

THE TRAGEDY OF BENINGBROUGH HALL

In 1670, Beningbrough Hall, a fine Elizabethan red-brick mansion, stood in a park near the junction of the Ouse and Nidd. The old house has been pulled down, and replaced by an edifice neat and commodious, as the guidebooks would say, and we need say no more.

In 1670 Beningbrough Hall belonged to a Roman Catholic family of the name of Earle. Mr. Earle, the proprietor, was in somewhat embarrassed circumstances, and was mixed up with some of the plots then rife. He was much away from the Hall — generally in London; but the house was full of servants, under the control of a steward, Philip Laurie, and a housekeeper, named Marian — a comely woman, just passing into middle age.

One day, when Laurie was absent, two gentlemen arrived at the Hall, cloaked, with their hats drawn over their eyes, and were admitted by Marian. One of these was Mr. Earle himself, anxious to escape recognition. Who the other was did not transpire. After some conversation with the housekeeper, Marian summoned the servants into the hall, and ordered them immediately to collect and pack the plate and pictures — everything that was of value and readily movable. Mr. Earle did not show himself — he remained in the housekeeper's room; but his companion appeared, and announced that he and Marian were acting under the authority of Mr. Earle, and he read them a letter from that gentleman requiring the removal of his valuable property as the housekeeper should direct.

The servants were much surprised; but as it was known that their master was in difficulties, and as some suspicion seems to have entered their heads that he was engaged in a plot, their wonder died away; they diligently discharged their duty, and everything that was required was speedily collected and stowed away in leather bags or wooden boxes in the hall. The housekeeper then dismissed the servants, and she and the stranger conveyed the articles packed up into her room.

Where were they next to be conveyed to, so as to be readily removed? Mr. Earle expected a warrant for his arrest on the charge of high treason, and the confiscation of all his property. He was therefore desirous to remove all he could in time to escape to France.

To avoid observation, it was advisable that his valuables should be secreted somewhere near, but not in the house. Marian then, with some hesitation, told the master that an attachment subsisted between her and the gamekeeper, a man named Martin Giles; that she could rely on his not divulging the secret, and trust him with the custody of the plate, etc., till it suited the convenience of Mr. Earle to take them away. She was accordingly despatched to the gamekeeper's cottage, and he was brought to the Hall, and as much of the secret confided to him as could not well be retained. He promised most frankly to do what was desired of him, and as he was a Roman Catholic, Mr. Earle felt

satisfied that he could trust him not to betray a master who professed the same faith.

When Philip Laurie returned he found to his surprise that the house had been stripped of everything precious. He was extremely incensed, and in an angry interview with Marian charged her with having told tales of him to her master, and so of having lost him the confidence of Mr. Earle. She did not deny that she mistrusted his honesty, unhappily recalled a circumstance he thought she knew nothing of, and took occasion to give him "a bit of her mind"; but she protested that she had not spoken on the subject to her master.

Philip Laurie asked where the property was removed to. She refused to tell him. He swore he would know. He did not trust her story. The house had been plundered; the opportunity had been taken when he was absent, and Marian was privy to a robbery.

After violent words on both sides they parted. As he left the room the steward turned, fixing his eyes, blazing with deadly hate, upon the housekeeper, and muttered a few inarticulate words.

It was not long before Laurie suspected or discovered where the valuables were secreted.

Chance had thrown in his way a labourer of bad character named William Vasey, a poacher and a reputed thief. Laurie walked through the park to the cottage of this miscreant, and it was resolved between them that the housekeeper should be murdered, and then that the lodge of the gamekeeper should be robbed.

In the evening Marian was taking her accustomed walk along a beech avenue beside the Ouse. It was evening, and the red evening sky was reflected in the water, which looked like a streak of blood. The rooks were cawing and wheeling about the tree tops, settling for the night.

A white owl that lived in the ivy that covered the north side of the house floated, ghostlike, through the gathering darkness. Marian in her white cap walked quietly in the avenue. She was a Roman Catholic, and was reciting her beads. Laurie knew that she was accustomed every evening to retire into this walk to say her rosary.

At one point a beech tree had been blown over, and had left a gap to the west, through which the faint reflection of the evening sky fell, leaving the shadows beyond it in deeper gloom. For some unaccountable reason, as Marian came to this gap, instead of passing it and continuing her walk, she stood still, and then turned. A second time she walked the avenue and came to this gap. A mysterious repugnance to advance caused her to hesitate and halt.

Thinking that this was an unreasonable feeling, she walked on a couple of steps, and then stood still, turned round, and looked at the spot where the sun had gone down.

At that moment Vasey sprang from behind a tree, and thrust Marian over the brink. With a shriek she sank.

Next morning the body was found, a part of the rosary clenched in her hand, and the other portion was discovered caught in the stump of the broken beech. Prints of a man's boots in the mud showed that Marian had not died by accidentally falling into the water.

Suspicion of the guilt of the murder fell upon Martin Giles, the gamekeeper. Laurie was in the Hall the whole time, and therefore no one supposed him implicated in the commission of the crime. The gamekeeper had behaved mysteriously for the last day or two. He had avoided his usual friends; he had been seen privately conversing with the housekeeper. Only Marian and he knew that their master had been in the house; his presence had been concealed from the other servants, who only saw his companion. The removal of the valuables to the house of Giles had been accomplished by the two gentlemen with the assistance of the gamekeeper alone. After the valuables had been taken away, the two gentlemen in disguise had ridden off.

The servants, who had noticed that there was some mystery to which Giles and Marian were privy, thought that the keeper had killed the poor woman out of dread lest she should prove an untrustworthy depositary of the secret, whatever it was. It was known also that the lovers had been accustomed to meet in the beech avenue, the place where the murder had been committed.

Whilst the tide of popular indignation ran strong against the unfortunate gamekeeper, Laurie and Vasey resolved on committing the robbery — before also Mr. Earle and his companion had found means to remove the property entrusted to his custody.

At midnight Vasey and the steward went to the gamekeeper's cottage. Laurie was to remain outside, and the other ruffian to enter and rob the house. They thought that Martin Giles was sure to be asleep; but they were mistaken. The man had been sincerely attached to poor Marian, and lay tossing in bed, wondering who could have murdered her, and vainly racking his brain to discover some clue which could guide him to a solution of the mystery. As he thus lay, he thought he heard a slight sound downstairs. But the wind was blowing, and the trees roaring in the blast; the little diamond panes in the latticed windows clattered, and the keeper thought nothing of it.

Presently, however, he heard the latch of his door gently raised, and in the darkness he just distinguished the figure of a man entering the room. He immediately jumped out of bed, but was felled to the ground. As he struggled to rise he was again struck down, and for the moment was stunned. But he recovered consciousness almost immediately. He had fallen upon a sheep net,

which lay in a heap on the floor. He quietly gathered up the net in his hands, sprang to his feet, and flinging the net over the murderer, entangled his arms so that he could not extricate himself.

He wrenched the bludgeon out of his hand, and struck him over the head with it, so that he measured his length, insensible, on the floor.

Had Martin only known that this ruffian had been the murderer of her who had been dearer to him than anyone else in the world, there is no doubt but the blow would have fallen heavier, and would have spared the hangman his trouble.

Giles then threw open his window and fired off his gun, to alarm the inmates of the Hall.

In a few minutes the servants made their appearance, amongst them Philip Laurie, with a ghastly face. A sign passed between him and Vasey, and he recovered some of his composure. The captured ruffian had assured him he would not betray his accomplice.

Vasey was taken into custody, and on the following day was removed to York Castle, where he was committed for burglary with intent to commit murder.

When Mr. and Mrs. Earle heard of what had taken place, the latter came with the utmost speed into Yorkshire. Mr. Earle, fearing arrest for treasonable practices, did not venture to do so.

Laurie's conduct had already excited suspicion. He had not been seen issuing from the Hall on the night of the attempted robbery with the other servants, and was found on the spot fully dressed, and that not in his usual costume, but one which looked as if intended for a disguise.

Mrs. Earle sent for him to her boudoir, and dismissed him from her service. As yet there was no charge sufficiently established against him to warrant her committing him to custody; but, she added, Vasey had declared his full intention to confess before his execution.

Laurie, a desperate man, flung himself on his knees, and implored his mistress not to send him away; or if, as he heard, she was about to escape with Mr. Earle to France, would she allow him to accompany them?

She indignantly thrust the wretch from her. He started to his feet, drew a pistol from his coat pocket, and presented it at her head. She struck up his hand, and the contents of the pistol shivered the glasses of a chandelier that hung in the room. He rushed out of the room, ran to his own apartment, put another pistol to his forehead, and blew his brains out.

