

“PEG PENNYWORTH”

Margaret Wharton, an unmarried lady of great wealth and ancient family, was one of the Yorkshire oddities of last century.

She belonged to the family of the Whartons of Skelton Castle, in Cleveland, and possessed a fortune of £200,000, of which, with rare liberality, she made her nephew a present of £100,000. Her charities were liberal, but always private, and if she heard that a recipient of her bounty had disclosed the good deed, that person never received another penny from her.

She was a short, stout lady, dressed fashionably, had an aristocratic air, and liked to be respected as rich and of good family.

For some time she resided at York, and visited Scarborough in the season, where she was well known on account of her eccentricities. She used to send for “a pennyworth of strawberries” or “a pennyworth of cream” at a time, and pay down her penny, as she had an aversion to tradesmen’s bills. From this she obtained the name of “Peg Pennyworth”, which stuck to her through life. An incident occurred at Scarborough in which she displayed her dislike to public charities. She was solicited by some gentlemen to give a subscription to a charity on behalf of which they were making a collection. Peg pulled out her purse with an ominous frown, and turned out its contents into her palm. This was in or about 1774, when light guineas were in disgrace. She deliberately selected from among the coins the lightest guinea she could find, and handed it to the gentlemen.

The celebrated Foote is said to have drawn her character in a farce. When informed of this she exclaimed, with a smile, “I will see it acted, as I live.” She did, and expressed her satisfaction that the character in the play did her justice.

She frequently catered for herself, making her own purchases, and taking them home in her carriage. Once, having purchased some eels, she put them in her pocket, entered her coach, and called on a lady friend and invited her to come out with her for an airing.

The warmth of Peg’s pocket revived the seemingly dead eels, and they began to wriggle out to enjoy a little fresh air. The lady who was sitting beside Peg, happening to look down, saw what she thought was a serpent writhing into her lap, and several hideous heads breaking out of the side of Mistress Margaret Wharton. She uttered an awful shriek, bounded to her feet, pulled the checkstring, and cried “Madam! madam! you are swarming with adders! Coachman, stop! Let me out! let me out!”

Mistress Wharton coolly looked at the eels, now escaping rapidly from her pocket, gathered them up, and shoved them into her reticule, saying, “I protest, madam, it is only my eels come to life. Sit you down again, and don’t be frightened.”

One day at Scarborough she had ordered a large meat pie to be baked for dinner. It was a very large one — to serve for herself, some visitors, and all the servants. When it was made she ordered the footman to take it to the bakehouse, but he declined, saying that it was not his place, neither did it comport with his dignity, to be seen in Scarborough stalking through the streets in plush and tags, bearing a huge meat pie.

Mistress Margaret then ordered the coachman to take it, but he declined. “Bring out the carriage, then!” said Peg Pennyworth. The horses were harnessed; the coachman put on his powdered wig and mounted the box; the footman took his place behind; and Mistress Margaret Wharton, bearing the meat-pie, sat in state in the carriage. “Drive to the bakehouse.”

So the coachman whipped his horses, and the meat pie was carried thus to the baker’s. An hour or two later the carriage was ordered out again, the coachman remounted the box, the footman took his stand behind, and the lady drove to the bakehouse to fetch her pie, which she carried back thus to her house. “Now,” said she to the coachman, “you have kept your place, which is to drive; and you,” turning to the footman, “have kept yours, which is to wait; and now we shall all have some of the pie.”

Mistress Wharton had a visiting acquaintance with a lady, a clergyman’s wife, in York. On the death of her husband, the widow retired with her four daughters to Thirsk, and she invited Peg Pennyworth to visit her.

To her dismay, one day up drove Mistress Wharton in her carriage, with coachman, footman, and lady’s maid. The widow, whose means were not very ample, endured having all these people quartered on her for a month, but at the expiration of that time she was obliged to hint to the nephew of her guest that “the pressure on her means was rather greater than she could bear.”

“Let my aunt have her way” said Mr. Wharton. “I will pay you two hundred a year during her life, and one hundred during your own, should you survive her.”

Mistress Margaret Wharton never left the house of the widow, but died there after some years, in the one hundred and third year of her age, in 1791. The annuity was regularly paid to the widow lady to the day of her death.

PETER BARKER, THE BLIND JOINER OF HAMPSWAITE

Peter Barker was born on July 10th, 1808. At the age of four he was deprived of sight by an inflammation of the eyes, and ever afterwards he was—

“dark, amid the blaze of noon,  
Irrevocably dark; total eclipse,  
Without all hope of day.”

The loss of his sight caused Peter from an early age to cultivate music, and he became a skilful performer on the violin; and as he grew up to manhood he frequented the village feasts, dances, and merrymakings all round the country, as a performer on that instrument. This led him into habits of intemperance. But he had a strong will, a tender conscience, and seeing that he was sinking in his own respect and in that of others, he determined to abandon his musical profession.

But he must earn his livelihood; and he determined to become a joiner. He fell to work to make a chair, succeeded in the first attempt, and for the rest of his life followed carpentering as his profession. He handled his tools with all the dexterity of a practised workman; his shop was always in order, the tools in their proper position in the rack, or in his hands. The only peculiarity about his instruments was in the foot rule he used for making his measurements, the lines on which were marked by small pins, of different numbers, to indicate the different feet on the rule. The idea of having his rule thus marked was suggested by a lady who interested herself in his welfare. She wrote to a manufacturer of carpenters' rules in London, to inquire if such a thing could be had as a rule with raised lines and figures; the answer was that no such rules were made. Failing to procure an article of this kind, she suggested the making of the measurements on it with pins; and this was carried into effect.

The articles made by this blind workman were firm and substantial, the joints even and close, and the polish smooth. It is said that a cabinetmaker at Leeds, having heard reports of the blind joiner's skill, procured a chair he had made, and showed it to the workmen in his shop, asking them their opinion of the chair. After examining it, they said that they thought there was nothing particular about the chair, only it was a thoroughly well made, serviceable one. “So it is,” said the master; “but — will you believe it? — the man who made it never saw it: he was blind from a child.” Their indifference was at once turned into amazement.

The writer of a memoir of Peter Barker says: —

“We have frequently seen him at work, and were it not from the more frequent handling of the articles operated on, and the nearness of his fingers to the edge of the chisel or saw, there was nothing apparently to distinguish his manner

from that of an ordinary workman. In 1868 we found him at work in the church, repairing the seats, and watched him for some time before he was conscious of the presence of any one. He showed us what he had done — lowered the fronts of both the pulpit and reading desk, the one twenty inches, the other a foot: brought forward a pew some three feet, and refronted it with panels of old carved oak, which he asserted was very difficult to work over again; showed us a piece of carving which he, in conjunction with the churchwarden, had only discovered the day before, and which was upwards of 200 years old; led the way into the belfry, giving a word of advice to be careful in ascending the old rickety stairs; showed the clock, which he had under his care to keep clean and in going order. At this point, while seated on a bench, he gave us a narrative of his first acquaintance with the clock, which we give in his own words as nearly as we can remember: — ‘You see, our clock is yan o’ these and fashion’d handmade ’uns, not made exact and true by machinery as they are now, but ivvery wheel cut an’ filed by hand. Aud Snow, a notified clock-makker ’at lived up aboon abit here, had the managing of her a lang time, at so much a year. He used to come just at t’ time when his year was up, give t’ aud clock a fether full o’ oil, tak his brass, and there was no mair on him till t’ next year. At last she gat as she wadn’t gang at all; she wad naither turn pointers nor strike. T’ foaks i’ t’ toon were sadly dissatisfied; they neither knew when to get up nor gang to bed, as they had done afore, when t’ clock was all reet. T’ church-maister sent for t’ clock-maker, and he come an’ come ageean, an’ fizzled an’ faff’d aboot her, but nivver did her a farthing’s worth o’ good. At last he was forced to give her up as a bad job; she was fairly worn out, an’ she wad nivver be no better till she was mended with a new un; and that’s aboon twenty year sin, an’ t’ aud clock’s here yet. Then Johnny Gill, another clever fellow, took her under hands, and she lick’d him as fairly as she’d deean aud Snow. I was i’ t’ church by mysel one day, I hardly know what aboot, when it com’ into my heead ’at I would try my hand at her; I nivver had deean nowt o’ t’ sort; but if ye nivver try, ye nivver can dea (do) nowt. So t’ first thing I did was to give her a reet good feelin’ all ower her; an’ then, heving settled all her parts fairly i’ my mind, I fell to work and took her to pieces, bit by bit, got all t’ works out of her, and cleaned her all ower reet soundly, particularly t’ pivots, and then gav ’em all a sup o’ nice oil; then I put her together ageean; efter a few trials I got her all reet, got her started — she strake an’ kept time like a good un. Efter I finish’d I com’ doon, an’ into th’ church garth, and wha did I meet there but Mr. Shann, our vicar at that time, and just as I was meeting him t’ clock strake ageean. ‘What’s that, Peter?’ he says. I says, ‘It’s t’ clock, sir!’ He says ageean ‘What does this mean, Peter?’ I says ‘It meean t’ time o’ day when t’ clock strikes.’ He began o’ laughing, and said ‘You’re a queer fellow, Peter. I mean who made the clock strike?’ ‘Oh,’ I says, ‘I’ve deean that mysel, sir. I’ve been at her a goodish bit today, an’ I think I’ve gotten her put all reet at last.’ ‘Well done, Peter, you’re a clever fellow’ he says. ‘But you sha’n’t do all this for nothing. I shall let the churchwardens know what you have done. You must have some reward.’ ‘Varry weel, sir’ I says, and so we parted. And he was as good as his word. When t’ churchmaisters met, he tell’d ’em all aboot it, and they allowed me four shillings for my job; and I was to have ten shillings a year for keeping her ganning ivvery year efter.’ ”

