally ambitious and always knew how to hide her defects."

The details above given are not merely meagre but are only explicable by the fact that during the earlier years of her life the child was not considered of any importance. The circumstances of Anne's marriage—which in any case was delayed till it became a necessary preliminary to the legitimacy on which any future claim to the throne must rest—did not make for a belief in the public mind for its permanency. Things were fluctuating in the religious world and few were inclined to the belief that the Pope (with whom lay the last word and whose political leanings in favour of Catherine of Aragon and the validity of her marriage to Henry were well known) would be overthrown by the English King. And in any case, were Henry314 to be the final judge of appeal in his own case no great continuity of purpose could be expected from him. The first important event which we have to consider with reference to the question before us is Elizabeth's first letter to Queen Catherine (Parr) in 1543. In this the girl then ten years old writes to her new step-mother, at whose marriage she together with her half-sister Mary had been present. It is in form a dutiful letter, not entirely without an apparent compulsion or at least intelligent supervision. As it stands, it is impossible to believe that it emanated from a child of ten quite free to follow out its inclinations. The dutifulness is altogether, or largely, due to the training and self-suppression of the royal child of an arbitrary father with absolute power. But it remains for each reader to consider it impartially. The points which we should do well to note here are its plain form of expression, and its entire absence of personal affection. The latter is all the more marked in that it was a letter of thanks for a kindness conferred. Elizabeth was very anxious to come to her father, and Catherine had furthered her wish and secured its fulfilment. After the marriage, the child, as is shown (or rather inferred), had been sent away for more than a year, which absence had been prolonged for at least six months—as already shown.

There is little evidence of Elizabeth's inner nature in these early days; but we have every right to315 think that she was of a peaceable, kindly and affectionate nature. Lady Bryan her first nurse or governess (after Lady Boleyn, Anne's mother) thought highly of her. Catherine Ashley, who had charge of her next, loved her and was her devoted servant, friend and confidant till her death.

Thomas Parry her life-long friend was devoted to her, and when the circumstances of their respective lives and the happenings of the time kept them apart, she restored him at the first opportunity and made his fortune her special care.

There is little base here on which to build an inverted pyramid; our only safety is in taking things as they seem to be and using common sense.

(b) Changes

Let us now take the years beginning with 1544. From this time on, more is known of the personality of Elizabeth; in fact there is little unknown, that is, of matters of fact, and to this only we must devote ourselves. Whatever may have been Elizabeth's motives we can only infer them. She was a secretive person and took few into her confidence, unless it was of vital necessity—and then only in matters required by the circumstance. The earliest knowledge we have of this second period of her history is in her letter to Queen Catherine (Parr) written from St. James' Palace on 31 July, 1544.

In the year which had elapsed since her last recorded316 letter Elizabeth's literary style had entirely changed. The meagre grudging style has become elegant and even florid with the ornate grace and imagery afforded by the study of the Latin and French tongues. Altogether there is not merely a more accomplished diction but there is behind it a truer feeling and larger sympathy. It is more in accord with the letter accompanying the gift to the Queen, of her translation of the *Mirror of the Sinful Soul* which she had dedicated to her.

Historians have given various rescripts of certain earlier letters of the Princess Elizabeth, but none of them seem in harmony of thought with this, whereas it is quite in accord with her later writings. Metabolism is an accepted doctrine of physiology; but its scope is not—as yet at all events—extended to the intellect, and we must take things as we find them within the limits of human knowledge.

It will perhaps be as well to reserve the consideration of any other point, except the change in actual identity, till the complete analogy of all natural processes is an established fact.

(*c*) *Her personality*

We have no letters of Princess Elizabeth before 1543 which are not open to grave doubt as to date, but there is one letter to which allusion must almost of necessity be made. It is a letter from Roger Ascham, tutor to the Princess Elizabeth, to317 Mrs. Ashley. No date is given by Mr. Mumby, but he states in his text that it was written "during Grindal's term of office" as tutor to the Princess. Mumby quotes from the *Elizabeth* of Miss Strickland, who in turn quotes from Whittaker's *Richmondshire*. Now Grindal's term of office lasted from 1546 (probably the end of that year) till it was cut short by his death from the Plague in 1548, so that he could not have known his royal pupil *before* 1544. The text of the letter leads a careful reader to infer that it was written *after* that date. The important part of the letter is as follows:

"… the thanks you have deserved from that noble imp by your labour and wisdom now flourishing in all goodly godliness.… I wish her Grace (Elizabeth) to come to that end in

perfectness and likelihood of her wit and painlessness in her study, true trade of her teaching, which your diligent overseeing doth most constantly promise.... I wish all increase of virtue and honour to that my good lady, whose wit, good Mrs. Ashley, I beeseech you somewhat favour. Blunt edges be dull and dure much pain to little profit; the free edge is soon turned if it be not handled thereafter. If you pour much drink at once into a goblet, the most part will dash out and run over; if ye pour it softly you may fill it even to the top, and so her Grace, I doubt not, by little and little may be increased in learning, that at length greater cannot be required."