Vasey now confessed everything, and was executed at the Tyburn, outside Micklegate Bar, at York, on August 18th, 1670.

Yorkshire Oddities

It is said that at night a pale, female figure is seen to steal along the bank of the Ouse, where the avenue stood in olden time, and to disappear in the churchyard of Newton, which adjoins the park, where Marian was buried.

A YORKSHIRE BUTCHER

The subject of this memoir has been dead but a few years, and therefore I do not give his name, lest it should cause annoyance to his relatives. He was a tall, red faced, jovial man, with a merry twinkle in his small eyes; a man who could tell a good story with incomparable drollery, and withal was the gentlest, kindest hearted man, who would never wound the most sensitive feelings by ridicule. He had a splendid bass voice, and sang in the church choir; his knowledge of music was not inconsiderable, and for some time he was choirmaster, and performed a feat few other men have been able to accomplish — he was able to keep the discordant elements of a choir in harmony. His inimitable tact, unvarying good nature, and readiness to humour the most self-consequential of the performers, made him vastly popular with them, and prevented or healed those jars which are proverbial among professed votaries of harmony.

This worthy butcher thus narrated his courtship:—

“It’s a queer thing, sir, hoo things turns oot sometimes. Noo it war a queer thing hoo I chanced to get wed. I war at Leeds once, and I’d na mair thowts about marrying na mair ’an nowt; and I war just going doon t’ street, tha knaws, sir, when I met wi’ my wife — that’s her ’at’s my wife noo, tha knaws. I’d kenned her afore, a piece back; soa shoo comes oop to me, an’ shoo ses ‘Why, James, lad, is that thee?’ — ‘Aye’ I ses ‘it is awever.’ — ‘Weel, James’ ses she ‘what’s ta doing wi’ thysen noo?’ — ‘Why’ I ses ‘I’s joost getten me a new hoose.’ Soa wi’ that she ses ‘Then I lay, James, if tha’s getting a new hoose, tha’ll be wanting a hoosekeeper.’ Soa I ses to ‘er, ses I ‘Tha ma’ coom and be t’ wife if ta likes; tha mawn’t be t’ hoosekeeper, tha knaws, but tha ma’ coom and be t’ wife.’ And soa shoo ses ‘I ain’t partikler. I don’t mind if I do.’ So we never had na mair to do about t’ job.”

I asked him if he ever had found occasion to regret such an expeditious way of settling the matter. He shook his head and said “Noa, sir, niver. Shoo’s made a rare good wife. But shoo’s her mawgrums a’ times. But what women ain’t got ‘em? They’ve all on ‘em maggots i’ their heads or tempers. Tha sees, sir, when a bone were took out o’ t’ side o’ Adam, to mak a wife for ‘m, ‘t were hot weather, an’ a bluebottle settled on t’ rib. When shoo’s i’ her tantrums ses I to her, ‘Ma dear’ ses I ‘I wish thy great-great-grand ancestress hed chanced ta be made i’ winter.”

When he was married he took his wife a trip to Bolton, and spent a week on his honeymoon tour. As soon as he was returned home, the first thing he did was to put his wife into the scales and weigh her. Then the butcher took out his account book, and divided the expenses of the marriage and wedding tour by the weight of the wife. “Eh! lass!” said he “Thou’st cost me fourteen pence ha’penny a pound. Thou’st the dearest piece o’ meat that iver I bought.”

He had a barometer. The glass stood at set-fair, and for a whole week the rain had been pouring down. On the eighth day the glass was still telling the same tale, and the rain was still falling. Our friend lost his patience, and holding the barometer up to the window he said "Sithere, lass! Thou'st been telling lees. Dost thou see how it's pouring? I'll teach thee to tell lees again!" And he smashed the glass.

He was laid up with gout. The doctor had tried all sorts of medicines, but nothing seemed to profit him. At last the medical man said, "Try smoking. I daresay smoking would do you a deal of good."

"Ah" said the wife "it's possible it might. But thou seest, doctor, chimleys is made so narrow nowadays that one cannot hang un up i' t' reek (smoke) as one did wi' one's bacon i' bygone days."

His wife was dying. She was long ill, and during her sickness was always exclaiming "Eh! I'm boun' to dee. It win't be long afore I dee. I shan't be long here" — and the like. Our jolly butcher heard these exclamations day after day, and said nothing. At last he got a little impatient over them, and said one day, as she was exclaiming as usual "O dear! I'm goin' to dee!" —

"Why, lass, thou'st said that ower and ower again a mony times. Why doan't thou set a time, and stick to it?"

On another occasion his wife slightly varied the tune to "Eh! the poor bairns! What will become o' t' bairns when I dee? Who will mind t' bairns when their mother is dead?"

"Never thee trouble thy head about that" said her husband; "go on wi' thy deein'. I'll mind t' bairns."

He was going to York with his son, a boy of eighteen. He took a ticket for himself and a half one for the boy. When the train drew near to York, the ticket-collector came round, and exclaimed at this half ticket, "Where's the child?"

"Here," said the butcher, pointing to the tall, awkward youth.

"What do you mean?" asked the indignant ticket-collector. "He ain't a child; he's a young man!"

"Ah! so he is, now," answered the butcher; "but that's thy fault, not mine. I know when we got in at Wakefield he were nobbut a bairn; but tha'st been going so confounded slow that he's growed sin' we started!"

Many years ago, on a rare occasion, James took a glass too much. It was the last time such a misfortune took place with him. His clergyman was obliged to speak to him about it, and in doing so said — "You know, James, beasts do not get drunk."

“There’s a deal o’ things belonging to all things” answered the worthy butcher, who never suffered himself to be cornered. “If a horse were o’ one side o’ a pond, and another on t’ other side, and t’ first horse ses to t’ other ‘Jim, I looks towards ye!’ and t’ other ses to the first, ‘Thank y’ kindly, Tom; I catches your eye.’ And the first horse ses again ‘Tha’ll tak’ another sup, lad, and drink ma health’; the second will be sewer to say ‘I will, and I’ll drink to lots o’ your healths.’ Why, sir, them two horses will be nobbin to one another iver so long. Lor bless ye! them two horses win’t part till they’s as drunk as Christians.”

James at one time was not well off. He had a brother whom we will call Tom, who had some money.

Now James happened to hear that his brother was very ill, and as they had not latterly been very good friends, he was afraid lest, if Tom died, he would not leave him his money.

So he immediately set off to his brother’s house, and on his arrival found him ill in bed. He went up to the room in which his brother lay, and began — “Weel, Tommy, an’ hoo art a?”

“Oah, James!” said Tom “I’se vara bad. I thinks I’s boun’ to dee.”

“Eh!” said James “Well, mebbe tha’lt outlive me, Tommy; I nobbut feels vara middlin’ mysen. I hain’t felt weel for a long while, and I war just thinking, Tommy, o’ sending to Mr. Smith, t’ lawyer, to mak’ me a bit o’ a will, tha knaws. Hast a’ made *thy* will, Tommy?”

“Noa,” said Tom, “I hain’t; but I was thinking wi’ thee, James, o’ sending for Lawyer Smith. Noo, who wast a’ thinking o’ making thy heir, James?”

“Weel, tha knaws, Tommy” said James “mebbe thou and me hain’t lately been vara particklers; but I war thinking it ever owt ta be ‘Let bygones be bygones’; and soa I was thinking o’ leaving my bit o’ brass to thee. Noo, Tommy, hoo wast a’ thinking o’ leaving thy money?”

“Why” said Tommy “as thou’st been sa good as leave thy money ta me, I think it wadn’t be reet if I didn’t do t’ same by thee, and leave thee my brass.”

“Weel” said James, “I think thou couldn’t do better; and soa let’s send for Mr. Smith to mak’ our wills, and I think mebbe, Tommy, *thou’d better ha’ thy will made fust.*”

So these two men sent for the lawyer to make their wills. Tommy’s was made first, and a very few days after he died. His money then came to James, who in reality was not ill in the least, but had only pretended to be so.

One of James the butcher’s sayings I well remember. He was addressing a young man who was courting a girl, and was very hot and eager in his pursuit of her.

“I’ll gi’e thee a bit o’ advice, Joa: Don’t bother to shuttle a happle tree to get t’ fruit; tak’ it easy; wait, and t’ apples will fall into thy lap o’ their selves. Don’t go coursing over hedges and threw ditches after rabbits; wait a bit, and t’ rabbits ’all come into thy springes without trouble. Don’t take on running after t’ lasses; take it easy, and thou’lt find, Joa, lad, that t’ lasses will run after thee.”