In the month of July, 1865, the clock did not strike correctly. As Peter told the tale himself: — “I was i’ t’ shop when I heard her at it, two or three times. I stood it as lang as I could; at last I banged down my teeals (tools), and says to mysel’ ‘I’ll mak thee either strake reet, or I’ll mak thee as that thou’ll nivver strike ageean.’ Away I went, spent an hour over her, gat her reet, and she’s kept reet ever sin’.”

His biographer says: — “Once on a visit to Peter’s cottage, we found a window had been recently inserted, according to his statement, to make the fireside more lightsome — Peter having been mason, joiner, and glazier himself. In short, he appeared to be able to do any kind of work that he had the desire or the will to do. He was an expert in the art of netting — fabricating articles in that line from the common cabbage net to the curtains which adorn the windows of the stately drawing-room. As a vocalist he sang bass in the church on Sundays. He was also one of the bellringers; and during the winter months the curfew bell is rung at Hampswaite at eight o’clock every evening. When it was Peter’s turn to ring he took a lighted lanthorn with him — not for the purpose of seeing others, but that others might see him.

“He always fattened a pig in the winter season, and had a method of measurement of his own for ascertaining how much weight the pig had gained every week; and to such measurement and calculation the pig was weekly subjected until he attained the proper bulk and weight. Peter generally bought his pig himself, and for that purpose attended the market at Knaresborough, where the bargain was cause of much amusement to the onlookers. When the pig was pointed out which was thought likely, the seller had to seize the same, and hold it still as possible, until Peter had felt it over and ascertained its *points*, and passed his judgment on its feeding qualities.”

Peter learned to read with his fingers in 1853, and was given a New Testament with embossed letters.

He was very fond of children, and would play tunes to them on his fiddle at his shop door of a summer evening, whilst they danced and sang. He had made this fiddle himself, as well as the case in which he kept it.

So delicate was Peter’s touch that he was able to tell the hour on a watch by opening the case and running his fingers lightly over the face.

Peter in his youth had a romantic courtship, and married a wife. She presented him with a son, born in 1846; and died on June 3rd, 1862. The boy, who was his father’s constant companion and delight, died the following year, on Jan. 19th, 1863, leaving the poor blind joiner’s house completely desolate.

After a few weeks’ illness, Peter died in his cottage, near the churchyard gate, on February 18th, 1873, at the age of sixty five.

## THE WHITE HOUSE

On the road between Raskelfe and Easingwold stood in 1623, and stands still, a lonely inn called "The White House."

The wide, brown, heathery moor called Pill Moor then extended to the roots of the Hambledon hills; on a slight rising ground above the marshes stood here and there a farm or cottage; and here and there a portion of the soil had been enclosed. To this day a large portion of the moor remains untilled, and is a favourite resort of botanists, who find there several varieties of gentian and orchis, rare elsewhere. Originally it stretched from Borough Bridge to the Hambledons, intersected by the streams flowing into the Ouse, patched here and there with pools of water.

In the White House lived a man called Ralph Raynard, and his sister. Ralph paid his addresses to a fine-looking young woman, dark eyed, dark haired, who lived at Thornton Bridge, at the Red House, where the road from Brafferton or Tollerton crossed the Ouse to Topcliffe and Ripon. The old house, lonely, surrounded by trees, with traces of a moat or pond, in spring full of yellow flags, stands to this day, almost deserted. The girl was poor, and a good match was of the first advantage to her; she was at the time in service at the Red House, and thither Ralph came to visit her.

But, for some cause unknown, they quarrelled, an estrangement ensued, and Ralph came no more across Thornton Bridge.

At the same time a yeoman named Fletcher, living at Moor House, in the parish of Raskelfe, had cast his eyes on the comely young woman, and he took advantage of the rupture between the lovers to step in and offer his hand to the damsel. He was at once accepted, in a fit of resentment against Ralph Raynard, and the marriage rapidly followed; so that she soon found herself the wife of a man whom she did not love, and some miles nearer the White House, where lived Ralph, whom she did love, than when she had resided at Thornton Bridge.

The resentment she had felt died away; an explanation followed when too late. There was a scene — despair on both sides, and resentment entertained by both Ralph Raynard and Mrs. Fletcher against the unfortunate yeoman who stood between them and perfect union and happiness.

On market day, when Mrs. Fletcher ambled on her nag into Easingwold, she invariably halted at the White House, when the hostler, one Mark Dunn, a beetle-browed, uncouth fellow from Huby, received and held her horse as she dismounted and entered the inn. Ralph, the host, was always there, and received Mrs. Fletcher with an affection which dissatisfied his sister, a woman of sense, who saw that this cherishing of an old passion could lead to no good. When Mark Dunn disappeared for hours at a time, she shrewdly suspected that he was sent on messages to Raskelfe.

More than once she interfered and rebuked Ralph, her brother, warning him of the dangerous consequences of thus encouraging the attachment of a woman now bound to another man by the most sacred ties. With an oath he bade her mind her own business, and not interfere with him.

Fletcher could not but be aware that his wife did not love him; whispers reached him that she met her old sweetheart when he was from home; that her nag was seen standing an unreasonable time outside the door of the White House. He caught Mark Dunn one evening prowling in his orchard, and he fell on him with a stick. The ungainly fellow howled with pain, and swore revenge.

Fletcher became gloomy, neglected his affairs, and began to fall into difficulties. He had been sincerely, passionately attached to the dark eyed, handsome girl he had brought to his home. He had done his utmost to render her happy, and now she was making his home miserable, destroying the former serenity of his spirits.

He was obliged to go one day on business to Easingwold. He would not return till late. His wife knew it. Something troubled his mind. A presentiment of evil which he could not shake off hung over him, and he wrote on a sheet of paper —

“If I should be missing, or suddenly wanted be,  
Mark Ralph Raynard, Mark Dunn, and mark my wife for me,”

directed it to his sister, and on reaching Easingwold, posted it.

No sooner was he gone than Mrs. Fletcher mounted her horse and rode to the White House. She asked to see Raynard, and he walked by her side some way back to Raskelfe. There they parted; and Raynard was next observed in close conversation with his hostler, Mark Dunn.