If this letter means anything at all—which in the case of such a man as Roger Ascham is not to be doubted—it means that Mrs. Ashley, then her318 governess, was cautioned not to press the little girl overmuch in her lessons. It is an acknowledgment of the teacher's zeal as well as affection, and in the flowery and involved style of the period and the man, illustrates the theory by pointing out the error of trying to fill a small vessel from a larger one by pouring too fast. She is not a backward child, he says in effect, but go slowly with her education, you cannot give full learning all at once.

Compare this letter with that of the same writer to John Sturmius, Rector of the Protestant University of Strasbourg, on the same subject in 1550:

"The Lady Elizabeth has accomplished her sixteenth year; and so much of solidity of understanding, such courtesy united with dignity, have never been observed at so early an age. She has the most ardent love of true religion and of the best kind of literature. The constitution of her mind is exempt from female weakness, and she is endued with a masculine power of application.

"No apprehension can be quicker than hers, no memory more retentive. French and Italian she speaks like English; Latin with fluency, propriety and judgment; she also spoke Greek with me, frequently, willingly, and understanding well. Nothing can be more elegant than her handwriting, whether in the Greek or Roman character. In music she is very skilful but does not greatly delight. With respect to personal decoration, she greatly prefers a simple elegance to show and splendour, so despising the outward adorning of plaiting the hair and of wearing of gold, that in the whole manner of her life she rather resembles Hippolyta than Phædra."

That such a scholar as Roger Ascham makes the simile is marked. Hippolyta was a Queen of the319 Amazons and Phædra was an almost preternaturally womanly woman, one with a tragic intensity of passion.

The Elizabeth whom we know from 1544 to 1603 certainly had brains enough to protect her neck. In 1549 Sir Robert Tyrwhitt wrote to the Protector Somerset, apropos

of the strenuous effort being made to gain from her some admission damaging to herself concerning Thomas Seymour's attempts to win her hand:

"She hath a very pretty wit and nothing is gotten out of her but by great policy."

In a letter from Simon Renard Ambassador to the Emperor Charles V dated London September 23, 1553, there is incidentally a statement regarding Elizabeth's character which it is wise to hold in mind when discussing this particular period of her history. Writing of Elizabeth's first attendance at Mass he said: "she, Mary, … entreated Madame Elizabeth to speak freely of all that was on her conscience, to which the Princess replied that she was resolved to declare publicly that in going to Mass as in all else that she had done, she had only obeyed the voice of her conscience; and that she had acted freely, without fear, deceit, or pretence. We have since been told, however, that the said Lady Elizabeth is very timid, and that while she was speaking with the Queen she trembled very much."

Compare with this the letter of 16th March, 1554320 to the Queen (Mary) written just as she was told to go to the Tower. In this letter which is beautifully written and with not a trace of agitation she protests her innocence of any plot. Her mental attitude was thoroughly borne out by a calm dignity of demeanour which is more in accord with male than female nature. In very fact Elizabeth appears all her life since 1544 to have been playing with great thoughtfulness and yet dexterity a diplomatic game—acting with histrionic subtlety a part which she had chosen advisedly.

A good idea of the personality of Elizabeth during the period beginning with 1544 may be had from a brief consideration of the risks which a person taking up such an imposture would run, first at the time of beginning the venture and then of sustaining the undertaken rôle. At the outset a boy of ten or eleven would not think of taking it seriously. At first he would look on it as a "lark" and carry out the idea with a serious energy only known in play-time. Later thought would give it a new charm in the shape of danger. This, while adding to his great zest, would sober him; thence on it would be a game—just such a game as a boy loves, perpetual struggle to get the best of someone else. To some natures wit against wit is a better strife than strength against strength, and if one were well equipped for such a fray the game would satisfy the ambition of his years. In any case when once such a game was entered on, the321 stake would be his own head—a consideration which must undoubtedly make for strenuous effort—even in boyhood.