At one time James rented some land of a neighbouring gentleman of large fortune and estates who was well known for his hospitality. James was invited with other tenants to dine on Court day at the Hall, and dinner was served up in the best style. On his return home to his wife, he gave her an account of it “Eh! Phoebe, but it wad ha’ capped owt. There were beef and mutton, and chickens and game, and ivery thing one could think of. I’s sewer I were fair an’ bet wi’ it all; but what bet ma moast o’ all were ‘at we’d ivery one on us a small loaf lapped up i’ a clout.”

Liqueurs were handed round after dinner. Our good friend took his little glass of the, to him, unknown tipple, and after drinking it off at one gulp, and considering a while, turned round to the waiter and said, “John, bring us some o’ this ’ere i’ a moog.”

At a club dinner, a wedding breakfast, or a funeral lunch, James was overflowing with anecdotes. He was generally the hero of his stories; but I do not believe that they all in reality happened to himself. The stories often told against the principal actor in them, and therefore he may have thought it legitimate to appropriate to himself tales which made him appear in a ludicrous light.

I can remember only a few of these stories.

“It was one night in November last that I and my wife Phoebe was sitting tawking i’ t’ house. It were a dark night, as black as Warren’s best. Now I mun tell thee that our Rachel Anne — that’s our grown up daughter — were at that age when they mostly likes to ha’ a sweetheart, Shoo’d gotten a young man. I don’t like to name names, but as we’re all friends here, I don’t mind saying he were a downright blackguard. It were old Greenwood’s son, tha knaws; t’ lad as were locked up by t’ police for boiling a cat. Well, Rachel Anne were mad after him, and nother her mother nor I liked it. We were nicely put out, I promise you.

“To go on with my tale. Phoebe and I were sitting by t’ fire, when all at once I ses to my old woman, ‘Phoebe, lass, where’s Rachel Anne? Shoo’s not at home, I reckon.’

“Nay, James, lad’ said she ‘shoo’s at a confirmation class.’

“At a confirmation!’ said I, and I whistled. ‘I thowt confirmation was ower.’

“Ah! I dunnow sure; but that’s what shoo said.’

“Is owd Greenwood’s son, Jim, going to confirmation class too?”

“I cannot tell,’ shoo said.

“No more can I’ said I; ‘but I’d like to know?’

“So should I’ said she.

“Win’t thee look out o’ chamber window and see if there’s a leet i’ t’ school?’ said I. So my owd woman went upstairs and looked, and when shoo came down, ‘No, there ain’t’ said she.

“I thowt not’ said I.

“Well, we sat by t’ fire some while, and then my owd lass went into back kitchen to get a bit o’ supper ready. Shoo hadn’t been there long afore shoo come back and said, ‘James, lad!’

“Ah!’ says I; ‘what’s up?’

“Why, this’ says she; ‘there’s summun i’ t’ back yard.’

“How dost a’ know?’ says I.

“Says she, ‘I heard ‘em taukin’; and there’s a lanthorn there.’

“There’s impidence!’ says I. ‘Who is they?’

“I think Rachel Anne is one’ says Phoebe.

“And Jim Greenwood is t’ other’ says I; ‘and I’m glad on’t.’

“Why?’ says Phoebe.

“Lass’ says I ‘I’ll pay yond chap out, I will. I’ll go out by t’ front door, and I’ll come on him, and I’ll let him know what I think of him, coming arter our Rachel Anne. And when I’ve gotten howd on him, I’ll hollow. Then do thou run out o’ t’ back door, and I’ll howd him tight, and thou can poise him behind as much as thou like. Since we’ve been man and wife these fourteen year’ says I ‘we’ve taken our pleasure in common’ says I. ‘We’ve been to Hollingworth Lake together’ says I. ‘And we’ve been to Southport together’ says I. ‘And wunce we’ve went together to t’ exhibition i’ Wakefield together. So,’ says I, ‘we’ll ha’ the kicking, and the shuttling, and the rumpling up o’ yond lad o’ Greenwood’s together. O glory!’ And then I run out o’ t’ front door as wick as a scoprill, and came shirking round towards t’ back door i’ t’ yard. Well, t’ night were dark, but I could see there were some folks there, and I could see the glint o’ a lanthorn, and t’ leet from t’ back kitchen window came on a bit o’ gownd, and I know’d it belonged to Rachel Anne.

“Drat him!” said I to mysen ‘what is lasses coming to next, when they brings their young men under the noses o’ their parents wot can’t abear them?’

“So I came sloping up along the wall till I was quite near. Will you believe it? — her young man, that’s owd Greenwood’s lad Jim, was sitting as easy as owt i’ a chair.

“Oh, you charmer!” says Rachel Anne. I heard her voice. I know’d it were she. ‘You’re near perfect noo!’

“Oh lawk!” thinks I, ‘there’s no accounting for tastes.’ Jim he ain’t ower much o’ a beauty, I promise thee. He’s gotten a cast i’ one o’ his eyes, and when he washes his face he’s gotten a black stock on; and when he don’t, why, then he’s all o’ a muck, face and neck alike.

“Can I get thee owt?” says Rachel Anne, as shameless as owt. ‘Ah! Tha wants a pair o’ boots. I reckon father’s gotten an owd pair he win’t miss. I’ll get them for thee.’ Then sudden, as she was going away to t’ back door, she turns and says, ‘My! he ain’t got no pipe. I mun get him one o’ father’s.’

“Oh, ye abandoned profligate!” groaned I ‘Robbing thy parents to bestow all on this owdacious waggabone! But I’ll be even wi’ thee! I’ll let my fine gentleman know the looks o’ my backyard! I’ll let un ha’ a taste o’ my baccy! I’ll let un know the feel o’ my boots!’

“Father’s breeches fit un rare!” said Rachel Anne.

“Well, now! if that warn’t too much. I yelled —

“Ah! ye dirty waggabone! Thou stealing rascal! Thou cockeyed raggamuffin! And I wor upon him in no time. I caught un by t’ neck and shook un furious. I wor nigh brussen wi’ rage. He were fair down capped, and said nowt. But, as you’ll see presently, he were gathering up his rage for a reglar outbust. He were nigh brussen too.

“Well’ says I ‘wot is’t a doing here? I knows! Thou’rt arter my Rachel Anne. Well. Tha’lt never marry my daughter if I can help it. I’ll never own thee wi’ thy ugly face for a son in law. I win’t run the chance o’ a cock-eye i’ my grandchildren. If my dowter will ha’ thee, I’ll disown her; I win’t speak to her again.’ Then I shook him. ‘Take that,’ says I, and I gave him a blow o’ the fist on his nose, and I reckon I flattened it in. ‘Dost a’ like it?’ says I. ‘Take another taste — a little stimulant will do thee good.’ Then I kicked un off t’ chair, and dragged him up, and shook, and shook, and shook him till I were all of a muck wi’ sweat. So I hollered to my Phoebe. ‘Phoebe, lass! come and poise un i’ t’ rear. I’ll hold un i’ position.’ Well, she came out, and she gave him a crack.

“Now’ says I, ‘I’d like to look i’ thy ugly face and take stock o’ t’ damages. I’ve done thy beauty. Phoebe, lass! give me t’ candle.’ Shoo went to t’ lanthorn, and browt out t’ candle and gave it to me.

“Jim Greenwood hung all limp, like old clothes i’ my hand, and never spoke. But I didn’t know what fire and fury was in him then. He wor just one o’ them chaps as endures what you may say and do up to a certain point, but when that point is passed, then — Lor’!

“I took t’ candle from my owd woman — that’s my wife, I mean, tha mun know — and I held it afore me. Lor-a-mussy, I were flayed! I let go hold, and let t’ candle tumble on Jim — that’s owd Greenwood’s son, tha knows — and I stood shakin’ i’ all my limbs. I’d smashed his nose right in; I’d broken t’ bridge and knocked it in, and there weren’t nowt on it remaining. And his eyes — Lor’! I hadn’t time to think, for I had passed t’ point, and t’ chap couldn’t stan’ no more. I’d let t’ candle fall on him, and set him on fire. Folks don’t over much like being set fire to — leastways owd Greenwood’s son didn’t; for he did blaze, and bang, and fizz, and snap, and crackle away! He reglar exploded, he did! I stood in a sort o’ maze like — I were dazed. Phoebe screamed. And then came a great haw-haw from my boys, who were all there. I could see ‘em now by t’ leet o’ t’ burning sweetheart. ‘Lor’, father!’ said Rachel Anne, as innocent as owt, ‘*What hast a’ been doing to our Guy Fawkes?*’

“Well, sir, will you believe it? — it was nowt but a Guy Fawkes full o’ straw and squibs and crackers ’at I’d involuntarily set on fire.”