It was May Day. In the sweet spring evening Fletcher was returning on foot from Easingwold, when he came to Daunay Bridge, where at that time a road branched off from the highway from the North to York, and traversing the Lund, led to Raskelfe. As he crossed the bridge he stood still for a moment, and looked up at the stars, just appearing. Next moment Raynard and Dunn were upon him; they had sprung from behind the bridge, and he was flung over it into the water. The stream is narrow and not deep, so that, once recovered from the shock, he could have easily crawled out. But the murderers leaped into the water after him. Mrs. Fletcher, with a long sack over her shoulder, ran out from the shadow of a bush where she had been concealed, and they held the farmer under water, the two men grasping his throat, his wife retaining his feet in the sack, into which she thrust them, till his struggles ceased, and he was, or was supposed to be, dead.

The body was then thrust into the sack which Mrs. Fletcher had brought for the purpose, and the three guilty ones assisted in carrying or dragging the body

along the road towards the White House. They were alarmed once; the clatter of a horse's hoofs was heard, and they concealed themselves by the roadside. The horseman passed, they emerged from their place of hiding, and continued their course.

As they drew near to the inn a streak of light from the inn door showed that it was open. They heard voices. The horseman had called for something to drink, and it was brought to him without his dismounting. Then Miss Raynard was heard calling, "Ralph! Ralph!" She wondered, perhaps, at his long absence, or wanted him for some purpose in the house.

No answer was returned. Raynard, Dunn, and Mrs. Fletcher lifted the body over the low hedge into Raynard's croft or garden, and buried it in a place where the ground had been disturbed that day by his having stubbed up an old root. They carefully covered the body with earth, and Raynard sowed mustard seed over the place.

It was thought prudent that Mrs. Fletcher and Raynard should not meet after this.

People wondered what had become of Fletcher; but knowing that he was somewhat embarrassed in his circumstances, they readily accepted the statement of his wife — that he had gone out of the way to avoid having a writ served on him.

Thus matters stood till the 7th July, when Ralph Raynard rode to Topcliffe fair. It was a bright sunny day. He passed the Moor House, but did not stay there; crossed Thornton Bridge, went before the Red House, where he had so often visited and spent such happy hours with the woman who was now his accomplice in crime, along by Cundall to Topcliffe.

He dismounted at the inn there — the Angel, an old-fashioned house near the dilapidated market cross. He led his horse out of the yard into the stable. The sun glared without; within it was dark. As he was removing the bridle from his horse, suddenly he saw standing before him the spirit of Fletcher, pale, with a phosphoric light playing about him, pointing to him, and saying, "O Ralph, Ralph! repent. Vengeance is at hand!" In an agony of horror he fled out of the stable. In the daylight without he recovered composure, and endeavoured to believe that he had been a victim to delusion. He thought he must buy some present for the woman, love for whom had led him to the commission of murder. He went to one of the stalls to buy some trinket — a chain of imitation coral beads. "How does it look on the neck?" he asked, extending it to the keeper of the stall. Then he looked up and saw a ghastly figure opposite — the dead man with the coral round his neck, knotted under his ear, and his head on one side, the eyes wide open, with a blaze in the eyes, and heard him say: "How like you a red streak round the neck such as this? I will put one round the throat of my wife; and you shall wear one too!"

Sick and faint, he hastened back to the inn, and called for beer. Towards evening he rode home. He saw as he came towards the Carr, where there is a dense clump of trees, a figure looking at him. It was deliberately getting out of a sack, and shaking and wringing water out of its clothes. With a scream of terror Raynard plunged his spurs into the horse's flanks, and galloped past Cundall, home. As he crossed Thornton Bridge he closed his eyes, but when he opened them again he saw the well-known figure of the dead man walking before him so fast that his horse could not catch him up. The ghost trailed the sack after it, and left a luminous track on the road. When it reached a point at a little distance from the White House — the very spot where Raynard, Mrs. Fletcher, and Mark Dunn had turned aside with the body — the spectre strode across the heather, leaped the low hedge, and melted, apparently, into the ground, where now a rich, green crop of mustard was growing.

"You're back earlier than I thought" said the sister of Ralph Raynard. "I reckon thou'st not been stopping this time at Moor House?"

Raynard said nothing, except "I'm ill."

"Ah" said his sister "I've gotten thee a nice bit o' supper ready, with a beautiful dish o' salad."

And she laid the cloth, and placed upon it a plate of fresh cut *mustard!*

Raynard's face grew rigid and white.

"What is the matter?" asked his sister.

Opposite him, on the settle, sat the dead man, pointing to the salad.

Ralph sprang up, drew his sister away, and told her all.

She, poor woman, horrorstruck, ran off at once to Sir William Sheffield, a justice of peace, residing at Raskelfe Park. The three guilty parties were apprehended and taken to York, where, on July 28th 1623, all three were hung.

When they had been cut down, the bodies were removed and conveyed in a waggon to the White House, the hangman seated by the driver in front. There is a little rise not far from the inn, commanding the spot where the murder was committed, and the green mustard bed where the body of Fletcher had been hidden, but which had been removed and buried in Raskelfe churchyard. On this hill a gibbet had been erected, and there the three bodies were hung, with their faces towards the dismal flat and the gurgling stream where the murdered man had been drowned. There they hung, blown about by the autumn storms, screeched over by the ravens and magpies, baked by the summer sun, their bare scalps capped with cakes of snow in the cold winter, till they dropped upon the ground, and then the bones were buried and the gallows cut down.

About eighty years ago the plough was drawn over Gallows Hill, when a quantity of bones were unearthed by the share. They were the bones of Raynard, Dunn, and Mrs. Fletcher. The hill to this day bears its ill-omened name, and people mutter about Raskelfe the doggerel lines —

“A wooden church, a wooden steeple,  
Rascally church, and rascally people.”

JEMMY HIRST, AN ODDITY

Jemmy was born at Rawcliffe, in the West Riding, on October 12th, 1738. His father was a respectable substantial farmer, without great brilliancy of parts, but with the usual Yorkshire shrewdness.

The boy soon began to exhibit originality; mischievousness was mistaken by a fond mother for genius, and he was destined for the Church. He was sent accordingly to a boarding-school, to a clergyman, at the age of eight, to acquire the rudiments of the necessary education.

But at school Jemmy's genius took an altogether perverse turn. He was always first in the playground and last in class; a leader in mischief, a laggard in study. Finding his master's spectacles on the desk one day, Jemmy unscrewed them, and removed the glasses. When the Principal came in, he gravely took up the spectacles and put them on. Finding them dim, he removed them. When he was seen demurely to wipe where the glasses had been, and then, with his fingers through the rims, to hold them up to his eyes to see what was the matter, the whole school burst out laughing. The pedagogue demanded the name of the culprit. Jemmy had not the honesty or courage to proclaim himself the author of the trick, and the whole school was whipped accordingly. On the morning of the 1st April, early, a big boy in his dormitory sent Jemmy to the master, expecting that he would knock at his bedroom door, wake him, and get a thrashing for his pains. Jemmy turned out of bed and went outside the door, waited a minute, and then came into the dormitory again. "Ah! Tom, thou'rt in for it. Thou mun go at once to Lovell for having made an April fool of him and me." The boy, believing this, went to the master's door, knocked him up, and got well thrashed for his pains. "You will know in future what is meant by the biter being bit" said Jemmy, when the boy returned, crying. "There's an old fable about the viper biting the file and breaking his teeth. Perhaps you can understand the moral of it now."

The Principal kept an old sow. Jemmy used to get on her back, tie a piece of twine — "band" a Yorkshire boy would call it — to the ring in her snout, run a nail through the heel of his boot to act as spur, and gallop the old sow round the yard. This was often performed with impunity, but not always. The master saw him from his window one morning as he was shaving, and rushed down with a horsewhip in his hand. Jemmy was careering joyously round and round the yard when a crack of the lash across his back dislodged him. He was fed next day on bread and water as a punishment.

One night Jemmy and some of his schoolmates got out of the house with intent to rob an orchard. But one of the day scholars had overheard the boarders planning the raid, and he informed the farmer whose orchard it was purposed to rob, and he was on the lookout for the young rogues. When they arrived he suffered one of them — it was Jemmy — to climb an apple tree without molestation, but then he rushed forth from his hiding place and laid about him with a carter's whip with hearty goodwill. The boys fled in all

directions, except Jemmy, who escaped further up the tree, and there remained, unable, like a squirrel, to leap from bough to bough, and so escape. The farmer went under the tree and shouted to him, "Come down, you young rascal! I'll strap thee!"