The task which would have followed—which did follow if the Bisley story is true—would have been vastly greater. If the imposture escaped immediate detection—which is easily conceivable—a new kind of endeavour would have been necessary;

one demanding the utmost care and perpetual vigilance in addition to the personal qualities necessary for the carrying out of the scheme. Little help could be given to the young boy on whom rested the weight of what must have appeared to all concerned in it a stupendous undertaking. From the nature of the task, which was one which even the faintest breath of suspicion would have ruined, the little band, originally involved, could gain no assistance. Safety was only possible by the maintenance of the most rigid secrecy. All around them were enemies served by a host of zealous spies. If then the story be true, those who carried such an enterprising situation to lasting success, must have been no common persons. Let us suppose for a moment that the story was true. In such case the Boy of Bisley who acted the part of the Princess Elizabeth could have had only two assistants—assistants even if they were only passive. *Whatever* may have happened we know from history that both Mrs. Ashley and Thomas Parry were ingrainedly loyal to Elizabeth, as she was to them.322 For convenience we shall speak of the substitute of the Princess as though he were the Princess herself whom he appeared to be, and for whom he was accepted thenceforth. That the imposture—if there was one—succeeded is a self-evident fact; for almost sixty years there was no question raised by any person of either sex and of any political opinion. The statecraft of England, France, the Papacy, and the German Empire were either unsuspicious or in error—or both. It is reasonable to imagine that a person of strong character and active intelligence might have steered deftly between these variously opposing forces. It is conceivable that in the case of a few individuals there might have been stray fragmentary clouds of suspicion; though if there were any they must have come to those who were held to a consequent inactivity by other dominating causes. We shall have occasion presently to touch on this subject but in the meantime we must accept it that there was no opinion expressed by any one in such a way as necessarily to provoke action. Of course after a time even suspicion became an impossibility. Here was a young girl growing into womanhood whom all around her had known all her life—or what was equivalent—believed they had. It is only now after three centuries that we can consider who it was that formed the tally of those who knew the personality of Elizabeth during both periods of her youth, that up to 1543–4 and that which followed.323 Henry VIII manifestly not only had no doubt on the subject but no thought. If he had had he was just the man to have settled it at once. Anne Boleyn was dead, so was her predecessor in title. Anne of Cleves had accepted the annulment of her marriage—and a pension. Jane Seymour and Catherine Howard were both dead. Nearly all those who as nurses, governesses, or teachers, Lady Bryan, Richard Croke, William Grindal, Roger Ascham, who knew the first period were dead or had retired into other spheres. Those who remained knowing

well the individuality of the Princess and representing both periods were Mrs. Ashley, Thomas Parry and the Queen (later dowager) Catherine Parr.

We know already of the faithfulness of the two former, the man who was a clever as well as a faithful servant, and the woman, who having no children of her own, took to her heart the little child entrusted to her care and treated her with such affectionate staunchness—a staunchness which has caused more than one historian to suspect that there was some grave secret between them which linked their fortunes together.

As to Catherine Parr we are able to judge from her letters that she was fond of her step-daughter and was consistently kind to her. Those who choose to study the matter further can form an opinion of their own from certain recorded episodes which, given without any elucidating possibilities324 leave the historians in further doubt. Leti puts in his *Life*, under the date of 1543, "before her marriage to Henry, Catherine Parr had seen often Elizabeth and admired her." The Italian historian *may* have had some authority for the statement; but also it may have been taken from some statement made by Elizabeth in later years or by some person in her interest, to create a misleading belief. In any case let us accept the statement as a matter of fact. If so it may throw a light on another branch of this eternal and diverse mystery. Martin Hume and F. A. Mumby approaching the subject from different points confess themselves puzzled by Elizabeth's attitude to men. The former writes in his *Courtships of Queen Elizabeth*:

"No one can look at the best portraits of Elizabeth without recognising at a glance that she was not a sensual woman. The lean, austere face, the tight thin lips, the pointed delicate chin, the cold dull eyes, tell of a character the very opposite of lascivious."

Mr. Mumby writing about Mrs. Ashley's "Confession" and of the horse-play between Elizabeth and Lord Seymour (whom Queen Catherine had married immediately after the King's death) makes this remark:

"The most surprising thing about this behaviour is that the Queen should have encouraged it."

There is plenty of room for wonder, considering that Admiral Seymour had earlier wanted to marry325 Elizabeth. But Catherine was a clever woman, who had already had three husbands—Seymour was her fourth—and children. If any one would see through a boy's disguise as a girl she was the one. It is hard to imagine that Seymour's wife had not good cause for some form revenge on him of whom Hallam speaks of as a "dangerous and unprincipled man" and of whom Latimer said "he was a man farthest from the fear of God that ever I knew or heard of in England" as it was believed

at the time of her death that he had poisoned his wife, the Queen dowager, to make way for a marriage with Elizabeth, with whom according to common belief he was still in love, it would be only natural that a woman of her disposition and with her sense of humour, should revenge herself in a truly wifely way by using for the purpose, without betraying the secret, her private knowledge or belief of the quasi-princess's real sex. Such would afford an infinite gratification to an ill-used wife jealous of so vain a husband.