This story was told, scarcely above a breath, during a missionary meeting, whilst a colonial bishop was addressing us. James did not laugh himself — was as grave as was proper on the occasion; but his little eyes twinkled roguishly, and those who could hear the whispered tale with difficulty restrained their laughter.

“I think I can tell you summut as happened to my brother Tommy” said James, after we had sung “From Greenland’s icy mountains” and were walking at a judicious distance from the colonial bishop. “Well, my brother Tom were a rare bird to drink. He’d been to t’ Horse and Jockey one day, and had supped enough beer for once, and when he came out about half after ten, he warn’t ower clear as to t’ direction he sud go. Howm’ever, he took t’ loin (lane) all right. Presently there come some one along t’ road. ‘Now’ thowt he ‘I mun keep clear o’ he, or he’ll run hissel’ again’ me, and knock me down.’ T’ mooin were up, just settin’, and castin’ shadows; so he made a great roundabout to avoid lurching again’ t’ man as were comin’ along; but seeing his shadow, ma brother mistook that for t’ man, and thowt t’ shadow had cast t’ feller. So he tried to step ower t’ chap and avoid t’ shadow. As tha mun see, he came wi’ a crack again t’ chap.

“Ye druffen rascal’ said he, giving ma brother a bang on t’ lugs (ears) as made his head spin.

“It’s thy fault,’ said Tom. ‘What dost a’ mean by having a standing-up shadow and solid too?’

“The chap gives him another crack and tumbles him down. When ma brother got up again he went on his road again, saying to hissel’ ‘I winna go blundering again’ no more shadows tonight if I see anybody coming.’ Just then he thowt he saw another chap; so to get out o’ his way he turned into a field by a gate to let un pass. Now, ma brother had a little too much beer in his head; soa when he got into t’ field he couldn’t get out again. He rambled round and round, and t’ moon went down.

“Weel’ ses he ‘I don’t care; I’ll sleep where I am.’ And he ligs him down on t’ ground. He hadn’t been long asleep afore he wakened wi’ cold. T’ dews o’ neet came falling on him and wetted him, and his teeth were chattering; so then he opened his eyes. And what dost a’ think he seed? Why, standing above him were a hawful form as black as a crow. His legs was crooked, his arms was spread, and Tom could see claws on his fingers. His face were like nowt earthly; and he had bristling hair, and great horns like a coo. Tom could see t’ glint o’ his wicked een fixed on him.

“Weel, now, Tommas weren’t that sort o’ chap exackly as might flatter hissen angels ’ud come after him out o’ heaven; so the thowt came on him it were t’ owd chap come to fetch his soul to t’ other place.

“Tom lay quite still. He thowt t’ owd chap mebbe would let un lig awhile if he shammed sleep. He wouldn’t be so unmannerly as to wake un up for the purpose o’ takin’ him away. Tha knaws t’ owd chap war’ a gem’man once, tho’ he’s fallen a bit sin’. Yet what’s born i’ t’ bone comes out i’ t’ flesh — leastwise so Tom thowt.

“Soa Tom lay quiet. But presently he thowt he felt t’ owd chap’s fingers feeling in his pocket for four and twopence he’d gotten aboot him somewhere. Soa Tom turned round sudden on him and ses ‘Tha mun tak ma soul if tha’s boun’ to do soa; but I’ll trouble thee to let t’ four and twopence aloan.’

“Ah! he war’ a deep one war’ t’ owd chap. As sharp as owt, when Tom turned on un, he were standing up stiff and unconcerned, and looking t’ other way.

“Nah, as Tom had spoken, ’t warn’t no use his pretending any more to be asleep. So he thowt, ‘What am I to do next? Tha mun do more wi’ traycle than tha can wi’ brimstone. I’ll soap un down a bit.’

“Then Tom opens his eyes and looks at un and ses ‘Owt fresh?’ But he wouldn’t answer and reveal the mysteries o’ his shop.

“So Tom ses, ses he ‘I reckon tha’st coom a rare long way, and it’s thirsty work walking, or flying, or travelling by train, or whichever way tha hast comed. And’ ses he ‘I tak it vara civil o’ thee to come for me. There’s ma owd woman grummles if shoo’s to come for ma to t’ Horse and Jockey, and that’s half a mile

from my home. And mebbe tha's comed for me five thousand mile. It's vara civil. It's not like a north countryman that's ses he. 'We are outspoken folk, and there ain't much civility among us, but hard rubs. But I won't be outdone by a south countryman i' civility. I daresay tha'rt dry. Tha'll stop a bit, and I'll fetch thee a sup o' home brewed beer.'

"Soa Tom gets up on his feet, and away he goes as wick as a scoprell, and gets home, and dashes in at t' door. There were Sarah Anne, his wife, as red as a turkey cock, and swollen fit to brussen wi' he getting home so late.

"But Tommy he out wi' it at once. 'Sarah Anne, lass! run and get a jug o' beer and a mug, and off wi' thee as fast as tha' can to t' owd chap — he's waiting for thee.' He thowt, tha knaws, to get t' owd chap to tak t' wife instead of he. But Sarah Anne she up wi' her fist and knocked him down as flat as ginger beer as has had t' cork out a fortnight. 'Ah, James' ses ma brother to me, 'I've tried to send ma owd woman to t' owd chap, but shoo winna go. Tha mun tak' a horse to t' water, but tha canna mak' un drink.'

"Weel, next morning ma brother Tom hoo went to look at t' place where he was i' t' neet, and there he see'd t' owd chap still.... But by day leet — what dost a' think? — he was nowt but a flaycrow (scarecrow)."

THE ONE-POUND NOTE

Samuel Sutcliffe lived at Hebden Hay, or Hawden Hole, about a quarter of a mile west of Newbridge, nearly at the bottom of the steep slope which descends from Whitehill Nook to the river Hebden. The house is still standing, easy to be recognised by its whitewash and by the yew tree which grows between the door and the path leading to Upper Hepton and Tommy Rocky's. Beside the farmhouse there is under the same roof a cottage at the east end. In the field at the west end, and below the house, stretching down to the stream, were formerly some mounds, where it was said that the Heptonstall people during the plague buried their dead. Crabtree says (p. 15): "Of that dreadful epidemic, the plague, one hundred and seventeen persons are said to have died at Heptonstall in 1631, several of whom were buried at home, but all entered in the register there." In the old barn near the house, pulled down a few years ago, since 1817, an old man cut his throat. The yew tree is no inapt symbol of the melancholy associations of this secluded spot — a cemetery, a suicide, and a murder.

Samuel Sutcliffe, commonly called Sammy o' Kattie's, lived there to the age of eighty, a bachelor. He was a manufacturer of worsted pieces, and for several years farmed the small farm. The only person living with him was his nephew, William Sutcliffe. On Saturdays, sometimes the uncle, sometimes the nephew, attended Halifax market; sometimes both. On Saturdays, towards evening, the old man might have been seen crossing the old bridge at Hebden Bridge, and calling at the "Hole in the Wall" to take a single glass of ale and hear the news, while he gave himself a very brief rest after his walk from Halifax, before passing on. He was a stout, active man for his age; sober, steady, and industrious; and by economy, but without penuriousness, had saved a considerable sum of money. The cottage adjoining Sammy's dwelling was inhabited by a weaver named William Greenwood.

For five or six years the nephew, William Sutcliffe, had carried on a little business in the fustian trade on his own account; and for two years he had the take of the farm, on which he kept a couple of cows. His business led him to travel into Lancashire, Craven, and even Westmoreland. His journeys were taken three times a year: he started on Monday morning, and returned usually on Friday evening, sometimes on Saturday. He left Hawden Hole on one of these journeys on Monday, February 3rd, 1817, and was this time expected home on the Thursday night following, but circumstances prevented his return till the Saturday.