"Nay" answered Jemmy "dost see any green in my eye? It's like I should come down to get a whipping, isn't it?" And he began leisurely to eat some of the apples, and pelt the farmer with others. The man, highly irate, began to climb the tree after him. Jem remained composedly eating till the farmer was within reach of him, and then he drew a cornet of pepper from his pocket and dusted it into the eyes of his pursuer. The man, half blinded, desisted from his attempts to catch the boy, in his efforts to clear his eyes, and Jemmy slipt past him down the tree and escaped. Next day the farmer came to the school to complain, and Jemmy received thirty strokes on his back with the birch. "Ah!" said Jemmy, "Thou'st made my back tingle, and I'll make thine smart." So he got a darning needle, and stuck it in the master's hair bottomed chair in such a way that when anyone sat down the needle would protrude through the cushion, but would recede on the person's rising again.

At school hour the master came in, and seated himself in his chair with his usual gravity. But suddenly up he bounded like a rocket; then turned and examined the cushion, very red in the face. The cushion seemed all right when he felt it with his hand, so he sat himself down on it again, but this time much more leisurely. No sooner, however, was his weight on it than up came the needle again, and with it up bounded the master.

"Please, sir" said Jemmy, affecting simplicity "was there a thorn in the seat? If so, thou'd better run two or three times round t' school yard; I did so yesterday to work t' birch buds out o' my flesh."

Jemmy had one day tied two cats together by their hind legs and thrown them over a rail, when the master, who had been watching him from an upper window, made his appearance on the scene, horsewhip in hand, and belaboured Jemmy severely. But little Hirst always retaliated in some way. The master used to walk up and down in the evening in the yard behind the school. He wore a foxy wig. Jemmy one evening went into the study where Mr. Lovell kept his fishing tackle, for he was fond of angling. The window was open; Jemmy cast the hook, as for a fish, and caught the little fox coloured wig. Then leaving the rod in the window, and the head of hair dangling above the master's reach, he ran down into the school. The Principal was therefore obliged to go upstairs with bald head to his study to recover his wig. This final act of insubordination was too much for Mr. Lovell — it touched him in his tenderest point; and he wrote to Mr. Hirst to request him to remove the unmanageable boy from his school.

He was fourteen years old when his father took him away, and was little advanced in his learning. Every prospect of his going into the Church was abandoned, but what trade or profession he was qualified for was as yet undecided. His father wanted to put him to school again, but Jemmy so steadily

and doggedly persisted in his refusal to go to another, that his indulgent father ceased to press it. The boy showed no inclination for farming, and no persuasion of his father could induce him to take a farming implement in his hands to work with. His chief pleasure consisted in teaching pigs and calves to jump.

Mr. Hirst had a friend at Rawcliffe, a tanner, and this friend persuaded Mr. Hirst to bind Jemmy apprentice to him; and as the boy showed no disinclination to the trade, he was bound to the tanner for seven years.

The tanner had a daughter called Mary, a year younger than Jemmy, and a tender friendship grew up between the young people: Jemmy was softened and civilised by the gentle influence of the girl; he took willingly to the trade, became settled, lost his mischievous propensities, and promised to turn out a respectable member of society. An incident occurred three years after he had entered the tanner's house which tended to cement this attachment closer. Mary went one Saturday to spend the day with an aunt living at Barnsley. Jemmy ferried her over the river in a boat belonging to the tanner, and promised to fetch her in the evening. Accordingly, towards nightfall, he crossed the river, and made his boat fast to a stake, and then walked to Barnsley to meet the young girl. Mary met him with her usual smile, and tripped by his side to the boat, but in stepping into it her foot slipped, and she was swept down by the current. Jemmy instantly leaped overboard, swam after her, overtook her before she sank, and supporting her with one arm, succeeded in bringing her ashore, where several persons who had witnessed the accident were assembled to assist and receive her.

Mary's parents showed Jemmy much gratitude for his courageous conduct in saving her life, and the girl clung to him with intense affection; whilst Jemmy, who seemed to think he had acquired some right over her by his having saved her life, was never happy unless he was by her side. They were always together. She would steal in to do her needlework in the place where he was engaged in his trade, and when work was over they were together walking in the lanes and fields.

But in the midst of this happiness a stroke fell on them which for ever altered the tenor of Jemmy's life. Mary fell ill with smallpox. The lad watched by her bedside night and day, giving her medicine, making up her pillow, tending her with agonised heart, utterly forgetful of himself, fearing no risk of infection, heedless of taking his natural rest. The whole time of her illness he never slept, and could scarcely be induced to leave her side for his meals.

On the fifth day she died. The blow was more than Jemmy could bear, and he was prostrated with brain fever.

That the poor boy had naturally very deep feelings is evident from his having, some few years before, been laid up with fever when his mother died. Hearing of her death whilst he was at school, he became ill and was removed home, where it was some time before he got over the shock. Mary had taken the place in his vacant heart formerly occupied by his mother, and with years the strength

of his feelings had increased. Consequently the loss of Mary affected him even more than that of his mother.

In his brain fever he raved incessantly of the poor dead girl, and for several weeks his life was despaired of. By degrees he slowly recovered; but for some time it was feared that his reason was gone. At the end of six or seven months he was able to take a little exercise without attendance; but, as will be seen, he never wholly recovered the blow, and his conduct thenceforth was so eccentric that there can be no doubt his brain was affected.

He left the tanner's, abandoned the trade, and returned to his father's house, where he idled, preying on his fancies — one day in mad, exuberant spirits, the next overwhelmed with despondency.

When aged five and twenty he took a fancy to a fine bull calf belonging to his father, which he called "Jupiter", and he began to train it to perform various tricks, and to break it to bear the saddle. Jupiter bore the bridle patiently enough, but plunged and tossed his horns when the saddle was placed on his back. Jemmy next ventured to mount his back. The young bull stood for a minute or two, as his father said "right down stagnated," and then began to plunge and kick. Jemmy held fast, and Jupiter, finding he could not thus dislodge his rider, set off, tearing across the paddock towards a thick quickset hedge at the bottom. But instead of leaping it, as Jemmy expected, the bull ran against the fence, and precipitated his rider over the hedge into the ditch on the further side. Jemmy was unhurt, except for a few scratches and some rents in his garments, and patches of mud, and picking himself up, raced after Jupiter, nothing daunted, caught him, and remounting him, mastered the beast. After this he rode Jupiter daily, to the great amusement of people generally, especially when he trotted into Snaith on market days on the back of the now docile bull.

On the death of his father he was left about £1000. The farm he gave up, having no taste for agriculture, and he took a house on the bank of the river, not far from his old master's the tanner. The house had a few acres of land attached to it, which he cultivated. The old housekeeper, who had known him since a child, followed him to his new home; and in his stable was a stall for Jupiter.

He began to speculate in corn, flax, and potatoes, and having considerable natural shrewdness underlying his eccentric manners, he managed to realise enough to support himself comfortably. He invested £4000 in consols, and had £2000 lying at interest in a neighbouring bank. He rode out with Lord Beaumont's foxhounds, always on Jupiter, who was trained to jump as well as to run. When he was seen coming up on the bull, Lord Beaumont would turn to those with him at the meet and say, "Well, gentlemen, if we are not destined to find game today, we may be sure of sport."

His dress was as extraordinary as his mount, for he wore a broad brimmed hat of lambskin, fully nine feet in circumference; his waistcoat was like Joseph's

coat of many colours, made of patchwork; his breeches were of listings of various colours, plaited together by his housekeeper; and he wore yellow boots.

Though Jupiter could keep up with the foxhunters for a few miles, his powers of endurance were not so great as those of a horse, and he began to lag. Lord Beaumont would pass Jemmy, and say, "Come, Mr. Hirst, you will not be in at the death."

"No; but I shall at the dinner," was Jemmy's dry reply. Lord Beaumont always took the hint and invited him to Carlton House to the hunting dinner.

His Lordship had a nephew visiting him on one occasion, a London exquisite, who thought he could amuse himself at Jemmy's expense. One day at the meet this young man said to Captain Bolton "Let us quiz the old fellow." —

"By all means" answered the captain; "but take care that you do not get the worst of it."

When Jemmy came up, the young dandy, bowing to him on his saddle, said, "I wish you a good morning, Joseph."

"My name isn't Joseph," answered Jemmy.

"Oh, I beg pardon. I mistook you by your coat and waistcoat for that patriarch."

"Young man" said Jemmy, with perfect composure "t'win't do to judge by appearances. As I wor a-coming up, says I to mysen, 'You're a gentleman.' When I gotten a bit closer, says I 'Nay, he's a dandy.' And now that I heard thee voice, I knows thou'rt nowt but a jackass."

Jemmy was out with the hounds one day, along with Lord Wharncliffe and Lord Beaumont and several of the gentry of the neighbourhood. It was agreed amongst them, unknown to Jemmy, that he should be let into a scrape, if possible. Accordingly, after the start, Lord Wharncliffe kept near him, and led him into a field surrounded by a low, thick hedge — low enough for Jupiter to clear without any trouble. On the other side of the hedge in one place there was a drinking pond for the cattle, five or six feet deep, and full of water at the time. Lord Wharncliffe kept close by Jemmy, and edged towards where the pond was; and then, putting spurs to his horse, he leaped the fence, and Jemmy did the same to Jupiter, and clearing the hedge in gallant style, came splashing into the water, and rolled off Jupiter.

Lord Wharncliffe, when he saw Jemmy fairly in the middle of the pond, turned back, and alighted, in order to assist him out of the water. He found him half blinded with mud and dirt, trying to scramble out, his clothes completely saturated. Jemmy managed to get out without assistance, but it was some time before their united efforts could extricate Jupiter.

Lord Beaumont offered Jemmy a change of clothes if he would go to his house, but he would not hear of the proposal, declaring he would see the day's sport over first; and so they rode on together towards the rest of the party, who were halted near Rawcliffe Wood. The fox had been caught after a short run, and the huntsmen were already beating after another.

Jemmy was greeted with a general titter. Captain Bolton laughed out, and said, "Why, Jemmy, you've been fishing, not hunting. What have you caught?"

Jemmy looked hard at him — he was in no good humour after his plunge — and said, "I reckon there's a flat fish I know of that I'll catch some day."

"Why, Jemmy" said Lord Wharncliffe, laughing "I saw you catch a flounder."

"Ha! ha!" said the captain "That's good! You've taken the shine out of your smart clothes to-day, Jemmy."

"A little water will give it back to them" answered Hirst, sulkily.

"Jemmy" asked Captain Bolton "did you think you were drowning in the wash-tub? Did you say your prayers in it?"

"No" answered Jemmy, angrily "I didn't; but what I was doing then was wishing I'd got a contemptible puppy named Bolton in the pond with me, that I might kick his breech."

Jemmy soon saw that he had been the victim of a planned trick, and he determined to have his revenge. "I know very well that Lord Wharncliffe led me o' purpose into t' pond — I could see't by his manner; but I'll be even wi' him."

He did not carry his purpose into execution at once, lest he should arouse suspicion, but about a month afterwards, when in company with Lord Wharncliffe, he adroitly let drop that he had seen a number of snipe on Rawcliffe moor. This moor, now enclosed, was then a wide, open common, full of marshy places, and with here and there bogs covered with a little green moss, deep holes full of peat water, not to be discerned except by those who were well acquainted with them and the treacherousness of their bright green covering. Lord Wharncliffe, Captain Bolton, and some others, made up a party to shoot on the common the following day, and met Jemmy, who undertook to show them where the snipe most congregated.

They had a good day's sport, and when it fell dusk were returning home, Jemmy beside Lord Wharncliffe, whom he engaged in conversation, and Captain Bolton, with his gun over his shoulder, immediately behind, joining in the conversation at intervals. Jemmy led the way direct to one of these bogholes, and on reaching the patch of moss adroitly slipped on one side, and let Lord Wharncliffe and Captain Bolton walk straight into it. The moss at once yielded, and both sank to their breasts, and only kept their heads above water by spreading out their arms on the moss. In this condition they were perfectly

helpless. To struggle was to endanger their lives, for if the web of moss were torn, they must infallibly sink beneath it.

Jemmy looked at them from the firm ground with a malicious grin.

“Ha, ha! captain” said he, laughing; “art thou saying thy prayers in yond washtub?”

“Go to the devil!” roared Captain Bolton.

“Nay” answered Jemmy “thou’rt going to him as fast as thou can, unless I pull thee out.”

He held out his gun to Lord Wharncliffe, and assisted him from the hole. “There, my lord, now you have tit for tat.”

“Well, Mr. Hirst, I shall take care how I play with edged tools again. But I think it is too bad of you to punish Captain Bolton as well as me.”

“Why, my lord, he seemed to enjoy the horse pond so much that I thowt I’d let him taste the bogpit. I’ve no doubt it gives him a deal o’ pleasure.”

“You old scarecrow!” said the captain, angrily. “I’ve a great mind to shoot you.”

As he was helping Captain Bolton out with his gun he said drily “Sure it’s a rare funny sight to see a queer sole angling for a flat fish.”

The immersed man little enjoyed the jokes at his expense, and he swore at Jemmy. “Ah!” said that oddity “I don’t think thou’rt a fish worth catching. Shall I fling him in again, my lord? He’s nowt but what folks would call a little commonplace.”

Jemmy’s old housekeeper died, and he supplied her place by a strange creature, nearly as great an oddity as himself, called Sarah, who for many years had kept house for a rag-and-bone dealer at Howden, but who at his death had returned to Rawcliffe, her native place, and was living with her brother there when Jemmy engaged her.

Having made money by his speculations in corn and potatoes, he resolved to retire from business. He invested £4000 in the funds and £2000 in the bank, and lived on the interest. He was now forty five years old.

An inactive life, however, did not suit him, so he turned his mind to mechanics, and made several curious contrivances, some useful. He constructed a windmill to thrash corn, but for this purpose it did not answer, though it served for cutting up straw and chopping turnips.

His next contrivance was a carriage, the body of which was made of wickerwork. It cost him a year's constant application to finish it, and when completed it was calculated to cause a sensation. It was a huge palanquin, with a top like an exaggerated Chinaman's hat, supported on four iron rods, which were screwed into the shafts, the shafts running the whole length of the carriage, and resting on springs connected with the axle of the wheels. The sides and back of the carriage were made of wickerwork matting. The axle case was faced with a clock dial with numbers, and hands connected with a piece of ingenious mechanism, afterwards perfected and patented by another person, which told the distance the carriage had gone by measuring the number of rotations made by the wheels.

Jemmy used for his hunting suit a lambskin hat, a rabbit skin jacket, a waistcoat made of the skins of drakes' necks with the feathers on, a pair of list breeches, yellow, blue, black, and red, stockings of red and white worsted, and yellow boots. His best room was furnished as curiously as his person. Instead of pictures, the walls were hung round with bits of old iron and coils of rope; in one place an old frying pan, in another a rusty sword, a piece of a chair, or a jug.

One evening, after a day's sport, he invited the party to join him for a social evening, and the offer was eagerly accepted, as every one was curious to see the interior of his house. He gave them a very fair entertainment, and amused them all the evening with his jokes. Immediately over Lord Wharncliffe's head was suspended a pair of horse's blinkers.

"Do you wear these?" asked a Mr. Sadler who was present.

"No, sir, I do not; I keep them for donkeys of a peculiar make, who stand on their hind legs and ask impertinent questions."

"What do you mean?" asked the young man, reddening. "Is that intended as a personal remark?"

"Draw your own inferences" answered Jemmy, knocking the ashes out of his pipe.

The young man was so offended that he demanded satisfaction for the insult. The company tried hard to pacify him, but in vain. Jemmy then whispered in Lord Wharncliffe's ear, and the latter immediately rose from the table, and said, "Now, gentlemen, Mr. Hirst is quite willing to give Mr. Sadler that satisfaction he desires. He has requested my services as second. I have granted his wish. As soon as Mr. Sadler can arrange with any gentleman to act as his second, I shall be happy to arrange preliminaries with him."

Mr. Sadler having chosen a second, the belligerents were desired to leave the room for a few moments until arrangements had been made for the duel.

As they left the room Lord Wharncliffe whispered in the ear of one of the party "Follow Mr. Sadler into the other room, and take a bottle of wine with you; get him to drink as much as possible, and we will manage to make the affair end in fun."

The gentleman did as desired. Then Lord Wharncliffe and Jemmy, slipping in by another door, proceeded to dress up a dummy that was in a closet hard by in Jemmy's clothes.

Mr. Sadler was then told that all was ready, and he returned into the room rather the worse for the liquor he had drunk.

The pistol was put into his hand, and he was stationed opposite the dummy, which with outstretched arm pointed a pistol at him. The signal was given, and Mr. Sadler fired; then Jemmy, who was secreted in a closet hard by, pulled a string, and the dummy fell with a heavy thud upon the floor.

Mr. Sadler, who thought he had killed his antagonist, was sobered instantly, and was filled with remorse and fear. He rushed to the dead man and then towards the door, then back to the corpse to see if life were quite extinct. Then only, to his great relief, he found that the supposed dead man was made of wood. The company burst into a roar of laughter, and when he had sufficiently recovered from his bewilderment he joined heartily in the mirth raised at his own expense. Jemmy, emerging from his place of concealment, apologised for the offence he had given, and both shook hands. The carouse was renewed with fresh vigour, and the sun had risen an hour before the party broke up, and its members unsteadily wended their way homewards.

Jemmy had bought a litter of pigs, and entertained the idea of teaching them to act as setters in his shooting expeditions, and therefore spent a considerable time every day in training them. There were only two that he could make anything of. But he never could induce them to desist from grunting. It was impossible to make them control their emotions sufficiently to keep quiet, and this inveterate habit of course spoiled them as setters.

When the litter was about six months old, one of the little pigs discovered his potato garden, and that by putting its snout under the lowest bar of the gate it could lift the gate so that the latch was disengaged from the catch, and the gate swung open; by this means the pig was able to get to the roots. Hirst saw the pig do this several times, and he determined to stop the little game. He therefore ground the blade of a scythe, and fixed it, with the sharp edge downwards, to the lower bar.

Shortly after, Jemmy saw the pig go to the gate, but in lifting it off the hasp the scythe blade cut the end of the Snout off. Jemmy burst out laughing, and called his old housekeeper to see the fun; but old Sarah was more compassionate than her master, and begged him to kill the pig and put it out of its pain.

The carriage did not altogether satisfy Jemmy; he therefore enlarged it to double its former size. He made it so that, when necessary, he could have a bed in it; and then he bought four Andalusian mules to draw it, and with them he drove to Pontefract and Doncaster races, which he attended every year, and created no small sensation along the roads and on the course. Bear and bull baiting were favourite pastimes with him, as was also cock fighting. He kept two bulls and a bear for this purpose. He used to call the bear Nicholas. It was a large savage animal, and was always kept muzzled at home.

One morning, after it had been baited and had destroyed four dogs, he took it something to eat, but it would not touch the meat. "Ah! thou'rt sulky; then I mun gi'e thee a taste o' t' whip." So saying, he struck the bear over the muzzle with a hunting whip he carried in his hand.

He had no sooner done so than the bear sprang upon him, seized him, and began to hug him. Jemmy roared for help, and a favourite dog rushed to his assistance and seized Bruin by the ear. The bear let go Jemmy to defend itself against the dog, and Jemmy, who had the breath nearly squeezed out of him, managed to crawl beyond the reach of the beast. The dog seeing his master safe, laid himself down by him, facing the bear, to guard him from further attacks. Sarah found her master half an hour after on the ground, unable to rise, and in great pain. She raised him, assisted him to the house, and put him to bed. He was confined for three weeks by the injuries he had received.

A few weeks after his recovery he attended Pontefract races in his carriage, drawn by four splendid mules, and no one on the course could keep up with him when he put the mules to their speed. Sir John Ramsden was in a carriage drawn by two fine bays, of which he was not a little proud, and he challenged Jemmy to a trial of speed round the course. Off they started, Sir John taking the lead for a short time, but Jemmy's mules, with their light carriage, soon overtook Sir John's bays, and came in a hundred yards before them. It was the most popular race run that year on the Pontefract course.

He also constructed for himself a pair of wings, and by an ingenious contrivance was able to spread the feathers. But his attempt to fly from the mast top of a boat in the Humber failed. He fell into the water, and was drawn out covered with mud, amidst the laughter of a crowd which had assembled to witness his flight.

Jemmy's eccentricities had reached the ears of King George III., and he expressed a desire to see him. Lord Beaumont promised to do his best to persuade Hirst to come to town, but at the same time he told the King that if Jemmy took it into his head to decline the invitation, no power on earth could move him.

Accordingly, Lord Beaumont wrote to Jemmy, stating his Majesty's wish to see him, and urging him to come as soon as possible. At the end of the week Lord Beaumont received the following reply: —

“MY LORD, — I have received thy letter stating his Majesty’s wish to see me. What does his Majesty wish to see me for? I’m nothing related to him, and I owe him nothing that I know of; so I can’t conceive what he wants with me. I suspect thou hast been telling him what queer clothes I wear, and such like. Well, thou may tell his Majesty that I am very busy just now training an otter to fish; but I’ll contrive to come in the course of a month or so, as I should like to see London.”

Lord Beaumont showed Jemmy’s letter to George III., who laughed when he read it, and said, “He seems to think more of seeing London than of the honour of introduction to royalty.”

Jemmy spent a month in getting ready for his journey to London; he had an entirely new suit made — a new lambskin hat of the old dimensions, an otter skin coat lined with red flannel and turned up with scarlet cloth, a waistcoat of the skins of drakes’ necks, list breeches, red and white striped stockings, and shoes with large silver buckles on them. His carriage was repainted in the most lively colours; and when all was ready he adjured Sarah to look well after his favourites during his absence, and then drove off at a slashing pace, drawn by his four Andalusians.

He created a sensation in every town and village he passed through. People turned out of their shops and houses to see him.

He put up at Doncaster at the King’s Head Inn. The hostler there exhibited Jemmy’s carriage and mules at a penny charge for admission, and realised something handsome thereby. The landlord also reaped a good harvest, for the inn was crowded as long as Jemmy stayed there.

Jemmy reached London in three days. Lord Beaumont’s butler had been sent some time before to Tottenham, with orders to wait there till Mr. Hirst made his appearance and then to conduct him to his Lordship’s town residence.

On Jemmy arriving at Tottenham, the butler informed him of his lordship’s orders, and then rode off before him to show the way. The news spread through London, and the streets were crowded, so that the carriage could hardly make its way through the numbers of people whom the report of the arrival of an eccentric Yorkshireman on a visit to the King had drawn together. Jemmy, who was immensely conceited, was greatly delighted with this ovation. On reaching Lord Beaumont’s house he was welcomed by his Lordship with great cordiality; and after lunch was driven out in Lord Beaumont’s carriage to see the sights of London. The King was informed of Jemmy’s arrival, and his Majesty expressed his wish that Jemmy should be presented to him on the morrow. Lord Beaumont vainly endeavoured to press on the strange fellow the obligations of the Court ceremonial. “D—— your forms and ceremonies!” said he, impatiently. “If the King don’t like my ways, he must let it alone. I did not seek his acquaintance — he must take me as I am. I am a plain Yorkshireman, and if

the King asks me a question in a plain manner, I shall answer him in a plain way, so that he or anybody else may understand. I can do no more.”

Lord Beaumont saw it was in vain to press him further in the matter, and therefore left him to follow his own course.

On the following morning, Jemmy set out in his wickerwork carriage, in all the glory of drakes’ necks, lambs’ wool, and otter skins turned up with scarlet, to visit the King. But if the streets were crowded the day before, on this occasion they were crammed, for the news had spread that Jemmy was going in state to Court.

Lord Beaumont and a couple of Horse Guards accompanied the carriage, and with difficulty made a passage for Jemmy; and all along the streets the windows were filled with heads.

When Jemmy alighted he was conducted by Lord Beaumont into an antechamber, to await the King’s pleasure. The Duke of Devonshire was also waiting there for an audience with His Majesty, and on seeing this extraordinary fellow enter, he burst into a fit of uncontrollable laughter, and exclaimed “Pon my honour! What a scarecrow. Why, Beaumont, where did you pick up that ridiculous object? Why have you brought such a merry andrew here?” Jemmy listened patiently for a moment only to the Duke’s exclamations and laughter, and then seizing a tumbler of water that stood on the sideboard, he dashed it in the Duke’s face, exclaiming that the poor man was in hysterics: he ran to the Duke, loosed his cravat, pulled his nose, and shook him, pretending that he was using his best endeavours to bring him round from his fit.

At that moment a messenger came to announce that his Majesty wished to see Lord Beaumont and Mr. Hirst; so Jemmy was ushered into the royal presence. But instead of kneeling and kissing the hand that was extended to him in silence, he caught it and gave it a hearty shake, saying, “Eh! I’m glad to see thee such a plain owd chap. If thou ever comes to Rawcliffe, step in and give me a visit. I can give thee some rare good wine, or a sup of brandy and water at any time.”

The court was convulsed with laughter, and King George III. could hardly contain himself. However, he did not laugh out openly, but with courtesy maintained his gravity, and asked Jemmy how he liked London. “I like it weel enow” answered the oddity; “but I hadn’t any idea afore yesterday and to-day there were sae mony fools in it.”

“Indeed!” said the King; “You pay us a very poor compliment, Mr. Hirst. I did not know that we were so badly off for wisdom in London. Perhaps that is an article in such demand in Yorkshire that there is none to spare for cockneys.”

“Why, I’ll thee how it were” said Jemmy. “When I come into t’ town yesterday, and to thy house today, the streets were full o’ crowds of folks gathered as thick as owt to see me, just a cause I happ’d to be dressed different frae other folk;

and as I were waiting out yonder i' t' forechamber, there were one o' thy sarvants burst out laughing at me; but I reckon I spoiled his ruffled shirt for him and punished his impertinence."

The King asked an explanation of Lord Beaumont, and when he had heard what Jemmy had done to the Duke of Devonshire, the King laughed heartily.

"Did you think to find London streets paved with gold?" asked the King.

"Mebbe I did" answered Jemmy; "but I've found out I was mista'en. It's nowt but a mucky place, after all."

"A Yorkshire bite" said his Majesty.

"Aye" answered Jemmy "but I'm no a bite for thee."

After some further conversation the King and his attendants descended to look at Jemmy's carriage, and he showed the clock for marking the distance he travelled; the King was interested with this, and praised it as an ingenious contrivance. Jemmy then showed him the place he had made for the reception of his wine when he travelled, but which was then empty. His Majesty immediately ordered it to be filled with bottles from the royal cellar.

As Jemmy was taking leave of the King he heard a young nobleman say to another, "What an old fool that is to wear such a hat; it is three times as large as is necessary."

Jemmy turned sharply upon him and said: "I'll tell thee what, young chap, folks don't always have things about 'em that's necessary, or his Majesty could dispense varry weel wi' thee."

Lord Beaumont gave an entertainment at which Jemmy was present, and danced with a niece of his host. He danced very well, and was very popular; all the evening he was surrounded by a knot of young ladies and gentlemen who did their best to draw him out. But it was dangerous game, for those who attempted to play jokes on him generally got the worst of it. A young man present asked Jemmy to procure him a suit of clothes like his own, as he wanted them to attend a masquerade in. Jemmy asked in what character he wished to appear.

"Oh, as a clown, of course" was the answer.

"Nay, then" said Jemmy "thou'st nowt to do but go just as thou art; nobbudy'll mistake thee for owt else."

"You have got your answer" said Lord Beaumont's niece, laughing; "I hope you are satisfied with it."

During his stay in London, Jemmy visited the Court of Chancery, and whilst Lord Beaumont was talking to a friend, a barrister in wig and gown passing by stopped, and staring at Jemmy, said, "Holloa, my man, what lunatic asylum have you escaped from, eh?"

"Bless me!" exclaimed Jemmy, catching Lord Beaumont's arm; "sithere, yonder's an owd woman i' her nightdress that's tummled out o' bed into an ink pot, and is crawling about. Let's get a mop and clean her."

After spending a week in the metropolis, he returned home much delighted with his visit, which furnished him with topics of conversation for a long time.

Sarah, his old housekeeper, falling ill, and being unable to work, Jemmy engaged the services of a young woman from Snaith to wait upon him, and she so accommodated herself to Jemmy's whims, that she soon became a great favourite with him. He would not, however, allow followers about the house; and as Mary had a sweetheart, the meetings between them had to be carried on surreptitiously.

However, one day whilst Jemmy was hunting, his bull tripped in jumping a fence, and fell, with Jemmy's leg under him, which was broken with compound fracture.

This invalidated him for some while. He had a block tackle fixed to a hook in the ceiling of the room, and a sling made for his leg to rest in, fastened to the lower end, and whenever he wished to alter the position of his leg, he hoisted it up or let it down with the tackle.

During his illness the restraint of his observant eye was off Mary, and the sweetheart had opportunities of visiting her. One night, when Jemmy was somewhat recovered, he was sitting in the corner of his garden enjoying a pipe of tobacco, when he saw a man jump over the wall into the garden and make his way to the kitchen window, then rap with his fingers against the glass. Mary came out to him, and they spent some time in conversation together, and when they parted he promised to return and see her the following night.

Jemmy heard every word that had been said, and he sat chuckling to himself, and muttered, "So thou'lt come again tomorrow night, wilt thou? I'll learn thee to come poaching on my preserves."

Next morning, very early, Jemmy rose and dug a hole, four or five feet deep and six or seven feet long, just under that part of the garden wall where the sweetheart had clambered over the night before, and covered it all over with thin laths and brown paper, and then sprinkled mould over it, so that it had all the appearance of solid earth. A small stream of water ran through his garden into the river. Jemmy cut a small grip from it to the hole he had dug, and filled the hole with water; then choked the grip up and went into his house, laughing to himself at what would probably happen that night.

Stationing himself at nightfall in the garden where he could not be seen, he had not long to wait before he saw a head rising above the wall, then the body of a man, and in another moment the expectant lover had cleared the wall, and dropped on the covering of the pitfall. The laths and brown paper yielded to his weight, and he plunged up to his neck in water. The unfortunate young man screamed with fright, and Jemmy and Mary rushed to the spot.

“Holloa, my man! what’s the matter? What art a’ doing i’ yond water pit? Hast a’ come to steal my apples and pears?”

Then turning to Mary, he asked if she knew him. The poor girl hesitated, but at last confessed that the young man was her sweetheart. “Well, then” said Jemmy “help him out and get him into t’ house, and let us change his clothes, for I reckon he’s all over muck.”

The young man was brought in dripping like a water rat.

“Now, then” said Jemmy, “thou mun have a dry suit. Which wilt a’ have — a pair o’ my list breeches and rabbit skin coat, or my old housekeeper’s petticoats and gown?”

The young man ungallantly chose the former, thinking if he must be made ridiculous before the eyes of Mary, he would be less so in male than female attire. Jemmy gave him a glass of hot brandy-and-water, kept him talking by the kitchen fire till his clothes were dried, and then dismissed him with permission to come to the house openly, and visit Mary as often as he liked. The young fellow became in time a great favourite with the old man, and when he married Mary, Jemmy gave him £50 to start life with.

Jemmy took it into his head to make himself a coffin, for he said he was getting old, and did not know how soon he might require one, and therefore it was best to be ready. It took him a month to construct it. It had folding-doors instead of a lid, and two panes of glass in each door; and he fitted the inside with shelves for a cupboard, saying that he might as well turn it to some use whilst he was alive, and then fixed it upright in the corner of his sitting room. Twelve months after, he had a second coffin made on the same model, but better, and with some improvements, by a joiner at Snaith, which cost him £12. “He always wished people to believe that he made it himself; but this was not the case, for the person that made it declared to us that Jemmy enjoined him not to divulge who had made it during his lifetime.” Inside the coffin he placed a handle connected with a bell outside, so that, as he said, if he wanted anything when in his grave — shaving water, sherry, or his boots — he would ring the bell for his servant to bring them to him.

He bought a sloop, which he called “The Bull,” and made a voyage in her once as far as Boston; but he was so sick during the passage that he could never after be persuaded to set foot on her again. “Nay, nay” said he “a yard of dry land is worth a mile of water.”

Otter hunting on the marshes between Rawcliffe and Goole was one of his favourite pastimes. He kept a small pack of otterhounds for the purpose.

One day, when out with three dogs, near where Tunbridge House now stands, the dogs started an otter and gave him chase. He made for a drain, and there being plenty of water in it, he dived several times. The dogs followed him in the water, and Jemmy ran along the edge waiting for him. When the otter came out close to him, Jemmy struck at him, but missed his aim and fell, owing to the mud being slippery. The otter immediately seized him by the leg, and succeeded in dragging him into the water before the hounds could come to his assistance. A favourite dog, named Sancho, dived, and seizing the otter by the throat, forced it to release Jemmy's leg, and he reached the bank greatly shaken and exhausted. He fortunately wore that day a thick pair of leather boots, which prevented the teeth of the otter from cutting his flesh. The other dogs had dived to the assistance of Sancho, and they brought the otter to the bank, where Jemmy clubbed it. It was the largest otter that he had ever caught, and he had the skin tanned. He kept it for two or three years, and then made a present of it to a hairdresser who used to attend and shave him.

As he was returning one night about eight o'clock from Howden, where he had been to the bank to draw some money, he was attacked by a couple of footpads, who probably knew where he had been. One seized the bridle of his bull, and the other took hold of Jemmy's arm and demanded his money. Jemmy suddenly drew a pistol from his pocket and fired it — according to his own account — full in the man's face, then struck spurs into the bull and galloped home. After getting assistance, he returned to the place where he had been stopped, but could find no trace of the persons who had attempted to rob him.

With the assistance of the captain of his sloop, Jemmy rigged some sails to his carriage, and after a few trials of the new contrivance in the lanes about Rawcliffe, he set off one day to Pontefract with all sail set. Having a fair wind he went at a dashing speed. When he reached the town every one turned out to see the wonderful ship that sailed on dry land.

But when Jemmy reached the first cross street a puff of wind caught him sideways, upset the carriage, and flung Jemmy through the window of a draper's shop, smashing several panes.

The crowd that followed speedily righted the carriage and extricated Jemmy, who paid for the damage he had done, and led the way to the nearest tavern, where he treated the whole crowd with ale. This bounty naturally elicited great enthusiasm, which exhibited itself in prolonged cheers, to Jemmy's great delight, for he was one of the most conceited of men.

The authorities having intimated to him that he would not be allowed to sail back through the streets, the crowd yoked themselves to the carriage, and drew him triumphantly out of the town, and would have dragged him half way to Rawcliffe had not a favourable wind sprung up, when Jemmy spread his sails

again, and was blown out of sight of the crowd with expedition. He reached home without any further mishap.

A friend writes to me: — “I remember Jemmy Hirst well coming to Doncaster races in his wretched turnout, and with a bag of nuts, which he always brought with him for a scramble. He was not a very reputable individual, and must have been, I fancy, half-witted. He was wont to issue flash notes on the ‘Bank of Rawcliffe’ meaning the river bank, for five farthings; and as these bore a great resemblance to the notes issued by a banking firm in Doncaster, he was able to deceive many people with them.”

Among other accomplishments, Jemmy played the fiddle tolerably well. In winter he would collect all the boys and girls of Rawcliffe at his house in the evenings, once a week at least, when he would play the fiddle for them to dance to. At nine o’clock punctually he rang a bell and dismissed them. He never would allow them to remain a minute longer. They were sent away with buns, simnel cake, or apples.

On another evening of the week he would have all the old women to tea, but he would allow no men in to have tea with him on these occasions. They were invited to come in later, and then dancing and singing began, which continued till nine, when he would dismiss them with a glass of rum or gin each.

On the evenings that he wished the children to come he blew a horn thrice at his door, and six blasts of the horn assembled the old people. In his old age, Jemmy was frequently laid up with gout, when he amused himself with the composition of doggerel verses, mostly about himself. They were contemptible productions, but his vanity made him suppose that he was a poet. He got these rhymes printed, and sold them for a penny to his numerous visitors, and as sometimes on a Sunday he had three or four hundred people to see him, he realised a good sum — enough to keep him for the week — from this source.

But besides selling his verses, Jemmy used to make money by showing his coffin to visitors. He would induce them to enter the largest one, which was contrived to close upon any one inside, and hold him fast as a prisoner till released from the outside. No one once within was suffered to escape without payment — men were charged a penny, women one of their garters. In this way Jemmy accumulated hundreds of garters, which he tied to his chair. They were of all sorts, from a piece of silk down to a bit of whipcord. He used to say that he could always tell a woman’s character by her garter.

His old housekeeper, Sarah, after a tedious illness, died, and then Jemmy would not suffer any one to attend him except the wife of the captain of his sloop, “The Bull”, who used to live in the house with him when her husband was at sea. All his pets were sold off, except a fox which he called Charley, that was chained in the backyard; and his pointer pigs were converted into bacon and eaten.

During the last few years of his life Jemmy was confined a great deal within doors, and the neighbouring gentry used very often to visit him for the sake of old times; but he never would tolerate a visit from a clergyman. He had no religion whatever, and very little morality either. No one ever saw him inside a church or chapel, or got him to enter on religious conversation.

He was visited one day when he was visibly declining by Lord and Lady Wharncliffe; and the latter, on his swearing at the twinges of his gout, gently reproved him, pained to see how utterly indifferent he seemed to the future. "Mr. Hirst" said her Ladyship "you should not swear; you really ought to make some preparation for death."

"Haven't I, my lady?" asked Jemmy. "I've had my coffin made these ten years."

It was in vain that Lady Wharncliffe endeavoured to get him into a serious turn; he turned off all her remarks with a bantering reply.

Jemmy was subject to temporary fits of insanity, in one of which he stripped himself stark naked and ran all round Rawcliffe. Fortunately it was night, so that there were not many people abroad; but he nearly frightened one young fellow out of his wits as he came bounding upon him in the moonlight, round a corner. The cries of this man brought people to his assistance, and they ran after Jemmy and caught him as he was stepping into a boat with the purpose of ferrying himself across the river, his mind in this disordered condition returning to the event of his youth, when he rowed across to meet his poor Mary. They brought him, not without trouble, to his house, and put him to bed. What made it the more remarkable was, that he had been confined to his bed all day with gout, and could scarcely move a limb.

Jemmy died on October 29th 1829, at the age of ninety-one. By his will he left £12 to be given to twelve old maids for carrying him to his grave, £5 for a bagpiper from Aberdeen to play before him alternately with a fiddler to whom he also bequeathed £5, as he was borne to the churchyard.

The executors had some trouble in carrying out his wishes. The rector of Rawcliffe protested against the music being played on the occasion; but eventually a compromise was effected, and the piper was alone allowed to head the funeral to church, playing sacred music. Sacred music on a Scottish bagpipe!

Long before the funeral started for the church hundreds of spectators had collected in front of the house. Everything being in readiness, the procession moved off — the neighbouring gentry and farmers on horseback, followed by the piper; next came the coffin, carried by six of the old maids and two men, the other six of the old maids bearing the pall. The piper played a psalm tune; but as soon as ever the funeral was over, the fiddler met the piper at the church gates, and they struck up the tune of "Owre the hills and far awa'" followed by the crowd to Jemmy's late residence, where they received their money and were dismissed.