THE DUKE OF RICHMOND

We now come to the crux of the whole story—the touchstone of this strange eventful history. Could there have been such a boy as is told of; one answering to the many

conditions above shown to be vitally necessary for the carrying out of such a scheme of imposture. The answer to this question is distinctly in the affirmative; there *could* have been such a boy; had the Duke of Richmond been born fourteen or fifteen years earlier than he was,326 the difficulties of appearance, intellect, education, and other qualifications need not have presented themselves.

If the question to be asked is: "Was there such a boy?" the answer cannot be so readily given. In the meantime there are some considerations from the study of which—or through which—an answer may, later, be derived.

H. THE SOLUTION

The Duke of Richmond

The points which must be settled before we can solve the mystery of the *Bisley Boy* are:

(1) Was there such an episode regarding the early life of the Princess Elizabeth?

(2) Was there such a boy as was spoken of?

(3) How could such an imposture have been carried out, implying as it did—

(a) A likeness to the Princess so extraordinary as not to have created suspicion in the mind of anyone not already in the plot.

(b) An acquaintance with the circumstances of the life of the Princess sufficiently accurate to ward off incipient suspicion caused by any overlooking or neglect of necessary conditions.

(c) An amount of education and knowledge equal to that held by a child of ten to twelve years of age who had been taught by some of the most learned persons of the time.

327(d) A skill in classics and foreign tongues only known amongst high scholars and diplomatists.

(e) An ease of body and a courtliness of manner and bearing utterly foreign to any not bred in the higher circles of social life.

If there could be found a boy answering such conditions—one whose assistance could be had with facility and safety—then the solution is possible, even if not susceptible of the fullest proof. Following the lines of argument hitherto used in this book, let us first consider reasons why such an argument is tenable. I may then

perhaps be allowed to launch the theory which has come to me during this investigation.

(*a*) *His Birth and Appearance*

A part—and no small part—of the bitterness of Henry VIII in not having a son to succeed him was that, though he had a son, such could not by the existing law succeed him on the throne.

Nearly ten years after his marriage to Catherine of Aragon and after a son and other children had been born to them, all of whom had died shortly after birth, Henry had in the manner of mediæval kings—and others—entered on a love affair, the object of his illicit affection being one of the ladies-in-waiting to Queen Catherine, Elizabeth, daughter of John Blount of Knevet, Shropshire.

The story of this love affair is thus given in[328] quaint old English in *Grafton's Chronicle* first published in 1569 which covers the period from 1189 to 1558:

"You shall understande, the King in his freshe youth was in the cheynes of love with a faire damosell called Elizabeth Blunt, daughter of Syr John Blunt Knight, which damosell in synging, daunsing, and in all goodly pastimes, excelled all other, by the which goodly pastimes, she wanne the king's hart: and she againe shewed him such favour that by him she bare a goodly man childe, of beautie like to the father and mother. This child was well brought up lyke a Princes childe."

(*b*) *His Upbringing and Marriage*

This son of an unlawful union—born in 1519 it is said—was called Henry Fitzroy after the custom applicable in such cases to the natural children of kings. Naturally enough his royal father took the greatest interest in this child and did, whilst the latter lived, all in his power to further his interests. A mere list of the honours conferred on him during his short life will afford some clue to the King's intention of his further advancement, should occasion serve. The shower of favours began in 1525 when the child, as is said, was only six years of age. On the 18th of June of this year he was created Earl of Nottingham and Duke of Richmond and Somerset, with precedence over all dukes except those of the King's lawful issue. He was also made a Knight of the Garter—of which exalted Order he was raised to the Lieutenancy[329] eight years later. He was also nominated to other high offices: the King's Lieutenant General for districts north of the Trent; and Keeper of the city and fortress of Carlisle. To these posts were added those of Lord High Admiral of England, Wales, Ireland, Normandy, Gascony and Aquitaine; Warden General of the Marches of Scotland, and Receiver of Middleham and of Sheriff Hutton, Yorkshire. He was also given an income of four thousand

pounds sterling per annum. In 1529, being then only ten years of age, he was also made Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Constable of Dover Castle and Warden of the Cinque Ports—three of the most important offices of the Nation. A few months before his death in 1536 there was a general understanding that Henry VIII intended to make him King of Ireland and possibly to nominate him as his successor on the throne of England. That some such intention was in Henry's mind was shown by the Succession Act passed just before the close of the Parliament which was dissolved in 1536. In this Act it is fixed that the Crown is to devolve on the King's death to the son of Jane Seymour and in default of issue by him, on Mary and Elizabeth in succession in case of lack of issue by the former. In the event of their both dying before the King and without issue he is to appoint by will his successor on the throne.

The various important posts conferred on the young Duke of Richmond were evidently preparations330 for the highest post of all, which in default of legitimate issue of his own legitimate children he intended to confer on him.

The education which was given to the little Duke is of especial interest and ought in the present connection to be carefully studied. It was under the care of Richard Croke, celebrated for his scholarship; who in the modern branch was assisted by John Palsgrave the author of the earliest English grammar of the French language "*Lesclarcissement de la langue Francoyse*." In spite of the opposition of his household the Duke of Richmond devoted his young life to study rather than to arms. Whilst still a young boy he had already read a part of *Cæsar*, *Virgil* and *Terence*, knew a little Greek, and was fairly skilful in music—singing and playing on the virginals. There was much talk in Court circles as to whom he should marry and many ladies of high degree were named. One was a niece of Pope Clement VII; another was a Danish princess; still another a princess of France; also a daughter of Eleanor, dowager Queen of Portugal, a sister of Charles V. This lady was afterwards Queen of France.

Early in 1532 the Duke resided for a while at Hatfield. Then he went to Paris with his friend the Earl of Surrey, son of the Duke of Norfolk. There he remained till September, 1533. On his return to England he married by special dispensation, on 25 November, 1533, Mary Howard, daughter331 of the Duke of Norfolk by his second marriage and sister of Surrey. Incidentally he is said to have been present at the beheading of Queen Anne (Boleyn), May 19, 1536. He did not long survive the last-named exhibition, for some two months later—22 July, 1536, he died. There was at the time a suspicion that he had been poisoned by Lord Rochford, brother of Queen Anne (Boleyn).

Henry Duke of Richmond and Somerset had no legal issue. As a matter of fact though he was married in 1533, nearly three years before his death, he never lived with his

wife. It was said that he was not only young for matrimony, being only seventeen; but was in very bad health. It was intended that after his marriage he should go to Ireland; but on account of the state of his health that journey was postponed—as it turned out, for ever.

A light on this ill-starred marriage is thrown in the quaint words of another chronicler of the time, Charles Wriothesley, who wrote of the time between 1485 and 1559.

“But the said younge duke had never layne by his wife, and so she is maide, wife, and now a widowe; I praie God send her now good fortune.”

In this summarised history certain points are to be noticed:

(1) The Duke of Richmond was like his father (Henry VIII) and his mother who was “fayre.”

(2) A Dispensation was obtained for his marriage332 to Lady Mary Howard which took place in 1533 but with whom he never cohabited.

There is a side-light here of the hereditary aspect of the case. Both the Duke and Duchess of Richmond were “fayre,” and in the language of the old chroniclers “fayre” means blonde. Wintown for instance speaking of Macbeth’s supposed descent from the Devil says:

“Gottyne he was on ferly wys“Hys Modyr to woddis mad oft repayre“For the delyte of halesum ayre.“Swa, scho past a-pon a day“Tyl a Wod, hyr for to play:“Scho met at cas with a fayr man.”

And Grafton thus speaks under date 7 September 1533 of Elizabeth’s birth: “The Queen was delivered of a fayre Lady.”

Now Anne Boleyn is described as small and lively, a brunette with black hair and beautiful eyes, and yet her daughter is given as red-haired by all the painters.

It is somewhat difficult to make out the true colours of persons. For instance Giovanni Michiel writing to the Venetian Senate in 1557 puts in his description of Elizabeth “She is tall and well formed, with a good skin, although swarthy” but in the same page he says “she prides herself on her father and glories in him; everybody is saying that she also resembles him more than the Queen [Mary] does.” As to the introduction of the333 word “swarthy” as above; it may have been one of the tricks of Elizabeth to keep the Venetian ambassador from knowing too much or getting any ground for guessing. If so it looks rather like Elizabeth concealing her real identity—which would

be an argument in favour of an imposture; if she was the real princess there would be no need for concealment.

It is only common sense to expect, if the paternal element was so strong in Henry as to reproduce in offspring his own colour, that had the Duke of Richmond had any issue especially by a fair wife it too would have inherited something of the family colour. Holbein's picture of the "Lady of Richmond," as the Duke's wife was called, shows her as a fair woman.

These are two points to be here borne in mind; that Henry VIII was probably bald, for in none of his pictures is any hair visible. It would hardly be polite to infer that Elizabeth wore a wig for the same reason. But it is recorded that she always travelled with a stock of them—no less than eighty of various colours.