The name of the murderer was Michael Pickles, commonly designated "Old Mike." He lived at Northwell, near Heptonstall, on the road leading from Heptonstall by Newbridge to Haworth. His cottage, since pulled down, was of one storey: it contained two rooms — one towards the valley and the township of Wadsworth, into which the door entered, formed the dwelling or "house;" the other, trenching back into the hillside, was called the "shop," and contained the looms. Some portion of the walls of the shop are still visible. Approached from

the road, Old Mike's cottage stood a little below and a little beyond the principal house now standing at Northwell. A small garden was attached, in the walls of which are still to be seen the recesses which contained Mike's beehives. The plump looking navelwort, possibly introduced by him, may be seen peeping from crevices in the walls. Like Hawden Hole, Northwell has also its characteristic tree. The sombre Scotch pine which stands prominently forward in front of Northwell is in the corner of Mike's garden, and is said to have been planted by him. He lived at this cottage fifteen years. His age was forty one. He is described as a strong, broad set, but not a tall man, with rather dark hair, pale, cadaverous face, no whiskers, and large rolling eyes. He was lefthanded, his hands being very large: he often made exhibition of the power of his left hand in grasping and crushing anything placed within it, in which exploit he surpassed all competitors. He had a very large, flat foot; his knees inclined very much inwards. He had the reputation of being "double-jointed," whatever may be meant by that term. His occupation was sometimes that of weaving at Northwell, sometimes of gardening for his neighbours, but more frequently that of an outdoor labourer in drywalling, and especially in constructing, of large stones, what is called "weiring," for preventing the river edge from encroaching on the neighbouring fields; for which his great strength qualified him. He had the reputation of being lightfingered. In dressing the gardens of his neighbours he not unfrequently helped himself to some of the contents. His house was generally very well supplied with milk in summer, which was considered to have been obtained by milking the cows in the fields. Above all, he had the reputation of stealing beehives, to which the fact of his being a beekeeper was a sort of cover. As a gentleman was one night riding along the "Needless Road" when not quite dark, he and his horse were suddenly startled, on coming in view of the steep field stretching from that road up to Northwell, by the sight of a strange figure moving slowly and heavily up the field: it was Mike with his not uncommon night burden, a hive of bees on his head. Another gentleman, stopping late at Kebcote Inn because of the rain, saw Mike and a companion take shelter there about an hour after midnight, the former being loaded with the customary "hive-piche" on his head. In the floor of his house, under the bed, he had excavated a secret hiding place for stolen goods, covered by a moveable flagstone. The paving before his door had been raised by the earth taken from this so-called "cave." Notwithstanding these dishonest practices, Mike made a considerable profession of religion. He was a joined member at Birchcliffe Chapel, having, with his wife, received adult baptism. Whether he was originally sincere in his profession and afterwards fell away, is more than doubtful when we consider that, notwithstanding his malpractices, he continued to make great religious profession. In conversation he would expound at large the doctrines of Christianity. To approach him with the view of holding short discourse with him on general topics while he was gardening for you, was to incur the risk of a sermon from him. He fetched milk from old Sammy's at Hawden Hole, and was in the habit of sitting and conversing with him, not unfrequently of reading to him during the long evenings. They had been acquainted many years.

Mike's accomplice was John Greenwood, a weaver, a tallish, slender man, aged twenty nine years, with lightish hair, whose features gave the impression

of a weak and undecided, rather than a depraved and wicked disposition. His characteristic want of firmness rendered him the easy dupe of any deeper adept in villany who might throw temptation into his way. It is believed that he would not have been connected with the murder but for the persuasion of Mike. His character does not appear to have lain under any suspicion, although, as his confession afterwards showed, he was already addicted to dishonest practices. He and Mike married sisters. He lived in a cottage attached to a remote farm in Wadsworth called Bog-Eggs, above Old Town, a little below the moorland prominence called Tomtitiman from which so noble a prospect of this district may be obtained. His cottage, now unoccupied, forms the upper part of the building at Bog-Eggs, being contiguous to the farmhouse.

On Thursday, the 6th of February, 1817, "Joan o' t' Bog-Eggs" went over to Northwell to try to obtain some money from Old Mike, saying that he was "pinned." Times were very hard just now, and doubtless there was much suffering among the poor. Flour was selling at eight shillings per stone, and meal at four and sixpence to five shillings. Old Mike said that he had no money, but that he knew of a place where they could get some. This was just the sort of temptation in which Joan's (John's) weak principles were likely to fail; and Mike was exactly the sort of man to attempt to turn Joan's infirmities to his own advantage. Mike's plausible speech soon prevailed over Joan's scruples; and it was agreed that that night they should sally forth and rob Old Sammy.

On Thursday evening, February 6th, 1817, "Old Mike" and "Joan o' t' Bog-Eggs" were sitting by Old Mike's fireside at Northwell. The night was wearing late, and the family had been sometime in bed. It was clearly understood between Mike and Joan, that after waiting till the hour was sufficiently advanced, they should sally out and rob "Sammy o' Kattie's." The hour agreed upon was midnight. Mike was smoking his pipe, and thinking over the circumstances of the intended burglary. Simple, unthinking Joan had fallen asleep under the influence of the warm fire. At length the clock struck twelve, and Mike aroused his companion, saying, "Come, it's time to be going." They took with them Mike's gun, and left the house, proceeding towards Whitehill Nook, along a field called Adcock, which is to the left of and above the public road leading to Whitehill Nook. They then travelled down the steep rough wood to Hawden Hole. Thrice Joan's heart failed him as he thought of the possible consequences to them both of the meditated robbery. Reassured by Mike's arguments, he proceeded to Old Sammy's. Half past twelve was the hour for the moon to rise; but the night was cloudy, though without rain. Arrived at the house, Joan was placed as sentry before the door, with the gun in his hand, and directed to shoot any person who should offer interruption. Mike, perfectly familiar with the premises, took out a window at the west end of the house. There were more than one window at that end. He took out the larger one, being that nearest to the river. He then entered the house, and undid the door, and opened it. Besides a lock, the door was also fastened by a stout wooden bar placed across it, with the ends inserted in holes in the masonry. Coming out of the house through the now opened door, he fastened the door of William Greenwood, the neighbouring cottager, by placing the wooden bar across the doorway, and fastening the latch to the bar with string. Probably they both

entered Sammy's cottage. Mike mounted the stairs into the room where Old Sammy was sleeping alone. About a month before, the old man had bought a small oak box, in which he placed such of his papers and documents as were of value, and most of his money. The box was placed in a bucket which stood in one corner of his bedroom. Mike secured this bucket, with its contents. Three cotton pieces and four warps were also taken from the bedroom: the pieces were marked by William Greenwood. A cloth coat, and a pair of shoes belonging to William Sutcliffe, which wanted soling, were also taken, and a new shirt of Sammy's.

But old men sleep lightly. Before these things were secured and got away, Sammy awoke. Sitting up in bed to listen, he heard footsteps in the house. He endeavoured to alarm his neighbour in the adjoining cottage, and called out, "William! William! William!" Fearful of being disturbed or detected, Mike approached the bed and seized his old friend and companion by the throat with his terrible left hand. Gripping him as in a vice, he held him down; nor did he quit his grasp till the spark of life was extinguished.

William Greenwood was disturbed during the night. He fancied he heard a noise in Sammy's house, but could not be sure. He called out, but received no answer. He conjectured that the old man might be talking in his sleep; at any rate, he took no more notice of the matter, and fell asleep again. The wind was very strong, and roared terrible in the yew tree. Probably the noise which he heard was Sammy's voice calling out "William" the third and last time. The silence which ensued was, as Mr. Hardy eloquently described it at York, "the silence of death."

I have a short document drawn up at Halifax for the satisfaction of William Sutcliffe, on the 17th or 18th of February, 1817, that he might possess some account of the manner of his uncle's last struggles, in which is recorded the substance of what Mike confessed on the subject at Halifax, February 17th. It is as follows: — "The further examination of William Sutcliffe, of Hawden Hole, in Heptonstall, who saith that on Monday, the 17th day of February 1817, Michael Pickles, the prisoner, told this examinant that after he had entered the dwelling-house of his late uncle, Samuel Sutcliffe, and had got into the bedroom, the said Samuel Sutcliffe rose up on the bed and called out 'William! William! William!' on which the said Michael Pickles seized the said Samuel Sutcliffe by the throat, and heard no more from him, except that he sobbed, as it was soon over with him, and he bore very little. And saith that the cause of his asking the question of the said Michael Pickles as to his uncle's death was to know what his said uncle said previous to his death, and if he suffered much."

Mike now descended the stairs, and greatly alarmed his companion by telling him he was afraid he had killed Sammy. Leaving the bucket outside the house, they made off to Northwell with their booty — the cotton pieces, the warps, the shoes, the cloth coat, the shirt, and, above all, the oak box with its contents.

Having arrived at Northwell, Mike deposited the cotton pieces and warps in the hiding place under the flagstone. Joan took the shoes. The oak box they at once burnt to prevent detection, but preserved the contents. Mike told his wife he was afraid he had killed Sammy, and she began to cry. He also charged Joan to keep it a secret, even from his wife, for his revealing it would cause them both to be hanged. In dividing the money Joan contrived to take advantage of his more crafty companion; for he pocketed one note unknown to Mike. Mike's "Confession" says respecting the remaining notes — "John Greenwood took the guinea note, and gave me the two Bank of England notes, and I gave him nine shillings and sixpence in silver, which made it equal — one pound ten shillings and sixpence each."

William Sutcliffe in his evidence at York said that on going from home on Monday, February 3rd, "he left his uncle four one-pound notes and some silver, to pay wages with in his absence. His uncle had also some notes of his own; among others, one of Mytholm Bank, which had been issued without the signature of Turner, Bent, and Co. It was No. 63. His attention had been called to this note on the 1st of February (the preceding Saturday); his uncle had brought it downstairs in an old book: there were also in this book another pound note and a guinea note"—in all seven notes. William Sutcliffe on his return said that Sammy's three notes were pinned in a ready reckoner. Now, on examining the house the following morning, among some loose papers in the window downstairs, there were found three one-pound notes which had escaped the notice of the robbers. These three which were left being added to the four which Mike and Joan took away, made seven notes. It would seem that Sammy had separated one of William's four notes from the remaining three; that this note he had placed in his box upstairs with the three notes belonging to himself; and that thus his three notes and one of William's were taken away, while three of William's notes had been left in the pocket book in the window downstairs. The note which Joan appropriated to himself, unknown to Mike, was the unsigned Mytholm note. Had this note fallen into Mike's hands, he would probably have observed the danger arising from the circumstance, and destroyed the note; but the ignorant and unsuspecting Joan was not aware of the danger.

There was at this time a set of men in the Cragg valley who went by a bad name. In order to shift the suspicion of the murder and robbery from himself and Mike, Joan, on his way home to Bog-Eggs, instead of crossing the valley at Foster Mill, travelled down towards Mytholmroyd, and crossing the Calder at Carr Bridge, threw down the papers and documents obtained from Sammy's box at Carr Green, hoping thereby to induce suspicion that some of the Cragg band were the robbers and murderers.

And now for the events of the following morning. During the week Sammy had paid some money for work to a man named James Greenwood, of Lobbmill; but a balance of four shillings was left unpaid. Before daylight on Friday morning James Greenwood presented himself at Sammy's door, having come for his four shillings. He was surprised to find the door wide open. This excited his fears that some mischief had taken place during the night. He knocked at

William Greenwood's door, stated the suspicious circumstance, and desired him to come out. On attempting to do so, he found that the door would not open. James Greenwood then discovered (it was still dark) that the door was fastened by means of the wooden bar. It was now ascertained that Sammy's house had been entered by robbers through the window, and that he lay lifeless in his bed. His mouth was full of blood, and some had run out upon the bedclothes. The empty bucket was found outside the door. William Greenwood, who had seen Sammy at half past ten the night before in good health, looked for the cotton pieces which he had taken in the previous day, but they were gone. He observed one footprint leading to the window which had been removed. It was the mark of a bare foot.

There was great consternation in the neighbourhood as soon as the murder was known. Mr. Thomas Dineley, surgeon, of Hebden Bridge, was called in. He gave his opinion that the deceased died of strangulation. It is commonly said that he also pronounced Sammy to have been strangled by a lefthanded person; but some persons very likely to know most of the facts have no remembrance of this circumstance.

The papers and documents were found at Carr Green early in the morning by Olive Heyhirst, who was going to fetch milk.

Several persons expressed to each other their suspicions that Old Mike was the criminal. A woman met him in Northwell Lane on Friday morning. He said "Have you heard that Old Sammy's murdered?"

She replied "If he is, it's thee that's done it."

Mike afterwards confessed that the day after the murder he could neither eat, drink, nor sleep, and was always uneasy wherever he was. On Friday evening he went to Heptonstall to be shaved. He was in such a state of restless agitation that the barber had much difficulty in fulfilling his office, and when Mike was gone out, the barber said to some bystanders "Yon's the man that's murdered Sammy."

William Sutcliffe, the nephew, returned from his journey on Saturday afternoon. A messenger had been sent to expedite his return; but he was not able to get back more than a couple of hours earlier than he would otherwise have done. He now privately made known to several neighbours, and among others to Mr. John Sutcliffe, of The Lee, that among the missing property there was an unsigned Mytholm note. It had been entered by Mr. Barker, the clerk to Turner, Bent, and Co., but was not signed by them. Having been pinned in the ready reckoner, it would show the marks of pinholes. At that time several firms near Hebden Bridge issued private notes of various values. Messrs. Turner, Bent, and Co. issued both guinea and one-pound notes, printed in black ink. Messrs. Rawden, of Callis Mill, issued both guinea notes and five-shilling cards, printed in blue ink, and therefore called "blue backs." Mr. John Sutcliffe, of The Lee, issued cards, value three shillings and sixpence, printed red. Mr. Edmondson issued seven-shilling notes. Mr. Richard Chatburn, of Sprutts,

issued three and sixpenny cards. Mr. Robert Sutcliffe, of New Shop, put out five-shilling notes. Silver was very scarce just then; the smooth shillings which had been current were being called in by Government, and stamped ones were being issued instead.

Monday, February 10th, Mike attended service at Birchcliffe Chapel. The minister, Mr. Hollinrake, during his sermon made some strong remarks about the murder. His text was Matthew xxiv. 43 — “But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.” This smote Mike’s conscience so severely that he afterwards declared that, if any one had looked him earnestly in the face, he might have discovered that he was the man. An inquest was held at Heptonstall; and poor old Sammy’s remains were interred at Heptonstall church. Standing outside the churchyard, at the east end, near the street, you may read his epitaph through the rails: — “In memory of Samuel Sutcliffe, of Hebden Hay, in Heptonstall, who died February 7, 1817, aged eighty-one years.”

John Greenwood had a brother living at Luddenden, named William. John went to him, and gave the unsigned note into his hand. He then received the note back again from his brother. This farce was enacted between them to enable John to give an evasive answer to any one who should make troublesome inquiries as to how he became possessed of the note. John now went to the house of Thomas Greenwood, of Birchcliffe, and completed the purchase of a clock from him, giving him in payment the unsigned note, with some other money. Another version of the story is that given by William Greenwood, the brother, at York, viz. that “John Greenwood came to his father’s house on Tuesday, February 11th, and on going home, desired William to ‘go agatards’ with him; when he told him that he had bought a clock of Thomas Greenwood that came to forty two shillings; that he would give him a note which the witness was to give to Thomas Greenwood on John’s account, and say that he had lent it to John. This William did; but he then began to think that John had not come by the note in an honest manner.”

A woman named Betty Wadsworth, having had an illegitimate child, had been disowned by her relatives, and was now living “afore t’ friend” at Rawholme with another William Greenwood, commonly known by the name of “Will o’ t’ shop.” She possessed a chest of drawers, which, to raise money, she disposed of to Thomas Greenwood, of Birchcliffe, who in payment handed over to her the unsigned note on Tuesday, February 11th. The same evening she went to the shop of John Hoyle, of Woodend, to buy groceries, and offered the unsigned note in payment. Hoyle refused to receive it, seeing it was unsigned. She took it back to Rawholme. Wednesday morning, the 12th, she sent it up to Thomas Greenwood by Sarah, wife of “Will o’ t’ shop,” complaining that he had paid to her a note which was not genuine. Now this Thomas Greenwood was a weaver for Mr. John Sutcliffe, of The Lee; and on the day before Tuesday he had received from Mr. John Sutcliffe, for wages, a Halifax banknote. Not being able to read, he was not aware whether the rejected note was that which he had received from William Greenwood, of Luddenden, or from Mr. John Sutcliffe. Doubting

whether he should be able to get a good note from John or William Greenwood in exchange for it, he decided to try The Lee first, and hope for a successful issue of the experiment. He went immediately to The Lee, and found in the warehouse Mr. Richard Aked, who was learning the business with Mr. Sutcliffe. To him he gave the note, saying that Mr. Sutcliffe must have given him an unsigned note by mistake the day before. Mr. Aked took the note to Mr. Sutcliffe, who was breakfasting. He at once saw that this note was the key to the discovery of Sammy's murderer. He sent for some constables, and meanwhile learned from Thomas Greenwood that the note had come from "Joan o' t' Bog-Eggs." James Wilson, the constable, sizer, of Hebden Bridge Lanes, soon made his appearance, and with him three others — viz. George Hargreaves, John o' Paul's (Greenwood), and John Uttley, commonly called John Clerk, being the clerk of Heptonstall church. Mr. John Sutcliffe and Thomas Greenwood accompany the officers to Bog-Eggs, and Joan is apprehended. He declares that the note was paid to him by his brother William. Joan is therefore set at liberty, and William is apprehended at Luddenden, and taken to Halifax in proper custody the same day. He is brought before Thomas Horton, Esq., J.P., at the justice room, Copper Street. He refuses to give any account of the note, being afraid of criminating his brother, till Friday, February 14th. On that day William Greenwood confesses the hoax as to the passing of the note from Joan to him, and back again. The same day Joan is re-apprehended, and declares before Mr. Horton that he received the unsigned note from Old Mike. William Greenwood is set at liberty. Old Mike is looked for, but cannot be found, his wife stating that he is gone off seeking for work.