But there are other indications of such concealment. Why for instance did she object to see doctors? So long as she was free and could control them she did not mind; but whilst she was under duress they were a source of danger. Perhaps it is this which accounts for her taking the Sacrament on 26 August, 1554 when she was practically334 a prisoner at Woodstock in the keeping of Sir Henry Bedingfield. About the third week in June the Princess asked Sir Henry to be allowed to have a doctor sent to her. He in turn applied to the Council who made answer on the 25th that the Queen's Oxford physician was ill and Mr. Wendy was absent and the remaining one, Mr. Owen, could not be spared. The latter however recommended two Oxford doctors, Barnes and Walbec, in case she should care to see either of them. On July 4th Sir Henry reported to the Council that Elizabeth in politely declining said: "I am not minded to make any stranger privy to the state of my body, but commit it to God." Then, when through her submission to the Queen's religious convictions she had obtained her liberty, she took no more concern in the matter.

The Duchess of Richmond

Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, married twice. His second wife was the lady Elizabeth Stafford, eldest daughter of the Duke of Buckingham, and he had issue by both marriages. In 1533 the only surviving daughter of the second marriage was Mary, who was thus the Lady Mary Howard, sister of the Earl of Surrey. It was this lady with whom the uncompleted marriage of the Duke of Richmond took place. Doubtless they were early friends. In her youth she used to spend the summer at Tendring Hall, Suffolk, and the winter335 at Hunsdon, Hertfordshire, where was one of Henry's palaces; in addition Henry was one of the closest companions of her brother, the Earl of Surrey. Lady Richmond's part in the historical episode before us is hardly direct. It only comes in through two circumstances not unattended with mystery. It is not

necessary that the two were correlated; but no student can get away from the idea that there was some connection between them, especially when there is another inference bearing on the subject with reference to the second marriage of the Duchess. This took place after an interval of some years to Gilbert, son of Sir George Talboys of Goloths, Lincolnshire. The name of the second husband is variously spelled in the chronicles as Tailboise or Talebuse. She died in the year before Elizabeth came to the throne. The two things to examine closely with regard to this marriage to the Duke of Richmond were the Dispensation for the marriage (together with the date of it), and its non-fulfilment. The Dispensation was dated 28 November, 1533, but the marriage took place three days earlier. Whether this discrepancy had anything to do with her later marriage to Talboys we can only guess—unless of course more exhaustive search can produce some document, unknown as yet, which may throw light on the subject. It is a matter of no light mystery why a Dispensation was obtained at such a time and by whom it was effected. At this time Henry336 VIII was engaged in the bitterest struggle of his life, that regarding the supremacy of the Pope, so that it was a direct violation of his policy to have asked for, or even to recognise such a Dispensation in the case of his own son whom he intended to succeed him as King. Before a year had passed he had actually thrown over the Papal authority altogether, and had taken into his own hands the headship of the National Church. What then was behind such a maladroit action? If it had been done as a piece of statecraft—the ostensible showing that there was as yet no direct rupture between the British Nation and the Papacy—it would have lost its efficacy if it might be cited as a Court favour rather than a national right. Moreover, as it was to sanction by then existing canonical law a marriage of Henry's son with a daughter of the head of the most powerful Catholic House in England, it could not be expected that Rome would not use this in its strife for the continuation of its supremacy. If Henry was directly concerned in the matter, it was bad policy and unlike him to conciliate Catholicism by a yielding on the part of one who would be in the future the Head of the Reformed Church. Altogether it leaves one under the impression that there must have been a more personal cause than any yet spoken of. Something to be covered up, or from which suspicion should be averted. There was already quite enough material for a controversy in case Henry Fitzroy337 should come to the throne and it might be well to minimise any further risk. But in such case what was there to be covered up or from which suspicion should be averted? Already Richmond held under his father all the threads of government in his own hand. If he ever should need to tighten them it would be done by himself as ruler. There must still be some reason which must be kept secret and of which Henry himself did not and must not know. Beyond this again was the question of the personal ambition of "Bluff King Hal." It was not sufficient for him that a barren heir

should succeed him—even if that heir was his own son. He wanted to found a dynasty, and if he suspected for an instant that after all his plotting and striving—all his titanic efforts to overcome such obstacles as nations and religions—his hopes might fail through lack of issue on his son's part he would cease to waste his time and efforts on his behalf. It is almost impossible to imagine that the Duke of Richmond had not had *some* love affairs—if indeed he was only seventeen (of which there is a doubt)—it must be borne in mind that both the Lancastrians and the Yorkists who united in the Tudor stock matured early. On both his father's and mother's side Henry Fitzroy was of a pleasure-loving, voluptuous nature, and as the masculine element predominated in his make-up there is not any great stretch of imagination required to be satisfied that there was some young likeness of him[338] toddling or running about. But in a case like his masculine mis-doing does not count; it is only where a woman's credit is at stake that secrecy is a vital necessity. We must therefore look to the female side to find a cause for any mystery which there may be. So far as a boy of the right age is concerned with a decided likeness to Henry VIII it would not have required much searching about to lay hands on a suitable one.

The Lady of Richmond.

THE DUCHESS OF RICHMOND

But here a new trouble would begin. It would be beyond nature to expect that any mother would consent, especially at a moment's notice, to her child running such a risk as the substitute of the dead Princess Elizabeth was taking, without some kind of assurance or guarantee of his safety. Moreover, if there were other relatives, they would be sure to know, and some of them to make trouble unless their mouths were closed. Practically the only chance of carrying such an enterprise through would be if the substitute were an orphan or in a worse position—one whose very life was an embarrassment to those to whom it should be most dear.

Here opens a field for romantic speculation. Such need not clash with history which is a record of fact. Call it romance if we will; indeed until we have more perfect records we must. If invention is to be called in to the aid of deduction no one can complain if these two methods of exercise of intellect are kept apart and the boundaries between them are duly charted. Any speculation beyond339 this can be only regarded as belonging to the region of pure fiction.

In one way there is a duty which the reader must not shirk, if only on his own account: not to refuse to accept facts without due consideration. Wildly improbable as the Bisley story is, it is not impossible. Whoever says, offhand, that such a story is untrue on the face of it ought to study the account of a death reported at Colchester in Essex just a hundred years ago. A servant died who had been in the same situation as housemaid and nurse for thirty years. But only after death was the true sex of the apparent woman discovered. It was masculine!

* * * * *

Here I must remind such readers as honour my work with their attention that I am venturing merely to tell a tradition sanctioned by long time, and that I only give as comments historical facts which may be tested by any student. I have invented and shall invent nothing; and only claim the same right which I have in common with every one else—that of forming my own opinion.

Here it is that we may consider certain additions to the original Bisley tradition. How these are connected with the main story is impossible to say after the lapse of centuries; but in all probability there is a basis of ancient belief in all that has been added. The following items cover the additional ground.

340When the governess wished to hide the secret hurriedly, she hid the body, intending it to be only temporarily, in the stone coffin which lay in the garden at Overcourt outside the Princess's window.

Some tens of years ago the bones of a young girl lying amidst rags of fine clothing were found in the stone coffin.

The finder was a churchman—a man of the highest character and a member of a celebrated ecclesiastical family.

The said finder firmly believed in the story of the Bisley Boy.

Before Elizabeth came to the throne all those who knew the secret of the substitution were in some way got rid of or their silence assured.

The name of the substituted youth was Neville; or such was the name of the family with whom he was living at the time.

There are several persons in the neighbourhood of Bisley who accept the general truth of the story even if some of the minor details appear at first glance to be inharmonious. These persons are not of the ordinary class of gossipers, but men and women of light and leading who have fixed places in the great world and in the social life of their own neighbourhood. With some of them the truth of the story is an old belief which makes a tie with any new investigator.

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The Unfulfilled Marriage

The remaining point to touch on is the unfulfilled marriage of the Duke of Richmond. This certainly needs some explanation, or else the mystery remains dark as ever.

Here we have two young persons of more than fair presence, and graced with all the endearing qualities that the mind as well as the eye can grasp. We have the assurance of Chronicles regarding Henry Fitzroy; and from Holbein's picture we can judge for ourselves of the lady's merits. They are both well-to-do. The lady, one of title, daughter of one of the most prominent Dukes in England, the man then holding many of the most important posts in the State, and with every expectation of wearing in due course the purple of royalty. They both come of families of which other members have been notorious for amatory episodes; voluptuousness is in their blood. They have been old friends—and yet when they marry they at once separate, she going to her own folk and he to Windsor. Seemingly they do not meet again in the two and a half years that elapse before his death. The story about his youth and health preventing cohabitation is all moonshine. The affair points to the likelihood of some ante-matrimonial liaison of which, as yet, we know nothing. Applying the experiences of ordinary life in such cases, we can easily believe that Mary Howard, egged on by her342 unscrupulous and ambitiously-intriguing brother, was for ulterior purposes either forced or helped into an intrigue with the young Duke. There is no doubt that Surrey was unscrupulous enough for it. A similar design on his part—only infinitely more base—cost him his head. He had tried to induce his sister, Duchess of Richmond, to become mistress of Henry VIII—her own father-in-law!—so that she might have power over him; and it does not seem that there was any wonderful indignation on the part of the lady at the shameful proposal.

We are told that when Sir John Gates and Sir Richard Southwell, the royal Commissioners for examining witnesses in the case of the charge of treason against

the Duke of Norfolk and the Earl of Surrey, arrived at Kenninghall in the early morning and made known their general purposes in coming, the Duchess of Richmond "almost fainted." But all the same when she knew more exactly what they wanted she promised without any forcing to tell all she knew. As a matter of fact her evidence (with that of Elizabeth Holland, the mistress of the Duke of Norfolk), whilst it helped to get Norfolk off, aided in condemning Surrey. There must have been some other cause for her consternation. She had been bred up in the midst of intrigues, polemical and dynastic as well as of personal ambition, and was well inured to keeping her countenance as well as her head in moments of stress. The cause of343 her "almost fainting" must have been something which concerned her even more nearly than either father or brother. It could only have been fear for her child or herself—or for both. It is possible that she dreaded discovery of some sort. *Omne ignotum pro magnifico.* Suspicion has long flexible tentacula, with eyes and ears at the end of them, which can penetrate everywhere and see and hear everything. She knew how to dread suspicion and to fear the consequences which must result from inquiry or investigation of any sort. If she had had a child it must have been kept hidden, and if possible far away—as the unknown Boy was at Bisley. Indeed the Howards had immense family ramifications and several of them had collateral relationships in and about Bisley. There were Nevilles there, and doubtless some of them were poor relations relegated to the far away place where living was cheap and where they might augment their tenuous incomes by taking in even poorer relations than themselves whose rich relatives wished to hide them away. It is only a surmise; but if there had been a case of a child unaccounted for, which any member of so great a family as the Howards wished to keep dark, it would be hard to find a more favourable locality than the little almost inaccessible hamlet in the Cotswolds. If there were such a child, how easy it would all have been. When the Duke was married he was fourteen or perhaps sixteen at most—an age which344 though over-young for fatherhood in the case of ordinary men seemed to offer to the Plantagenet-York-Lancaster blood no absolute difficulty of taking up such responsibility. As Elizabeth was only born some two months before the Duke's marriage there was not any time to spare—a fact which would doubtless have been used to his advantage if Henry's natural son had lived. In all probability Richmond's marriage was a part of the plot for aggrandisement of the Howards which began with the unscrupulous securing by Surrey of the son of Henry VIII at the cost of his sister's honour; and ended with the death of Surrey as a traitor—a doom which his father only escaped by the King dying whilst the Act of Attainder was lying ready for his signature. If this reasoning be correct—though the data on which it is founded be meagre and without actual proof—as yet—the risk of Duchess Mary's child born before her marriage must have been a terrible hazard. On one side perhaps

the most powerful sceptre in the world as guerdon; on the other death and ruin of the child on which such hopes were built. No wonder then that Duchess Mary “almost fainted” when in the early dawn the King’s Commissioners conveyed to her the broad object of their coming. No wonder that freed by larger knowledge from the worst apprehension which could be for her, she announced her willingness to conceal nothing that she knew. That promise could not and345 would not have been made had the whole range of possibilities, which as yet no one suspected, been opened to their investigation. For even beyond the concern which she felt from the arbitrary power of the King and at the remorseless grip of the law, she had reason to doubt her own kin—the nearest of them—in such a struggle as was going on around them when the whole of the Empire, the Kingdom of England, France and Spain, and the Papacy were close to the melting-pot. It would have been but a poor look-out for a youth of a little more than a dozen years of age had fate made him the shuttlecock of such strenuous players who did not hold “fair play” as a primary rule of the game in which they were engaged.

In his *Life of Elizabeth*, Gregario Leti concludes a panegyric on the Queen’s beauty with the following: “This was accompanied by such inward qualities that those who knew her were accustomed to say that heaven had given her such rare qualities that she was doubtless reserved for some great work in the world.” The Italian historian perhaps “builded better than he knew,” for whether the phrase applies to the one who is supposed to have occupied the throne or one who did so occupy it, it is equally true. The world at that crisis wanted just such an one as Elizabeth. All honour to her whosoever she may have been, boy or girl matters not.

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Transcriber’s Notes

Punctuation, hyphenation, and spelling were made consistent when a predominant preference was found in this book; otherwise they were not changed.

Simple typographical errors were corrected; occasional unbalanced quotation marks retained.

Index not checked for proper alphabetization or correct page references.

Hemi-titles that duplicate the immediately-following chapter title have been deleted from this eBook.

Page 3: “villany” was printed that way.

Page 43: “romancists” was printed that way; may be a misprint for “romanticists”.

Page 78: “are current Paracelsus” was printed that way; perhaps a question mark should have been used after “current”.

Page 284: Paragraph beginning “Elizabeth was as loyal to Parry” contains unbalanced quotation marks.

Page 325: “some form revenge on” was printed that way; seems to be missing an “of”.