Sunday, February 16th, Mike is apprehended at his brother's at Cowside, near Blackshaw Head. He is kept in custody at an inn in Heptonstall for the night. He declared to the Rev. J. Charnock, who visited him, "I am as innocent as you are; I am as innocent as a child unborn."

Monday morning, February 17th, Mike was taken to Halifax, before Justice Horton, with many other persons who had by this time been apprehended on suspicion. (Some had already been brought before Mr. Horton at Halifax. As many as sixteen or seventeen persons in all were taken up. Some of these confessed other crimes, being, however, unconnected with this murder, as of stealing meal and flour, and a gun from Handganroyd Mill, sheep stealing, etc. I believe that one or two persons were convicted of sheep stealing. The rest escaped, partly from the unwillingness of the parties robbed to prosecute.) Mike is confronted with Joan, and denies Joan's accusation. Joan contradicts himself by some blunder as to the day of the week and day in the month when he went to Old Mike's to borrow money. Hereupon Mike appears to be cleared, and is set at liberty. Joan's father comes to Joan, and entreats him, if he knows anything about the robbery, to confess it. At length he yields to this persuasion, and unreservedly confesses all about both the robbery and the murder. John Uttley, the constable, is in court, and having a horse at the inn, he volunteers to pursue Old Mike on his way back to Heptonstall. He overtakes him in King's Cross Lane, walking quickly homewards, and eating "sweet parkin". Uttley calls out "You must come back with me."

Mike, off his guard, asks "What! Has he been telling something?" Uttley brings him quietly back to the magistrates' room. Mike no longer denies the crimes of murder and burglary. When he and Joan were confronted by each other there occurred such a scene of crimination and recrimination that it was found necessary to place Joan in the cell (or cellar) until the minutes of Joan's confession had been read over to Mike. After Mike had confessed many circumstances connected with the affair, the prisoners exchanged places, and the minutes of Mike's confession were read over to Joan. Both were now consigned to their cells.

Tuesday, February 18th, the prisoners were again before Mr. Horton, but nothing new was elicited. They were this day committed to York Castle. The same day James Wilson, the constable, searched Mike's house for the third time. His evidence at York is that "he found, concealed under a flag, under the bed, three fustian pieces and four warps, and some other articles, and above the fireplace a gun. The cotton pieces were identified by William Greenwood, Sammy's neighbour, who had taken them into the house of the deceased and marked them; the other articles were identified by William Sutcliffe."

The *Leeds Mercury* of Saturday, Feb. 22nd, says that on Wednesday, the 13th, the two prisoners passed through that town, strongly ironed, on their way to York Castle.

The trial took place at York Castle on Friday, March 14th 1817. The prisoners were arraigned on an indictment of murdering Samuel Sutcliffe, and also on an indictment of burglary. Both admitted the burglary; both denied the murder. By the recommendation of the judge they pleaded "Not guilty" to both indictments. No fewer than 22 witnesses were taken to York, including all the individuals whose names have been given above; with Mr. William Sutcliffe, of Heptonstall, who made Sammy's writings; Mr. John Barker and Mr. Jas. Bent, of Mytholm, and Mr. Henry Sutcliffe, of Pendle Forest, etc. Mr. Hardy, in a very eloquent and perspicuous opening, stated the facts of the case. The names of the witnesses whose evidence is given in the *Leeds Mercury* (Saturday, March 22 1817), are William Sutcliffe, William Greenwood (the neighbouring cottager), Thomas Dyneley, Betty Wadsworth, John Hoyle, Sarah Greenwood, Thomas Greenwood, William Greenwood, of Luddenden, Thomas Horton, Esq., Olive Heyhirst, John Thomas, of Midgley, and James Wilson. John Thomas "was a shoemaker, and received a pair of shoes from the prisoner, John Greenwood, on the 8th of February, which he delivered to the constable, and which, being produced in court, were identified by William Sutcliffe as the shoes which he had left in the house" when he went on his journey. The other witnesses gave evidence agreeing in most particulars with the facts stated above.

The remainder of the proceedings at York we give in the words of the *Leeds Mercury* of Saturday, March 22nd 1817. "The prisoners being called upon for their defence, Michael Pickles said — John Greenwood came to my house and said he was pined, and asked me to go with him to Sammy's, of Hawden Hole, which I did, and he took the gun with him. When we got to the old man's house, we got in at the window, and we both went into the chamber where the old man

was. He started up in bed when he heard us, and we both ran away, and I never touched the man.

“John Greenwood said — The robbery was proposed by Michael Pickles, for I did not know that there was such a house — I had never been there in my life. When we got to the house, Pickles went in at the window, but I stayed at the outside. I was never in the biggin’ at all, but stood at the shop end all the time, and Pickles brought out all the goods to me that he had taken out of the biggin’. He then told me that he had taken the old man by the neck, and was afraid he had killed him; and I said, ‘Surely thou hast not hurt the old man?’ Michael Pickles gave me the gun to carry, but I tied my handkerchief in two knots over the lock, for fear I should do some mischief with it. When we got back to Pickles’ house, he told his wife he was afraid he had killed the old man; and his wife began to cry. Pickles charged me that I should keep it a secret from every one, even from my wife, for if I told I should be hanged.

“Three witnesses were called. Two of them spoke favourably of the character of John Greenwood. The third stated that he had a wife and three children, but that he did not know much about his character.

“His Lordship, in his charge to the jury, stated that where two or more persons were jointly engaged in the commission of any burglary or other felonious act, and one of the party killed a person in furtherance of their common object, every one of the party would in law be guilty of the crime of murder. And it was necessary, continued his Lordship, for the safety of society, that it should be so, that associations in guilt might be as much as possible prevented. If indeed an individual of any such party should put a person to death to gratify his own private revenge, and not for the furtherance of their common object, in that case he alone would be answerable for the murder. His Lordship explained that this furtherance comprises all acts done to prevent or overpower resistance and to prevent discovery. Applying this rule to the case before them, his Lordship said that if the jury were satisfied that both the prisoners had gone to the house of the deceased for the purpose of committing a robbery, and that one of them, to prevent any alarm or discovery, had by violence occasioned the death of the deceased, it would be murder in them both, though one of the prisoners should not have been within the house at the time, and should have given no consent to the murderous deed, or even not have known of its being committed. That a burglary had been committed in the house was too evident to admit of a doubt. It also appeared from all the circumstances of the case that the death of Samuel Sutcliffe had been produced by strangulation, and it was admitted by Pickles that he had seized him by the throat, and that when he quitted his grasp he had reason to suppose he was dead. If the jury were satisfied of these facts, and further thought that Michael Pickles had committed this violence, not from any personal enmity (of which there was not the least proof), but with a view to prevent alarm and secure the accomplishment of their design of robbing the house, it would be the duty of the jury to find both the prisoners guilty.

“The jury turned round in the box for a moment, and then pronounced against both prisoners the fatal verdict of ‘Guilty.’ His Lordship proceeded, after a most solemn and affecting address, to pass the sentence of the law, which was, that they were both of them to be hung by the neck on Monday until they were dead, and that their bodies should be delivered to the surgeons for dissection.

“John Greenwood fell on his knees, begging for mercy, and protesting his innocence of the murder.

“It is understood that since his conviction he has acknowledged to the chaplain that he was in the house, and stood at the foot of the steps with the gun.

“The sentence of the law was carried into execution on Monday, March 17th, a few minutes after eleven o’clock, and their bodies, after being suspended the usual time, were delivered to the surgeons for dissection. The body of Pickles has been sent to the Dispensary at Halifax.”

MR. WIKES, OF LEASEHOLME

The living of Leaseholme, in the North Riding of Yorkshire, was held by three successive generations of the Wikeses for upwards of a century; all of whom were men of literary talents, popular preachers, great oddities — but much given to the bottle. The first of the Wikes family who held the living was a gentleman who had been captain in the army in the reign of Charles I, and had fought for the unfortunate monarch throughout the civil war. In one of the battles he received a wound in his leg, which incapacitated him from further active service, and the death of the king and the supremacy of Cromwell prevented him from looking to Government for promotion.

But on the Restoration Mr. Wikes cast about for some berth in which he might spend his declining years in ease and comfort. The living of Leaseholme fell vacant, and he applied for it, remembering how his old friend the sea captain, Lyons, had obtained the bishopric of York from Queen Elizabeth.

Captain Wikes was ordained by the Archbishop of York, and given the living he solicited, King Charles II. being glad to reward an old soldier of his father, who had shared his misfortunes, thus economically to himself.

Mr. Wikes also held the incumbency of Ellerburn, near Leaseholme, and took service in the morning at Leaseholme, and in the afternoon at Ellerburn, or *vice versa*.

One year, when the 30th of January fell on a Sunday, Mr. Wikes marched off to Ellerburn for morning service, with a pathetic sermon on the martyrdom of his royal master in his pocket; but on his arrival at the place he found the clerk and sexton near the churchyard, with a short pole in their hands, watching a domestic quarrel that was going forward on the opposite side of the beck that flows through the village. The parson asked why the church was empty and his subordinates were not in their places. The clerk pointed across the beck, and bade Parson Wikes “look and see a woman combing her husband’s head with a three-legged stool.”

Mr. Wikes at once plunged over the brook, and striking the husband with his fist, tore the furious pair asunder, shouting “Be quiet, you brute!” to the husband, and “Hold your tongue, you vixen!” to the woman. Both fell on him, and he had hard work in defending himself from husband and wife. In the fray that ensued the yells of the parson — “Peace, you monster! Have done, termagant! Hands off, you coward! Retire, virago!” — were mingled with the abuse and blows of the disputants, till the absurdity of the whole scene burst upon them all, as the crowd of delighted parishioners and neighbours gathered in a circle about them, and they fell back laughing, and shook hands all round.

But matters did not end here. When husband and wife disagree, and a third party interferes, according to local custom, all three are doomed to “ride the

stang” whilst the people shout and caper around the victims, chanting, as they beat frying pans and blow horns —

“Rub-a-dub, dub-a-dub, ran-a-tan-tang,
It’s neither what you say nor I say, but I ride the stang.”

The parishioners insisted on the immemorial custom being complied with, and Parson Wikes was made to sit astride on the short pole the clerk and sexton had prepared; two others were provided for the belligerent husband and wife; and the whole village prepared to march in procession with them. But though the parson sat complacently on his pole, the husband and wife refused to submit to the ignominious custom, and he armed himself with the pitchfork, she with the poker, and began to defend themselves against the villagers. Parson Wikes was carried to the scene of conflict, and the clerk and sexton, in their eagerness to join in the struggle, dropped him into the beck. Then the villagers rushed upon him, swearing that he was shirking his duty of riding the stang, and he had to stand up to his middle in the water, and fight them off. Armed with the stick, which he whirled about him in single stick fashion, he rattled their heads and arms with it to such good purpose that he was able to beat a retreat into the church, where he rapidly vested himself in his surplice, and placed the sanctity of the place and garb between him and his opponents.

The crowd now poured into the church, and Parson Wikes proceeded with the service, leaving a trail of water up and down the chancel as he paced to the altar and thence to the pulpit. Having prefaced his sermon with an announcement that he took in good part the disorderly conduct and undignified treatment he had met with, he preached them a moving sermon on the merits of Charles the Martyr, and the ingratitude of the people of England to such a virtuous monarch, and wound up with — “Let those who feel the consequence of such a misfortune deplore with me upon this melancholy occasion; but if there be any among you (and I make no doubt there are) who may have secretly wished for this event, they have now got their desire, and may the devil do them good with it.” After which he made the best of his way home to his rectory, and endeavoured to counteract the effects of his dipping by moistening his clay within with hot punch.

THE REV. MR. CARTER, PARSON-PUBLICAN

I cannot do better than extract verbatim the following account from a curious book entitled "Anecdotes and Manners of a Few Ancient and Modern Oddities, interspersed with Deductive Inferences and Occasional Observations, tending to reclaim some Interlocutory Foibles which often occur in the Common Intercourses of Society." York, 1806: —

"The Rev. Mr. Carter, when curate of Lastingham, had a very large family, with only a small income to support them, and therefore often had recourse to many innocent alternatives to augment it; and as the best of men have their enemies — too often more than the worst — he was represented to the archdeacon by an invidious neighbour as a very disorderly character, particularly by keeping a public house, with the consequences resulting from it.

"The archdeacon was a very humane, worthy, good man, who had imbibed the principles not only of a parson, but of a divine, and therefore treated such calumniating insinuations against his subordinate brethren with that contempt which would accrue to the satisfaction and advantage of such as listen to a set of sycophantic tattlers culled from the refuse of society. Besides, the improbability of a malevolent story generally renders it more current by increasing the scandal; and the world, like the pious St. Austin, believes some things because they are impossible. However, he considered that not only the conduct of the inferior clergy claimed his attention, but also to have some idea how far their subsistence was compatible with the sanctity of their functions; therefore, at the ensuing visitation, when the business of the day was over, he, in a very delicate and candid manner, interrogated Mr. Carter as to his means of supporting so numerous a family — ever thinking of this admirable hint to charity, that the more a person wants, the less will do him good — which was answered, as related to me by one well acquainted with the parties, in nearly the following words: —

"I have a wife and thirteen children, and with a stipend of £20 per annum, increased only by a few trifling surplice fees. I will not impose upon your understanding by attempting to advance any argument to show the impossibility of us all being supported from my church preferment. But I am fortunate enough to live in a neighbourhood where there are many rivulets which abound with fish, and being particularly partial to angling, I am frequently so successful as to catch more than my family can consume while good, of which I make presents to the neighbouring gentry, all of whom are so generously grateful as to requite me with something else of seldom less value than two- or threefold. This is not all. My wife keeps a public house, and as my parish is so wide that some of my parishioners have to come from ten to fifteen miles to church, you will readily allow that some refreshment before they return must occasionally be necessary, and when can they have it more properly than when their journey is half performed? Now, sir, from your general knowledge of the world, I make no doubt but you are well assured that the most general

topics in conversation at public houses are politics and religion, with which ninety nine out of one hundred of those who participate in the general clamour are totally unacquainted; and that perpetually ringing in the ears of a pastor who has the welfare and happiness of his flock at heart, must be no small mortification. To divert their attention from these foibles over their cups, I take down my violin and play them a few tunes, which gives me an opportunity of seeing that they get no more liquor than necessary for refreshment; and if the young people propose a dance, I seldom answer in the negative; nevertheless, when I announce time for return, they are ever ready to obey my commands, and generally with the donation of a sixpence they shake hands with my children, and bid God bless them. Thus my parishioners enjoy a triple advantage, being instructed, fed, and amused at the same time. Moreover, this method of spending their Sundays is so congenial with their inclinations, that they are imperceptibly led along the paths of piety and morality; whereas, in all probability, the most exalted discourses, followed with no variety but heavenly contemplations, would pass like the sounds of harmony over an ear incapable of discerning the distinction of sounds. It is this true sense of religion that has rendered my whole life so remarkably cheerful as it has been, to the great offence of superstitious and enthusiastic religionists. For why should priests be always grave? Is it so sad to be a parson? Cheerfulness, even gaiety, is consonant with every species of virtue and practice of religion, and I think it inconsistent only with impiety and vice. The ways of heaven are pleasantness. Let "O be joyful" be the Christian's psalm, and leave to the sad Indian to incant the devil with tears and screeches. Now, to corroborate my remarks upon cheerfulness as conducive to contentment, I will by leave solicit so much of your indulgence as to hear the following extract from the works of an eminent divine of the Established Church: — The Thirty Nine Articles are incomplete without a fortieth precept enjoining cheerfulness; or you may let the number stand as it does at present, provided you expunge the thirteenth article, and place that heavenly maxim in the room of it. Might not the Archbishop of Cashel have been a sound divine though he added the arch stanza about Broglio to the old Irish ballad in praise of Moll Roe? Or did the Bishop (not the Earl) of Rochester's poems on the manlike properties of a lady's fan ever impeach his orthodoxy in the least?

"Here the archdeacon very candidly acknowledged the propriety of Mr. Carter's arguments in defence of his conduct, and complimented him on his discernment in using the most convenient vehicle for instruction; observing that, although he might deviate a little from the plans generally advised for the accomplishment of that purpose, yet it bore no less authority than the celebrated Dr. Young, who wrote a play ('The Brothers') for the propagation of the Gospel, the profits of which he consecrated to the Society for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts."