

The Weird Aryan History Series

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Someone once said that Americans are a people without a past. I once saw a statistic to the effect that less than 50% of Americans, meaning White Americans, can name all four of their grandparents (I mean actually name them: Grandpa and Mee-Maw don't count) and less than ten percent could name more than one great-grandparent. Many Americans confuse the Korean War with World War Two. Something like 30% of *reporters* in the Gulf War did not know there had been a World War One, although you'd think the designation of World War Two might have tipped them off that there was a previous version floating around somewhere. (True story.)

We as a people have no idea where we've been, so it's no wonder we have no idea where we're going.

My Weird Aryan History series is an attempt to remedy that, to inform White Nationalists of some of the more interesting events in the history of our people and let them know that yes, in fact there *were* Aryan events going on before the time of cowboys and Indians, which is as far back as most Americans have any historical awareness at all.

Beyond a highly inaccurate movie version of the Wild West, some Americans have a vague impression of the Civil War (some re-enactors are downright anal about the 1861-1865 period to the exclusion of the other 3000-odd years of Western civilization, just like some National Socialists can recite a day by day history of the Third Reich from 1933 to 1945 and nothing else at all.) There is a dimmer impression in a few consciousnesses of George Washington crossing the Delaware, and guys in white wigs signing something in 1776, and beyond that there's Elmer Fudd in Puritan dress, wearing a cartoon steeple-crown hat and carrying a blunderbuss, hunting turkeys for Thanksgiving (nobody in the 17th or 18th centuries hunted with a blunderbuss) while having run-ins with Bugs Bunny. For 99% of Americans, that's it.

Now, in addition to being a people with amnesia, we are also a very *sleazy* people, as the current pre-occupation with Court TV and assorted media hyped crap indicates, from Scott Peterson to Natalee Holloway. Fine, I'm sleazy too. So I will be selecting all kinds of weird, wonderful, violent, bloody, bizarre, and ghastly stuff from the history of our race and presenting it for our own little tabloid show here on the internet. I'll start off with the mystery of the Princes in the Tower.

These articles will in fact be mostly fairly long and detailed and you will have to dust off the old attention span and give it a good workout to read and understand most of them, but I will try to intersperse short little Aryan factoids as well. I think this will actually be a kind of entertaining project, something to occupy myself while waiting for the lights to go out, and something many of you will appreciate. If you don't, there's always the old delete button.

Okay, are we clear on what the Weird Aryan History Series is and why? We do know that there is a purpose to it and it's not just Harold losing his marbles? Good.

The series consists of 56 e-mails, including this one. I have sent them out before. A few of you loved it. Most of you--well, it was pretty obvious most of you just considered the series one of HAC's little eccentricities, and didn't even bother to read them. That always saddened and disappointed me. I don't understand why I could never seem to get any traction with this.

I mean, I just don't get it. How can anyone *not* be fascinated with all this stuff?

Anyway, to counter all this Black History Month crap, I am going to re-transmit the complete Aryan History Series, roughly two or three per day, so this will probably take about a month. It will give you guys some great entertainment, which seems to be largely what many of you are looking for.

No, history did *not* begin with America. Yes, our race does have a past other than WWII and the Civil War and the cowboys.

88!
HAC

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– HAC)*

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Lesson #1: The Princes in the Tower (1483) by Russell Auto

Prologue

Some time in the summer or early fall of 1483, 12-year-old Edward V and his 10-year-old brother, Richard of York, disappeared from public view. Their father, King Edward IV, had died in April, and they had been lodged in the Tower of London since the end of May by their Uncle Richard. In mid-July, Richard had his nephews declared illegitimate, which meant that neither boy would be able to become king, and arranged to have himself crowned Richard III. Two years later, in August, 1485, Richard III was killed at the Battle of Bosworth Field, and Henry Tudor, the victor, became Henry VII.

What happened to the princes? Over the next 500 years, two camps emerged. The first, the traditionalists, were firm in their belief that Richard III had ordered the murders of his nephews. The second, the revisionists, maintained that Richard III's reputation had been besmirched by his successor, Henry Tudor, the first of the Tudor kings and father of Henry VIII.

Josephine Tey, in her classic mystery novel *The Daughter of Time*, represents the best of the Revisionists artistic treatment of the story. The pre-eminent artistic rendering of the mystery for the Traditionalists is, of course, Shakespeare's Richard III. Since Ms. Tey's novel, many treatments and interpretations have been published that, if anything, deepen the mystery.

Discovery in the Tower – July 1674

Other than the account of Sir Thomas More, often repeated and embellished by other 16th century writers, nothing was known of the fate of the princes. In 1674, 191 years after their disappearance, an interesting discovery was made in the Tower of London. Assembling the known facts together, one might imagine that the discovery occurred something like this:

The clanging of picks resounded through the White Tower. The stairs leading up to the Chapel of St. John the Evangelist had been crumbling for a number of years, and the king had ordered its demolition and replacement. The large broken stones shattered under the workmen's picks, and a large pile of rubble had formed in the open area leading to the steps. The workmen had reached the floor of the basement and had been surprised to find a layer of loose stones, rather than a stone floor, as they had anticipated.

After they had removed about a 10-foot layer of stones, they looked at the top of a wooden chest. Clearing away the last of the debris, one of them carefully raised the lid and reached in.

He held up a bone. It was an arm bone. An hour later, the workmen had collected the bones of two humans.

Charles II, king at that time, ordered that the bones be examined by the royal surgeon, who was afterwards satisfied that they were the remains of the two princes, Edward V and his brother.

Four years later, after having lain in a safe place in the Chapel of the White Tower, the bones were placed in a small marble casket and given a place of honor in Westminster Abbey. At the service, the Archbishop of London said the prayers, and Charles II spoke.

“It is right and meet that we commend the bones of these young princes to a place of final rest. Their fates at the order of Richard III grieves us, and though almost two centuries have passed, the vile deeds of that villain shall ne’er be forgotten.” The King crossed himself, turned, and led the small funeral procession out of Westminster Abbey.

An Inquest

Two and a half centuries after the burial ceremony in Westminster Abbey, King George V in 1933, annoyed by the mounting pressure from supporters of Richard III, gave his approval for the examination of the bones in the white marble coffin by reputable scientists. This inquest, intended to resolve the question of whether or not the princes had been found in 1674, may very well have been similar to this hypothetical account:

September, 1933

Lawrence E. Tanner, MD, OBE, and Keeper of the Monuments of Westminster Abbey, had known William Wright, President of the Anatomical Society of Great Britain, for over 20 years. He had met Bill Wright under unfortunate circumstances, when Wright, the pre-eminent dental surgeon of Harley Street, had extracted his wisdom teeth. Tanner had never forgiven him for that painful experience, even though the two met often at conferences and dinners, and had been unfailingly polite to one another.

Now, they were thrown together, directed by the king, George V, and the Home Secretary, to perform an examination of the bones of the supposed princes, Edward V and Richard of York. Tanner did not look forward to working with Wright, a hearty fellow who got on his nerves. But, duty called.

Tanner had set them up in a room in the chapter house. A long oak refectory table had been covered with sheets, and the contents of the Christopher Wren marble coffin had been spread on the table. The bones, brown with 450 years of oxidation, were arranged by length.

Quite a few that don't belong here, wouldn't you say, Tanner? What do you think? Pig bones? Sheep?"

"A bit of everything, I'd say. Scraps from the kitchen. Pork, sheep, cattle. Some scullery lad must have had a rubbish heap under those stairs, and when the chest was found, the workmen must have thrown every bone they found into it. Quite a mess." Tanner lit his pipe.

"Well, lets get started, shall we? Why don't you separate out the animal bones, and Ill start lining up the young lads. It was just as Tanner thought; Wright would use him as an assistant.

However, it was Tanner who made the final measurements. After a week of careful sorting and measuring, they were ready to record. Wright was poised with pen and paper as Tanner dictated. "So what do we have?" Tanner said. "Two pre-pubertal skeletons of undetermined gender."

Wright interrupted. "Most likely male, though, wouldn't you say?"

Tanner frowned, but replied "Most likely male. One, four feet ten inches tall, the other just under four feet seven inches—say, four feet six and one half inches tall. Only a partial skull for the younger. Both have some bones missing, phalanges, metacarpals."

Wright handed the notebook to Tanner. "Now, for the jaws and dentition. The elder looks like he suffered from osteomyelitis—quite extensive. Must have been dreadfully painful. They are no doubt related, as based on the presence of hypodontia—both have permanent teeth missing. Good thing the younger boy's skull was the lower half. What would you estimate their ages, Tanner?"

“Well, using your tooth measurements, I’d say the elder was 12 to 13 years old, the younger—it’s a little more difficult to tell—say, 9 to 11 years old.”

“That pretty well takes it, then, doesn’t it? Edward was 12 years, 10 months old in September, 1483, and Richard was what?”

“I believe just 10 years old. Yes, I have no doubts. You agree, Wright?”

“Indeed I do. Too many coincidences not to be the princes. Found in the right place—according to Thomas More. Related, clearly. Right ages. Yes, I have no doubts. Besides, this stain on the skull of the elder. Blood stain, consistent with suffocation. No, no doubt about it, as far as I’m concerned.”

“I agree. Well, lets get these boys back in their coffin. This time, we’ll leave out the animal bones.”

In fact, Tanner and Wright did not resolve the question to the satisfaction of some. After all, it is argued, Tanner and Wright assumed from the beginning that the bones in the casket were those of the princes. They merely confirmed their assumption. No radio-carbon dating (not available at the time) was done. Could these have been the bones of some children of an earlier era, perhaps Roman? Despite the urging of Richards present-day supporters, the bones have not been reexamined.

Shakespeare at Work

Where do we get our conception of Richard III, villain and murderer of children? There is no more profound influence on how we view Richard than the famous play by William Shakespeare. He, of course, relied on histories that had been written in the first half of the 16th century. These, most prominently by Hollinshed and Hall, had been based on Thomas Moore’s biography of Richard. Shakespeare had already achieved a certain amount of success with the London theatre public with his three plays on Henry VI, the last part of which has an appearance by Richard III, and then known as Richard Gloucester. Shakespeare was, after all, a man of the theatre and not an historian. It is interesting to speculate on how Shakespeare interpreted these sources, and created the play that has had so much influence over the last 400 years.

It would be fascinating to have been present at the first rehearsal of Richard III, probably held in mid-1592. What were Shakespeare’s instructions to his leading actor, Richard Borage? Did he direct Borage to act Richard as an attractive

villain, so that he was as much devilish as evil? Whatever the original interpretation of the role, Shakespeare gives the character of Richard lines that unmistakably reveal his villainous motives.

*And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover
To entertain these fair well-spoken days,
I am determined to prove a villain
And hate the idle pleasures of these days.
Plans have I laid, inductions dangerous,
By drunken prophecies, libels, and dreams,
To set my brother Clarence and the King
In deadly hate the one against the other.*

Shakespeare's Richard is a new kind of complex villain, one who is adept at plotting, prone to irony, and just as blood-thirsty as the villains who came before him. But, he is a villain nonetheless.

The Three Kings

In order to understand the context of the murder of the princes, it's helpful to know something about the politics of the second half of the 15th century, particularly about the three kings that ruled England at that time. The princes, after all, were pawns in the elaborate game of power seeking, and the players—for the most part—were those who wanted to be king. Certainly, the personalities of Edward IV, his younger brother Richard III, and the man who overthrew Richard, Henry VII, are central to the story.

Edward IV (reigned from 1460 to 1483)

Even before he assumed the throne, Edward of York had a reputation as something of a rake. He stood six feet three and a half inches tall, fully a half foot taller than the average Englishman of the age, and was, by all reports, remarkably handsome. Edward did not restrain his interest in women, and enjoyed numerous liaisons. Marriage to Elizabeth Woodville did not interfere with his sexual adventures. A handsome, affable, charming man was, it appears, forgiven his appetites. He was, at the beginning of his reign, a fair and benign ruler, and well liked by his subjects.

Pleasant as Edward was, it didn't stop him from doing whatever was necessary to secure his reign. After defeating the forces of Henry VI, Edward had Henry's heir, the young Prince of Wales, murdered. Allegedly, even Henry VI, a

simple-minded and ineffectual old man who was imprisoned in the Tower, may have also been murdered at Edward's request.

Another threat to Edward was the unpredictable loyalty of his other brother, George, Duke of Clarence, who allied himself with Henry VI's wife in her attempt to overthrow Edward. Younger brother Richard played the role of peacemaker in reconciling his two older brothers, but George remained troublesome, eventually giving Edward no choice but to execute him for treason. Interestingly, George and Richard had married sisters. The older of the Neville girls, Isobel, married George, and the younger, Anne married Richard. Family connections aside, George had to go, and so he met the usual fate of 15th century traitors.

These relationships—the execution of George, Duke of Clarence, and the marriage of Richard to Anne Neville—are changed quite dramatically in Shakespeare's play. According to Shakespeare, George, a gentle soul slandered by Richard, is drowned in a butt of malmsey. Most likely, the reference to this comes from his love of wine, and the drowning in malmsey is a metaphor for his drunkenness leading to his eventual death. The fascinating courtship of Anne by Richard, her husband's (Henry VI's heir, the Prince of Wales) corpse between them, is pure invention, since Anne never met the Prince of Wales, her husband, and was still little more than a child when Richard courted and married her.

During his reign, Edward continued to indulge himself. One of his mistresses, procured for him by his loyal aide, Lord Hastings, was Jane Shore. As he tired of her, he turned her over to Hastings. His appetites included not only women, but food and drink as well, so that by the time of his death at the age of 44, he was grossly fat.

Richard had been a loyal youngest brother. At the age of 18, he performed admirably at the Battle of Tewksbury against the forces of Henry VI, and for a number of years thereafter governed the northern counties for Edward with skill.

Edward had married Elizabeth Woodville secretly, over the objections of his mother, who found Elizabeth, a widow, an unsuitable candidate for a queen. In addition to her unsuitability, she brought with her a group of relatives, brothers and sons, who were ambitious and grasping. Edward, as long as he was left to his own pleasures, did not seem to mind the machinations of his in-laws and stepsons. It was one of these pleasures that eventually kept his own son from inheriting his throne.

One of the ecclesiastical laws of the time was that the promise of a marriage carried the legal force of an actual marriage. Edward evidently used the promise of marriage as a means to entice women into his bed, and by all accounts he used the device successfully. However, with at least one of these promises, to Eleanor Butler, he made the mistake of promising it in the presence of a bishop, Bishop Stillington. This was several years before his marriage to Elizabeth Woodville (who probably had the same promise made to her, but made Edward keep it). The net effect of this promise to Eleanor Butler was, years later, to invalidate his marriage to Elizabeth Woodville, rendering his children from that marriage illegitimate, and hence ineligible to inherit the throne.

In the meantime, throughout the reign of Edward IV, younger brother Richard was a loyal soldier and administrator. He was so trusted by his older brother that he, Richard of Gloucester, was named in Edwards will as protector, the guardian of Edward's oldest son and heir. Protectors ruled as king until the designated heir reached majority, which had varied throughout the centuries, but was generally about 14 years of age. England had experienced political turmoil in the past when the heir had not yet reached majority, and the naming of a protector was a reasonable practice.

Edward IV died at the age of 44 on April 9, 1483. His son and royal heir, known henceforth as Edward V, was 12 years old.

Richard III (reigned from 1483 to 1485)

Richard of Gloucester was considerably different from his older brother. What he actually looked like is in dispute. He was described as almost as handsome as the charismatic Edward, but smaller and slighter. Others, including Thomas More, describe him as deformed, with a withered arm and a hunched back.

Almost every actor who has portrayed Richard plays him as deformed. The most recent production of note, starring Kenneth Branagh as Richard, begins the play with Richard delivering his famous opening soliloquy on a rack, dressed only in underpants, undergoing a physical torture evidently intended to straighten his deformed body. A famous production starring Antony Sher presents Richard as a malevolent spider, skittering across the stage on insect-leg-like crutches.

Portraits picture him with one shoulder slightly higher than the other, but without any other noticeable deformity. Even the portraits are in dispute, since two of the three principal ones have been retouched to either accentuate the raised shoulder, or to paint it out.

It is important to note that two contemporary reporters of the reign of Richard III do not mention any physical deformity, and both observers certainly saw him at one time or another. The several reports of Richard's prowess in battle deny the assertion that Richard was physically deformed.

One consistent feature is his serious, almost melancholy expression. This mesmerizing face is the key element that prompts novelist Josephine Tey's character, a bored, bedridden detective, to become interested in the case of Richard III and the two princes.

Other contrasts with his brother were made by various authors. Richard was more puritanical than his sybaritic brother, and, at least with respect to Edward IV's later years, a benign and efficient ruler. These admirable traits—courage, benevolence, administrative and legislative wisdom—are in contrast to the historical characterization of Richard III as a remorseless villain. Still, like most of the rulers of medieval Europe, there is no question that he was ruthless. Whether he murdered his nephews or not, he certainly executed a number of political opponents during his brief reign. Some of these were dispatched because of actual rebellion, but others were killed because they simply posed a threat to his throne.

It is not surprising that the Tudor appraisal of Richard included charges of more subtle murders. One particular rumor was that Richard poisoned his wife Anne, who died in 1484. His motive was, supposedly, two-fold: First, Richard and Anne's son had died, and Richard had no direct heir. Another marriage might have provided him with a male heir. Second, a solution to this was for Richard to marry his niece, Elizabeth York in order to strengthen his hold on the throne and thwart the plans of Henry Tudor. (This eldest daughter of Edward IV was a pawn in the power struggle between Richard and Henry. She had been promised to Henry Tudor by her mother, Elizabeth Woodville, and she eventually married him.)

Revisionists point out that, to all appearances, Richard and Anne were happily married—she accompanied him on his many trips to the North—and that both grieved the loss of their son. They further argue that Richard would have to rescind the judgment of illegitimacy on Edward IV's children in order to profit from marrying Elizabeth York, a complicating factor if the princes were still alive. The traditionalists logically point out that rescinding the illegitimacy would no longer pose a threat to Richard's right to the throne if the princes were already dead.

Henry VII (reigned from 1485 to 1509)

Henry Tudor, a descendent of the House of Lancaster, had a tenuous claim to the throne of England. He was the son of a commoner, Owen Tudor, who had married the widow of Henry V. However, he had an ambitious mother and a number of significant supporters. Two of these were Bishop Morton and the Duke of Buckingham. Buckingham had been the primary supporter of Richard III during the frenetic period between Edward IV's death and Richard's assumption of the throne, but betrayed Richard and joined the cause of Henry Tudor.

Several reasons are given by different authors for Buckingham's defection. The first, and probably the most reasonable, is that Richard reneged on promises to transfer to Buckingham extensive properties. The second is that Buckingham was repelled by Richard's murder of the two princes. Some theorists regard Buckingham as the most likely murderer of the princes, perpetrated in order to secure Henry Tudor's claim to the throne. A variation of Buckingham's deed by some of the traditionalist's camp is that Buckingham was the murderer, following instructions from Richard to carry out the deed.

Portraits of Henry Tudor present a thin-lipped, sly man, much more likely to evince a response of distrust in the viewer than the famous portrait of Richard III. Like all of the English kings during the late medieval period, Henry was ruthless. He justified the killing of Richard at Bosworth Field by declaring that he had been declared king the day before the battle, thereby classifying Richard as a traitor against the crown. He conveniently dispatched to the headsman's block Sir James Tyrell after extracting a confession from Tyrell that he and two others were the actual murderers of the princes. While he solidified the Tudor hold on the crown for his son, Henry VIII, he was noted for his mean and stingy nature.

When Henry landed in Wales in 1483 with his forces of French mercenaries and English and Welsh rabble, he had lived half of his 28 years outside of England. In some respects, he was a foreign invader. But his noble supporters were intent on toppling Richard and replacing him, even if it had to be with the relatively unknown Henry Tudor.

If the Earl of Stanley had not kept his forces out of the Battle of Bosworth, Henry might have been defeated, and Richard III would have remained king.

One of Henry's first acts as king was to see that Parliament repealed *Titulus Regius*, the act by which Richard had used to declare Edward IV's children illegitimate. Now, his future queen, Elizabeth of York, sister of the princes, was

legitimate and a proper wife for a king. However, by repealing the act, Edward V and his younger brother were legitimate once again. Hence, Henry was acknowledging that the princes were dead, since, by restoring Edward V's legitimacy, he was acknowledging that the dead boy had been the rightful King of England.

Whatever Henry's personal traits, he gave his reign peace and stability, ending the War of the Roses by uniting, in marriage, the House of Lancaster, his family, and the House of York, his wife's family.

Prelude to Murder

The murder of the princes in the Tower of London was, of course, a political act, and was prompted by the sequence of events that began with the death of Edward IV. Upon the death of her husband, Elizabeth Woodville, Edward's queen, sought to keep her family in power by moving swiftly to establish her son, Edward V, on the throne.

To accomplish this, she dispatched her brother, Lord Rivers, and her son from a previous marriage, Lord Richard Grey, as well as Grey's chamberlain, Sir Thomas Vaughn, to bring young Prince Edward from the North. The idea was have Edward crowned as soon as possible, leaving him free to choose his own advisers, which would, of course, be his mother, his Woodville uncles and half-brothers, and nobility loyal to Edward IV. Thus Richard, as protector, would have his power neutralized by Elizabeth Woodville and her relatives.

Lord Hastings, a close friend and adviser of the dead king (who shared a mistress, Jane Shore, with him) protested against the size of the escort that the queen intended to send, and Elizabeth Woodville reduced the size of the force to 2,000 men. In the meantime, couriers from Hastings informed Richard, who was at York, of these developments, urging him to put himself at the head of an army and to arrive in London before Rivers brought the young king from Ludlow.

Richard left York for Northampton with an army of 600 men. At Northampton he was to join Rivers and Edward V and proceed to London together. By the time Richard arrived, he learned that Rivers and his troops had passed through the town and were now in Stony Stratford, some 12 miles closer to London. Rivers traveled back to Northampton to extend the young king's greetings to his uncle. Richard invited Rivers to stay for supper, and proposed that the next morning they ride together to meet the king. During the meal, the Duke of Buckingham arrived.

After Rivers retired for the night, Richard and Buckingham plotted. In the morning, Rivers was arrested. Richard and Buckingham then traveled the 12 miles to Stony Stratford and met with the young king. Richard gave his condolences, and then maintained that the same men who had encouraged Edward IV's vices were conspiring to ambush the protector. The interview, according to Thomas More, ended with the 12-year-old king in tears, and his half-brother, Richard Grey, and his chamberlain under arrest. When the news reached the queen, she took her remaining children and sought sanctuary in Westminster Abbey. London was in an uproar, mollified to some degree by a letter from Richard promising an early coronation for Edward V. Richard, Buckingham, and their retinue arrived in London, and the young king was safely lodged in the Palace of St. Paul.

All seemed calm, until Richard learned that Lord Hastings had begun to conspire with Elizabeth Woodville, shifting his loyalty from Richard, probably because he felt that Buckingham would now have access to the spoils that Hastings felt were his. Richard summoned the unsuspecting Hastings to a meeting at the Tower, where he asked Hastings what should happen to those who would conspire against the protector.

Lulled into a sense of relief when Richard seemed to be accusing the Woodvilles, he started to speak, when Richard slammed his fist on the table, calling Hastings a traitor. At that sign, armed men rushed into the room, took Hastings away, and, within minutes, he was (as described by Thomas More) brought forth into the green beside the chapel within the Tower, and his head laid down upon a log of timber and there stricken off.

Richard immediately called forth a number of prominent citizens and declared that Hastings and others had planned to assassinate himself and Buckingham during their meeting, and that the traitor had to be killed immediately. The other conspirators were pardoned, no doubt to quiet the fears of the nobility. One of them, Bishop Morton, was to be kept in the custody of the Duke of Buckingham, and would rise again in opposition to Richard.

It is probable at this point that Richard decided that if he were to survive, he must be king. Edward, the boy king, had shown some maturity, and would not be pleased to be ruled by his uncle, who had imprisoned his mother's brother, Lord Rivers, and his half-brother, Richard Grey, and who had driven his mother and younger brother into sanctuary. Worst of all, his uncle had beheaded his Lord Chamberlain, Hastings, within sight of the royal apartments in the Tower where young Edward was now lodged.

While Richard began his program to usurp the throne, he had Rivers, Grey, and Vaughan executed at Pontefract, where they had been kept. Most of the important opponents, including the powerful Hastings, were now out of the way.

The Plot

Sir Thomas More's version

Sir Thomas More gives an account of how the murders were planned. According to him, Richard hatched his plot while on a royal progress through England, an attempt to visit regions throughout the land and establish his popularity. More's description might be dramatized with the following scene:

Gloucester, July 30, 1483

“Do you understand? You are to hence to the Tower and instruct our Lord Brackenbury to carry out the deed. It must be done, and done quickly.”

John Green, loyal retainer to a fault, bowed to his sovereign, King Richard III. “Your Majesty, I will leave at once.”

Four days later, Green was in the small chamber that was used by the Constable of the Tower, Sir Robert Brackenbury. He had revealed the purpose of his visit to the constable, who sat silently after Green had delivered his charge from the king.

In distress, Brackenbury finally said, “Sir, I cannot. I love the king, but I cannot do this thing that he wishes. It is not within my purview. I have no stomach for it.”

“The king will not be pleased, Sir Robert. It is not a great thing that he asks of you. The young princes have no future, as you are well aware.”

Brackenbury knelt before Green. “Before our Lady in the Tower, I could never put the princes to death, though I should die therefore.”

Now at Warwick Castle, Richard awaited the return of Green. “Is it done?”

“Your Majesty, he will not. He says he cannot.”

“Ah, a man of scruples is our Lord Brackenbury. We shall not compromise his loyalty. Yet, I will have it done. Is there not a man amongst my party who can do this? Ah, whom shall a man trust? Those that I have brought up myself fail me, and at my commandment will do nothing for me.”

“There is one,” said Green. “He lies outside your door. James Tyrell. You need only command him, and the princes will be dead.”

Again, four days passed. At the gate of the Tower wall, Tyrell met with Brackenbury. “Lord Brackenbury, this is my man, John Dighton, who assists me with this mission. I have here, m’Lord, a letter from the king, sealed by his hand. It directs you to deliver unto me the keys to the Tower wherein the princes lodge.”

Brackenbury read the letter. Looking up, he said, “I see. Very well, you shall have the keys.”

Tyrell took the large ring of keys and said to Brackenbury, “Who is with the princes? Who waits upon them?”

“There are four.”

“Is Miles Forest amongst their number?”

“He is.”

“I suggest that you dismiss all but Forest, and then retire to some place of refreshment within the city. You shall enjoy a full day’s deliverance from your duties.”

Brackenbury sighed. “I see. I will do as you suggest.”

Two hours later, Tyrell, Forest, and Dighton were at a table at the Golden Cockerel. Tyrell spoke, “It is now going upon nine o’clock. You shall carry out the deed about midnight. There must be no mistake, no chance that either will survive. I will await you in the passageway. When you have finished, fetch me and show me that you have done what the king has commanded. Understood?”

“Aye, m’Lord,” Forest and Dighton both replied.

The Murders

Sir Thomas More's version, 1511

Sir Thomas More, basing his account of the murders of the princes on the supposed confession of Sir James Tyrell, is vivid in his description of the deed. It is worth quoting directly from his biography of Richard:

Sir James Tyrell devised that they should be murdered in their bed, to the execution whereof he appointed Miles Forest, one of the four that kept them, a fellow fledged in murder before time. To him he joined one John Dighton, his own horse keeper, a big broad, square, strong knave. Then, all the other being removed from them, this Miles Forest and John Dighton about midnight (the children lying in their beds) came into the chamber and suddenly lapped them up among the clothes so bewrapped them and entangled them, keeping down by force the featherbed and pillows hard unto their mouths, that within a while, smored and stifled, their breath failing, they gave up to God their innocent souls into the joys of heaven, leaving to the tormentors their bodies dead in the bed.

Sir Clements Markham's version, 1906:

A popular theory of some of the revisionists is that Buckingham murdered the princes, either to clear the way for Henry's usurpation, or to gain the throne for himself. The latter proposition, that Buckingham, also a descendant of Edward III, sought to be king, is particularly favored. Involved in this version of the murder plot is Bishop Morton, who appears to have been a very astute politician of the time. While he was accused of plotting against Richard with Lord Hastings, Morton was spared and given over to the supervision of Buckingham. Regardless of whichever murder theory is believed, Morton was instrumental in helping Henry wrest the throne from Richard. Interestingly, Sir Thomas More spent some of his youth in the household of Bishop Morton (subsequently esteemed by Henry VII as an important advisor). It has been assumed that Thomas More obtained some of his information for his biography of Richard from Morton, who was a very involved participant in the events of 1483 to 1485.

This theory had its most elaborate presentation by Sir Clements Markham. One might reconstruct Markham's theory with the following scene:

August, 1483:

“It seems your king is not quite the generous benefactor you thought him to be.” Bishop Morton, both sleek and fat like an otter, smiled at his captor, the Duke of Buckingham.

“No doubt he has his reasons,” said Buckingham.

“Oh, I am sure he has his reasons to go back on his word. Richard—or should I say King Richard III?—always has his reasons. Devices would be a better word.”

Buckingham paced. “For one who was spared the headsman’s axe, you are forward, my Bishop.”

“Forgive me, m’Lord. It is just that when one such as yourself has the ability to rule, it seems unfortunate that you would remain here, in Wales, whilst the king progresses triumphantly throughout his realm, forgetting those who aided him in usurping the throne of the unfortunate Edward V.”

“You speak treason, Morton. Mind your tongue.”

“I speak only the truth, as you know it to be the truth. Your lineage is as valid as the kings—nay, more so. You are Chancellor of England, yet you must settle for second-best. If you had not publicly proclaimed the illegitimacy of the princes, if you had not assisted the king in ridding him of Woodville opponents, where would our Richard III be now?”

“Tell me, Bishop. You are versed in the ways of power. What would you have me do?”

“Far be it for me to advise you, m’Lord. You do not need the words of a humble cleric to see your path. But it does seem to me that once the princes are—ah, how shall I put it?—removed from the scene, you are the foremost heir to the throne.”

“The princes? But they are bastards. They cannot inherit. Titulus Regius sees to that.”

“But don’t you see? If something should befall our king, surely the act would be repealed, and then there are two who stand in your way to the throne.

Young Edward and his brother would surely be restored to their rightful patrimony.”

Buckingham was silent. Then, turning fiercely towards Morton, he said, “They must be done away with. Only the duplicitous Richard would then stand in my way.”

“There is the Earl of Richmond—Henry Tudor. But his claim is weak, and if you were to join forces with the queen and her Woodville family, it would be impossible to deny you that which is rightfully yours.”

“We shall see, Bishop. We shall see.”

Robert Brackenbury, summoned from a deep sleep, responded to the pounding at the North Tower Gate. Who comes?

Opening the gate, he saw the Duke of Buckingham and three men. Lord Brackenbury, as Chancellor of England, I command you to allow us to enter.

Of course, m’Lord. What is it that you wish?

Summon those who serve the princes. Dismiss them for the night. Take yourself and your servants to some other place in the city. You may return at dawn.

Brackenbury searched Buckingham’s face for some indication of his intent. Finding none that he could discern, he bowed and said, As you wish, m’Lord. All of whom you speak shall be gone from the Tower in an hours time.

Buckingham led his men up the long staircase to the upper level of the East Tower. Pausing at the door to the chamber of the princes, he said, Do it now, and do it quickly and quietly. Do not let your hearts be swayed by their pleas for mercy. Dispose of them in some secret spot where they will ne’er be found. If you fail, you will forfeit your lives. Come to me when your task is complete. I will be in the constable’s apartment.

Bertram Fields version, 1998:

The theory of the murders favored by many admirers of Richard III lays the deed at the hands of Henry VII. This proposition suggests that the princes were alive at the time of Richard’s death at the Battle of Bosworth Field, and were not murdered until more than two years after their disappearance from public view.

October, 1485:

Henry VII, King of England for two months, was still insecure. His impending marriage to Elizabeth York, eldest daughter of Edward IV, was, of course, a necessary political act. The Houses of Lancaster and York would be joined, and what was left of the irritating Woodville family would be rendered ineffectual. He cared little for who should be his wife. Her lineage made her the most acceptable solution to the marriage problem. Notwithstanding, he was well aware of the tenuousness of his claim to the throne. The princes still lived, although he could thank Richard for not allowing them to be visible these past two years. Rumors abounded, and many thought that Richard had murdered them two years before. But, as long as they lived, his position as king was weak. Added to that, he had been forced to reverse their illegitimacy in order to justify his marriage to Elizabeth, and that, in effect, restored the older boy to his claim to the throne.

Henry enlists Sir James Tyrell, Richard's loyal friend, to murder the princes and promises him protection. Tyrell kills the princes.

Tyrell did indeed have the protection of Henry VII, whether this version of the murders is true or not. For reasons that are not clear, Henry pardoned Tyrell twice over the next 10 years. The pardons could have been for Tyrell's service to Richard, or they could have been for something more mysterious. Whatever the case, Tyrell prospered under Henry VII until 1502, when he appeared to be involved in a plot against Henry. The result was the execution of Tyrell, after he purportedly confessed to the murders of the princes in 1483. No written account of this confession has ever been found, although Thomas More claimed to have seen it.

Summing Up

Richard III was killed on August 21, 1485, at the Battle of Bosworth Field, fighting valiantly against the forces of Henry Tudor. If he had not been betrayed by Lord Stanley (who kept his forces out of the battle until he saw his chance to make it decisive for Henry), Richard would have won. There would have been no Tudor dynasty, no Henry VIII, no Elizabeth I, and probably no James I.

The noted British historian, A.L. Rowse, described the aftermath of the battle:

“Richard's body was treated with great indignity. Perfectly naked, it was trussed over a horse's back, head and arms dangling on one side, legs on the other.

“Passing over a bridge the head was bruised against a stone. It was brought to the church of the Grey Friars at Leicester, where it was exposed for two days so that people might see that he was dead. A king’s body would never have been treated in this way if he had not been what he was.”

However, two serious pretenders made their claims during the early years of Richard’s successor, Henry VII. The first, Lambert Simnel, claimed to be the Earl of Warwick, son of George, the Duke of Clarence. Then, changing his story, Simnel claimed to be the younger of the two princes, Richard of York. The mastermind of this plot was probably John de la Pole, Earl of Lincoln, a nephew of Richard III. Since the Earl of Warwick, was alive and a prisoner in the Tower, it was clear that Simnel was an impostor. Henry had George’s son paraded through London in order to demonstrate that Simnel was a fraud. The plot came to an end at the Battle of Stoke in 1487 where Henry defeated and killed Lincoln and took Simnel prisoner. In an uncharacteristic act of mercy, Simnel was put to work in the royal kitchens. He died in 1525.

A more serious impostor was Perkin Warbeck, a pawn of Margaret of Burgundy, a sister of Richard III. Again, Warbeck claimed to be the Earl of Warwick, and, just as Simnel had done, then changed his identity to that of the younger Prince, Richard of York. This imposture became a dangerous threat to Henry, in that French and Scottish supporters made the Warbeck rebellion formidable. This conspiracy began in 1492 and lasted until 1497, when Warbeck’s invasion force was repelled and Warbeck captured. He was imprisoned, and, after Henry learned that he planned an escape and intended to resume his rebellion, executed in November, 1499. On the scaffold, Warbeck confessed that he was not the son of Edward IV. However, his royal bearing, his resemblance to Edward IV, and his knowledge of the royal house led many to continue to believe him to be the rightful heir to the throne of Edward IV.

During the reign of Henry VII, official biographers made certain that Richard III’s reputation would be that of murderous tyrant. Well into the reign of his son, Henry VIII, scattered members of the York family (such as the Duke of Clarence’s daughter) were executed. By the time of Shakespeare’s play in 1592, a number of biographies and histories, including Sir Thomas Mores, had been published which supported the idea that Richard was a monster.

It was not until the middle of the 17th century, 150 years after the events of Richard III’s reign, that a defense of Richard appeared. This was the sympathetic

defense by Sir George Buck, eventually published by his nephew, also Sir George Buck.

As even the most strident defenders of Richard admit, we will never know for sure what happened to the princes in the Tower. The account of Thomas More, contemporary accounts by Mancini and certain chroniclers, and the discovery of the bones in the Tower, tend to support the contention that the princes were dead by 1483. While the medical evidence is not conclusive, and while the timing does not necessarily mean that Richard had to be the one who ordered the murders, all of this circumstantial evidence taken together supports the finding that Richard III was responsible for the murder of his nephews.

Lesson #2: The Wild Donnellys (1880)

Preface

*“Bad luck to you, McGarry,
An’ your pure Roscommon brogue!
You led me into trouble
You blarneying ould rogue!”*

—John F. Finery, Dooley’s Lamentation

There is nothing more beautiful than a Canadian sunset. Lakes the color of amber, catching the glow of the limitless horizon, itself the color of a new-forged chalice only moments from the kiln. Mallards skimming the marsh waters, rippling the surface into gentle designs. Soft lullabies of loons. Silhouettes of a diversity of trees chestnut, firs, many more—against the sky, still, without a twitch, in the pause of wind between light and dark. And the perfume of a million blossoms blended, distributing a mix between the fragrance of evening dew and the sweetness of applejack.

But, those who lived in Biddulph Township, Ontario, on February 3, 1880, sensed little beauty in the transition of day into night. Serenity obscured by Man’s doubt. While the ice encasing the rivers, bogs and streams must have reflected a brilliant provincial dusk, no one noticed. Darkness came early, if not in fact, then in theory. It came skittishly. Irish citizens of Lucan village near the old Roman Line Road later said they had felt the phantom sulking in the shadows. Some heard the Ban-Sidhe, the Banshee, the spirit woman who wails at impending death. And when an Irishman says he hears the Banshee, sure and there’s no doubt the Banshee is there.

Following is a story combining fact and legend, about the slaying of the Donnelly family of Southern Ontario the Black Donnellys, they were called by a vigilante mob comprised of members whose names remain unknown or, at best, unproven to this day, 181 years later. Hard evidence, tales handed down some probable and possible and even folklore; it has the potpourri of an Irish yarn spun off from a midnight jaunting car but it’s a cold, terrifyingly real tale. Of deceit, hatred and death.

Where blank spots and unanswered theories exist in the history and there are plenty of both—I have taken the liberty to fill the blank spots with surmising and relate only the most practical of theories. This was done in order to keep what is an

interesting tale out from under the weight of historical browbeating and a complex of issues that add little to the end result. And, on a whimsical note, having a large amount of Irish flowing in my veins, I surrendered to the temptation of opening each chapter with a fitting Irish parable or a stanza from one of Ireland's many bards.

Setting the Scene

*"You're welcome, Mick, to foreign lands,
Where'er the Celt may roam,
Your caubeen, pipe and blackthorn
Shall find a cozy home."*

—Rev. James Keegan, You're Welcome, Mick McQuaid

What became known, as "the Donnelly Massacre" was the culmination of a 30-odd years' feud between one Irish immigrant family and their Irish immigrant neighbors. It reeks of obsessive pride and prejudice. It is a landmark example of an ancient and bitter religious opposition in one country spreading thousands of miles across an ocean to affect human lives in another.

According to an article that appeared in the Toronto Globe the day immediately following the tragedy, "The Donnelly family, to a marked degree, bore quarrelsome characteristics when they were not fighting among their neighbors, they constantly fought among themselves." It is a description that supports that of Johannah Donnelly, matron of the sparring Gaelic clan that appears in Thomas P. Kelley's *Vengeance of the Black Donnellys*. In the book, Kelley quotes Johannah as saying, "From the time they could toddle, I taught my seven sons to be foin fist-and-club fighters. Sure, an' 'tis I who taught them how to gouge, bite off an ear and crack in a head with a club; showed them the best way to send a fast punch to the chin."

A local axiom at the time taught, "The farther one lives down Roman Line Road, the tougher one is. And the Donnellys live at the end of the road."

But, many of the citizens with whom they quarreled in and around Lucan, Ontario, were neither timid nor lily white. Equally headstrong, equally superstitious, equally prejudiced, yes, and equally Irish, they also clubbed and gouged and bit and cracked and kicked. Unfortunately for the Donnellys, they were a mite tougher and unrelenting and, therefore, in being so, disposed their own hides to the harder lesson forthcoming.

The Donnellys were Ireland born. Considering the climate of the Emerald Isle in the latter half of the Eighteenth Century and the fact that nearly all of Lucan's citizens were immigrants from the same county in Ireland—the fate of the Donnellys, in retrospect, seemed pre-destined. The “ould sod” they left behind had been torn by a religious animosity that existed since that Protestant Protector, William of Orange, himself, crossed into Roman Catholic Ireland in the late 1100s. After four decades of religious civil war, the situation worsened when, in 1697, Oliver Cromwell's re-design of Ireland land rights left English Protestants the major landlords and the Catholics mere serfs in their own beloved Erin.

“This awful state of affairs was at its worst in (County) Tipperary, where James and Johannah Donnelly came from,” reads The Official Donnelly Home Page, which is dedicated to the family's colorful, albeit bloody, saga. “The Roman Catholics' poverty became...abject.”

Rebel elements fought back, very much as the Irish Republican Army does in Protestant-owned Northern Ireland today, often with violence. Then, a society called the Whiteboys, its members known only to each other, exacted revenge, sometimes sanguinely, on the anti-papist landlords. But, the revenge only began there, for the all-Catholic Whiteboys judged as the greater devil those of their own religion who patronized the Protestant British who traded commerce with them, bought from them, sold to them, drank with them. These very-much-Catholic citizens, while yearning for a free Ireland, merely chose to abide and live peaceably. But, in the eyes of many of their own faith, they were reputed as cowards and traitors to both their country and God. Pinned with the name Blackfeet, they found themselves outcasts in their own thatched villages; they were forced to escape Ireland in order to avoid chastisement.

The Donnellys, although Mass-attending Roman Catholics, were Blackfeet. Nowhere in Ireland were Whiteboy families more influential than in Tipperary. When Great Britain zealously began hunting them down and hanging them, however, they found it necessary to flee Ireland to other parts of the globe. In doing so, they clung to their intolerance and, if meeting a known Blackfoot in their new land, caused the Blackfoot misery. Cases of such predisposition existed in both America and Canada.

“With the massive Irish immigration ... in the early 1800s, most of the time the Irish were easily assimilated into the mixing pot of (other) cultures, but not in Biddulph Township in Ontario,” continues the Official Donnelly Home Page. “In

Biddulph, with its heavily Irish population, there was a perfect balance of Whiteboys and ... Blackfeet.”

Keep in mind that most of the Roman Catholic population was not of Whiteboy partisanship they were non-violent devotees of their faith; existing by the principle of live and let live. But, albeit only a fraction of the population, the Whiteboy party became the “squeaky wheel” that made the most racket in town. Feuding with known or even suspected Blackfeet was most prominent.

Recognized Blackfeet such as the Donnellys were thereupon referred to in the new country of Canada with the abbreviation “Black” plunked insultingly before their surname ... the Black O’Fagins, the Black McGarritys, and the Black Donnellys. Throughout the years following the feuds, these families, especially the volatile Donnellys, were assumed to have earned the adjective because of their moods, but that supposition is wrong. While indeed the Donnellys were earthy, coarse, rough-and-tumble as well as dark of eye and hair the term was actually meant to scoff, not heed.

However, the popular vernacular is not altogether incorrect, for when things combusted—when James Donnelly found himself with a brood of strapping, iron-fisted sons who fought back they did indeed score the blackest reputation in Western Canada.

* * *

Before resuming with the history of the Donnellys in Ontario, let’s very briefly examine socio-political developments in Canada that led the Donnellys and others of their heritage to choose the Dominion as their new home, once they left Ireland. These elements must be understood so that the case history will be better realized in context of time and place.

What was referred to at one time as Upper and Lower Canada were both under the domain of Great Britain. The Territory of Canada was expansive, hard for Britain to manage, and rebellions were common. Canadian peoples, largely comprised of British, French and Indian, had long been at odds with themselves over land rights, customs, and nationality. Despite a brief feeling of nationalism enjoyed against American invaders during the War of 1812, there was otherwise little sense of crown-loyalty.

In 1838, Britain enacted the Province of Canada to unite the Upper and Lower districts under Lord Durham, who oversaw the peaceful transition. He

helped create an assembly of legislators, representing both one-time singular populations to more fully meet the needs of the new Province. The Province included Canada East (Quebec) and Canada West (Ontario). This successful unification eventually evolved into a confederation known as the Dominion of Canada under a national prime minister in 1867.

Under the initial Province, the Canada Land Company realized the need for people to help farm and civilize the wilderness; commerce was necessary to sustain the growth of both Ontario and Quebec as a new era of industry, trade and shipping were becoming apparent. The territory begged for farms to produce Canadian foodstuff, roads to move Canadian produce, and waterways to ship Canadian supplies. People from the United Kingdom were summoned to settle the land as tenant farmers with an option to buy. From across Ireland, Wales and Scotland came people who knew the toil of hard work and who believed they could successfully create a garden in the wilderness. The Donnellys were among these.

During the first half of the Nineteenth Century, most immigrants settled in southern Ontario where rich soil promised good agriculture and whose position along lakes Huron, Erie and Ontario demanded new ports of commerce. By 1851, the population had increased to nearly one million people in this sector—farmers who grew corn, apples, tobacco, wheat and hay; contractors and carpenters who built wharves where muddy banks had been, tradesmen and entrepreneurs who built towns seaside and inland. Cities grew. Toronto, a crossroads hamlet, boomed. Forest City renamed itself London after evolving from a lumber camp into a metropolis resembling a miniature version of that great English capital across the sea.

At a geometric angle north of London and east of Toronto, the village of Lucan rose up a couple stories high under slat board, peg, mortar and brick; a little town but important in that the rail lines ran through it to ship the local farmers' wares across Canada and, in turn, provide the farming community with seed and supplies. Lucan, and its surrounding countryside, was almost exclusively Irish. The influx had come almost exclusively from Tipperary.

James Donnelly brought his wife here in 1844 and, Blackfoot or not, he was determined to stay.

James Donnelly, Himself

“Have sense, patience and self-restraint, and no mischief will come.”

—Ancient Irish proverb

James and Johanna Donnelly migrated to Ontario in, most scholars believe, the year 1844. They brought with them their three-year-old son, James, Jr., and a few meager belongings, not much more than the ragamuffin clothes they wore on their backs. They settled first in Forest City, where Squire Donnelly worked for a time as a tradesman and where Johannah gave birth to another son, William, in 1847.

“James Donnelly was born on March 7, 1816 ... Although he was small and stocky, being only five feet five inches at manhood...he was described...as ‘good looking and gave the initial impression of pleasant amiability,’” writes Ray Fazakas in *The Donnelly Album*. “On the one hand he was known as sober, industrious, hard-working, kind and considerate (but was also known as being) rollicking, drinking, quarrelsome.”

The couple was discontent; they weren’t city folk; they wanted to farm; that’s the life they knew in Ireland. However, most of the acreage was being fast possessed by the wealthier Celts, they who could afford it. Donnelly, afraid to let his dreams suffer because of a mere thing called poverty, did what many of his caste were doing. He packed up once again, moved his family to the wilderness of Wellington County, Biddulph Township (where the finest soil was said to be had), and simply squatted on someone else’s property, law be damned.

“Squatting” was a common practice among the poor; often the perpetrators went unnoticed for sometimes decades since many of the landowners lived out of the precinct, intending said land as a tangible investment. The land John Donnelly staked out for himself was 100 acres of unsupervised Government Lot #18, a property owned by one wealthy but absentee John Grace. The squire was apparently a good judge of commercially potential farmland albeit someone else’s—for the ground was not only verdant and fertile but bordered the main highway, Roman Line Road, which led directly into nearby Lucan some four miles south.

Along the road which was named in honor of the many Irish Roman Catholics living in Lucan Donnelly raised a fence and a shingle, which read, “James Donnelly, Esquire,” as if to advertise his own merit of cunning. Just inside the gate, up a footpath, he built a crude log cabin for him and his family, and

immediately went to work. A sharp trader with a gift of gab, big James Donnelly talked the merchants in town into loaning him the necessary implements so that he could clear the land and plant the rows of corn he envisioned in his imaginative Irish brain. Darkness and inclement weather didn't stall him; he worked throughout, determined to turn the bare fields into Donnelly heaven in the new world. And in the meantime, his wife bore him a third son, John.

Biddulph Township was, according to Thomas P. Kelley's *Vengeance of the Black Donnellys*, "a flat, fertile district...bordered on the east by Perth County, on the west and north by Huron County." The nearest "big town" was London (formerly Forest City), seventeen miles distant, but the common meeting place of the township was dusty Lucan. Here on particular days the farmers held market to pitch their produce to both local and commercial buyers, the latter loading it onto rail cars destined for remote lumbering and milling villages in the province. Often, the smartest farmers gathered in one of the nigh-dozen saloons in town to barter equipment for seed or vice versa, or to share farmhands and, simply, advice. Certain evenings, the backrooms of the Western Bar, the Dublin House, McRobert's Old Dominion, and others bristled with gab and braggadocio. As in Ireland, these establishments were either Catholic- or Protestant-owned, drawing their own kind over their threshold.

Of the approximately 500 Lucan-area residents, most were Catholics who wanted to put the memories of dissent behind them, but some townsmen couldn't let go of their native prejudices. While the long sea voyage had cooled tempers, the remnants of the Whiteboys still whispered, still noticed men like James Donnelly who, true as it be, went to Mass on Sundays as Catholics, but then patronized both factions. In response, Donnelly argued that this was Ontario, not Tipperary, and those who couldn't adjust could skip to hell in a bread maid's basket!

In the years to come, his attitude would prove fatal to himself, but in the early days of Lucan, any hostilities were kept compact, muttered Saturday nights under kerosene lantern by Whiteboys with a pint of redeye in their fist, or on Sunday mornings outside St. Patrick's steepled church after the Solemnity, with a hangover needling their temperament. James Donnelly didn't care and continued to let them growl. He was his own man and would die first before giving in.

"On nearly every Saturday night Donnelly rode into Lucan for a drop of the spirits at one of its bars, and there were the occasional fist fights with one of its citizens," Kelley claims. "At the bars, (he) usually had to drink alone...the object of hostile gazes. Those around him had not forgotten how he had obtained his land."

“The village of Lucan had the misfortune of growing up with the Donnellys,” says author Fazakas. “Whether its bad reputation in the nineteenth century was attributable to the family or the way around can long be argued...From the beginning, a faint aura of disrepute clung to the village.” Feuding was an everyday occurrence, not always involving raucous James D.

Despite the animosity against him, James Donnelly did have friends in town and, in all, things went well for a few years. Squire Donnelly proved his labor and turned his land into one of the more prosperous farms along Roman Line Road; he inadvertently generated a degree of jealousy in several Whiteboys who were sure the indolent would fall flat on his face. The Donnellys grew, both in industry and numbers.

“During the eight years following his arrival in the Lucan district, Jim Donnelly whipped the wilderness to a standstill,” Kelley continues, “and created a rich, self-sufficient farm. Johannah, on her part, presented him with four more sons named, in order of birth, Patrick, Michael, Robert and Thomas ... The mother was as protective of the children as a she-wolf with cubs.”

The clan needed a new home; the log cabin was crammed with cribs and children. When James began to lay a foundation for a new place beside the initial log hut, his friends turned out to help him “raise a fine roof,” to use an Irish expression. The result was a roomier, two-story shingle-sided frame with three bedrooms down and one up, a large parlor and larger kitchen. No palace be it, but it was, to the old man, Donnelly’s castle.

Then, in 1855, a tragedy occurred that would be the beginning of the Donnelly name-tarnishing in Biddulph. James Donnelly, his Irish dander up, killed a man.

The incident started when a Patrick Farrell rented the same one hundred acres of land from its owner, the owner not realizing that someone had trespassed on his property and had been living there the last decade. When Farrell arrived in Lucan, he was amazed to find smoke curling from a house that shouldn’t have been there on a farm that shouldn’t have been there occupied by a family that shouldn’t have been there! Farrell attempted to oust the squatter through mediation of the local constabulary, but the law was too slow in reacting. (And it was said Donnelly had pals on the force.) This led to confrontations one-on-one until a fistfight erupted, ending, it appears, in no more than a pair of bloody Gaelic nostrils. Farrell

was a husky former blacksmith with shoulders like an ox, but brawn Squire Donnelly was, no doubt, a match.

Both men, sensing a stalemate, faced off in court. Donnelly argued that the land was his through toil; he had scraped his fingers to the bone caring for and nurturing it for, oh, so many years. Farrell denied any law but the written one: Thou shalt not steal (especially what was his). The judge was a man of temperance; his verdict was a balance: Donnelly, he said, could keep the northern fifty acres; Farrell could keep the southern fifty. But, while His Honor compromised, the defendants did not. Over the coming months, both stubborn hotheads continued to growl at each other over the picket line ... until June 25, 1857.

On that day, the township turned out at Billy Maloney's lumbering bee. While the men axed and cleared the forestland for grove, the women baked and cooked and prepared a hearty meal to take place at day's end. All day long, beer flowed, and so did jibes and taunts between the rival neighbors. Late into the afternoon, after consumption of brew kindled the furnaces in each, the words had heated blue fire. Before onlookers could separate them, Donnelly and Farrell were entwined on the ground, a whirly-ball of fists, feet, grunts and dust. Somehow, Donnelly broke free and, in a rage, reached for the first object at hand, which turned out to be a handspike used for climbing trees. Farrell was upon him, toting an iron bar, posed as to swing. In reflex, the other let him have it first, and Farrell crumpled at the knees, the iron still in his fists, his temple gushing blood.

Donnelly bolted into the woods, a murderer. The Whiteboy party reveled that the squire had at last earned the nickname "Black" as to wider comprehension. Constables rushed to the Donnelly home, but he was nowhere; they scoured the forest, checked every alley and back room in Lucan, every corncrib and barn up and down Roman Line Road. James Donnelly, himself, has vanished.

Explains the Internet's Official Donnelly Home Page, "For the next eleven months, nobody knew where James had disappeared. But, Johannah knew, as did their older children, James, Jr., now 15, William, aged 12, and 10-year-old John. They all knew, but they weren't talking, especially to the officers of the law who showed up regularly at their doorstep. And all that time, the head of the Donnelly household had been hiding right under their noses in his own backfields...(When) the icy breath of winter blew across the land ... he sheltered himself in stables and in the homes of friends who risked their own freedom to help a fugitive." However, one Canadian winter virtually spent outdoors had been enough for even the sturdy Irishman. He turned himself into the police in May the following year.

Many strange and almost incredulous stories revolve around those lost months of Mr. Donnelly. Considering the anything-goes state of affairs in the township at the time, each probably has its ratio of truth. Neighbors later confessed to seeing a “strange woman” in a sun bonnet helping Johannah work the fields while her husband was on the lam; “she,” they alleged, must have been none other than the escapee himself, in masquerade. Another tale professes the law knew all along where Donnelly was; Wellington County Sheriff Ryder, who had known Donnelly in Tipperary and had also been accused of being a Blackfoot, helped succor him those many months.

Wherever and however he chose to conceal himself, James Donnelly, husband and father, did indeed remain near home. During that time, Johannah conceived a ninth child, a beautiful daughter named Jennie.

Donnelly’s trial was set for September 1858. Because the murder had taken place in Stephen Township, Donnelly was tried within its jurisdiction, at Goderich. Biddulph neighbors travelled to witness the proceedings at the Huron County Courthouse. Many locals turned out, too, for although a county away, they had heard of the feisty squatter and his feud with the luckless Farrell. The decision of the court passed quickly: Guilty, hands down! The convicted Donnelly was rushed to the city gaol, sentenced to hang two weeks later.

Fate and Johannah intervened. A woman of fuss and action, she oiled well the gears of clemency, petitioning nearly the entire town of Lucan and most of Goderich as well, county borders, familiarity with herself and her husband’s character notwithstanding. Due to her, a turnabout occurred. Suddenly, her husband’s death penalty was exchanged for a seven-year sentence. Placed in Kingston Penitentiary to serve it, he at least knew that Hell, at least this time around, couldn’t keep him.

He was released in 1865. And, as the citizens of Lucan predicted, that’s when things really got hot.

The Feud

*“For the great Gaels of Ireland
Are the men that God made mad,
For all their wars are merry,
And all their songs are sad.”*
—G.K. Chesterton

Even before the Farrell murder and their father’s eventual incarceration, the Donnelly boys were beginning to earn a reputation as mischief makers. During his short life in Biddulph Township, Farrell often vocally accused the Donnelly teens for acts of vandalism and destruction. He even blamed the lads or their father for taking a pot shot at him one night while he was working in his barn. “The bullet whizzed by me ear! It was either one o’them rascals of his or it was the ould man hisself!” he told a barroom-full of listeners. “Either way, it was one’o’them Black Donnellys as shor’ as there’s a Lucifer!”

What was to come was a series of brawls, fisticuffs, antagonisms, ruptures and bad blood that was to make the famous Hatfield-and-McCoy feud in America’s mountain country look like a child’s game of pop-gun.

“With their father in jail, the boys were frequently the butt of cruel remarks with regard to the cause of his absence, but as they grew older they were able to avenge all insults with their fists,” attests Thomas P. Kelley in *Vengeance of the Black Donnellys*. “The Donnellys were not gunfighters, had a strange aversion to firearms and regarded them as ‘weapons of the weak, fit only for cowards,’ but without exception the entire seven Donnelly boys, as well as their father, were veritable terrors, wild men in fist and club battles.”

In defense of the brood, many of the criminal acts attributed to them were never proven, but the name “Black Donnelly” seemed rhythmical to the point that it was the first to conger up in the minds of the Lucanites whenever foul play occurred. That they were scrappers of the first order and had fuses of tolerance the length of a snail’s thumbnail there is no doubt, but, in just the same, the townsfolk never afforded them the same acceptance they did other children along Roman Line Road. Their “ould man” was a jailbird and convicted murderer, their mother was a leathery-faced harridan who never let an evil eye pass. The boys themselves were raised knowledgeable of the religious-based histrionics that had chased their “mum” and “pup” out of Tipperary, and, no doubt, as small children, they early felt the scorn of the Whiteboy families who continued to taunt anything named Donnelly. Doubtlessly, as well, their mother had told them of the fate of Sheriff

Ryder whom all of Biddulph Township knew had abetted their father while in exile and therefore paid the price of his life for doing so.

According to Earl Ryder, a descendant of the Ryder family who wrote a marvelous study of the Donnelly situation for the Official Donnelly Home Page, the sheriff was murdered by persons unknown (“dyed in the wool Whiteboys,” suggests he). “(The killers) must have known, like everyone else, that the sheriff could have captured ... Donnelly if he had made the effort,” Ryder asserts. “Some time later, Ryder met with sudden death. He either fell or was pushed under the wheels of a train.”

In the case of the ensuing feud, historians largely agree that finger-pointing rampaged. Whose fault it was seems almost secondary to the fact that somewhere along the way something got out of hand. Between the time Squire Donnelly went to prison in 1858 and the inevitable tragedy that occurred in 1880, a violent feud climaxed with very little let-up between the Donnellys and pretty much the rest of Biddulph Township.

Whether as offenders or defenders, the Donnellys were no pacifists. Especially Johannah who, if legends about her are accurate, was a large part of the problem. Put simply, if someone threw a stick of dynamite Johannah’s way, she would have gone back at them with a battleship, even if she had to steal one. With her collecting dust at Kingston Prison, she was bitter. True, he was spared the noose, but in her estimation he should not have been convicted in the first place. Farrell, she alleged, had baited him and her Jimmy fought back. Two hot tempers bubbling over, that’s all. No one meant to kill...well, at least her Jimmy hadn’t meant to. With this attitude, she almost certainly stuffed her offsprings’ heads with the evils of injustice and the right to avenge the sacred name. Writer Kelley calls Johannah “big, brawny and grim-featured” and the author of a litany of specific if not cockeyed rules for her sons to live by. “Hit first and talk later,” she advised them. “Never forgive your enemies. Always remember and never forget that, when in a rough-and-tumble fight, be shor’ to git in the first blow either a hard smash to the jaw or a good swift kick to the crotch.”

Lucan’s streets became the scene of altercations between the growing Donnelly clan and other boys their age who wanted to test the staying power of the tough, tough Donnellys. I repeat: The family loved to fight. Make no mistake of that. When their peers weren’t available to rattle, they oft took to finding other means to exercise their fists. When a band of eleven gypsies rode into town to cause the Christian community some apprehension, the Donnellys alone sent the

garlic-breathed pagans flying. And, according to legend, three Donnellys whipped, no-contest, enemy John Flannigan and seventeen hangers-on in a barroom brawl. Toughest of them was the second oldest, William, considered the leader of the brothers. William or Will—born with a club foot, and having endured scorn of other children for this malformation, was a bundle of fight and cocky strut; and woe be it to anyone who looked at him oddly from any angle. As he grew, he found his handicap an advantage. Because of an old Irish superstition much believed by many in the folklore-believing community of Lucan that “Children, conceived by Satan, walk with deformed feet”—many of the more traditional refused to take him on in fear that the Gates of Hell might gape mid-way through a confrontation to swallow them whole.

Early Lucan suffered a series of fires, many of them blamed on the Donnelly lads. Victims of these blazes, reeking of arson, were, according to Ray Fazakas in *The Donnelly Album*, “William Morgan’s hewed-log inn in 1864, Madill’s Hotel in 1865 (and) Leonard Hodgins’ tavern in 1866.” But, adds the author, “It was, of course, in the taverns where the Donnelly boys were usually to be found.”

Fistfights, fires and intemperance were not the only iniquities attributed to the Donnelly marauders. Beginning in the 1860s and lasting for some time, a number of petty thefts were blamed on the boys. When harnesses, milk cans, plows, yolks and other items started to disappear from Lucan area farms in droves, the Donnelly sons were old enough to have, en masse, taken them. At least, the town said so.

No formal charges were brought against them by wary neighbors, until Bob McLean had had enough; tired of replacing tools in his shed at extreme cost to his pocket book, he flew enraged at last to the constabulary to press charges against the Donnellys. Nothing came of it. But a week later, McLean’s barn burned to the ground. Then his house was set afire. Then his cattle were poisoned. Then three of his horses were discovered dead, their throats slit.

“The Black Donnellys,” says author Kelley, “were growing up.” And just when the apple seemed rotted enough, the serpent came yonder to poison it more. Squire Donnelly was released from prison.

Those who knew him well before he was imprisoned attest that he walked out a changed man. He had never been a loveable rogue, but where a soft touch might have existed now lurked a hardness. Meanness. The town sensed it and shuddered, for there were rumors that he might take vengeance on several men

who had fingered him in court as the one who shoved that spike in Johnny Farrell's brain. Among these witnesses were two central figures who had had a good view of the fight and the culminating murder; their names were Liam Haskett and Joseph Ryan.

“Around midnight on the very day James Donnelly returned to his family, several masked riders rode up to Haskett's barn, yelling like wild Indians, and threw burning faggots into the hayloft before riding away, while the terrorized Haskett remained within the house,” Kelley tells us. “When the vandals rode off, Haskett was able to save his horses, but the barn burned to the ground. (Then) Ryan, long a victim of Donnelly perpetrations, was finally beaten to a pulp one night by Tom Donnelly who robbed him of eighty dollars.”

When the latest victim sought redress, a constable supposedly answered, “We can't really do a thing for ya', Ryan lad, fer when ya got the Black Donnellys on your ass, all of Biddulph Township can't help ya'.”

The police, it seems, were not shrugging their duty nonchalantly, but spoke with first-hand knowledge, for even several constables had endured the Donnelly wrath presumably those involved in the arrest of James Donnelly. A reported seven men in uniform were, at various times, cornered on dark roads and dim street corners, pummeled by men who came so quickly from the shadows that the victim had no chance to identify them. One officer was beaten so badly that he lost his sight.

On several occasions, the Donnelly's own priest tried to intervene, but to no avail. Reverend Father Connolly, kind-hearted pastor of St. Patrick's Church and spiritual head of Lucan's Catholic community, often visited the Donnellys to and from his parish calls on buggy. If one man understood the family, it was Father Connolly, for he knew of its travails with the Whiteboys and the prejudice they faced at the outset. In certain ways, he admired James Donnelly's gumption and perceived underneath him a much better man than what surfaced. He recalled the time that the squire was one of the few Roman Catholics in Lucan to donate money to the building of St. James, the town's Anglican church, and while the act raised the hairs of the hard-set Whiteboys, the priest saw it as a true example of Christian togetherness, one from which many of his own congregation would follow.

When the priest called, the family treated the holy man cordially, but if he maneuvered conversation toward the mending of their ways, Big Jim Donnelly always reminded him, in a not too disguised manner, to butt out.

“Ah, Jimmy D, it’s a sinful road you’re travelin’,” the priest would say, “ya’ can’t go on this way, God knows it’s a blight on the foin name o’ Donnelly and a mark o’ Cain on the Irish race. I see ya’ every Soonday at Mass you n’ your boys takin’ the Host, then out ya’ go into the world with larceny in your heart, Jimmy, evil booblin’ in your veins. Foightin’ and pillagin’, it’s no good, Jimmy Donnelly. I’m fearin’ for where it’ll lead.”

To which Squire Donnelly would reply: “Father, when I have the wherewithal ta step into your poolpit box at St. Pat’s and preach the gran’ lessons of Ecclesiastes ‘n Deuteronomy, then that’s the day ya’ can tell me how ta run me family. In the meantime, please shut your gob on this subject...Now, would ya; be joinin’ us in a coop o’ tea?”

Donnelly may or may not have known just how difficult it had been for Father Connolly to keep the peace on his behalf. Several times the priest had gotten wind of vigilante movements against the Donnelly clan and had thwarted them. In fact, he had been one of the designers of a peace committee comprised of townsmen from Lucan and surrounding areas. The committee, which met at local Cedar Swamp school house, focused on community tolerance with, of course, the Donnelly foibles being its main issue. But, the priest was worried; he knew that several of the members had been meeting apart from the general sessions an inner council, if you may—and had been talking hanging talk.

That is why he was glad to see the Donnelly mob, one by one, marry fine women and move out of the Donnelly cluster. He hoped that with a wife and children, the boys would lose interest in fighting. In the first half of the 1870s, one wedding ceremony seemed to follow the other. John Donnelly wed Fanny Drunan in 1871 and took up farming on land of his own several miles out of town; he was followed by Patrick, Michael and Robert who married, respectively, domestic lasses named Mary Ryan, Ellen Hynes and Annie Currie.

All flowed quietly for awhile, but the Donnelly’s had a knack for irritating neighbors, even when in love. When “Clubfoot Will” met and won the heart of Hanora (Nora) Kennedy, her parents, brothers and sisters more or less told her that if she continued to “kiss the divil,” well ... consider herself no longer a Kennedy. She not only continued to see him, but married him in January of 1875. Their wedding was a blissful one, attended by much of Lucan except for a conspicuous absence of the entire Kennedy tribe. Unfortunately, Nora’s brother John was part of the “inner council” whose animosity toward the Donnellys worried the parish priest and whose hatred led to the bloody ultimatum to come five years later.

Tommy Donnelly also irked the wrong family with his choice of girl. Evidently, he and curvaceous Christiana McIntyre had fallen head over heels for each other and conducted a series of secreted rendezvous on the outskirts of Lucan until Papa Murray found out and sent his daughter packing to a school out of town and far from the rowdy boy. The McIntyres, too, were staunch members of the anti-Donnelly faction and failed to see that the brief love affair was two-sided. A Donnelly had done the unthinkable touched a McIntyre!

The one Donnelly who escaped the indignation of the Lucanites was daughter Jennie most likely, because she wasn't indignant. Unlike the rest of her family, she walked through life with a smile and a pleasant hello to all. She no doubt heard the hatred for many of the Lucan families spewing forth at the Donnelly dinner table, but she obviously took whatever she heard with a grain of salt. She seemed to be her own woman, tending to her own intuitions. People loved Jennie and went out of their way to greet her when she came to town to shop; she was a colleen, a true Tipperary pixie, dressed gaily in lace and ribbons, the perfection of sunlight. A swish in her walk, a giggle in her voice, emeralds radiating her eyes her footfall brought such illumination in stark contrast to the Donnelly umbrage that rumors prevailed she was adopted.

Jennie, nevertheless, paid a price, for she found whatever boy had become interested in her slowly, methodically shying away; their curious looks soon dwindled and soon they kept their distance and their gaze off her as if she were Medusa. Mothers may have wished that their sons could bring home a girl like Jennie without the Donnelly connection. When she married at nineteen, it was to a boy from St. Thomas, where the couple lived a long and blessed life, far from Lucan.

Much of Lucan had been settled by adventuresome couples in their early twenties at about the same time James and Johannah Donnelly, also young at the time, made their home there in the 1840s. By the '70s, the citizens' children had grown to matrimonial age and weddings were a common occurrence throughout Middlesex County in the spring months at that time. As the guest lists for these receptions often included both the Whiteboy and Blackfeet factions, it is a small miracle that they began and ended without incident. More so, since the Donnellys were present at many of them, seated alongside the families with whom they battled on the streets of Lucan or who blamed them many times over for acts of vandalism and theft.

One wedding reception in 1876 produced such a dangerous blend of personalities and a bad straw, as well. Things went smooth at first; the handshakes, the greeting of the bride, the toasts, the catering. An aroma of baked chicken, buttered biscuits and apple pie spiced the night air, dancers twirled under lantern light to the rhythm of a fiddling band strumming and singing the songs from Ireland:

*“Step we gaily on we go
Heel for heel and toe for toe,
Arm and arm and on we go all to Mairi’s wedding...”*

The groom looked handsome in high collar and Sunday coat, and the bride’s silken beige gown caught the sheen of the hundred candles illuminating the yard.

No one knows what precisely triggered it, but a scuffle commenced between a couple of the Donnellys and three others. Some words, a push here, a shove there, a slap, a punch, then another, a flip, spilled cider, a woman observer’s scream, than something close to the apocalypse erupted. Irish ham fists everywhere and the wedding feast became a boxing ring. But, the band kept on singing:

*“Through the hillways up ‘n down,
Myrtle green and bracken brown
Up again, oh ‘round and ‘round, all for sake of Mairi...”*

By the time it ended, there were three unconscious Lucanites on the ground and the Donnellys, triumphant, over them, flexing their muscles. Though at the time it seemed like a merry Irish brawl, a joke, in fact, to the winners, the incident was the beginning of the end for the Donnellys. It had been just one fight too many in which they were involved.

They had humiliated three of the leading Whiteboys.

The feud had reached the ears of the local press, who were beginning to print updates in their newspapers for all of Canada to see. While not always mentioning the Donnellys or any other family by name, the articles gave details of the infamous, ongoing scraping. Reads the London (Ontario) Free Press of May 23, 1877: “During the last week or two, several thousand dollars’ worth of property has been destroyed by fire, the origin (being) traced to incendiaries...Some 15 horses...have perished, either by burning alive or otherwise. The latest outrage (has) caused a great deal of indignation in the neighborhood and threats to lynch the miscreants ... are freely indulged in.”

The gazette didn't exaggerate. Father Connelly was having a Hades of a time keeping the angering Biddulphers from boiling over. Those who detested the Donnellys and that number now exceeded the smallish Whiteboy party had little satisfaction when a couple of the mad-hatters received light-term jail sentences for assorted acts of havoc or even when one of the wildest, James, Jr., died from pneumonia in May, 1877; the surviving brothers, in their grief, paid tribute to him by attacking anyone whom they knew had been an outspoken opponent of his in life.

As if they had given up trying to justify their actions and protect their name, the Donnellys now relished their own reputation; they wallowed in it. Clearly, the situation had become one of the Donnellys against the world. Squire Donnelly, growing older with Johannah at home, let his boys rampage and fuss all they wanted. And if he heard of anyone averring to "stop the Black Donnellys dead in their tracks," the Black Donnellys saddled up to torch his barn and beat him into submission. Thomas P. Kelley attests that every one of the brothers, with the exception of Patrick, "stood before a judge at one time or other ... (in one year alone facing) thirteen different criminal charges (including) arson, highway robbery, poisoning, brawling, drunkenness and wanton destruction."

Now and again came periods of silence. The town grew uneasy during these periods, for they were always followed by blasts like the storm that cometh after the calm. However, after the older Donnelly boys married and were forced to find means of full-time employment, these stretches of quietude lengthened and seemed to become more frequent with time; the town was even beginning to believe that perhaps the Donnelly wild boys had grown up. Then came an incident just before Christmas in 1879, not in Lucan, not even ignited by the Donnellys, but a powder keg just the same.

Michael Donnelly, then 29 years old, had acquired a job with the Canada Southern Railway; he resided in St. Thomas with his wife Ellen and two children whom he adored. Christmas coming, he looked forward to the holiday and the chance to spend it with the family 'round the Christmas tree. Because he wanted to fill the underside of that tree with toys and presents, he opted to take a short assignment out of town to Waterford, for extra money.

After work on December 9, 1879, before returning to Slaight's Boarding House where he lodged, he stopped for a drink in a Waterford saloon. Tired and not in the best of moods, Michael was easy prey for an altercation. "Sensing (this), a fellow worker ... instigated a bitter fight," pens Earl Ryder in his report on The

Official Donnelly Home Page. “The instigator at that time had a knife concealed on his person with the blade extended. When the fight started, he at once drew the knife and caused a wound which was serious enough to cause death within a couple of minutes.”

Ryder, who has studied the case for years, believes that the attacker and killer was a member of the vigilante committee out of Lucan that secret part of Father Connolly’s peace committee that was, unknown to the priest, working on its own for violent response. There are other scholars, too, who suggest that that small, clandestine membership sought to incite the feud into something bloody so that the Donnellys would be forced into a showdown. If that is true, Michael was a pawn.

The Donnellys were heartbroken and, although it is not recorded, most assuredly suspected a plot. They were not ignorant of the loathing towards them nor of the ability of some of the townsmen to kill if it came to that.

Another one of those long periods of silence fell over Wellington County. One faction would strike again whether the Donnellys to avenge, or the vigilantes to push the vengeance out into the open.

The Massacre

*“We may call and call him, wildly rending
This death-hush with moans of human pain...”*
—Mary Fitzpatrick, In Memory of the Same

There is an ancient Irish legend that tells of the Ban-Sidhe, a female spirit of death whose wail, heard spontaneously in the still of the night, warns of impending doom. According to Lady Wilde, scholar of Irish traditions and legends, and the mother of famed English writer Oscar Wilde, “There is no harm of fear of evil in (the Ban-Sidhe’s) presence, unless she is seen in the act of crying, but this is a fatal sign, and the mournful wail is a sure and certain prophecy that the angel of death is waiting...”

An old hagawitch who called herself Grandma Bell, a soothsayer who lived outside of Lucan and who claimed to see the future by reading tea leaves, later told the county newspapers that she had presaged the end of the Donnelly clan three months before it happened. She had tried to warn Squire Donnelly of the cry of the Banshee meant for him and his family, but he laughed at her.

On a lark, three of the Donnelly boys and their father visited her log cabin one November evening in 1879, wishing to have their fortunes told. Of course, it was all done on the spur of the moment, drunk as they were, but her reading was, she stressed, done in earnest.

“There was blood on the moon that night (when) I heard their horses pull up before my house,” she told a reporter from the London Free Press. “I knew Mr. Donnelly and had spoken to him several times in the past.” With him were Mike, John and Tom; she liked the first two, but distrusted Tom (“He just stared at me and his eyes were cold”). As was her custom, she boiled tea for them, then foretold their fate based on the position of the leaves left in their cups. She was shocked at what she saw; each of their cups agreed. “I see death, Mr. Donnelly! Death for you, death for your wife and sons here I see death for all of you soon and terrible!”

They only shouted and laughed. “Mr. Donnelly threw a coin on the table and said my words were the funniest he had ever heard,” she continued. “Then they all went out and got on their horses. I could still hear them laughing as they rode up the road. The next I heard of them was when a neighbor ran over to tell me they were all dead...all murdered!”

With the advent of a new year, 1880, a final plan was afoot to rid the township of the Donnellys in the name of self defense; once and for all. Scholars generally agree that all that the antagonists had to do was wait for an opportunity. They were certain that the Black Donnellys would go on a rampage after Michael was stabbed to death, but surprisingly they hadn't probably because the killer remained unidentified and had apparently fled for parts unknown, leaving the angry and insulted clan without a definite target. Since Squire Donnelly and his brood refused to cause trouble, the “inner committee,” as researcher Earl Ryder calls them, created trouble.

Ryder claims that one of the families with whom the Donnellys had remained on friendly terms were his ancestors, the Ryder family of neighboring burgh Granton. (Recall the aid given to James Donnelly by Sheriff Ryder after the Farrell killing at the logging bee, and the suspected reprisal of the Whiteboys visited upon him afterwards.) According to Ryder, the inner committee, in an effort to cause bad blood, burned Patrick Ryder's barn and blamed the deed on the Donnellys. “Witnesses” came forward naming certain Donnelly boys as the arsonists, and screamed for retribution.

But, before a lynch mob could manifest, the plot failed. The Donnelly boys had an irrefutable alibi: They had been at a dance and visible to more than a hundred witnesses who vouched for their presence. “The (real) arsonists were not successful in proving the Donnellys ... had a hand in the burning,” Earl Ryder asserts. More so, James Donnelly, pushed to boiling point, “had a counter charge arranged to put against them in court.” The charge was to be formally written up the next day, on February 4. This, claims Ryder, is most likely the reason why the killers decided to make their move when they did, in the pre-dawn hours of that day.

Around 10 p.m. February 3, 1880, twelve hours before James Donnelly was to appear in the Granton courthouse to present his official counter-charges, the Donnelly house settled down for the night. Each person tended to his or her respective evening chore. Johannah washed the supper dishes, accompanied by her husband’s niece, a pretty lass of 22 years named Bridget, who was visiting from Ireland. Outside, at the pens, careful not to slip on the ice that had formed in the spillage of water from the gutter, Tom Donnelly fed the livestock. The squire, in the barn, lay a blanket across each of his nags to protect them from the onslaught of wintry winds that had frozen every corner of Wellington County like a tundra. At his side was little Johnny O’Connor, a neighbor boy. A snowstorm was expected after midnight, and because the family would be busy in Granton in the morning, Squire Donnelly had borrowed the services of Johnny to feed the pigs and shovel a footpath through the property come morning. The boy was staying overnight at the Donnelly farm.

Patrick, the other son still unmarried, would have tended to those particular tasks, but he was off on business at Thorold, eighty miles away. He “escaped the slaughter he otherwise would have known,” says author Thomas P. Kelley.

Before midnight, the family snacked on cored apples and went to bed. The Donnellys had to change their usual sleeping arrangements to accommodate their guests for the evening; the O’Connor boy shared a room with James Donnelly in the front of the house, off the parlor; Bridget stayed with Johannah in what was normally the parents’ bedroom; and Tom Donnelly remained in his usual quarters off the kitchen.

The details of what happened next at the home of the Black Donnellys would have been completely unknown were it not for Johnny O’Connor who, at first intimation of danger, crept under his bed and survived. Sometime, in his estimation, about 1.00 a.m., February 4, he and the squire were awakened by an

aggravated pounding at the front door. The squire rushed from his room to be greeted by barrel-shaped town constable James Carroll who had taken the liberty to enter the premises before being invited and now circled the parlor floor as if he owned the place. James, lighting a candle, and looking ever so quizzical, asked him what he wanted. The policeman answered, "We have another charge against you and Tommy." Sharp but indiscernible chatter exchanged between the two men for a few minutes, interrupted by the arrival of Johannah, Bridget and Tom who, one at a time, entered the unfolding stage show.

Peering out into the parlor from his position on the bed, the O'Connor lad couldn't see much of the candlelit room, but he listened. He couldn't decipher everything that was being said the dialogue was a cacophony of voices speaking at once, but he managed to pick up fragments. Carroll, in maneuvering about the room, must have placed Tom in handcuffs because he heard James gasp, "Thomas, you are manacled?" to which Tom replied, indicating Carroll, "Yes, he thinks he's smart." O'Connor saw Tom sneering at the officer, demanding that Carroll better produce a warrant or else. "Read me the damned warrant!" Tom spat.

According to O'Connor, Carroll then made an odd gesture through the front window. That is when hell broke asunder. And Johnny O'Connor ducked under the bed.

"I think there were about twenty of them that ran into the house," the boy testified in court later. "I could see out into the front room; the bed was near the end of the room, opposite the door." From what he heard and the snatches of interplay he saw, he was able to fairly well piece together a scenario. The Donnellys ran into the kitchen ahead of their pursuers, but they must have met others at the back door, for none of them were able to make an escape. He heard their agonized screams. Tom must have broken free from the vigilantes, for O'Connor heard someone yell, "Stop that boy!" then saw Tom dart, terrified, through the front door into the yard. There, he was cornered and whipped—O'Connor could hear Tom's pleas under the thrashings. Several men carried him back into the parlor and threw the bundle onto the wooden floor, a thud. One man slammed the front door and stood before it, armed with a spade.

"I could see Tom's feet...and heard him groaning, I could hear something rattle when they threw him down," the boy continued. The men were bending over him, doing something that O'Connor couldn't see, but whatever they were doing must have been tortuous, for Tom screamed in pain. "One fellow said, 'Hit that fellow on the head and break his skull open!' Someone then complied; the listening

boy heard the terrible whacks one, two, three, four made with a spade upon Tom's head.

Tramping of feet resounded in the meantime as many men rushed the stairs to the upper floor; they were blustering about "that young girl (Bridget)" who had run up there to hide. It wasn't long before O'Connor heard them descending, slowly this time, their job obviously taken care of. "She won't talk now!" one man chuckled.

The child panicked when he saw the feet of several trespassers enter his room; they failed to look under the bed, busy spraying what his nostrils told him was coal oil across the furniture. A spark and the boy knew the bed over him was afire. Some more muttering, more shouting, somebody laughed, and he saw flickering of red in the parlor, also in flames. Silhouettes of the mob, in rank and file, some of them giving a victory whoop, filed from the house.

Rolling out from under the blazing mattress and through the stench-smoke of sizzling timber, O'Connor darted across the parlor, still ducking under the windows lest the monsters outside see his shadow in the fire light. He recalled, "I looked and saw Tom lying in the room, and the old woman (Johannah) near the kitchen door; I tramped on her as I went out (but) saw none of the others." He thought Mrs. Donnelly was still breathing, but he was too frightened to see what condition she was in.

In a paroxysm of panic, still unsure if the killers had left the property, O'Connor darted across the open yard through the snow and didn't stop until a neighbor down the road answered his frenzied knocking.

The murdering was not yet over.

Four miles away near the Grand Trunk Railroad tracks, on a dark, flat crossroads called Whalen's Corner, a half-dozen cutters carrying the destructive ones now glided onto the snowy grounds of Clubfoot Will's house. "Considered to be the smartest of the brothers, it was his blood the (vigilantes) wanted most of all," writes Earl Ryder. A dozen of the killers approached the stoop, aimed their carbines flush at the door only a few feet in front of them, and paused. Waiting for the signal to open fire.

Inside the small frame home, William and his wife Nora were asleep. Their evening guest, brother John Donnelly, slept in a bed down the hall. Having left his wife at his own home for the evening, John had ventured to Will's alone in the

inclement weather to borrow the family cutter for the ride to Granton the next morning. Sometime right before 2:30 a.m., a man's voice out front yelled "Fire! Fire! Open the door, Will" and John, semi-conscious, heard the cries. He scrambled from under his quilt, threw on a robe and proceeded towards the front door. William was sitting up in his bed by this time and saw his brother pass his bedroom door on the way to the parlor.

"What in the blue beyond is goin' on out there?" John murmured as he reached for the door latch. He threw open the door, braced for the morning cold—and stared into the half-score of gun barrels. He probably realized the ambush immediately, but had no time to react. The weapons flashed and roared, and John felt his body rip apart with the fusillade. He tumbled backwards into the room just as William careened around the corner from his bedroom.

"May the Lord have mercy on my soul!" John screamed. William shrank from the open doorway and, reaching over his brother's fallen form, slammed the door shut, engaging the bolt as he did. Even in the sorry light of the moon, William could tell that his brother had been transformed into a pincushion. His nightshirt was dark with blood, kneecaps to neck. Blood trickled from his mouth and nostrils.

Nora had found some holy candles and a rosary, and placed them on John's chest, wrapping his hands around them. His breathing came sparse, and rattled. He needed a doctor, but there was no way now that they could fetch one. Her husband, peeking out the window through the sash, consistently motioned her to keep her head and figure down lest the shooters open fire willy-nilly. He heard occasional movement and talking below the window. At one point he heard a laughter, followed by a voice he recognized instantly as that of Nora's brother, John. "I guess that takes care of my brother-in-law!" Kennedy mocked. Only then did William realize the hunters had mistaken John for him.

It seemed like hours before he heard the soft scrape of the cutters' blades whooshing from the snow piles in his yard, the vigilantes' hoozahs petering away into the distance. They thought they had killed Clubfoot Will. And, in a way, they did. For when he saw his brother gasp his final breath on the floor of his parlor, much of what was William Donnelly expired along with him.

When the sun rose over Biddulph Township, and he realized what had happened to other members of his family his mother, his father, Tommy and cousin Bridge—what fight may have eventually rejuvenated drowned in the agony of

tears. He sensed all hope die. He realized that the Black Donnellys were, as had long been the dream of so many, defeated. The fight was gone.

“It had been a cataclysm of slaughter that belonged to the Dark Ages,” Thomas P. Kelley estimates quite fairly in his *Vengeance of the Black Donnellys*. “The sharp knives of the mob had castrated Tom Donnelly before his head was chopped off, as was the head of his father, whose eyes were gouged out. The kitchen of the house literally swam in blood...The (four) bodies were so hideously burned and slashed that they were buried in one casket...One story has it that old Johannah Donnelly was scalped, while mob members heated an iron poker till it was cherry-red, then thrust it ...” Kelley leaves the rest to one’s worst imagination.

Of the murder at Whalen’s Corner, the same author quotes Lucan coroner Dr. Flock who examined John Donnelly’s body. Said Flock, “He had so many shots in his body that he would have had to be cut to mincemeat to get them all out.”

If the Donnellys had been the terrors of the town they were supposed to be, even at their very worst that worst had never come within the shadow of the depravity performed upon them by the howling mob. This was on another plateau. Much beneath the surface of human. Not even animal.

Aftermath

“Falling is easier than rising.”

—Ancient Irish proverb

Days after the massacre, the local police received an anonymous letter that began: “For some time past, a great deal has been said about the Donnelly family. They have been blamed by the Biddulphers as perpetrators of many crimes throughout the township. A vigilance committee was formed by a few pretended honest settlers as a means of protection from these outrages. But, the question is, who needed protection? Well, I think the Donnellys needed protection more than the vigilance committee did ...”

Such was the epilogue sentiment of many—in fact, of most guilt the generator. In testimony to the guilt that thunder-stoned the township, the township packed the pews of St. Patrick’s Church for the Donnelly funeral. Gaping mouthed, sullen mourners on the verge of tears broke down in entirety at the heart-wrenching sight of young Jennie Donnelly come to bid her parents goodbye, her cheeks tear-stained. Appearing from the foyer, she followed two coffins one bearing John

Donnelly, the other bearing what was left of the four others. Her surviving brothers braced her by the elbows to keep her from collapsing. The town had truly appreciated the amiable Jennie, had celebrated her wedding and now had slaughtered her family.

An organ boomed. Services began. In the front row of the church, William, Patrick, Robert and, yes, surely Jennie, couldn't help wondering who in the congregation behind them had, less than 48 hours ago, taken part in the carnage. God's sacramental house was not the place to cast the evil eye, but one can imagine their dark brows as they watched certain personages from the community shuffle past the closed coffins. William had heard some of their voices in his front yard. He heard their laughter. And he knew their faces well those who had sneered in his direction and spat in his path many a day John Carroll, John Kennedy, Mike Slattery, John Purtell, Joe McIntyre, Martin McLaughlin, and others. These, the ones who now, for the first time in their lives, kept their heads down, their gobs shut, their eyes averted, and actually flushed a vivid red under the gaze of the Black Donnellys.

Of the funeral, the *Toronto Telegram* wrote, "The melancholy cortege arrived at St. Patrick's Church and the coffins were deposited in the aisle of the church. At 12 o'clock precisely, Mass was celebrated by the Rev. Father Connolly. (He) undertook to address the congregation with which the church was crowded to suffocation. (At one point) his reverence completely broke down, being overcome by the intensity of his feelings ... Then with his handkerchief over his eyes, and staggering back against the altar, he threw himself upon it and wept like a child."

For days following, the town stilled itself in whisper. Winter nonetheless, a heat of intensity stifled the air and choked all loud talk. Ugly forms of cumuli scratched the sky to splatter the town in shadow. Everything seemed out of joint. The stench of the burned timbers at Donnelly house drifted into town, said some, to sting the nostrils of, especially, the guilty. Sparse movement was habitual, and dreamlike.

What animation there was came from the county detectives who fell upon Lucan in great numbers to investigate what happened the morning of February 4, 1880. They knocked on doors, pulled doorbells, and interviewed, interviewed, interviewed. Compiling testimony from the O'Connor boy and others (it is believed many pointed fingers at their brethren), the authorities arrested six men whom they believed had engineered the calamity. These half-dozen included James Carroll (the constable who came to "arrest" the Donnelly men), John Kennedy

(William Donnelly's perturbed brother-in-law), and four others whose actions prior to the tragedy seemed suspicious. In the fall, they were tried at the Middlesex County Courthouse, but the proceedings netted a hung jury. A second trial in January, 1881, concluded hastily with a "Not Guilty!" verdict for all defendants. By that time, the law's interest in justice seemed to have greatly faded.

But, the vigilance committee wagged on. When their own were freed, they met them at the Lucan train station with bugles and with drums, with banners and with speeches. Then, in parade, the assembly marched back to the Central Hotel where a hot dinner prevailed in their honor. Nothing was too good for these six men who they had crowned "redeemers of the community".

But, justice was coming. The Banshee had been taking notes.

"A startling story had spread throughout the district like wildfire; one which brought varied fears and emotions to its inhabitants," relates Donnelly biographer Thomas P. Kelley. "It was a story that told of the Donnelly wake, (which had been held the day after the murders) at the O'Connor farmhouse...Soon after midnight a lengthy series of wails and sobs, drawn out and eerie, floated from a distant, snow-covered field as stars twinkled above it ... (It) had been heard by most of those assembled at the farmhouse for the wake."

If more clever, the guilty might have known the Banshee wailed for their souls. The harbinger returned again and again after that time, even years later, to decree death to many of the architects of the massacre. Perhaps, say the old timers, Johannah Donnelly rode with her. Rumors persisted that Mrs. Donnelly, moments before she died her bloody death, vowed to return from her grave to inflict violent death to each of them. Folkloric in substance, but breath-taking in speculation.

"Oddly enough," says author Thomas P. Kelley, "a surprising number of the thirty or so men suspected of having been members of the mob ... actually did know a tragic demise; some of them almost inexplicable. One of those men, more than a decade after the massacre, is said to have groaned as he writhed in his death agonies, after being gored by a bull: 'It was her last words, the awful curse of Johannah Donnelly, that brought this upon me!'" Mike Slattery's throat was slashed with a broken bottle in Windsor, Ontario. John Purtell drowned. His corpse bore a look of horror.

Joe McIntyre, the sibling of Christiana McIntyre whom Tom Donnelly had courted before her family squelched the affair, admitted to a minister years later that he had been the one to chop off Tommy's head. "Life has been a living hell on

earth for me,” he sobbed, “and I have seen Johannah Donnelly a thousand times in my dreams. She points an accusing finger at me and gives a terrible smile. She comes in the night to haunt me, and I can’t go on much longer.” Two weeks after his confession, he hanged himself in his barn.

* * *

Today, Biddulph Township remains a farming area. It bears tribute to the hard-working Irish element that kept their noses clean, unprejudiced and out of the bloody business of feuding. Irishmen were responsible for cultivating much of this wilderness, clearing many of its forests, building many of its towns. Most of the Irish, Catholic or Protestant, had no time for bigotry. The incident at Lucan is an exception.

Outside Lucan, Roman Line Road still cuts through the rural topography as it did in 1880. Along it, a home that William Donnelly built on the site of his parent’s original house still exists and is cared for well by a private owner. The barn, which Squire Donnelly constructed in 1877, and which survived the fire, stands sturdily snubbing its roof beams at the century. Four miles away in the tiny cemetery behind St. Patrick’s Church both the cemetery and church have hardly changed—a headstone marks where the Donnellys rest in peace.

Standing before the monument might recall to mind the verse by the late General Sir William F. Butler:

*Give me but six-feet three (one inch to spare)
Of Irish ground, dig it anywhere;
And for the poor soul say an Irish prayer
Above the spot.*

* * *

JUSTICE IN ONTARIO

(Real country rockin’ number by Steve Earle)

All you who hail from Ontario
Know the tale of the Donnellys-O
Died at the hands of a mob that night
Every child and man by the oil torch light

Jim Donnelly was no angel sure
But they burned his barn, broke down the door
Well the children cried while they killed old Jim
Then they killed his wife, then they turned on them
No judge, no jury, no hangman, no justice in Ontario

Well, a hundred years or more have turned
And you always hear how much we've learned
When a man lay dead in a Port Hope bar
And the blood ran red on a hardwood floor

The big men ran through the nearest door
Only one man knew what had happened for sure
Well one and all wore the outlaws' brand
And the big bikes roared through the Great Northland
When you live on the edge of the law
You know, justice in Ontario

The blue smoke still hung in the air
No one spoke when the cops got there
'Till the local constable made the call
Send us Corporal Terry Hall

Well, they all sang a different tune
When Corporal Hall walked in the room
With his picture book and a list of names
One by one the witnesses came
And they told him what he wanted to know
Justice in Ontario

The provincial cops searched far and wide
And the outlaws ran but they could not hide
And they brought 'em in, every single one
'Cept the man who actually fired the gun

It was down in London, they were tried
And the guilty man stood free outside
When he took the stand to pay his debt
The judge was blind and the jury deaf
In Kingston Town they're locked up still

When the sun goes down and the air is chill
You could swear you heard Jim Donnelly's ghost cry "*Justice In Ontario!*"

Lesson #3: The Chevalier Bayard (1473–30 April 1524)

Pierre Terrail, Seigneur de Bayard, a French soldier, generally known as the Chevalier de Bayard, is considered to be the last true Knight in Shining Armor, the last flower of the Middle Ages before the modern world took over. Appropriately enough, he met his death at the hands of a peasant soldier with a matchlock musket in his hand, the firearm finally triumphing over the old chivalric ideal.

The descendant of a noble family, nearly every head of which for two centuries had fallen in battle, he was born at the Chateau Bayard, Dauphine, near Pontcharra). He served as a page to Charles I of Savoy, until Charles VIII of France, promoted him to be one of the royal followers under the seigneur (count) de Ligry (1487). As a youth he was distinguished for his looks, charming manner, and skill in the tilt-yard.

In 1494 he accompanied Charles VIII into Italy, and was knighted after the Battle of Fornovo (1495), where he had captured a standard. Shortly afterwards, entering Milan alone in pursuit of the enemy, he was taken prisoner, but was set free without a ransom by Ludovico Sforza. In 1502 he was wounded at Canossa.

Bayard was the hero of a celebrated combat of thirteen French knights against an equal number of Germans, and his restless energy and valour were conspicuous throughout the Italian wars of this period. On one occasion it is said that he single-handedly defended the bridge of the Garigliano against 200 Spaniards, an exploit that brought him such renown that Pope Julius II tried unsuccessfully to entice him into the papal service. In 1508 he distinguished himself again at the siege of Genoa by Louis XII, and early in 1509 the king made him captain of a company of horse and foot.

At the siege of Padua Bayard won further distinction, by his courage and consummate skill. He continued to serve in the Italian wars until the siege of Brescia in 1512. Here his boldness in first mounting the rampart resulted in a severe wound, and his soldiers had to carry him into a neighbouring house, the residence of a nobleman, whose wife and daughters he protected from threatened insult. Before his wound was healed, he hurried to join Gaston de Foix, under whom he served in the Battle of Ravenna (1512).

In 1513, when Henry VIII of England routed the French at the Battle of the Spurs (Guinegate, where Bayard's father had received a lifelong injury in a battle of 1479), Bayard, trying to rally his countrymen, found his escape cut off.

Unwilling to surrender, he rode suddenly up to an English officer who was resting unarmed, and summoned him to yield; the knight complying, Bayard in turn gave himself up to his prisoner. He was taken into the English camp, but his gallantry impressed Henry as it had impressed Ludovico, and the king released him without ransom, merely exacting his parole not to serve for six weeks.

On the accession of Francis I in 1515 Bayard was made lieutenant-general of Dauphine and after the victory of Marignan, to which his valour largely contributed, he had the honour of conferring knighthood on his youthful sovereign. When war again broke out between Francis I and Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, Bayard, with 1,000 men, held Montvillars, which had been declared untenable, against an army of 35,000, and after six weeks compelled the imperial generals to raise the siege. This stubborn resistance saved central France from invasion, as the king had not then sufficient forces to withstand the imperialists.

All France celebrated the achievement, and Francis gained time to collect the royal army, which drove out the invaders (1521). The parliament thanked Bayard as the saviour of his country; the king made him a knight of the order of St. Michael, and commander in his own name of 100 *gens d'armes*, an honour till then reserved for princes of the blood.

Bayard was sent into Italy with Admiral Bonnivet, who, being defeated at Robecco and wounded in a combat during his retreat, implored Bayard to assume command and save the army. He repulsed the foremost pursuers, but in guarding the rear at the passage of the Sesia was mortally wounded by an arquebus ball (April 30, 1524) which pierced his armor. He died in the midst of the enemy, attended by Pescara, the Spanish commander, and by his old comrade, Charles, Duc de Bourbon. His body was restored to his friends and interred at Grenoble.

As a soldier, Bayard was considered the epitome of chivalry and one of the most skilful commanders of the age. He was noted for the exactitude and completeness of his information on the enemy's movements, which he obtained by careful reconnaissance and a well-arranged system of espionage. In the midst of mercenary armies Bayard remained absolutely disinterested, and to his contemporaries and his successors he was, with his romantic heroism, piety and magnanimity, the fearless and faultless knight, *le chevalier sans peur et sans reproche*. His gaiety and kindness won him, even more frequently, another name bestowed by his contemporaries, *le bon chevalier*.

Lesson #4: Gotz Von Berlichingen (1480–1562)

[Note from Harold Covington: Now, just to show I'm even-handed, here's a forgotten hero for you from Germany.]

The famous Gotz von Berlichingen, who died on July 23, 1562, was a typical Raubritter, a petty aristocrat making a living serving less petty aristocrats in wars and feuds, and getting family finances in order by kidnapping and robbing merchants and burghers. After losing his hand in combat in 1504 (a missile from a “field snake,” or small cannon, hit his sword hilt, which, along with his arm greaves, ripped his lower arm to shreds) he had a mechanical hand made for him, which resulted in his cognomen Von der Eiserne Hand—Gotz of the Iron Hand.

His memoir is aimed mainly at justifying his role during the Peasant Wars of 1525, when, as he claims, he was coerced into leading a fraction of rebels. His brief stint among the Bundschuh, and his subsequent incarceration as a sympathizer of the abortive revolt made him somewhat of a folk hero ... a reputation cemented by Johann Wolfgang Goethe's in his Sturm und Drang drama Gotz von Berlichingen.

A RIDE IN THE COUNTRY A.D. 1502

The action and battle for Nuremberg having taken place on the Sunday after Valentine's Day, it happened soon afterwards, around Michaelmas, that I rode down from Sodenberg with Neidhardt von Thringen, under whom I was serving at the time. As we moved along, we became aware of two horsemen near a small patch of woods, in the vicinity of a village called Ober-Eschenbach, and these men were Endris von Gemund, bailiff of Solleck, and his servant, whom people called The Ape.

Now, preceding these events, when I had joined up with Lord Neidhardt, there had been a meeting at Hammelburg, and Neidhardt was there with Count Wilhelm von Henneberg and Count Michael von Wertheim, who had lots of strife because of an enemy who was the aforementioned Count Michael's enemy whom they had called to that meeting. And the proceedings were administered and arbitrated.

But as I went to join Lord Neidhardt at the inn and walked over to his servants—who by now were drunk for the most part—the aforementioned Ape was so far gone and with so much wind in his nose [i.e. garrulous] that he launched into

much odd talk. And he said to me: “So, Junker, are you come to join us?” and some such sarcastic nonsense with which he intended to provoke me.

Peeved, I told him, “I can do without you calling me Junker, and without your derision and your gluttony. Because once we happen to meet out in the field, we’ll see who is the Junker and who is the serving man.”

When we were riding down from Sodenberg, I thought to myself that this must be him riding with his Junker. And I drove my horse up a high, steep mountain, bringing up my crossbow while moving. Next, I moved straight at them. But the Junker was fleeing toward the village, so that I feared he would start inciting the peasants. The Ape also was armed with a crossbow, and took to flight just like his master. As I closed in with him, he was forced to enter a deep hollow path. I let him and shot at him over his back. Now I wanted to draw the crossbow again, but thought it unlikely that he would wait around for me, since he, too, had a bolt on his crossbow. And I had no-one with me, thus didn’t bother with my weapon.

I followed him into the hollow path, and since he saw that I did not reload, he waited for me at the gate until I had closed in. Then he shot at me, and hit me right into my breastplate so that the bolt burst into splinters that flew up all over my head. I threw my crossbow at his neck (since I had no bolt on it anyway) and drew my sword.

I ran him to the ground so that his nag hit its nose into the dirt. But he came up again, all the while yelling at the peasants they should come to his aid. And as I was running around with him inside the village, there was a peasant holding a crossbow, with a bolt already loaded. I charged at him before he could shoot and knocked the bolt from the bow. And then, I remained with him, sheathing my sword, and identifying myself, saying that I was serving under Neidhardt von Thurigen and thus was a staunch member of the Bishop of Fulda’s party.

Meanwhile, a whole gang of peasants had arrived and surrounded me, armed with boar spears, hand axes, throwing axes, wood axes, and rocks. If you don’t dare, you won’t win, if you don’t hit, you won’t score—so consequently the axes and rocks were flying past my head that I thought they’d dent my helmet, when a peasant was running at me with a boar spear. I launched myself at him, and as I was clearing my sword, the peasant struck at me, hitting my arm so that I thought he had broken it. And as I thrust at him, he fell under my horse, and I didn’t have enough space to lean over to get at him.

Finally, I broke through, but then a peasant was running after me who was wielding a wood cutting ax. Him I gave a blow that he fell next to the stockade. At that moment my horse gave out, since I had ridden him hard, and I became afraid that I might not be able to make it out of the gate. And as I was rushing toward it, someone immediately appeared who wanted to slam it shut. I made it out before he succeeded. A short distance from the gate, I again ran into the Ape, and he had a bolt on his crossbow and four peasants with him, yelling “Hither! Hither!” He shot at me so that I saw the bolt reflect off the soil.

And again, I attacked them with my sword drawn and chased all five of them back into the village when the peasants rang storm over me.

I, however, rode off toward Lord Neidhardt who kept himself far out in the field. We looked back at the peasants, but nobody was about to follow me. As I came close to Neidhardt, a peasant, alerted by his compatriots ringing storm, came running along with his plow. I caught him and forced him to swear to bring my crossbow back out to me, which I had thrown at the Ape and failed to pick up again.

From Pistorius, Wilhelm Friedrich. Lebens-Beschreibung Herrn Gozens von Berlichingen, zugenannt mit der Eisern Hand, Eines zu Zeiten Kaysers Maximilian I und Caroli V kühnen und tapfern Reichs-Cavaliers, Nurnberg: Adam Jonathan FeBecker, 1731; p. 52f., in Leitzmann, Albert (ed.). Lebensbeschreibung Herrn Gozens von Berlichingen, nach der Ausgabe von 1731, Halle an der Saale: Verlag von Max Niemeyer, 1916.

Lesson #5: Benvenuto Cellini, Artist and Murderer

by Edward J. Lowell

Note from Harold Covington: Okay, now here's one for the Italians. Benvenuto Cellini was one of the greatest goldsmiths and metalworkers of any age, and his works in gold and silver plate today fetch stunning prices at auctions and are proudly displayed in museums across the world. He also wrote an autobiography which is one of the most interesting and funny I have ever read.

After the siege, [of Rome, 1527] when things had got back to their normal conditions of irregular ruffianism, Benvenuto resumed the practice of his art.

He had a younger brother, a soldier in the service of Duke Alessandro de Medici. This brother was killed in a scuffle with the city guard, by an arquebusier whom he was attacking with his sword. The young man's death filled Benvenuto with grief, so that the pope noticed it, and remonstrated with him on his want of philosophy.

"I took," says Cellini, "To watching the arquebusier as though he had been a girl I was in love with. The man had formerly been in the light cavalry, but afterward had joined the arquebusiers as one of the Bargello's corporals; and what increased my rage was that he had used these boastful words: 'If it had not been for me, who killed that brave young man, the least trifle of delay would have resulted in his putting us all to flight with great disaster.'

"When I saw that the fever caused by always seeing him about was depriving me of sleep and appetite, and was bringing me by degrees to sorry plight, I overcame my repugnance to so low and not quite praiseworthy an enterprise, and made my mind up one evening to rid myself of the torment.

"The fellow lived in a house near a place called Torre Sanguigna, next door to the lodging of one of the most fashionable courtesans in Rome, named Signora Antea. It had just struck twenty-four, and he was standing at the house-door, with his sword in hand, having risen from supper. With great address I stole up to him, holding a large Pistoian dagger, and dealt him a back-handed stroke, with which I meant to cut his head clean off; but as he turned round very suddenly, the blow fell upon the point of his left shoulder and broke the bone. He sprang up, dropped his sword, half-stunned with the great pain, and took flight. I followed after, and in four steps caught him up, when I lifted my dagger above his head, which he was holding very low, and hit him in the back exactly at the junction of the nape-bone

and the neck. The poniard entered this point so deep into the bone that, though I used all my strength to pull it out, I was not able.

“For just at that moment four soldiers sprang out from Antea’s lodging, and obliged me to set hand to my own sword to defend my life. Leaving the poniard, then, I made off, and fearing I might be recognized, took refuge in the palace of Duke Alessandro, which was between Piazza Navona and the Rotunda. On my arrival I asked to see the duke; who told me that, if I was alone, I need only keep quiet and have no further anxiety, but go on working at the jewel which the pope had set his heart on, and stay eight days indoors.

“He gave this advice the more securely, because the soldiers had now arrived who interrupted the completion of my deed; they held the dagger in their hand, and were relating how the matter happened, and the great trouble they had to pull the weapon from the neck and head-bone of the man, whose name they did not know. Just then Giovan Bandini came up, and said to them: ‘That poniard is mine, and I lent it to Benvenuto, who was bent on revenging his brother.’ The soldiers were profuse in their expressions of regret at having interrupted me, although my vengeance had been amply satisfied.”

“More than eight days elapsed, and the pope did not send for me according to his custom. Afterwards he summoned me through his chamberlain, the Bolognese nobleman I have already mentioned, who let me, in his own modest manner, understand that his Holiness knew all, but was very well inclined toward me, and that I had only to mind my work and keep quiet. When we reached the presence, the pope cast so menacing a glance toward me that the mere look of his eyes made me tremble. Afterward, upon examining my work, his countenance cleared, and he began to praise me beyond measure, saying that I had done a vast amount in a short time. Then, looking me straight in the face, he added: ‘Now that you are cured, Benvenuto, take heed how you live.’ I, who understood his meaning, promised that I would. Immediately upon this I opened a very fine shop in the Banchi, opposite Raffaello, and there I finished the jewel after the lapse of four months.”

This way of treating murder on the part of the pope did not tend to discourage murderers. Benvenuto’s second successful exploit in that line, however, took place in the season of anarchy between the death of Clement VII and the election of Paul III.

The chronic turbulence of the times became acute on such occasions as this. Pompeo, a rival goldsmith, took the opportunity of the general confusion to come with ten armed men and try to pick a quarrel with Cellini. The latter controlled himself for a time, being unwilling to have his own friends drawn into the difficulty. Shortly afterward, however, he followed and came up with Pompeo, broke through the line of his defenders, and stabbed him twice with a dagger. He says he had not meant to kill him.

Pompeo's bravi ran up to the corpse, but took no steps to avenge their master; the whole flower of the young men of the neighborhood, except the Milanese, who were townsmen of Pompeo, came crowding in to help to save the murderer at the risk of their lives; a cardinal offered his palace as a place of refuge; and the new pope, when appealed to by friends of the murdered man, calmly assured them that the provocation was great, and that "men like Benvenuto, unique in their profession, stand above the law."

Lesson #6: The Strange Death of Warren Harding (1923)

by Russell Aiuto

Within minutes of Warren G. Harding's death at either 7:10, 7:20, or 7:30 p.m. on August 2, 1923, rumors began to circulate. No one present at his demise could give the correct time of death. No one seemed to be sure who was on hand in the San Francisco hotel room when he breathed his last. Most of all, the four physicians who had been caring for Harding for the previous week could not agree on the cause of death. It had something to do with his heart. On the other hand, perhaps it was a stroke. Alternatively, it could have been both, exacerbated by the ptomaine poisoning that he may or may not have experienced a few days earlier in Vancouver. Despite the confusion over the time of death, surely an autopsy would resolve the uncertainty about what killed Warren G. Harding.

Except—there was no autopsy. Mrs. Harding—the “Duchess,” as her husband called her—would not permit it. Within an hour of his death, he was embalmed, rouged, powdered, dressed, and in his casket. By morning, he was on a train, headed back to Washington, D.C.

It is little wonder that newspaper reporters, servants, and minor attending officials speculated about the circumstances of the death of the 29th President of the United States. How could an event so important to the life of the nation be so shoddily handled? Or was there some secret, something about this death that needed covering up?

The entire affair was so bizarre that it was inevitable that conspiracy theories arose. Was it suicide? If so, why? Was it murder? If so, who did it?

The Making of a President

To understand the strange circumstances of his death, it is necessary to know something of Harding himself. How could he have assembled such a loony group around him? If he committed suicide, what would have driven him to it? If he was murdered, who had reason for killing him and what was their motive?

It is difficult not to treat the story of Harding frivolously. He was a frivolous man, well meaning, but nonetheless a man who inspires irreverence.

The life and presidency of Warren Gamaliel Harding is essentially a comic story. Harding had many admirable traits—kindness, charm, generosity—but he was basically an inept man, without many talents. If it had not been for his steely, extremely capable wife, and a few stalwart members of his cabinet, he would have had no presidential accomplishments at all. From the time of his entry into politics in Ohio to the time of his death, his career can best be described as slapstick, a sort of political gang that couldn't shoot straight.

Yet the Harding story is, in its own way, sad. Besides the buffoonery of his days in the Senate and the White House, there is the tale of a man in over his head, trusting of untrustworthy associates, trying to do his best.

Harding was born in 1865 in the farming village of Blooming Grove, Ohio. His family moved to the somewhat larger town of Marion, Ohio, when he was a child. While his father was a doctor, his was essentially a farming family. He grew up with the usual farm chores of late 19th Century Middle America, did reasonably well in school, and went off to a small Ohio college. After graduating, he taught school for a year, and then left the demanding teaching profession for the newspaper business. Together with two other young men, he bought a local weekly, the *Marion Star*. Soon, he was the sole owner, and spent his adult life, other than his career in politics, as a publisher.

He was not, strictly speaking, a newspaperman. He wrote editorials, most of them loyally Republican in an otherwise Democratic county, but most of his efforts were in seeking advertising. He was a typical, small town glad-hander, a quintessential Midwestern Rotarian, a tall, handsome young man on Main Street chatting up the local citizens. He was clearly a politician in the making. A Marion “booster,” he played cornet in the town band, frequented the roller-skating rink, and played poker. Sinclair Lewis could not have invented a more typical character in his novels about small town America.

While still in his 20s, Harding became an orator. In the ornate style of the time, he gave speeches at county and state Republican conventions. They were noted for their William Jennings Bryan puffery, high-sounding orations without much comprehensible content.

At about this time, the daughter of Marion's richest man, Amos Kling, spotted the handsome, confident, and personable young man, and set her cap for him. Her name was Florence Kling DeWolfe. She was five years older than Harding, had recently been divorced (albeit from a common-law marriage) and

was a piano teacher. She was smart, tough, and reasonably good-looking. She had given birth to a child from her brief “marriage,” and had given the child to her stingy, mean-spirited father to raise. She met Harding at the skating rink, and within a year, they were married. It was a marriage that would make the career of Warren G. Harding.

Florence took over the business operations of the *Star*, and capably directed the paper’s fortunes. In the meantime, Harding was free to “bloviate” (as he called his speeches and conversations) and become a town fixture. His good nature and charm overcame the vicious rumors spread by his father-in-law, the most damning of which was that the Harding family had Negro blood. Florence and her husband were estranged from her father for more than seven years after their marriage.

With Florence’s encouragement, Harding ran for the Ohio State Senate and won. He served two terms, followed by a term as lieutenant governor, and then was defeated when he ran for governor. A fundamentally lazy man whose approach to politics was conciliation and compromise, Harding did not mind returning to Marion and his role as newspaper publisher.

During these early years of their marriage, Harding began his long career as an adulterer, and fathered the first of his illegitimate children. He and Florence never had children. She was, as he said many times over the years, his “partner,” his “best pal,” his “Duchess.” Not, however, the mother of his children. Harding’s life is resplendent with adulteries and one-night stands, a compulsion that he maintained almost to his last days.

Harry Daugherty

During his service as state senator, Harding, who certainly looked presidential, was noticed by a fevered Ohio politician, Harry Daugherty. Daugherty recognized that Harding could very well be his political meal ticket, and that someday he could guide this tall, good-looking, and charming boob to the greatest heights of political achievement. Between the Duchess and Daugherty, Harding’s trajectory to the presidency was a sure thing—at least Daugherty thought so. Daugherty was a schemer and a crook, but he knew a successful politician when he saw one.

After a hiatus from public life, Daugherty and the Duchess successfully brought Harding to the U.S. Senate in 1914. As always, Harding was well liked by his colleagues. His policy of conciliation and compromise was as successful in Washington as it had been in Columbus. One could always find Harding on both

sides of an issue, and could expect him to wait until the last moment before casting his lot with one side or the other. During his six years as a senator, the Hardings enjoyed their Washington, D.C., life, except for the snubs that Florence had to endure from other senators' wives. However, one day she would pay them back.

Harding enjoyed being a senator. Yet Daugherty and others saw him as the Republican hope for the presidency, particularly in the sad last days of the Woodrow Wilson administration. At first, the Duchess was reluctant to encourage her husband on this last, great quest. Her reluctance was reinforced by the prediction of her astrological adviser, Madame Marcia, who foresaw in the stars the presidency for Harding, but added that he would not live out his term of office.

Eventually, Daugherty persuaded Florence. The strategy was to make the well-liked Harding every delegate's second choice at the 1920 Republican National Convention in Chicago. The strategy worked. Slowly, the strength of the front three candidates eroded and late in the convention Warren G. Harding became the Republican nominee for president on the seventh ballot. Legend has it that Harding became the nominee after a long meeting in a "smoke-filled room," but the reality was that influential Republicans came and went from a hotel suite trying to figure out how to break the convention deadlock. Daugherty traded many favors and promised a number of political appointments as he seduced delegates from the three front-runners.

Then came the campaign—and a strange one it was. James Cox, the Democratic candidate and the Governor of Ohio, traveled the length and breadth of the country, while Harding conducted a "front porch" campaign from his home in Marion, just as William McKinley had done in his successful campaign for the presidency in 1896.

Droves came to hear orations by the candidate and, with a strategy developed by Florence, entertainment personalities (for the first, but not for the last, time in American politics) flocked to Marion to endorse the Republican candidate. Harding won the election handily. Warren G. Harding was now president and the colorless Calvin Coolidge, his eventual successor, his vice president.

America's Best Loved and Least Effective President

Warren G. Harding was inaugurated as the 29th President of the United States on March 4, 1921. He looked every inch a President—silver hair, dark eyebrows, tall, handsome, smiling—a president sent from central casting. His

inaugural speech, a bit better than his usual “blovations,” introduced the famous word “normalcy.” Warren Harding was going to return a war-weary country to the peace and happiness of a bygone era. Everything would return to normal.

President Warren Harding’s First Cabinet

Harding blundered from the very start of his presidency. He formed a cabinet that had four wise men, two non-entities, and three crooks. These selections would come back to haunt him.

The four capable appointees were Charles Evans Hughes (Secretary of State), Herbert Hoover (Secretary of Commerce), Henry Wallace (Secretary of Agriculture), and Andrew Mellon (Secretary of the Treasury). The two non-entities were James J. Davis (Secretary of Labor) and Will Hays (Postmaster General).

But it was the last three “old pals” who would disgrace his administration. The first scoundrel was Albert B. Fall, Secretary of the Interior, a New Mexico senator and pal from Harding’s poker-playing days in the Senate. The second was not so much a scoundrel as an incompetent—Edwin C. Denby, Secretary of the Navy. The third was Harding’s campaign manager and Ohio politico, Harry Daugherty, who was appointed, of all things, Attorney General. In Albert Fall, Harding had selected an anti-environmentalist with a penchant for acquiring land and wealth for himself. In Daugherty, he had selected a schemer and shady politician to be the nation’s leading law enforcer. Denby’s goal in life was to be liked. With 27 million American males to choose from, Harding picked three of the worst.

President and Mrs. Harding got off to a good start. They opened the White House to visitors, a practice that had been curtailed during the Wilson administration. The social functions of the presidency allowed Florence to return the snubs that the Hardings had endured during his six years in the Senate. With Mellon’s help, Harding created the Bureau of the Budget to oversee government spending. He held a far-reaching disarmament conference, primarily to provide an alternative to the League of Nations, Wilson’s attempt at world peace that had so polarized the nation. Secretary of State Hughes was instrumental in accomplishing a treaty that curtailed the growth of sea power. Mrs. Harding became an advocate for World War I veterans, particularly those that had been disabled.

Florence’s advocacy for veterans was only part of her impact on the Harding administration. She participated in the selection of government appointments, one of which, the Director of Veterans Affairs, would prove to be disastrous. This

appointment went to the Hardings' good friend, Charles Forbes, who was soon to lead the administration into scandal.

All Hell Breaks Loose

It wasn't long into the Harding presidency before the scoundrels began their work. Daugherty surrounded himself with nefarious characters. The most odious of the group was Jesse Smith, an unofficial member of the Justice Department who specialized in kickbacks, whiskey distribution—Prohibition had gone into effect in 1919—and political favors, all, presumably, with the approval of Daugherty.

William “Billy” Burns

A second remarkable character was Billy Burns, owner of a famous detective agency, who became director of the FBI, and was Daugherty's principal instrument for intimidation of citizens who were critical of Harding or Daugherty. Burns, who kept his detective agency throughout his tenure as FBI Director, employed Gaston B. Means, an ex-convict and swindler of the first rank whose assignments included shadowing Harding on his amorous escapades. Smith, in particular, was important, since he delivered blackmail payoffs to a number of Harding's mistresses when they threatened to make public the amazingly juvenile love letters written to them by Senator, and then, President Harding. Most of all, this group, particularly Smith and Daugherty, formed the nucleus for late night poker games and stag parties held in a special house kept for that purpose. It was, in effect, Harding's YMCA.

A dollar-a-year man hired by Daugherty was none other than the publisher of the *Washington Post*, Ned McLean, whose wife, Evalyn (the owner of the famous Hope Diamond), was Florence's best friend. Basically, McLean was Harding's pimp and one of his bootleggers. It was his house, occupied by Daugherty and Smith, which was the setting for the presidential shenanigans. Though both were married, Daugherty and Smith had a very domestic relationship in McLean's hideaway, prompting speculation that the attorney general and his unpaid assistant were gay.

Albert B. Fall

While shenanigans were going on in the Department of Justice, Albert B. Fall, with the cooperation of the hapless secretary of the Navy, Edwin Denby, set his corruption scheme into operation. During World War I, Wilson had placed the nation's oil reserves under the control of the Navy Department. Fall, who was a

friend of the oil barons Harry Sinclair and Edward Doheny, saw a golden opportunity. He convinced Harding to transfer the authority over the oil reserves from the Navy Department to the Department of the Interior. The clueless Denby went along with the proposal.

Fall's objective was to sell the oil leases in the federal lands surrounding the oil reserves to the oil companies. He did this without competitive bidding to Doheny (the Elk Hills oil reserve in California) and Sinclair (the Teapot Dome oil reserve in Wyoming). The oil companies stood to make \$100 million each, a considerable sum for the time.

Coincidentally, after the leases were approved, Albert Fall's ranch in New Mexico was improved and expanded, all on his modest government salary of \$12,000 a year. When eventually confronted with questions about his newly acquired wealth, Fall first said that he had received a loan from McLean, and then admitted that he had received "loans" from Doheny and Sinclair. One loan, from Doheny, was \$100,000, delivered in a suitcase by Doheny's son. Soon after the leases were given to Sinclair and Doheny, Fall resigned his cabinet post (much to the regret of his good friends, the Hardings) and went to work for Sinclair. One cannot say that Albert Fall lacked boldness.

After Harding's death, Fall was charged with corruption; Sinclair and Doheny with bribery. They were tried, convicted, and sent to prison. Fall, the first cabinet member in history to go to jail, served a year.

Daugherty was not to be outdone by Fall, whom he did not like. In addition to skimming his part of the take from Jesse Smith's operations, Daugherty also managed to sell off government surplus goods at ridiculously low prices, which the purchasing companies then sold for many times what they paid. Here again, Daugherty took the kickbacks. The Daugherty-Smith illegal gains ended up in Daugherty's brother's bank in the oddly named town of Washington Court House, Ohio. Daugherty was indicted for corruption and tried twice. His first trial resulted in a hung jury. He was found not guilty at his second trial because of insufficient evidence. It seems that the records of his brother's bank had mysteriously disappeared, and his partner in crime, Jesse Smith, had killed himself in 1923.

The boldest of the grafters was Charlie Forbes, a favorite of Mrs. Harding and the man responsible for the care of her "boys," as she called the World War I veterans. As director of the Bureau of Veterans, Forbes also sold supplies to willing purchasers, but, in this instance, these were hospital supplies—not

surplus—needed by the veterans’ hospitals. Worse, without approval from congress or the president, Forbes proceeded on a program of hospital construction, taking his cut from the inflated income of the contractors. In these schemes, he was assisted by the Veterans Bureau auditor, James Cramer.

There is a marvelous scene, worthy of the Three Stooges, in which Harding was found choking Forbes, shouting, “You yellow rat! You double-crossing bastard!” Forbes asked to conduct an inspection of British veterans’ hospitals, and Harding forced him to write a letter of resignation before he left. It was not needed. Before Forbes could leave the ship when it arrived in Southampton, England, Forbes received a cablegram that he had been fired. A little over a month later, Cramer committed suicide. Eventually, Forbes was tried, convicted, and sentenced to two years in prison.

There were at least two other suicides among these bands of pirates. Doheny’s son, the messenger with the suitcase of money, committed suicide during the oil lease scandal investigations of 1924. Jesse Smith, questioned by Harding about his activities, particularly for his arranging for paroles of convicts (for a price) without seeking the President’s approval, committed suicide in June 1923. The usually ebullient Smith became depressed after this interview, and was particularly upset that he was no longer in favor with the President and the First Lady. Evidently, he fed on being intimate with power. (It is important to note that Smith had an intense fear of firearms, and it was odd that he would choose a revolver for his suicide. Gaston Means suggests that Smith was murdered in order to silence him.) The Hardings were shaken by Smith’s death, as they prepared for a fateful trip west, but they were not nearly as upset as Smith’s co-conspirator and housemate, Harry Daugherty.

The Final Trip

For a number of years, the Hardings had been looking forward to a trip to the Far West, particularly Alaska. Finally, after Florence’s serious illness in the late fall and winter of 1922, and the President’s debilitating case of influenza in the winter and spring of 1923, they departed with an entourage in June 1923.

Accompanying them were the two White House physicians, Dr. Charles Sawyer, a homeopathic quack; and Dr. Joel Boone, a Navy physician assigned to the White House, but under the thumb of the quirky Dr. Sawyer. The Duchess swore by the skills of Sawyer, who, she claimed, had saved her life the previous winter. Also in the party were George Christian, Harding’s secretary; and three

cabinet secretaries: Work (who had replaced Fall), Wallace, and Hoover (who would meet them on the West Coast). The trip was called a “Voyage of Understanding.”

The train transporting the presidential party reached Tacoma, Wash., on July 4, after numerous stops and speeches along the way. Harding was clearly weak and tired, and, on some occasions, the Duchess gave impromptu speeches in his stead from the rear platform of the train. The President was brooding over the betrayals of his friends.

After four days of sailing, with Harding playing bridge most of the way, the ship carrying the group reached Alaska. They made brief stops along the Alaskan coast, and, on the return trip, Harding indulged in a feast of crabs and butter. When they reached Seattle, Harding faltered while delivering a speech and was rescued by Hoover as he dropped pages of his manuscript. He complained of violent cramps and indigestion and was put to bed. Sawyer diagnosed Harding’s complaints as “a slight attack of ptomaine” from the crabs he had eaten. Dr. Boone, however, was alarmed, and told Secretary Hoover that there was more to it than indigestion. Harding’s heart was enlarged. Hoover telegraphed ahead to San Francisco requesting that the president of Stanford University, Dr. Ray Lyman Wilbur, who was also president of the American Medical Association, meet the train. They proceeded directly to San Francisco, canceling a scheduled speech in Portland, Oregon. Dr. Charles Minor Cooper, a noted heart specialist, who had been enlisted by Wilbur, joined the group. Harding refused a wheel chair and walked off the train into a waiting limousine. He was whisked to the Palace Hotel, and put to bed at once.

The Palace Hotel

Harding was scheduled to deliver a speech on the World Court in San Francisco. Remaining ill, he canceled the speech, but had Hoover release it to the press. All of his scheduled activities for California were canceled. Harding rallied, sitting up in bed and eating solid food, reading the newspapers, and talking with the Duchess, Christian, Boone, Sawyer, and Hoover. Sawyer announced that the crisis had passed, while Boone, Wilbur, and Cooper were convinced that Harding had suffered a heart attack.

On the evening of August 2, Florence was reading an admiring article about him that he clearly enjoyed. According to one account, she left the room to go to her suite across the corridor. One of the nurses came into the room with a glass of

water so that Harding could take his evening medication. She saw Harding's face twitch and his mouth drop open. The nurse ran for Florence, who entered the room, saw her husband dead, and then called for Dr. Boone. By the time Boone arrived (in only a few minutes) Harding had been laid out in a white robe, eyes closed, flat on the bed. This, according to Francis Russell, is the official version.

Dr. Boone's recollections of the death were quite different. Dr. Sawyer was not in the room. Hoover's memoirs state that Dr. Sawyer was in the room, lying across the foot of the bed, taking Harding's pulse, or simply holding his hand. The two nurses, the consulting physicians, and reporters immediately outside told different stories. All that is clear is that Harding died some time between 7 p.m. and 7:35 p.m., but who was actually with him remains unknown.

The slow train ride from San Francisco to Washington, D.C., gave countless citizens an opportunity to show their affection for the good-natured, likeable president. It was the greatest outpouring of grief since the death of Abraham Lincoln. The oil lease scandals and the veterans' affairs corruption were not yet public, so the collective memory of the citizenry at the time of his death was of their handsome, friendly leader.

Mrs. Harding had Harding's casket elevated, so that as the train passed, the thousands along the route could glimpse their beloved president.

Warren Harding was eventually laid to rest in an elaborate mausoleum in Marion, Ohio, a structure finally dedicated by President Herbert Hoover in 1931. By this time, Harding's reputation had plummeted, where it remains to this day. It was an awkward dedication. Besides the scandals, there lingered questions about how Harding actually died.

There are four theories about the death of Warren Harding, ranging from the straightforward and plausible to the speculative and bizarre. These theories are natural causes, negligent homicide, suicide, and murder.

Natural Causes?

If ever there was a candidate for a heart attack, it was Warren Harding. He lived the fat-filled, tobacco-infused, and alcohol-drenched life of early 20th Century America with gusto.

While Harding epitomized the vigor of the corn-fed farm boy, he was, in reality, a violator of reasonably healthy behavior. His only exercise consisted of

desultory rounds of golf, fairly frequent love trysts, and at least twice-weekly marathon poker games. These card games were drenched in highballs, suffused with cigar smoke, and punctuated with copious expectorations of tobacco juice into strategically placed spittoons. While Harding and his cronies played cards and munched on roast beef sandwiches, the Duchess kept the whiskey flowing. These games often ran past one in the morning.

There were clear indications that Harding had coronary artery disease. He was short of breath, and for a considerable time he had to sleep propped up on pillows in order to breathe. During his final trip west, his lips were often blue. For most of his presidency, he complained of periods of indigestion that were, in all likelihood, attacks of angina.

Dr. Charles Sawyer—Doc Sawyer, as he was known in the Harding family—was a homeopathic physician who believed in herbal preparations, purgatives, laxatives, and other folk remedies. (Harding's other doctor, a scientifically trained allopathic physician, was Dr. Joel Boone, who was kept at a distance from his famous patient by the jealous and possessive Sawyer.) In brief, Harding's worsening coronary disease went untreated.

Or, one might propose, incorrectly treated.

Negligent Homicide?

Still, because of his cheerful vigor, Harding's death came as a surprise. For all of Dr. Boone's concern, one is left with the impression (derived from Dr. Boone's diaries and memoirs) that he felt that Harding could have been saved. Even with that hopeful outlook, Boone and the specialists brought into the picture when the ill Harding arrived in San Francisco thought that Sawyer's treatment of Harding was, at best, contrary to the best medical practice, and, at worst, bizarre.

Harding was already in a weakened state. He had experienced a severe bout of influenza in January 1923, and had returned to his duties before he had fully recovered. In the meantime, Sawyer, continuing to mistake Harding's angina for indigestion, was convinced that its severity was compounded by ptomaine poisoning from "a mess of king crabs drenched in butter." Obviously, reasoned Sawyer, he had to purge Harding of the poisons with powerful purgatives. The fact that Harding became weaker and weaker with this treatment did not alarm Sawyer as it had the other three physicians.

The agreed-upon “cause of death” was a stroke, although only Sawyer appeared to believe that conclusion. The other three doctors, particularly Boone, believed that Harding died from a heart attack. Most likely, the three allopaths agreed to the diagnosis of a stroke to keep Sawyer’s reputation from being damaged by his inept care of the President of the United States.

A reasonable conclusion is that Harding was a victim of negligent homicide. The case for this is strengthened by Sawyer’s strange behavior at the time of Harding’s death. One might reconstruct those last moments in the hotel room in San Francisco as follows: Sawyer, having given Harding another powerful dose of purgative, propelled the president into cardiac arrest. Alarmed at the result, he rushed from the sickroom to get a counteracting stimulant, but returned from his own room too late to save Harding.

Even if this scenario cannot be proved, it is clear that Sawyer was guilty of horrendous malpractice, both in diagnosis and treatment. It is reasonable to conclude that Harding, who might have died sooner or later from a heart attack, was a victim of negligent homicide.

Suicide?

“I can deal with my enemies. It’s my goddam friends that have me walking the floor at night!” So Warren Harding supposedly told the famous journalist, William Allen White.

There was no question that Harding was worried about impending revelations that would demonstrate the graft of his friends—Attorney General Harry Daugherty and his right-hand man Jesse Smith, Secretary of the Interior Albert Fall, and Director of Veteran Affairs Charles Forbes. His Secretary of Commerce (and later President) Herbert Hoover wrote that Harding, on the fateful trip, asked Hoover what he should do if it was revealed that scandal might engulf his administration. Hoover’s advice was to “get it out in the open” so that the President could remain above the wrongdoings. Harding dropped the subject.

There were times during the Western trip when Harding was visibly depressed. He seemed particularly shaken after a private interview in St. Louis with Fall’s wife. There was a sword above his head, and Harding knew it. He had made a new will just before leaving Washington, executed by his personal attorney, Harry Daugherty. He sold his beloved *Marion Star* a few weeks before—for a sum far exceeding its worth. His newspaper was to be his place of retirement,

his home to go to after his presidency was over. All in all, he seemed to be getting his house in order, anticipating his death.

In contradiction to these omens of doom, it appeared that Harding was preparing to run for a second term, although his campaign manager, Daugherty, might have created that appearance. Even the rumblings that the auto magnate, Henry Ford, might run for the presidency did not seem particularly threatening. He might have survived the scandals after all, since he had fired Forbes and accepted Fall's resignation, and—considering his conversation with Hoover—contemplating how to disassociate himself from “his friends.”

While one of the rumors floating around after Harding's death was that he committed suicide to avoid impeachment and disgrace, there is little likelihood that he was driven to such an act by ingesting poison. It seems an unlikely method to choose to take one's life, even if he had been clever enough to select a means that would mimic “natural causes.” Harding might have been corruptible, but he was not so clever and devious.

The one certainty is that the scandals were worrying him, adding stress to an already diseased constitution. That, combined with the inept care provided by Doc Sawyer, would have been enough to do him in.

Murder?

The specter of murder pervades the characters of the Harding administration. Some of the suicides, notably Jesse Smith, prompted rumors of murder, since the hapless Smith knew too much about the schemes that might have involved Daugherty, bootleggers, grafters, and Harding himself. It is interesting to note that at least five of the principals in this story died suddenly.

In 1930, the amazing Gaston B. Means published a book entitled *The Strange Death of President Harding*. It is difficult to determine whether this book contains accurate information or whether it is pulp fiction at its worst. Means cast himself as the hero, a private investigator who can accomplish anything a client requested. The fact that he was working for the FBI under the disreputable William Burns contributes to the unsavory nature of the Department of Justice under Daugherty's leadership.

In his book, Means claims that he was on special assignment to Mrs. Harding, who directed him to obtain evidence of Harding's affair with Nan Britton. (Means repeats the story, first told by Harding's secretary, George Christian, that

disaster was averted when Mrs. Harding made an unexpected visit to the Oval Office, at the very time when Harding and Nan were making love in a nearby closet, and was intercepted by Christian.) With Evalyn McLean acting as an occasional intermediary, Means was asked to pilfer letters and mementos from Nan Britton, and to deliver them personally to Mrs. Harding. Means recorded her fury over her husband's infidelity. To add more spice to his account, Means has other revelations about Jesse Smith, Charlie Forbes, and other characters.

According to Means, Mrs. Harding had two motives for murdering her husband. The first, and most important, was to protect his reputation from the looming scandals by killing him when he was at the height of his popularity. She could not allow him to be disgraced. His death, she reasoned, would remove him from the tawdry malefactions of his subordinates.

The second motive was revenge, prompted by her jealousy over Nan Britton, who had, she claimed, given birth to Harding's daughter. The betrayal wounded her so deeply that she could not allow her beloved Warren to live.

As Means' potboiler of a book steams to its conclusion, Mrs. Harding more or less admits that she poisoned her husband, almost as an act of charity.

Rumors that Harding had been murdered had been around from just after his death, and were almost as widespread as those that he had committed suicide. Most of these murder plots revolved around some idea that Harding had to be silenced, lest he implicate, punish, or otherwise demolish the careers of the grafters.

But this was different. Florence Harding had been dead for some six years at the time of the publication of Means' book—she had died a little more than a year after her husband—and was, of course, not able to defend herself. As it turned out, there was little need for a defense, since Means, recently released from a federal prison in Atlanta after serving a sentence of two years for graft, was not a very credible witness.

Surprisingly, Means does get some things right in his book. There are some verifiable facts, and some details that indeed demonstrate an insider's knowledge of the machinations of the Harding presidency. The association with Evalyn McLean must have been somewhat congenial, since he was able to dupe her out of \$100,000 in 1934 during the Lindbergh baby kidnapping case. He claimed that he could ransom the boy, and convinced Mrs. McLean to provide the cash. After some wild goose chases, Means was shown to be a fraud, convicted, and spent the rest of his life in prison, where he died in 1939.

Mrs. Harding had endured far more than Nan Britton during her marriage to Warren. A conservative number of mistresses would be five, all of whom had been bought off by Daugherty, Ned McLean, or Jesse Smith. The number of one-night stands must have been formidable. Harding, in his sexual exploits, makes John Kennedy and Bill Clinton look like Dominican friars. Florence knew of at least four of these mistresses, and she certainly knew of Warren 's penchant for pretty women. One mistress, once Florence 's best friend, was Carrie Phillips, who carried on an affair (off and on) with Harding for over 15 years. Another, Grace Cross, had been one of Harding's secretaries during his senate years, and received a substantial blackmail payment for the return of incredibly sappy and juvenile love letters Harding wrote her.

It is difficult to imagine that Nan Britton finally enraged her to the point where she murdered her husband. It could not have been the existence of a child, since Harding had already fathered an illegitimate child early in their marriage with another of Florence's best friends.

So, jealousy, even from the long-suffering Duchess, is an unlikely motive. However, the protection of her husband's reputation was important to her. Her burning much of her husband's papers immediately after his death evidences this. Nonetheless, for all of the storm clouds hovering around Warren Harding in August 1923, he was still popular and beloved. One gets the impression that rather than hurrying Warren into the Great Beyond in order to protect his good name, the Duchess would have found a way to weather the storm.

Besides, the Duchess must have known that Warren had not long to live. He was obviously ill. Most of all, Madame Marcia had foretold that Harding would not live out his first term, and that, for Florence, was something she feared, but knew—absolutely—would happen.

Summing Up

Hypotheses on Harding's Death

The most likely hypothesis about Warren Harding's death is that put forth by Carl Anthony. Warren Harding was a victim of medical neglect, or, to be precise, of negligent homicide. Considering the strange mix of folk medicine and evolving science at the time, that is not a very remarkable fact. Distinguished physicians often recommended smoking for their tense patients, so ignorance was a common occurrence in medical circles of the time.

What makes the case of Warren Harding interesting is the cast of characters surrounding him, as well as the president himself. While there have been scoundrels around the presidency throughout American history, none have been quite as colorful as those around Harding. John Dean (of Watergate fame) recently wrote a book that maintains that George W. Bush is worse than Dean's old boss, Richard Nixon. Even Nixon, for all of his problems, was distinctly above the mediocre as a man and as a president. Some of the associates of Ronald Reagan were a bit odd, particularly during the Iran-Contra affair, but none rose to the level of idiocy of Fall, Daugherty, and Forbes. Warren Harding, witless and genial, takes the prize for gathering around him the most disreputable bunch in 20th Century American politics.

It is tempting to draw parallels. Florence Harding and Nancy Reagan share a preoccupation with astrology, horoscopes, and the occult, and both provided steely support for their husbands. One could remark on the proclivities of other presidents to engage in sexual dalliances—indeed, at least half dozen presidents from Wilson to Clinton have had mistresses. A cynic might point out that almost every president has had at least one venal, or slightly demented, cabinet officer.

But, in the last analysis, such parallels would be pointless. The times, the people, and the country during the period 1920 to 1924 constituted a special set of circumstances wherein a well-meaning bumbler and his disreputable underlings could construct a national farce.

It would be unfair not to mention that Harding did some good things. He pardoned Eugene V. Debs, the Socialist unjustly imprisoned during World War I for opposing the war. In his zeal to be a good Republican, he tried to restrain federal spending by creating the Bureau of the Budget, an institution that is still useful to this day. Through the talents of his “good” cabinet officers, he was able to create the forty-hour week, reduce military armaments, and stimulate a lagging economy.

But his failures were many. His successors—Calvin Coolidge, the dour do-nothing, and Herbert Hoover, the bright but unsuccessful technocrat—inherited a federal government and policies that would eventually lead to the Great Depression. The fact that the Teapot Dome and other Harding-era scandals would drag on through both the Coolidge and Hoover administrations did the country no service.

Whatever one's view—critic or apologist—a significant mystery remains. How did Warren Harding die? Any conclusion must be murky because evidence is either lacking, or, when available, contradictory. Is this simply a case of a genial mediocrity who didn't know how to take care of himself, and paid the price with a stroke? Or is it something more sinister—a gullible politician who became aware of what was going on around him, and had to be silenced?

Lesson #7: Caterina Sforza, Duchess of Forli and Imola (1463-1509)

[You know, there were a few real warrior princesses. They didn't wear armored bikinis like Xena, either, and they were definitely not politically correct feminists. This one is for Sue Enders. Here's a real Strong Womyn for you. - HAC]

Fifteenth-century Italy was a battleground of warring city-states and competing families. The city-state of Milan ranked high in wealth and power. And its rulers, the Sforza family, were as brilliant and ambitious as any of their rivals.

In 1462, the Duke of Milan, Galeazzo Maria Sforza, fathered an illegitimate child. The baby's mother was the wife of a friend and follower of the duke. But the birth of little Caterina neither surprised nor shocked the Milanese court. (Note that the portrait shown here may or may not be that of Caterina. Experts disagree.) Galeazzo Maria would eventually have four children born in wedlock and six out of wedlock. Nevertheless, Caterina's birth had broken a social rule. This baby girl would grow up to break many other rules in the course of her eventful life. *[I might also add that Galeazzo Maria is one of my favorite Renaissance princes—brilliant in every way and mad as a hatter. - HAC]*

As a duke's daughter in Renaissance Italy, Caterina was offered an excellent education. In her view, however, this education was not the special privilege it would have been for other girls. From the beginning, Caterina was bored by literature, philosophy, Latin, history and the other subjects her tutors tried to teach her. She much preferred dancing, horseback riding, hunting, and other vigorous activities.

Caterina learned more from observing people and events than from reading books. Italian politics were in a perpetual state of turmoil. There was no king who ruled all of Italy, as there were kings in Spain, France, and England. Instead, almost every city, large or small, had its own duke, count, or lord; and each city was trying to gain territory, economic advantages, or protection from its neighbors. From Rome, the pope also played a major role in politics, because he ruled many city-states as well as the Catholic Church. Caterina watched the complex and often violent political moves that made Milan one of Italy's great powers along with Florence, Venice, the Kingdom of Naples, and the states owned by the pope. Young Caterina was ambitious, active, and pleasure-loving. She intended to achieve both fame and fortune—right away, if possible.

By the time she was 15, Caterina's childhood had ended. Her family married her to Girolamo Riario, a grown man in his twenties. The Riario family had risen to sudden prominence when Girolamo's uncle was elected Pope Sixtus the Fourth. As wife to the pope's nephew, Caterina could expect to gain great wealth. The world would have been amazed if Sixtus had not used his position to advance his family's fortunes.

From 1477 to 1484, Caterina and Girolamo spent most of their time in Rome, where Caterina was much admired for her blond beauty. During these years, she also bore four children: Bianca, Ottaviano, Cesare, and Giovanni Livio. Caterina and her husband prospered because of their family ties. The pope gave the young couple title to the cities of Forli and Imola, located northeast of Rome beyond the mountains that run up the spine of Italy. These cities had once belonged to other families, of course. But this fact posed little problem for the Riarios, whose wealth and security seemed assured.

Then everything changed. In 1484, Pope Sixtus died. Caterina and Girolamo worked hard to control the election of the next pope. In a show of force, Caterina belted on a curved sword and led a group of soldiers to take over Castel Sant Angelo, one of Rome's greatest fortresses. Girolamo, however, acted much less decisively, and the Riarios' candidate lost the election. The new pope was Innocent the Eighth, who was no friend of the Riarios. From now on, Girolamo and Caterina would have to struggle just to keep what they had.

Caterina and Girolamo withdrew to their cities, Forli and Imola. Even there, the numerous enemies of the Riario family repeatedly tried to overthrow them. In 1488, the Orsi family succeeded or so they thought. They murdered Girolamo and captured Caterina and her children. Caterina knew very well that she and the children might be the killers' next victims. She showed cool courage in her desperate situation. She managed to escape her jailers through trickery, saying she was going to parley when in fact she was seeking protection. The result was that she recaptured an important fortress that overlooked Forli, then she threatened to level the city with her cannon. Her enemies fled, and Caterina emerged firmly in control of the two cities.

The next years of Caterina's life were fairly happy ones. She had not loved Girolamo, although they had shared an interest in advancing the family fortunes. Now independent and still youthful at 28, Caterina fell exuberantly in love with Giacomo Feo, the 19-year-old younger brother of one of her loyal military commanders. Caterina was a passionate person. For a while, she reveled in her new

love and also in her other enthusiasms. She avidly collected herbal recipes, especially those that might preserve her health and beauty. Also, she still enjoyed dancing, hunting, and all forms of activity.

Yet there were problems, too. Giacomo became demanding and arrogant, making enemies for himself and Caterina among the cities' noble families. Furthermore, the couple was always short of money. Their own way of life was expensive, as "making a good show" was a way of asserting status in relation to other cities. Also costly were the troops they needed to defend the cities in dangerous times. But as soon as Caterina decreed a new tax, the wily citizens of Forli and Imola found a way around it. Thus both the citizens and the great families were unhappy, whether over taxes or from fear of Giacomo's influence. There were frequent little wars and rebellions, characterized by poisonings, stabbings, secret meetings, and letters fastened to arrows.

In 1495, as Giacomo and Caterina rode through the streets of Forli, assassins stabbed Giacomo to death. Caterina was personally devastated, but instead of collapsing in grief, she took swift action. She vented her fury on the killers and their families, executing or torturing many and imprisoning more. Then, to stave off her sorrow, she turned to work. She enriched her cities with building projects, creating beautiful gardens and public works.

The next year, the grain harvest was poor in the lands around Florence. The Florentines sent an envoy to buy grain 130,000 bushels of it from Forli and Imola. The envoy was the handsome, charming, and intelligent Giovanni de' Medici. He was also a nobleman, born into a minor branch of the great Medici family that ruled Florence. Soon Caterina was in love again, and Giovanni loved her in return. But the marriage of two people from such powerful families was likely to arouse opposition, so they were wed in secret. Then, at 36, Caterina bore Giovanni a son, the last and best loved of her children. (Caterina's eldest son, Ottaviano Riario had grown into a lazy, self-indulgent, young man with much ambition and few abilities.)

Sadly for Caterina, Giovanni died of an illness in 1498. The timing was unfortunate. His death left Caterina alone to face one of the most ruthless, ambitious, and implacable families in Europe, the Borgias.

Pope Innocent had died and been replaced in 1492 by Rodrigo Borgia, who took the name Alexander the Sixth. The new pope's son Cesare set out to increase his family's power by brutally seizing control of central Italy, one small city-state

at a time. Cesare was a bad fellow, even by the standards of the time. He poisoned his sister's husband so that he could make a more profitable match for her. On another occasion, he hosted a lavish dinner for a group of his captains whom he suspected of disloyalty, then locked the doors and had them all strangled. With the pope's power and money behind him, Cesare now took aim at Forli and Imola.

Once before when she had been in danger, Caterina had said, "If I have to die, I want to die like a man!" Now, she seemed likely to do just that. A poet/spy that she employed warned her that Cesare had 15,000 troops and 17 cannons. Still Caterina refused to flee and give up her cities. She announced her determination to withstand Cesare Borgia's siege. Annoyed at being defied by a woman, Cesare offered 10,000 ducats for Caterina, dead or alive.

Caterina fought as she had always fought, "like a tiger." She put on armor herself and encouraged her men from the city walls. Still, the superior Borgia forces advanced, first to the city, then to its fortress. Caterina and her troops made their last stand in the fortress's great tower. Borgia captured two of her children and displayed them before the walls, threatening to kill them if Caterina did not surrender. In response Caterina pulled up her dress and shouted down, "In this belly I can make more children, but my city you will not have!"

Finally, the inevitable happened, and the Borgia large army captured the tower. Luckily for Caterina, she was taken prisoner not by one of Cesare's men but by a French captain who admired her beauty and courage. In the end, this French connection saved her life, because the French code of chivalry said that women could not be considered prisoners of war. Still, Caterina suffered greatly before the Frenchman persuaded the pope to release her. While she was a prisoner, Cesare Borgia brutally raped her and then locked her in a filthy cell in Castel Sant Angelo, the same Roman fortress she had once captured. To gain her freedom, Caterina was forced at last to give up her claims to Forli and Imola.

By the time the pope allowed her to go free in 1501, Caterina was in poor health, but she was by no means crushed in spirit. To the many people who hated the Borgias, she was a heroine. A Venetian commentator said she was "Without doubt at that time the first lady of Italy." (As for Cesare, within a few years he lost power, fled from Italy, and died in a minor battle in Spain.)

Though she tried, Caterina never regained control of her cities. She did have one great pleasure, however. Her young son by Giovanni de' Medici proved to be a child after her own heart, fascinated by horses, swordplay, and military activities.

She devoted her last years to raising and training him. Caterina died in 1509, just a little too soon to see her favorite son, known as *Giovanni dalle Bande Nere*, become a brilliant soldier and a national hero. It would have pleased her enormously to know that Giovanni's son, her grandson, became Cosimo the First, Grand Duke of Tuscany.

Lesson #8: A Passage to Oblivion

The Disappearance of the U.S.S. Cyclops (1918)

“Only God and the Sea know where the great ship has gone.” - Woodrow Wilson

“I approached Captain Worley, sir, about the mess. The fish we had for dinner had not even been cleaned and smelled bad. Captain Worley was lying on his bed. He got up and put on his trousers. ‘The whole God-damned lot of yous are only a lot of God-damned sons of bitches,’ he said. I told him I resented being called by a name which no man born of a woman could stand. Captain Worley insisted he had never called me nor any man aboard—ever—a son of a bitch. Quartermaster Langren then asked for an apology.”

“What did he do then?”

“He then called me a son of a bitch and confined me for two days.”

Well, this was the gist of only one sailor’s testimony before the Board of Inquiry at Hampton Roads, Virginia, in August 1917. Some 50 seaman aboard the U.S.S. *Cyclops* signed a petition against their captain, George W. Worley, accusing him of being foul mouthed, drunk and unfit for command. This petition was started by one man, hospital apprentice Howard, who then circulated it amongst the crew.

In this petition, the crew accused Worley of being so drunk that he fell in and out of doorways and staggered about the deck. They also accused him of chasing ensign J.J. Cain around the deck with a pistol in his hand. The crew also reported that odd happenings occurred on board during their recent stay off France, re-coaling the fleet: an unauthorized signal lamp had been strung up to the foremast and connected to a cord. (The light could easily be used for night signaling, in order to give away the position of the fleet to the Germans.) One day the life boat falls were found cut, and on another day the gun scope lenses were found put in backwards. These were all acts that questioned the loyalty of some unknown hand aboard. Publicly, however, none of the crew openly accused their master of being disloyal, although the biggest rumor aboard was that he was very pro-German.

These were no light charges to bring. Worley had a good reputation with the Naval Auxiliary, reflected by the fact he commanded a key vessel vital to the refueling of the American fleet. The *Cyclops* was a huge 522-foot collier, only a few years old, with a displacement of 12,000 tons. Lt. Commander Worley had

also been a seaman most of his life, and when war seemed imminent with Germany he was automatically enlisted with command rank into the Navy. The Naval Auxiliary was full of such captains—merchant skippers who were placed into command positions as the need arose. Sometimes their manner wasn't the usual officer and gentleman of cadet school training ... but a commanding officer was a commanding officer, with the Navy's trust.

Worley faced these charges with his typical humor and gruff egotism. To him Burt J. Asper, the ship's surgeon, was to blame. It was he who had instigated Howard to stir up trouble and write that petition. During the hearings, the superior bear-like Worley stared with rustled aplomb at the two, both of whom always sat together in the audience.

Why had Asper done this? ... Because, according to Worley, he had dressed Asper down in front of the officers.

Sex, sex, sex, is all that Asper talked about.

The subject of women seemed to be on his brain all the time as he would continue to talk to all the men and officers on the ship in this manner until some of the officers on the ship were unable to stand it any longer, Worley testified.

The fallout happened when Worley decided to take his meal down in the Officers' Mess. This subject appeared to be the whole conversation at the table. Worley testified that he told then—especially Asper—that this must be stopped and immediately I issued a written order to that effect.

It was after this that Asper and Howard were seen together in the doctors room or the afterbitt conspiring. Dr. Asper and Howard are the sponsors of the whole matter.

Now, as to Worley's drunkenness: he reminded them that he contracted beri-beri long ago, and in the warm summer months it acted up on him. "I desire to state that this bottle contained medicine that I have used for many years and I most emphatically deny that it contained ardent spirits." The many remedies he takes, like Iodine of Potash or Peruna of Sasparilla, taste so bad he must mix a jigger of liquor with it. If he does not take his medicine quickly, he loses his balance from the beri-beri attack. "On leaving port I always provide myself with a bottle of Port or Sherry, which is taken only for medicinal purposes."

There, that's why he reeked of liquor most of the time!

George Worley was cleared of the charges against him ... but it seems he was cleared with some reserve. He grumbled to his neighbor that the Navy had treated him badly over this. He told his wife that perhaps he would retire after this next voyage. He felt like he would be buried at sea.

Orders for his next voyage came quickly. Very little of the crew were changed. Burt Asper remained on board, and so did the timid ensign Cain. However, the Navy may have thought that some of the peculiar events described, such as the lamp strung out on the mast, the tampered lenses, etc., warranted the *Cyclops* should remain out of the war zone. The *Cyclops* was to prepare for sea by early January, but she was to remain in the Americas. She was to steam to Rio de Janeiro to refuel the fleet there and pick up a very valuable cargo in return—manganese ore, vital in the production of steel.

Worley was seen firmly walking aboard the gangplank of his ship, austere and isolated in demeanor, poking his walking stick along the way. The impression he gave one officer was that of ... a gruff, eccentric salt of the old school, given to carrying a cane, but possessing few other cultural attainments.

It is little surprising Worley seemed this way, considering what his crew had just brought against him after the last voyage ... though it pretty much described him how he really was. This same officer, Conrad A. Nervig, also described him as: “a very indifferent seaman and a poor, overly cautious navigator. Unfriendly and taciturn, he was generally disliked by both his officers and men.

Apparently he made no effort to change on this voyage. On January 8, 1918, the *Cyclops* set sail from an ice covered Norfolk Navy Yard loaded to her plimsol line with coal. On leaving Norfolk she narrowly averted a collision with the USS *Survey*, outward bound for the Mediterranean for patrol and anti submarine duty.

By night fall they had cleared the Virginia Capes, and headed southward, breasting the heavy winter seas with a speed and ease amazing for such a heavily loaded vessel. But by the fifth day out things began to happen. Worley blew his temper at Harvey Forbes, the Exec, and had him confined to quarters. Under arrest, no less, for disagreeing over some trivial matter. Then he directed his anger at the timid ensign Cain. However, in this instance Worley’s nemesis, Burt Asper, anticipated him and ordered Cain, apparently in perfect health, to the infirmary in order to spare him any of Worley’s unreasonable anger. There he staid for the rest of the voyage, according to Nervig.

It was from this incident that Conrad Nervig was to get to know Worley much better than any other of the crew or officers. Nervig recalled that Mr. Cain's duty had been the mid-watch, the very lonely hours of the night and early morning. He now had to take over these duties. It was during this time that Worley came up from his cabin below the bridge and paid him the first of many visits. They were now in the tropics; the nights were balmy and calm. I was somewhat startled to see him coming up the starboard ladder dressed in long woolen underwear, a derby hat, and a cane. Nervig was worried about what he might have done wrong; yet Worley was affable and quite indifferent to Nervig's crisp military salute "Good morning, Captain." This was, in fact, a social call.

For some 2 hours Worley and Nervig leaned on the forward bridge railing while he regaled Nervig with stories of his home and numerous incidents of his long life at sea. He had a fund of tales, mostly humorous. "These nocturnal visits became a regular routine, and I rather enjoyed them. His uniform, if it could be so called, never varied from what he had worn on that first occasion. I have often wondered to what I owed these visits—his fondness for me or his sleeplessness."

Six days of this saw them finally off the coast of Brazil. It was at night. The navigator and Worley now got into a disagreement over their course, the navigator insisting they overshoot Bahia, their first stopover. Worley smugly over ruled him. But after hours of continued steaming without sighting land, he finally relented; and, on the 20th of January, they entered Bahia harbor from the south, having indeed overshoot the harbor by 48 miles!

Finally, on the 28th, the *Cyclops* arrived at her destination of Rio, where she would remain for a couple of weeks unloading her coal, then loading her new cargo of manganese ore.

During the entire voyage Nervig had not been able to figure out his eccentric captain. His kindness to him in the wee hours of the morning contrasted sharply with how he treated the crew during the day. He recalled "That he liked me, I was sure, for when in Rio de Janeiro I received orders detaching me from the *Cyclops*, he sought to have those orders revoked. Fortunately, for me, he was unsuccessful."

So ends Nervig's tour of duty. He was transferred to the USS *Glacier*. However, he recalled that while in Rio, incidents were still occurring around the *Cyclops*. A man was working overboard in a launch by the propellers. Worley turned over the engines. The launch and man were drawn into the propellers and the man killed. This negligence I feel can be laid squarely at the feet of the

commanding officer who, by his irrational methods of command, had thoroughly demoralized and disorganized the officers and men of the *Cyclops*.

Worley continued to curse his men. Within ear shot of the vessel perhaps passersby could hear “You clumsy son of a bitch!” echo out from her busy decks.

The *Cyclops* was now under another Naval inquiry. This time regarding her starboard high pressure engine, which had blown its cylinder. In Worley’s typical manner he assured the Navy it would be repaired, and then laid the blame on another— on Lt. Fingleton.

When her vital cargo was nearly loaded, another type of cargo was ordered aboard. These were 73 sailors and marines from the South Seas Fleet who were returning home. Three of their shipmates were escorted aboard in chains. They were: Barney De Voe, Moss Whiteside, and James Coker. They had been found guilty of charges ranging from murder to perjury surrounding their beating to death one Oscar Stewart. De Voe was on his way to serve out his 50-99 year sentence, Whiteside for 15 years, and Coker was to be hanged.

Just before they sailed, one more passenger was brought on board, a man who by appearance was so distinguished he was seemingly at the opposite end of the spectrum of these three above. He was Alfred Louis Moreau Gottschalk, none other than the U.S. Consul General at Rio. He was returning home in order to enlist in the army and fight in the war ... so he said.

The ship was now fully loaded to her plimsol line. All passengers aboard, Worley received orders and was cleared to leave Rio for Bahia on the 16th of February, now homeward bound north. All told, there were 309 persons aboard her when she left.

On the 20th of February the *Cyclops* entered Bahia. In Worley’s usual style of navigating, she entered from the north, not the south, as he must have overshot the harbor again. While she sat at anchor, Conrad Nervig gazed upon the little launch approaching from her across the bay. (The Glacier had set sail for Bahia 2 days before the *Cyclops*.) In the launch was paymaster Ensign C.J. Page, his best friend aboard the *Cyclops*, who was coming on official business. When Page finished, Nervig, being officer of the deck, escorted him to the gangway. “On leaving he grasped my hand in both of his, and said very solemnly, ‘Well, good-bye, old man, and God bless you.’ I was deeply impressed with his finality, which was truly prophetic in its implication.”

Two days later *Cyclops* departed for Baltimore, Maryland, with no scheduled stops in between.

However, on March 3, 1918, Worley sent a surprising message: Arrived Barbados, West Indies, 1730 [5.30 P.M.] for bunker coal. Arrive Baltimore, Md, 12013 [March 13,]. Notify Office Director Naval Auxiliaries, Comdr. Train (Atl), 07004. CYCLOPS.

According to procedure in such matters Worley went straight to the U.S. Consul there, in this case Brockholst Livingston, to state his business and secure whatever aid he could from the chief US representative. This gives us the last known facts about the *Cyclops*. One, the meeting did not go well, but Livingston authorized Worley to receive all the supplies he said he needed. Two, the atmosphere around the *Cyclops* was truly unsettling; the crew grumbled about their skipper while the port busily went about meeting his demands. Three, the mood was so bad British officers would not even pay the ship the customary visits.

The next day, March 4, 1918, the *Cyclops* raised anchor and left as unceremoniously as she came. Supposedly, her last message after clearing port was Weather Fair. All Well.

Nothing was ever heard from her again.

When she failed to make Baltimore on the 13th, a search was begun of her entire track from Barbados. Every Naval ship in the vicinity from Cuba to Puerto Rico searched for massive debris, presupposing a German sub torpedoed her. But the Navy pondered over why no SOS had been received in such an instance. Since it was war time, however, they had made no announcement that the *Cyclops* was late, but had held back information until sure something had truly gone wrong.

On April 15, one month after she failed to make port, the papers were finally given the story she was overdue. On this same date a secret circular was telegraphed to respective consulates along her voyage, requesting every bit of information known.

How many theories can be drawn from this? Mutiny? Treason? Betrayal? Sabotage? Espionage? What about the illegal execution? Who could it have been and why? Worley certainly hated Asper and, apparently, Cain. Disturbances? Over what—a planned execution? A banana court at sea is hardly Navy regulations. Could Asper have caused the disturbances over Worley's leadership? Knowing Worley's Bligh-type of personality, could it have been mutiny? On the other hand,

could it have been the crew attempting to stop Worley from betraying the ship to the Germans? Was the executed person the leader of the disturbances whatever may have been the motivation?

The Navy had to follow up every possibility with an investigation. Their task was to be Herculean, spanning a decade, several continents, and thousands of people; and to this day there is evidence to suggest almost every theory above. Yet none could ever be proven, for no trace of the *Cyclops* has ever been found: not one survivor; not one shred. Their results, now amassed at the National Archives in Washington, contain about 1,500 pages of interviews, investigations and testimony. It shows the vigor with which the Navy pursued an answer. It is on this material the following is based.

The Investigation

The first and foremost theory to confirm or dismiss was betrayal. Livingston's cable had let the cat out of the bag. He noted that the crew were openly griping about their pro-German captain. (The epithet "damned Dutchman," it should be remembered, did not mean a Hollander the way we use Dutch today, but was American slang for Deutsch—i.e. German.) Betrayal was clearly on the Consul's mind when he noted that many Germanic names were aboard. But why would Worley be pro-German? This seemed ludicrous.

However, it was no more strange than the curious evidence the Navy had from Livingston. The fact was Worley requested all this extra stuff, perhaps suggesting a longer sea voyage than scheduled, like to Germany. Not only did he not need the stuff, as Livingston discovered, but there is the fact that messages were waiting there, even though it had been an unscheduled stop. It is this which smacks of premeditated conspiracy...But why? Why would he do this? Why was a man like Worley called a "damned Dutchman"?

Almost everywhere ONI (Office of Naval Intelligence) operatives went, they found out Worley had indeed been very pro-German. Investigation found out why: Worley had not been born an American; he was born in Germany, at Sandstadt in Hannover province in 1862 under the name Johan Frederick Wichmann.

"Oh, you mean Fred Wichmann," was a common response to ONI operatives in San Francisco. Worley's past had been a secret only to the Navy. In 1878, so the data goes, he had jumped ship at Frisco. In 1898 he adopted the name of Worley, stating it was from a seaman who had befriended him in his early years. Why he changed it, isn't stated. His brothers Herman and Henry had also

immigrated. They ran a bar and grocery on the Barbary Coast, sporting the Wichmann name openly, as did Worley before his name change. He ran his own liquor store in 1891 at the corners of California and Polk until he ran it into the ground. Then he tried his hand at a grocery as well, at Oak and Broderick, while being heavily involved in Captain Wichmann's Roadhouse, a saloon near San Francisco's Cliff House at Ocean Beach. Worley was quite a character, to be sure.

Sea life, it seems, was more enticing to him. Certainly more profitable than his land ventures ... especially for illegal cargoes. There could be any number of reasons why he changed his name, for it was at this time in his life that he became involved in some shady affairs. He became Mate on a schooner owned by the Austrian Count Rudolf Festetics de Tolna. In this capacity he was soon making trips to the Philippines, where, it is said, he smuggled opium into the U.S.

In the next decade Worley held several positions on freighters ranging from Master to Mate. While captain of a backwater tramp steamer, a bizarre murder was discovered by a crewman. Upon entering the cabin of the first mate (possibly Worley's brother-in-law), he saw the macabre scene of his decapitated body on the bed.

Naturally, there were those who thought Worley was the culprit. However, another seaman was charged and duly sentenced for the crime. It seems certain that this sailor was not merely a fall guy for Worley. For those who knew the most about this incident believed that Worley himself was the object of the sailor's hatred. The Mate, by a sad turn of fate, had merely been mistaken for him in the dark. This, it is possible, is the first inkling we get of his Bligh-type of personality.

As the pall of European war loomed on the horizon old sea dogs like Worley were recruited into the Naval Auxiliary Reserve Force. It was then that Worley became captain of the new *Cyclops*. He seems to have served well enough. There are no disparaging records on him or the *Cyclops* antedating the charges made against him while off France in the summer of 1917. (It should be noted, however, that America had not been at war until this time.)

Investigations certainly did prove that Worley had a strong German background (he spoke without an accent). But what did it prove? There was no *Cyclops* to prove where she had gone. No survivors, no debris. No German propaganda bragging about the success. The rumors about the *Cyclops* being seen at Kiel in Germany could not be proven during the war. So until the war was over (in November of that year) most people preferred to believe that Worley was, in

fact, a traitor. Newspaper after newspaper implied as much with story after story about his pro-Germaness. His nephew, Dr. Ewald Angerman, decried this, saying that Worley was more loyal than anyone. Worley had told him, "If we sight a U-boat, I'll make all hell smell like Limburger!"

Even if Worley betrayed the ship to the Germans, how could he have done it all alone? Livingston's message had implied help—a number of German names were aboard. However, it is extremely unlikely they would have sold their lives for one ship, especially with all their families still in the U.S.

But by a disquieting coincidence, now enters into the picture the *Cyclops* most distinguished passenger, Alfred Louis Moreau Gottschalk. Within the diplomatic scene, Gottschalk had been just as hated as Worley was by his men. He was also discovered to be highly pro-German as well.

One of his colleagues, J.E. Conner, sent this to the Secret Service in May, 1918:

Conner was certainly good for his word. Investigators found him reliable and honest. Like Worley, an investigation of Gottschalk now uncovered many surprises.

Not only was Gottschalk's popularity in Brazil immense, he was especially popular with the large German colony there; and it is certain Gottschalk handled a lot of Red Cross affairs for German ships. Could the idea to hand over the ship been Gottschalk's to begin with? When the *Cyclops* arrived, he may have heard rumors about the captain's pro-Germaness from the often grumbling crew. He might just have approached and convinced Worley to assist him in turning over the *Cyclops*. Would Worley have been inclined to do this considering how he had been treated by the Navy? But again comes the question, as in Worley's case, how could Gottschalk have done it?

Turn over the ship seems unlikely ... but destroy it? In actuality there were more than enough German spies in Brazil and Argentina that could have assisted. They were desperate to find a means of encouraging the German colonies there that the war was not lost for Germany. ONI thought that the destruction of the *Cyclops* would have been helpful propaganda toward this end.

In any case, Gottschalk suddenly secured passage on the *Cyclops*, giving as his excuse, surprisingly, his wish to suddenly go back to America to enlist. What a contradiction the two must have made, with their cabins adjoining: the very

distinguished Gottschalk and the crude sea dog Worley! Both of them similar only in the animosity felt for them by their colleagues... and their strong pro-German stance. Yet since no trace of the ship was found, as with the Worley angle, the question of sabotage could not be proved during the war. Investigators waited. While they waited, something provocative happened.

Gottschalk's connection with the loss of the *Cyclops* has to be taken seriously for a number of reasons. His presence aboard prompted one of the most interesting and perplexing clues about the mystery. A newspaper article in a Rio newspaper announced a requiem mass for the repose of the soul of Consul Gottschalk who was lost when the *Cyclops* was sunk at sea. Harmless enough, it would seem. It was signed by many of the top level business men in Rio, where, it must be remembered, Gottschalk was extremely popular. There was one problem with the article: it appeared before the *Cyclops* was reported overdue! Nobody but the upper echelons in the Navy knew she was missing! When these prominent men (those who had attached their names) were approached they flatly denied any knowledge of it! This article was regarded as a clear tip-off that a sabotage plot had successfully been carried out—and this article was designed to announce its success to various German agents in Brazil.

Somewhat supporting this idea, there are peculiar coincidences with Worley and Gottschalk's last acts on land. Worley had sold everything before he left Virginia, including his house; Gottschalk had left a number of personal and sentimental items in Rio that, by their size, would nevertheless have been easy to pack and take with him. Does this indicate premeditation? Why did Gottschalk leave these behind if he was never returning? Did he carry a bomb aboard with him? Had Worley been swayed by the German community to do it? Was the requiem a message from Gottschalk signaling success? Had he and Worley then escaped into obscurity ... or Germany?

Again, none of these questions could be answered during the war. But to give you an idea of how perplexing this mystery was, as soon as the war ended Admiral Robinson and his party went to Germany to examine documents and interview the German High Command. No plans were ever uncovered to shed any light on sabotage or betrayal! The *Cyclops* had never been in Germany, nor were any of her crew found interned in a prisoner of war camp (despite newspaper predictions). No agent ever came forward after the war and bragged (or during the war, for that matter) of their success in sabotage. No trail of Worley or Gottschalk was ever found to indicate they survived ... Worley never came back to his wife

and daughter, nor did Gottschalk ever slip back into Rio to get his things. They were sent to his sister in New York.

Now that the war was over the mystery of the *Cyclops* was only growing more fantastic. There seemed no rational solution. The papers touted it as The Greatest Mystery of the Sea.

Quietly, behind-the-scenes, the Navy continued their methodical investigation of other possibilities, none of which seemed probable. They dismissed the idea that her cargo sank her. It had been proposed that the heavy manganese ore shifted in her holds and capsized her. Manganese was much heavier than coal so the holds, when fully loaded by weight, still had a great amount of free space in which to allow the cargo to shift. However, investigations in Rio proved it had been loaded and secured properly.

In 1920 Lt. Comm. Mahlon S. Tisdale, who had once been an officer on the *Cyclops*, wrote in the Naval Institute Proceedings an article: *Did the Cyclops Turn Turtle?* He based his theory on his experience during his brief 10 day stint as a communications officer during war games. He recalled that the forward top tanks (storage) were always left open. During rough weather he was shocked to find their hatches unsecured for sea, and even struggled to secure one with one hand while he held on with the other. Afterward, he rushed straight to the bridge. He told Worley what he had just seen. But Worley laughed at how serious he took this, and even went further to say they were always left open as the air was better for the bitumastic.

In light of Worley's lax attitude on ship safety, Tisdale was sure that the *Cyclops* had capsized in rough seas. The ships of her class were known to have an uncomfortable roll in heavy weather. He recalled that on his voyage, the *Cyclops* was riding high because she barely had any cargo, but on her final voyage she was heavily laden. This could have made the crucial difference. If she rolled enough, water may have flooded into the top tanks and heeled the ship over all the way.

However, Tisdale's brief stay on the ship did not qualify him to understand Worley's sense of humor, which was very sarcastic to say the least. (In fact off France he had spread the rumor he had a lion aboard as pet. When this caught the Admiral's ear, he was ordered to release it!) With the *Cyclops* riding high, as in Tisdale's voyage, the forward top tanks would have been full of water anyway to maintain ballast. It was irrelevant whether the hatches were secured or not. Thus Worley's response was calculated at scaring Tisdale. The top tanks were always

secured when the ship was fully laden. So much for Tisdale's frequently touted solution.

The Navy investigated every other possible theory (except the *Literary Digest's*, which suggested the Giant Squid got it). Islands were searched for large numbers of recently arrived whites presupposing them to be an escaping crew if mutiny had taken place. Records in Germany proved no mines or submarines were near the area. Coal dust mixing with manganese was thought potentially to be an explosive hazard, but it was disproven. There was, in fact, no solution.

Then in 1969, over 40 years after her loss, Conrad A. Nervig wrote in the *Naval Institute Proceedings* regarding her last voyage south. A new theory was offered. During heavy seas, he remembered hearing grating sounds on the ship, where pipes went through bulkheads. He also recalled the uncomfortable sight of seeing the deck undulating in these heavy seas as it conformed to the wave troughs a sign of bad contractions. In other words the ship was showing signs she was ready to split in two. He recalled he had pointed it out to Worley, who only dismissed it with a superior: Son, she'll last as long as we do. Nervig believed she did indeed break in twain, this being aggravated by her heavier than usual cargo of manganese ore.

Conrad Nervig has been one of the most quotable persons as regards the *Cyclops* since his article in 1969. Both he and Tisdale's theories essentially tried to explain her greatest mysteries: why no SOS, why no debris. Both have tried to provide us with a conventional answer to an unconventional mystery; Tisdale sudden capsizing; Nervig sudden structural failure.

Tisdale's failure is one of not really knowing the ship or Worley. Nervig's claim, however, poses some very peculiar problems. For one, he himself seems highly ignorant of basic facts. In his article he never mentioned the rumors of pro-Germaness, even though the crew grumbled about it constantly; it was all over the papers at the time. He never mentioned Worley's drinking. And he also never heard of the ship touching port at Barbados. And this truly is astounding since that was plastered in every paper for months—even for years when the greatest mystery of the sea was rehashed. Forgetting these is like forgetting a scorpion in your underwear.

Nervig adds a further touch of mystery.

For the Navy made a full investigation of the *Cyclops*, her crew, Worley, Gottschalk, her last voyage, everything. Yet they never expressed a desire to

contact Nervig to get his information. All of what he claims is conspicuous by its absence in all the documents. No other crewman who had sailed on her testified to the ship being in a state of near structural failure. And the Navy contacted every person they could; they investigated crank letters from half-wit authors who claimed to know something. They studiously probed into any crewman with a German name (which Nervig is). They even investigated a bigamous officer transferred from the *Glacier* to the *Cyclops* named Winkle. They investigated notes in bottles, and even followed up on Tisdale's article to see if there was merit to it.

But in all the papers amassed by the Office of Naval Intelligence, the Department of Justice and their joint operatives, there is no mention of an interview with Nervig nor his attempt to contact them! Yet it would seem this would be highly desirable. He claimed to have been an officer aboard, an officer whose transfer Worley tried to prevent just before the vessel vanished into oblivion. Indeed, this would all seem very desirable to investigators... But nothing exists. There are records of the Naval inquiry into the engine failure (with Worley's own signature), but no objection on a transfer.

What Nervig claims to have happened on the voyage south cannot be rechecked. For this reason all his quotes are marked in red to alert the reader they are held in question. Yet what he claims happened in Rio can be checked. He said that Worley, in his opinion, was responsible for the death of a crewman over the side. However, there are no records for this. The Navy doesn't usually investigate a cylinder on an engine and gloss over a sailor's death.

Even more peculiar, there is no proof that Nervig was even aboard the *Cyclops* on her voyage south! This is confirmed by solid evidence. Many communiqués went back and forth, just routine, nothing significant. However, Bureau of Navigation requested officers' records in January, when the *Cyclops* was still sailing south. They list all officers, ranks, etc. Even where no records were found, they still listed the names. Familiar names appear: Asper, Cain, Page, Worley, of course, Fingleton, Maguet, Hodge, Holmes, Forbes, Konstonvich, etc. Their duties are specified and so forth. However, there is no Nervig. The papers that detail this investigation 1,356 in total fail to mention any Nervig whatsoever. And the idea that he is somehow omitted by accident, that somehow he is overlooked in every page, is patently ridiculous.

It is possible, of course, that Nervig was on board the *Cyclops* on an earlier voyage, and after 40 years his memory mistook the events he described as happening just before her final one. If so what he says about the captain and crew

adds a true light of what life was like on the ship. But the idea that Worley walked around in long johns, a derby hat and cane, is not even remotely attested to by any number of crewman, either in scuttlebutt at Rio or at Barbados ... and several on the bridge would have seen him talking to Nervig!

Investigation by the Navy did turn up that *Cyclops* was seen two days after she left Barbados. This is not commonly known. A British patrol boat on 2 occasions sighted her far off course, both on the 5th and 6th of March, and guided her back.

Was this Worley's poor navigation or his desire to break course and head for Germany? If one assumes that Worley and Gottschalk did intend to betray her on their own plan, she might have been torpedoed by a German U-boat far from her course. Investigations into subs only included her official course. But if Worley was intentionally or accidentally far off course, he may have perished, ironically, by the hand of those whom he supported or was even trying to assist.

The *Cyclops* shall always remain a mystery. One can imagine almost any scenario. Mutiny could have happened, although unlikely, far off her course when the men realized what was happening. But, alas, a sub might enter the picture again before they could alert base. Certainly a mutiny was not successful, for there would have been survivors.

Weather can also be ruled out. The only rough weather were high winds off Cape Hatteras on the 10th of March, but they dissipated the next day. *Cyclops* should not have been around there yet, being due on the 13th. Her engine had been fixed, regardless of popular rumor, so she was not traveling on one engine but was making normal speed.

Among all the many theories, the phenomenon of the Bermuda Triangle is a relative latecomer. Like the others, this merely tries to explain the unexplainable. But unlike them, this theory has with it the litany of many other missing ships and plains that vanished in like manner: no SOS; no debris; traveling in fair weather. The *Cyclops* last known place on this earth was right in the heart of the Triangle before, like so many others, she went into mystery. If there was treachery aboard, perhaps the culprits were surprised by the greater mystery of nature than that which hid in the dark maze of their own hearts.

The official Navy statement has not changed in all these years:

“Since her departure [Barbados] there has been no trace of the vessel. The disappearance of this ship has been one of the most baffling mysteries in the annals of the Navy, all attempts to locate her having proved unsuccessful. Many theories have been advanced, but none that satisfactorily accounts for her disappearance. There were no enemy submarines in the western Atlantic at that time, and in December 1918 every effort was made to obtain from German sources regarding the disappearance of the vessel. Information was requested from all attachés in Europe with the result that it is definite that neither German U-boats or German mines came into the question.”

Lesson #9: Hildegard von Bingen, Abbess of Disibodenburg (1098–1179)

At age eight, she was dedicated to God as an anchorite at the monastery of Disibodenburg in Germany. Despite being confined to her tiny cell, she displayed precocious spiritual and intellectual gifts in reading, writing, music, and Latin, to such an extent that by the time she was in her teens, other monastics were clamoring to study with her.

Elected abbess of her convent, Hildegard wielded as much earthly power as many a secular ruler. She pursued a remarkable career as administrator, herbalist, mystic, composer, and playwright, always stressing God's goodness and mercy. By the end of her long life she was famed far beyond her convent walls, advising (and sometimes chastising) popes, princes, and potentates. Both her music and her writings are enjoying renewed popularity today.

[I might add that I have my own collection of Hildegard von Bingen music CDs, some of the best Gregorian chant and choral music pieces for women ever written. Hildegard was one of the first composers of medieval sacred music actually to write down her songs in a musical format which is still decipherable today, so we know what they sounded like. - HAC]

Lesson #10: The Battle of Maldon (991 A.D.)

[Somebody complained there were no Vikings in my series. - HAC]

England, at the end of the tenth century, was ruled by King Aethelred II. Now commonly described as the Unready (arising from his description at the time as Aethelred Unrede, meaning “no counsel” or “ill advised”), his reign was punctuated by ever-increasing raids upon his territories by the ravaging and pillaging Vikings. Aethelred had no military or diplomatic answer to their raids, so he simply raised a series of taxes, called Danegeld, to pay them off.

The earliest raiders of this period descended upon England in small companies, which came ashore without warning, and departed before meeting any but local resistance, and they circumnavigated the entire British Isles in their search for booty, visiting in the 980s amongst other places Hampshire, Kent and Cheshire, Devon and Cornwall, and Dorset. No part of the coast was safe, and Essex and the Blackwater estuary towns like Maldon were no exception.

In August 991 yet another body of raiders appeared off the English coast, with Olaf Tryggvasson at their head. It was larger than any of the forces which had lately harried the English, possibly greater than 3,000 men, and to some extent it was much more an organised army than a raiding party. Its ravages are important in English financial history, for they compelled the government to raise a particularly heavy tax (danegeld) in order to buy off the invaders.

But the war of 991 would be no more than a dim episode in a monotonous succession of disasters were it not for the great poem which describes the death of Byrhtnoth, ealdorman (the King’s representative) of Essex, in a battle against the raiders.

In the second week in August, after a profitable descent on Ipswich, 40 miles to the north-east they entered the Blackwater estuary, and occupied Northey Island to the east of Maldon (then called Maeldun, meaning “Hill with a Cross”). For access to the mainland they depended then, as today, on a single causeway, flooded at high tide, which led from Northey to the flats along the southern margin of the estuary.

Before the Vikings had left their camp on the island, Byrhtnoth, with his retainers and a hastily assembled force of local militia, had taken possession of the landward end of the causeway. The Vikings, as was their way, shouted across the water while the tide was high their demands for gold and silver tribute in exchange

for their leaving. However, Byrhtnoth refused and drew up his men along the bank and waited, as then did the Vikings, for the ebb tide.

As the water fell the raiders began to stream out along the causeway. But three of Byrhtnoth's retainers, tough and hardened fighting men, held it against them, and at last they asked to be allowed to cross unhindered and fight on equal terms on the mainland.

Even at low tide, the causeway is no more than a few feet wide at best, and both to the left and right is the black sticky ooze of the Essex salt marshes. A man weighed down with arms and thick mud would be no match for those waiting on dry land. It was a virtually unassailable position, yet with what even those who admired him most called over-courage, Byrhtnoth agreed to their request: the pirates rushed through the falling tide, and battle was joined.

It was a fearsome fight with no quarter asked or given on either side. The English were well aware of the ferocity of the Vikings who in their turn knew that there could be no surrender so far from home. The issue was decided when Byrhtnoth himself was slain.

Many, even of his own men, immediately took flight and the English ranks were broken. What gives enduring interest to the battle is the superb courage with which a group of Byrhtnoth's thegns (his personal military entourage), knowing that the fight was lost, deliberately gave themselves to death in order that they might avenge their lord. A plaque has been erected at the spot to mark the site.

The Battle of Maldon was one of the great epic bardic poems of the old Anglo-Saxon language. Unfortunately, only a fragment of it has survived. The author is unknown.

* * *

The Battle of Maldon

...would be broken.
Then he ordered a warrior each horse be let free,
driven afar and advance onward,
giving thought to deeds of arms and to steadfast courage.
Then it was that Offa's kinsman first perceived,
that the Earl would not endure cowardice,
for he let then from his hand flee his beloved

falcon towards the woods and there to battle went forth.
By this a man might understand that this youth would not
prove soft at the coming battle, when he takes up arms.

Further Eadric desired to serve his chief,
his lord to fight with; and so he advanced forward
his spear to battle. He had a dauntless spirit
as long as he with hands might be able to grasp
shield and broad sword: the vow he would carry out
that he had made before his lord saying he would fight.

Then Byrhtnoth marshalled his soldiers,
riding and instructing, directing his warriors
how they should stand and the positions they should keep,
and ordering that their shields properly stand firm
with steady hands and be not afraid.

Then when he beheld that people in suitable array,
he dismounted amid his people,
where he was most pleased to be,
there amid his retainers knowing their devotion.

Then stood on the shore, stoutly calling out
a Viking messenger, making speech,
menacingly delivering the sea-pirate's
message to this Earl on the opposite shore standing:

“I send to you from the bold seamen,
a command to tell that you must quickly send
treasures to us, and it would be better to you if
with tribute buy off this conflict of spears
than with us bitter battle share.

No need to slaughter each other if you be generous with us;
we would be willing for gold to bring a truce.

If you believe which of these is the noblest path,
and that your people are desirous of assurance,
then pay the sea-farers on their own terms
money towards peace and receive peace from us,
for we with this tribute will take to our ships,

depart on the sea and keep peace with you.”

Byrhtnoth spoke, his shield raised aloft,
brandishing a slender ash-wood spear, speaking words,
wrathful and resolute did he give his answer:
“Hear now you, pirate, what this people say.
They desire to you a tribute of spears to pay,
poisoned spears and old swords,
the war-gear which you in battle will not profit from.
Sea-thieves’ messenger, deliver back in reply,
tell your people this spiteful message,
that here stands undaunted an Earl with his band of men
who will defend our homeland,
Aethelred’s country, the lord of my
people and land. Fall shall you
heathen in battle! To us it would be shameful
that you with our coin to your ships should get away
without a fight, now you thus far
into our homeland have come.
You shall not so easily carry off our treasure:
with us must spear and blade first decide the terms,
fierce conflict, is the tribute we will hand over.”

He then ordered their shields taken up, his soldiers
advancing until on the river-bank they all stood.
Because of the river they were not able
this band of men to fight the other:
there came flowing the flood after the tide;
joining in the tidal stream. Too long it seemed to him
until the time when they together with spears join in battle.

There they on the Pante stream with pride lined the banks,
East Saxon spears and the sea-raider army;
nor might any harm the other
unless through an arrow’s flight death receive.

Then the tide went out. The seamen stood ready,
many Vikings eager for battle.
Then the heroes’ protector ordered that the causeway be held
by a warrior stern—Wulfstan was his name—

valiant with his people: that was Ceola's son,
who the first man with his spear slain
was one who boldly on the causeway stood.
There fought with Wulfstan warriors fearless,
Aelfere and Maccus, two great in courage,
who would not at this fjord take to flight,
but stoutly against the enemy defended themselves
while with their weapons they might wield.
Then they understood and clearly saw,
that this guarding of the causeway was a fierce encounter,
and so began to use guile, the hateful strangers,
asked that passage to land they might have,
to the shore and pass the fjord would this force lead.

Then the Earl permitted in his great pride
to allow land many of these hateful people;
and so then shouted on the shore of the cold water
Byrhtelm's child—and the warriors listened:
“Now the way is open to you: come quickly to us
you men to battle. God alone knows
who on this field of honor may be allowed to be the master of.”

Then advanced the wolves of slaughter, for water they
cared not for, this band of Vikings;
west over the Pante's shining water shore they carried their shields,
these men of the fleet towards land advanced their linden shields.

There against the enemy stood ready
Byrhtnoth with his soldiers. He with his shield commanded
to form the battle ranks and that force of men to hold fast
firmly towards the enemy. Then was the fight near,
glory in battle. The time was come
that these doomed men would fall in battle.
There came the loud clamor. Ravens circled around,
eagles eager for carrion. On Earth was the battlecry.

They then sent forth from their hands shafts hard as file,
murderously sharpened spears flew.
Bows were busily at work, shields received spears.
Fierce was that onslaught. Warriors fell in battle
on either side, young men lay slain.

Wounded was Wulfmaer, meeting death on the battlefield,
Byrhtnoth's kinsman: he with sword was,
his sister's son, cruelly hewn down.
There were the Vikings given requital:
I hear that Eadweard smote one
fiercely with his sword, withholding not in his blow,
so that at his feet fell a doomed warrior;
for this he of his people gave thanks for,
this chamber-thane, when the opportunity arose.

So stood firm of purpose
these young men in battle, eagerly giving thought
to who there with spear-points was first able
of doomed men's life destroy,
warriors with weapons. The slain in battle fell to Earth.
Steadfast and unyielding, Byrhtnoth exhorted them,
bidding that each young warrior's purpose to this battle,
against the Danes a desire to win glory in war.

Advanced again to fierce battle, weapons raised up,
shields to defense, and towards these warriors they stepped.
Resolute they approached Earl to the lowest Yeoman:
each of them intent on harm for the enemy.
Sent then a sea-warrior a spear of southern make
that wounded the warrior lord.
He thrust then with his shield such that the spear shaft burst,
and that spear-head shattered as it sprang in reply.
Enraged became that warrior: with anger he stabbed
that proud Viking who had given him that wound.
Experienced was that warrior; he thrust his spear forward
through the warrior's neck, his hand guiding
so that he this ravager's life would fatally pierce.

Then he with another stab speedily pierced the ravager
so that the chainmail coat broke: this man had a breast wound
cut through the linked rings; through his heart stuck
a deadly spear. The Earl was the better pleased:
laughed then this great man of spirit, thanking the Creator for
the day's work which the Lord had given him.

And so then another warrior a spear from the other side
flew out of hand, which deeply struck
through the noble Aethelred's retainer.

To him by his side stood a young man not fully grown,
a youth on the battlefield, who valiantly
pulled out of this warrior the bloody spear,
Wulfstan's child, Wulfmaer the younger;
and so with blinding speed came the shaft in reply.
The spear penetrated, for that who on the Earth now lay
among his people, the one who had sorely pierced.
Went then armed a man to this Earl;
he desirous of this warrior's belongings to take off with,
booty and rings and an ornamental sword.

Then Byrhtnoth drew his sword from its sheath
broad and bright of blade, and then struck the man's coat of mail.
But too soon he was prevented by a certain sea-scavenger,
and then the Earl's arm was wounded.
Fall then to the ground with his gold-hilted sword:
his grip unable to hold the heavy sword,
or wield the weapon. Then still uttered those words
of the grey-haired warrior, encouraging the younger warriors,
bidding to advance stoutly together.

Not could he on his feet any longer stand firmly up,
and so he looked to heaven:
"I thank you, Lord of my people,
all the joys which I on this world have experienced.
"Now I ask, oh merciful Creator, the greatest hope
that to you my spirit shall be granted salvation
that my soul to thee be permitted to journey
and into your power, King of Angels,
with peace I depart. I only beseech that
the fiends of hell shall not be permitted to harm me."

Then he was slain by the heathen warriors;
and both of those warriors which by him stood,
Aelfnoth and Wulmaer were each slain,
close by their lord did they give up their lives.

Then turned away from battle those that would not stay:
there went Odda's child first to flight,
Godric fled from the battle, and the noble abandoned
the one which had often given him many a horse.
He leapt upon the mount of the steed
which had once been his lord's,
on those trappings of which he was not fit,
he and with his brothers both galloped away,
Godwine and Godwig not caring for battle,
but turned away from this battlefield and to the forest fled,
seeking a place of safety and to protect their lives,
and many more men than what is right were there,
then if they had acted deservingly and all remembered
he, who had to them, all benefits did make.

Thus had Offa on that day first said
at the meeting place, there at the council,
that there would be boldly many a boastful speech
which at the time of stress would not endure.

So now was laid low the Chief of this army,
Aethelred's Earl. All saw those
sharers of the hearth that their lord lay slain.
But then there advanced onward those splendid retainers,
undaunted men hastening eagerly:
they desired all one of two things,
to leave life or else to avenge their dear lord.

And so exhorting them to advance was the child of Aelfrices,
a warrior young in winters whose words spoke,
Aelfwine then said, he in valiant talk:
"Remember the speeches which we had often at mead spoken,
that we on the bench had loudly uttered vows,
warriors in the hall, concerning bitter strife:

Now may we prove who is truly valiant!
I am willing that my royal descent be made known to all men,
that I was of Mercian blood greatly kindred;
my grandfather was named Ealhelm,

a wise alderman and very prosperous.

“Not shall me these people’s liegeman reproach
that I of this army am willing to depart from,
a homeland seek, now that my lord lies slain
and hewn down in battle. Mine is that sorrow greatest:
he was both my kinsman and my lord.”

Then he advanced onward, remembering with hostility,
then he with spear-point pierced one
pirate in their host, and to the ground lie slain
killed with the weapon. He began then to exhorted his
comrades, friends and compatriots, that they advance onward.

Offa spoke, shaking his ashen spear:
“Lo, thou Aelfwine, have your words thus reminded
us liegemen to our allegiance. Now our people’s protector lies slain,
the Earl is on the Earth, and to us all is our need
that one another encourage each other
warriors to battle, while with weapons we are able
to have and grasp, the hard blade,
the spear and the good sword. To us has Godric,
that cowardly sun of Odda, all betrayed.
Many men believed, then when he rode on the horse,
on that splendid steed, that it was our lord.
Because of that happening here on the battlefield the people scattered,
the wall of shields breaking asunder. Shame on that action,
for because of him thus many a man was caused to flee!”

Leofsunu spoke and his linden shield was raised,
the board to defense; this warrior replied:
“I that swear, that from here I will not
flee a foot’s space, as my desire is to advance further,
avenge in battle-strife my lord and friend.
I have no desire among Sturmere’s unyielding heroes
to reproach my word, now that my patron has perished,
that I now lordless go on a homeward journey,
having turned away from battle,
but rather I shall be taken by weapons,
either spear or iron.” Wrathfully he advanced,

fighting resolutely, for he despised flight.

Dunnere then said, brandishing his spear,
a simple yeoman calling out to the entire shore,
exhorting that each warrior avenge Byrhtnoth:
“One cannot retreat who intends vengeance
for our lord of the host, if their lives they care not for.”

So then they pressed forward, caring not about their lives.
Then began these retainers to fiercely fight,
ferocious warriors armed with spears, and praying to God
that they might avenge their lord and patron
and on their enemy death make.

Thus the hostage himself willingly helped;
he was a Northumbrian of a brave family,
Ecglaf's child; he was named Aescferth.
He hesitated not at the play of battle,
but shot forward many arrows;
here striking a shield, there cutting down a warrior,
at almost every moment giving out some wound,
all the while with his weapon he would wield.

Yet still at the battle front stood Eadweard the tall
ready and eager, speaking vaunting words
that he would not flee a foot's ground,
or turn away back to the bank, then leave his superior where he lay.
He broke through that wall of shields and among the warriors fought,
until his bounteous lord upon those sea-men
did worthily avenge, and he on the battlefield lie slain.

So did Aetheric, noble comrade,
press forward and eager to advance fight resolutely,
Sibyrht's brother and very many others;
splitting the enemy's shields, valiantly they defended themselves.
Rang the shield rims, and sang the corselets of mail
a certain terrible dirge. Then at the battle's height
Offa a sea-farer sent to the Earth dead,
and there Gadd's kinsman was laid low to the ground:
soon it was at battle that Offa was hewn down.

He had however accomplished that vow to his lord
that he had uttered before to his giver of rings,
that either they both ride to the fortified
home unhurt or else perish fighting
on the battlefield and die of their wounds.
He lay slain nobly near the lord of his people.

Then it happened that the shields broke through.
The sea-warriors advanced,
to battle enraged. Spear often pierced
the doomed houses of life. Onward then advanced Wistan,
Thurhstan's son, to these warriors fought.
He was among the throng and slew three,
before Wigelm's child lay slain in battle.
There was severe combat. Stood firm
did these warriors in battle. Warriors perished
exhausted by their wounds. The slain fell dead to the Earth.

Oswold and Eadwold all this time,
both of these brothers encouraged the soldiers,
their beloved kinsman they would exhort through words
that they needed to endure
without weakening and make use of their weapons.

Byrhtwold spoke, shield raised aloft—
he was an old loyal retainer—and brandished his spear;
he very boldly commanded the warriors:
“Our hearts must grow resolute, our courage more valiant,
our spirits must be greater, though our strength grows less.
Here lies our Lord all hewn down,
goodly he lies in the dust. A kinsman mourns
that who now from this battle-play thinks to turn away.
I am advanced in years. I do not desire to be taken away,
but I by my liege Lord,
by that favorite of men I intend to lie.”

So then did Aethelgar's child embolden them all,
Godric to battle. Often he sent forth spears,
deadly shaft sped away onto the Vikings;
thus he on this people went out in front of battle,

cutting down and smiting, until he too on the battlefield perished.
This was not that Godric who from the battle had flown away ...

Lesson #11: The Devil's Footprints (1855)

The First Report

After a dense snowfall on February 7 and 8, 1855, the people of Devonshire, England awoke to find strange footprints throughout their small town. The London Times, on February 16, reported the entire incident in detail.

“Considerable sensation has been evoked in the towns of Topsham, Lympstone, Exmouth, Teignmouth and Dawlish, in the south of Devon, in consequence of the discovery of a vast number of foot-tracks of a most strange and mysterious description. The superstitious go so far as to believe that they are the marks of Satan himself; and that great excitement has been produced among all classes may be judged from the fact that the subject has been descanted on from the pulpit.

“It appears that on Thursday night last there was a very heavy fall of snow in the neighborhood of Exeter and the south of Devon . On the following morning, the inhabitants of the above towns were surprised at discovering the tracks of some strange and mysterious animal, endowed with the power of ubiquity, as the footprints were to be seen in all kinds of inaccessible places—on the tops of houses and narrow walls, in gardens and courtyards enclosed by high walls and palings, as well as in open fields. There was hardly a garden in Lympstone where the footprints were not observed.

“The track appeared more like that of a biped than a quadruped, and the steps were generally eight inches in advance of each other. The impressions of the feet closely resembled that of a donkey's shoe, and measured from an inch and a half to (in some instances) two and a half inches across. Here and there it appeared as if cloven, but in the generality of the steps the shoe was continuous, and, from the snow in the center remaining entire, merely showing the outer crest of the foot, it must have been convex.

“The creature seems to have approached the doors of several houses and then to have retreated, but no one has been able to discover the standing or resting point of this mysterious visitor. On Sunday last the Rev. Mr. Musgrave alluded to the subject in his sermon, and suggested the possibility of the footprints being those of a kangaroo; but this could scarcely have been the case, as they were found on both sides of the estuary of the Exe.

“At present it remains a mystery, and many superstitious people in the above towns are actually afraid to go outside their doors at night.”

Other Reports of Walking Devils

There was one other recorded sighting of similar tracks, reported by Captain Sir James Clark Ross. The commander of two ships was exploring the South Pole landed on Kerguelen Island around May 1840. The Captain told of finding no animals and simply tracks of a “pong or ass, found by the party detached for surveying purposes ...” The men thought the creature may have escaped from a shipwrecked vessel. The men eventually gave up looking for the creature as it passed over a large area of rocks and the tracks were lost. As Rupert Gould asks, “One wonders, if they had ‘got a sight of it,’ what they would have seen.”

Lesson #12: Don Carlo Gesualdo (c.1560–1613)

Italian composer. Born of a noble Neapolitan family (he became Prince of Venosa), he probably studied music with Pomponio Nenna.

Gesualdo's output consists of six volumes of five-part madrigals, published from 1594; two books of what became known as polyphonic motets and one of responsories; and a few keyboard works. Though from the south, he is linked by his visits to Ferrara and his friendship with Tasso with the 'mannerist' madrigalists of northern Italy. Wayward harmonies in his earlier madrigals develop, in his later ones, into wild and passionate juxtapositions of fast and slow motion, and of total and extremely chromatic harmony. *[I myself have some of his music and it sounds very weird and haunting, even today. - HAC]*

One musical commentator wrote "These violent contrasts seem to reflect Gesualdo's neurotic personality; from a stylistic viewpoint his harmonic experiments are more the ultimate outcome of sixteenth century harmonic vocabulary than prophetic of the music that was to come; it was only in the eccentricity of his melodic lines that some monodists followed." In his lifetime, Gesualdo's music was so odd that it was considered proof that he was insane.

Another of Gesualdo's biographers wrote, "Temperamentally he was given to excess, and the sensational murder of his first wife and her lover in 1590 was one of the great sixteenth century musical scandals."

Er ... that's one way to put it, yes. Warning: some really raunchy stuff follows.

Don Carlo Gesualdo was rich, artistic, and as the second son of a noble Neapolitan family, free to indulge his passion for music. But disaster struck: his brother died, and it was decreed that he must carry on the line. The bride found for him—Donna Maria d'Avalos—was his cousin, and the greatest beauty in town. Older and more experienced, she had already sent two husbands to their graves (one, it is rumored, from "an excess of connubial bliss".) The marriage between the two of them would have been roughly similar to a marriage between Anna Nicole Smith and Bill Gates, if Gates turned out to be a homicidal maniac.

Gesualdo sired several children, after which he lost interest in sex. But it still interested his wife. One day his uncle told him she was brazenly enjoying a rip-roaring affair with the handsome Duke of Andria, and that whenever possible they would "invite each other to battle on the fields of love," sometimes even in his

house. Alerted to the fact that Gesualdo knew about the affair, the Duke tried to persuade Donna Maria that they must end the liaison, but she said she'd rather die. As it turned out, that could be arranged.

Thus was the scene set for Don Carlo's historic act. It was kind of the O.J. Simpson case of Renaissance Italy, without the racial angle.

One night in April of 1590, Gesualdo pulled the old stunt of pretending to leave home on a business trip and came home "unexpectedly" to his castle or villa around midnight to find the two of them together in his marital bed. There are a number of versions of what followed, all of them bizarre and scandalous.

According to one account, Gesualdo did not even enter the room, but sent in some hired thugs called bravos, of the kind that were a dime a dozen on any street corner in Naples, to do the deed, and they simply hacked the nude couple to death in the bed, with a couple of pistol shots to finish them off.

According to another version, the doomed lovers had some warning and the Duke attempted to escape out the window dressed in the Princess's clothes, most chivalrously leaving Maria behind to face the music. But Gesualdo and his goons dragged him back in, stabbed and shot him to death, tossed the body out the window, and Gesualdo then whiled away the hours until dawn torturing his wife to death with "unspeakable practices," primly left to the imagination by the chroniclers of the time.

Some contemporary accounts have him disemboweling her, some have her both disemboweled and slit at the throat Jack the Ripper style. Another persistent story (they had no *National Enquirer* back then but the gossip was just as hot) had the monks who were supposed to be chanting Maria's funeral mass ravished her corpse because of her fetching good looks (really, no kidding).

In any event, after he finished murdering his wife, Gesualdo went to the nursery, killed his youngest infant by bashing his head against the wall because Gesualdo suspected the child's paternity, and then killed a nanny who tried to stop him from despatching the oldest boy as well. At this point Gesualdo's servants and a priest restrained him from killing the little boy, pointing out that this was the family heir and hadn't he done enough murdering for one night? Or words to that effect.

It should be pointed out that under the moral and legal code of the time, having caught his wife and her toy boy *in flagrante delicto*, Gesualdo was entirely

entitled to do what he did and no one in high society blamed him for the actual killings. They did sneer at his alleged cowardice in having his hired bravos do the actual wet work.

As odd as it may seem, four years later Gesualdo found another noble lady willing to marry him, Eleonora d'Este of the ruling house of Ferrara, and *she* apparently stepped out on him as well, this time with her stepbrother who was a priest. Gesualdo seems to have mellowed with age; this time he merely had the stepbrother's throat cut and dumped his body in a nearby river, and locked Eleonora up in one of his rural castles.

Gesualdo's music, highly progressive in terms of harmony—imagine Wagner or Hugo Wolf in madrigal form—has often been connected to the composer's dark side. He eventually went insane with guilt over his deed, and in particular was perpetually constipated because of latent then overt horror over how he killed his wife. (Well, so the gossips say.) The actual cause of death was blood poisoning due to this constant state of constipation. (Actually, this is somewhat similar to how Elvis died on the crapper at Graceland, and in a sense Gesualdo's music was so avant-garde he was kind of the Elvis of the sixteenth century. Maybe it's an occupational hazard for musicians.)

You can still buy Gesualdo's music on CD through Amazon or in any good music store. Check it out if you're into medieval and Renaissance chant and song.

Lesson #13: Oak Island: The Money Pit

by Bill Milstead

[Suggested by James Butler]

For over 200 years treasure seekers have been searching here for buried treasure. Oak Island, Nova Scotia, is one of the greatest mysteries of all time.

It all began in 1795 when three young men landed on Oak Island. They noticed a tree with one limb sawed off and a depression in the ground underneath. This piqued their interest since the island was uninhabited.

Underneath the sawed limb it looked as though something was buried there. They came back the next day and began to dig. The men came upon a layer of logs every ten feet that had been embedded in the walls of a refilled pit. Some of the platforms were covered with charcoal while others were covered with a putty-like substance. At around thirty feet they abandoned the dig until they could get help. Later they returned with people from the area and resumed the dig, to no avail. The treasure was much deeper than they could imagine.

Since that time, there have been many major digs in the area at a cost of well over 1 million dollars. In 1897, William Chappell struck iron, then cement, wood, and 32 inches of soft metal plus oak chips, coconut husk fiber, and a small piece of parchment with the letters “ui” “vi” or “wi”. They appear to be written in India ink with a quill pen. These were found at the 153-foot level. In 1909, Franklin D. Roosevelt, at the age of 27, was part of an exploration group. He maintained a lifelong interest in Oak Island.

Between 1967–1969 an exploratory group brought up oak buds, fragments of 16th century wood and a piece of antique brass. In 1972, a team lowered an underwater camera in a deep shaft close to the Money Pit, called Borehole 10X and photographed what appeared to be logs, sea chests, a human head and hand. This was photographed at 230 feet. To date, the treasure has not yet been uncovered.

One group, the Oak Island Exploration Company, has begun to address the problems associated with the excavation. These include: No direct plan supported by professional engineering studies, the inability to control underground flooding which is coming directly from the sea via two or more tunnels, insufficient funding

to overcome unforeseen obstacles, and not understanding the island's underground structures.

In 1995 a team from Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute spent two weeks on the island while their report is confidential it was by no means discouraging.

Since the time of the first exploration, six people have died attempting to uncover what some people believe to be buried treasure—Legend has it that seven people will die before it is found! And what is this treasure? Speculation ranges from Captain Kidd's treasure; a communal bank built by pirates; the hiding place for the treasure plundered by Sir Francis Drake from Spanish ships and settlements in the Caribbean; writings by Francis Bacon that would prove it was he that wrote Shakespeare's plays; Marie Antoinette's jewels; the lost treasure of Tumbez, Peru; and others.

One of the leading theories today is of the Knights Templar and there certainly is evidence to support the theory. Whatever the treasure may or may not be, Oak Island is a once-in-a-lifetime adventure which combines the excitement of a treasure hunt with a major archeological dig!

Unfortunately the island is closed to the public now. But hopefully tours will be available again soon. The last activity of any merit occurred in 1995 when a team from Woods Hole spent two weeks on the island and also surveyed the surrounding bay. While I can not divulge the 200 page report from them ... I can say it did nothing to discourage us from continuing the search.

Lesson #14: Spring-Heeled Jack (1837)

[Believe it or not, this is for real. Kind of a 19th century Spiderman who liked to grab bouncing boobies. There have been several lengthy and fully documented books written on this weird mess, and even allowing for exaggeration, it's clear there was something very strange indeed moving in the shade in Victorian England. - HAC]

Was he a creature, an alien, or a man wearing some strange costume and a hidden jumping apparatus?

During the 1830s, this “man” terrorized England. Described as tall, thin, powerful, wearing a black cloak, the man could jump 20 to 30 feet vertical. It was reported that he had large pointy ears and nose, with red glowing eyes, and capable of spitting an odd white and blue flame from his mouth.

The Early Sightings

The first sighting may have occurred in September of 1837 in London, England. A businessman was returning home from work late at night when a mysterious figure vaulted over the railings of a cemetery. The railings were at least 10 feet high but the creature effortlessly leaped over the wall and landed directly in the path of the man. He was described as having pointed ears, large glowing eyes, and a large pointed nose.

A little while later, Spring Heeled Jack was said to have attacked a group of people—three women and one man. All ran but Polly Adams, who was left behind. Spring Heeled Jack tore off the top of her blouse, grabbed her breasts, and began clawing at her stomach. The attack knocked Polly unconscious where she lay until being discovered by a policeman.

The Mary Stevens Incident

In October of 1837, Mary Stevens, a servant, was returning to her employer's home on Lavender Hill. While passing through Cut Throat Lane in Clapham Common, Spring Heeled Jack sprang from an alley, tightly wrapped his arms around her, kissed her on the face and began running his hands down her blouse. When Mary screamed, Spring Heeled Jack ran from the scene. Local men were alerted by the screams and quickly arrived on the scene. They searched for the assailant to no avail.

The next day, Spring Heeled Jack struck again at a location very near Mary Stevens home. He sprang in front of a passing carriage causing the carriage to careen out of control and crash. Witnesses at the scene claimed that Spring Heeled Jack escaped by springing effortlessly over a 9-foot wall.

Very shortly after the carriage incident, Spring Heeled Jack accosted a woman near Clapham Church. In this particular incident he left physical evidence. Investigators discovered two footprints three inches deep. The depth of the prints seemed to suggest some type of spring mechanism in the shoes. Note: A spring apparatus was tested by the Germans during the war and resulted in an 85 percent failure rate (the men broke their ankles).

A few months later, January 1838, London 's Lord Mayor, Sir John Cowan, declared Spring Heeled Jack a "public menace." A posse of men was formed to search for the individual responsible for the attacks. It was during this time that the great Duke of Wellington, who was now 70 years old, joined in the search. Some sources indicate that the Duke may have had several close encounters with Spring Heeled Jack. Unfortunately, Spring Heeled Jack was never found and in fact, intensified his attacks during the following months.

The Lucy Scales Incident

On Feb. 20, 1838, Lucy Scales (18) and her sister Margaret Scales were returning home at around 8:30 p.m., from their brother's house in the Limehouse area. Reports indicate that Spring Heeled Jack jumped out in front of Lucy Scales and spat blue fire in her face. Written evidence indicates that Lucy was "blinded"—whether this blindness was temporary, permanent or simply a figure of speech is not known. After the attack, witnesses claim that Spring Heeled Jack jumped from the ground to the roof of a house and made his escape.

The Alsop Incident

Two days later, on February 22, 1838, Jane Alsop (18) was in her home on Bearhind Lane in the district of Bow, when she heard a rapping on the door. Answering the door, a black cloaked man exclaimed "I'm a policeman. For God's sake, bring me a light, for we have caught Spring-heeled Jack in the lane" (a black cloak was traditional uniform attire for policemen of this era). Jane, who lived with her father and two sisters, went to fetch a light for the man. She returned with a candle and as she was handing the light to the man, it shone on his face and she saw that it was Spring Heeled Jack.

He immediately spat a blue and white ‘gas’ into her face. She attempted to run back into the house but he held on tightly to the back of her hair. One of her sisters managed to pull her out of his grasp and drag her back into the house. Spring Heeled Jack continued banging on the door some time before hastily leaving. Witnesses claim that Spring Heeled Jack left quickly, dropping his coat in a field by Jane’s home. Another person was seen scooping up the coat and leaving the area leading police to believe that Spring Heeled Jack may have an accomplice. The Lambeth police took Jane’s statement:

“He wore a large helmet and a sort of tight-fitting costume that felt like oilskin. But the cape was just like the ones worn by the policemen. His hands were as cold as ice and like powerful claws. But the most frightening thing about him was his eyes. They shone like balls of fire.”

The following day another incident occurred on Turner Street near Commercial Road. Once again Spring Heeled Jack knocked on the resident’s door. When a servant boy answered the door, Spring Heeled Jack asked to speak to the master of the house, Mr. Ashworth. The boy turned to call Mr. Ashworth when he noticed, out of the corner of his eye, that the visitor was none other than Spring Heeled Jack. With glowing orange eyes and clawed hands, Spring Heeled Jack waved his fist at the boy and leapt over the houses on Commercial Road. The lad was able to supply an additional piece of evidence—under his cloak, the lad noticed that Spring Heeled Jack had an embroidered letter ‘W’ on his shirt. Similar to a coat of arms, the gold ‘W’ seemed to indicate someone of royalty.

It was the Ashworth attack and the servant boy’s subsequent description of the attacker’s monogram that led police to suspect Henry, the Marquis of Waterford. The Marquis was an Irish nobleman known for his sometimes cruel and unusual sense of humor. Police surmised that the Marquis accomplished his leaping feats via springs hidden in his shoes. This theory was later abandoned when the Marquis died tragically in 1859 (he was thrown from his horse) while the attacks continued for some time afterward.

After the Ashworth incident, attacks continued during the next year (1839). They stopped for a short while and then continued again in 1843. In 1845, the single fatal incident occurred on a bridge in New York, far across the ocean from the London attacks. In broad daylight, a Spring Heeled Jack-style assailant jumped toward a young prostitute, grabbed her by the shoulders, and spat fire into her face. The stunned girl was then thrown into a sewer below where she tragically drowned.

The Final Attacks

Things grew quiet for several years before flaring up again during 1877 back in London. In Caistor, Newfolk, there were several reports of Spring Heeled Jack traveling across the town by jumping from rooftop to rooftop.

In August of 1877, Spring Heeled Jack appeared before a group of soldiers in Aldershot's North army camp. A Private John Regan was standing sentry at the camp when he heard the noise of someone dragging something metallic down the road. He went to investigate and finding nothing unusual turned to return to his post. When he did, Spring Heeled Jack leapt at him and spat blue flames from his mouth into the boy's face. Other sentries heard the commotion and hurriedly ran to his aid. Witnesses claim that Spring Heeled Jack jumped over the men, clearing them by 10 feet or more. The sentry fired at the intruder and claimed that bullets did not affect him (note that some reports indicate that these sentry men were not allowed live ammunition but rather 'blanks,' only used to warn off evil-doers). The sentry described the attacker as tall and thin wearing a helmet and oilskin suit.

One month later, in Lincolnshire, Spring Heeled Jack was seen hurdling over several houses. As in the Aldershot episode, residents fired at him with shotguns to no avail. These witnesses claimed that the shots did hit Spring Heeled Jack and sounded like they were hitting some sort of metallic object.

Another occurrence was reported in January of 1879 where Spring Heeled Jack once again startled a carriage and horse team. The driver was crossing a bridge in Birmingham and Liverpool Junction Court, when Spring Heeled Jack, clothed in black and flashing menacing orange eyes, jumped onto one of the horses' backs.

In September 1904, South of Liverpool in England, Spring Heeled Jack appeared on the roof of a church. He was spotted hanging on the steeple of St. Francis Xavier's on Salisbury Street. Onlookers claimed he suddenly dropped from the steeple and fell to the ground. Thinking that he had committed suicide, they rushed to the point where he had landed (behind some houses) only to find a helmeted man, clothed in white, standing there waiting. He scuttled toward the crowd, raised his arms, and took to the air over William Henry Street.

The final recorded event occurred in 1920 at the Central Railway Station in London. A man in a white cloak was seen jumping back and forth from rooftop to the street below.

Theories Abound

Several theories have been proposed. Everything from a normal man with some sort of spring apparatus to the devil himself (it was reported that cloven footprints had been found at the site of one of the incidents) has been offered as explanations. Lack of hard evidence leaves a lingering cloud of mystery over this anomaly.

Possibly Daniel Cohen offers our best explanation. In the *Encyclopedia of Monsters*, Daniel noted that “penny dreadfuls” were very popular during the era. These magazines, similar to modern day comic books, often featured stories of Spring Heeled Jack. Titled Spring-Heel’d Jack—The Terror of London, these stories may have distorted many of the facts we glean from this case although the chance of these events being entirely fiction seems unlikely.

[I have to admit, guys, this one has me beat. This silliness went on for almost ninety years, apparently, and the whole thing seems like some pointless and infantile practical joke to begin with. The question here is not only who and how, but WHY, for Chrissakes? I mean, the British have a deserved reputation for eccentricity, but this is ridiculous even by Monty Python standards. – HAC]

Lesson #15: The Murder of Christopher Marlowe (1593)

The Official Story

It strikes a man more dead than a great reckoning in a little room.

- “As You Like It” Act III, scene 2

[The above quotation is thought by some scholars to be a mysterious reference by Shakespeare to Christopher Marlowe’s murder.]

May 31, 1593. A widow’s house in Deptford, three miles from London. She rents rooms for meetings, and provides food and drink to those who wish to spend the day in contemplation. It is just after six in the evening, the sun not yet set, the room suffused in a pale, golden light. Supper is over. In a matter of minutes, Christopher Marlowe will be dead.

Three of the men are seated on a bench, “cheek by jowl,” as one of them is to report later, in front of a trestle table. They are playing an Elizabethan version of backgammon. The only other furniture in the beamed, dark, low-ceiling room is a bed, upon which the fourth man, recovering from too much wine, is reclining. One of the men at the table, the one sitting in the middle of the three, says, over his shoulder, that the bill for their day’s food and drink must be paid to their hostess.

The young, drunken man on the bed protests. His share of the reckoning is too large, he says. The man at the table replies that the share is only right. The young man lurches to his feet and grabs the dagger from the seated man’s belt—kept in his belt at the small of his back, “Spanish style”—and strikes him on his head, a superficial gash that bleeds profusely. He strikes him again, opening a second wound. The man struggles to his feet, grabs the wrist of the young man, and forces the dagger into the eye of his assailant. He falls to the floor, instantly dead. The man at the table had no choice. He had to defend himself.

This is the account of the three men, given to the coroner the next day, June 1, 1593, as the coroner and his jury of 16 men view the room and the body. It is a case of self-defense. The next day, June 2, in the churchyard of St. Mary’s, Deptford, the dead man is buried. The grave is unmarked.

Death was a common event in Elizabethan London. Plague, violence, execution—each day brought the end of life to more than a few 16th century Londoners, with little regard to rank or station. Death hovered above the city day after day. Why should the death of this one man concern us?

Two weeks later, the man who thrust the fatal blow is pardoned by Queen Elizabeth I.

Who is he, the man who is dead on the floor of a chamber in a widow's house? And how did he really die?

He must have been important.

Who Was Christopher Marlowe?

The record of the coroner's inquest states that the victim was one Christopher Marlowe, poet and playwright. He was so identified when all were crowded into the small room to view the body, still lying on the floor.

Christopher Marlowe, if he is known at all, is vaguely remembered as a playwright who wrote the immortal lines about Helen of Troy: "Was this the face that launched a thousand ships, and burnt the topless towers of Ilium?"

These lines from *Dr. Faustus* are repeated by actors auditioning for roles in the film *Shakespeare in Love*, and serve as a cliché or the soaring poetry of Elizabethan drama. Yet, Marlowe was more than a single immortal line of blank verse. He was the most popular and successful playwright before and during Shakespeare's early years, having written five tremendously successful plays. It has been suggested that he collaborated with Shakespeare on the latter's three parts of *Henry VI*.

Like most of the playwrights of the era (except Shakespeare), Marlowe was a university graduate, having left Cambridge in 1585, about the time of his first success, *Tamburlaine*. He had left Cambridge under a cloud, and was denied his Master's degree until a letter from the Privy Council charged the university with granting it. "He has of late done the Queen great service." Cambridge relented, and he became Christopher Marlow, M.A. He had been born in Canterbury in 1564, the son of a shoemaker, two months before Shakespeare had been born in Stratford. Besides his fame as a poet, as well as a playwright, he was, in all probability, a spy.

What was he like? Harold Bloom proposes that Marlowe was very much like his character Barabbas in *The Jew of Malta*. Bloom writes: "What the common reader finds in Marlowe is precisely what his contemporaries found: impiety, audacity, worship of power, ambiguous sexuality, occult aspirations, defiance of moral order, and above all else a sheer exaltation of the possibilities of rhetoric, of

the persuasive force of heroic poetry.” In his opening soliloquy, Barabbas presents his devilish, heretical, and sardonic face to the audience:

*“As for myself, I walk abroad a-nights,
And kill sick people groaning under walls.
Sometimes I go about and poison wells.”*

Several accounts of fights that Marlowe had suggest that he had a violent temper. Other references to him propose that he was “sweet Kit Marlowe,” an affable companion. The portrait in Corpus Christi College in Cambridge that has been purported to be the likeness of Marlowe shows a young dandy with a sardonic smile. Only one signature (as a witness to a will) exists. In contrast, the mysterious William Shakespeare is represented by two (perhaps three) portraits and a number of signatures. While we have a reasonably detailed paper trail of Marlowe’s life, not much more is known about him than we know about Shakespeare. Calvin Hoffman has argued that, indeed, Marlowe was Shakespeare.

A great deal of evidence exists, however, that Marlowe was a spy. Under the power of Sir Francis Walsingham, Elizabeth I had the first of the British Secret Services, and university graduates were recruited for intelligence work. The enemy, of course, was primarily Spain, but, broadly speaking, it was an intelligence war against Catholics. Sir Francis’s spy group engaged not only in intelligence gathering, but in elaborate schemes of entrapment. It was a very nasty enterprise.

A curious adventure of Marlowe’s was his involvement in “coining,” that is, the counterfeiting of gold coins. This charge was apparently dropped, for reasons that are never made clear in the historical record. One author (Nicholl) suggests that this counterfeiting enterprise was a plot to disrupt the activities of English Roman Catholics living in France, supporters of Mary, Queen of Scots, imprisoned by Elizabeth I. It is very bizarre, but not beyond the devious imagination of Francis Walsingham.

One of Cambridge’s objections to granting Marlowe a degree was his frequent absences with trips to the Continent. Were these espionage assignments in which he provided “good service to the Queen?”

The Three Men in the Room

More is known about the three other men in the room, Ingram Frizer, Robert Poley and Nicholas Skeres, than about Christopher Marlowe. Frizer, the man who

killed Marlowe, was a servant of Sir Thomas Walsingham, a relative of Francis, the Spymaster. In this case, “servant” refers to a general handyman, a combination of secretary, administrative assistant, and gofer. Thomas Walsingham was not only Frizer’s employer, but, as was often the case in Elizabethan times, a patron of Christopher Marlowe. To add to his mysterious resume, Frizer appears to have been an adept confidence man, specializing in schemes to lend money and extract more than he lent.

Robert Poley and Nicholas Skeres were, to one degree or another, spies in the employ of Francis Walsingham. Poley was deeply involved in “The Babbington Plot,” a scheme by Roman Catholic dissidents to assassinate Elizabeth I and to replace her with the imprisoned Mary Queen of Scots. Evidence supports the idea that Poley infiltrated the plotters, encouraged their traitorous plans, and provided information to Francis Walsingham, allowing the plot to be both created and thwarted.

In order to maintain Poley’s cover as a spy, Poley was comfortably imprisoned in the Tower of London for two years—lenient, by Elizabethan standards. Skeres was also involved in the undoing of Babbington and his co-conspirators, and engaged in other assignments for Francis Walsingham.

Hence, all three were connected to the shadowy world of 16th century espionage and intrigue. And so was Marlowe.

Was Marlowe Really Murdered?

For the past 50 years or so, a theory has been put forth that Christopher Marlowe was not murdered at all. The proposition is that his killing was faked, and that Marlowe escaped from inevitable prosecution as a heretic by fleeing abroad. The main proponent of this theory, Calvin Hoffman, maintained in numerous writings that Christopher Marlowe was the author of the plays of Shakespeare. The outlines of his theory go something like this:

With the connivance of Thomas Walsingham, and through the services of his men Frizer, Skeres and Poley, a recently executed man was substituted for the body of Marlowe. Marlowe then fled to Italy, where he wrote Shakespeare’s greatest plays (many of them set in Italy), sent them back to Walsingham, and Walsingham had William Shakespeare, an actor, serve as a front man for the authorship of the plays. Of course, Walsingham would have had Marlowe’s manuscripts recopied.

Hoffman relied heavily on what he termed “parallelisms,” phrases and lines from Marlowe’s acknowledged works that are very similar to lines from the plays of Shakespeare. Further, he raised the cherished argument that no one of Shakespeare’s limited education could have written the erudite and complicated plays attributed to Shakespeare.

Hoffman was dogged in his pursuit of evidence to support his theory. He managed to open Thomas Walsingham’s tomb, searching for the play manuscripts he believed were buried with Marlowe’s patron. None were found. Hoffman’s explanation for this failure was that such an attempt was a long shot anyway. He went to Italy to search for evidence that Marlowe had lived there after 1593, and, despite a disputed letter referring to an English playwright living in Florence, he was unable to establish Marlowe’s existence after 1593.

Hoffman’s work is strongly supported by members of the International Marlowe Society, whose members are called “Marlovians.” However, one of the arguments against the principal Hoffman theory is that “parallelisms” are not uncommon in Elizabethan literature—apparently, “borrowing” ideas, phrases and actual lines of dialogue was not rare—and that such similarities in turn of phrase are to be expected. Further, collaboration in the writing of plays of that era was common, and the “borrowing” could have come from a variety of individuals who probably worked with Shakespeare. Indeed, the few flashes of humor in Marlowe’s plays were probably not written by him at all, but by resident playwrights hired by the theater managers to “juice up” Marlowe’s scripts. Evidence of this comes from entries in the diary of Phillip Henslowe, theater manager for the company for which Marlowe wrote, wherein he records payments for additions to Marlowe’s plays.

If Marlowe had been spirited away into exile, it was cleverly done. There are a number of references to Marlowe’s death in various documents of the time, and friends and associates seemed to have no doubts that Marlowe had been killed at Deptford.

Much has been made of the coroner’s report (not discovered until 1925, by the historian Leslie Hotson). The disputed information is the nature of Marlowe’s supposedly fatal wound. Dr. Frederic Schreiber, a leading neurosurgeon, has maintained that the wound described could not have been fatal, and that Marlowe could have survived such a blow. The Marlovians are somewhat confused about this, and offer conflicting scenarios. It is difficult to see how they can claim that

the murder was staged, and at the same time offering the idea that there was indeed a stabbing, but that the wound was not lethal.

The most convincing argument, however, is the difference in quality between Marlowe's plays and those attributed to Shakespeare. If one rereads Marlowe's plays, one is struck by the absence of plot, the two-dimensionality of the characters, and the almost simplistic moral presentation of the plays. With the exception of some moments of soaring poetry, and, in *Edward II*, a few scenes of dramatic power, Marlowe's plays are not comparable in quality to even the earliest and least popular of Shakespeare's plays.

In brief, if the non-murder of Marlowe is dependent on his assuming the authorship of Shakespeare's plays, the case is indeed weak. In all likelihood, the man murdered in Deptford in 1593 was Christopher Marlowe. The question is "Why?"

Why Was He Murdered? Theory One

If Marlowe did not die from an argument over a bill (a "reckoning," as the Elizabethans called it), what was the motive for his murder? There are several possibilities, some more probable than others.

The first of these possible theories for "getting rid" of Marlowe was bandied about the small literary community of 1590s London. The several variations of this theory revolve around Marlowe's possible love life. One contemporary account reports that Marlowe was murdered by a jealous husband in a street brawl. Another suggests that the brawl was with a jealous competitor of Marlowe, both of whom sought the favors of a compliant and not too respectable mistress. A third, it has been suggested, proposes that Marlowe was a homosexual—he was quoted as stating that those who love neither tobacco nor boys are missing something—and that his murder somehow was involved with his aberrant sexual tastes. The implication is that he was involved with a rough crowd, or that he made the fatal mistake of approaching an unwilling young man who was not so inclined. Many of the interesting novels about Marlowe, particularly one written by the distinguished writer, Anthony Burgess, have scenes with Marlowe in energetic love trysts with boys and men. Marlovians defend their hero by arguing that sexuality in Elizabethan times was far more ambiguous than in the present day, and that sex between men was common. After all, did not Shakespeare suggest homosexual love for a youth in his sonnets? (It should be noted that in his sonnets, Shakespeare also expressed a passion for "a dark lady.")

All of these speculations fall into the category of gossip, and seem unlikely.

Why Was He Murdered? Theory Two

A second scenario proposes that Marlowe was done in because of his heresy. Shortly after Marlowe's death, a document, written a short time before by Richard Baines, surfaced. In it, Baines claimed that Marlowe had uttered various blasphemies, the most serious of which denied the divinity of Christ. Ten days before Marlowe's appearance before authorities, Marlowe's fellow playwright, Thomas Kyd, was arrested and tortured until he confessed that heretical documents found in his chamber were written by Marlowe when the two had shared quarters in 1591. It is believed that Marlowe's summons before the Privy Council a few weeks before he was murdered was based on these accusations, as well as other unspecified evidence that Marlowe was a heretic. Heresy in Elizabethan times was a capital offense, carried out in a most horrendous manner—hanging, disemboweling while still alive, drawing and quartering. Yet, Marlowe was released by the council, with the mild admonishment that he must remain in the area and report daily to officers of the council. This was a curious procedure, considering the severity of such an accusation. As a matter of record, Marlowe was summoned by the Privy Council for this interview while he was visiting his patron, Thomas Walsingham, so it is unlikely that Walsingham was unaware of Marlowe's predicament. A possibility exists that the true reason for his requested appearance had more to do with his association with others whom the council wished to discredit than with any intemperate beliefs on Marlowe's part.

An interesting corollary to this theory and the preceding one is that Baines reports that Marlowe spoke boldly of Jesus and his disciples as a licentious homosexual group, with blasphemies about Jesus' relationship to Peter. In effect, the Baines letter does triple duty in accusing Marlowe: heretic, blasphemer and sodomite.

Why Was He Murdered? Theory Three

Which brings us to a third explanation. Marlowe was a known member of a heretical group led by the famous Sir Walter Raleigh, an important Elizabethan figure who was alternately in and out of favor with the queen. The Raleigh group was opposed by a rival group that also sought the favor of Elizabeth I, led by the Earl of Essex. In one way or another, Marlowe, in his role as a spy, or possibly because of his dangerous atheistic talk, had to be silenced. The question remains whether Raleigh needed Marlowe out of the way, or Essex needed, for some

reason, to silence Marlowe. Key to this question is the relationship of Thomas Walsingham to these two rival factions.

Walsingham, no longer under the protection of his recently deceased relative, Sir Francis Walsingham, was involved in the “study group” led by Raleigh, and, as such, could be painted with the same brush of heresy. It wasn’t simply the heretical views of the Raleigh faction, but the fact that such heresy was also a threat to the authority of the queen. It was a fatal combination of disbelief and treason. The new spymaster, Sir Robert Cecil, was as dogged as his predecessor, and would have little regard for Thomas Walsingham’s position.

It is curious that all three of the men present with Marlowe at Deptford were nefarious characters. All three, along with Marlowe, had been spies (and, in the case of Poley, would continue as an active agent). It is even more remarkable to accept the strange fact that Poley and Skeres stood by while the struggle between Frizer and Marlowe was going on. One might assume that Frizer “drew the short straw” and was the designated assassin, while his two colleagues were available should Frizer encounter some difficulty with their intended victim.

Evidence Marlowe was Silenced

The facts of the case, at best, lead one to select the most plausible resolution to the question of the murder of Christopher Marlowe. This, I believe, is that Marlowe had to be silenced in order to save the skin of his patron, Thomas Walsingham. However reluctantly he felt about disposing of the poet that had been under the protection of his patronage, the political baggage that Marlowe carried was not to be endured.

Hence, Marlowe had to go. For this purpose, Walsingham had Marlowe lured to a meeting with three of his loyal servants, and there, in Deptford, silenced him once and for all. The fact that Frizer was quickly pardoned suggests that Walsingham persuaded the queen of his loyalty, and either urged upon her the necessity of getting rid of Marlowe, or convinced her that the coroner’s jury was correct, and that Marlowe’s death was the result of self defense.

It is entirely possible that Robert Cecil was concerned about Marlowe, and was involved in the attempt to silence him. If the Privy Council decided to further question Marlowe, and subject him to the same instruments of interrogation that they had used so effectively on Thomas Kyd, was it not likely that Marlowe would reveal the machinations of Cecil’s secret service? Could the wily Cecil afford to have his various plots known?

Another interested party in the effort to silence Marlowe was the Earl of Essex. In his battle of wits with Raleigh, Essex needed to establish his credibility with the queen, while the two factions jockeyed for advantageous positions in the question of Elizabeth's successor. Further, Nicholas Skeres, a member of that strange quartet at Deptford, was a faithful servant of Essex. Was it he who arranged the meeting?

Nicholl suggests that the murder was unplanned, that the goal of the meeting was to seek the volatile Marlowe's silence by persuasion, and that things got out of hand. Either a genuine disagreement and fight began, or Skeres saw no alternative but the ultimate silencing of Marlowe.

The murder of Christopher Marlowe remains a mystery, but it seems unlikely that the great dramatist's death was the result of an argument over a few shillings. Considering the magnitude of late 16th century intrigue, Marlowe was most likely a victim in the struggle for political survival of Thomas Walsingham, Walter Raleigh, and the Earl of Essex. It is interesting to note that eventually Essex (by order of Elizabeth) and Raleigh (by order of her successor, James I) were beheaded. Clearly, it was an era where the principal players played for keeps.

On July 11, 2002, a memorial window in Poet's Corner, Westminster Abbey, was dedicated to Christopher Marlowe. It gives the date of his birth as 1564, and the date of his death as "?1593." Even his memorial refuses to acknowledge the fact of his death.

A few yards away from the Marlowe Memorial window sits the bust of William Shakespeare.

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Lesson #16: Sawney Beane (app. 1420s A.D.)

[From *The Newgate Calendar*, circa around 1730 or so. The actual events took place in the reign of James the First of Scotland, so say in the 1420s or so. In fairness it should be added that Scots Nationalists deny this ever happened, and claim it is evil Sassenach propaganda and defamation. - HAC]

Sawney Beane

An incredible Monster who, with his Wife, lived by Murder and Cannibalism in a Cave. Executed at Leith with his whole Family in the Reign of James I.

SAWNEY BEANE was born in the county of East Lothian, about eight or nine miles eastward of the city of Edinburgh, under the reign of King James I in Scotland. His parents worked at hedging and ditching for their livelihood, and brought up their son to the same occupation. He got his daily bread in his youth by these means, but being very much prone to idleness, and not caring for being confined to any honest employment, he left his father and mother, and ran away into the desert part of the country, taking with him a woman as viciously inclined as himself. These two took up their habitation in a rock by the seaside, on the shore of the county of Galloway, where they lived upwards of twenty five years without going into any city, town, or village.

In this time they had a great number of children and grandchildren, whom they brought up after their own manner, without any notions of humanity or civil society. They never kept any company but among themselves, and supported themselves wholly by robbing; being, moreover, so very cruel, that they never robbed anyone whom they did not murder.

By this bloody method, and their living so retiredly from the world, they continued such a long time undiscovered, there being nobody able to guess how the people were lost that went by the place where they lived. As soon as they had robbed and murdered any man, woman or child, they used to carry off the carcass to the den, where, cutting it into quarters, they would pickle the mangled limbs, and afterwards eat it; this being their only sustenance. And, notwithstanding, they were at last so numerous, they commonly had superfluity of this their abominable food; so that in the night time they frequently threw legs and arms of the unhappy wretches they had murdered into the sea, at a great distance from their bloody habitation. The limbs were often cast up by the tide in several parts of the country, to the astonishment and terror of all the beholders, and others who heard it. Persons who had gone about their lawful occasions fell so often into their hands

that it caused a general outcry in the country round about, no man knowing what was become of his friend or relation, if they were once seen by these merciless cannibals.

All the people in the adjacent parts were at last alarmed at such a common loss of their neighbours and acquaintance; for there was no travelling in safety near the den of these wretches. This occasioned the sending frequent spies into these parts, many of whom never returned again, and those who did, after the strictest search and inquiry, could not find how these melancholy matters happened. Several honest travelers were taken up on suspicion, and wrongfully hanged upon bare circumstances; several innocent innkeepers were executed for no other reason than that persons who had been thus lost were known to have lain at their houses, which occasioned a suspicion of their being murdered by them and their bodies privately buried in obscure places to prevent a discovery. Thus an ill placed justice was executed with the greatest severity imaginable, in order to prevent these frequent atrocious deeds; so that not a few innkeepers, who lived on the Western Road of Scotland, left off their business, for fear of being made examples, and followed other employments. This on the other hand occasioned many great inconveniences to travelers, who were now in great distress for accommodation for themselves and their horses when they were disposed to bait, or put up for lodging at night. In a word, the whole country was almost depopulated.

Still the King's subjects were missing as much as before; so that it was the admiration of the whole kingdom how such villainies could be carried on and the villains not be found out. A great many had been executed, and not one of them all made any confession at the gallows, but stood to it at the last that they were perfectly innocent of the crimes for which they suffered. When the magistrates found all was in vain, they left off these rigorous proceedings, and trusted wholly to Providence for the bringing to light the authors of these unparalleled barbarities, when it should seem proper to the Divine wisdom.

Sawney's family was at last grown very large, and every branch of it, as soon as able, assisted in perpetrating their wicked deeds, which they still followed with impunity. Sometimes they would attack four, five or six foot men together, but never more than two if they were on horse- back. They were, moreover, so careful that not one whom they set upon should escape, that an ambuscade was placed on every side to secure them, let them fly which way they would, provided it should ever so happen that one or more got away from the first assailants. How was it possible they should be detected, when not one that saw them ever saw anybody else afterwards? The place where they inhabited was quite solitary and

lonesome; and when the tide came up, the water went for near two hundred yards into their subterraneous habitation, which reached almost a mile underground; so that when some who had been sent armed to search all the by-places about had passed by the mouth of their cave, they had never taken any notice of it, not supposing that anything human would reside in such a place of perpetual horror and darkness.

The number of the people these savages destroyed was never exactly known, but it was generally computed that in the twenty-five years they continued their butcheries they had washed their hands in eke blood of a thousand, at least, men, women and children. The manner how they were at last discovered was as follows.

A man and his wife behind him on the same horse coming one evening home from a fair, and falling into the ambuscade of these merciless wretches, they fell upon them in a most furious manner. The man, to save himself as well as he could, fought very bravely against them with sword and pistol, riding some of them down, by main force of his horse. In the conflict the poor woman fell from behind him, and was instantly murdered before her husband's face; for the female cannibals cut her throat and fell to sucking her blood with as great a gust as if it had been wine. This done, they ripped up her belly and pulled out all her entrails. Such a dreadful spectacle made the man make the more obstinate resistance, as expecting the same fate if he fell into their hands. It pleased Providence, while he was engaged, that twenty or thirty from the same fair came together in a body; upon which Sawney Beane and his bloodthirsty clan withdrew, and made the best of their way through a thick wood to their den.

This man, who was the first that had ever fallen in their way and came off alive, told the whole company what had happened, and showed them the horrid spectacle of his wife, whom the murderers had dragged to some distance, but had not time to carry her entirely off. They were all struck with stupefaction and amazement at what he related, took him with them to Glasgow, and told the affair to the provost of that city, who immediately sent to the King concerning it.

In about three or four days after, His Majesty himself in person, with a body of about four hundred men, set out for the place where this dismal tragedy was acted, in order to search all the rocks and thickets, that, if possible, they might apprehend this hellish cure, which had been so long pernicious to all the western parts of the kingdom.

The man who had been attacked was the guide, and care was taken to have a large number of bloodhounds with them, that no human means might be wanting towards their putting an entire end to these cruelties.

No sign of any habitation was to be found for a long time, and even when they came to the wretches' cave they took no notice of it, but were going to pursue their search along the seashore, the tide being then out. But some of the bloodhounds luckily entered this Cimmerian den, and instantly set up a most hideous barking, howling and yelping; so that the King, with his attendants, came back, and looked into it. They could not yet tell how to conceive that anything human could be concealed in a place where they saw nothing but darkness. Never the less, as the bloodhounds increased their noise, went farther in, and refused to come back again, they began to imagine there was some reason more than ordinary. Torches were now immediately sent for, and a great many men ventured in through the most intricate turnings and windings, till at last they arrived at that private recess from all the world which was the habitation of these monsters.

Now the whole body, or as many of them as could, went in, and were all so shocked at what they beheld that they were almost ready to sink into the earth. Legs, arms, thighs, hands and feet of men, women and children were hung up in rows, like dried beef. A great many limbs lay in pickle, and a great mass of money, both gold and silver, with watches, rings, swords, pistols, and a large quantity of clothes, both linen and woolen, and an infinite number of other things, which they had taken from those whom they had murdered, were thrown together in heaps, or hung up against the sides of the den.

Sawney's family at this time, besides him, consisted of his wife, eight sons, six daughters, eighteen grandsons, and fourteen granddaughters, who were all begotten in incest.

These were all seized and pinioned by his Majesty's order in the first place; then they took what human flesh they found and buried it in the sands; afterwards loading themselves with the spoils which they found, they returned to Edinburgh with their prisoners, all the country, as they passed along, flocking to see this cursed tribe. When they were come to their journey's end, the wretches were all committed to the Tolbooth, from whence they were the next day conducted under a strong guard to Leith, where they were all executed without any process, it being thought needless to try creatures who were even professed enemies to mankind.

The men had their hands and legs severed from their bodies; by which amputations they bled to death in some hours. The wife, daughters and grandchildren, having been made spectators of this just punishment inflicted on the men, were afterwards burnt to death in three several fires. They all in general died without the least signs of repentance; but continued cursing and venting the most dreadful imprecations to the very last gasp of life.

Lesson #17: The Disappearance of Greenland's Vikings

Over a thousand years ago, the Viking Eric the Red sailed to Greenland around 985 A.D., while in temporary exile from his Iceland home for homicide. He returned to Iceland with fabulous tales of pastures and valuable wild animals in a land he named Greenland.

Twenty-five boats with some 500 people are said to have returned with him, eventually building two settlements on the big island, with typical Norse long houses and enclosed barns, etc. made out of fitted stone, many of which still stand today and some of which are actually still in use.

The exact details are lost to history, but the outlines of this story has been proven true by archeologists this century who have excavated Viking remains at two sites on Greenland's west coast. It needs to be born in mind that the period of Norse settlement was prior to the "Little Ice Age" which set in around the beginning of the fourteenth century, and that in the days of the first Scandinavian settlements, the climate was much warmer even than it is today, (grapes grew in England in those days) and Greenland most likely really was green. The climate was milder and crops could be grown as well as the abundant animal life hunted.

Greenland's two outposts together, called the Eastern Settlement and the Western Settlement, had about 2,500 inhabitants at their peak. For more than 400 years they lived primarily on meat and milk from sheep, goats and cows. Interestingly, for those of us who envision Vikings constantly quaffing ale and mead and whatnot, they had no beer or ale and had to trade for it; what grain was available was far too precious for fermenting and had to be used for food. For wood and iron implements they traded polar bear and caribou skins and walrus hides and tusks. The Greenlanders launched at least one expedition to North America, landing in modern-day Newfoundland and setting up a short-lived colony.

But for a variety of reasons, probably including the devastation of the Black Plague in Europe and a waning interest in Greenland's luxury products, the settlements lost touch with the old country. Recent studies of ice cores from Greenland show that the 15th century, when the colonies probably died out, was a period of climate deterioration across the Atlantic. When the "Little Ice Age" set in around the beginning of 1300, the ice floes from the Arctic pressed in, the sailing season in the northern hemisphere became much shorter, and the seas became more unnavigable and dangerous. Trade and communication with Greenland dropped

away. But these researchers say their explanation must be more nuanced than simply: “it got cold and they died.” For starters, that wouldn’t explain why the Eskimos survived these lean years. It has been proven that human beings, including White men, can if necessary survive and even thrive on an all-meat, high-protein diet, as witness the latest Atkins Diet craze.

But beyond this, for reasons which have always remained mysterious, people in Europe seem simply to have *forgotten* about Greenland. Various Popes used to agitate their Norwegian bishops to send out priests to the colonies, but it seems volunteers to go off to the far reaches of the earth were kind of scarce and Norwegian church prelates seem to have grown quite adept at avoiding or obfuscating the subject. One gets the impression they just couldn’t be bothered. At one stage Greenland falcons were very fashionable among the nobility, but the fashion seems to have changed, and as far as Europe was concerned Greenland seems to have fallen off the edge of the earth.

The last known record of the Greenland Vikings was in 1408, when a traveler reported a wedding there. Several centuries later, in 1721, Hans Egede, a Norwegian-born missionary, sought out the colonies. To his surprise, they were gone; this seems to have been the first time anyone noticed that they were gone. It is a mystery that remains unsolved to this day. There is one fascinating story, though, which I have to quote from memory, since it’s been years since I’ve read this.

Greenland was actually re-discovered, independently, by the English sailors John and Sebastian Cabot in the late 15th century, and sometime in the sixteenth century the great Elizabethan sailor and first Arctic explorer Martin Frobisher first arrived. Frobisher recorded in his log that as he and his men came ashore on the rocky beach, they found a dead White man lying there face down, wearing only furs, who had apparently only just died of unknown causes. They buried him and went on to find an empty settlement of stone huts. Did Frobisher and the modern world just miss the last of the Greenlanders by a few hours?

Researchers and history buffs have offered many possible explanations for the disappearance of the Greenland Vikings, including raids by Eskimos or European pirates, assimilation into Eskimo communities and starvation. Modern DNA testing shows no apparently genetic Norse strain in modern Greenland Inuit, though. Neither do the settlement remains show any signs of fire or violence or destruction, although these would not necessarily be present.

From the Greenlanders' point of view, one day the ships just—stopped coming. Archaeological excavations which have been carried out in recent years on grave tumuli which still dot the rocky hillsides show evidence of physical degeneration due to poor nutrition and inbreeding. The last Greenlanders seem to have been dwarf-like people, sick and often deformed, who dressed in uncured skins, had no metal tools, and could not have fought off the Eskimos.

Ever want a chill down your spine? Envision what life in the Greenland settlements must have been like during the last fifty years or so before the end—completely isolated at the end of the world, always cold and probably starving, always looking to the east over the icy water for the ships that never came.

Lesson #18: The Siege of the Alcazar **July 20–Sept. 27, 1936**

In July of 1936, the people of Spain revolted against their tyrannical and murderous Communist government. The uprising was led by General Francisco Franco and had the support of most (although not all) of the Spanish military, the Catholic Church, the middle classes, and a very large section of normal working class people as well. The popular left-wing myth that the Spanish Civil War was nothing more than a “military coup” is unfounded; the fact that Franco was able to establish a stable and relatively prosperous society that lasted for over forty years belies this.

When it became apparent that the initial rising in Madrid had failed, the Nationalist supporters in Toledo, which is 40 miles to the southwest of the capitol, declared for Franco and occupied the military academy in the ancient Alcazar fortress. The garrison was mainly drawn from the local Guardia Civil and Falange, but also included a handful of teenaged military cadets (most were on summer holidays), a large number of women and children as well as civilians, and a number of nuns who had fled to the fort for safety from the marauding Communist militia and the *Asaltos* or Assault Guards, who were the Republic’s paramilitary goon squads. This motley crew of resistance fighters was commanded by the Commandant of the Academy, Colonel Jose Moscardo.

At that time Toledo was a Nationalist island surrounded by Republican-held territory, and it was psychologically as well as strategically vital that the Red government in Madrid recover the symbolic fortress as soon as possible. They dispatched a large force of militia, *Asaltos*, army troops who remained loyal to the government, “international brigades” and Soviet “advisors” as well as the dreaded POUM anarchist paramilitary gangs, to capture the Alcazar. Within days, the ancient castle was surrounded by hastily-built barricades and besieged with sniper and machine-gun fire.

One of the most famous incidents of Spanish heroism during the war took place on July 23, 1936. The Communist commander reached Moscardo by telephone within the Alcazar and the Colonel was informed that Republican forces had arrested his 16 year old son, Luis, a cadet at the academy under his father’s command, and unless Moscardo surrendered immediately, Luis would be executed. To prove that they had his son, he was put to the phone to speak to his father. The boy spoke up proudly, “Father, if you surrender your command to the enemies of

Spain in order to save my life, I shall disown you and never more acknowledge you as my blood!”

His father replied “Die like a Spaniard, my son!” The enraged Communists then shot Luis in the head. (A second Moscardo son was later captured and executed in Madrid.) In the Alcazar today, the telephone still remains on display.

Repeated assaults against the castle walls failed and resulted in heavy government casualties. The Reds had brought artillery with them, but only light field guns which could be shielded against through the extensive use of sandbagging on the ramparts, and poorly trained Republican militia were such bad cannon shots that they often missed the huge castle completely and their shells fell on the hapless city. Then they ran out of shells entirely and the incompetent, bickering Republican staff in Madrid were unable to supply any more. Crude attempts at aerial bombing also failed.

For the next two months the defenders held out against the Republican units besieging them. Their only source of water was a cistern in the main courtyard; fortunately they were able to fill it up, because it took the Reds some time to figure out how to shut off the water mains. After that the hundreds of people in the fortress, many of them non-combatants, had to rely on rainwater caught in sheets and tarps. In August they ran low on food and had to rely on nightly stealth foraging expeditions over the walls to raid a grocery warehouse the Nationalists knew about in town, but which the Reds had somehow overlooked. They also had to crawl down and scavenge ammunition by ambushing Republican sentry posts or looting the corpses of those killed in the day’s fighting. Many local residents of Toledo who had remained behind in the city risked their lives to supply Moscardo and his men with food, ammunition, and intelligence on the enemy’s activities, and many were summarily tortured and executed because they were suspected, rightly or wrongly, of helping the Alcazar’s defenders or being in contact with them.

In mid-September the Reds brought in a sapper unit of anarchist Asturian miners, who tunneled beneath the walls and planted a large explosive charge which they detonated in a massive blast, bringing down a section of the wall. Now the Reds could gain partial entry into the Alcazar, and the fighting slowly progressed from building to building, floor to floor, room to room. One upstairs classroom became known as the “Chamber of Death.”

In the meantime General Franco was receiving regular reconnaissance reports from his air corps on the situation, and he realized that the Alcazar couldn’t

hold out much longer. His army was marching on Madrid in four columns (hence General Molina's famous remark about his "fifth column" inside the city.) Franco faced a choice. He could divert one of the columns to relieve the Alcazar and risk not having enough troops to capture the capital, or else he could ignore the sideshow in Toledo and concentrate on his main strategic objective.

Franco spent a whole night in thought and prayer, and in the morning he made his decision. "This is a matter of the honor of the Spanish Army. We cannot leave Moscardo and his heroes to their fate, as well as the women and children." He ordered General Jose Varela to alter his line of march and storm Toledo. On Sept. 27, 1936, Nationalist troops from the Army of Africa entered the city. The Reds fled back to Madrid without much of a fight.

The raising of the siege of the Alcazar did much to enhance General Franco's reputation, but the diversion of Varela's troops from the advance on Madrid gave the capitol's defenders further time to prepare their defenses, and time for Soviet supplies and weapons to arrive. Franco has been criticized by military historians for his decision, which may well have prolonged the Civil War, but for the rest of his life, he always maintained that he had been right to put honor before expediency.

Colonel Moscardo was promoted to the rank of General, fought well throughout the rest of the war, and later led the Spanish Blue Division of volunteers on the Eastern Front during World War Two. The main Spanish command post on the Russian Front was always referred to as "The Alcazar."

Lesson #19: Sir John Franklin: His Life and Afterlife
(c) 1996 Russell A. Potter, PhD

Captain Sir John Franklin's disappearance in the Arctic—along with two ships and 128 officers and crew—was a celebrated mystery in the nineteenth century, attracting enormous public attention both in Great Britain and the United States. Some forty expeditions were launched in search of his party, funded both by governments and public subscriptions.

In a way, Franklin's expedition was the Apollo 13 of his times—only, in his times, without radio or modern communications, such potential martyrdom came with painful slowness. It is probably impossible to be quite as lost today anywhere on the planet as Sir John was by 1848, and his plight was only worsened by the hundreds of theories pursued by experts and amateurs alike as to where help might best be sent.

In the end, the few sober voices (and two remarkably accurate psychics) who made the right guess as to his location were drowned out by a bevy of British and American Arctic experts, including more than a few of Franklin's old friends, and much-needed relief never reached him. Franklin himself, it was later learned, had died in 1847, before concerns had really reached their peak—and within the next two or three years, every single one of the men under his leadership joined their commander in anonymous death.

Franklin's holy grail was the long-sought Northwest Passage, through the Arctic from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Many sailors had tried to find such a route in centuries past, but it was not until 1819 that Captain William Edward Parry succeeded in making any headway into the inland Arctic, where winter freeze-ups left sailors with only a month or two out of twelve in which there was any open water to navigate.

When an expedition was contemplated to follow that last remaining link, it was little surprise that Franklin—though nearing sixty and grown rather sedentary—was selected to lead it. He departed from England in May of 1845, his two ships, the *Erebus* and *Terror*, packed to the gunwales with pickled potatoes, pemmican, and a relatively new invention—canned meat, Goldner's Patent. He reached Lancaster Sound, the gateway to Barrow's straits, in August of that year, and was afterwards never seen again by Europeans.

It was not, in fact, until 1854 that Dr. John Rae, a surveyor for the Hudson's Bay Company, heard the first intelligence of Franklin's fate. By that time, a dozen

expeditions, including official and un-official British ones as well as the American Grinnell Expedition (on which E.K. Kane served as surgeon) had tried to find him, but discovered nothing beyond the site of his first wintering (1845-6), marked by three graves and a heap of empty meat tins. Dr. Rae, far to the south, did not expect to hear anything of Franklin during his survey. Yet he always asked the Inuit, among whom he traveled, if they had heard any stories of white men and ships, and one day his question received a startling answer.

Sledging along the coastline not far from Pelly Bay, Rae encountered an Inuk hunter with an unusual cap-band; it was made of gold cloth and looked to have come from a naval officer. Questioning the man, he was told that “a party of Ka-bloo-nans [white men] had died of starvation, a long distance to the west of where we were then, and beyond a large River.”

Rae did not get the full story until his return trip to Repulse Bay, by which time it was too late for sledging; the coastal areas were thawing, making for treacherous travel. Yet having heard of his offer of a reward for artifacts, the Repulse Bay Inuit offered a trove of items from the Franklin expedition, including the officers’ silver plate, broken chronometers and astronomical instruments, and even one of Sir John Franklin’s medals—a Guelphic Order of Hanover.

Rae hastened to convey this news to England, where it caused consternation among many. Franklin’s widow, the inestimable Lady Jane Franklin, was incensed that Rae had not tried to go further, and outraged that the government reward of ten thousand pounds for information about her husband was given to Rae. Newspapers seized on the accounts of cannibalism, which was widely attacked as impossible—by, among others, Charles Dickens. Rae defended his Inuit informants, however, and as we now know, these stories were entirely true, though some of the geographical details had been confused by various informants who had not actually been to the places named.

One indirect result of Rae’s news was that Jane Franklin decided to fund yet another private expedition to visit the area named by Rae’s informants. She obtained & refurbished a small yacht, and enlisted Captain (later Admiral Sir) Leopold M’Clintock to head a small but tested crew.

Finally, in 1858, M’Clintock and his second-in-command Hobson made their way to the Franklin party’s camps on King William Island, where they found a number of melancholy sights: bodies left lying face down in the snow, decapitated skeletons inside a boat lashed to a sledge (and filled with all manner of

weighty and useless material), abandoned heaps of clothing, and two enigmatic paper records—the only official records ever found. Both were standard Admiralty forms, and one simply gave the expedition’s progress report, followed by “All Well” and the officer’s names. The other was nearly identical, except that around its margins Captains Fitzjames and Crozier (in command after Franklin’s death) had scrawled the following message:

“25th April 1848. H M Ships *Terror* and *Erebus* were deserted on the 22nd April 5 leagues NNW of this, having been beset since 12th Sept. 1846. The officers and crews consisting of 105 souls under the command of Captain F.R.M. Crozier landed here in Lat. 69° 37’ 42” Long. 98° 41’ ... Sir John Franklin died on the 11th June 1847 and the total loss by deaths in the Expedition had been to this date 9 officers & 15 men. [signed] James Fitzjames, Captain HMS *Erebus*, F.R.M. Crozier Captain & Senior Officer, and start on tomorrow 26th for Back’s Fish River.”

This was grim news, and still enigmatic. Why was the proportion of deaths among the officers nearly twice that of the crew? How were 105 souls reduced to the “forty” seen hauling sledges to the south? Why did it take them from April to sometime late in the summer to travel eighty or ninety miles? And why, above all, were they headed to Back’s Fish River?

True, the ascent of that river would take them to a Hudson’s Bay outpost, but this 1,200 mile trek over rapids and waterfalls would have been a hard haul for men full of life and vigor. For the Franklin crews, clearly affected by scurvy (and possibly by lead-poisoning as well, from badly-soldered meat tins), it was an insane destination. The boat found by M’Clintock, one of the ship’s sizable whaleboats, was lashed to a heavy sledge of solid oak planks and filled with all manner of oddments from silver teaspoons to carpet slippers to a copy of *The Vicar of Wakefield*; hauling it to the mouth of the Fish River would have been a death sentence.

Nonetheless, despite the unresolved problems, M’Clintock returned to public accolades as the man who finally “solved” the Franklin mystery. And that was where the matter lay for many a year, until other men revisited these sites and re-interviewed the Inuit.

The boldest of these was Charles Francis Hall, an eccentric newspaperman whose mind was inflamed with Franklin after he heard of Kane’s expedition. Hall knew—as did others - that the Ross expedition had survived four Arctic winters

with the help of the Inuit—could not some of the Franklin crew have done the same? Hall hitched a ride on a friendly whaler & headed north to find out.

His first two years, frustratingly, were spent far from the Franklin sites, though he was able—by following Inuit remembrances—to re-discover the site where Martin Frobisher dug for gold some three hundred years previous. This discovery only furthered Hall's passion; if the Inuit could still remember tales of Frobisher's men, what might they be able to tell of Franklin's!

Hall returned to the U.S., raised more money through lectures & subscriptions, and went back to the Arctic, where he would spend nearly six years tracking Franklin stories. Astonishingly, he managed to interview a number of Inuit who had actually talked with Franklin parties, including an elderly couple who had joined Sir John for dinner on board the "Erebus." He interviewed In-nook-poo-zhe-jook, as well as several of the hunters who were eye-witnesses to the band of 40 starving men.

All the stories meshed with amazing reliability, and Hall thus was the first to learn that one of the ships—probably the *Erebus* had sunk not far from where it was abandoned, while the other had drifted or been piloted a substantial distance south. Some of his informants told of three or four final survivors from this second ship, including a man who may have been Captain Crozier himself. These survivors had indeed wintered among the Inuit, but had departed for the south many years ago. See-gar, one of the men who had met them, told that he had heard that they had arrived safely in the country of the Kin-na-pa-too Inuit on the shores of Hudson's Bay. Only much later, Hall heard from a whaling captain stationed near the Kin-na-pa-too's territory that this man who had been among them himself either starved or was killed, and thus never reached the Hudson's Bay outposts that were his likely destination.

Others passed through the Franklin sites—military expeditions from the U.S. and Canada, and even the intrepid Rasmussen, who in the 1920's heard once more of the Franklin survivors, this time from the elderly sons of the hunters who had originally seen them. In the twentieth century, most interest in the Franklin disaster has been among those interested in filling out the minutiae of events, or speculating on minor details, all the while accepting the general idea of a single abandonment, aimed at the Fish River, with the party dying off along the way.

A final answer to the Franklin mystery seems unlikely. From the very start, the one thing most sought by every searcher was some kind of cache of papers that

would fully explain the expedition's fate. Yet despite the fact that two sets of duplicate records—one for each ship—were ordered to be kept, not a single scrap of either has been found. The Inuit, regarding papers and books as useless, often left them where they found them, or gave them to their children as playthings.

The only other surviving paper items were a couple of pages from *The Student's Manual*, some prayer books, a New Testament in French, a book of *Christian Melodies* (inscribed to G.G., possibly Lieutenant Graham Gore), and a copy of *The Vicar of Wakefield*. Back at Franklin's first winter camp, not a single official record was found, though a scrap reading "until called" and another reading "Macdonald" (name of one of the ship's surgeons) survived.

In 1973 a perfectly legible note was recovered from a cairn in the middle of Cornwallis Island which had been deposited by Commander Phillips in 1851. Even more remarkably, a letter written by William Barents, the intrepid Dutch explorer who spent the winter of 1595 at Ice Haven on Novaya Zemlya, was recovered intact in 1871, 276 years later!

So the search goes on. The permafrost can preserve other things, besides; in 1985, Owen Beattie opened the graves from Franklin's first winter camp, and found inside three remarkably well-preserved bodies, looking not much different from the way they did when first buried. One, John Torrington, his eyes open, looks almost as if he could yet be alive—a deceptive look for a man who had spent 139 years in a simple black wooden coffin.

Beattie also measured lead levels in the soft tissue and hair from these bodies, as well as from bones recovered from King William Island, and found that at least some of the Franklin crew-members were suffering from lead-poisoning brought about by their canned foods. Yet whether this ailment, or scurvy, or starvation was the ultimate killer, one fact remains: not a single survivor ever returned. The finality of the tragedy is perfectly encapsulated by the words of the well-known ballad, "Lord Franklin":

*In Baffin's Bay where the whale-fishes blow
The fate of Franklin no man can know
The fate of Franklin no tongue can tell
Lord Franklin with his seamen does dwell.*

Lesson #20: A Haunting at Sea **by Bobette Bryan**

One of the most terrifying and shocking true ghost stories in history took place on a Russian freighter called the *Ivan Vasili*.

The *Ivan Vasili* was not a typical cursed or jinxed ship. There was nothing unusual or spectacular about her. She was built in St. Petersburg in 1897 to transport freight across the Baltic Sea to the Gulf of Finland. She was driven by a single triple-expansion steam engine. Her bunkers carried enough coal to take her 2500 miles at a speed of eight knots. She was made of riveted iron plates, while her deck and superstructure were wood. She had a record of reliability and stability to the point of being boring. No mishaps took place on her during the first five years that she plied the sea.

Then everything changed overnight, and she became a sailor's worst nightmare of calamity and death.

In 1903, when the Russian government prepared for war with Japan, her role changed suddenly. The *Ivan Vasili* was commandeered by the Tsarist navy and was ordered to carry a cargo of war materials to Vladivostok in advance of the Russian warships.

The steamer cut through the North Sea, the Atlantic, and south along the west coast of Africa, coaling in Capetown. Then she moved north along the east coast of Africa and Zanzibar, topping off her bunkers and taking on extra sacks of coal for the upcoming leg across the Indian Ocean. Soon the nightmare would begin for the crew would realize that they'd taken on more than coal.

Everything was business as usual as the ship left the port and took to sea, but the crew suddenly felt that a presence was on board. Something just didn't feel right. No one knew exactly what the presence was, but everyone was certain that some sort of invisible entity was among them. When it was near, the men felt that something was watching them, and they would feel a sudden chill in the air.

This went on for a few days, before the danger of the situation heightened and the entity began extracting an alarming toll on the crew.

One night before the change of watch, the men on deck saw the apparition. It looked human, but its features were impossible to make out. It was misty, glowing, and luminous as it strolled across the deck and disappeared behind a lifeboat.

The men were understandably shocked. Still, nothing remarkable happened until the ship reached the Port Arthur military base in China where the crew intended to refuel the ship.

On the night before the ship entered port, a crew member suddenly let loose with a horrifying scream that sent everyone into a panic. The crew literally went berserk, and a wild melee ensued, the men having no idea what they were doing as they beat each other and themselves. This episode ended with seaman Alec Govinski hurling himself into the murky black waves to his death. Afterward, the other men collapsed to the deck, and everything returned to normal.

The ship resumed its journey to Vladivostok, and the crew was relieved when nothing unusual happened during the first and second day at sea. But then all hell broke loose again. On the third day, the crew went on a screaming, fighting, hysteric rampage. A few minutes later, they collapsed on the deck like before only to learn that another shipmate had thrown himself overboard to his death.

When the ship finally reached Vladivostok, twelve crew members abandoned ship. They were so afraid of whatever was aboard the vessel that they couldn't get away from it fast enough and even attempted to escape before the cargo hatches were opened. Unfortunately for them, they were quickly rounded up like cattle and returned to the vessel where they were kept under armed surveillance.

The anxiety on the ship must have been high as the cargo was unloaded; nevertheless, the *Ivan Vasili* was put to sea again on a voyage south to Hong Kong. In no time, this leg of the trip erupted into yet another nightmare. Another hysterical frenzy occurred and another crew member killed himself. The next night, there was a repeat performance, resulting in another crew member's death. During the third episode, a stoker reportedly died of fear.

Then, just as the ship reached the port of Hong Kong, Captain Sven Andrist flung himself overboard and drowned. This time nothing could stop the crew members from deserting when the ship docked. The entire crew, except Second Officer Christ Hansen and five Scandinavian seamen, fled.

Either dedicated to duty or unfazed by the tragedies, Hansen, took over as captain and hired a new crew for the ship, and the steamer set out again, this time toward Sydney Australia to pick up a cargo of wool. To Hansen's relief, the voyage south was uneventful--that was until just before they reached Sydney. Then

Hansen suddenly had an urge to kill himself, took out his revolver, and shot himself to death.

In Sydney, even before the dock lines were secure, the crew started abandoning the ship—all except boatswain Harry Nelson. Nelson set about finding another captain, one who didn't believe in ghosts or superstitions. He found his man, but it took four months to find another crew. By then, word had gotten around and no sailor in his right mind wanted to sail on the death ship.

The steamer was put to sea again; its destination, San Francisco. The trip went smoothly until a week later when the crew was set into a screaming melee again. This time, two seamen went totally mad and had to be confined below decks. In the morning, they were both found dead. The next day, the new and skeptical captain, put a revolver in his mouth and pulled the trigger.

Following the latest round of tragedy, the crew, including Nelson, refused to continue with the voyage, and they turned the vessel around with the intent to return to Vladivostok. When the Ivan Vasili arrived in the Russian city, the entire crew, including Nelson walked off the ship.

The men were offered rewards, incentives, and all kinds of bonuses for returning to the ship, but nothing would convince them to get back on the vessel. Not one of them wanted any part of the ship. No other sailor did either. Watchmen were unwilling to even get close to her—much less spend a night aboard her. And so the diabolical vessel sat in port, abandoned, for many years.

Ultimately, the sailors of Vladivostok decided that fire was the only way to destroy the evil entity that haunted the ship, and so in the winter of 1907, on a clear starry night, they set it aflame. In dozens of small boats, they watched, cheering, as flames devoured the ship. Some even sang as the fiery bridge engulfed the ship. They cheered its demise, toasting the occasion with vodka as the iron skin buckled. Cast off from her moorings, she was dragged out to sea by a tugboat.

She still smoldered the next day and began rolling to starboard until she flipped over on her side and started to slide beneath the water. Those who watched swore that before the ship went under, an eerie scream emanated from the hulk.

No one ever knew what or who the evil entity was.

[Sounds almost like it might have been ergotine poisoning in the food, but odd it would go on for so long. - HAC]

Author's Notes:

Hopefully the fire did indeed send the entity on its way. At any rate, there have been no accounts of this entity haunting another vessel.

It's hard to find any information on the *Ivan Vasili*. Most of the information in this account came from Vincent Gaddis' book *Landmark Invisible Horizons*, published in 1965 by Ace Books; unfortunately, however, the book is no longer in print. If you're lucky, you may be able to find a copy on Ebay or from Amazon's used books.

Lesson #21: Abelard and Heloise (12th century A.D.)

Abelard and Heloise are one of the most celebrated couples of all time, known for their love affair, and for the tragedy that separated them. In a letter to Abelard, Heloise wrote: “You know, beloved, as the whole world knows, how much I have lost in you, how at one wretched stroke of fortune that supreme act of flagrant treachery robbed me of my very self in robbing me of you; and how my sorrow for my loss is nothing compared with what I feel for the manner in which I lost you.”

It's perhaps the most tragic love story ever. Abelard and Heloise were two well-educated people, brought together by their passion, then separated by the act of her uncle's vengeance.

Peter Abelard (1079–1142) was a French philosopher, considered one of the greatest thinkers of the 12th century. Among his works is *Sic et Non*, a list of 158 philosophical and theological questions. His teachings were controversial, and he was repeatedly charged with heresy. Even with the controversy that surrounded him at times, nothing probably prepared him for the consequences of his love affair with Heloise, a relationship destined to change his life in dramatic ways.

Heloise (1101–1164) was the niece and pride of Canon Fulbert, a kind of bureaucratic functionary in the Church, and a wealthy man. Rare for women at the time, she was well-educated by her uncle in Paris. Abelard later writes in his *Historica Calamitatum*: “Her uncle's love for her was equaled only by his desire that she should have the best education which he could possibly procure for her. Of no mean beauty, she stood out above all by reason of her abundant knowledge of letters.” Heloise was one of the most well-educated women of her time, so, perhaps it's not surprising that Abelard and she became lovers. Also, she was more than 20 years younger than Abelard.

Wishing to become acquainted with Heloise, Abelard persuaded Fulbert to allow him to teach the girl such things as Latin, theology, and rhetoric. Using the pretext that his own house was a “handicap” to his studies, Abelard further moved in to the house of Heloise and her uncle.

Supposedly it all started one day in the middle of a lesson when they were reading about King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. There was the classic cinematic glance of passion between them and then, in the famous line from one of her letters, “... that day we read no more.”

Apparently Canon Fulbert was not exactly the sharpest knife in the drawer, and the affair continued under his roof and under his nose for some time without him suspecting anything. Inevitably, though, the two of them became careless and got caught. As Abelard would later write: “Oh, how great was the uncle’s grief when he learned the truth, and how bitter was the sorrow of the lovers when we were forced to part!”

They were separated, but that didn’t end the affair. Instead, they discovered that Heloise was pregnant. She left her uncle’s house when he was not at home; and she stayed with Abelard’s sister until their daughter Astrolabe was born. Why anyone even in those days would want to name their child after a navigational instrument is somewhat hard to understand, but they did.

Abelard asked for Fulbert’s forgiveness, and permission to marry Heloise; then with Fulbert’s assent, Abelard tried to persuade Heloise to marry him. In Chapter 7 of *Historia Calamitatum*, Abelard wrote: “She, however, most violently disapproved of this, and for two chief reasons: the danger thereof, and the disgrace which it would bring upon me ... What penalties, she said, would the world rightly demand of her if she should rob it of so shining a light?” It should be born in mind that like all scholars of the time, Abelard was a minor priest in orders. Although he had not yet been ordained and taken the vow of celibacy, his marriage would have blocked his path of advancement in the Church and at the Paris University.

When she finally agreed to become Abelard’s wife, Heloise told him, “Then there is no more left but this, that in our doom the sorrow yet to come shall be no less than the love we two have already known.” In regard to that statement, Abelard later wrote, in his *Historica*, “Nor in this, as now the whole world knows, did she lack the spirit of prophecy.”

Secretly married, the couple left Astrolabe with Abelard’s sister. When Heloise went to stay with the nuns at Argenteuil, her uncle and kinsmen believed Abelard had cast her off, forcing her to become a nun. Why the two of them did this has never been adequately explained. They must have known how it would look to the world, as if Abelard had seduced Heloise, gotten her knocked up and forced her to bear an illegitimate child, married her late and then stashed her in a convent out of the way. It was perceived by Fulbert’s family, who were of the minor nobility, as a deadly insult. There does seem to have been a self-destructive element in all of this.

“Violently incensed, they laid a plot against me, and one night while I all unsuspecting was asleep in a secret room in my lodgings, they broke in with the help of one of my servants whom they had bribed. There they had vengeance on me with a most cruel and most shameful punishment, such as astounded the whole world; for they cut off those parts of my body with which I had done that which was the cause of their sorrow.”

What happened was that one night while Abelard lay asleep in his lodgings, Fulbert and a gang of relatives, servants, and general thugs broke into his room and castrated him. But poor Abelard was not without friends and supporters. The intruders were pursued down the street by the outraged occupants of the house and a number of Abelard’s students, at least one of the attackers was lynched on the spot, and several others were badly beaten and taken to the Provost of Paris who imprisoned them. Fulbert seems to have escaped. Abelard survived his mutilation, which in view of the severing of arteries involved was fortunate.

The most interesting part of the story is the relationship that grew out of the tragedy. Abelard became a priest and Heloise a nun, eventually Mother Superior and abbess of her convent.

In his *Historia Calamitatum*, Abelard wrote: “Often the hearts of men and women are stirred, as likewise they are soothed in their sorrows more by example than by words. And therefore... am I now minded to write of the sufferings which have sprung out of my misfortunes ...”

The story of Abelard and Heloise is tragic, but what’s more important to literature and history is what happened after the agony was over. Both Peter Abelard and Heloise continued to go on living, to write, to love, to contribute to our literary history. They didn’t kill themselves, or marry anyone else (unless you count the fact that both married the church). Heloise asks for his words, saying: “While I am denied your presence, give me at least through your words—of which you have enough and to spare--some sweet semblance of yourself.” She ends the letter with: “I beg you, think what you owe me, give ear to my pleas, and I will finish a long letter with a brief ending: farewell, my only love.”

To her passionate letters, he responds in part: “If since our conversion from the world to God I have not yet written you any word of comfort or advice, it must not be attributed to indifference on my part but to your own good sense ...”

How do two lovers part after such a short time, with such a terrible end and no real beginning? They had been so close. And, then their only link is through their letters, and the works that Abelard left behind.

Heloise speaks of losing Abelard: “But if I lose you, what have I left to hope for? Why continue on life’s pilgrimage, for which I have no support but you, and none in you save the knowledge that you are alive, now that I am forbidden all other pleasures in you and denied even the joy of your presence which from time to time could restore me to myself?”

Lesson #22: The Defense of Rorke's Drift 22nd and 23rd of January, 1879

[This is the battle on which the movie "Zulu" was based.]

In January 1879 the British invaded KwaZulu in South Africa, without the sanction of the home government, in a war brought about by the misguided policy of "confederating" southern Africa under the direction of the Governor-General Sir Henry Bartle Edward Frere. The fiercely independent AmaZulu people refused to lay down their arms and accept British rule. The British General Officer Commanding, Lord Chelmsford, despite having abundant military intelligence on the AmaZulu, had a misconceived idea of the fighting prowess of his enemy. The result was that on 22nd January a British force of seventeen hundred strong, was attacked and only some four hundred men, of whom only some eighty were Europeans, survived at a place called Isandhlwana.

Prince Dabulamanzi kaMpande commanded an impi, the Undi 'corps' of 4,500. His men had played little part in the action at Isandhlwana. Goaded on by his warriors who sought loot and glory, and despite the orders of his brother, King Cetshwayo kaMpande, not to cross the Buffalo River into Natal, he chose to attack the British supply base close to a river crossing known as Rorke's Drift, which the AmaZulu called KwaJimu. The post was established in a trading store-cum-mission station that consisted of a dwelling house and a chapel, both sturdily built of stone. The house was doing temporary duty as a field hospital, the chapel was full of stores and there were only 104 men who were fit enough to fight.

The command of the post had passed to Lieutenant Chard of the Royal Engineers, when Major Henry Spalding of the 104th Regiment left on the morning of the 22nd January. Commanding a company-strength detachment was Lieutenant Bromhead of the 24th Regiment.

James Langley Dalton, a volunteer serving as an Acting Assistant Commissary and a former Staff Sergeant, ordered the construction of barricades connecting the two buildings with sacks of corn, and an inner barricade with biscuit boxes.

When the Zulus attacked, wielding their short stabbing assegais, they were unable to reach the men behind the barricades and they were blasted by rifle fire at point blank range. Most of those who did mount the breastwork were repulsed by the bayonets of the defenders. Some of the Zulus were armed with rifles, purchased

from unscrupulous traders or captured at Isandhlwana, but they were not trained marksmen and the British soldiers were able to pick them off at long range.

After a number of unsuccessful attacks the Zulus set fire to the hospital, burst in and began to spear the patients. A private named Alfred Henry Hook, a Gloucestershire man, kept them at bay with his bayonet while his friend John Williams hacked holes in the wall, separating one room from another and dragged the patients through, one by one. The last man had dislocated his knee. Williams had to break the other to get him out of a window and into the yard where the barricades offered some protection.

Fighting went on all night in the fitful glare from the blazing hospital as the Zulus made charge after charge on the barricades. Both sides fought with desperate courage. A patient from the hospital, a Swiss born adventurer Christian Ferdinand Schiess, stabbed three Zulus in quick succession after he had clambered over the breastwork. In the yard Surgeon James Henry Reynolds tended to the wounded, oblivious to the life and death struggle going on all around him. Those too badly hurt to shoot propped themselves up as best they could and reloaded the guns, and re-supplied ammunition to those who were still on their feet.

When dawn came at last, the Zulus drew off taking their wounded with them and leaving at least 351 dead around the barricades. Later Lord Chelmsford arrived on the scene with a column of British soldiers.

Lieutenants Chard and Bromhead were both awarded the Victoria Cross, as were the redoubtable privates Alfred Hook, Frederick Hitch, Robert Jones, William Jones, Corporal Allen, James Langley Dalton and Pte. John Williams. Surgeon Reynolds got the Cross for tending the wounded under fire; and the Swiss volunteer Christian Schiess—the first to a soldier serving with South Africa forces.

To this day, the defense of Rorke's Drift holds the record in the British Army for the highest number of VCs awarded for a single engagement.

Lesson #23: The Mad Prince of Spain (1568)

Don Carlos of Spain (July 8, 1545–July 24, 1568)

Don Carlos, Prince of Asturias, was the son of King Philip II of Spain by his first wife Maria Manuela, daughter of John III of Portugal. He was born at Valladolid, and his mother died a few days after his birth.

No doubt many of his problems stemmed from the extreme inbreeding that was a chronic aspect of the House of Habsburg and the royal houses of Portugal and Spain. Carlos had only six great-great-grandparents, instead of the more normal 16, and two of his great-grandmothers were sisters. His namesake, King Carlos II of Spain, was also highly inbred and debilitated as a consequence. Despite his many afflictions, in 1560 he was recognized as the heir to the throne of Castile, and three years later to that of Aragon.

The young Infante Carlos was delicate and deformed. He grew up proud, willful, and indolent, and soon began to show signs of insanity. Although provided with the most famous and learned academics of Europe for his tutors, Carlos was barely literate and some of his surviving exercise books consist of nothing but Tourette-style strings of obscenities (in five languages) and pornographic drawings.

Among other quirks, Carlos was the original gun nut. The prince kept an arsenal of the primitive matchlock arquebuses and wheel-lock pistols of the time in his rooms, and he had a disconcerting habit of firing them off indoors into the walls and the furniture, and also taking pot shots out of his windows at anything that moved, man or animal. His health wasn't improved by his habit of beating the Spanish heat by sleeping on a bed of ice, which was brought down from the peaks of the Pyrenees for him in special wagon convoys at immense expense.

Carlos as an adult was erratic, arrogant, and sexually depraved. Being the heir to the greatest empire the world had yet seen (it included Spanish America and huge chunks of Europe, including the Netherlands and most of Italy and Germany) he could indulge himself, which he did in the form of what today we would call S & M. He found sexual relief by whipping young women almost to death. He did this mostly with prostitutes, who were brought to his chambers in the Escorial Palace outside Madrid, and when they ran short he flogged and tortured female servants. Eventually there were some scandals involving his behavior with court ladies—one court lady in particular.

In 1559, Prince Carlos was betrothed to Elizabeth of Valois, a daughter of King Henry II of France, but owing to a change in the political situation, a few months later she became the third wife of his own father, King Philip II. Elizabeth was sweet sixteen, and even allowing for the fact that she was a princess, she was regarded by contemporary commentators as the most beautiful girl in Europe, as well as being gentle and devout. There were rumors that one of the reasons Philip married her himself was because he was genuinely touched by her beauty and innocence, and he wanted to save her from his son's perversions. Carlos had been looking forward eagerly to marrying her, and no doubt working her over on their wedding night, and when Daddy snatched the hottie from him and married her himself, what little that remained of his sanity seems to have slipped. He hated his father and plotted against him for the rest of his short life.

Other brides were then suggested for the prince: Mary Queen of Scots, Marguerite de Valois, another daughter of Henry II of France, and Anne of Austria, a daughter of Maximilian II, Holy Roman Emperor, who after Carlos's death was to become his father's fourth wife. Meanwhile, Carlos's mental derangement became more acute, and his condition could no longer be kept secret.

Don Carlos continued his bouts of bondage. Accounts of life in his wing of the Escorial sound kind of like a sixteenth-century Abu Ghraib. In 1562, he "met with an accident which was followed by a serious illness," as the more discreet chroniclers put it. He was whipping the daughter of his steward, the girl escaped and fled, and while he was chasing her he tripped and fell over a banister and into a stone-floored courtyard, cracking his head badly, which swelled to twice its normal size. The most eminent physicians in Spain were called in, and they performed what appears to have been some kind of crude brain surgery to relieve the pressure and fluid in his skull. Amazingly, considering the lack of sterilization and the primitive medical techniques of the time, the boy lived.

After his recovery, Carlos showed more obvious signs of insanity, while his conduct both in public and in private was extremely vicious and disorderly. He took a marked dislike to the Duke of Alva, the most famous and victorious general in the Spanish army, possibly because he wished to proceed to the Netherlands as governor instead of the duke. In view of the fact that the Protestant half of the province was in armed revolt, led by the Dutch national hero William the Silent, putting this young lunatic in charge would have been catastrophic, and Philip wisely sent the brutal but efficient Alva instead. Carlos also exhibited continued morbid antipathy towards his father, whose murder he even contemplated, and he

apparently made several attempts to seduce and/or rape his stepmother, Queen Elizabeth, to whom he had once been betrothed.

Yet all this, his father forgave him. Pathetically, Philip still loved his son, until finally the crazed Carlos went too far and threatened the empire itself. In January 1568, proof was discovered that Carlos had been in contact with the Protestant rebels in Germany and the Netherlands, and he was making preparations to flee from Spain and join the Protestants, who would have used him as a kind of figurehead pretender to the throne.

In the early morning hours of January 17th, 1568, King Philip personally led a squad of soldiers, a team of carpenters, and his entire royal council to his son's chambers in the palace. He found the young man in bed, and held his hand while he directed the nailing and boarding up of all windows and doors in the room, finally sealing his son inside and forbidding anyone in the empire except for one servant who fed him to have any communication at all, written or verbal, with his son, on pain of death. In July of the same year, Don Carlos of Spain died mysteriously in his sealed room in the palace, possibly from poison. Every year thereafter, on the anniversary of his son's death, King Philip would wear mourning, shut himself into his study, and weep.

The mad prince did obtain immortality, though. The opera *Don Carlos* by Giuseppe Verdi is based on the 1787 drama by Friedrich Schiller, which in turn is loosely based on the historical conflict between Carlos and his father. The opera was first performed in French in Paris in 1867. Later, an Italian version was prepared that is referred to as *Don Carlo*.

Lesson #24: Lucius Cornelius Sulla, 138-78 BC

[You think the liberals are worried about the Tea Party and Rush Limbaugh? Read about a real reactionary who was dictator of ancient Rome]

Julius Caesar is famous for crossing the Rubicon with his legions, marching on Rome, and effectively abolishing the old Roman Republic and transforming it into an empire. Yet Caesar never really got a chance to show what he could do as an emperor; he was assassinated. It is often forgotten that a generation before Caesar, another Roman accomplished exactly what Caesar may have intended...and survived to die in his bed.

He was Lucius Cornelius Sulla, known as “Felix” or “Lucky Sulla,” and he was able to inscribe upon his tomb what is probably the best epitaph any man ever had, because it was true.

Of an old but decayed patrician family, Sulla was famous for his conquest of foreign kings and his unrivaled luck in battle. He was ruthless, brilliant, alternately merciful and pitiless to his enemies, devilishly handsome and a renowned seducer of beautiful women. The young general’s actions sent shock-waves to the very foundations of the enfeebled Republic and led to his seizing the dictatorship of Rome. However, he would not step aside from the office in the traditional six months, but proceeded to force through legislation to recreate Rome in his own image. His name would become a byword for those who helped destroy the Roman Republic in its final years.

The parallels between Sulla’s notorious career and that of Julius Caesar (who was not even born when Sulla first rose to prominence, but who lived his youth under his shadow) are uncanny. As Caesar had his Pompey, Sulla had his Gaius Marius. The increasing struggles between the two warlords resulted in civil war and a seesaw of alternating political regimes that immersed Rome in blood. Caesar grew up in this political chaos. Sulla’s ruthless actions must have profoundly influenced the mind of the young Julian.

We know more about Sulla than of many Romans of the period; Sulla wrote extensive memoirs and, although they are lost to history, other writers like Plutarch and Appian could rely on Sulla’s own words to justify his actions.

Sulla was born into an impoverished branch of the Corneli, of impeccable patrician background but no longer contenders in Rome’s power structure. Sulla appears to have lived a poor and dissolute existence until he received two family

inheritances that finally gave him the financial stature to run for office. According to a best-selling sequence of Roman novels by author Colleen McCullough, Sulla gained those inheritances by poisoning his own mistress and also his stepmother, whom he had seduced as well. There were contemporary rumors to this effect, which may simply have been the usual nasty political gossip, but as he proved later, Sulla was certainly capable of it.

His first major break into the Roman political ladder was to serve as quaestor for the famous general, Gaius Marius, who was leading Rome's armies against King Jugurtha of Numidia. Sulla, the impoverished patrician, served with Marius, the ambitious up-and-comer, and rose to be his ranking lieutenant. After several years of inconclusive battles, the ambitious Sulla was able to negotiate Jugurtha's surrender personally: typically, he persuaded one of Jugurtha's relations to betray him.

Sulla was also able to cop the credit for defeating Jugurtha which, in all fairness, should have gone to Marius, who did all the work. This glorious conclusion to the campaign was an achievement the jealous Marius never forgave. Relations between the two men soured to the point that, when Marius fought his memorable campaign against the Germanic Teutons and Cimbri tribes in further Gaul (104–103 BC), Sulla had transferred to the staff of his rival, Catullus, and fought elsewhere. By all accounts, Sulla was invaluable to Catullus and their armies secured a great victory against the invading Germans.

Upon his return to Rome, Sulla served as praetor urbanus, kind of a city manager of Rome, after having lost the year before in his first attempt at the office. The young Caesar would later comment on the common rumors that Sulla had bought his election; when Sulla threatened to use his personal power and authority against Caesar, Caesar replied "Considering that you bought it, you are absolutely right to call it your own." (Plutarch, 5)

Sulla was assigned the province of Cilicia as proconsul, and was instrumental in displaying Rome's power to the eastern provinces, including Parthia; the rulers of the distant kingdom, hitherto largely unknown to Rome, sent their ambassadors to meet the tough young politician. It was while in the East that Sulla allegedly was told by a mystic that he would achieve greatness and die at the very height of his good fortune, a prophecy Sulla apparently took seriously and recounted in his memoirs. Sulla remained in the east for several years, returning to Rome in either 92 or 91 BC. He immediately joined the political faction opposed to Gaius Marius, who had served in five successive consulships but was still hungry

for power. The two factions were on the verge of open riot when the “Social War” intervened in 89.

After decades in which various city-states on the Italian peninsula sought, and were denied, full political power in Rome, a series of revolts against Roman hegemony drew all her generals into the field. Sulla rose to increased prominence as one of the three generals who were successful in the bitter years of the Social War; he outshone Marius (who was now in his late sixties) as well as his only other rival, Gnaeus Pompeius Strabo (father of Pompey the Great). Due to his successes, he was elected Consul (88 BC). Velleius comments, Sulla was a man to whom, up to the conclusion of his career of victory, sufficient praise can hardly be given, and for whom, after his victory, no condemnation can be adequate. (II, XVII).

At the summit of his career, Plutarch notes that Sulla had a very irregular and inconsistent character. He was deeply greedy and deeply generous; he was completely unpredictable. He would have a man beaten to death for no good reason, and yet pardon an inveterate political enemy.

Sulla lived rough with his troops, sharing their lives. He could be a brutal disciplinarian yet also was notorious for pampering his soldiers (recognizing, probably, that they were his guarantee of influence and power). Physically, Sulla is described as looking “much like his statues,” with cold blue eyes although later in life his famous good looks were marred by a peculiar blotched complexion of red and white, looking like “mulberries lying atop oatmeal.”

As consul, Sulla prepared to take an army to the east, where Mithridates, King of Pontus, had invaded Bithynia and Phrygia. However, the aging Marius, who had become almost unbalanced in his jealousy of Sulla, encouraged the tribune Sulpicius Rufus to force a vote in the assembly to award command of the army to Marius, instead of Sulla. After Sulla and the army left Rome, Sulpicius managed through violent means to reverse the command.

When Sulla learned of this, camped in Italy prior to leaving for the East with his army, he called his commanders together and portrayed himself (correctly) as the victim of Marius’s intrigues, manipulating them into suggesting that he march on Rome to secure his rights. Taking six legions, Sulla took the fateful step. Most of his officers resigned rather than being part of what looked like the first act in civil war. As Sulla’s armies took Rome, Marius fled and Sulla harangued the Senate.

Sulla, with an army behind him, easily persuaded the Senate and the Comitia (the people's Assembly) to pass laws implementing his wishes. Marius and his followers were declared outlaws and efforts made to hunt them down and kill them. Sulla then took his army and left to fight Mithridates.

Scarcely had Sulla's army left Rome when Cinna, now allied with the fugitive Marius, switched sides. Before the end of 87, Rome had fallen to the forces of Marius; together, he and Cinna instituted a bloodbath of political opponents exceeding anything ever seen in the city. Marius and Cinna were elected consuls for 86; Sulla was formally exiled and his laws repealed. Marius died only days into the new consulship and, for the next three years, Cinna controlled Rome, securing reelection to the consulship each year. As Sulla's armies found increasing success in the campaign against Mithridates, his vengeful shadow loomed over the forces of Cinna. Upon Cinna's death in 84, his co-consul, Carbo, became the target. Sulla pillaged the treasures of Asia for the inevitable conflict with his enemies in Rome.

Once Sulla heard of Cinna's death, he abandoned his Asian maneuvers and returned to Italy. En route to Rome (his second effort with an army behind him), Sulla was met by the ambitious young Gnaeus Pompeius, who brought him a small army of his own clients and his father's veterans; hereinafter, Pompey would firmly attach himself to Sulla's star. Later on Pompey was to become the greatest enemy of Julius Caesar. Sulla won battles and negotiated to bring armies over to his side before finally approaching the gates of Rome.

The final battle against the consular forces was in Rome's very outskirts, in the battle of the Colline Gate in November, 82, in which Marcus Crassus helped turn the tide for Sulla. Crassus was another future foe of Caesar who eventually came to a sticky end. (The Parthians captured him and poured molten gold down his throat, as a sardonic comment on his fabulous wealth and his renowned, insatiable greed for money.) It had taken less than a year to defeat the armies of Carbo and the young Marius, who were now hunted down without mercy and destroyed. Pompey completed the mopping-up operations, earning the possibly ironic title from Sulla of Magnus, the Great.

Now completely in charge of Rome, Sulla proceeded to butcher all political opponents on a scale unmatched even by the outrages of Marius and Cinna. Plutarch describes the terror and awe in which Sulla was held. The city was filled with murder; a young senator at one point asked Sulla when they could expect a cessation of the murder and plundering. "We are not asking you" he said "to

pardon those whom you have decided to kill; all we ask is that you should free from suspense those whom you have decided not to kill.”

Sulla obligingly began posting lists of the condemned in the Roman Forum, of those to be killed and/or those whose property would revert to the state, in this case comprised of Sulla, his creatures, and his cronies. These were the famous Proscriptions of Sulla. The young Caesar was also proscribed because, married to Cinna's daughter, he refused the tyrant's order to divorce his wife. Caesar fled Rome, only barely escaping Sulla's enforcers. Thousands were not so lucky. Eventually, Sulla was persuaded by a consortium of Caesar's supporters to pardon him, but only after grimly noting that he should not be permitted to survive as he had many Mariuses in his nature. He ordered the young Julian yet again to divorce Cinna's daughter. When Caesar again refused, Sulla simply impounded her dowry.

A complaisant and severely diminished Senate, flooded with Sullan supporters and under a tame interrex (temporary ruler), voted Sulla the long-neglected position of Dictator. In the early years of the Republic, a dictator could be appointed to sole power when the state was in imminent danger, but for no longer than a six-month period. However, no dictator had ruled Rome in centuries. And no dictator had refused to step down after the expiration of his six-month term. Sulla did. He retained supreme power for almost seven years.

Then, to the astonishment of his contemporaries and historians, Sulla did what no dictator has ever done before or since. He voluntarily stepped down. Apparently, Sulla believed a prediction made in the East that he would die soon after attaining his unmatched power as dictator. He agreed to stand as Consul in 80 but withdrew in 79 from all political activity, essentially retiring from politics. Someone asked him at the time why he was giving up power voluntarily. “Are you not afraid of your enemies?”

“I have no enemies,” replied Sulla. “I've killed them all.”

Living quietly in the country, and writing his memoirs, Sulla was surrounded by a raffish crowd of actors, prostitutes and thugs, some of whom had remained his friends since his youth. He died the next year. Pompey helped force through a magnificent state funeral, to the delight of Sulla's veterans, although many wished to give him no honors from a Republic they thought he had polluted. On his tomb was inscribed the following magnificent epitaph:

“No friend ever served me, no enemy ever wronged me, whom I have not repaid in full.”

Lesson #25: The Germans Who Won (1914–1918)

Colonel Paul Emil von Lettow-Vorbeck (1870–1964) was remarkable among military commanders of the First World War in that he served for the entire period without ever having suffered defeat.

Often compared with the better-known T.E. Lawrence—Lawrence of Arabia—Lettow-Vorbeck similarly was a master of guerrilla warfare, this time in East Africa. With a force never great than 14,000 in total—comprised of 3,000 German and 11,000 Askari (native African) troops—Lettow-Vorbeck ran rings around Allied forces (for the most part British and South African) that were ten times larger than his own.

Prior to the war Lettow-Vorbeck had seen service during the Boxer Rebellion, and in German Southwest Africa (Namibia) during the Hottentot and Herero Rebellion of 1904-08, during which he was wounded and sent to South Africa to recuperate. Six months before the outbreak of war in 1914, Lettow-Vorbeck—then a Lieutenant-Colonel—was given command of Germany's forces in East Africa, which included twelve companies of Askari troops.

Lettow-Vorbeck realized quickly that the German campaign against Allied forces in East Africa needed to be conducted on his own terms, largely by seizing (and retaining) the initiative. In August 1914 he began his war by attacking the British railway in Kenya. Three months later a large mixed British and Indian invasion force landed at Tanga Bay to conquer German East Africa; in numerical terms at least they outnumbered Lettow-Vorbeck's available force by some eight to one. Nevertheless, right from the start he demonstrated great tactical planning.

With the Allied landing a success, Lettow-Vorbeck pulled his forces some distance back, not in full retreat as seemed apparent, but simply in order to draw the British and Indian forces further inland, catching them in a crossfire and inflicting heavy casualties, quickly obliging a British retreat back to Tanga Bay to consolidate.

Over the next couple of years Lettow-Vorbeck launched raids into the British colonies of Kenya and Rhodesia, the aim being to destroy forts situated there, along with railway track and carriages. His Askari troops, trained in the Prussian manner, gained in confidence and experience with each successful raid. Jan Smuts—himself an enemy of the British during the Boer War of 1899–1902, but now serving with them - was tasked in March 1916 with dealing with Lettow-Vorbeck, and in doing so launched an attack from South Africa with a force of

45,000 men. As with the British beforehand, Lettow-Vorbeck led Smuts a merry dance, although curiously this did not subsequently harm Smuts' political career in any way.

In 1917 the Allies turned up the heat on Lettow-Vorbeck, with attacks launched from such disparate locations as Kenya, Rhodesia, Congo and Mozambique - the latter two spearheaded by Belgian and Portuguese forces, respectively. With his forces running low on supplies—both ammunition and food—Lettow-Vorbeck was forced to live off the land, although a successful raid upon a Portuguese arms dump near the Mozambique border largely resolved his arms shortage. Lettow-Vorbeck launched fresh raids against Rhodesian forts in 1918, tackling one after another. He was in the midst of planning further large raids when news of the 11 November Armistice reached him (from a British prisoner).

Far from beaten, and with a force of some 3,000 men available to him, Lettow-Vorbeck nonetheless decided to surrender to the British on 25 November at Mbaala, Zambia. Returning to Germany as a national hero (and having been promoted general in the field), Lettow-Vorbeck was likewise admired by his former enemies as a courageous, tenacious and honorable fighter.

Once in Germany he immediately joined the Freikorps, and at the head of a brigade successfully crushed Spartacist forces in Hamburg. Lettow-Vorbeck was however obliged to resign from the army having declared his support for the right-wing Kapp Putsch in 1920.

His memoirs of his wartime experiences were subsequently published (in English translation) as *My Reminiscences of East Africa*. When Smuts, his former opponent, in the aftermath of the Second World War, heard that Lettow-Vorbeck was living in destitution, he arranged (along with former South African and British officers) for a small pension to be paid to him until his death on 9 March 1964 at the age of 94.

Lesson #26: The *Mary Celeste* (1872)

The Classic Unsolved Mystery of the Sea

It was 9 a.m. on the morning of Friday, December 13th 1872, when people on the waterfront saw a small two-masted sailing vessel entering the Bay of Gibraltar. The ship was the *Mary Celeste* of New York, a Canadian-built 100 foot brigantine of 282 tons registered in New York. The registered owners were James H Winchester (12/24), Sylvester Goodwin (2/24) and Benjamin Spooner Briggs (8/24).

Her master, Benjamin Spooner Briggs, was an old Yankee salt of the New Bedford strain, born and bred to the sea. He was known in Gibraltar to be a staunch abstainer and devout Bible reader, and his reputation among sailors and shippers alike was excellent. He was considered a fine captain and a skilled seaman, honest and trustworthy. At the inquiry the ship's main owner, James Henry Winchester, gave evidence that the captain was a courageous officer who would not desert his ship except to save his life. The second-in-command, the mate, was Albert Richardson, who was also considered by Winchester to be fit to command himself.

But of the good Captain Briggs, his wife Sarah, two year old daughter Sophia Matilda, and the crew of seven, nothing was to be seen or found ever again.

And so begins the greatest of all mysteries of the sea. However, were it not for Dr. Arthur Conan Doyle, struggling to establish himself as a writer prior to creating Sherlock Holmes, perhaps the world would not have ever known or cared. The story, like many a tale, has grown with the telling, to incorporate speculation of further mysteries, including pirates, creatures from the deep, abduction by aliens, submarines, and time travel. Conan Doyle's short story about the 'Marie Celeste' (he changed the name from Mary) turned a minor puzzle into one of the most famous legends of the sea. Nevertheless we should recognize it was fiction, for which his editor paid 30 pounds, which would have been a respectable sum in 1884.

Turning back to the real story, which survives because shipping and court inquiries leave behind ample records to be researched, we find the following facts:

The *Mary Celeste* had sailed from New York on November 7th bound for Genoa with a cargo of 1701 barrels of American alcohol, shipped by Meissner Ackermann & Co.; value approximately \$35,000, the purpose of which was to

fortify wine. The value of the freight on the alcohol was \$3,400 and the ship herself \$14,000. The vessel's cargo was insured in Europe, and the hull insurance was carried by American companies. The freight was insured by the Atlantic Mutual Insurance Company of New York, today the only survivor of the American insurers.

She was followed out of port on 15th November by the *Dei Gratia*, which followed a roughly parallel course across the Atlantic carrying a cargo 1735 barrels of petroleum.

On the afternoon of December 5th 1872 half way between the Azores and the Portuguese coast the *Dei Gratia* came up with a Brigantine which Captain Morehouse recognized as the *Mary Celeste*. He knew Captain Briggs personally and had dined with him before he sailed. He was puzzled to see the ship yawing, coming into the wind and then falling off. She was out of control, and he could not see anyone on board through his spyglass. There were no distress signals, and after watching for two hours and hailing her and getting no reply, Morehouse sent First Mate Oliver Deveau and three men off in a small boat to board her, which they did without difficulty.

Deveau and his men searched the vessel from top to bottom and found—nothing. No one.

Although there was some damage due to water and weather, the vessel appeared to be entirely seaworthy and there was no evident reason for its abandonment. The general impression was that the crew had left in a great hurry. They had left behind their oil skin boots and pipes. One of the later myths surrounding the discovery of the *Mary Celeste* was that there were steaming mugs of tea, half eaten breakfasts, and a phial of oil balanced on the sewing machine. This is untrue. Let us remember the vessel was observed out of control for two hours before she was boarded, and had been in heavy seas in the days previous.

Deveau found one pump out of order, and only used the other later on his way to Gibraltar. He found the fore hatch off and also the lazarette hatch off with a great deal of water between decks. The clock and compass were spoilt and destroyed respectively. The ship's longboat was missing. The chronometer, the sextant navigation book and the ship's register and papers were also missing. There was not a log line ready for use. The last entry on the ship's slate showed she had made the island of St Mary in the Azores on November 25th.

There was no indication of any trouble; so far as could later be determined from reading the log book, it had been a routine voyage. There were no signs of violence, no bloodstains or bullet holes. The court record states that Deveau found no beer or spirits in the ship, which fitted in with Captain Briggs' reputation as a strict abstainer who would not allow drink aboard his vessel. The cargo had not shifted and seemed to be intact. The court record states "The galley was in a bad state, the stove was knocked out of its place, and the cooking utensils were strewn around. The whole ship was a thoroughly wet mess. The captain's bed was not fit to sleep in and had to be dried." The only dry clothes found were dry because they were in a watertight seaman's chest. Everything else was wet. There is a mystery of the clock face being upside down, but not because of any "time warp." The Mate had removed it to clean it and put it back wrongly.

Now we come to a crucial bit. Charles Lurd, crew member states; "We found no boats on board." He could not state how many there should have been, but he had seen the *Mary Celeste* in dock at New York and he felt sure there had been a boat at the main hatch from the fixing there.

In his conclusion the judge praises the crew of the *Dei Gratia* for their great courage in view of the risk to both vessels in dividing the crew, and their great skill shown in bringing both vessels safely to Gibraltar.

So where does that leave us? It seems obvious that the crew got into the boat and left the ship. But why?

One explanation is for some reason the captain and crew panicked and took to the ship's boat. This could have been due to a mistake in sounding the pump and thinking she was sinking, or bearing in mind the nature of the cargo, there may have been an small explosion or rumbling in the barrels below.

There is one odd thing which has often escaped notice in accounts of the disaster: when the cargo was finally unloaded in Genoa, nine of the alcohol barrels were found to be empty.

We can safely assume there was a boat. Let's say Briggs ordered his men to abandon ship and snatched up his navigational instruments. In great haste they all left. It may be significant that the main halyard, a stout rope 3 inches in circumference, was found later broken and hanging over the side. [See: "The Story of the *Mary Celeste*" written by Charles Edey Fay in 1942 and the cross examination of Augustus Anderson in the Admiralty inquiry where he states "there were ropes hanging over the side"]

Let us assume that they were trailing behind the ship, waiting to see if she exploded. Then, suddenly, the wind took off and snapped the rope, maybe sinking the small boat at the same time. Even if it did not, it would have been difficult to keep afloat in a small boat in bad weather.

The records of the Servico Metrologico in the Azores say that the weather deteriorated that morning and a storm blew up involving gale force winds and torrential rain. The Captain of the *Dei Gratia* says in his sworn record that the weather had been blowing very hard for seven or eight days previous and had only moderated in the morning of the 4th. So that left the poor people from the *Mary Celeste* crowded into a tiny boat at the mercy of the Atlantic, in heavy seas. Perhaps the same violent rains quietened down the cargo and the final story is that Captain Briggs got it wrong and paid the ultimate price along with his wife, child and crew.

Another theory was that there was a mutiny. However, this was a very short voyage, with a small crew, a fair and experienced captain and first officer. And why would mutineers abandon the ship? Usually the objective of a mutiny is to take over a ship and sail it away to the South Seas or turn pirate or something of the kind, not abandon it and flee in a small boat in mid-ocean. It seems unlikely that this was the cause.

The poor *Mary Celeste* did not enjoy a good fate either. She became regarded as a ship seamen and owners wished to avoid. She changed hands frequently. Twelve years later she sailed from Boston with a mixed cargo and was wrecked off the coast of Haiti apparently by her subsequent owners to cash in on her insurance.

She started life as the *Amazon* and arrived practically a wreck in New York in 1868. She was sold in a public auction for \$10,000 and arrested in Boston. From Boston she sailed to New York and was re-fitted at a total cost of \$11,500 before she sailed into her fate in the history books. At some point along the line she was re-named the *Mary Celeste*, and many superstitious sailors consider re-naming a ship once it has been christened to be bad luck.

To put the whole thing in perspective, when the court in Gibraltar had settled this matter (they were more concerned in ownership of the vessel and the cargo, rather than solving any mystery) their next case was the forgotten.

Neither was the *Mary Celeste* the only vessel found abandoned. In April 1849 the Dutch Schooner *Hermania* was found dismasted but otherwise sound,

with the captain, his wife, child and crew missing, and in February 1855 the *Marathon* was found in perfect order abandoned. In 1921 the schooner Carroll Deering was found floating off Hatteras Island , North Carolina , completely deserted.

No one will ever know of the fate of Captain Briggs, his family and his crew until, in the words of the burial service, “the sea shall give up its dead.”

Lesson #27: St. Edward the Martyr (978 A.D.)

[This is one of those historical murders that have always interested me, because we know so little about it, and you get the definite impression that there is a lot more to it than those damned monkish scribblers let on. - HAC]

St. Edward the Martyr was the son of King Edgar the Peaceable by his first wife, and succeeded to the throne of his father as King of England in 975 A.D. Despite the opposition of some of the nobles, Edward was confirmed by the primitive parliament of the time and crowned. Of his character and piety we have this testimonial from Theodoric Paulus: "St. Edward was a young man of great devotion and excellent conduct; he was wholly Catholic, good and of holy life; moreover, above all things he loved God and the Church; he was generous to the poor, a haven to the good, a champion of the Faith of Christ, a vessel full of every virtuous grace."

Uhhh ... yeah. Right.

According to less biased (or possibly more biased) accounts, Edward was actually a nasty young punk. He was about fifteen when he came to the throne, and it seems to have gone to his head. The boy king quickly gained a reputation for arrogance, childish petulance, stubbornness, and rudeness to his counselors and his earls and ealdormen, as Saxon barons were called. He was frequently drunk and beat his servants. He also had an unpleasant habit of helping himself to any comely female he fancied, from slave girls on up to the wives of his nobles and his friends. He had a special predilection for young nuns, a quirk which his churchly boosters seem to have passed over in discreet silence. His court seems to have been kind of a Dark Ages Animal House. Well, he was just a teenager on spring break, after all.

However, in politics he was an earnest supporter of the monastics in the life of the Church, as his father had been before him, and when you've got monks writing the chronicles it sure helps to have them on your side. Sometimes, as in Edward's case, you even get canonized. Edward's preference for ecclesiastical advisors despite his disorderly personal life, and his habit of granting the Church all kinds of land, privileges, and goodies aroused the displeasure of the powerful secular party within England, and some of the secularists were sufficiently pissed off to have the boy king whacked.

The main shaker and mover in the plot was old King Edgar's second wife and widow, a slinky lady named Aelfrida. She was apparently the proverbial

Wicked Stepmother of fairy tales. Her motive was simple: she wanted her own son Aethelred to inherit the throne and become king.

On March 18th, 978 A.D., King Edward rode alone to Queen Aelfrida's crib at Corfe Castle in the Purbeck Hills of Dorsetshire. (The castle still stands after more than 1,000 years, one of the oldest surviving in Europe.) It has always been a mystery as to why the boy went alone into a den of people whom he must have known were his enemies, and who had every reason to desire his death. Legend has it that Queen Aelfrida had a particularly beautiful Welsh girl among her maids and the king was lured to the castle anticipating an encounter of fiery Celtic passion. Other more sleazy versions claim that it was the mature yet still beautiful Queen herself who beckoned the come-hither to her stepson. Still, let's face it, this kid doesn't appear to have exactly been the sharpest knife in the drawer. In our own era, we have all too much experience of being ruled by the sons of great men who have room-temperature IQs, bad tempers, and drinking problems.

Be that as it may, the wicked stepmother made the most of her opportunity. Queen Aelfrida herself met the king at the castle gate, still on his horse, and offered him a drink, a goblet or wine or possibly a horn of beer. While the king was chug-a-lugging, a couple of Aelfrida's male retainers attacked him and stabbed him in the belly with a sword and a dagger. Edward's horse bolted, and the royal rider fell off, but his foot was caught in a new-fangled invention just coming into use called a stirrup, and his body was dragged down over the rocks Homer Simpson-style. In the early 20th century Edward's skeletal remains, remarkably intact, were exhumed and examined by the forensic pathologists of the British Home office. They were able to detail with remarkable accuracy all of his injuries, from his broken ribs and ankle and fractured skull due to the dragging, to the nick from the assassins' blades on his spinal column, thus confirming the historical account of his death.

Edward's body was moved to Shaftesbury, where miracles were reported at his tomb, and he was regarded as a saint and martyr by the people, which was confirmed by his formal canonization some years later. The monks gratefully remembered the wealth and privilege he had heaped on them; it was the least they could do. His feast day is the day of his murder, March 18th.

Aethelred became King of England at something like the age of seven, and needless to say mama was quite ready to step in and act as regent for him during his minority. However, regardless of what they thought of being ruled by a drunken teenager, the rough-hewn Saxon thanes and earls didn't appreciate being

ruled by a murderess either. Regicide was a man's job, dammit! A short time after Aethelred's accession, a group of them staged a coup and locked Queen Aelfrida up in a convent, where according to one account she lived a long life of devout repentance for her crime, and according to another she was shortly afterwards discreetly strangled. (The farther back you go in history, the more you get these extreme discrepancies, and at this distance there's no way to tell.)

Aethelred's reigned for many years, and he proved to be an incompetent and a disaster. He lost most of the country to the Danes under the Viking King Canute, and went down in history as Aethelred the Unready.

Lesson #28: Wrong-Way Corrigan (1938)

Douglas Corrigan became a legendary aviator, not because of his accomplishments as a pilot but rather because of a supposed navigational error. In 1938, Corrigan “mistakenly” flew from New York to Ireland—when he was supposed to be flying from New York to California—because he seemingly misread his compass.

For Americans, who were caught in the midst of the Great Depression, Corrigan’s antic provided a great deal of humor and uplift and he became a national folk hero. To this day, Corrigan’s nickname, “Wrong-Way Corrigan,” remains a stock colloquial phrase in popular culture. People use it to describe anyone who blunders and goes the wrong way, particularly in sporting events. Nevertheless, as much fun as Corrigan’s incident provides, many people do not understand all the complexities of his story, nor do they appreciate the fact that he was a sound and accomplished pilot.

Corrigan was born in Galveston, Texas, on January 22, 1907. His father was a construction engineer and his mother a teacher. When Douglas was 15 months old, he was already making a name for himself; he won first prize in a local baby contest. Corrigan’s father moved his family around fairly often during Douglas’s childhood. Eventually, Corrigan’s parents divorced and Douglas bounced from one parent to another before he settled in Los Angeles with his mother. There, he began working in the construction industry. At the time, aviation did not seem to be in his future.

Then, on a Sunday afternoon in October 1925, Douglas decided to visit a local airfield. Corrigan watched a pilot take passengers for rides in a Curtiss “Jenny” biplane. Excited at the prospect of taking his own ride, he returned the next Sunday with \$2.50 in hand and persuaded the pilot to take him aloft. Flying over Los Angeles that afternoon, Corrigan was hooked; he was determined to learn to fly. The following Sunday, he returned for his first flying lesson and continued for weeks thereafter. Corrigan also spent time learning everything he could from the field’s aircraft mechanics. On March 25, 1926, Corrigan made his first solo flight.

Notably, Corrigan took flight lessons at the airfield where B.P. Mahoney and T.C. Ryan, a team of well-known aircraft manufacturers, were operating a small airline. It was not long before Corrigan got a job with the two men and started working in their San Diego factory.

Shortly after Corrigan began working for Mahoney and Ryan, a new customer approached them about making a special aircraft. Charles Lindbergh wanted them to design and build the Spirit of St. Louis. Corrigan assembled the aircraft's wing and installed its gas tanks and instrument panel.

When Lindbergh made his famous transatlantic flight in May 1927, Corrigan and his coworkers were thrilled, but Corrigan's excitement did not stop there. Inspired by Lindbergh's trip, he decided that he would make his own transatlantic flight someday. Being of Irish decent, he selected Ireland as his destination.

Starting in the late 1920s, Corrigan changed jobs several times. In October 1929, he became a full-fledged pilot when he earned his transport pilot's license. The following year, he moved to the East Coast and began a small passenger-carrying service with a friend named Steve Reich. The two men would land in small towns and convince people to buy airplane rides. Although the operation did fairly well financially, Corrigan eventually grew restless and decided to return to the West Coast. In 1933, he bought a used OX5 Robin monoplane to make the trip home. Back in California, Corrigan returned to work as an aircraft mechanic. During that period, he also began to modify his Robin for a transatlantic flight.

In 1935, Corrigan applied to the federal government for permission to make a non-stop flight from New York to Ireland. Officials denied his application, however, because they claimed that his plane was not sound enough to make a non-stop transatlantic trip. Nevertheless, they did certify it for cross-country journeys. In an attempt to get full certification, Corrigan made several modifications to his aircraft over the next two years, but each time he reapplied for permission, officials turned him down.

By 1937, Corrigan had grown tired of red tape and decided to try the flight without official sanction (although he never publicly acknowledged such a decision during his lifetime). His plan was to land in New York late at night, after airport officials had already left for the day, fill his gas tanks, and then leave for Ireland. But various mechanical problems while in route to New York caused him to lose his safe weather window over the Atlantic, and Corrigan decided not to risk the flight just then. He returned to California to wait for another opportunity the next year.

On July 8, 1938, Corrigan left California for New York. His official flight plan called for him to return to California, and on July 17, Corrigan took off from Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn, New York. He took off in thick fog and headed

east because airport officials had told him to lift off in any direction except west since there were some buildings at the western edge of the field. They fully believed Corrigan would turn his plane around and head west toward California once he cleared the airport's airspace. To everyone's surprise, he kept flying eastward. Corrigan insisted that his visibility was so poor that he could only fly by using his compass and claimed his compass indicated he was heading west.

Approximately 26 hours into his flight, Corrigan claimed to have finally dropped down out of the clouds and noticed that he was over a large body of water. Knowing that it was too early to have reached the Pacific Ocean, Corrigan looked down at his compass—and because there was now supposedly more light to see by—suddenly noticed he “had been following the wrong end of the magnetic needle.” Within a short time, Corrigan was over Ireland. He landed at Baldonnel Airport, near Dublin, after a 28-hour, 13-minute flight.

When officials questioned Corrigan about the incident, he explained that he had left New York en route to California but had then gotten mixed up in the clouds and flown the wrong way. He also explained about the fog and his mistake with the compass, but they did not believe him. As authorities continued to press him for the truth, Corrigan finally ended the situation by replying: “That’s my story.” After failing to sway him from his explanation, officials released Corrigan. The only punishment he received was a brief suspension of his pilot’s license, which lasted only until August 4, the day he returned to New York via steamship.

Corrigan returned to the United States a hero. People loved his audacity and spirit. They also had a great deal of fun with the obvious humor of his situation. The New York *Post*, for example, printed a front-page headline—“Hail to Wrong Way Corrigan!”—backwards. Corrigan also received a Broadway ticker-tape parade with more than a million people lining the street, more people than had turned out to honor Charles Lindbergh after his transatlantic flight.

Corrigan lived a fairly simple life after his famous flight. In the 1950s, he bought an orange grove in Santa Ana, California, and lived there for the remainder of his life. During the 50th anniversary of his flight, some newspapers began reporting that he was going to admit to having flown to Ireland intentionally, but he never publicly acknowledged that fact. Corrigan died on December 9, 1995.

Although Corrigan never admitted that his story was a ruse, most people believe that he purposely set out to bypass authorities and accomplish his dream of a transatlantic flight. Despite the humor that his story has provided, it is worth

noting that Corrigan flew across the Atlantic during the early years of transoceanic flights, something that only the bravest and best aviators of the day attempted. Corrigan deserves recognition for such a daring achievement, even though he had to accomplish the task in such an unorthodox manner.

—David H. Onkst

The Synod Horrenda (897 A.D.)

The Strangest Trial In History

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One thousand one hundred and four years ago a criminal trial took place in Italy, a trial so macabre, so gruesome, so frightful that it easily qualifies as the strangest and most terrible trial in human history.

At this trial, called the Cadaver Synod or *Synod Horrenda* in Latin, a dead pope wrenched from the grave was brought into a Rome courtroom, tried in the presence of a successor pope, found guilty, and then, in the words of Horace K. Mann's *The Lives of the Popes in the Early Middle Ages* (1925), "subjected to the most barbarous violence."

For the past several centuries the papacy has enjoyed enormous respect in every quarter of the globe, partly because most 19th and 20th century popes have stood for and publicly defended basic principles of liberty, justice and humanity in a tumultuous world often beset by war and revolution, and partly because with a few exceptions these popes have been extraordinarily admirable human beings. Pope John XXIII, for example, who reigned from 1958 to 1963, is one of the most beloved men of all time, and the present pope, John Paul II, whose pontificate began in 1978, is not only the most admired man in the world, but also one of the greatest figures of the 20th century.

In earlier times, however, things were sometimes quite different. Eleven hundred years ago the papacy was going through an era which, John Farrow tells us in his *Pageant of the Popes* (1942), "shroud[ed] the papacy with gloom and shame."

The period from around the middle of the 9th century to around the middle of the 10th century is often referred to as the Iron Age of the Papacy. This period, according to Richard P. McBrien's *Lives of the Popes* (1997), "was marred by papal corruption (including the buying and selling of church offices, nepotism, lavish lifestyles, concubinage, brutality, even murder) and the domination of the papacy by German kings and by powerful Roman families."

During that Iron Age the Chair of St. Peter became the prize of tyrants and brigands and a throne fouled by fierce tides of crime and licentiousness. The

papacy became the possession of great Roman families, a ticket to local dominance for which men were prepared to rape, murder, and steal.

Candidates the most worthless and unfit were forcibly intruded into the Chair of St. Peter. All real power in Rome was at this time in the hands of the great families who, through their connection with the local militia, had become practically a feudal aristocracy. These families were all jealous of one another, and were perpetually fighting for supremacy. The one aim of each party, pursued by every resource of violence and intrigue, was to get control of the Chair of St. Peter. Its occupant must be one of theirs at all costs.

During the Iron Age of the Papacy, pope succeeded pope with bewildering rapidity. In the 94 years from 872 through 965 there were 24 popes; and during the nine years between 896 and 904 there were no less than nine popes. (By contrast, there was a total of only nine popes in the entire 20th century, and one of them, John Paul I, reigned only 33 days.) In the Iron Age of the Papacy, the powerful families that dominated Rome not only arranged to have their supporters elected pope, but also had pontiffs deposed, and killed to advance their political ambitions, or as vengeance for some action taken by the pope that offended them or inconvenienced some plan or plot.

As a consequence, of those 24 popes who held office from 872 to 965, seven—nearly one-third—died violently or under suspicious circumstances. Five popes were assassinated in office, or deposed and then murdered. John VIII, the first pope to be assassinated, was poisoned by his entourage; when the poison did not act quickly enough, his skull was crushed by blows from a hammer. Both Stephen VII and Leo V were deposed, imprisoned, and strangled. John X was deposed, imprisoned, and suffocated by being smothered with a pillow. Stephen IX was imprisoned, horribly mutilated by having his eyes, nose, lips, tongue and hands removed, and died of his injuries. Two other popes died in circumstances strongly indicative of foul play: Hadrian III was rumored to have been poisoned, and John XII, the sources tell us, either died of a stroke suffered while in bed with a married woman or was beaten to death by the woman's outraged husband.

The Iron Age of the Papacy produced a number of unfortunate "firsts" for the papacy. As noted above, the first papal assassination took place when John VIII was murdered; this was on Dec. 16, 882. In 896 Boniface VI became the first (and only) person to be elected pope after having previously been twice degraded from holy orders for immorality. In 904 Sergius III became the first (and only) pope to order the murder of another pope, at least officially; pursuant to his order, Leo V,

who previously had been deposed, was strangled in prison. In 931 John XI became the first (and only) illegitimate son of a pope to be elected pope; his father was Sergius III. In 955 John XII became the first (and only) teenager to be elected pope; he was 18 at the time.

It is only against the backdrop of this dark century in the history of the papacy that it is possible to make sense of the *Synod Horrenda*. If the Iron Age of the Papacy was the lowest period in the history of the papacy, then without question the Cadaver Synod was not only the lowest point in that Iron Age, but also the lowest point ever.

The “Cadaver Synod” occurred sometime in January 897 in the Church of St. John Lateran, the pope’s official church in his capacity as Bishop of Rome. The defendant on trial was Formosus, an elderly pope who after a reign of five years had died April 4, 896 and been buried in St. Peter’s Basilica. (Formosus means “good-looking” in Latin.) The trial of Formosus was ordered by the reigning pontiff, Stephen VII, who had been prodded into issuing the order by a powerful Roman family dynasty and other anti-Formosus political factions, and who apparently also was personally motivated by a near-hysterical hatred of Formosus. Although Formosus had been a man of exceptional intelligence, ability, and even sanctity, he had made some bitter political enemies, including one of his successors, Stephen VII.

No trial transcript of the Cadaver Synod exists. Nonetheless, it is reasonably clear what happened. Sitting on a throne, Stephen VII personally presided over the proceeding. Also present as co-judges were a number of Roman clergy who were there under compulsion and out of fear. The trial began when the disinterred corpse of Formosus was carried into the courtroom. On Stephen VII’s orders the putrescent corpse, which had been lying in its tomb for seven months, had been dressed in full pontifical vestments. The dead body was then propped up in a chair behind which stood a teenage deacon, quaking with fear, whose unenviable responsibility was to defend Formosus by speaking in his behalf. The presiding judge, Stephen VII, then read the three charges. Formosus was accused of (1) perjury, (2) coveting the papacy, and (3) violating church canons when he was elected pope.

The trial was completely dominated by Stephen VII, who overawed the assemblage with his frenzied tirades. While the frightened clergy silently watched in horror, Stephen VII screamed and raved, hurling insults at and mocking the rotting corpse. Occasionally, when the furious torrent of execrations and

maledictions would die down momentarily, the deacon would stammer out a few words weakly denying the charges. When the grotesque farce concluded, Formosus was convicted on all counts by the court. The sentence imposed by Stephen VII was that all Formosus's acts and ordinations as pope be invalidated, that the three fingers of Formosus's right hand used to give papal blessings be hacked off, and that the body be stripped of its papal vestments, clad in the cheap garments of a lay person, and buried in a common grave. The sentence was rigorously executed.

The body was shortly exhumed and thrown into the Tiber, but some monks pulled it out of the river and re-buried it in secret.

Stephen VII's fanatical hatred of Formosus, his eerie decision to convene the Cadaver Synod in the first place, his even eerier decision to have Formosus' corpse brought into court, his maniacal conduct during the grisly proceeding, and his barbaric sentence that the corpse be abused and humiliated make it difficult to disagree with the historians who say that Stephen VII was stark, raving mad.

The *Synod Horrenda* was the cause of Stephen VII's prompt and precipitous downfall. The appalling trial and the savage mistreatment of Formosus's corpse provoked so much anger and outrage in Rome that within a few months there was a palace revolution and Stephen VII was deposed, stripped of his gorgeous pope's clothing and required to dress as a monk, imprisoned, and, some time in August 897, strangled.

Three months later another pope, Theodore II, whose pontificate lasted only 20 days, all in the month of November 897, held a synod which annulled the Cadaver Synod and fully rehabilitated Formosus. Theodore II also ordered that the body of Formosus be reverentially reburied. Therefore, according to Joseph S. Brusher's *Popes Through the Ages* (1980), the corpse was "brought back to [St. Peter's Basilica] in solemn procession. Once more clothed in the pontifical vestments, the body was placed before the Confession [the part of the high altar in which sacred relics were placed] of St. Peter's. There, in the presence of Pope Theodore II, a Mass was said for the soul of Formosus, and his poor battered body was restored to its own tomb."

The next pope, John IX, whose pontificate lasted from 898 to 900, also nullified the Cadaver Synod. At two synods convened by John IX, one in Rome, the other in Ravenna, the pronouncements of Theodore II's synod were confirmed, and any future trial of a dead person was prohibited.

Incredibly, however, this was not the end of disputes about the legality of the Cadaver Synod.

Sergius III, who was pope from 904 to 911, reversed the decisions of the synods of Theodore II and John IX by convening a synod which quashed their invalidations of the Cadaver Synod and reaffirmed Formosus's conviction and sentence. Sergius III even went so far as to place an epitaph on the tomb of Stephen VII which lauded that evident madman and heaped scorn on Formosus. Sergius III was a violent hater of Formosus and had been elected pope by an anti-Formosan faction. In fact, Sergius III, while a bishop, had actually taken part in the Cadaver Synod where he was one of the clergy coerced into serving as co-judges with Stephen VII. Sergius III, it will be recalled, was also the only pope to order the murder of another pope, and also the only pope to father an illegitimate son who became a pope. It is no wonder, therefore, that historians such as Farrow describe the pontificate of the murderer Sergius III as "dismal and disgraceful."

Although the decrees of Sergius III's synod marked the last formal pronouncement by the Roman Catholic Church on the lawfulness of the Cadaver Synod today there is a nearly unanimous consensus among scholars and theologians, both within and outside the Church, that the Cadaver Synod was an illegal monstrosity and that Formosus stands entirely vindicated, cleared of all the charges against him. On the other hand, it is hardly surprising that there has never been a Pope Formosus II, although Cardinal Pietro Barbo had to be dissuaded from taking the name in 1464. He took the name Paul II instead.

Lesson #30: Remember, Remember, the Fifth of November (1605)

[Kind of the prequel to “V for Vendetta.” - HAC]

In 1605, Guy Fawkes (also known as Guido—yes, really) and a group of conspirators attempted to blow up the Houses of Parliament.

After Queen Elizabeth I died in 1603, English Catholics who had been persecuted under her rule had hoped that her successor, James I, would be more tolerant of their religion. James I had, after all, had a Catholic mother. Unfortunately, James did not turn out to be more tolerant than Elizabeth and a number of young men, 13 to be exact, decided that violent action was the answer.

A small group took shape, under the leadership of Robert Catesby. Catesby felt that violent action was warranted. Indeed, the thing to do was to blow up the Houses of Parliament. In doing so, they would kill the king, maybe even the Prince of Wales, and the Members of Parliament who were making life difficult for the Catholics. Today these conspirators would be known as extremists, or terrorists.

To carry out their plan, the conspirators got hold of 36 barrels of gunpowder and stored them in a cellar, just under the House of Lords. But as the group worked on the plot, it became clear that innocent people would be hurt or killed in the attack, including some people who even fought for more rights for Catholics. Some of the plotters started having second thoughts. One of the group members even sent an anonymous letter warning his friend, Lord Monteagle, to stay away from the Parliament on November 5th. Was the letter real?

The warning letter reached the king, and the king’s forces made plans to stop the conspirators.

Guy Fawkes, who was in the cellar of the parliament with the 36 barrels of gunpowder when the authorities stormed it in the early hours of November 5th, was caught, tortured and executed. It is ironic that his name became irrevocably associated with the Gunpowder Plot to the point where the resulting holiday is even called Guy Fawkes’ Night, because Fawkes was in fact not the leader but a mere player. A better name would be the Catesby Plot, but Fawkes just happened to get caught with the goods.

It’s unclear if the conspirators would ever have been able to pull off their plan to blow up the Parliament even if they had not been betrayed. Some have

suggested that the gunpowder itself was so old as to be useless. Since Guy Fawkes and the other conspirators got caught before trying to ignite the powder, we'll never know for certain. If the powder had detonated, then London might have gotten a taste of bombing centuries before Zeppelins, the Blitz, the IRA and Al-Qaeda were even thought of.

Even for the period which was notoriously unstable, the Gunpowder Plot struck a very profound chord for the people of England. In fact, even today, the reigning monarch only enters the Parliament once a year, on what is called "the State Opening of Parliament". Prior to the Opening, and according to custom, the Yeomen of the Guard search the cellars of the Palace of Westminster. Nowadays, the Queen and Parliament still observe this tradition. (In light of recent events, they probably need to.)

On the very night that the Gunpowder Plot was foiled, on November 5th, 1605, bonfires were set alight to celebrate the safety of the king. Since then, November 5th has become known as Bonfire Night or Guy Fawkes' Night. The event is commemorated every year with fireworks and burning effigies of Guy Fawkes on a bonfire. In fact Fawkes and his fellow conspirators were not burned. They were hanged, drawn, and quartered, in a gruesome spectacle of public execution which took several hours of screaming and splattering, to the joy of the London mob.

Some of the English have been known to wonder, in a tongue in cheek kind of way, whether they are celebrating Fawkes' execution or honoring his attempt to do away with the government.

Lesson #31: The Case of the Vanishing Diplomat (1809)

On the cold and snowy day of November 25th, 1809, 25 year-old diplomat Benjamin Bathurst, his secretary, and his valet stopped at an inn at midday in Perleberg, a small town in the Rhineland, to eat dinner and to rest their tired coach horses. They had been travelling at great speed from Bathurst's ambassadorial post in Vienna—a post which, for reasons which were never made clear, he seems to have deserted without permission from his superiors, in a desperate attempt to get back to England.

While his dinner was being prepared and his horses seen to, Bathurst asked for directions to the commander of the local garrison, one Captain Klitzing. In Klitzing's office, Bathurst surprised the German officer with a disjointed and not very clear tale about how Napoleon was after him, and he asked for guards to protect him against mysterious pursuers.

This was not quite as crazy as it sounded; the Napoleonic wars were in full swing and Perleberg was near enough to the border of French-occupied territory so that there had been reports of cavalry raids and other French incursions into the district. Since Prussia and England were allies and Bathurst had diplomatic credentials, Klitzing obligingly assigned a couple of soldiers to stand guard at the inn. He later commented that Bathurst seemed petrified with fear, and he got the impression there was more to the tale than he was being told.

Darkness came early in November, and most travelers would have been content to stay the night at the inn, but Bathurst insisted on pressing on to his destination, Hamburg, where he meant to catch a ship for home. Considering the state of the roads and the time of year, he must have been genuinely desperate to travel at night. At about four o'clock that afternoon, he dismissed his two sentries and impatiently demanded that his coach be provided with fresh horses, which he paid for in cash. (Horses for private coaches could be rented, kind of like today we rent a U-Haul trailer, and dropped off at one of the post inns further along the way.)

There was some delay while Bathurst searched the inn for a fur coat of his that had gone missing, but eventually he gave up on the coat despite the cold weather in his eagerness to leave. Around five o'clock at night, Bathurst went out into the now dark but public square, in the dim light of oil lamps on the houses and also, according to accounts, at least a few street lights as well, so it was by no means completely black. A light snow was falling. On being told by his coachman

that everything was ready for departure, he walked around the head of the horses to inspect them ... and disappeared forever.

His party waited one minute...two...three...five minutes. From that day to this, no one has a clue what happened to Benjamin Bathurst.

His waiting valet saw nothing and neither did the coachman. Neither did the hostler who had harnessed the horses, or his secretary who was standing in the inn doorway paying the bill or the soldiers stationed at each end of the street in regular guard boxes. There were people on the square, which was in the middle of a populated town, and they were passing by all the time so much that it was useless to try and discover any tracks in the snow. No one reported seeing anything unusual. No struggling figures in the snow, no cries for help. Zilch. Zip. Nada. Sweet Fanny Adams. Just a man vanished off the face of the earth.

Captain Klitzing, embarrassed at losing his British diplomat despite being asked for protection, immediately organized a full search of the whole town and sent out the equivalent of an all points bulletin. The search went on for days. Only two clues were ever discovered. Bathurst's missing fur coat was eventually found concealed in the barn of a local ne'er-do-well named Augustus Schmidt, a young man who had a criminal record for theft, illegal gambling, and burglary. His mother worked as a charwoman at the inn, and eventually both of them got short prison sentences for stealing the coat, but they always denied having anything to do with Bathurst's disappearance.

Klitzing tried to make a case that Schmidt mugged Bathurst for his heavy purse and somehow made off with the body through the crowded streets, but he could never make it fly. The Schmidts may well have been telling the truth; the coat had been missed and the theft apparently taken place some time before Bathurst's disappearance. And even in the dark of a winter night, some guy trundling or dragging a dead body would have been noticed, as well as the crime itself witnessed.

About two weeks after the disappearance, two boys found a pair of trousers lying in a frozen puddle with some papers scattered around. The trousers were identified as Bathurst's, and the papers were inconsequential personal letters and documents, tradesman's bills from Vienna, etc. The trousers had two bullet holes in them, but the absence of bloodstains led the authorities to believe they had been fired through the garment after it had been removed from Bathurst's body. Klitzing, who had developed an almost obsessive involvement with the hunt for the

missing man, was of the firm opinion that the trousers were a red herring meant to mislead the law.

And you, dear reader, now know just about all there is to know about the facts of the case. Captain Klitzing never got his answers and died a frustrated man. Benjamin Bathurst was simply—gone.

At the time, the British assumed that Napoleon had put the snatch on Bathurst and somehow managed to smuggle the young man to prison or death in French-occupied territory. This made a certain sense. Bonaparte could be pretty vindictive, and he had done similar things before, notably the armed abduction of the Royalist Duc d'Enghien, who was captured by a French cavalry troop sent on a kind of commando raid into Germany for the purpose, dragged back to France, and stood in front of a firing squad.

But why? Bathurst was a diplomat attached to the embassy in Vienna, but his security clearance, as we would say today, wasn't all that high. He was part of the larger embassy staff. Bathurst had been part of a British mission that had persuaded the Austrians to declare war on France; the Austrians had gotten their asses kicked for their trouble, and had just been forced to sign a humiliating peace treaty. Napoleon had already won. Would he still be peeved at Bathurst? In any case, Bathurst was not solely responsible for the declaration of war, and there is no evidence that the French Emperor bore him any particular grudge.

Could Bathurst have been a Regency James Bond, engaged in espionage work of his own, and were those tracking him from French counterintelligence? Possibly, but no evidence of anything of the kind has ever been turned up, and the British government denied that this was the case. Napoleon himself always denied that he had anything to do with Bathurst's disappearance, repeating that denial in a letter he wrote to Bathurst's mother before he went to his final exile in St. Helena.

And if Bathurst was abducted by French agents, how had they done it in the middle of town, in a public square with people and soldiers all around, silently so as not to alarm the horses or Bathurst's own party not fifteen feet away, and gotten away with their target, either dead or alive, without anyone seeing anything?

What, exactly, was Bathurst so afraid of? Everyone who met him on that last journey remarked that he seemed nervous, agitated, preoccupied, and he admitted he was afraid of mysterious parties who were out to get him. The story about Napoleon may have been a blind. A jealous husband? Creditors? Some bizarre Masonic conspiracy? Space aliens? The young man must have been unusually

level-headed to be a career diplomat at 25, not prone to histrionics or neurosis. Someone was apparently after Bathurst. Who?

Well, whatever Benjamin Bathurst was afraid of in his last hours on earth—it got him.

Remember: just because you're paranoid, that don't mean they ain't out to get you.

Lesson #32: Marozia the Pope-Maker (10th Century A.D.)

[From *The Bedside Book of Bastards* by Dorothy Johnson and R. T. Turner]

For centuries, women have been trying to get equal rights. Every now and then, one succeeds, and proves that given equality of opportunity, women can be just as bad as anyone. In the tenth century A. D., the ambitious wife and daughter of an Italian noble named Theophylact rose about as high as any women have ever gotten. Neither of them actually became pope or even wanted to, but they made popes, ruled them, and murdered them. Theophylact and his wife Theodora had daughters named Marozia and Theodora.

Theodora the younger didn't do anything spectacular. The elder Theodora and her daughter Marozia were pretty successful in using all their God-given advantages, good looks, no scruples, and great talent for public (and private) affairs. Their era became known as the pornocracy, government by dissolute women.

Theophylact presided over the papal treasury. He was a sort of prime minister and commander-in-chief. As his womenfolk's meddling became more and more successful, he assumed the titles of Duke, Consul, and Senator of Rome. He was not just a Senator, but *the* Senator, *dominus urbis*, lord of the city. Theodora the elder and her daughter Marozia, unwilling to be ignored, also assumed the title of Senator.

Those were turbulent times in Italy, which was united only by religion. Scandals at the ecclesiastical as well as the secular level were the order of the day. There was usually a power struggle in the church and in the various secular governments, and in addition the church claimed temporal as well as spiritual sovereignty. A few years before Theodora and Marozia came to the fore (and certainly while they were in power) there were wild goings-on. In the years between 896 and 904, known as the Dark Age of the Papacy, there were ten popes, most of whom gained or lost office by murder and intrigue. In those days popes were not elected in the solemn ceremony that now prevails. It was more like a dogfight. [See *The Synod Horrenda*, *Weird History passim*. A section here describing the Cadaver Synod and the imprisonment and strangling of Stephen VII is snipped. We've already covered that.]

Stephen's immediate successors were Romanus, who reigned for four months, and Theodore II, who lasted for only twenty days. Then *two* popes were

elected, Sergius III and John IX, but of course this wouldn't do at all. In the ensuing scramble, John won out—he had more political punch--and excommunicated Sergius, who escaped into Tuscany.

John lasted until 900; Benedict IV followed, holding office until 903. Leo V took office for one month, until a Cardinal named Christopher led an uprising and had him thrown in prison. Christopher usurped the papal throne from September 903 until the following January. He is not, however, named in the church's official list of popes; he was an interloper, an anti-pope. Now the exiled Sergius, who had been plotting with the French, came back and threw Christopher into prison. One story has it that Sergius strangled both Christopher and Leo. Sergius has been described as “malignant, ferocious, and unclean.” The one good thing he is remembered for is that he rebuilt the Lateran basilica, which collapsed after the Synod Horrenda.

With Sergius III in power, Theophylact's family came into its own. Theodora the elder was one of Sergius's supporters, and Marozia, an ambitious teenager, was his paramour. A son was born to Marozia and Sergius. The infant was destined to become Pope John XI. But Sergius died after a reign of seven years and somebody had to fill the papal throne while John was growing up.

Anastasius III reigned uneventfully for the next two years. Landus succeeded him in July 913, and nothing much is known about him except that he took his orders from Theodora the elder. He appointed as archbishop of Ravenna a lover of Theodora's, who succeeded him in March 914 as John X.

For a while this John did as he was told by the ladies of the pornocracy. In a political horse-trade he even appointed a five year-old child as archbishop of Rheims. And at the behest of these powerful female ward bosses he crowned Berengar, a grandson of Charlemagne, as Emperor of the West in 915. This was an empty title but much in demand.

But John X showed a fatal tendency to branch out and take action without permission. He crowned Rudolf of Burgundy as king of Italy in 922, even though the Emperor Berengar had been king for years and thought he still was. Marozia thought he was, too, and Berengar was one of her favorites. She began to take a long, hard look at John X for challenging her authority.

About 924 Marozia's father, mother, and husband—Theophylact, Theodora, and Alberich—disappear from the pages of history without a trace. Now Marozia was all-powerful, and she had every intention of maintaining that position. She was

rich, beautiful, ambitious, and about thirty-four years old. Needing a nice place to live, suitable for a lady of her standing, she seized Hadrian's Tomb and moved in. The roomy mausoleum even had convenient dungeons, and the late Emperor Hadrian wasn't really using it any more, because he had been dead for eight hundred years. (The Borgia Pope, Alexander VI, fortified it in the fifteenth century, and now it is called the Castle de St. Angelo.) Marozia was Senator; she ruled Rome. And she began to look around for another husband. We don't know what happened to Alberich, but no doubt his widow did.

In 926 the ungrateful John X crowned Hugo of Provence as the next king of Italy (Berengar had been assassinated) and Marozia was fretting because her advice hadn't been asked. But she found a suitable candidate as successor to her missing-presumed-dead husband Alberich. This was Guido, duke of Tuscany, who had political connections and a potential future that appealed to her. She let it be known that she wouldn't mind marrying him.

John X made another awful mistake. He put his foot down. The union of Marozia with Duke Guido was not his idea of sound politics. He had on his side the argument of his brother Peter, Count of Orte, but Marozia was more powerful than both of them combined. At her command the brothers were seized. Peter was killed before the Pope's very eyes, and John X himself was thrown into prison and then smothered. The triumphant Marozia married Guido of Tuscany. Her next candidate for the papacy reigned as Leo VI for a few months. There is no record of what became of him. His successor, also put forward by Marozia, ruled for two years as Stephen VIII. He was assassinated, probably by her orders.

The year was now 931, and Marozia's boy John had been growing up. Her younger son Alberich, by her first marriage, had been growing up too; she should have kept a closer watch on him, because he turned out to be a menace. Son John became Pope John XI in March 931. He was under age, but that was a small matter. Marozia intended to run things anyway.

While he was in office, she became a widow again. The facts are not clear. Anyway, her second husband disappeared. She had always wanted to be a queen, and the chances looked good. Hugo of Provence, whom John X had crowned king of Italy in 926, had just lost his official wife. Marozia offered him her hand and heart. Hugo was willing. True, he was her brother-in-law by her second husband, so they were related within the prohibited degrees of kinship for marriage, but Marozia told her son the pope to relax the rule. He married the happy couple in the bride's home, Hadrian's tomb.

The obvious next step was to revive the vacant title of emperor for Hugo so that his bride could become an empress. The stage was now set for the entry of the other son, Alberich, about eighteen. He had political ambitions, and his mother's shenanigans could wreck them. Furthermore, he didn't like his new stepfather, Hugo, in whose court he was required to act as a page. Alberich spilled a cup of wine on Hugo, who rewarded him by boxing his ears. Alberich rushed out in a rage and began yelling to the people outside the castle. He was a fiery orator and a handsome youth, and the people of Rome were open to suggestions. Besides, they considered Marozia's latest marriage incestuous. In no time flat, Alberich had a mob at his command. They assaulted the castle with enthusiasm and damage in mind.

The terrified King Hugo let himself down from a window with a rope and fled from Rome. Alberich threw his mother into prison in her own palace, and nothing more was ever heard of Marozia. One chronicle reported that Alberich was warned by a mad monk with the gift of prophecy against spilling the blood of his own mother, and so he diverted a conduit from the river Tiber into her underground cell until it was full of water to the brim, then sealed it up forever.

Alberich governed Rome for twenty years, keeping a tight rein on his half-brother, Pope John XI, who died about 935, ostensibly of natural causes, although with this family one always has to wonder. Alberich was a severe ruler but a good one. This statement is based on the fact that after he died, conditions in Rome became much worse. He brought about several needed reforms. He saw to it that the popes who held office during his regime were responsible for spiritual but not temporal affairs. And three times, when King Hugo came clamoring at the gates of the city with conquest in mind, Alberich repulsed him. Alberich married Hugo's daughter, who was his stepsister, during a lull in the hostilities. Even when he was trying to storm the city, so far as is known, Hugo politely refrained from inquiring of his enemy and son-in-law as to the whereabouts of his wife. She was a family skeleton, literally.

Alberich's ambitions stretched longer than his life. When he was near death from a fever, at about age forty, he assembled the nobles of Rome and made them swear that they would elect his young son Octavian to succeed him as ruler and, when the next vacancy occurred in the papacy, to that high office. Thus he overruled his own decision that spiritual and temporal affairs should be kept separate—but the fact that Octavian was his own son made a difference. Alberich died in 954. Octavian became prince, and a year later when Pope Agapitus II died,

he was crowned Pope John XII. He established the custom, which popes still adhere to, of changing his name.

John XII, sixteen years old when he began his reign, was a REAL hell-raiser. Grandma Marozia would have been proud of him. In 963 he was deposed, and a year later he was killed by an outraged husband who came home unexpectedly.

Marozia's descendants were remarkably lucky in attaining the papal throne many decades after she had gone to her eternal reward. Two of her great-grandsons became pope: Benedict VIII (who wasn't even a priest when elected but became a strong and effective pontiff), 1012–1024; and his brother John XIX, 1024–1032. The successor of John XIX was his nephew Theophylact, who became Benedict IX at age twenty. During his lifetime there were so many fights for supremacy that he resigned once and was deposed twice. He was pope for three periods: 1032–1044; 1045; and 1047–1048.

Marozia was a tyrant and a murderess. She was mistress of a pope (Sergius III), mother of a pope (John XI), grandmother of a pope (John XII), great-grandmother of two popes (John XIX and Benedict VIII), and great-great-grandmother of another (Benedict IX). Nobody has beaten that record.

Lesson #33: The Mysterious Death of Amy Robsart (1560)

Amy Dudley, daughter of Sir John Robsart, a wealthy Norfolk landowner, was the wife of the Elizabethan statesman Robert Dudley, later Earl of Leicester. They had been married at Sheen (Richmond) Palace in 1550 when they were both about eighteen. The young King Edward VI was present at their wedding, and recorded in his diary that some young gallants of the court amused the wedding guests by playing a kind of polo or hockey with a trussed-up, live goose. (The English weren't always the great animal-lovers they are today.)

On September 8th 1560, still only twenty-eight, Amy was found dead at the foot of a staircase in the manor house at Cumnor Place, where she was then living. At the time there was speculation as to whether she fell accidentally, was murdered or committed suicide, and many subsequent historians have speculated about her death.

As we shall see, the circumstances lent some color to suspicions of foul play, but two factors about the evidence help to explain the subsequent debate. One is that the record of the coroner's inquest into Amy's death has not survived; the other is that in 1584, twenty four years after Amy's death, the Catholic enemies of Leicester and the Queen produced a document, which has come to be known as *Leicester's Commonwealth*, claiming that he had murdered Amy, and others.

It was said she was shut up in Cumnor with one Sir Richard Verney, a retainer of her husband's, who was supposedly something of a bad hat, who first tried to poison her and then, having sent away her servants, broke her neck.

The ghastly Robert Dudley was the quintessential Elizabethan yuppie, a young man on the make with an eye to the main chance and willing to step on anyone to get a leg up in the scramble for favor and riches at court. In his early years, his ambition appears to have verged on treason on more than one occasion, despite the fact that both his father and his grandfather were executed for dabbling in that sort of thing. In 1553 Robert was involved with his father, the Duke of Northumberland, in a plot to secure the accession of Lady Jane Grey in place of Queen Mary ("Bloody Mary.") For this Northumberland was beheaded and young Robbie was imprisoned in the Tower until October 1554. Amy visited him there; but his properties remained confiscated and he was left "with nothing to live by" until March 1556. In that year it was rumored that he was a fugitive in France suspected, probably correctly, of involvement in further conspiracy against Mary.

In view of her habit of executing members of his family, this would have been understandable.

On her accession in November 1558 Elizabeth made Robert Master of the Horse, an important post. They had been jailmates together when Bloody Mary had them both locked up in the Tower, and supposedly would lay one another macabre wagers as to who would go to the headsman's block first. It is believed that they first became lovers when they were imprisoned in the Tower. In fact, Robert Dudley is the only man that most historians agree did in fact have a sexual relationship with the "Virgin Queen," whom it must be remembered was at that time a spirited and beautiful teenager. The seeming imminence of violent death at the hands of Elizabeth's homicidal sister no doubt served as a turn-on.

It was not customary for courtiers' wives to live at Court; Elizabeth didn't appreciate female competition, and would have wanted to keep Amy out of the way for she was strongly attracted by Robert, who was, as Neale says, "a magnificent, princely looking man". They were much together, and there was a great deal of gossip about the affair, which Amy must have heard. In March 1560 the Spanish Ambassador wrote about the possibility of Dudley divorcing his wife.

The problem was that such a divorce would have had to have been approved by Queen Elizabeth herself, in her role as head of the Church of England. Had she then married the divorced husband, the scandal would have been intense, especially in view of the bizarre matrimonial history of her father, King Henry the Eighth. (It's difficult to realize today, but as recently as fifty years ago divorce was still considered shameful. In the sixteenth century it was regarded with horror.)

The news of Amy's death on September 8th 1560 was carried by one Bowes, one of her servants, to Robert Dudley at Windsor. On his way Bowes met Thomas Blount, a kinsman and business associate of Robert's. It may be, though it is not clear, that Blount was on his way to Cumnor. On hearing Bowes' news Robert immediately sent a message after Blount asking him to use all "means you can possible for the learning of the truth" about Amy's death.

The main source for the events is a series of letters exchanged between Blount in Cumnor and Robert in Windsor and Kew, copies of which are in the Pepysian Library in Cambridge (they are printed in Bartlett and Adlard). The letters are copies, probably made in 1567 at the time of the Appleyard affair (see below); but they are likely to be accurate.

“The greatness and suddenness of the misfortune so perplexes me”, Robert wrote to Blount on the 9th September, and “how this evil doth light upon me, considering what the malicious world will bruit as I can take no rest.” Blount must see that the coroner chose the “discreetist and most substantial men” for the jury, which may have been a genuine appeal for fairness and honesty on Dudley’s part, depending on how he intended his servant to understand the term “discreetist”. Blount replied that he found most of them already chosen and some of them at the house when he arrived there on September 10th, and he judged them to be on the whole wise and able men. Robert also sent for Amy’s half brother, Appleyard, and “other of her friends” to be there and see what went on. To give Dudley his due, there was no obvious appearance of cover-up.

Blount discovered that on the day she died Amy’s servants were sent off by her to the fair at Abingdon, and she remained in the great manor house alone. This was extremely unusual behavior for a woman who, despite her reclusive life, was one of the foremost ladies of the realm due to her husband’s wealth and powerful position. Sixteenth-century noblewomen were not in the habit of “roughing it” alone for a day just to be kind to servants, and one of the great mysteries of the case has always been why Amy did such a thing. But the servants confirmed that she did.

In the course of the day Amy allegedly fell downstairs to her death, and she was discovered that night when the household returned from the fair. The Spanish Ambassador reported that on September 11th the Queen told the Court that Amy had broken her neck. On September 13th Blount wrote to Robert that the jury kept very secret; “and yet I do hear a whispering that they can find no presumption of evil”.

Robert was also assured by one Smythe, who seemed to be the foreman, that so far as he could see the death was a “very misfortune”; and from other contemporary evidence it is clear that the verdict was that Amy died by mischance. (Robert even suggested that another jury “might try again for more knowledge of the truth”.) Susan Doran points out the contemporary chronicler (see BL Add. MS 48023), whose account is of uncertain reliability and is hostile to Dudley, says this Smythe was the Queen’s man who was “put out of the house for his lewd behavior” and implies he was not impartial.

Prior to Amy’s death there had been rumors floating around the courts of Europe that Robert was planning to murder her, many of them undoubtedly put out and encouraged by the Catholic intelligence and propaganda network. Poisoning

was usually mentioned, as by Cecil to the Spanish Ambassador on, or close to, the day of her death. Other rumors were about to the effect that Amy Robsart Dudley was suffering from breast cancer, was in pain, and was dying.

The people of England themselves were not happy with the affair. It was known that Robert Dudley had moved into palace quarters below the Queen's own bedchamber, effectively shacking up with her, and there was widespread shock and outrage at Elizabeth's immoral behavior. Some ten days after her death the Rector of Coventry wrote to Cecil that there was "a grievous and dangerous suspicion of muttering" about Amy's convenient demise in his neighborhood. The accusations that Robert had had Amy murdered circulating in the 16th century are not specific about how it was done but the assumption must be that her neck was broken first - no murderer could rely on pushing his victim downstairs.

As for Robert's guilt, certainly in the letters he showed little grief, but he does seem determined to get at the truth. His agitation only emphasized that if he were discovered in a plot to murder his wife he could never have married the Queen; indeed it seems he was ordered to leave the Court while investigations were under way. Cecil went to see him in his house at Kew and was thanked for his "great friendship"; and though Cecil said Robert was "inflamed" by Amy's death he never said he caused it. (He might have been glad to be rid of Amy but would not have wanted a scandal which would have reflected on the Queen.)

Robert's brother-in-law, the Earl of Huntingdon, a man of puritan leanings, sent Robert half a dozen stag pies on September 17th and added a postscript to his letter, having just heard of Amy's death, saying that Robert had no doubt considered "what a happy lot it was that brought man from sorrow to joy and from mortality to immortality", and more in this vein, but with no hint of suspicion. He would presumably not have behaved in such a friendly manner to a man he suspected of having murdered his sister.

In 1567 Appleyard, who had some personal grievance against Leicester, alleged that the Duke of Norfolk and others had bribed him to revive the charge that Amy had been murdered. He was put in the Fleet prison. He later withdrew the allegation of bribery. The Privy Council seems to have had no doubt about Leicester's innocence, but gave Appleyard the chance to see the inquest verdict. He declared himself fully satisfied and persuaded that this proved "under the oaths of fifteen persons how my late sister by misfortune happened of death". He added tantalizingly that he had returned the copy to the Warden of the Fleet who had sent

it back to their Lordships, but Privy Council papers were subsequently destroyed in a fire.

Accounts based on *Leicester's Commonwealth* accuse Verney and another servant of Dudley's named Forster of complicity in the murder though the original document, while saying it happened in Forster's house, names Verney and another man as the murderers. Sir Richard Verney, like Forster, was in Robert's employment, but there is no evidence he was anywhere near Cumnor at the time. The landlord of the Abingdon inn where Blount put up on September 9th said it was a great pity that the death happened "in that honest gentleman's house", presumably meaning Forster.

Neale in his life of Queen Elizabeth says that Amy most likely committed suicide, a view recently supported by Susan Doran. Blount interviewed Amy's personal maid who "dearly loved her". She confirmed what Bowes had told him that Amy had ordered her servants to Abingdon Fair that morning and had wanted Mrs. Odingsell's to go too, though she refused at first because it was Sunday and "no day for a gentlewoman". Amy had been very angry when people objected to going.

When Blount asked the maid whether she thought Amy had died by "chance or villainy" she said "by very chance, and neither done by man or herself." Her mistress was a good virtuous gentlewoman who daily prayed upon her knees. Then she added "I myself have heard her pray to God to deliver her from desperation". When Blount suggested Amy might have had "some evil toy on her mind" the maid said that if he judged so of her words she was sorry she had said so much. Twice Blount referred to Amy's "strange mind" and promised to tell Robert more in person. Amy had reason for unhappiness: her childlessness and her husband's neglectful behavior. However, death by a fall downstairs can no more be relied on by a suicide than a murderer. No doubt an inquest jury in 1560 would have been very reluctant to bring in a verdict of suicide against Dudley's wife.

Professor Ian Aird, in an article in the *English Historical Review*, excludes suicide and puts forward another reason for Amy's desperation and death. In April, 1559 seventeen months before her death, the Spanish Ambassador reported that people talked of Elizabeth and Dudley's friendship so freely that "they go so far as to say his wife has a malady in one of her breasts and the Queen is only waiting for her to die to marry Lord Robert."

Aird argues that this was cancer and had spread to the bones of Amy's spine, which could have caused her neck to break spontaneously from any jolt or fall. Though Aird accepts the questionable nature of the document, he finds support for his theory in "Leicester's Commonwealth" which said that Amy fell so as to break her neck "but yet without hurting her hood which stood upon her head". He also suggests that Amy's anger and irritability on the morning of her death was due to this illness.

Edward Impey inclines to Aird's view; and Percy Williams in his book *The Later Tudors* (1995), says Amy was likely to have been "weak and ill". But Aird's argument does not seem conclusive. Amy visited Lincolnshire, Suffolk, London and Warwickshire during the two years before her death; and there is no suggestion in the Blount correspondence that she was physically ill. Just before, or even on the day of, her death Cecil told the Spanish Ambassador that she was publicly reported to be ill "but she was not so, on the contrary was quite well and taking good care not to be poisoned."

The case against Dudley for murder must be returned as "not proven." There are, however, two points which need explaining.

Why did Amy Robsart Dudley send all her servants away? It must be emphasized again that this was completely unknown behavior for a very upper-class woman of the nobility of the 16th century, accustomed to being waited on hand and foot from birth. The only possible conclusion is that for some reason she wanted to be alone in the house. This implies that either she intended suicide or that she was going to meet someone, possibly a lover of her own. It would not be unknown for a lonely and neglected wife to have an affair, except for the fact that there is not a jot of evidence that any such man existed, and all those who knew Amy swore to her virtue and religious character. Also, Dudley would have jumped on any affair as grounds for a divorce. He never made any such accusation.

The second puzzling thing is the precise manner of the woman's death. Cumnor Place no longer exists, but an early nineteenth-century floor plan does, and presuming the building hadn't changed much between 1560 and 1830, it is very difficult to see how Amy could have broken her neck falling downstairs, which contrary to what we see in movies is a very uncommon form of fatality except with quite elderly people. There was no grand Victorian staircase; the stairs seem to have all been "dog-leg" in design with five or six steps and then a landing, and then another five or six steps. Very difficult to break one's neck falling down--but what does break the neck sometimes is a hangman's noose.

Suicide in the sixteenth century was considered a mortal sin, and suicides were not allowed to be buried in consecrated ground, but at crossroads with stakes through their hearts. Amy's servants all loved and respected her. Suppose they came back and found their mistress not lying at the bottom of the stairs but hanging from the banister or a rafter beam? Not wanting to stigmatize her memory, what if they then took her down and told everyone they'd found her at the foot of the stairs? A kind-hearted, not to mention politic, coroner's jury might have hesitated to offend the most powerful baron in the land with the imputation that his adultery with the Queen had driven his wife to such despair that she had hanged herself.

Amy was buried in the chancel of the Church of St Mary the Virgin, her body having been first taken to Gloucester (Worcester) College. (There is a relatively modern tablet recording her burial.) Eighty poor men and women were said to have marched in procession, followed by members of the University, a choir and heralds. Her funeral cost Robert 500; but he was not present. The chief mourner, by custom of the same sex, was Lady Norry's, Forster's wife's cousin.

As for Dudley, the Queen blew hot and cold in her attitude towards him. Of course she never married him, nor anyone else, though Dudley married again. However, she made him Earl of Leicester and gave him Kenilworth Castle and large areas of North Wales. He commanded the army at Tilbury when Elizabeth made her famous speech on August 9th 1588 just after the Spanish fleet had been defeated. Later in the month Robert set off for Kenilworth on his way to a cure at some spa. He stayed a night at Lord Norreys' home at Rycote, and while there wrote a letter to Elizabeth. She had afterwards to write on it "his last letter", for he got no further than Cornbury Park, where he died.

According to the *Little Guide to Oxfordshire* (1906) Amy's ghost was supposed to have met him in the park there saying that "in ten days he'd be with her". If we are to believe Bartlett, writing in 1850, it was chiefly the people of Cumnor who remembered Amy's mournful end. Her ghost, he said, haunted Cumnor Place, made people fear to go near it and "destroyed the peace of the village". The ghost had to be exorcised by nine clergymen from Oxford who drowned it in a pond in the adjoining close; and the water never again froze over the spot.

Lesson #34: The Last Viking

The Viking era in European history may be said to run very roughly from about 775 A.D., when the Norse, on ships, suddenly burst on a startled world that had only the vaguest idea that Scandinavia even existed, until 1066 and the Battle of Stamford Bridge. The last true Viking chieftain and one of the most colorful characters in Viking history was King Harald Hardraada of Norway.

In their pagan days the Norse practiced polygamy, which was one reason for the overcrowding that produced so many land-hungry and adventurous young men ready to go sailing off in the dragon ships. In the ninth century Harald Fairhair was a minor Norse ruler who had the usual collection of wives, but there was a singularly lissome young maiden he wished to add to his collection named Ingeborg. But Ingeborg turned him down on the grounds that his kingdom was too small; no doubt she was a kind of Norse Valley Girl type who liked to shop til she dropped and Harald's piece of turf was too small for her expensive tastes. Well, Harald showed her. He spent a number of years conquering all of Norway, and in due course claimed his reward, nailed his hottie and produced a whole dynasty of swashbuckling kings and adventurers who spent the next two hundred years raising all kinds of hell.

Harald Hardraada's tale begins with a great grandson of Harald Fairhair, one Olaf Tryggvason, being baptized as a Christian as part of a settlement arranged with the English, whom Olaf's Vikings had been subjecting to a particularly pulverizing series of raids. [See *The Battle of Maldon*, Weird Aryan Histories *passim*.] Olaf, however, not only was acknowledged as leader of the Vikings in northern England, but he also managed to quell enough dissent in Norway to become that country's monarch around 995 A.D.

As a result of this, the throne of king of Norway was then linked to the leadership of at least half of England. When Harald Hardraada (the "hard ruler") finally ascended to the throne, this sparked off one of the final battles between the Vikings and the English.

Harald was the half brother of King Olaf the Stout, a king of Norway who was chased out of his country while trying to violently convert his countrymen to Christianity. Olaf fled to the Viking settlements in Russia, which stretched as far south as Kiev in what is now the Ukraine. These areas had become Christianized, and Olaf raised an army to stage a comeback in Norway. Olaf returned to Norway in 1030, with his 15 year old half brother, Harald, at his side. Together they fought

their pagan countrymen but were defeated. Olaf was killed (he was later made a saint by the Christian Church and is to this day patron saint of Norway) and Harald was severely wounded.

The young Harald fled back to Russia, stopping in Kiev to enlist in the army of King Yaroslav, winning great prestige as a soldier. From there he went to Constantinople where he enlisted in the Byzantine emperor's Varangian guard, an elite army unit made up exclusively of Vikings and Rus recruited from the Norse settlements in Christian Russia. He eventually rose to be the commander of this elite military unit. For a decade Harald fought for the Eastern Roman Empire, winning not only great fame but also great wealth and experience as a general. Harald saw an immense amount of the known world as he engaged in campaigns across Asia Minor and the Mediterranean, and it is said that he became fluent in Greek, Latin, Bulgarian, and Arabic, as well as being able to read and write all of those languages. This was quite an accomplishment for any man of that period, never mind a barbarian Northman.

In 1044, he went back to Kiev and married the daughter of King Yaroslav. By 1047, he had worked his way back to Norway where he claimed the Norwegian throne. His royal family tie combined with his by now legendary exploits being enough to silence opposition to his becoming king.

During the next nineteen years, Harald continued trying to Christianize his countrymen, earning for himself the name of "hard ruler." Although a Christian himself, Harald made it a point to ensure that the old strength and toughness remained in his people. He set an example of hardness himself, among other ways by always keeping his Christmas feast "under sail," meaning out at sea with his fleet of ships, feasting and sleeping it off on an open deck under the sky and the stars. In December, in the North Sea, this was a pretty rough-cut habit, even by the standard of the times.

Harald's last great exploit came in 1066. Upon the death of the Anglo-Saxon king, Edward the Confessor, Harald claimed the English crown for himself on the basis of an old legal fiction regarding the shared sovereignty of Norway and northern England. It was something that had been a dead letter for over a century, but Harald used it as a political fig leaf for his expedition of conquest. However, another claimant to the English throne also put in his bid—William, Duke of Normandy, ironically the descendant of Vikings just like Harald himself.

Harald first formed an alliance with Earl Tostig, the disaffected brother of the English king who had succeeded Edward the Confessor, Harold Godwinson. Then Harald sailed for England and seized the town of York as a base for his operations against Harold Godwinson. The English Harold staged a stunning three-day forced march and before Norse Harald could react, the English were on him. The Viking and English armies clashed at the battle of Stamford Bridge, where Harald was killed in battle. He was given a true Viking's funeral pyre, although on land rather than at sea, and Harold Godwinson marched south again to meet his own death in battle against William the Conqueror.

Harald Hardraada seems to be pretty much the Vikings' last hurrah; after his death was when the Swedes and the Norwegians started to get placid and boring and spent their time doing cute little wood carvings instead of looting and pillaging. Possibly they were all Viking'ed out. The Danes are a bit more interesting throughout the Middle Ages; they've got some artistic and flamboyant murders, at least, no doubt due to their continental location right next to the Germans.

Lesson #35: The Hurtling Moons of Barsoom (19th Century A.D.)

Giovanni Virginio Schiaparelli (1835–1910) is the prolific Italian astronomer whose research ranged widely, but whose name is forever associated with Mars, and the controversy over the Martian “canals” which, unwittingly, he helped to unleash.

Born in Savigliano, Piedmont, Schiaparelli graduated from the University of Turin and studied at the Royal Observatory in Berlin under Johann Encke, discoverer of a short-period comet that now bears his name. After a brief spell at Pulkova Observatory in Russia, he joined the staff of Milan’s Brera Observatory in 1860 and became its director two years later. The small instruments at Brera led Schiaparelli to focus his research initially on meteors and comets. Indeed, probably his most important contribution to astronomy was his discovery that swarms of meteors, which give rise to annual showers on Earth, and comets follow similar paths through space.

His reward for this breakthrough was the installation of a more powerful (8.6-in.) refractor at Brera which allowed him to engage in serious planetary work. He first wanted to test the powers of the new instrument, to see if it “possessed the necessary optical qualities to allow for the study of the surfaces of the planets.” 1877 brought the ideal opportunity in the form a particularly favorable opposition of Mars. Schiaparelli prepared for it almost like a prize fighter, avoiding “everything which could affect the nervous system, from narcotics to alcohol, and especially ... coffee, which I found to be exceedingly prejudicial to the accuracy of observation.”

What emerged from Schiaparelli’s long hours at the eyepiece in September 1877 was the most (optimistically) detailed map of Mars ever published. With the additional features he filled in over the next decade, it became a standard reference in planetary cartography, still in use until the dawn of the space probe era, and the scheme he devised for naming major Martian features survives to this day.

He used Latin and Mediterranean place names taken from ancient history, mythology, and the Bible. A light spot in the southern hemisphere, for example, he called Nix Olympia -the Snows of Olympus (now known to be the largest volcano in the solar system and rechristened Olympus Mons). The great triangular feature, first observed by Huygens in 1669, became Syrtis Major, while large, bright patches earned the picturesque labels of Elysium, Cydonia, Tharsis, and Thyle.

What was most striking about Schiaparelli's original map, however, was a curious network of linear markings which crisscrossed the Martian surface and joined one dark area to another. These lines he referred to as canali and he named them after famous rivers, both fictional and real—Gehon, Hiddekel, and Phison from the rivers in the Garden of Eden, Lethes and Nepenthes from the underground realm of Hades, and Ganges, Euphrates, and Nilus from actual geography.

Schiaparelli insisted that his nomenclature was not intended to prejudge the nature of the features he saw on the Martian surface: "These names may be regarded as a mere artifice ... After all, we speak in a similar way of the seas of the Moon, knowing very well that they do not consist of liquid masses."

However, the romantic and evocative names he chose would prove to have a powerful influence over some of his contemporaries. Moreover, Schiaparelli himself clearly favored a maritime view of Mars in which the dark areas were seas and the brighter regions land.

During the opposition of 1879, Schiaparelli refined his original map, noting some changes such as the apparent invasion of a bright area known as Libya by Syrtis Major. This encouraged him in his belief that Syrtis Major was a shallow sea which at times flooded the lands around. He drew in more canals and for the first time reported what he called a "gemination," or doubling of one of these features. Of the reality of the canali, if not their exact nature, he was utterly convinced: "It is [as] impossible to doubt their existence as that of the Rhine on the surface of the Earth."

So began the great canal controversy. Were the canali real? And if so, what were they? In an influential 1893 article, Schiaparelli maintained that Mars is a planet of seasonal change, with a temporary sea forming around the northern polar cap as it melted each spring. In support of his belief in a Martian atmosphere rich in water vapor he pointed to the spectroscopic observations of Hermann Vogel. The canals, he asserted, comprised "a true hydrographic system" and perhaps "the principal mechanism ... by which water (and with it organic life) may be diffused over the arid surface of the planet."

As to their origin, he leaned toward a natural explanation: "We are inclined to believe them to be produced by an evolution of the planet, just as on the Earth we have the English Channel and the Channel of Mozambique." However, he did not rule out the possibility that they might be artificial: "Their singular aspect, and their being drawn with absolute geometrical precision, as if they were the work of

rule or compass, has led some to see in them the work of intelligent beings ... I am very careful not to combat this supposition, which includes nothing impossible.”

Cautious and unflamboyant though he was—in sharp contrast to Percival Lowell—Schiaparelli nevertheless seems to have been biased in his Martian studies by a underlying desire to prove the habitability (if not the actual habitation) of other worlds in the solar system.

One man was so influenced by the Martian cartography of Schiaparelli that he created an entire fictional series based around it.

The American author Edgar Rice Burroughs (1875–1950) started to write for pulp magazines at the age of 35. His first professional sale was *Under the Moons of Mars*, serialized in 1912 and introducing the popular invincible hero John Carter, who is transported to Mars apparently by astral projection, following a battle with Apaches in Arizona. (Burroughs himself was a former cavalryman who fought in the last anti-Apache campaign in 1896.) ERB’s *Red Planet* was an exotic place filled with beautiful maidens, treacherous warlords, and monsters such as tharks and apts. It was referred to in the books by its alleged native name of Barsoom. The Martian series eventually reached eleven books including *John Carter of Mars*, *A Princess of Mars*, and *Thuvia, Maid of Mars*.

Burroughs has been repeatedly condemned as a racist and proto-National Socialist by assorted politically correct establishments, and it can’t be denied that there are distinctly racial elements in the John Carter series and also in his later, better known Tarzan mythos. Yet he is still recognized as a precursor and one of the fathers of modern science fiction, even though Schiaparelli’s Martian theories have been proven baseless by the advent of space travel.

Lesson #36: Germany's Prince Of Darkness

Albrecht Von Wallenstein (1583–1634)

Historically, Albrecht von Wallenstein, duke of Friedland and Mecklenburg was one of the most important mercenary commanders of the Imperial army during the Thirty Years' War (1618–48). In the centuries since his death, it is the dark side of his character which has prevailed, his intrigues and betrayals and murders. Wallenstein has assumed a kind of evil eminence, a devilish Faust-like character in the German consciousness who remember him, in the most part justly, as the source of the wretchedness and destruction and bloodshed that came to the Fatherland in a terrible time. The memories of the Kaiser and of Adolf Hitler have been secretly kept green and admiring by most of the German people, despite the draconian penalties, but Wallenstein is remembered as Germany's true Prince of Darkness.

Born a Protestant at Hermanic, Bohemia, 24 September, 1583, Wallenstein belonged to a Czech noble family of Bohemia who were members of the Bohemian Brethren. He studied at the Lutheran university at Altdorf, traveled in France and Italy, became a Catholic apparently at the Jesuit college at Olmutz. He married an elderly widow, whose large fortune he inherited in 1614 and promptly squandered, being forced to enter military life to escape his creditors.

In 1617 he served as an officer in the army of Ferdinand of Styria, who became emperor in 1619, against Venice, and in 1618 against the revolting Bohemians—his own people. This was just after the Thirty Years' War began with what became known as the Defenestration of Prague, when a group of Protestant legislators threw three Imperial commissioners out of an upper story window in the palace.

In 1621 Wallenstein received for the first time an independent command and fought against the prince of Transylvania, Bethlen Gabor, who had invaded Moravia. In return for large advances of money to Ferdinand, he received after the battle of the White Mountain so many of the confiscated estates of the Bohemian insurgents that his possessions in northern Bohemia formed the territory of Friedland, which Ferdinand in 1624 raised to a principality. Wallenstein's relations with the Jesuits were most friendly. Determined to become the champion of the Habsburgs and of the Church in the empire, he offered to raise an army of 20,000 men at his own expense, upon which Ferdinand appointed him, 7 April, 1625,

“Captain over all the imperial forces in the Holy Roman Empire and the Netherlands”, and in June raised him to the rank of a duke.

Unknowingly, Ferdinand had created a monster.

It was largely due to Wallenstein and Wallenstein’s military practices, which were adopted by all the armies, that the Thirty Years’ War turned Germany into a hell on earth and created a devastation which some historians believe was worse than that of World Wars One and Two. Wallenstein’s motto was simple: “Let war feed on war.” He had no supply lines, no supply trains, no problem with paying his soldiers—he and his armies simply took anything they wanted from any locality they passed through, Protestant or Catholic. Be it eatable, drinkable, ride-able, shootable, spendable, or female, they just helped themselves and killed anyone who got in the way. Wallenstein’s armies were like a horde of fire ants swarming over the countryside and stripping away everything, leaving a barren wasteland in their wake.

Wallenstein was also responsible for the innovation of what might be called the first modern partisan warfare. He hired a number of Croatian light cavalry, similar to Cossacks and armed with lance and saber, to serve as outriders, scouts and a screen for his main forces, and these marauders gained themselves an evil and terrifying reputation as killers, rapists, and arsonists. Soon all the armies were employing bands of irregular light horsemen in this manner, of all nationalities, but the nickname “Croats” stuck to them.

Wallenstein was very successful in collecting his army and late in the autumn appeared at the scene of war in the circle of Lower Saxony. He occupied Magdeburg and Halberstadt, On 25 April, 1626, he was attacked at the bridge of Dessau over the Elbe by the enemy he most feared, the Protestant commander Ernst von Mansfeld, whom to pretty much everyone’s surprise Wallenstein defeated and forced back into Dracula country, Transylvania.

In 1627, Wallenstein raised an army that finally numbered almost 150,000 men, which he supported by assigning definite territories of the empire to its different divisions, including those both of Catholic princes and of Protestant rulers who were friendly to the emperor. There was little discipline, and the greed of the generals and colonels was great. After a short time of unrestricted looting and pillaging by the new standing army, angry accusations were made against Wallenstein from every quarter. In the meantime, he drove Mansfeld’s troops out of Silesia and advanced as far as Jutland in Denmark. In January, 1628, the

emperor granted Wallenstein the Duchy of Mecklenburg in fief for life and in June, 1629, as a hereditary possession. Thus he became one of the most prominent princes of the empire.

The other princes holding this rank hated him, fearing that he would overthrow their freedom and subject them once more to the supremacy of the emperor. Wallenstein had now reached the highest point of his successes. He made the vain boast that in three years he would conquer Constantinople, and sought unsuccessfully to form an alliance between the emperor and Gustavus Adolphus; he also endeavored to persuade the Hanseatic towns to form a union with the empire. He even planned a canal uniting the North Sea and the Baltic Sea. But he was unable to collect a fleet, or to occupy and close the whole of the German coast along the Baltic. Wallenstein failed in the siege of Stralsund in the summer of 1628 and several other campaigns. He accused others for his lack of success, but eventually his enemies at court were able to procure his dismissal.

After this Wallenstein's life was mainly a series of intrigues, and at this point he added to his well-deserved reputation for bloodthirstiness and callousness an equally well-deserved reputation for treachery and unreliability. His character, which had never been noble, now gave way completely. He was perhaps more embittered over the loss of Mecklenburg than over the loss of the rank of commanding general. As early as the spring of 1631 he negotiated through Bohemian refugees with Gustavus Adolphus in an attempt to betray the emperor and change sides; which side began the negotiations is a disputed point. Wallenstein also apparently hired assassins and carried out several complicated murder plots, which involved doing away with his various rivals at the Vienna court in a number of exotic ways, including poison, strangling, and in one case having an enemy mauled and eaten by a captive lion. His attitude was noted at court.

When, after the battle of Breitenfeld, Gustavus Adolphus continued his campaign and the emperor in October appealed again to Wallenstein, the latter was willing to listen to him but did not come to terms until April, 1632, when the Swedes had overrun northern Germany. Wallenstein received absolutely unprecedented powers never granted before or since by any king or government to a commanding general, including the right to fill all positions in the army on his own say-so, to negotiate with foreign governments, and any troops not under his command were not to be permitted in the empire.

On 25 May, 1632, he again took Prague, then squared off to take on the Swedes led by their brilliant warrior king, Gustavus Adolphus. In September the Swedish king attacked Wallenstein but was driven back. In order to force Gustavus to retreat Wallenstein advanced toward Saxony. On reaching the boundary of Bavaria, Maximilian of Bavaria and his troops betrayed Wallenstein and turned back, a loss which weakened Wallenstein's strength. On 16 November a famous and bloody battle was fought with the Swedes at Lützen in Germany. Wallenstein was not defeated, but neither was he the victor; and he suffered such heavy losses that he ceased operations.

During this entire period he fought but one battle himself, that at Steinau in Silesia, where in October he defeated the Swedish troops, his last victory. He grew more and more involved in negotiations which finally led him into treason against the emperor. Sometimes he was engaged in negotiations with the Swedes, sometimes with Saxony against Sweden and the Habsburgs, and finally even with France. At one time he desired, by combining with the estates of the empire, to establish peace. Probably the impelling force was largely the desire for revenge.

Wallenstein's inactivity and double dealing brought the emperor into a position which might easily have become dangerous. In addition the Spanish ambassador at Vienna urged his removal. During these later years the Jesuits were opposed to him, and the army fell away from him. Prague and Pilsen deserted him and went over without a struggle to the emperor as soon as the latter took the first measures against Wallenstein, who responded by plotting to assassinate the emperor and replace him on the throne with—himself. No one in Europe would have accepted such a coup; clearly, towards the end of his life Wallenstein was losing touch with reality.

His mad scheme was inevitably betrayed, and Ferdinand responded as one might expect. Albrecht von Wallenstein was tracked down at one of his country residences at Eger, in Bohemia, by two Protestant Scotch officers and one Catholic Irish officer hired for the job, all belonging to his own army. They bribed his servants to desert him and broke into his study on the night of February 23rd, 1634, and after a desperate sword and pistol battle in which all were wounded, laid the once mighty general dead on the floor with a dozen blade and bullet wounds.

Lesson #37: Death at the Ball (1792)

King Gustav III of Sweden was born on 13 January 1746. He ascended the throne on February 12, 1771. He was the eldest son of Adolf Fredrick, King of Sweden, and Louisa Ulrika of Prussia, sister of Frederick the Great. Gustav was educated under the care of two governors who were amongst the most eminent Swedish statesmen of the day, Carl Gustaf Tessin and Carl Scheffer; but he owed most perhaps to the poet and historian Olof von Dalin. Even his most hostile teachers were amazed by his natural gifts, and, while still a boy, he possessed that charm of manner which was to make him so fascinating and so dangerous in later life, coupled with the strong dramatic instinct which won for him his honorable place in Swedish literature.

On the whole, Gustav cannot be said to have been well educated, but he read very widely; there was scarce a French author of his day with whose works he was not intimately acquainted; while his enthusiasm for the new French ideas of enlightenment was as sincere as, if more critical than, his mother's. On November 4, 1766, Gustav married Sophie Magdalen, daughter of Frederick V of Denmark. The match was an unhappy one, owing partly to incompatibility of temper, but still more to the mischievous interference of the jealous queen-mother.

Gustav first intervened actively in politics in 1768, at the time of his father's interregnum, when he compelled the dominant Cap faction to summon an extraordinary diet from which he hoped for the reform of the constitution in a monarchical direction. But the victorious Hats refused to redeem the pledges which they had given before the elections. "That we should have lost the constitutional battle does not distress us so much," wrote Gustav, in the bitterness of his heart; "but what does dismay me is to see my poor nation so sunk in corruption as to place its own felicity in absolute anarchy."

Gustav made a sincere and earnest attempt to mediate between the Hats and Caps who were ruining the country between them. On June 21, 1771 he opened his first Riksdag of the Estates (parliament) in a speech which awakened strange and deep emotions in all who heard it. It was the first time for more than a century that a Swedish king had addressed a Swedish Riksdag from the throne in its native tongue. The subsequent attempts of the dominant Caps still further to limit the prerogative, and reduce Gustavus to the condition of a figurehead, induced him at last to consider the possibility of a revolution. Of its necessity there could be no doubt. Under the sway of the Cap faction, Sweden was on the verge of being absorbed into their gigantic neighbor, Russia. Only a swift and sudden coup d'état

could save the independence of a country isolated from the rest of Europe by a hostile league.

At ten o'clock on 19 August, 1771, Gustav mounted his horse and rode straight to the arsenal. On the way his adherents joined him in little groups, as if by accident, so that by the time he reached his destination he had about two hundred officers in his suite. Meanwhile the Privy Council and its president, Rudbeck, had been arrested and the fleet secured. Then Gustav made a tour of the city and was everywhere received by enthusiastic crowds, who hailed him as a deliverer. The king summoned the legislature, imposed a new Constitution of his own devising, dissolved the parliament and for the next twenty years, Gustav ruled Sweden more or less single-handedly.

When the French Revolution broke out, Gustav aimed at forming a league of princes against the Jacobins, and every other consideration was subordinated thereto. But he was hampered by poverty and the jealousy of the other European powers, and he fell victim to a widespread aristocratic conspiracy of nobles and former politicians seeking revenge for the 1771 revolution. At a midnight masquerade at the Royal Swedish Opera in Stockholm, on March 16, 1792, the king was shot in the back with a flintlock pistol by Jacob Johan Anckarstrom. Gustav expired on March 29. Anckarstrom and several other participants were executed, but it has always been felt that the real masterminds behind the conspiracy escaped.

The assassination of Gustav III, with the specifics changed by censorship, became the basis of Giuseppe Verdi's 1859 opera *Un Ballo in Maschera*.

Lesson #38: Screaming in the Castle **by Charles Nicholl**

Beatrice Cenci was—to take a sample of sound-bites over the centuries—a goddess of beauty, a fallen angel, a most pure damsel. She was also a convicted murderer. This is a charismatic combination, not least here in Italy, and her name has lived on, especially in Rome, where she was born and where she was executed in 1599.

The story as it comes down to us has the compactness of legend. It tells of a beautiful teenage girl who kills her brutal father to protect her virtue from his incestuous advances; who resists interrogation and torture with unswerving courage; and who goes to her execution unrepentant and borne along on a wave of popular sympathy. There have been many literary treatments of the story, the most famous of which is Shelley's verse-drama, *The Cenci*, written in 1819.

Other writers drawn to the subject include Stendhal, Dickens, Artaud and Alberto Moravia. The appeal of the story is partly lurid—a pungent mix of Renaissance sex and violence; a sense of dark deeds behind the closed doors of a prominent Roman family. It affords a glimpse, in Shelley's words, of “the most dark and secret caverns of the human heart.”

There is also the ethical conundrum it poses, its puzzle of legal guilt v. moral innocence. At the end of Moravia's play, *Beatrice Cenci* (1958), she tells her prosecutors: “Accuse me if you wish, but I am innocent ... According to your justice you will certainly be able to prove that I am guilty of my father's death. But you will never be able to prove that I am not at the same time innocent according to another justice—a justice which you cannot know, still less administer.”

The beautiful murderer, the innocent sinner: La Cenci has cast her spell on the imagination—especially on a certain kind of male imagination—and it is with some difficulty that one digs back through the silt of literary sentiment to the event itself, which took place four hundred years ago, in the precipitous little village of La Petrella del Salto, in the foothills of the Abruzzi mountains a hundred kilometers north-east of Rome.

* * *

Sometime after seven o'clock on the morning of 9 September 1598, a woman called Plautilla Calvetti was combing flax in her house at La Petrella. She heard a confused clamor outside—“shouted words that I could not understand.”

She hurried out into the street. Someone she knew called to her: “Plautilla, Plautilla, they are screaming in the castle!”

The castle stood up on a steep crag above the village. It was known as La Rocca, and certainly today its stubby ruins, overgrown with broom and elder, look more like an outcrop of rock than the remains of a building. It was then the kind of rough-hewn, strategically placed fortress-cum-country-house that a very wealthy and very dodgy Roman nobleman might choose to hole up in when things got a bit hot—both climatically and figuratively—down in Rome. This was broadly the case with the current tenants of the building: Count Francesco Cenci, a 52-year-old Roman around whom accusations of corruption and violence clustered like summer flies; his second wife, Lucrezia; and his youngest daughter, Beatrice. The two women were essentially prisoners in the castle, slaves to the Count’s brutality, paranoia, and—if the rumors were to be believed—sexual abuse.

Plautilla knew the castle, and its secrets, rather better than most in the village. Her husband Olimpio was the *castellano*, or manager of the castle, and she, too, worked there as a housekeeper. This was why the villagers were here at her house, shouting that something was wrong—even more wrong than usual—up at La Rocca. Olimpio was absent, however.

Plautilla ran straight away up the steep track to the castle, “with one slipper on and one slipper off.” She saw Beatrice Cenci looking down at her from one of the windows. She called up to her: “Signora, what is the matter?” Beatrice did not answer. She was clearly distraught but “strangely silent,” unlike her stepmother Lucrezia, who could be heard screaming inside the castle.

Some men came hurrying down the track. As they passed Plautilla they told her: “Signor Francesco e morto.” The infamous Count Cenci was dead. His body was lying in what was called the “warren,” a dense patch of scrub below the castle rock which was used as a refuse tip. It appeared he had fallen from the wooden balcony that ran around the upper storey of the castle. There was a drop of six canne (about thirteen meters) into the warren. Part of the balcony had collapsed: one could see splintered wood, though the gap looked small for the bulky Count to have fallen through.

Ladders were fetched. Three or four of the men climbed down the “wilderness wall” and into the warren. They confirmed that Cenci was dead—despite his fall having been broken by the branches of an elder tree. Indeed, the body was already cold to the touch, suggesting death had occurred some hours

before. It was hauled up with great difficulty, roped to one of the ladders, and on this improvised stretcher it was carried to the castle pool, down below the outer gate.

A crowd of villagers had gathered, among them three priests. They stared at the mortal remains of the great Count Cenci. His face and head were matted with blood; his costly casacca, or gown of camel's hair, was torn and befouled with the rubbish of the warren: a "miserable rag."

It was during the washing of the body, at the castle pool, that questions started to be raised. As they rinsed the blood off the Count's raddled face, they found three wounds on the side of his head. Two were on the right temple, the larger one "a finger long." The deepest and ugliest wound was near the right eye. One of the women deputed to wash the body, whose name was Dorotea, made irreverent comments about the dead man. She thrust her forefinger into the wound with grisly relish. One of the priests, Don Scossa, later said: "I could not look at it any longer." Porzia Catalano, another onlooker, said: "I turned my eyes aside so I didn't have to look, because it frightened me."

It was not the ghoulish jesting of Dorotea that struck the priests, however, so much as the nature of the wounds. How far their statements were shaped by later knowledge we do not know, but the priests who witnessed the washing of the body all claimed to have recognized instantly that the wounds on Cenci's head had been made not by a fall from the balcony but by a violent blow with a sharp instrument. They thought they had been "made with a cutting tool like a hatchet" or with a "pointed iron," or possibly with a stiletto.

One of the priests, Don Tomassini, also noted a deep bruise on the Count's arm, above the left wrist. Thus, even before the dead man's eyes had been closed (or rather, as Don Scosso pedantically noted, "the left eye, for the right eye was completely destroyed by the wound"); even before the body, clad in a fresh shirt and laid on sheets and cushions from the castle linen-chest, had been carried down the twisting lane to the village church of Santa Maria which was to be its resting-place, it was already suspected that Count Cenci's death was not an accident but a case of murder.

Standing on the site of the castle pool four centuries later, assisted by the conventions of the Hammer horror-movie which this story often resembles, one envisages that moment of dawning recognition, when the assembled villagers fall

silent, and their eyes slowly turn back up to the forbidding silhouette of La Rocca, to the “strangely silent” figure of Beatrice at the window.

This brief account, based on statements by witnesses, catches at least something of the reality of the Cenci murder. It is a local event, as all historical events are to begin with; a sudden noisy intrusion into the routines of a late summer morning in La Petrella. This is the event before the dust has settled. Thereafter it becomes progressively distorted by various kinds of partisanship—the police investigation, the extraction of confessions, the hectoring of the trial, the blanket cruelties of the verdict—and then by the obscuring draperies of legend.

The investigation—by the Neapolitan authorities, who controlled the province of Abruzzo Ulteriore—was thorough and even ardent defenders of Beatrice do not dispute its basic findings. Count Cenci had indeed been murdered, horribly. While he slept, drugged by a sleeping draught prepared by Lucrezia, two men had entered his bedroom. Despite the drug, it seems he awoke. One of the men held him down—the bruise on the wrist which Don Tomassino spotted—while the other placed an iron spike against his head and drove it in with a hammer. The two slighter wounds on the Count’s head were probably botched blows before the coup de grâce smashed home. They then dressed the body, humped it to the edge of the balcony and threw it down into the warren. Leaving a half-hearted hole in the balcony floor to make it look like an accident, and a mass of scene of the crime evidence—blood-soaked sheets and the rest—to show that it wasn’t, they rode off into the night.

The two men were Olimpio Calvetti—the trusted castellano of La Rocca, the husband of Plautilla and, it later transpired, the lover of Beatrice—and a hired accomplice, Marzio Catalano, a.k.a. Marzio da Fiorani. These were the murderers of Count Cenci, but they were really only hit-men. The true architects of the murder were the Count’s immediate family: Lucrezia and Beatrice, his long-suffering wife and daughter; and his eldest surviving son, Giacomo. The latter was actually in Rome when it happened, but his extensive confessions provided the bulk of the case against them. Beatrice was said to have been the most implacable of the conspirators, the one who urged the assassins on when they balked at the last moment. She, however, refused to confess, even under torture.

The judicial process lasted exactly a year, during which time both of the murderers died. Olimpio Calvetti, on the run in the Abruzzi hills—we shift from Hammer Horror to Spaghetti Western here—had his head sliced off with a hatchet by a bounty-hunter. Marzio Catalano died under torture in the interrogation rooms

of the Tordinona Prison in Rome. On 10 September 1599, Giacomo, Beatrice and Lucrezia Cenci were executed outside the Castel Sant'Angelo on the banks of the Tiber.

Giacomo's death was protracted—he was drawn through the streets on a cart, his flesh mutilated with heated pincers, his head smashed with a sledgehammer, his body quartered—but the two women walked to their death “unbound and in mourning garments” and were “cleanly” beheaded. A not entirely trustworthy account of the execution adds that Lucrezia had difficulty settling at the block because of the largeness of her breasts. A fourth Cenci, Bernardo, too young to be actively involved, was forced to watch the killing of his kin and was dispatched to the galleys thereafter.

The affair was a cause célèbre, which echoed briefly through the newsletters of the day: “The death of the young girl, who was of very beautiful presence and of most beautiful life, has moved all Rome to compassion”; “She was 17 and very beautiful”; “She was very valorous” at her death, unlike her stepmother, who was a “rag.”

The bald facts of the case do not go very far in explaining the passionate interest it has aroused, which has little to do with the actual murder of Count Cenci: on that, posterity's verdict is a simple “good riddance.” It is rather the particular quality—real or imagined—of the person who has become the protagonist, the star, of the story: Beatrice Cenci.

Though there was undoubtedly a continuous knowledge of the case from the late 16th century onwards, the legend of Beatrice Cenci is essentially a Romantic construct whose origin can be found in a long and highly-colored account by the historian Ludovico Antonio Muratori, in his 12-volume chronicle, *Annali d'Italia*, published in the 1740s. This popular book brought the case to a new generation of Italian readers, and when Shelley arrived in Rome in 1819 he found that ‘the story of the Cenci was a subject not to be mentioned in Italian society without awakening a deep and breathless interest.’ For Beatrice herself, he added, “the company never failed to incline to a romantic pity” and a “passionate exculpation” for the crime she had committed.

Shelley almost certainly knew Muratori's version and may also have known an early dramatization by the obscure and prolific Florentine playwright Vincenzo Pieracci (1760-1824), but the only source he mentions in the introduction to his play is a mysterious old manuscript, which he describes as ‘copied from the

archives of the Cenci Palace in Rome' and 'communicated' to him by a friend. Mary Shelley also mentions this manuscript in her later notes on the play, though exactly what it was, and how much Shelley's historical errors or re-workings were taken from it, is unclear.

His version of the murder itself, for instance, is strangely sanitized: the Count is strangled by Olimpio, "that there might be no blood." This accords rather better with his idealization of Beatrice than the messy reality of the murder.

Shelley's poetic heroine, agonizing between the impossible alternatives of incest and parricide in tones that sometimes recall Isabella in *Measure for Measure*, is the exemplar of the Romantic Beatrice and ushers in a parade of doomed heroines in prose works by Stendhal (*Les Cenci*, 1839), Niccolini (*Beatrice Cenci*, 1844), Guerrazzi (*Beatrice Cenci*, 1853)—the latter a work of almost unbearable treaciness—together with shorter essays or treatments by the elder Dumas and Swinburne. In the 20th century the legend has persisted—a film (*Beatrice Cenci*, 1909) directed by the Italian Expressionist director Mario Caserini; a Theatre of Cruelty version, *Les Cenci*, by Antonin Artaud, first performed in Paris in 1934, with Artaud in the role of the wicked Count; and Alberto Moravia's wordy, Anouilhesque play, *Beatrice Cenci* (1958).

Then there is oral tradition. A typical synoptic version of the story runs: "her father dishonored her, and in revenge she killed him by stabbing a silver pin into his ear" (Carlo Merkel, *Due Leggende intorno a Beatrice Cenci*, 1893).

Another, recorded in *La Petrella* in the Twenties by Corrado Ricci, describes her torture: "they hung her up by her yellow hair, which reached to her knees." This finds its way into Artaud's play: "From the ceiling of the stage a wheel is revolving on its invisible axis. Beatrice, attached to the wheel by her hair, is urged on by a guard who grips her wrists behind her back."

These literary or anecdotal aspects of the legend are closely connected with a visual aspect: the supposed portrait of Beatrice by Guido Reni, which shows a beautiful young girl with brown hair and wide, lustrous eyes. According to tradition—scrupulously nurtured by all the 19th-century writers on the subject—the portrait was taken from the life during Beatrice's imprisonment, in late 1598 or 1599.

An alternative tradition, taking into account the unlikeliness of the unknown Guido being able to visit her in the Corte Sevelia prison, says it was based on a glimpse the artist had of her in the street as she went to her death. Shelley saw it in

1818, in the Palazzo Colonna in Rome, and described the face as “one of the loveliest specimens of the workmanship of Nature.

“There is a fixed and pale composure upon the features; she seems sad and stricken down in spirit, yet the despair thus expressed is lightened by the patience of gentleness ... The lips have that permanent meaning of imagination and sensibility which her suffering has not repressed ... Her eyes, which we are told were remarkable for their vivacity, are swollen with weeping and lusterless, but beautifully tender and serene. In the whole mien there is simplicity and dignity which, united with her exquisite loveliness and deep sorrow, are inexpressibly pathetic.”

The portrait was, in Mary Shelley’s view, the spark which ignited the poet’s interest—Beatrice’s “beauty cast the reflection of its own grace over her appalling story; Shelley’s imagination became strangely excited.”

A few years later, the expatriate French novelist Henri Beyle, better known as Stendhal, was similarly moved, seeing in the portrait “a poor girl of 16 who has only just surrendered to despair. The face is sweet and beautiful, the expression very gentle, the eyes extremely large; they have the astonished air of a person who has just been surprised at the very moment of shedding scalding tears.”

Dickens found it “a picture almost impossible to be forgotten,” full of “transcendent sweetness” and “beautiful sorrow.” In her face ‘there is a something shining out that haunts me. I see it now, as I see this paper, or my pen’ (Pictures from Italy, 1846). Nathaniel Hawthorne, meanwhile, found the picture “the very saddest ever painted or conceived: it involves an unfathomable depth of sorrow.” It is “infinitely heartbreaking to meet her glance ... She is a fallen angel—fallen and yet sinless.” (Transformations, 1858).

Despite these plangent and heavyweight endorsements, it is almost certain that the face in the portrait has nothing at all to do with Beatrice Cenci. Guido Reni, a Bolognese by birth, is not known to have painted in Rome before 1608, nine years after her death. In its visual imagery—particularly the turban-like drapery—the portrait is more likely to be a representation of one of the Sibyls. (There is a turbaned Cumaean Sibyl by Guido Reni at the Uffizi.) The girl’s extreme youth suggests she is the Samian Sybil, sometimes referred to in classical sources as a puella.

The earliest connection of the portrait with Beatrice appears to be in a catalogue of paintings owned by the Colonna family, compiled in 1783—"Item 847. Picture of a head. Portrait believed to be of the Cenci girl. Artist unknown."

In documentary terms this identification, itself tentative, belongs to the late 18th century, to the time of the upsurge of interest in La Cenci arising from the account in Muratori's *Annales*. It is not too cynical to suggest that her name was appended to the picture to lend it a spurious glamour. This seems to have been the result, for when Shelley showed a copy of it to his Roman servant, he instantly recognized it as the portrait of La Cenci.

The painting now hangs in the gloomy corridors of the Palazzo Barberini; it was purchased in 1934 by the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica. The label below it has a question mark after both the artist and the subject, and adds an apologetic note that the painting is of "poor quality" and is only famous because of its supposed connection with Beatrice.

A couple of rooms away hangs the gallery's masterwork: Caravaggio's breathtaking *Judith Cutting off the Head of Holofernes*. In the expression of Judith, resolute but disgusted by the sheer messiness of the operation; in the fountains of blood spurting over the bed-sheets; in the scarcely veiled eroticism—her hardened nipple is painted with great specificity beneath the white gown—one might see an entirely different reading of Beatrice Cenci: not sweet and mournful like the young Sybil, but steeled to a necessary, or perhaps merely expedient, act of butchery.

There is no provable connection between Caravaggio's Judith and Beatrice, but it is by no means impossible. Caravaggio was working in Rome at the time of the trial and execution and the painting is broadly datable to this period. Perhaps it contains a vein of comment on the Cenci case; it is rather more likely to do so than the dubious Reni portrait, which caused so many flutters beneath the frock-coats of the literati.

In the later 19th century, the case became the object of more serious historical investigation. In some instances the findings contradicted the received pseudo-facts of the legend, though they did little to diminish its popularity. Even sober scholars found it hard to resist the peculiar allure of La Cenci. When a Victorian antiquarian, Edward Cheney, discovered an autograph letter of Beatrice's in a Roman archive, he duly published the text in a learned periodical (*Philobiblon*, Vol 6, 1861). Halfway through his transcription, however, he signals an omission, with a note that states: "Here the manuscript is illegible from tears having blotted

it.” I have seen a photograph of the original document. There is some deterioration of the paper, but no sign whatever that this was caused by La Cenci’s teardrops. The bibliophile has suffered that characteristic rush of blood to the head which Beatrice excites in all the historians, particularly male ones.

The most challenging documentary discoveries were made by a tenacious archival ferret, Dr Antonio Bertoletti. In 1879 he published his findings in a slim, refreshingly dry volume, *Francesco Cenci e la sua Famiglia*. His first discovery was a manuscript volume in the Vittorio Emmanuele library in Rome, headed “*Memorie dei Cenci*.” In it he found, in the surprisingly well-formed hand of Count Cenci, a precise register of the births and deaths of his many children. Among these Bertoletti was surprised by the following entry: “*Beatrice Cenci mia figlia. Naque alla 6 di febraio 1577 di giorno di mercoledi alla ore 23, et e nata nella nostra casa.*”

So we learn that the beautiful teenage girl of legend, invariably described as 16 or 17, was actually 22 years and seven months old when she died. Her birthplace—“our house”—was the rambling Palazzo Cenci, on the edge of Rome’s Jewish ghetto. It is still standing, though split into apartments and offices: one may imagine her passing under its dark archways, lingering by the small fountain in the courtyard, walking up the marble stairs. From the top floors she could see the broad sweep of the Tiber, and on the far bank the drum-like shape of the Castel Sant’Angelo, where she would meet her death. The topography suggests the narrowly circumscribed ambit of her life.

Bertoletti also made a remarkable discovery in his examination of Beatrice’s will, or rather—crucially—wills. (The fact that she was allowed to write a will at all puts a question mark over the received view that Pope Clement VIII hounded the Cenci to death in order to swell his coffers with confiscated revenues.) In her first and fullest will, notarized on 27 August 1599, Beatrice left a great deal of money—about 20,000 scudi in all—to charitable and religious causes. She made particular provision, in the form of trusts, for the dowries of poor girls in marriage. She also made a number of smaller bequests, typically 100 scudi, to individual relatives and retainers. What caught Bertoletti’s eye, however, was the following clause, and the rather more secretive trust-fund it alluded to:

“Item. I bequeath to Madonna Catarina de Santis, widow, 300 scudi in money, to be placed at interest, and the interest to be given in alms according to the instructions I have given her. If the said Madonna Catarina should die, this legacy is to be transferred to others, on condition that they use it for the same purpose,

according to my intention, as long as the person to whom these alms are to be given remains alive.”

Beatrice’s friend Catarina de Santis is obscurely traceable: a respectable widow with three unmarried daughters (also remembered in Beatrice’s will). But who is the unnamed person who is to be the beneficiary of the legacy, according to the instructions given to Catarina verbally but not revealed in the will? The probable answer was discovered by Bertolotti in a hitherto unknown codicil to the will, added by Beatrice on 7 September 1599, witnessed by her brother Giacomo and lodged with a different notary. In this codicil, written two days before her execution, she increases the sum allotted to Catarina to 1,000 scudi and specifies the purpose of the bequest as being “the support of a certain poor boy [povero fanciullo], according to the instructions I have verbally given her.”

She also adds that if the boy attains the age of 20, he should be granted free possession of the capital. It cannot be proved, but it seems very likely that this “poor boy” for whom she made such generous and secret provision was her son. If so, there is not much doubt that the father of the boy was Olimpio Calvetti, whose intimacy with Beatrice is noted by many witnesses. The hushing up of a pregnancy may have been one of the reasons for the imprisonment of Beatrice at La Rocca.

From these documents a different Beatrice emerges. The angelic Beatrice of legend, the sweet and mournful girl of the Guido Reni portrait, the spotless damsel (or sublimated Lolita) of the 19th-century romancers, proves to have been a tough young woman in her twenties, probably the mother of an illegitimate child, probably the lover of her father’s murderer. This does not, of course, lessen the awfulness of her situation or the tyranny of her father. Nor does it lessen the evils of the sexual abuse she suffered, even if her vaunted chastity is no longer part of that equation. But how much of this is fact? Did her father really violate her, or attempt to do so?

Throughout her interrogation Beatrice maintained that she was entirely innocent of the murder. Her defense was simply that she had no motive for killing her father. It was only later, during the long and crucial summing-up by her lawyer, Prospero Farinacci, that the question of incest arose, as a compelling mitigation of her crime. Corrado Ricci notes sternly: “in all the trial records from November 1598 until August of the following year—in more than fifty examinations—there is not the slightest hint of any such deed.” There is plenty of evidence of her father’s violent temper—it is certain that on one occasion he attacked her with a whip—but no mention of incest.

Then, in her last examination, on 19 August 1599, Beatrice reports her stepmother Lucrezia urging her with these words to kill her father: “he will abuse you and rob you of your honor.” This seems to suggest that sexual violence was threatened, though the phrasing does not prove that any sexual violence had yet taken place. Ten days later, a former servant at La Petrella, Calidonia Lorenzini, appeared before the prosecutor. (She did so voluntarily, at the request of certain friends of Beatrice’s.) In her deposition she stated that a few days before Christmas 1597, she was in bed at ‘the third hour of the night’, when Lucrezia came in, having been sent out of the bedroom by the Count.

A few minutes later, she relates, “I heard a voice, which seemed to me that of Beatrice, saying: ‘I do not want to be burned!’ I heard nothing else afterwards. The following morning I asked Signora Beatrice what had ailed her when she uttered those words ... She told me that her father had come into her bed, and she had told him she did not wish him to sleep there.” In terms of statements by witnesses this is as near as we get to first-hand evidence of the bruited incest. The prosecutor was not impressed: he was particularly skeptical that the chattering Calidonia could have kept all this secret from her fellow-maid, Girolama, who knew nothing of it.

Girolama herself gives a vivid glimpse of the brutishness of domestic life in the Cenci household. It was the Count’s custom, she said, to have his skin scratched and scraped with a damp cloth—he suffered from a form of mange. This duty often fell to Beatrice.

She told Girolama “that sometimes she scratched her father’s testicles; and she said also that she used to dream that I, too, was scratching them, and I said to her: ‘That will I never do!’” Girolama also reported that “Signor Francesco used to go about the house in just a shirt and doublet and a pair of drawers, and when he urinated, it was necessary to hold the urinal for him under his shirt, and sometimes [Beatrice] was obliged to hold it; and it was also necessary sometimes to hold the close-stool.” These observations tell us something about life inside La Rocca, but they do not constitute proof that Cenci had raped his daughter.

It may be that the certainty of Beatrice’s violation at the hands of her father is the hardest part of the legend for us to surrender, but the truth of the Cenci case, as with many cases of sexual abuse in the family today, will never be known. There are too many untrustworthy sources: suborned and frightened witnesses (witnesses were routinely tortured—hoisted on ropes or stretched on a kind of rack known as *la veglia*—to make them agree with others); documents that may not

after all mean what we think they mean; a profusion of folklore and fantasy and poetic wish-fulfillment that has worked its way too deep into the story to be separated out.

Francesco Cenci was an arrogant, greedy, lecherous and violent man. There are many reasons why he might have had his head stove in on a dark night in the badlands of the Abruzzi. Lust for his daughter, credible but unproven, may have been one of them. At least five people were involved in the killing. Each had motives of some sort, but only one (the hit man Marcio, who was in it for the money) had a motive that can be defined with any certainty.

The ethereal legend of Beatrice does not itself contain the complexities and untidiness of the truth: it is a memory device that serves to remind us of the intense repressions and vulnerabilities suffered by a well-born young woman in late Renaissance Italy. In this sense, as a representative, as an individual woman who speaks for countless others, Beatrice is a heroine.

But to the other questions we want to ask—What was she really like? What really happened and why?—she gives no answer.

There was “screaming in the castle”; there were “shouted words.” They were audible for a moment above the white noise of history but are no longer decipherable.

Lesson #39: The Hunley (1864)

The Confederate States Ship (CSS) *H. L. Hunley* was a submarine of the Confederate States Navy that demonstrated both the advantages and the dangers of undersea warfare. *Hunley* was the first submarine to sink a warship, though the sub was also sunk in the engagement.

It was a hungry time in Charleston, South Carolina, those early months of 1864. Bombarded by land and blockaded by sea, the city that cheered the opening shots of the American Civil War remained proudly defiant, but its Rebel defenders were looking mighty pinched. Salt pork, corn, boots, blankets, lead for musket balls, and most everything else the army needed was in critically short supply. The Union Navy's chokehold on the city's harbor would have to be broken soon, and the best hope for doing that lay with a strange and secret new weapon—a "diving torpedo-boat" christened the *H. L. Hunley*.

Privately invented and paid for, by Horace Lawson Hunley and built in 1863 by Park and Lyons of Mobile, Alabama, *Hunley* was fashioned like a cylindrical iron steam boiler, which was deepened and also lengthened through the addition of tapered ends. The *Hunley* was designed to be hand powered by a crew of eight: seven to turn the hand-cranked propeller and one to steer and direct the boat. As a true submarine, each end was equipped with ballast tanks that could be flooded by valves or pumped dry by hand pumps. Extra ballast was added through the use of iron weights bolted to the underside of the hull. In the event the submarine needed additional buoyancy to rise in an emergency, the iron weight could be removed by unscrewing the heads of the bolts from inside the vessel.

On August 29, 1863 five of a crew of eight was killed during a training attack, when the skipper accidentally dove with the hatches still open. On October 15, 1863 the *Hunley* failed to surface during a trial dive, killing its inventor Horace Lawson Hunley and seven other crewmen. In both cases, the Confederate Navy salvaged the vessel and returned it to service.

Shortly after sunset on the night of February 17, at a dock on nearby Sullivans Island, eight audacious Confederates squeezed inside the claustrophobic iron vessel and set out on a quixotic mission. Affixed to the boat's bow was a 22-foot long spar tipped with a deadly charge of 90 pounds of black powder. At the helm was Lt. George Dixon, a bold-hearted, battle-scarred army officer. Behind him, wedged shoulder to shoulder on a wooden bench, sat seven crewmen whose muscles powered the sub's hand-cranked propeller. As the crew began turning the

heavy iron crankshaft, Dixon consulted a compass and set course for a daunting target—the steam sloop U.S.S. *Housatonic*, 1800 tons with 12 guns, stationed four miles (six kilometers) offshore. The Rebels’ plan was to run about six feet (two meters) below the surface until they neared the blockader. But in order for Dixon to take final aim, he would have to resurface just enough to peer through the sub’s tiny forward viewport.

At 8:45 p.m. John Crosby, acting master aboard the *Housatonic*, spotted something off the starboard beam that looked at first like a “porpoise, coming to the surface to blow.” There had been warnings of a possible attack by a Confederate “infernal machine,” and Crosby was swift to sound the alarm. Sailors rushed to quarters and let loose a barrage of small arms fire at the alien object barely breaking the surface, but the attacker was unstoppable.

Two minutes later the *Hunley* rammed her spar into the *Housatonic*’s starboard side, well below the waterline. The explosives were embedded in the sloop’s wooden side and were detonated by a rope/trigger, as the *Hunley* backed away. The resulting explosion sent the *Housatonic* with five crew members to the bottom of Charleston Harbor, in five minutes. The *Hunley* also sank, moments after signaling shore, possibly because of the blast, although this is not certain. The entire crew died, but the *H. L. Hunley* earned a place in the history of undersea warfare as the first submarine to sink a ship in wartime.

The Wreck

The search for the *Hunley* ended in 1995, 131 years later, when best-selling author Clive Cussler, and his team from the National Underwater and Marine Agency (NUMA) discovered the submarine after a 14-year search. At the time of discovery, Cussler and NUMA were conducting this research in partnership with the South Carolina Institute of Anthropology and Archaeology (SCIAA). The team realized that they had found the *Hunley* after exposing the forward hatch and the ventilator box (the air box for the attachment of a snorkel). The submarine rested on its starboard side at about a 45-degree angle and was covered in a 1/4 to 3/4-inch encrustation of ferrous oxide bonded with sand and seashell particles. Archaeologists exposed a little more on the port side and found the bow dive plane on that side. More probing revealed an approximate length of 40 feet, with all of the vessel preserved under the sediment.

Archaeological investigation and excavation culminated with the raising of the *Hunley* from its watery grave on August 8, 2000. A large team of professionals

from the Naval Historical Center's Underwater Archaeology Branch, National Park Service, the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, and various other individuals investigated the vessel, measuring and documenting it prior to removal. Once the on site investigation was complete, harnesses were slipped underneath the sub one by one and attached to a truss designed by Oceaneering, Inc. After the last harness had been secured, the crane from *Clarissa B* (a U.S. Navy barge) began hoisting the submarine from the mire of the harbor entrance.

On August 8, 2000 at 8:37 a.m. the sub broke the surface for the first time in over 136 years, where it was greeted by a cheering crowd lining the shore and in hundreds of nearby watercraft. Once safely on its transporting barge, the *Hunley* finally completed its last voyage back to Charleston. The removal operation reached its successful conclusion when the submarine was secured inside the Warren Lasch Conservation Center, at the former Charleston Navy Yard in a specially designed tank of freshwater to await conservation.

The Crew

Apart from the commander of the submarine, Lt. George Dixon, the identities of the volunteer crewmembers of the *Hunley* remained a mystery. Douglas Owsley, a physical anthropologist working for the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History examined the remains and determined that four of the men were American born, while the four others were European born, based on the chemical signatures left on the men's teeth and bones by the predominant components of their diet: four of the men had eaten a lot of corn, indicating that they were likely Americans, while the remainder ate mostly wheat and rye, indicating that they probably originated in Europe.

By examining Civil War records and conducting DNA testing with possible relatives, forensic genealogist Linda Abrams was able to identify the remains of Dixon and the three other men: Frank Collins, Joseph Ridgaway, and James A. Wicks. Identifying the European crew members has been more problematic, but was apparently solved in late 2004. The position of the corpses indicated that the men apparently died at their stations, and were not trying to flee the sinking submarine.

On 17 April 2004 the remains of the crew of the *H. L. Hunley* were interred in Charleston's Magnolia Cemetery with full military honors, and attended by as many as 10,000 civil war re-enactors and well wishers.

Hunley herself remains at the “Lasch” conservation center, for further study and conservation. There have been many surprising discoveries over time, including the complexity of the sub’s ballast and pumping systems, steering and diving apparatus, and its construction and final assembly. Another surprise occurred in 2002, when a researcher, examining the area close to Lieutenant Dixon, found the famous gold coin, long thought to be a myth, which his girlfriend had given to him. Legend had held that Dixon had the coin with him at the Battle of Shiloh, where he was wounded in 1862. A bullet, which would have probably cost him his leg and possibly his life, struck the coin in his pocket. The coin was badly bent but saved Dixon from injury and was later engraved by him to mark the occasion.

Lesson #40: The Affair of the Poisons (1679)

Louis XIV, France's Sun King, had the longest reign in European history, from 1643 to 1715—72 years. During this time he brought absolute monarchy to its height, established a glittering court at Versailles, and fought most of the other European countries in four wars. He added more territory permanently to France than did Napoleon.

The early personal reign of Louis was highly successful in both internal and foreign affairs. Breaking with tradition, Louis excluded from his council members of his immediate family, great princes, and others of the old military nobility (*noblesse d'epee*); his reliance on the newer judicial nobility (*noblesse de robe*). Local government was increasingly placed under removable intendants. At home Louis created what we would call today a dictatorship, replacing the old feudal order. The parliaments lost their traditional power to obstruct legislation; the judicial structure was reformed by the codes of civil procedure (1667) and criminal procedure (1669), although the overlapping and confusing laws were left untouched. Urban law enforcement was improved by creation (1667) of the office of lieutenant general of police for Paris, later imitated in other towns.

This becomes important when the Affair of the Poisons is discussed; France was the only country in Europe in the seventeenth century that had anything we would recognize today as a police force.

Money was lavished on buildings. In Paris the Louvre was essentially completed with the classical colonnade by Claude Perrault. At Versailles, Louis XIII's hunting lodge was transformed into a remarkable palace and park, which were copied by Louis's fellow monarchs across Europe. When the king moved permanently to Versailles in 1682, an elaborate court etiquette was established that had the aristocracy, including former rebel princes, vying to participate in Louis's rising (*leve*) and retiring (*couche*). These ceremonies led to the saying that, at a distance, one could tell what was happening at the palace merely by glancing at an almanac and a watch.

The turning point in Louis's reign between the earlier grandeur and the later disasters came after Colbert's death (1683). In 1685 the king took the disastrous step of revoking the Protestant minority's right to worship by revoking the Edict of Nantes. Many Huguenots—who constituted an industrious segment of French society—left the country, taking with them considerable capital as well as skills. In

addition Louis's display of religious intolerance helped unite the Protestant powers of Europe against the Sun King.

For a time in the third quarter of the seventeenth century, Louis's France reigned supreme, all the world reflecting the Sun King's glory. But at the heart, Louis's empire was rotten. The Affair of the Poisons, as it was known, was a scandal at which all France trembled and which horrified the whole of Europe as it implicated a number of prominent persons at the court of Louis XIV in wild orgies, murder by poison, abortion and the sacrifice of infants in Satanic rituals, and black magic directed against the King himself.

* * *

It began with the trial of Marie Madeleine d'Aubray, Marquise de Brinvilliers, who conspired with her lover, Godin de Sainte-Croix, an army captain, to poison her father and two brothers in order to secure the family fortune and to end interference in her adulterous relationship.

Sainte-Croix was a rake, a spendthrift, an occultist and alchemist, a kind of seventeenth-century mad scientist who whipped up his own poisons in his own fully equipped laboratory, where he wore a special mask of leather and glass rather like a modern gas mask while he brewed his lethal concoctions. The beautiful Marquise developed a reputation for charity by visiting hospitals for the poor and bringing them dainty delicacies to eat; no one seems to have noticed that most of her patients died soon after her visits. What she was doing was testing Sainte-Croix's poisons out on live subjects.

The two murderous lovers were finally discovered when Sainte-Croix's mask slipped off one day while he was doing some kind of experiment that produced poison gas, and he collapsed and perished before he could get out of the room. The police found all kinds of incriminating documents and letters from Marie in his rooms; apparently the charming fellow was blackmailing his paramour to make sure he got his share of the family loot.

The marquise fled abroad, but in 1676 was located at Liège. She had gone to ground in a convent on the Austrian Netherlands side of the border. Not only was she out of French jurisdiction, but she was on holy ground and good Catholic that he was, Louis XIV refused to countenance any forcible raid to snatch her out of her sanctified lair. The commander of the Paris police, Lieutenant General Nicholas de la Reynie, therefore sent one of his boldest detectives—Captain Desgrez—with orders to somehow or other get the murdering Marquise in custody on French soil.

The captain disguised himself as a priest, gained entry to the convent, and managed to become the Marquise's confessor. Apparently the Paris cop was a handsome young man and Marie still had a yen for such; he declared himself madly and passionately in love with her, but what with him allegedly being a priest and all, he could not possibly defile the sacred precincts of the convent with his carnal lust. He managed to lure Marie out of the convent, with her expecting a one-night stand of priestly passion. He then threw her into a sealed carriage which pelted pell-mell for the border, and by morning she was back in France and on her way to Paris under arrest.

The affair greatly worked on the popular imagination, and there were rumors that she had tried out her poisons on hospital patients. At her trial she was scornful and insolent, which did her no good. She was subjected to the agonizing water torture to make her confess, then sentenced to death. Being a noblewoman she was not hanged on a gallows along with the peasantry, but she was beheaded with a sword by a black-masked executioner in best theatrical style, and her body was then burned.

The Brinvilliers trial attracted attention to other mysterious deaths. Parisian society had long been seized by a fad for spiritualist séances, fortune-telling, and the use of love potions, and the mortality rate among wealthy older men in the capital was becoming truly alarming, producing a bevy of wealthy young widows beyond the statistical norm. In 1679 things got so bad that the Catholic Church unofficially contacted the Paris police to inform them that, although they could not violate the secrets of the confessional in specific cases, a frightening number of women were confessing to their priests that they had poisoned their husbands, fathers, brothers, and other relatives for their inheritances.

The most celebrated case was that of La Voisin, a midwife and fortune-teller whose real name was Catherine Deshayes Monvoisin. Among her clients were Olympe Mancini, Comtesse de Soissons, who sought the death of the king's mistress, Louise de la Valliere; Mme. de Montespan, Mme de Gramont (la belle Hamilton), the Marechal de Luxembourg, and others. Her husband, Monvoisin, was an unsuccessful jeweler, and she practiced chiromancy and palm-reading to retrieve their fortunes. She gradually added the practice of witchcraft, in which she had the help of a renegade priest, Etienne Guibourg, whose part was the celebration of the Black Mass, an abominable parody in which the host was compounded of the blood of a little child mixed with horrible ingredients. She practiced medicine, especially midwifery, procured abortion and provided love powders and poisons.

Her chief accomplice was one of her lovers, the magician Lesage, whose real name was Adam Coeuret. The great ladies of Paris flocked to La Voisin, who accumulated enormous wealth. The bones of toads, the teeth of moles, cantharides, iron filings, human blood and human dust were among the ingredients of the love powders concocted by La Voisin. The art of poisoning had become a regular science. The death of Henrietta, duchess of Orleans, was attributed to poison, and it is unknown how many people of lesser rank were murdered in this manner.

The Paris police chief de la Reynie was extremely concerned about the rumors of mass poisoning, which by now were floating all over Europe and worse yet, had reached the ear of the King, who was asking pointed questions. But he was working in the dark. All he had to go on were wild and unsubstantiated tales and a few whispered names, among them that of La Voisin. Once again he called upon the expertise of Desgrez—only this time it was the talented police captain's equally intrepid, beautiful young wife, Solange.

Solange Desgrez became the first undercover policewoman known to history. She went to La Voisin's shop, ostensibly selling soaps and perfumes, and managed to worm her way into the poisoner's confidence. Solange played the part of a giddy young married woman with a secret lover and a rich, elderly husband she wanted to get rid of, and she succeeded in making "buys" of several lethal quantities of potent poisons from Catherine Deshayes, who by now seems to have become overconfident in her immunity and the protection of her powerful patrons.

In April of 1679 de la Reynie swooped in history's first organized crime raid. A small army of police and soldiers kicked in doors all over Paris and arrested dozens of people in connection with crimes ranging from fraud, fortune-telling, and keeping illegal drinking and gambling houses all the way up to murder, blasphemy, witchcraft, and treason. A special court, the *Chambre Ardente* [Burning Chamber], was instituted to judge cases of poisoning and witchcraft. Some of the sessions were held in secret, but others were public, and despite the lack of Court TV, Greta Van Susteren and Nancy Grace, the world watched in fascination as the gilded denizens of Versailles and the highest nobles in the land were hauled into court alongside the most sordid dregs of the Paris underworld.

In an even further similarity to present times, none of the celebrity accused or witnesses was punished, although some like the Comtesse de Soissons endured one session of grilling questions from de la Reynie and the stern judges and fled the country, never to return. It was said that at night the cobbled streets of Paris rang with the horses' hooves and wheels of the carriages of noble ladies fleeing the

city and heading for their country estates, or for the frontiers of the kingdom to get beyond the *Chambre Ardente's* reach. No serious effort was ever made to arrest or try them, but the thrifty King Louis fined many of his nobles huge sums and in some cases confiscated all their property due to their wives' indiscretions.

The wretched criminal element was left holding the bag, and they got it in the neck. La Voisin was burned alive after excruciating torture, after watching her husband hanged before her eyes. Her lover Lesage died in prison from maltreatment. Her daughter was dropped into a hole in the floor of the Bastille and never seen alive again. Dozens of other suspected witches and poisoners were burned at the stake or broken on the wheel. The Abbe Guiborg and other satanic priests were all made off with, either immured in dungeons for the rest of their lives or in Guiborg's case sent to the galleys where he died under the lash chained to an oar.

The immunity which noble ladies enjoyed who had bought poison from the witches, who had attended Black Masses, or given up their illegitimate infants for sacrifice by the devilish priests did not extend to those of lesser social status, the wives and daughters of tradesmen or merchants or artisans who had done the same thing. Throughout the early 1680s the Place de la Grève sometimes almost presaged the events of a hundred years later, only in place of a guillotine there were blackened stakes and the swaying bodies of women and girls hanged in rows on gallows around the square. It is not known how many people were executed in the *Chambre Ardente* purge, but it is believed to be several hundred.

The proceedings lasted for three years, and finally ended when they got too close to the throne itself. During a number of secret sessions, some under torture, it became clear that the King's reigning mistress, Madame de Montespan, when she felt her beauty fading and her power over the monarch slipping, had plotted to recover his affections by black magic, up to and including arranging for Black Masses wherein a baby was sacrificed and her own naked body served as the infernal altar. When this didn't keep the King's eye from wandering, in her increasingly frantic jealous rage, she hatched a conspiracy to poison Louis XIV, apparently being willing to administer the poison with her own hand.

This scandal was too much for Louis to bear, and on July 21st, 1682 he closed down the *Chambre Ardente* and ordered de la Reynie to seal all of its most sensitive documents up in a black mahogany chest, which the King then took personal possession of and sealed with his own seal. Madame de Montespan was quietly but firmly banished from court. Supposedly, after one terrible confrontation

in Versailles between Montespan, the King, and de la Reynie, Louis swore that he would never again be alone in her presence, and he kept the vow for the rest of his life.

Twenty years afterward, in 1712, after everyone involved but himself was dead, an ageing and dying Louis XIV summoned his ministers and ordered a fire lit in the conference chamber, even though it was mid-summer. In their presence opened the black casket containing the damning documents and testimony which had revealed the rottenness in his most glorious hour. Then he fed all the papers one by one into the flames.

Lesson #41: The Man in The Iron Mask (17th century)

Dear Straight Dope:

I've never seen the film on the subject, and being quite certain I never want to see another film starring Leonardo DiCaprio I probably never will see it. So I ask you, who was the Man in the Iron Mask?

I've asked many people about this guy who apparently spent 34 years in the Bastille wearing a metal contraption on his face, and one passing know-it-all told me that apparently the masked man scratched some words on a plate and dropped it out the window into the river, where it was fished out by a fisherman. The fisherman handed it in to the authorities, who would have killed him, had they not discovered he couldn't read. I don't think I believe the above story, but I ask you, what should I believe?—Raven, Liverpool

SDSTAFF Dex replies:

It's hard to know what to believe. There has been speculation, romantic literature, and analysis of all sorts for 300 years, with countless novels and theories by the likes of Voltaire, Pagnol and Jung. Most of the details that have come down to us are strictly flights of fancy. But the story wasn't manufactured from whole cloth. There really was a man in a mask.

The Facts

First, let's set the scene. We're in the reign of Louis XIV of France, the Sun King, who ruled from 1643 to 1715. It's the era of the "divine right of kings"—the king's power was absolute and unquestioned. To Louis XIV is attributed the quote: "*L'état, c'est moi!*" (I am the state.) At the other end of society were prisoners, many jailed by the king, who could imprison someone for any reason that struck his fancy. Political intrigue? Prison. Inappropriate remarks? Prison. Fashion faux pas? Maybe not prison, but who knows? Louis XIV condemned folks for good reasons and bad, with a "carefree flourish of the royal quill."

Our first record of a masked prisoner is from a notebook kept by Lieutenant Etienne du Junca, an official of the Bastille from October 1690 until his death in September 1706. His notebooks are "the most important and reliable source of information we have about the management and conduct of the Bastille under Louis XIV," according to Theodore M.R. von Keler.

The entry for Thursday, September 18, 1698, records the 3 p.m. arrival of a new governor of the Bastille, Bénigne d'Auvergne de Saint-Mars. Du Junca writes that Saint-Mars "brought with him, in a litter, a longtime prisoner, whom he had in custody in Pignerol, and whom he kept always masked, and whose name has not been given to me, nor recorded." Saint-Mars had been at Pignerol from 1665 to 1681, so the Man in the Mask had been imprisoned for at least 18 years prior to his arrival at Bastille, and perhaps as long as 33 years.

Du Junca's later comments indicate that the prisoner was well treated, and had no complaints. He was permitted to attend Mass on Sundays and holidays, but had to keep his face covered by a "black velvet mask." Du Junca's report is the only mention of a mask, and note that it is black velvet, not iron.

Five years later, on November 19, 1703, Du Junca records the death and burial of the "unknown prisoner, who has worn a black velvet mask since his arrival here in 1698." Saint-Mars had the name "Marchialy" inscribed in the parish register, but spelling in those days were subject to what John Noone calls "orthographical disorder."

The Legends

Those are the bare facts, but the legend started almost immediately. The prisoner aroused some curiosity at the time. Within a few months of the arrival of the masked prisoner at the Bastille, stories were already circulating, each one wilder and more improbable than the last.

The stories reached new heights after the prisoner's death. By 1711, we have letters from Princess Palatine, the second wife of Louis XIV's brother, speculating about the "man who lived masked for long years in the Bastille and masked he died there." Other prisoners later claimed they had known the Man in the Mask, and told their invented stories to different writers, such as Voltaire, who exaggerated them even more. Speculation ran wild over the next two centuries.

I'll give you a handful of legends, to give you the flavor.

That the mask was made of iron. Voltaire, writing in 1751, said it was riveted on, and described in detail a "movable, hinged lower jaw held in place by springs that made it possible to eat wearing it." The only reliable contemporary reference we have to the mask clearly calls it black velvet, not iron, but the "iron mask" caught the public's imagination.

That there were two soldiers always at his side ready to shoot him if he ever unmasked.

That he was treated with extreme courtesy by his jailors. The governor of the prison personally took care of his linens and meals. The governor and jailors removed their hats in his presence, remained standing until he invited them to sit, served his meals on silver plate, and so forth—in short, etiquette accorded royalty. This legend was widespread, and makes a great story, but prison records show exactly what supplies were furnished—and they were pretty humble. Rooms in the Bastille before 1745 were unfurnished, as the majority of political prisoners preferred to provide their own furnishings. Du Junca's notebooks record that the masked prisoner had no furniture of his own, instead using the standard furniture provided by the governor. This implies that the Man in the Mask was not wealthy, and certainly wasn't treated "like royalty."

That each governor of the Bastille had to swear to the king not to reveal the identity of the masked prisoner to anyone, except to the successor governor. This legend is silly—there was only one governor of the Bastille during the imprisonment of the masked prisoner, namely, Saint-Mars.

The story you recounted: that the prisoner wrote a message with the point of a knife on a silver plate, and tossed the plate out the window into the river. It was found by a fisherman who brought it back to the prison, and was immediately questioned by the governor whether he had read what was on the plate. He said that he did not know how to read. He was imprisoned and interrogated and investigated, and it was proved that he had no schooling and could not read or write his own name. The governor then freed him, saying, "It is your great luck that you can't read!" This story was recounted by Voltaire in the 1750s. A similar story is told about a shirt of fine quality, covered with writing, found by a barber and returned to Saint-Mars; two days later, the barber was dead.

The reality is that prisoners did try to communicate with the outside world, and that Saint-Mars was concerned about such attempts. One prisoner (Pierre Slaves) may have used a pewter plate (not silver) and a shirt. The plate wasn't thrown out the window; the prisoner was trying to reach other prisoners (and perhaps a laundress). Guards foiled the attempts; no outsiders were involved.

That after the death of the prisoner, all his furnishings were cleared away. This is true, but not special; it was standard procedure when a prisoner died in his

room. A more elaborate version has it that the prisoner's belongings (clothes, sheets, paper) were burned and the room scrubbed and repainted.

In short, romantic fancy ran wild. But some of the legends had a grain of truth.

Louis XV is said to have told Madame du Pompadour that the masked prisoner was a "minister of an Italian prince." Louis XVI told Marie Antoinette that he was a political intriguer from Mantua in Italy. These comments are worth remembering, for they point to one of two likely suspects.

The myth of the iron mask took hold in the popular imagination. In the late 1700s, with revolution in the air, the growing discontent with royalty and tyranny found symbolic expression in the masked prisoner, confined for unknown reasons for 30 years, and dying masked. His prison, the Bastille, was the ultimate symbol of tyranny and repression.

When the Bastille was stormed in 1789, reports were circulated that the invaders had found the skeleton of a man, with an iron mask riveted around his head, chained to walls in one of the dank, hidden lower prisons. The discovery of an iron mask was a great coup in public relations, symbolizing the dreadful excesses of the monarchy. It was especially poignant if the poor prisoner were a "skeleton in the cupboard of the French Royal House" (as John Noone puts it). As such, the myth (then and now) far outweighed the reality.

In 1855, an iron mask, with a Latin inscription, was put on public display as the "identical mask which the famous prisoner in the Bastille had worn during his incarceration." People paid admission to see this wonderful (but wholly fabricated) relic, which may still be seen in the museum at Langres.

So, who was the Man in the Mask? Two approaches have been used to solve the mystery, the speculative and the historical.

The Speculative Approach

As early as 1715, authors and political pundits approached the mystery of the masked prisoner by trying to answer the main questions: Why was the prisoner masked? Most people, including Voltaire, reasoned (then and now) that the mask must have been used to conceal his identity, or at least, to hide his face. In those days, there were not many faces that might have been recognized by the average

prison guard or person in the street. Hence, the reasoning goes, the prisoner must have been famous himself or strongly resembled someone famous like royalty.

Other questions included: Why not just kill him? And why such enormous secrecy that not even du Junca knew who he was?

The facts were mixed with the legends, and there have been dozens of suggestions, many involving some sort of royal connection. A few of the major theories:

The most famous story with a royal connection holds that the masked prisoner was Louis XIV's identical twin brother, hidden at birth to avoid complications in the succession, raised secretly far away from court, and imprisoned when he discovered his true identity. The mask, obviously, was to hide the resemblance to the King. The ultimate version is "The Man in the Iron Mask" by Alexandre Dumas, published in 1850 as part of his trilogy on the Three Musketeers. All the movies (there have been at least a dozen in Europe and the U.S. since 1910) are based on this popular book. The story is tempting and romantic, but highly implausible and without any supporting evidence whatsoever.

In the 1770s, Voltaire hinted that the prisoner was an older half-brother of Louis XIV with a family resemblance, but not necessarily a twin, such as the Duke of Beaufort. Such a person might have raised complications about the royal succession, hence the need for absolute secrecy.

Other suggested that the older half-brother was the illegitimate son of the Queen Mother, imprisoned to prevent a scandal, and having nothing to do with the succession. Another version of this holds that the man in the mask was a woman, an illegitimate daughter of the Queen Mother!

A very amusing version of the "older royal brother" was circulated in 1801, under the rule of Napoleon Bonaparte. While in jail, the man in the mask was married, and fathered a son; the infant was taken by his mother to Corsica and given his mother's name of ... ready? ... Bonaparte. Thus Napoleon Bonaparte was the direct descendent of the rightful king of France!

Or, he was a black politician whose dalliance with the Queen resulted in an illegitimate daughter. He was masked because he would be identifiable, being black.

If not an older brother or a twin of Louis XIV, perhaps his illegitimate son, such as the Count of Vermandois? Such stories often included wonderful embellishments such as being imprisoned because he struck his older brother, the Dauphin, heir to the throne. Alas, Vermandois died in 1682, too early to be the masked prisoner.

But there's no reason to allow death to discourage us from a candidate. After all, this is the highest level political intrigue, and death can be faked. Conspiracy theorists, go wild!

Some have suggested Molière, the famous playwright, as a candidate. Molière's death in 1673 was faked, and he was concealed behind the mask until his true death 40 years later at age 83.

Then there are those who argue the Man in the Mask was English, such as the Duke of Monmouth, an illegitimate son of Charles II involved in religious and political rebellion against his father. Or perhaps the Man in the Mask was an illegitimate son of Oliver Cromwell.

There are dozens of such candidates, especially when we disregard minor inconveniences like well-documented deaths. Those who argue any particular theory usually have some plausible set of coincidences to bolster their case. But, ultimately, their arguments tend to require that we overlook some historical contradiction or inconsistency.

Investigations

In the last century or so some have taken a more analytical approach, sifting through the documentation and historical evidence. While there are few reliable documents about the Man in the Mask himself, there are prison records, letters to and from the governor Saint-Mars, and so forth. Deductions and assumptions can be based on these documents.

The starting point for this type of analysis is that the Du Junca reports the masked prisoner was brought to the Bastille in 1698 by Saint-Mars, as his "longtime prisoner" from Pignerol. Pignerol was a fortress-prison that belonged to France near Turin in Italy. Saint-Mars was governor there from 1665 until 1681.

From Pignerol, Saint-Mars was transferred to the prison Exiles from 1681 to 1687, and then to Sainte Marguerite in the Gulf of Cannes until 1698, when he became governor of the Bastille in Paris and brought his masked "longtime

prisoner” with him. Saint-Mars then served as governor of the Bastille until his death in September 1708.

So the game is to find a prisoner in Pignerol in 1681 (or earlier) who was later in Sainte Marguerite and could have been brought masked to the Bastille with Saint-Mars in 1698.

I’ll spare you the vast amount of detail, deductions, and reconstruction of records, letters, arrest warrants, etc. There were only five prisoners in Pignerol when Saint-Mars left in 1681, and three are easily eliminated—for instance, by dying prior to 1698. There are thus only two candidates.

(1) Antonio Ercole Matthioli

Matthioli was an unscrupulous politician from Mantua, in Italy, who was involved in negotiations between the Duke of Mantua and the Republic of Venice, using France as an intermediary. (At the time, remember, Italy was not unified but comprised a large number of small but powerful states.) Matthioli double-crossed everyone in sight, and “caused disturbances in at least five countries, which came near leading to general war,” according to van Keler. This put the King of France in a very awkward position.

Matthioli was kidnapped by the French in May 1679 in Italy and hustled off to the mountain fortress of Pignerol. The arrest warrant contained a postscript: “No person shall know what has become of this man” by special order of the King. The French secretary of state, Louvois, instructed the governor to give him only absolute necessities, and nothing of comfort, saying this was at the special request of the King. Matthioli almost became deranged from this treatment.

He did not accompany Saint-Mars when he was transferred to the prison at Exiles in 1681, but was transferred to the prison at Sainte Marguerite in March 1694, so meets our criteria. After 1694, Mattioli disappears from official correspondence.

Arguments in favor of Matthioli as the masked prisoner include:

When the Masked Prisoner was buried in 1703, Saint-Mars gave the parish register of the church the name “Marchioly.” This is an easily explained corruption of Matthioli—spelling wasn’t standardized in those days. In his correspondence, Saint-Mars occasionally wrote “Marthioly” for “Matthioli.” Of course,

“Marchioly” could have been a false name, if Saint-Mars were still concerned about secrecy.

As previously noted, Louis XV and Louis XVI mentioned an Italian intriguer from Mantua. This is consistent with Matthioli, but with no other prisoner at Pignerol during the period in question.

Arguments against Matthioli:

Matthioli may have died in 1694. Reference is made to a prisoner who died at Sainte-Marguerite. Circumstantial evidence is pretty convincing that Matthioli is the only prisoner who fits the description. Obviously, if Matthioli died in 1694, he could not have been the masked prisoner of 1698.

There is a letter to Saint-Mars from the secretary of state in 1697, cautioning that he not ever “explain to anyone what it is your longtime prisoner did.” But everyone knew what Matthioli did; there was no secret or mystery about it. His crime and punishment were reasonably well known. The cause and place of his imprisonment were published in newspapers as early as 1682. There was no need to keep his face masked and his identity secret.

Counter-arguments:

It’s possible Matthioli wore a mask from choice. It was an Italian custom among the upper classes to mask one’s face when going out in the sun, and Matthioli may have taken this custom to extremes and masked himself.

(2) Eustace Dauger

The more likely candidate is a prisoner named Eustace Dauger (or some similar spelling), who was a valet. The name Dauger is likely false, and there is considerable speculation about who Dauger might have been. The King’s arrest warrant restricts Dauger from having any contact with anyone. Saint-Mars himself must feed Dauger, and the secretary of state writes to Saint-Mars, “You must never, under any pretenses, listen to what he may wish to tell you. You must threaten him with death if he speaks one word except about his actual needs. He is only a valet, and does not need much furniture.”

Dauger was transferred from Pignerol with Saint-Mars to Exiles in 1681 and to Sainte Marguerite in 1687, so meets our criteria.

The arguments in favor of D'Auger:

In 1687, when Saint-Mars went to the fortress-prison of Sainte Marguerite, he brought D'Auger with him in a sedan chair covered over with oilcloth. Saint-Mars did not use a litter because he feared it might break down and D'Auger could be seen. Thus, Saint-Mars wanted to keep D'Auger's face hidden. The twelve-day journey in a closed chair nearly killed D'Auger, and his arrival at Sainte Marguerite in this way aroused a great deal of excitement, curiosity, and speculation.

D'Auger accompanied Saint-Mars through all his prison postings, unlike Matthioli. If the prisoner was to be handled so confidentially by Saint-Mars, it makes sense that he would stay with Saint-Mars all that time. This is consistent with the Man in the Mask being called Saint-Mars' "longtime" prisoner.

We already noted the letter to Saint-Mars from the secretary of state, cautioning that he not ever "explain to anyone what it is your longtime prisoner did." While everyone knew what Matthioli did, no one knew what D'Auger had done—in fact, no one knows to this day.

The main objection to the D'Auger theory is: why the mask? Why the fuss? Why all the secrecy? He was only a valet, why not just kill him? And the related question: who was this D'Auger, anyway?

The two most common theories:

(a) D'Auger was a valet named Martin, whose master was Roux de Marsilly, a French Huguenot who tried to stir up a Protestant alliance against France. Marsilly was publicly tortured to death in Paris in 1669, and his ex-valet Martin was imprisoned under the name Eustace D'Auger. The authorities must have assumed that D'Auger knew details of Marsilly's plots and secrets, and he was imprisoned to divulge them. D'Auger said that he knew nothing. Thus, D'Auger was probably imprisoned for something the authorities THOUGHT he had seen or heard or knew. (The name "Marchialy" under which the masked prison was buried could have been a misspelling of "Marsilly.")

He was a valet named "Danger" or "D'angers" who was hired by the secretary of state to commit a political assassination by poisoning, which he botched. He was imprisoned and kept silent so as not to incriminate the secretary of state.

Of course, speculation doesn't stop there. Other theories about D'Anger include:

He was Eustache D'Anger de Cavoye, a black sheep from an important family. He was mixed up with Satanism, homosexuality, and depraved criminals. He was involved in potential scandals with women close to the king, hence forbidden to speak and locked up for life. A problem: de Cavoye was imprisoned at Saint-Lazare, and so is unlikely to be our D'Anger.

Marcel Pagnol speculated in *The Secret of the Iron Mask* (1965) that D'Anger was, in fact, the identical twin brother of Louis XIV. John Noone comments: "That brings us back, with a cavalier flourish, to square one!"

But, in any case, why the mask?

If D'Anger was Martin, then he was initially imprisoned for interrogation, to find out what he knew. He probably knew nothing, and so repeated questioning got nowhere. However, never underestimate the power of "red tape," even three hundred years ago. Once he was "caught in the toils of the system," says Andrew Lang, sheer inertia and force of habit kept him there.

An intriguing argument is made by John Noone, in his comprehensive book *The Man Behind the Iron Mask*. He contends that D'Anger wore the mask only occasionally, and that the secrecy and mystery seemed to increase in the later years of imprisonment. Noone suggests that was a strategy of Saint-Mars, the governor of all the prisons where D'Anger was incarcerated, to gain attention. We know that Saint-Mars had some important prisoners at Pignerol, such as Nicolas Fouquet and Comte de Lauzun—high level politicians. Being in charge of such people brought Saint-Mars to the attention of the highest and mightiest in the land. Saint-Mars had an inflated sense of his own importance. When Fouquet died and Lauzun was released, Saint-Mars was no longer in the spotlight. However, he still had a political prisoner in his care, namely D'Anger. Yeah, he's only a valet, but what better way to remind the powers-that-be of Saint-Mars' importance than to play up the importance of his prisoner? Noone posits that Saint-Mars himself helped spread rumors about the identity of his "longtime" prisoner, made him wear a mask in public, and tried to stoke gossip. In short, the mask may have been a publicity ploy by Saint-Mars.

The Myth

One possible explanation of the Man in the Mask is that two men's histories (Matthioli and Dauger) have been conflated with stories about other prisoners to create one myth. Dauger is at the center of a number of legends about the Man in the Mask. For instance, Dauger was the prisoner carried from Exiles to Sainte Marguerite in a covered sedan chair so that no one would see his face. The story about the prisoner who wrote a message on his shirt and on a pewter plate, to bring attention of his plight to the outside world, is also part of the myth, as is the Iron Mask itself. These dramatic stories were romanticized and became associated with the Man in the Mask.

If Dauger is the Man in the Mask, that would combine the reality and several legends fairly well. However, if Matthioli was the Man in Mask at the Bastille, then the story of Dauger became a legend associated with the mysterious prisoner. Thus, for example, the "velvet mask" of 1698 and the covered sedan chair of 1687 may have become combined into the mythos, that the man was masked for his entire imprisonment. So the Man in the Mask is potentially not one individual but two, whose stories are combined (and spiced up with stories of other prisoners) into one legend.

We may never know, but the debate continues. The results of the last International Symposium on the Iron Mask are presumably available. Everyone needs a hobby.

By the way, the 300th anniversary of the death of the Man in the Mask (November 19, 1703) is coming up. This gives you plenty of time to prepare for a blowout party.

Lesson #42: Mystery Airships of the 1800s

From Fate Magazine: May 1973

by Jerome Clark and Loren Coleman

“No form of dirigible or heavier-than-air machine was flying-or could fly—at this time.” And yet ...”

March 26, 1880 was a quiet Friday night in tiny Galisteo Junction, N. Mex. (now the town of Lamy). The train from nearby Santa Fe had come and gone and the railroad agent, his day’s work finished, routinely locked up the depot and set out with a couple of friends for a short walk.

Suddenly they heard voices which seemed to be coming from the sky. The men looked up to see an object, “monstrous in size,” rapidly approaching from the west, flying so low that elegantly-drawn characters could be discerned on the outside of the peculiar vehicle. Inside, the occupants, who numbered 10 or so and looked like ordinary human beings, were laughing and shouting in an unfamiliar language and the men on the ground also heard music coming from the craft. The craft itself was “fish-shaped”—like a cigar with a tail—and it was driven by a huge “fan” or propeller. As it passed overhead one of the occupants tossed some objects from the car. The depot agent and his friends recovered one item almost immediately, a beautiful flower with a slip of fine silk-like paper containing characters which reminded the men of designs they had seen on Japanese chests which held tea.

Soon thereafter the aerial machine ascended and sailed away toward the east at high speed. The next morning searchers found a cup one of the items the witnesses had seen thrown out of the craft but had been unable to locate in the darkness.

“It is of very peculiar workmanship,” the Santa Fe Daily New Mexican reported, “entirely different to anything used in this country.”

The depot agent took the cup and the flower and put them on display. Before the day was over, however, this physical evidence of the passage of the early unidentified object had vanished.

In the evening a mysterious gentleman identified only as a “collector of curiosities” appeared in town, examined the finds, suggested they were Asiatic in

origin and offered such a large sum of money for them that the agent had no choice but to accept. The “collector” scooped up his purchases and never was seen again.

Of course the story of aviation does not begin on December 17, 1903, the date of Orville Wright’s 12-second aerial hop at Kitty Hawk. Long before that scientists and inventors had struggled to unlock the secrets of powered flight and to build what an 1897 issue of *Scientific American* called the “true flying machine; that is, one which is hundreds of times heavier than the air upon which it rests, (and flies) by reason of its dynamic impact, and not by the aid of any balloon or gasbag whatsoever.”

But nothing in the early history of flight tells us what a huge airborne cigar was doing over New Mexico in 1880, especially as it “appeared to be entirely under the control of the occupants and ... guided by a large fan-like apparatus,” and also could ascend with startling speed.

Its “monstrous size” and its propeller clearly indicate it was heavier than air, but such a flying machine didn’t then exist according to British authority Charles H. Gibbs-Smith: “Speaking as an aeronautical historian who specializes in the periods before 1910, I can say with certainty that the only airborne vehicles, carrying passengers, which could possibly have been seen anywhere in North America ... were free-flying spherical balloons, and it is highly unlikely for these to be mistaken for anything else. No form of dirigible (i.e., a gasbag propelled by an airscrew) or heavier-than-air flying machine was flying—or indeed could fly—at this time in America.”

Nevertheless, mysterious “airships” were seen in many parts of the world in the last half of the 19th Century and the early years of the 20th. And plans for the construction of such craft were not unknown.

On November 1, 1896, the *Detroit Free Press* reported that in the near future a New York inventor would construct and fly an “aerial torpedo boat.” And on November 17 the *Sacramento Bee* reprinted a telegram the newspaper had received from a New York man who said he and some friends would board an airship of his invention and fly it to California. The trip, he said, would take no more than two days. That very night all hell broke loose and the Great Airship Scare of 1896–97 was off and running.

The next day the *Bee* led off a long article with this paragraph: “Last evening between the hours of six and seven o’clock, in the year of our Lord

eighteen hundred and ninety-six, a most startling exhibition was seen in the sky in this city of Sacramento.

People standing on the sidewalks at certain points in the city between the hours stated, saw coming through the sky over the housetops, what appeared to them to be merely an electric arc lamp propelled by some mysterious force. It came out of the east and sailed unevenly toward the southwest, dropping now nearer to the earth, and now suddenly rising into the air again as if the force that was whirling it through space was sensible of the dangers of collision with objects upon the earth ...”

Hundreds of persons saw it. Those who got the closest look said the object was huge and cigar-shaped and had four large wings attached to an aluminum body. Some insisted they heard voices and raucous laughter emanating from the ship. A man identified as R.L. Lowry and a companion allegedly saw four men pushing the craft along the ground by its wheels. Lowry’s friends asked them where they were going. “To San Francisco,” they replied. “We hope to be there by midnight.”

One J. H. Vogel, who was in the vicinity, confirmed the story and added that the vessel was “egg-shaped.” The next afternoon an airship passed over Oak Park, Calif., leaving a trail of smoke and soon San Francisco, Oakland and other cities and town in the north-central part of California had their own stories in all the newspapers. Several persons now stepped forward to tell of earlier sightings. One was a fruit rancher near Bowman, Placer County, who said he and members of his family had watched an airship fly by at 100 miles an hour in late October.

Even more remarkable was the statement of a man who claimed that in August he and fellow hunters had tracked a wounded deer across Tamalpais Mountain until they came to a clearing where six men were working on an airship.

On July 28, around 6 to 7 a.m., two Louisville, Kentucky men saw an object in the distance which drew nearer and resolved into the appearance of a man surrounded by machinery. (Note no gasbag or canopy supported by one) If the man slacked his efforts (he was peddling) the machine dropped, but if he once again worked the treadles (peddles) and wings HE ROSE AGAIN; but the machine seemed under perfect control and executed a turn over the city.

In September an object like a black-clad man with bat’s wings and frog’s legs flew over Coney Island.

“The airship as a practical invention is believed to be so nearly ripe that a story of its appearance in the sky is not necessarily to be received with disrespect,” Harper’s Weekly commented in its April 24, 1897, issue ... not unless you assumed that thousands of Americans had lost their senses, a discomfoting notion which some scientists, editors and skeptics seemed to embrace.

Prof. George Hough, a Northwestern University astronomer, assured everyone that the “airship” was nothing but the star Alpha Orion as perceived by drunks, fools and hysterics. Most newspapers ridiculed reports of the airship, finally desisting only for fear of offending the growing numbers of readers who had seen the craft.

California’s airship, reported in November 1896, was the first to receive widespread publicity but that same month an unidentified flying object passed through central Nebraska and sightings in the state continued until the following May. Delaware farmers saw airships as early as January 1897.

It took a sighting in Omaha involving hundreds of witnesses to put the airships back in the headlines, however. The low-flying object, a large bright light, “too big for a balloon,” appeared on the night of March 29, 1897, and was visible for more than half an hour.

From then on America’s skies were filled with airships. The reports came primarily from Midwestern states and descriptions of the ships varied-as these random examples show:

Everest, Kans., April 1 (*Kansas City Times*): “The basket or car seemed to be 25 to 30 feet long, shaped like an Indian canoe. Four light wings extended from the car; two wings were triangular. A large dark hulk was discernible immediately above the car and was generally supposed by the watchers to be an inflated gasbag.”

Chicago, April 11 (*Chicago Times-Herald*): “The lower portions of the airship were thin and made of some light white metal like aluminum. The upper portion was dark and long like a big cigar, pointed in front and with some kind of arrangement in the rear to which cables are attached.”

Texas, April 16 (*New York Sun*): “... shaped like a Mexican cigar, large in the middle and small at both ends, with great wings resembling those of an enormous butterfly. It was brilliantly illuminated by the rays of two great

searchlights and was sailing in a southeasterly direction with the velocity of wind, presenting a magnificent appearance.”

Numerous persons reported seeing normal-looking men and women inside the ships. One of the most interesting “occupant” reports came from M. G. Sisson, postmaster at Greenfield, Ill.

On the afternoon of April 19, 1897, while walking his dog through the woods he spotted an airship 150 feet above him—a phenomenon he found less unsettling than the sight of a woman standing on a deck on the bow of the craft netting pigeons. When she saw Sisson she quickly stepped inside and the craft flew off. Later that day Thomas Bradburg of Hagaman, about nine miles east of Greenfield, found part of a letter supposedly dropped from the airship. On a printed letterhead of “Airship Co., Oakland Calif.,” it read: “We are having a delightful time and plenty to eat. Mollie’s scheme for running down birds and catching them with a net works excellently; we feast daily upon pigeon pie. “Since starting out we have greatly increased the velocity of the ship. The following figures will give some idea of the speed which we are now able to make: St. Louis, April 15, 8:30 P.M.; Chicago, same evening, 9:33; Kansas City, one hour and 40 minutes later.”

The events of 1896, incredible as they were, are relatively uncomplicated compared to what happened in 1897. California’s controversy concerned only one alleged inventor, the mysterious “E.H. Benjamin,” but April 1897 produced an onslaught of conflicting claims involving a host of people—stories which made it obvious that someone was lying. Sometimes it was the “witnesses,” sometimes the newspapers and sometimes it may have been the airship occupants themselves.

Let us examine several “contact” claims of this period: Springfield, Ill., April 15: Farmhands Adolph Winkle and John Hulle allegedly saw an airship land two miles outside the city and talked with its occupants, two men and a woman, who said they would “make a report to the government when Cuba is declared free.”

Harrisburg, Ark., April 21: At 1 a.m. a strange noise awakened a man identified as ex-Senator Harris and through his bedroom window he saw an airship descending to the ground. The occupants, two young men, a woman and an elderly man with a dark waist-length beard, got out and helped themselves to a supply of fresh well water.

Overcome by curiosity, Harris went outside and engaged the old man in a long conversation, during which the latter claimed he had inherited the secret of

antigravity from his late uncle. "Weight is no object to me," he said. "I suspend all gravity by placing a small wire around an object.

"I was making preparations to go over to Cuba and kill off the Spanish army if hostilities had not ceased," he went on, "but now my plans are changed and I may go to the aid of the Armenians." He would accomplish all this with a gun which would fire, he said "63,000 times per minute."

After offering Harris a ride, which the ex-senator refused, the crew reentered their craft and disappeared into the night. Stephenville, Tex., late April: Alerted by "prominent farmer" C.L. McIllhaney that an airship had alighted in a field on his farm three miles from town, a large delegation of Stephenville's leading citizens (our source lists all their names) set out to see for themselves.

They found a 60-foot cigar-shaped craft and its two occupants, who gave their names as S.E. Tillman and A.E. Dolbear. The pair explained that they were making an experimental trip to test the ship for certain New York financiers. Turning down requests from onlookers who wanted to examine the craft, the aeronauts boarded the machine and sailed off.

Conroe, Tex. April 22-23: Around midnight four men, one of them hotel proprietor G.L. Witherspoon, were playing dominoes in the hotel restaurant when three strangers entered. They said they had landed their airship not far away and come into town for supper "by way of a change," then went on to report they had flown from San Francisco en route to Cuba.

Witherspoon and his friends declined an offer to examine the ship, suspecting they were the victims of a practical joke. But about an hour later, after the visitors had left, a brilliantly lighted airship passed over Conroe.

Chattanooga, Tenn., late April: Several Chattanooga citizens reportedly encountered a landed airship "in the exact shape of a shad, (a type of fish) minus head and tail," resting on a mountainside near the city. Its two occupants were at work repairing it. One, who identified himself as Prof. Charles Davidson, said they had left Sacramento a month before and had spent the intervening time touring the country.

Jenny Lind, Ark., May 4: At 7:30 p.m. an airship passed over town. Three men leaped on their bicycles and pursued it until it landed near a spring next to a mountain. Its pilots, who introduced themselves as George Autzerlitz and Joseph Eddleman, talked with the three for a while, saying they subsisted on birds which

they would overtake and capture in flight. Before leaving the aeronauts offered any one of them a free ride and ended up taking James Davis to Huntington, 15 miles away. This story appeared in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch in the form of a letter from two Jenny Lind residents, who urged the paper to contact R.M. McDowell, general manager of the Western Coal and Mining Company in St. Louis. McDowell told the Post-Dispatch, "Yes, I know all those persons. I have extensive works at Jenny Lind. I don't understand the letter, though. It is very strange."

Hot Springs, Ark., May 6: John L. Sumpter, Jr., and John McLemore, police officers, testified in an affidavit that they had seen a 60-foot airship land that dark, rainy night. There were three occupants, a young man and woman and an older man with a long dark beard.

The latter approached the lawmen carrying a lantern while the young man filled a large sack with water and the woman stayed in the shadows, apparently hoping to remain unobserved. The old man said they would stop off at Nashville after traveling the country. The officers turned down an offer for a ride and then left on other business. When they returned 40 minutes later the ship was gone.

The Fort Smith Daily News Record noted that while Sumpter and McLemore were subjected to a great deal of ridicule "they, however, most seriously maintain that it is absolutely true, and their earnestness is puzzling many, who, while unable to accept the story as a fact, yet see that the men are not jesting."

Are these stories to be taken seriously? If they are hoaxes, at least they are not so obvious as many of the tales that circulated during the three months of the 1897 airship scare. And the incidents detailed above have a certain consistency. Three of them note the presence of a lone young woman with one or two young men; two of them describe one airship occupant as an elderly man sporting a long dark beard.

In two others the occupants give Sacramento and San Francisco as the points of origin of their flights and another mentions New York. These cities figure prominently in the November-December 1896 controversies as locations either where the craft were seen or where they were constructed. And the business of the birds in the Jenny Lind report is reminiscent of M. G. Sisson's Greenfield, Ill., sighting.

Even if every one of the stories is no more than a figment of some prankster's imagination, the fact remains that for the most part (the lesser part we

shall examine shortly) the craft were piloted and probably built by human beings—as opposed to the hairy humanoids and golden-maned Venusians of modern flying saucer folklore. But who were the airship pilots and occupants? And what happened to their marvelous inventions?

About 11 p.m. April 19 near Beaumont, Tex., a farmer and his son came upon an airship in a pasture. They found four men moving around the machine and one of them, who said his name was Wilson, asked for and received a supply of water from the farmer's well. At Uvalde, Tex., 23 hours later Sheriff H.W. Baylor spoke briefly with the three-man crew of an airship which had alighted outside the town. One of them men gave his name as Wilson and said he was a native of Goshen, NY. Then he asked about a Captain Akers, whom he said he had known in Fort Worth in 1877 and understood he now lived in southern Texas. After getting water from Baylor's pump the aeronauts entered their craft and took off.

On the morning of April 15 a large airship moved northward slowly over Linn Grove, Iowa, and five men followed it about four miles into the country where it landed. But when the pursuers got within 700 yards of the vessel it spread out four monstrous wings and flew away. As it rose its occupants tossed out two boulders "of unknown composition." The witnesses said the entities within the craft had the longest beards they had ever seen and a news account of the incident mentions "two queer-looking persons ... who made desperate efforts to conceal themselves."

The next day at Mount Vernon, Ill., the city's mayor focused his telescope on an "airship." What he saw was something that resembled, according to the *Saginaw Courier-Herald*, "the body of a huge man swimming through the air with an electric light at his back."

It goes without saying that no theory which assumed terrestrial inventors were completely responsible for airship manifestations is going to account for a sighting like this one.

From the *Houston Daily Post* for April 28, 1897, comes the weirdest case of all: "Merkel, Tex., April 26—Some parties returning from church last night noticed a heavy object dragging along with a rope attached. They followed it until in crossing the railroad, it caught on a rail. Looking up they saw what they supposed was the airship. It was not near enough to get an idea of the dimensions. A light could be seen protruding from several windows; one bright light in front

like the headlight of a locomotive. After some 10 minutes a man was seen descending the rope; he came near enough to be plainly seen.

He wore a light-blue sailor suit, was small in size. He stopped when he discovered parties at the anchor and cut the ropes below him and sailed off in a northeast direction. The anchor is now on exhibition at the blacksmith shop of Elliott and Miller and is attracting the attention of hundreds of people.”

An ancient obscure Irish manuscript, *Speculum Regali*, records an incident that supposedly occurred in the year 956 A.D.: “There happened in the borough of Cloera, one Sunday while people were at mass, a marvel. In this town there is a church to the memory of St. Kinarus. It befell that a metal anchor was dropped from the sky, with a rope attached to it, and one of the sharp flukes caught in the wooden arch above the church door.

The people rushed out of the church and saw in the sky a ship with men on board, floating at the end of the anchor cable, and they saw a man leap overboard and pull himself down the cable to the anchor as if to unhook it.

“He appeared as if he were swimming in water.”

The folk rushed up and tried to seize him; but the bishop forbade the people to hold the man for fear it might kill him. The man was freed and hurried up the cable to the ship, where the crew cut the rope and the ship rose and sailed away out of sight. But the anchor is in the church as a testimony to this singular occurrence.”

And about 1200 A.D. an anchor plummeted out of the sky trailing a rope and got caught in a mound of stones near a church in Bristol, England. As a mob of churchgoers congregated at the scene, a “sailor” came skittering down the rope to free it.

According to Gervase of Tilbury’s *Otia Imperialia* the crowd seized the intruder and “he suffocated by the mist of our moist atmosphere and expired.” His unseen comrades cut the rope and left.

We do not pretend to understand why an incident of this nature should continually recur but its occurrence in the midst of the 1897 airship flap should prove conclusively that we are dealing with phenomena whose implications boggle the mind.

Something astonishing, even incomprehensible, was taking place in 19th-Century America. Whatever conclusions we draw from it are bound to be unbelievable and little more than informed guesses, for the gaps in the story are often greater than the substance.

The weirdest incidents—those putting airships in a paranormal framework—well may have been the important ones, while the more mundane sightings were designed only to distract attention while the nonhumans set about doing whatever they intended to accomplish.

Lesson #43: The Witches of Kilkenny (1324)

by Sean Kenny

Kilkenny is an old Norman medieval city in the southeastern part of Ireland, and it is well known for its 13th and 14th century buildings and narrow alleyways. It has a small population today, around 20,000 but it has two cathedrals, one Church of Ireland and the other Roman Catholic. The Church of Ireland is called St Cannices, while a nearby RC Church is also called St Cannice.

Dame Alice Kyteler (rhymes with Hitler) was an Irish noblewoman in Kilkenny in the fourteenth century. Between 1324 and 1325 she and her son, William Outlawe (Uitlagh in Gaelic) with ten other men and women, were accused of sacrificing to demons and casting all manner of wicked spells on people—especially the local bishop.

Dame Alice Kyteler was born at Kyteler's House, Kilkenny, where her father carried on a banking business, around the year 1280, so she was already well into middle age by the standards of the time when the witchcraft episode occurred. Her family came to Ireland after the Norman conquest of 1169. When her father died in 1298, Alice, who was an only child, inherited his business and properties.

After his death she married one of his former associates, William Outlawe, who was also a highly successful banker from Coal Market Street and like her father, of Norman stock. This man was the brother of Roger Outlawe, Chancellor of all Ireland, whose position and power could one day play a dramatic part in the saga of witchcraft and heresy for which she would be charged, found guilty and sentenced to death.

William Outlawe was twenty years older than Dame Alice when they married in 1299. She bore a son for him a year later, who for the sake of clarity here, will be called William Junior, although that term was not in use in Dame Alice's day. Shortly after that, Dame Alice decided to build an addition to their house extending it to Kyron Street (St. Kieran Street) and develop it as an inn which still stands today.

Alice was a good looking, highly sophisticated woman, who could manipulate men into giving her lavish gifts of money and jewels. Because of this, Kyteler's Inn soon became the rendezvous for wealthy men, both young and not so young, who craved for the attention of the alluring Dame Alice.

But there was a darker side which was beginning to manifest itself in rumor and hearsay, of Satanic rites, practiced by their fascinating host. These rumors were spurred when William Outlawe Senior died suddenly under mysterious circumstances. It was said that upon forcing open a cupboard in the basement, he had discovered a terrible assortment of “Maleficia”- jars and bowls of evil smelling entrails of cocks and eyes of ravens, horrible worms and sprays of deadly nightshade, dead men’s hair and fragments of unbaptized babies, cooked in a pot made from the skull of a beheaded thief

Months later, Dame Alice married another banker from Callan, named Adam Le Blont. It is believed she had a daughter by Le Blont whom they called by the unusual name of Basilia. In 1310 Dame Alice was once again a widow as Le Blont died after a “drinking spree”. As her first husband Outlawe had left her a wealth of money and property, so too did Le Bont leave her all he possessed.

Dame Alice was fast becoming one of the wealthiest women in Kilkenny and if gossip were to be believed, the most wicked woman alive. She had gathered a bevy of young maidens around her to help with the running of the inn which was the busiest in Kilkenny.

But reports were rife that they were also used as participants in Dame Alice’s experiments in demonology. One maiden is particular, pleased her more than all the others. She was named Petronella of Meath. Petronella would eventually pay the ultimate price for her expertise in the art of witchcraft and necromancy.

Dame Alice married her third husband in 1311. He was a wealthy landlord who owned extensive properties in and around Clonmel. His name was Richard De Valle. Richard departed the land of the living long before his appointed time. It seems he grew suddenly ill while in the prime of life and died after a sumptuous supper. He had bequeathed all his land and properties to Dame Alice in his last will and testament. She was now one of the wealthiest persons in the province of Leinster. Only the princes of the Church could command greater wealth and resources.

All the while, Dame Alice had been indulging herself deeper and deeper in the art of demonology. Her favorite demon was Robin, Son of Artisson, who was also her lover. And she presided over nightly gatherings at the crossroads where living animals were cruelly dismembered and offered to demons.

The “narrative” is a Latin manuscript which was written during the time of the Kyteler Excommunication. The manuscript was published in 1843 under the title Contemporary Narrative of the Proceeding Against Dame Alice Kyteler, Prosecuted for Sorcery in, 1324 by Richard de Ledrede, Bishop of Ossary. Forty pages of close packed print is proof positive of the terrible events that necessitated the inquisition (Harley MS 641 British Museum).

Dame Alice married her fourth husband around the year 1320. This man was also of Norman stock as were his predecessors. John Le Poer had been a constant customer over many years at Kyteler’s Inn and had fallen into the snare of Dame Alice’s spell, wherefore it was claimed she could infatuate men and bring them to such a state of mind that they gave her all the riches they possessed.

John Le Poer was brother of Arnold Le Poer, Seneschal or Major-domo of Kilkenny. By 1323, John found himself suffering from many different sicknesses. Although he was only middle-aged, he became feeble and slow. His hair fell out in patches and what remained turned silvery grey and his finger nails fell out. *[NB. - These symptoms almost sound like thalium poisoning as practiced by Graham Young and certain other 20th century poisoners. If so, Dame Alice was most certainly ahead of her time! - HAC]*

Fearing that it was Dame Alice’s doing, he went just before he died to the Friars at Saint Francis’s Abbey for help. They in turn contacted Richard de Ledrede, Bishop of Ossory, giving him full account of Dame Alice’s coven of witches and her alleged responsibility for the deaths of her four husbands. Also there was the charge that she abjured the faith and claimed that Christ was a mere man who was justly put to death for his own sins.

Richard de Ledrede made every attempt to have this coven of witches arrested but was hindered because they were very influential people. Remember Dame Alice’s former brother-in-law was Roger Outlawe, Chancellor of Ireland and in the frequent absence of any other authority from London, the de facto ruler of the English Pale, the small area of central and eastern Ireland where English law and custom held sway.

The Bishop did, however hold an inquisition in 1324, at which she was found, by common agreement of all the judges, secular and religious, to be guilty of witchcraft and magic, of heresy and of having sacrificed to demons. For all of which she and her faction of sorcerers were excommunicated from Mother Church

and their goods confiscated and they were to be handed over to the secular authority.

But this was easier said than done. It was, in fact, the Bishop who was arrested and put under lock and key in Kilkenny jail. And there he remained for seventeen days on bread and water. This scandalous treatment, says the Narrative, was something unheard of in Ireland until then.

It was only after John Darcy the Lord Chief Justice travelled from Dublin to Kilkenny, that the Bishop was released. Darcy proceeded to examine the facts put before the inquisition and declared the sentence just and proper. And so the tables were turned once again on Dame Alice.

In those medieval times, for one to be found guilty of witchcraft was a most serious offense and one that carried the sentence of death. Dame Alice and her disciples were condemned to be whipped through the streets, tied at the back of a horse and cart after which Alice, as chief priestess and instigator would be burned to the stake.

But by the political power of the Chancellor, her former brother-in-law Roger Outlawe, her escape was organized. Her guards were beaten senseless and Dame Alice was released from the dungeons beneath Kilkenny Castle and freed from the sentence of death that hung over her.

But her hand-maiden, Petronella of Meath wasn't so lucky. To placate the howling mob that had gathered around the huge bonfire in front of the Tholsel, in the centre of Kilkenny, Petronella would be sacrificed in place of Alice. Already badly shaken from the whippings, she confessed her guilt to everything she was charged with. She told them it was at Dame Alice's instigation she had denied that Jesus Christ was the son of God; also that she had called up demons and received responses from them and performed many abominations of the flesh.

But she rightly claimed that Dame Alice's demonic powers by far exceeded her own and she begged for mercy. She got none. Petronella of Meath, was burned alive at the stake before a brutalized, chanting mob, as she screamed in vain for her mistress to come to her aid. But Dame Alice had begun a new life in far off London, never again to set foot in her native Kilkenny.

Lesson #44: The Battle of Adobe Walls (1874)

by Monty Rainey

In the pre-dawn hours of June 27, 1874, twenty-nine people (some accounts say twenty-eight) were in the town of Adobe Walls, a tiny settlement in the Texas Panhandle. This was little more than an abandoned outpost, where enterprising businessmen had attempted to re-ignite what had once been a small town and make a dollar off the buffalo hunters which were then a major industry. The settlement consisted of two stores, a blacksmith and a saloon.

Those present at Adobe Walls that night included James Hanrahan (the saloon owner), a twenty year-old drifter by the name of Bat Masterson, and a buffalo hunter named Billy Dixon. The only woman present was the wife of cook William Olds.

Around 2 a.m., the lodge pole, holding up the sod roof of the saloon gave way with a loud crack. The men in the saloon as well as the other inhabitants immediately set about repairing the damage. It was this act of Providence that caused the inhabitants of Adobe Walls to be wide awake when the dawn attack by Indians began.

Just a few days before, Billy Dixon had ridden into the tiny settlement and told of the death of his two friends, Dudley and Williams. He recounted to the saloon patrons how the Comanches had propped their heads up so they could see what was happening to them. He told of how their tongues and ears had been cut off, then their testicles removed and stuffed into their mouths, before finally being sliced into ribbons and dying a slow, torturous death.

Now, as the men worked to repair the damaged roof, some 700 Plains Indians, mostly Cheyenne, Comanche and Kiowa, gathered nearby. The Indians were led by the Comanche war chief, Quanah Parker, the son of a captured white woman, Cynthia Ann Parker.

Since they were already awake, Billy Dixon and Jim Hanrahan decided to get an early start on the day's buffalo hunting. Hanrahan sent Billy Ogg to retrieve the horses that were picketed at nearby Adobe Walls creek. Ogg saw the Indians emerge from the tree lined creek bank and ran back to the settlement to alert the others. About the time he arrived, Dixon spotted the Indians as well and fired a shot into the air.

At first, Dixon believed the Indians to be after the horses, but then realized the Indians were coming straight towards the settlement. Dixon and Ogg managed to join the several others who had sought refuge inside the walls of the saloon. Thus the surprise attack had failed. There were only two deaths in the initial attack, those of the Sadler brothers who were sleeping in their wagon. They were killed and scalped along with their dog who was killed and a patch of hide cut from the animal's side.

The initial attack very nearly carried the day. The buffalo hunters found themselves in a close quarter combat, where their buffalo long guns were all but useless. Miraculously, the inhabitants of Adobe Walls were able to stave off the onslaught of Indians with their pistols. Once the Indians had killed all of the animals, leaving their victims helpless to escape, they withdrew. The morning's battle had resulted in four dead settlers and an unknown number of Indians. The bodies of fifteen warriors were found that were too close to the buildings for the Indians to have retrieved their bodies.

The next few hours saw the battle waged with rifle fire, which was to the buffalo hunters' advantage. The Indians had moved far enough away from the settlement to allow the nine men at Hanrahan's saloon to send two men to Rath's store to resupply their depleted ammo.

Quanah Parker's medicine man, Esa-Tai, (literal name, coyote dung) was largely responsible for the attack. The crazed medicine man had convinced Parker of their invincibility for the attack. The attacks were sporadic thereafter and on what is believed to have been the fourth day of siege, a small group of Indians had ventured to the edge of a distant ridge to plan their next attack. Billy Dixon caught sight of them and asked Bat Masterson to hand him his Sharps 50 caliber. The inhabitants laughed at Dixon, exclaiming, They're a mile away! Dixon drew down his aim, squeezed the trigger and watched Esa-Tai, the medicine man, fall from his mount. It was this act that caused the Indians to determine they could not compete with such weapons and they withdrew from the fray.

Two weeks later, a team of U.S. Army surveyors would determine the distance of Dixon's famed shot to be 1,538 yards, or nine-tenths of a mile. Billy Dixon later gave up buffalo hunting and became a scout for the U.S. Army. As a scout at the Buffalo Wallow Fight, Dixon would earn the Congressional Medal of Honor. In 1893, he retired and built a home on the Adobe Walls site. He died there on March 9, 1913 at the age of 63.

On the fifth day, more than 100 men arrived at Adobe Walls. The Indians never returned. The main significance of this fight is that it led to the Red River War of 1874–75, which resulted in the final relocation of the Southern Plains Indians into reservation in what is now Oklahoma.

Lesson #45: First To Fly, First To Die (1785)

Francois Pilatre de Rozier (baptized 30 March 1754 in Metz, died 15 June 1785 in Wimereux/Pas-de-Calais) was a French chemistry and physics teacher, and one of the first pioneers of aviation. He was one of the first two men ever to leave the earth in a flying machine, and he was the first man to be killed in an aviation accident.

The son of an innkeeper, De Rozier botanized in the company of the Duc de la Rochefoucauld, in the democratic companionship that early science fostered. His interests in the chemistry of drugs had been awakened in the military hospital of Metz, an important garrison town on the border of France. He made his way to Paris, then taught physics and chemistry at Reims, which brought him to the attention of the king's brother, Monsieur, the Comte d'Artois, who put him in charge of his cabinet of natural history and made him a valet de chambre to Madame, which brought him his ennobled name, Pilatre de Rozier. Soon, however, he opened his own museum in the Marais quarter of Paris, researched the new field of gases and invented a respirator.

In 1782 Joseph Michel Montgolfier and Jacques Etienne Montgolfier, two brothers from Annonay, France, constructed an air balloon that was lifted by lighting a cauldron of paper beneath it, and therefore heating and rarifying the air it contained. They had conceived this idea in one of those strange creative flashes that seem to pepper the history of the White race. By watching a small paper bag which had fallen into the fire fill with hot air, rise, and float in the air over the flames, the Montgolfiers had suddenly wondered if such a bag could be made large enough to carry a human being into the sky. Amazingly, in all the thousands of years man had been using fire as an essential tool, no one else had ever realized that smoke and heat go UP and that this might be a powerful enough force to take a man up as well. One supposed that certain ideas simply have their time.

On 4th June, 1783, this hot air balloon reached a height of about 6,560 feet (2,000 meters) flying as a captive balloon, i.e. tethered to a long cable so the Montgolfiers could bring it back down. It carried aloft a rooster, a dog, and a cat, in separate wicker baskets, rather like the first space shots carried dogs and monkeys. De Rozier was present. That September the Montgolfiers sent aloft from the front courtyard of Versailles, the first un-tethered balloon, containing a sheep, a cockerel and a duck, who made a flight of several miles before coming safely to earth.

It was proposed that a gondola be built under the balloon to carry a man, and there arose some debate as to who should be the first human being carried into the air by a manmade device. Many scientists of the day thought that the air even a few thousand feet up was too thin to sustain life or else was poisonous. King Louis XVI proposed sending a condemned criminal aloft, with the promise of pardon if he survived.

However, Pilatre de Rozier stepped forward and objected, saying that the honor of being the first man to fly should not be given to a criminal. De Rozier and the Marquis d'Arlandes became the first people to take part in a manned balloon flight. On 21 November 1783 the two of them made the first manned free flight in history. During the 25-minute flight using a Montgolfier hot air balloon heated by burning straw and coal, they traveled 12 kilometers from the chateau of La Muette to the Butte aux Cailles in the outskirts of Paris, attaining an altitude of 3,000 feet. On flying over the river Seine, they became the first to notice something that all pilots would later be taught—that there is a downdraft over water.

They both became very famous and were received at court. Benjamin Franklin observed their flight, and on being asked “But what good is it?” replied, “What good is a new-born baby?”

One obvious problem with the Montgolfier design was that these balloons were almost impossible to control, not only impossible to steer, but to control the ascent and descent. Professor Charles of the Paris Academy of Sciences made a successful hydrogen balloon, which he sent up unmanned and which was slashed to pieces by peasants with pitchforks and reaping hooks when it landed in a field. (They thought it was the Devil.) Hydrogen did not require the constant feeding of wood or other flammables into the burner.

Pilatre de Rozier now decided to make his own balloon that contained both hot air and hydrogen. He placed a hydrogen balloon on top, which provided a steady lift, and a hot air balloon on the bottom, which could be heated and cooled by placing faggots of tarred, burning straw in a brazier and thus provide some control over the up-and-down capabilities of the aircraft. This actually wasn't a bad idea, except for the fact that hydrogen is highly explosive.

On 15th June, 1785, Rozier and a friend, Pierre Romain, decided to fly from Boulogne to England. At an altitude of about 2,950 feet (900 m) the hydrogen, expanded by the hot air, exploded and the two men were fell to their death. Their horrified friends ran to the gondola; de Rozier was still barely alive and managed

to gasp out a prayer as a priest recited the last rites before he expired. They were the first men to lose their lives in a manned flight.

The modern hybrid gas and hot air balloon is named the Rozier balloon after his pioneering design.

Lesson #46: Who Was Then The Gentleman? (1381)

Feudalism was the common system of government during the Middle Ages. It was a custom widely held throughout Europe, especially in England. Serfs would work the land for the vassals and lords who owned it in exchange for protection. They were legally tied to the land, and for all practical purposes they were slaves.

However, the system began to break down after the devastating plague of the Black Death in the middle of the fourteenth century. Labor was so scarce that workers could afford to demand actual money wages, or run away to the growing cities in search of more freedom and higher pay. In addition, many people were tired of being treated as inferior and worked like draft animals to keep the local baron and his ladies in silks and imported wine. The very first stirrings of the concept of individual liberty and dignity were beginning to take hold, as well as the concept of class and class warfare.

Such a man was John Ball, a priest in the county of Kent in England, who was a vocal opponent of feudalism and who has gone down in history as one of the first quasi-Marxists. To this day, John Ball is a hero of the Left. He could be heard on Sundays after his sermons voicing his opinions on social issues to the commoners and serfs. The Archbishop of Canterbury imprisoned him several times for his reckless words and eventually deprived Ball of his parish. Ball then became what was called a “hedge-priest,” a kind of wandering holy man and agitator.

He preached on one astounding and wondrous new theme: “That naught shall ever go well in England until all land and goods be held in common.” A few people such as the early Franciscans had questioned the institution of private property before, but always from a religious and personal viewpoint. John Ball was one of the first men whose words have survived who questioned the entire state of things and the way society was set up. Ball or someone at the time composed a couplet which spread like wildfire throughout the peasantry:

*“When Adam delved and Eve span,
Who was then the gentleman?”*

After Ball’s last imprisonment of three months, he met and joined forces with two other rebellious peasants, Jack Straw from Essex and fellow Kentishman Wat Tyler. Tyler especially was impressive, a blacksmith of gigantic stature and a fiery orator. The peasants formed a number of secret groups or cells and began coordinating plans for an uprising and a revolution in which they would kill all the

nobles and high church officials--and, significantly, lawyers who used pieces of paper and the courts to enslave them.

At the beginning of 1381, the regents for the young King of England, Richard the Second, tried to impose a "poll tax" or head tax on the peasants for the second time in a year, to cover budgets deficits largely caused by their own incompetence and embezzlement, as well as by the quest of the King's uncle John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, to buy his way into becoming King of Castile. The overtaxed and abused peasants in the southern counties of the country exploded. Tax collectors and lawyers were hunted down and slaughtered, tax rolls and land deeds and other legal documents burned in great bonfires, manor houses were sacked, knights and nobles and their families were murdered and their women raped and mutilated. The height of every assault on a castle or manor house was the looting of the wine cellar, and the bands of peasant rebels generally concluded the festivities by a mammoth drunk, which should have made them easy prey for royal troops. But the King's forces were all in France or fighting along the Scottish border; southern England was denuded of soldiers and the peasants were able to pretty much run riot.

Ball and Tyler inspired more than thirty thousand men to join their crusade. The peasants gathered carrying the traditional pitchforks and torches, but also the deadly English longbow which many of them had wielded in France during the on-again-off-again Hundred Years' War. Many of these military veterans remembered their discipline and formed into proper companies, with elected leaders, and two great peasant armies converged on London, one from Kent in the South and one from Essex in the northeast.

The Kentishmen arrived first, occupying the suburb of Southwark on the south bank of the Thames in June of 1381, and Tyler was able to browbeat or bribe some local men into lowering London Bridge. His army streamed across the river and got into the city, and went berserk. The first target was the Savoy Palace, seat of John of Gaunt; the peasants stripped it bare of food and wine and valuables and then burned the stately home to the ground. The young King and his family holed up in the Tower of London while peasants chased any well-dressed person through the streets. They caught Simon Sudbury, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and hacked off his head, which they then paraded through the streets on a pike. One wealthy citizen of London, Richard Lyon, was also caught and beheaded. He happened to be the man for whom Tyler had worked as a servant during the wars in France.

In the chaos two men stepped forward to thwart the rebel mob. One was William Walworth, Lord Mayor of London, who along with many citizens had lost whatever sympathy he had for the peasants' demands when they started burning and looting his city. The other was the fourteen year-old King Richard the Second. Richard later proved to be a mediocre monarch at best, but this was his finest hour.

Here is a description from Froissart, a chronicler of the time, of the final meeting of King Richard II and the leader of the Peasant's Revolt, Wat Tyler.

* * *

“Then the King caused a proclamation to be made that all the commons of the country who were still in London should come to Smithfield, to meet him there; and so they did.

“And when the King and his train had arrived there they turned into the eastern meadow in front of St. Bartholomew's, which is a house of canons: and the commons arrayed themselves on the west side in great battles. At this moment the Mayor of London, William Walworth, came up, and the King bade him go to the commons, and make their chieftain come to him.

“And when he was summoned by the Mayor, by the name of Wat Tighler of Maidstone, he came to the King with great confidence, mounted on a little horse, that the commons might see him. And he dismounted, holding in his hand a dagger which he had taken from another man, and when he had dismounted he half bent his knee, and then took the King by the hand, and shook his arm forcibly and roughly, saying to him, ‘Brother, be of good comfort and joyful, for you shall have, in the fortnight that is to come, praise from the commons even more than you have yet had, and we shall be good companions.’

“And the King said to Walter, ‘Why will you not go back to your own country?’ But the other answered, with a great oath, that neither he nor his fellows would depart until they had got their charter such as they wished to have it, and had certain points rehearsed and added to their charter which they wished to demand. And he said in a threatening fashion that the lords of the realm would rue it bitterly if these points were not settled to their pleasure.

“Then the King asked him what were the points which he wished to have revised, and he should have them freely, without contradiction, written out and sealed. Thereupon the said Walter rehearsed the points which were to be demanded; and he asked that there should be no law within the realm save the law

of Winchester, and that from henceforth there should be no outlawry in any process of law, and that no lord should have lordship save civilly, and that there should be equality among all people save only the King, and that the goods of Holy Church should not remain in the hands of the religious, nor of parsons and vicars, and other churchmen; but that clergy already in possession should have a sufficient sustenance from the endowments, and the rest of the goods should be divided among the people of the parish.

“And he demanded that there should be only one bishop in England and only one prelate, and all the lands and tenements now held by them should be confiscated, and divided among the commons, only reserving for them a reasonable sustenance. And he demanded that there should be no more villains in England, and no serfdom or villainage, but that all men should be free and of one condition.” *[Remember, this was 1381, not 1776, and these concepts were not just revolutionary, but considered shocking and insane by the standards of the time. - HAC]*

“To this the King gave an easy answer, and said that he should have all that he could fairly grant, reserving only for himself the regality of his crown. And then he bade him go back to his home, without making further delay.

“During all this time that the King was speaking, no lord or counselor dared or wished to give answer to the commons in any place save the King himself. Presently Wat Tighler, in the presence of the King, sent for a flagon of water to rinse his mouth, because of the great heat that he was in, and when it was brought he rinsed his mouth in a very rude and disgusting fashion before the King’s face. And then he made them bring him a jug of beer, and drank a great draught, and then, in the presence of the King, climbed on his horse again.

“At this time a certain varlet from Kent, who was among the King’s retinue, asked that the said Walter, the chief of the commons, might be pointed out to him. And when he saw him, he said aloud that he knew him for the greatest thief and robber in all Kent ...

“And for these words Watt tried to strike him with his dagger, and would have slain him in the King’s presence; but because he strove so to do, the Mayor of London, William Walworth, reasoned with the said Watt for his violent behavior and despite, done in the King’s presence, and arrested him. And because he arrested him, he said Watt stabbed the Mayor with his dagger in the stomach in great wrath. But, as it pleased God, the Mayor was wearing amour and took no

harm, but like a hardy and vigorous man drew his cutlass, and struck back at the said Watt, and gave him a deep cut on the neck, and then a great cut on the head. And during this scuffle one of the King's household drew his sword, and ran Watt two or three times through the body, mortally wounding him.

“And he spurred his horse, crying to the commons to avenge him, and the horse carried him some four score paces, and then he fell to the ground half dead. And when the commons saw him fall, and knew not how for certain it was, they began to bend their bows and to shoot, wherefore the King himself spurred his horse, and rode out to them, commanding them that they should all come to him to Clerkenwell Fields.” *[This is, of course, the Official Version. In actual fact it is believed Walworth planned to kill Tyler and lured him to the parley as an ambush. - HAC]*

“Meanwhile the Mayor of London rode as hastily as he could back to the City, and commanded those who were in charge of the twenty four wards to make proclamation round their wards, that every man should arm himself as quickly as he could, and come to the King in St. John's Fields, where were the commons, to aid the King, for he was in great trouble and necessity.... And presently the aldermen came to him in a body, bringing with them their wardens, and the wards arrayed in bands, a fine company of well-armed folks in great strength. And they enveloped the commons like sheep within a pen, and after that the Mayor had set the wardens of the city on their way to the King, he returned with a company of lances to Smithfield, to make an end of the captain of the commons.

“And when he came to Smithfield he found not there the said captain Watt Tighler, at which he marveled much, and asked what was become of the traitor. And it was told him that he had been carried by some of the commons to the hospital for poor folks by St. Bartholomew's, and was put to bed in the chamber of the master of the hospital. And the Mayor went thither and found him, and had him carried out to the middle of Smithfield, in presence of his fellows, and there beheaded. And thus ended his wretched life. But the Mayor had his head set on a pole and borne before him to the King, who still abode in the Fields.

“And when the King saw the head he had it brought near him to abash the commons, and thanked the Mayor greatly for what he had done. And when the commons saw that their chieftain, Watt Tyler, was dead in such a manner, they fell to the ground there among the wheat, like beaten men, imploring the King for mercy for their misdeeds. And the King benevolently granted them mercy, and most of them took to flight. But the King ordained two knights to conduct the rest

of them, namely the Kentishmen, through London, and over London Bridge, without doing them harm, so that each of them could go to his own home.

“Afterwards the King sent out his messengers into diverse parts, to capture the malefactors and put them to death. And many were taken and hanged at London, and they set up many gallows around the City of London, and in other cities and boroughs of the south country. At last, as it pleased God, the King seeing that too many of his liege subjects would be undone, and too much blood split, took pity in his heart, and granted them all pardon, on condition that they should never rise again, under pain of losing life or members, and that each of them should get his charter of pardon, and pay the King as fee for his seal twenty shillings, to make him rich. And so finished this wicked war.”

* * *

The Peasants’ Revolt of 1381 was a sloppy and disorganized affair, and never really had a chance. Yet in Tyler’s terms to the King at Smithfield, it can be seen that they at least did have a political and economic program that was far ahead of its time. Prior to this insurrection all politics was personal, so to speak, i.e., who shall be King, thee or me? The basic system and structure of society was never questioned—until Tyler and Ball picked up their pitchforks.

This was the first time that non-religious, purely political, class, and economic ideology of a kind that we would recognize makes its appearance in history. Two and a half centuries later, in the 1640s, a man named Oliver Cromwell would lead another such insurgency, and win at least a temporary victory. In 1776 the descendants of Wat Tyler and John Ball arose again over the sea—and won.

Lesson #47: The Death of the Red King (1100 A.D.)

Little is known of the early days of William Rufus. He was the third son of William the Conqueror, born in 1057 before the invasion and conquest of England by the Normans in 1066. It is known that as a child he spent much of his time in the care of Archbishop Lanfranc. Other than this his childhood is very much a mystery, with little documentary evidence to suggest what his early days were like. At some point he acquired the nickname of William Rufus, or Red Face, either because he was naturally flushed or else because of his habit of turning red when he was drunk or in a rage, which was often.

As an adult, however, William's life is very well documented. As the third son of William and Matilda he was not expected to rise to any great political prominence. To become a lord but not a king was his destiny. The death of Richard, the second son of William and Matilda changed this position though, and it was increasingly clear in the latter days of the Conqueror's reign that William would play a great role in the Norman Empire.

William's loyalty to his father never erred. He was at his side throughout the rebellions of Robert, the eldest of the Conqueror's sons, and was thought by many to have gained favor over the natural heir to the Norman lands. Upon William the Conqueror's death, however Robert was granted Normandy. For the loyal William there was the prize of England.

William was crowned King of England on 26 September 1087. He faced an immediate rebellion on the part of some of his barons, which he crushed ruthlessly, although he was not especially cruel by the standards of his era. His inheritance was relatively secure, his father having crushed most of the Saxon resistance to his throne. When his elder brother Robert went on Crusade in 1096, William loaned him a vast amount of money for which he pledged the duchy of Normandy. William ruled Normandy in his brother's absence and so was in effect now heir to all of the Conqueror's empire. William Rufus in the period 1089 to 1099 proved himself to be quite ruthless, and an extremely capable politician using a combination of force, bribery and persuasion to increase the size and wealth of his domain. He got into the usual disputes with the church, including a long and bitter feud with Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, but unlike his descendant Henry the Second with Thomas Becket, Rufus satisfied himself with exiling the archbishop and did not have him murdered, which was considered merciful by his contemporaries.

Most kings with such military success behind them would be remembered as being heroes. William Rufus however is often lost in history books or referred to in a negative light. This stems from the source of historical documents from the time. Most contemporary accounts of life in the Norman Empire were written by monks, and William was not very highly thought of by monks. He has been accused of being a homosexual, although the only thing that might be construed as proof of this was the fact that he never married. Perhaps he just didn't like women. In any case, there is no contemporary evidence that Rufus was perverted. The fact is that as medieval monarchs went, Rufus was no worse than most and a lot better than some.

The oddest thing about William Rufus's life was his death.

It was while planning further wars and conquests that William died. He was hunting in the New Forest, England, when an arrow struck him in the chest. Whether this was an accident or deliberate is the subject of debate, with either being feasible. On his death his younger brother Henry, who seems to have been hovering in the district for no apparent reason, immediately rode hard for Winchester and seized the royal treasury, which guaranteed him the funds to proclaim himself king and buy the loyalty of the Anglo-Norman barons. A good case can be made that Henry had his brother assassinated in order to seize his throne.

But the oddest version of the story is that William the Second was a follower of what anthropologist Margaret Murray called the Old Religion, the pre-Christian pagan cults of Western Europe with their nature gods and goddesses, and that his death was in fact a ritual sacrifice. Many ancient pagan religions followed some version of what is known as the Osiris cycle; when a magical King was created and then sacrificed in order to insure bountiful harvests, avert the wrath of the gods, etc. The idea being that the gods were more pleased with the blood of a king than some goat or peasant.

William Rufus was killed on August the first, 1100, Lammas Day in the Christian calendar, but also one of the four intersolstices or pagan equinoxes. To this day the four main "witches' sabbaths" followed by assorted witchy cults are Hallowmass or Samhain (October 31st), Candlemas (February 2nd), Beltane or Walpurgis Night (April 30th), and Lammas or Lughnasadh (August 1st.) The alleged hunting accident happened as Rufus was entering his 14th (2x7) regnal year.

The circumstances surrounding his death are certainly curious. As history records it, William was on a hunting expedition in the New Forest (where Gerald Gardner's coven would make their home centuries later) on August 1st. The tale tells us that William was shot "accidentally" by his friend, Sir Walter Tyrrel, with a crossbow bolt, which ricocheted off a tree as it flew towards a stag. One version has Tyrrel refusing at first to shoot, and Rufus standing up and saying "Shoot, Tyrrel, in the name of God!" (Or the gods?) The tale differs in describing the wound, according to different sources. Some say his eye was pierced, others his chest. Either way, he was killed and his blood spilled on the earth.

Two interesting facts also might jump out at those who see signs and omens in everything: the stag is a symbol of one of the main gods of the witches; Herne the Hunter, and William II was almost certainly a pagan. His habit of swearing "by the sweet face of Lucca" (a pagan goddess) was so well known as his most serious oath that enemies were known to capitulate bloodlessly in argument or war upon hearing this oath. (No wonder he was in bad odor with the Church!)

On the other hand, Walter Tyrrel fled to France, and he swore until the end of his days that the death of the Red King at his hands was nothing more than a tragic accident.

If anyone has a yen to read an absolutely rip-roaring, swashbuckling medieval adventure story, go to Alibris or your local library and see if you can get hold of the two George Shipway novels "The Paladin" and "The Wolf Time." These books are a fictionalized biography of Walter Tyrrel, the knight accused of regicide on that day in the forest so long ago. They're worth the read.

Lesson #48: The Mistress of Death

(Date—and facts—uncertain)

[I got some queries on Madame LaLaurie when I mentioned her in my “Why Not Repatriate?” article. I have put a question mark on this one because, while the LaLaurie House is still there, there is some question in my mind as to whether any of this actually happened. I have never seen any reliable documentation on it. This whole story may be just tourist hype. - HAC]

The haunted history of the LaLaurie Mansion in New Orleans is perhaps one of the best known stories of haunted houses in the city. It tragically recounts the brutal excess of slavery in a horrifying and gruesome manner because for more than 150 years, and through several generations, the LaLaurie house has been considered the most haunted location in the French Quarter.

Let's just say this story is not for the faint of heart ... and not for the weak of stomach either.

The origin of the ghostly tale dates back to 1832 when Dr. Louis LaLaurie and his wife, Delphine, moved into their Creole mansion in the French Quarter. They became renowned for their social affairs and were respected for their wealth and prominence. Madame LaLaurie became known as the most influential French-Creole woman in the city, handling the family's business affairs and carrying herself with great style. Her daughters were among the finest dressed girls in New Orleans.

For those lucky enough to attend social functions at 1140 Royal Street, they were amazed by what they found there. The three-story mansion, although rather plain on the exterior, was graced with delicate iron work but the interior was lavish by anyone's standards. The house had been made for grand events and occasions. Mahogany doors that were hand-carved with flowers and human faces opened into bright parlors, illuminated by the glow of hundreds of candles in gigantic chandeliers. Guests dined from European china and danced and rested on Oriental fabrics which had been imported at great expense.

Madame LaLaurie was considered one of the most intelligent and beautiful women in the city. Those who received her attentions at the wonderful gatherings could not stop talking about her. Guests in her home were pampered as their hostess bustled about the house, seeing to their every need.

But this was the side of Madame LaLaurie the friends and admirers were allowed to see. There was another side. Beneath the delicate and refined exterior was a cruel, cold-blooded and possibly insane woman that some only suspected ... but others knew as fact.

The finery of the LaLaurie house was attended to by dozens of slaves and Madame LaLaurie was brutally cruel to them. She kept her cook chained to the fireplace in the kitchen where the sumptuous dinners were prepared and many of the others were treated much worse. We have to remember that, in those days, the slaves were not even regarded as being human. They were simply property and many slave owners thought of them as being lower than animals. Of course, this does not excuse the treatment of the slaves, or the institution of slavery itself, but merely serves as a reminder of just how insane Madame LaLaurie may have been ... because her mistreatment of the slaves went far beyond cruelty.

It was the neighbors on Royal Street who first began to suspect something was not quite right in the LaLaurie house. There were whispered conversations about how the LaLaurie slaves seemed to come and go quite often. Parlor maids would be replaced with no explanation or the stable boy was suddenly just disappear ... never to be seen again.

Then, one day a neighbor was climbing her own stairs when she heard a scream and saw Madame LaLaurie chasing a little girl, the Madame's personal servant, with a whip. She pursued the girl onto the roof of the house, where the child jumped to her death. The neighbor later saw the small slave girl buried in a shallow grave beneath the cypress trees in the yard.

A law that prohibited the cruel treatment of slaves was in effect in New Orleans and the authorities who investigated the neighbors claims impounded the LaLaurie slaves and sold them at auction. Unfortunately for them, Madame LaLaurie coaxed some relatives into buying them and then selling them back to her in secret.

The stories continued about the mistreatment of the LaLaurie slaves and uneasy whispering spread among her former friends. A few party invitations were declined, dinner invitations were ignored and the family was soon politely avoided by other members of the Creole society.

Finally, in April of 1834, all of the doubts about Madame LaLaurie were realized. A fire broke out in the LaLaurie kitchen. Legend has it that it was set by

the cook, who could endure no more of the Madame's tortures. Regardless of how it started, the fire swept through the house.

After the blaze was put out, the fire fighters discovered a horrible sight behind a secret, barred door in the attic. They found more than a dozen slaves there, chained to the wall in a horrible state. They were both male and female ... some were strapped to makeshift operating tables... some were confined in cages made for dogs ... human body parts were scattered around and heads and human organs were placed haphazardly in buckets ... grisly souvenirs were stacked on shelves and next to them a collection of whips and paddles.

It was more horrible that anything created in man's imagination.

According to the newspaper, the New Orleans Bee, all of the victims were naked and the ones not on tables were chained to the wall. Some of the women had their stomachs sliced open and their insides wrapped about their waists. One woman had her mouth stuffed with animal excrement and then her lips were sewn shut. [I have never seen any photocopies of these alleged news articles from the New Orleans newspapers. - HAC]

The men were in even more horrible states. Fingernails had been ripped off, eyes poked out, and private parts sliced away. One man hung in shackles with a stick protruding from a hole that had been drilled in the top of his head. It had been used to stir his brains.

The tortures had been administered so as to not bring quick death. Mouths had been pinned shut and hands had been sewn to various parts of the body. Regardless, many of them had been dead for quite some time. Others were unconscious and some cried in pain, begging to be killed and put out of their misery.

The fire fighters fled the scene in disgust and doctors were summoned from a nearby hospital. It is uncertain just how many slaves were found in Madame LaLaurie's torture chamber but most of them were dead. There were a few who still clung to life ... like a woman whose arms and legs had been removed and another who had been forced into a tiny cage with all of her limbs broken than set again at odd angles.

Needless to say, the horrifying reports from the LaLaurie house were the most hideous things to ever occur in the city and word soon spread about the

atrocities. It was believed that Madame LaLaurie alone was responsible for the horror and that her husband turned a blind, but knowing, eye to her activities.

Passionate words swept through New Orleans and a mob gathered outside the house, calling for vengeance and carrying hanging ropes. Suddenly, a carriage roared out of the gates and into the milling crowd. It soon disappeared out of sight.

Madame LaLaurie and her family were never seen again. Rumors circulated as to what became of them ... some said they ran away to France and others claimed they lived in the forest along the north shore of Lake Ponchartrain. Still other rumors claimed the family vanished into one of the small towns near New Orleans, where friends and relatives sheltered them from harm. Could this be true? And if so, could the terrible actions of Madame LaLaurie have “infected” another house in addition to the mansion in the French Quarter?

Whatever became of the LaLaurie family, there is no record that any legal action was ever taken against her and no mention that she was ever seen in New Orleans, or her fine home, again.

Of course, the same thing cannot be said for her victims.

The stories of ghosts and a haunting at 1140 Royal Street began almost as soon as the LaLaurie carriage fled the house in the darkness.

After the mutilated slaves were removed from the house, it was sacked and vandalized by the mob. After a brief occupancy, the house remained vacant for many years after, falling into a state of ruin and decay. Many people claimed to hear screams of agony coming from the empty house at night and saw the apparitions of slaves walking about on the balconies and in the yards. Some stories even claimed that vagrants who had gone into the house seeking shelter were never heard from again.

The house had been placed on the market in 1837 and was purchased by a man who only kept it for three months. He was plagued by strange noises, cries and groans in the night and soon abandoned the place. He tried leasing the rooms for a short time, but the tenants only stayed for a few days at most. Finally, he gave up and the house was abandoned.

Following the Civil War, Reconstruction turned the empty LaLaurie mansion into an integrated high school for girls of the Lower District but in 1874, the White League forced the black children to leave the school. A short time later,

a segregationist school board changed things completely and made the school for black children only. This lasted for one year.

In 1882, the mansion once again became a center for New Orleans society when an English teacher turned it into a conservatory of music and a fashionable dancing school. All went well for some time as the teacher was well-known and attracted students from the finest of the local families ... but then things came to a terrible conclusion.

A local newspaper apparently printed an accusation against the teacher, claiming some improprieties with female students, just before a grand social event was to take place at the school. Students and guests shunned the place and the school closed the following day.

A few years later, more strange events plagued the house and it became the center for rumors regarding the death of Jules Vignie, the eccentric member of a wealthy New Orleans family. Vignie lived secretly in the house from the later 1880s until his death in 1892. He was found dead on a tattered cot in the mansion, apparently living in filth, while hidden away in the surrounding rooms was a collection of antiques and treasure. A bag containing several hundred dollars was found near his body and another search found several thousand dollars hidden in his mattress.

For some time after, rumors of a lost treasure circulated about the mansion ... but few dared to go in search of it.

The house was abandoned again until the late 1890s. In this time of great immigration to America, many Italians came to live in New Orleans. Landlords quickly bought up old and abandoned buildings to convert into cheap housing for this new wave of renters. The LaLaurie mansion became just such a house ... and for many of the tenants even the low rent was not enough to keep them there.

During the time when the mansion was an apartment house, a number of strange events were recorded. Among them was an encounter between an occupant and a naked black man in chains who attacked him. The black man abruptly vanished. Others claimed to have animals butchered in the house; children were attacked by a phantom with a whip; strange figures appeared wrapped in shrouds; a young mother was terrified to find a woman in elegant evening clothes bending over her sleeping infant; and of course, the ever-present sounds of screams, groans and cries that would reverberate through the house at night.

It was never easy to keep tenants in the house and finally, after word spread of the strange goings-on there, the mansion was deserted once again.

The house would later become a bar and then a furniture store. The saloon, taking advantage of the building's ghastly history was called the Haunted Saloon. The owner knew many of the building's ghost stories and kept a record of the strange things experienced by patrons.

The furniture store did not fare as well in the former LaLaurie house. The owner first suspected vandals when all of his merchandise was found ruined on several occasions, covered in some sort of dark, stinking liquid. He finally waited one night with a shotgun, hoping the vandals would return. When dawn came, the furniture was all ruined again even though no one—human anyway—had entered the building. The owner closed the place down.

Today, the house has been renovated and restored and serves as luxury apartments for those who can afford them. Apparently, tenants are a little easier to keep today than they were one hundred years ago.

Is the LaLaurie house still haunted? I really don't know for sure, but one has to wonder if the spirits born from this type of tragedy can ever really rest?

A few years ago, the owners of the house were in the midst of remodeling when they found a hasty graveyard hidden in the back of the house beneath the wooden floor. The skeletal remains had been dumped unceremoniously into the ground and when officials investigated, they found the remains to be of fairly recent origins.

They believed that it was Madame LaLaurie's own private graveyard. She had removed sections of the floor in the house and had hastily buried them to avoid being seen and detected. The discovery of the remains answered one question and unfortunately created another. The mystery of why some of the LaLaurie slaves seemed to just simply disappear was solved at last ... but it does make you wonder just how many victims Madame LaLaurie may have claimed?

And how many of them may still be lingering behind in our world?

Lesson #49: The Father of Modern Science (1493–1541)

[Interestingly, when I first transmitted this article, I got several angry e-mails in response from historically abled readers who were very upset, to the point of incoherent rage, that I would dare credit Paracelsus with being the “Father of Modern Science.” Almost half a millennium after his death, the man is still capable of stirring passionate controversy. – HAC]

Auroleus Phillipus Theostratus Bombastus von Hohenheim, immortalized as “Paracelsus,” was born in 1493. He was the son of a well known physician who was described a Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, and it was from him that Paracelsus took his first instruction in medicine.

At the age of sixteen, Paracelsus entered the University at Basle where he applied himself to the study of alchemy, surgery, and medicine. With the science of alchemy he was already acquainted, having previously studied the works of Isaac Hollandus. Hollandus’ writing roused in him the ambition to cure disease by medicine superior to those available at that time to use, for apart from his incursions into alchemy, Paracelsus is credited with the introduction of opium and mercury into the arsenal of medicine. His works also indicate an advanced knowledge of the science and principles of magnetism. These are just some of the achievements that seem to justify the praise that has been handed him in the last century. Manly Hall called him “the precursor of chemical pharmacology and therapeutics and the most original medical thinker of the sixteenth century.”

His Travels

The Abbot Trithemius, an adept of a high order, and the instructor of the illustrious Henry Cornelius Agrippa, was responsible for Paracelsus’ initiation into the science of alchemy. In 1516, Paracelsus was still pursuing his research in mineralogy, medicine, surgery, and chemistry under the guidance of Sigismund Fugger, a wealthy physician of the Basle, but the student was forced to leave the city hurriedly after trouble with the authorities over his studies in necromancy. So, Paracelsus started out on a nomad’s life, supporting himself by astrological predictions and occult practices of various kinds.

His wanderings took him through Germany, France, Hungary, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, and Russia. In Russia, he was taken prisoner by the Tartars and brought before the Grand Cham at whose court he became a great

favorite. Finally, he accompanied the Cham's son on an embassy from China to Constantinople, the city in which the supreme secret, the universal dissolvent (the alkahest) was imparted to him by an Arabian adept.

For Paracelsus, as Manly Hall has said, gained his knowledge "not from long-coated pedagogues but from dervishes in Constantinople, witches, gypsies, and sorcerers, who invoked spirits and captured the rays of the celestial bodies in dew; of whom it is said that he cured the incurable, gave sight to the blind, cleansed the leper, and even raised the dead, and whose memory could turn aside the plague."

His Return to Europe

Paracelsus ultimately returned to Europe, passing along the Danube into Italy, where he became an army surgeon. It was here apparently that his wonderful cures began. In 1526, at the age of thirty-two, he re-entered Germany, and at the university he had entered as a youth, took a professorship of physics, medicine, and surgery.

This was a position of considerable importance that was offered to him at the insistence of Erasmus and Ecolampidus. Perhaps it was his behavior at this time that eventually led to his nickname "the Luther of physicians," for in his lectures he was so bold as to denounce as antiquated the revered systems of Galen and his school, whose teachings were held to be so unalterable and inviolable by the authorities of that time that the slightest deviation from their teachings was regarded as nothing short of heretical. As a crowning insult he actually burnt the works of these masters in a brass pan with sulfur and nitre!

The Hermetic Heretic

This high-handed behavior, coupled with his very original ideas, made him countless enemies. The fact that the cures he performed with his mineral medicines justified his teachings merely served further to antagonize the medical faculty, infuriated at their authority and prestige being undermined by the teachings of such a "heretic" and "usurper." Thus Paracelsus did not long retain his professorship at Basle, but was forced once again to leave the city and take to the road in a wanderer's life.

During the worse of his second exile, we hear of him in 1526 at Colmar and in 1530 at Nuremburg, once again in conflict with the doctors of medicine, who denounced him as an impostor, although once again, he turned the tables on his

opponents by his successful treatment of several bad cases of elephantiasis, which he followed up during the next ten years by a series of cures that were amazing for that period.

In his book *Paracelsus*, Franz Hartmann says: “He proceeded to Machren, Kaernten, Krain, and Hungary, and finally to Salzburg in Austria, where he was invited by the Prince Palatine, Duke Ernst of Bavaria, who was a great lover of the secret art of alchemy. But Paracelsus was not destined to enjoy the rest he so richly deserved. He died in 1541, after a short sickness, in a small room at the White Horse Inn, and his body was buried in the graveyard of St. Sebastian. At least one writer has suggested that his death may have been hastened by a scuffle with assassins in the pay of the orthodox medical faculty, but there is no actual foundation for this story.

What is odd is that not one of his biographers seems to have found anything remarkable in the fact that at sixteen years of age, Paracelsus was already well acquainted with alchemical literature. Even allowing for the earlier maturity of a man in those times, he must still have been something of a phenomenon in mental development. Certainly, few of his contemporaries either could or would grasp his teachings, and his consequent irritation and arrogance in the face of their stupidity and obstinacy is scarcely to be wondered at. Although he numbered many enemies among his fellow physicians, Paracelsus also had his disciples, and for them no praise was too high for him. He was worshipped as their noble and beloved alchemical monarch, the “German Hermes.”

Lesson #50: The Shangani Patrol (1893)

The small White nation of Rhodesia was founded in 1890 by the Pioneer Column, which marched across country from South Africa and erected a fort at what later became the city of Salisbury. By 1893 the new colony, at first called Mashonaland, was elbowing the territory of the warlike Matabele tribe, an offshoot of the Zulus who used the same tribal military system of impis or regiments as the Zulus. In October of 1893, at the beginning of the rainy season, war broke out between the White settlers and the Matabele.

The settlers, commanded by Cecil Rhodes's associate Dr. Leander Starr Jameson, marched into Matabeleland and quickly burned the Matabele King Lobengula's kraal or village up on a flat-topped mountain called Thabas Induna. Lobengula himself fled into the bush with his warriors and the English determined to pursue him. Up until that point the Whites, who were armed with modern rifles, Maxim machine guns, and a few light artillery pieces, had easily defeated the blacks who had only spears, but at this point, for reasons which have never been fully explained, the whole campaign went to hell in a handbasket.

To begin with, it was the worst time of year for such a campaign in what is known as the low veld in Rhodesia—tsetse fly country, deadly for horses. The rains had broken, malaria would soon be rampant and the waterlogged veld would make progress difficult. In addition, the infernal dissension which is the curse of our race had manifested itself, and there was quarreling and intrigue and division among the officers of the Rhodesian forces.

On November 9th, 1893, Jameson decided to send a strong patrol to reconnoiter the country between Inyati and Shiloh and if possible bring Lobengula back a prisoner. His call for volunteers met with a good response, and the force of 320 men was composed of volunteers from the Salisbury and Victoria Columns and 150 men of the Bechuanaland Border Police and Raaff's Rangers who had reached Bulawayo ahead of the main body of the Southern Column. With three Maxim guns and two hundred native carriers and with Major Forbes in command, they rode out of Bulawayo shortly before sunset on November 14.

The first two days and nights it rained almost continually and the horses, which were in poor condition after the main campaign, found the sodden country heavy going. Forbes made for the London Missionary Society's station at Inyati, which had been established before the days of Thomas Baines, and found it a sorry sight. Its normal occupants had abandoned it at the beginning of the invasion and it

was now occupied by a party of Matabele in charge of a large herd of cattle. They fled. The Matabele had vented their wrath on the missionaries' houses, which had been wrecked in an orgy of destruction. The veldt was littered with torn books, broken furniture and ruined personal belongings.

Leaving a force of eighty men to garrison the station, Forbes went on with the remainder. This part of the country had been heavily populated and in the numerous kraals they found cattle and grain. The grain was a welcome addition to their meager diet. The force had left Bulawayo before the arrival of the main Southern Column with its food supplies, and their rations, small enough when they had started on the pursuit, were by now almost exhausted. They had kept going with what they could find in Matabele corn bins, but now this source was almost at an end. When they reached the last of the kraals and realized that the further they went the shorter they would be of food, many of the men became discontented. They considered that the pursuit should be postponed until the food position was corrected and did not see why they should have to endure hardships that could be avoided.

Major Forbes saw their point of view, but knew that if they gave up the chase now they would never overtake Lobengula. He paraded his force and ordered the malcontents to step forward. Most of Raaff's Rangers and the Salisbury Horse did so, but the Victoria Column stood firm. The detachment of Bechuanaland Border Police, being regular soldiers, was not consulted. Forbes thereupon sent a messenger to Bulawayo asking for food and instructions and received a reply from Dr. Jameson that reinforcements and wagons carrying more ammunition and what food could be spared were being sent to Shiloh. There Forbes reorganized his force.

The new provisions were sufficient to provide three-quarter rations for three hundred men for twelve days and to see the disaffected section back to Bulawayo. Forbes composed his new force of Captain Borrow and twenty-two men of the Salisbury Horse, Major Wilson and seventy mounted and a hundred dismounted men of the Victoria Column, Captain Raaff and twenty men of the Rangers and Captain Coventry and seventy-eight men of the Bechuanaland Border Police.

Soon after leaving Shiloh the scouts found Lobengula's wagon tracks and followed them for eight miles through thick bush. There were other signs that they were hot on the trail - camp fires whose ashes were still hot, pots and calabashes hastily abandoned, the charred remains of two of the king's wagons which had

broken down and been destroyed. It was evident that Lobengula and his warriors were making for the Shangani River.

The further they went the more difficult conditions became. The Whites were drenched by storm after storm, and the veldt became so waterlogged that the oxen pulling the wagons carrying their provisions gave up the struggle and collapsed. Forbes decided that the wagons were a hindrance. Forming a flying column of a hundred and sixty men, he sent the rest with the wagons to a place called Umhlangeni to await their return.

The flying column pushed ahead with greater speed. On the evening of November 30, Johan Colenbrander, who had been scouting, brought in an induna he had known when he had lived at the king's kraal. The induna said the Matabele had become dispirited through defeat, starvation, exposure to the constant rain and the ravages of smallpox and most of them wanted to surrender. But remnants of three of Lobengula's best regiments, the Insukameni, the Ihlati and the Siseba, were still loyal to the king and were covering his retreat.

On December 3 the column reached the bank of the Shangani River. They were very close on the king's heels now. Across the river they could see a number of natives frantically driving the last of their cattle in the wake of an impi. They had evidently only just crossed, for on the column's side was evidence of a Matabele encampment with the fires still smoldering. But had the king himself crossed the river or had he gone further along the bank? It was essential to know. Forbes decided to form a laager on open ground about two hundred yards back from the river while a small patrol went across the river to reconnoiter the further bank. He selected Major Allan Wilson, commander of the Victoria Column, to lead a patrol of twelve men.

When Wilson and his men had disappeared into the bush on the other side, Forbes interrogated a captured native. From him he learnt that Lobengula was ill and that with him were some three thousand warriors from different regiments who were determined that he should not be taken prisoner. If reports that the Matabele morale was low were correct, Forbes planned to make a rush the next day, capture the king and at once turn back for Bulawayo. They had now been out for nine days, their rations were dwindling and if they were to get back to their wagons and food supplies in time they would have to move swiftly.

He expected Wilson and his men to return in a couple of hours, but the afternoon wore on and darkness came without a sign of the missing patrol. In the

meantime Forbes had received a report that the bulk of Lobengula's warriors, under his chief induna, Mjaan, had turned back and intended to attack the column that night.

It was a dark night and rain fell at intervals. At about nine o'clock an alert picket heard the sound of horses and aroused the laager. Two men rode in who told Forbes that the patrol had followed Lobengula's wagon spoor for some five miles and that Wilson considered the prospects of capturing the king were so good he had decided not to return that night. He wanted Forbes to send more men and a maxim in the morning. Two hours later Captain Napier and two troopers reached the laager and reported that the patrol had got close to the bush enclosure protecting the king and his wagon but had had to retreat to prevent themselves from being surrounded and had taken up a position in the bush to wait for daylight.

On neither occasion did Wilson state exactly what he wanted, although Napier said he thought he expected the rest of the column to cross the river and join him so that they could make a daylight raid on the enclosure at dawn. This Forbes refused to do. He expected a Matabele attack on his position, and he could not endanger his whole force by crossing the river in darkness, cutting off his retreat and presenting his back to the enemy. He did not want to recall Wilson since he was obviously in a good position to capture Lobengula, and if this opportunity were lost it would never recur. He compromised by sending Captain Borrow and twenty men to reinforce the patrol, and thus made his mistake. The patrol was now too large to be merely a reconnoitering force and too small for the dangerous task of trying to capture the king in defiance of the Matabele impis. But it strengthened Wilson's resolve to undertake his suicidal mission.

At daybreak Wilson and his thirty-two men approached Lobengula's enclosure. The wagon was still there, but when Wilson called on the king to surrender there was no answer. In the ominous silence they realized that during the night he had continued his flight. All hope of capturing him had gone.

Then came the development they had all been expecting and dreading. In the half-light they heard the clicking of rifle bolts and from behind a tree stepped a warrior wearing the induna's headring. He fired his rifle. It was the signal for a scattered volley which intensified as more warriors came running through the bush. Most of the shots went over their heads, but two horses went down. A trooper, Dillon, ran to them, cut off the saddle pockets carrying ammunition and regained his horse as Wilson gave the order to retreat to an anthep behind which they had sheltered the previous night.

They reached it without losing a man. As horses were shot down their riders jumped up behind men still mounted or ran alongside holding the stirrup irons. The volume of Matabele fire steadily increased and the exposed position of the antheap became untenable. Wilson ordered a retirement into the trees, and as they went the rearguard, firing with cool accuracy, kept the Matabele at bay. But the Matabele were in no hurry. They had the white men at their mercy and could take their time.

Several men had been wounded and a number of them were dismounted. Wilson grouped these in the centre and started off slowly for the river in the hope that some at least might reach the main Column. For nearly a mile they marched without harm, their progress dogged by warriors keeping pace among the trees. Then they saw that their path was barred by a line of warriors waiting for them to come closer. An attempt to break through that barrier would mean sacrificing the wounded. That was unthinkable. They would face it together.

Three men, however, got away. An American and two Australians galloped unscathed through the Matabele line, threw off their pursuers by doubling on their tracks and reached the bank of the Shangani in safety. Shortly after leaving the patrol they heard heavy firing and the shouting of hundreds of warriors as they attacked Wilson and his men. When they reached the river they saw that there was no hope whatever for the patrol. Heavy rains upstream had swollen the waters of the river and now it was in flood, and rising every minute. They managed to get across only with the greatest difficulty.

The subsequent fate of the Wilson patrol, whose bones now rest beneath their memorial on the Matopo hill on which Cecil Rhodes lies buried, was gathered afterwards from Matabele sources. They had selected a clearing among the trees for their last stand and, some standing, some kneeling, poured a hot fire in all directions. The Matabele had the advantage of better cover and took time to aim accurately and make their shots tell. But so calmly and steadily did the patrol fight back that in spite of the bush and the trees they took a heavy toll of the enemy.

At one stage in the fight, said the Matabele, they had offered the white men their lives provided they laid down their arms and surrendered. Their offer was scornfully rejected. There would be no surrender.

The patrol used their dead horses as cover, but their number steadily dwindled. Many were killed outright, and the wounded went on fighting until they lost consciousness. The fight went on until late in the afternoon. Just before the end the few surviving white men staggered to their feet, sang a few bars of "God Save

the Queen”, shook hands with each other, and waited for the end. It was not long in coming. The Matabele charged them with their assegais, and gave no quarter. One last man escaped for a few precious minutes, gained the top of an anthill a few yards away and shot down several Matabele before a bullet smashed his hip. He was still firing a revolver as the assegais ended his life.

There were no survivors, and this is the proud epitaph on their memorial. No one knew of their fate until two months later, when James Dawson, the trader, was led to the spot by a party of natives and found their skeletons. The trees all round were scored by bullet marks. The Matabele spoke of them reverently and had been so impressed by their bravery that they had refrained from mutilating their bodies and had left them where they fell. Dawson dug a large grave and gave them temporary burial close to a tree on which he cut a cross and the words, “To Brave Men”. Their bones were later interred at Zimbabwe, since they had all come from Fort Victoria, and in 1904 removed to the Matopos, to the hilltop “consecrated and set apart for ever for those who had deserved well of their country.”

A question that intrigued the pioneer population when the fate of Allan Wilson’s patrol became known was why so many officers were permitted to accompany him across the Shangani River. Major Forbes had granted him the privilege of picking his own men, and it was only natural that the officers of the Victoria Column - many of them his own personal friends, men he had known in civilian life - should clamour for the honour of helping him to capture Lobengula. Dr. Jameson paid Allan Wilson a tribute when he reported officially on the Shangani episode.

“Major Allan Wilson was one of the most gifted leaders of men I have met. Personally brave to rashness, yet extremely careful and considerate of the men under his command, it followed that the men would go anywhere with him. It is to this hero worship of Wilson, so well deserved, that I attribute the large number of officers who accompanied him on that last fatal reconnaissance.”

Lesson #51: The Murder of Lord Darnley (1567)

by Russell Aiuto

A small furtive band of men carried large sacks through the quiet, dark streets of Edinburgh. They stacked these bags around the walls of a lower room of a comfortable house next to a church as if they were lying in stores of wheat for winter. One of the men snaked a long cotton string from one of the bags across the diagonal of the room so that it came out under the heavy oak door. The men backed away to some distance from the building. With a flint and a small wisp of hay, they lit the end of the string. They watched, transfixed by the slow, almost painful progress of the ignition of the fuse. Then, the street, the church and the building lit up with an explosion, the likes of which Edinburgh had never heard.

The Cast

The cast of characters in this complicated plot is positively Shakespearean:

- The most beautiful queen in all of Europe, twenty years old, six feet tall, in an age when the average height of a woman was barely five feet. This is our heroine, Mary Queen of Scots.
- A nineteen-year-old king, handsome, two inches taller than his queen, towering by half a foot over the men of the time, but despite these gifts, a syphilitic, disgruntled libertine. Here we have the fascinating Lord Darnley.
- A half-brother, Lord Moray, a bastard, seeking by any means to dethrone his half-sister, even though he is sometimes her advisor.
- Lord Bothwell, a dashing, mercurial, ambitious lord, with his eye on the throne, who plans to win his trophy by capturing the affection of the Queen.
- A short, ugly, swarthy Italian secretary to the queen, David Rizzio, perhaps her lover. Perhaps, the king's lover, as well.
- A complete cast of dukes and lords, all possessed with the pursuit of power, some rabid Roman Catholics, some equally frenetic Protestants.
- Treachery. Adultery. Religion. Greed. Sex. Power. And, most of all, murder.

This is a tale of two murders. The first murder that of David Rizzio, the Italian secretary of Queen Mary, has no mystery, since it was committed by a crowd of assassins before Mary's very eyes.

Imagine a sixteenth-century royal chamber, Mary and her secretary playing cards, a musician playing his lute softly in one corner of the room, candles ablaze,

servants bringing and removing dishes of delicacies. Then, chaos. A group of men, armed with knives and swords, knocked over tables and pulled the almost dwarfish Rizzio from Queen Mary's skirts. They stabbed him repeatedly as his pregnant benefactor screamed in horror.

The second murder, that of Lord Darnley, Mary's second husband, is cloaked in mystery, and has at least half a dozen suspects. In terms of history and historians, it is an unsolved murder. This time the murder is preceded by a horrendous blast of explosives, with the building housing Lord Darnley collapsing in dust and rubble, but leaving the intended victim unmarked, as he lay dead in the adjacent courtyard.

Was history changed by these murders? Were they the undoing of the reign of Scotland's queen? Perhaps the destiny of England itself was altered.

The consequences were much more far-reaching than would first appear. The heart of the story begins with Mary returning from France, where she had spent her childhood.

Return to Scotland

Mary, Queen of Scots, and Francis, Dauphin of France, were married in 1558. The bride was sixteen, the groom fourteen. The marriage ceremony, even for the sixteenth century, must have had elements of comedy about it. Mary, tall, robust, beautiful, walked down the aisle with a short, puny, sickly boy. Those in attendance must have wondered how such an incongruous couple could ever consummate a marriage. Shortly after the marriage, Francis's father, Henry II, King of France, declared his new daughter-in-law Queen of Scotland, Ireland, and England.

A little over a year later, King Henry II died and Francis was proclaimed King Francis II. Other thrones were in flux. Within this time period, Elizabeth had become Queen of England, and Mary's mother, Mary of Guise, was ruling Scotland in her daughter's absence.

In 1560, however, things changed rapidly. Mary, now not only Queen of Scots but Queen of France as well, had her life altered significantly by the end of that year. First, France, England, and Scotland signed the Treaty of Edinburgh, in which France no longer claimed the throne of England in Mary's name. By mid-year Mary of Guise died, and Scotland was ruled by a faction of warring lords. By the end of the year, Francis II, always a sickly boy, caught a fever while hunting

and died in December. In the course of two years, Mary Queen of Scots was married, orphaned, and widowed.

Francis II was succeeded by his brother, the ten-year-old Charles IX. Mary's mother-in-law, the formidable Catherine de Medici, had no place in her plans for her newly widowed daughter-in-law. Suggestions that Mary should marry Charles were quickly squashed, as well as attempts by her Guise uncles to marry her to Don Carlos, heir to the Spanish throne. [See "The Mad Prince of Spain."] Under these circumstances, Mary decided to return to Scotland, her kingdom that she had not seen in thirteen years.

She would return to a land ruled by a council of twenty-four nobles divided between Protestants and Roman Catholics, sufficiently motivated by the pursuit of power to allow Scotland to exist in an uneasy truce between the competing religious doctrines. Foremost among these lords was the ambitious Lord James of Moray, Mary's bastard half-brother. Moray was a Protestant who had led the effort to declare Scotland officially a Protestant country, but in effecting a compromise of tolerance between the competing religious factions, he had acquired the enmity of the intolerant Calvinist, John Knox, a powerful and wild-eyed preacher.

Despite this opposition, Moray seemed to Mary to be the most effective advisor for her return to ruling Scotland and the man most likely to help her avoid civil war. In accepting the advice and counsel of Moray, Mary had to accept the influence of his cronies, the clever Lord Morton and the dangerous Lord Maitland. All three of these men would have a hand in the murders that would ultimately determine Mary's future.

On August 19, 1561, Mary Queen of Scots, nineteen years old, returned to the land of her birth. "She had left a Scots child and returned a French woman," as John Guy so aptly describes it.

However, sixteenth century Europe did not look kindly on female rulers. In the early years of her reign, Elizabeth I of England was under constant pressure to marry, not only for the functional reason of producing an heir (male, hopefully), but to have a strong man's hand on the helm of the ship of state. Anticipating Mary's return to Scotland, John Knox had written three years before Mary's return to Scotland his "First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women" which began:

“To promote a woman to be our rule, superiority, dominion, or empire above any realm, nation or city, is repugnant to nature, contumely to God, a thing most contrarious to his revealed will ...”

This was the land that Mary was to rule: A land of cold castles inhabited by rabid Protestants and equally rabid Catholics, all hungry for power. She was a lamb walking into a lion’s cage.

The Ambitious Bridegroom

There was no question in the minds of the lords of Scotland that Mary Queen of Scots needed a husband. Despite the impressive power exhibited by Elizabeth of England, there was reluctance elsewhere in Europe to accept the idea of a woman ruler. Elizabeth herself considered Mary to be a possible heir to her own throne and was interested in seeing that Mary was wed. She proposed several candidates, the most illustrious being her own probable lover, the dashing Earl of Leicester, whose wife had been found dead under unexplained circumstances. [See “The Mysterious Death of Amy Robsart.”]

After some negotiations, Elizabeth settled on Henry, Lord Darnley, a youth of eighteen who was of royal lineage. He was the son of Lord and Lady Lennox, the former in semi-exile in Scotland and the latter living in almost virtual captivity in London with her two sons. Darnley had met Mary shortly after the death of Francis when he brought condolences from Elizabeth, but he evidently left little of an impression. Now, prompted by the enthusiasm of Elizabeth and his parents, he set off to Edinburgh to woo Mary.

Darnley was tall, handsome, and in some ways rather effeminate. He could be charming, selfish, engaging, and feckless. Most of all, he was ambitious. He wanted nothing more than to be King of Scotland and eventually King of England. He was clever, dangerous and untrustworthy.

Eventually Darnley wore down the dubious Mary, who wasn’t quite sure about this charming young man. With the blessing of the lords of Scotland and Elizabeth, Darnley, a Protestant, and Mary, a Roman Catholic, married on July 29, 1565.

It was a match that soon disintegrated. The best that can be said of the marriage of Mary and Darnley is that the union produced an heir who would eventually attain the goal that Mary had set for herself: the throne of England, the

successor to Elizabeth I, henceforth, upon Elizabeth's death in 1603, to be known as James I.

Darnley was a problem from the very beginning of the marriage. He not only liked to drink and gamble, but he enjoyed spending his nights pursuing the prostitutes of Edinburgh. From time to time, he was reported to enjoy men as partners in sex as well. He even exhibited a certain amount of affection for the little Italian, Rizzio. There is much not to like in Darnley. He complained bitterly that he should be given the title of king, and he schemed and conspired with a number of the Scottish lords to accomplish his goal as the undisputed king of Scotland.

First Murder: David Rizzio

Every murder story, real or imagined, has an element of comic relief in it. The very character of David Rizzio (or "Riccio" as it is sometimes spelled) has such elements in it. Rizzio was the Queen's secretary, rising to that position over the first months of Mary's reign as Queen of Scotland. He was more than that. He was a musician who entertained Mary, a companion with whom she played cards, and, in effect, a sort of court jester.

Most of all, he had a comic appearance. He was short, swarthy, and, in the eyes of some, a grotesque and ugly figure. As his self-importance grew, he became more and more a strutting little rooster. He dressed lavishly, and restricted access to his Queen, who preferred to remain isolated in her apartments rather than concern herself with the entreaties of members of her Council. Rumors that he was Mary's lover abounded, circulated by the jealous lords who sought more influence with her. Even decades later, King James VI was referred to by sly Continental wits as "the British Solomon," i.e. the son of David. Such rumors were not only false, but absurd. The beautiful six-foot-tall Mary was an unlikely paramour for the dwarfish, comical Rizzio. She enjoyed his company, but no more than she would have enjoyed the company of an energetic lap dog. Or so her defenders claim. Women are funny about these things, and at this distance in time it's always hard to determine the facts about who was slipping into whose bed down through the centuries.

If there was a ruling emotion among the lords of Scotland, it was paranoia. The favor shown to Rizzio by Mary galled them. It particularly galled Darnley, whose profligate ways and desire to be named to the "crown matrimonial," rather

than his lesser status of “King-Consort,” led him to become involved with a plot to do away with Rizzio.

After supper, in the Queen’s chamber, Rizzio and Mary, along with a number of attendants, were playing cards. Mary was five months pregnant. It was a usual evening—light-hearted, relaxing, and frivolous. Ruthven, an old and devious lord, entered from the staircase that led from Darnley’s chamber a floor below. He was part of a group that included Morton and Maitland, which had hatched the scheme. Darnley was with them. It was clear to all in the chamber that Ruthven’s intent was to murder Rizzio. Clinging to the Queen’s skirts, shrieking in terror to her for protection, Rizzio was grabbed by Ruthven. Darnley raised his dagger to stab Rizzio, but Ruthven accomplished the deed first. Other lords of the Ruthven group entered through the main door to the chamber and blocked the exit. Two of them dragged the wounded Rizzio out the door, butchered him like a hog with their swords and daggers, and threw him down the stairs as a horrified Mary looked on. She was convinced that they meant to kill her as well. Rizzio’s dying screams could be heard all over the palace and in the grounds outside. Darnley, showing his usual bravery, began to beg Mary’s pardon. It was all over in a few minutes.

Mary was thunderstruck. Her own husband had been part of a cabal to murder her secretary and perhaps even to murder her. It occurred to her that they intended for her to miscarry.

After all had left, including a hypocritical and supposedly contrite Darnley, Mary immediately made plans to escape Holyrood Castle. She managed to smuggle a plea for help to the swashbuckling Lord Bothwell, whom she trusted, and late that night, after having her maids “divert” the conspirators’ guards in some manner discreetly passed over by historians, she climbed over a wall disguised with a cloak, and escaped into the darkness on the back of Bothwell’s horse.

Second Murder: Lord Darnley

Under the protection of Bothwell, and now safely ensconced in Edinburgh Castle, Mary was faced with a strange sort of rebellion. The lords who had killed Rizzio asked for forgiveness, and in the interests of maintaining some measure of control of her kingdom, she granted it. Darnley, of course, was not really forgiven, but endured as a necessary evil. Mary began to consider the possibility of divorcing Darnley, despite the myriad complications that such an act would have. The lords were not happy with Darnley’s pusillanimous performance during the

murder of Rizzio, so he was in the awkward position of being in no one's particular favor.

Bothwell assumed even greater importance as Mary's principal advisor. When the dust had settled, Darnley, threatening to leave Scotland for France and greater security, decided to relocate to Glasgow. He went to recover from an illness, most likely syphilis acquired during his nights of debauchery in that first year as Mary's husband.

For some reason, Mary decided that it would be politic to minister to her ill husband, and visited him in Glasgow. With apparent tenderness, she nursed him, and finally convinced him to return to Edinburgh. Between the murder of Rizzio and Darnley's self-imposed convalescence in Glasgow, James had been born, and was safely looked after at a castle to the north of Edinburgh. It is probable that Mary wanted Darnley closer to her so that she could keep an eye on him. Darnley, arrogant to a fault, presumed that he was once more in her favor and could look forward to sharing her bed. They settled on his moving to Holyrood Castle, the very locale of Rizzio's murder, and close to Edinburgh Castle.

At the last moment, though, Darnley appears to have become suspicious of his wife's sudden burst of affection, and he decided that he would rather reside at a comfortable house that was adjacent to Kirk o'Field, some distance from both Holyrood and Edinburgh Castles. It was a fateful decision.

The Lords of Scotland met after they learned of the relocation of Darnley. They were still angry over his betrayal in the plot to murder Rizzio. Among their number was Bothwell, who was playing a deep game of both ends against the middle. They decided that Darnley must be eliminated. Despite the last minute switch of locations for Darnley, they were able to formulate a plot that would rid them of this duplicitous and irritating young man. They signed a bond, a statement of mutual commitment, to the effect that they would kill Darnley.

The plot was simple. Bothwell's men, along with loyal liegemen of the other lords, would place explosives in the lower chamber below where Darnley resided in Kirk o'Field. The fuse would be lighted and Darnley would no more be the irritant that he had become. Who, exactly, came up with this brilliant plan to murder Darnley in the most incredibly public manner possible, making any attempt at a cover-up impossible, is unclear, but it bears all the hallmarks of Bothwell's jolly, swaggering and murderous clowning.

Some of Mary's apologists have claimed that the plot included getting rid of Mary along with Darnley. This may or may not be the case; by then the future James VI had been born and an infant king would have been very convenient for the gang of baronial bullies who wanted to return to a nice, long regency of the kind they had enjoyed when Mary was away in France. It is a fact that Mary promised Darnley that she would stay over with him on the fatal night, which may or may not have been done to re-assure the recovered but jumpy consort and keep him in place. But, she had previously committed to attend the wedding festivities for one of her servants at Edinburgh Castle. At the last minute, she decided not to stay with Darnley.

It is known that on her way out of the building, the Queen met one of her former servants, who was now working for Bothwell on the stair, who had just come up from the cellar and was covered from head to toe with the gunpowder he'd been stacking. Mary's laughing comment, which has come down through the long centuries, was "Jesu, Paris, how black you are!" Then she went out to the party.

Late on the evening of February 13, 1567, an explosion rocked the neighborhood around Kirk o'Field. The lodge in which Darnley had been staying was blown to bits; the whole building was leveled and a huge crater was all that remained. The amount of black powder used must have been colossal. However, Darnley was not a victim of the explosion. He and three of his servants appear to have heard suspicious activity below them, or have been otherwise warned, and fled out their second-floor rooms in a state of undress by lowering themselves (by a rope and chair) into the courtyard outside his window.

They escaped the explosion, but they did not escape the men of Lord Balfour who pounced upon them and strangled Darnley and one of his attendants. At first, it was thought that Darnley had been blown into the courtyard by the explosion, but it was evident that he had no other injuries than those evidenced around his neck.

The Queen, who had retired after the wedding festivities, was aroused by Bothwell and told of the explosion. Mary later claimed she was certain that she had been an intended victim, since the charge had supposedly been set in her chamber, immediately below that of Darnley's, which of itself requires some fancy explanation. Bothwell took charge of the investigation, even though he had been privy to the plot and some of his men had participated in the arduous task of hauling in the bags of explosives.

The questions immediately arose: Who were the perpetrators? How involved was Bothwell? Could Mary herself be involved in the plot to rid herself of this odious husband? How involved were the Lords Moray, Morton, Ruthven, and others?

Mary committed a fateful blunder. She didn't appear to be sufficiently mournful of the death of her husband. Indeed, while she retired to her chamber in mourning, she seemed to exert little effort in swiftly solving the crime. It was, after all, a case of regicide, even if Darnley had been "king" only by virtue of marriage. It was not long before placards arose around the city of Edinburgh, accusing Bothwell and what was worse for Mary crude placards depicting her as a mermaid, a symbol of harlotry.

Mary's Fortunes Decline

From this date on Mary was essentially doomed. Elizabeth, hearing the news of Darnley's murder, was horrified that a king had been murdered. As despicable as Darnley was, it was considered more despicable to kill a king.

After the obligatory forty days of mourning had elapsed, Mary was "kidnapped" by Bothwell, her trusted councilor, who now fancied himself the most appropriate husband for the widowed queen. He forced the signing of a bond between himself and the Lords, approving him as the most suitable mate for the Queen of Scotland. Bothwell, with the bond in hand, confronted Mary, swept her away to Dunbar Castle, and, to ensure his matrimonial privilege over her, raped her. A clearly distraught and emotionally exhausted Mary finally consented to marriage with Bothwell. If she was in on the plot, she certainly got more than she bargained for. It was a dizzying time. From the murder of Darnley to the marriage of Bothwell, a mere three months had elapsed.

Within a month, Mary had been forced to abdicate and her infant son James had been declared King, with his uncle Lord Moray as regent. Mary escaped to England, and sought the protection of her cousin Elizabeth. A month after his marriage, Bothwell fled to Denmark, where he was immediately imprisoned for past acts of piracy. Bothwell eventually died in prison, a madman. Mary and her third husband were never to see one another again.

Mary Tried and Convicted

Mary was moved from castle to castle. These moves were interspersed with a brief escape with subsequent recapture. Elizabeth bowed to the pressures of her

advisors, and allowed Mary to be tried for the murder of Darnley. The trial took place without Mary's being allowed to defend herself in person. The principal evidence against her was the so-called Casket Letters. This series of documents appeared to be love letters and poems written to Bothwell before the murder. They suggested that Mary was in league with Bothwell (now rotting in a Danish prison).

The Casket Letters, now lost and existing only in copies, have been a problem for scholars ever since their unveiling by Moray at Mary's trial. Some of them may indeed have been written by Mary, but it is not clear to whom they had been truly addressed. Others appear to be forgeries, implicating Mary as an unfaithful wife and libertine. Whatever the conclusion at the time, the Casket Letters constitute very slim evidence in Mary's involvement in the murder of Darnley. Even if they were true, they prove only motive for the murder, not complicity. Mary was found guilty of having conspired to kill Darnley. Elizabeth did nothing, choosing to keep Mary as a prisoner.

In 1570, Moray, Regent of Scotland, was assassinated. Darnley's father, Lord Lennox, was assassinated the following year. Lord Morton, who succeeded Moray as Regent, was found guilty of treason and executed in 1581. By this time, James VI, now fifteen years old, assumed the throne of Scotland without assistance from a regent. Raised a Protestant, he essentially disavowed his mother and did nothing to help her.

The rest is sad history. Mary was kept imprisoned for nineteen years. It was only after the discovery of the Babington Plot (a plot to assassinate Elizabeth and to place Mary on the throne of England) that Elizabeth was faced with the problem of what to do with her troublesome cousin. It is clear that Mary had been indiscreet when she had given her written approval of the plot. What she had not been aware of was that she had been the victim of a sting, and that the entire plot had been devised to ensnare her into an act of treason. Elizabeth's Lord of her Secret Service, Thomas Walsingham, had done his job well. This time her trial led not only to a verdict of guilty, but a sentence as well.

The Fascination Lives On

How is it that Mary, a queen all of her forty-five years but who actually ruled for only a scant five of them, is such a fascinating figure in history? She is equally as famous as her cousin, the great Elizabeth I who reigned over England for over fifty years. The literature devoted to Mary for over four hundred years is almost as vast as that devoted to Elizabeth. Indeed, there are a number of joint

biographies of the two that link them together throughout all of time. History's fascination for her seems strange.

Examining her life demonstrates that this fascination is not ill placed. She was the daughter of James V, King of Scotland, and Mary of Guise, a member of a powerful French family. Mary's father died when she was six days old, whereupon she was crowned Mary Queen of Scots, with her mother as regent. Five years later, in the midst of continual power struggles in Scotland, she was sent to live in the court of Henry II, King of France, and shortly thereafter identified as the future bride of the Dauphin, Francis, the heir to the French throne.

Not an uneventful beginning. Henry's goal was to position his son as king of both France and Scotland, and the union of Mary and Francis would achieve not only that but perhaps England as well, since Mary had, in the eyes of European Roman Catholics, a legitimate claim to the English throne. Both Mary and Elizabeth could claim descent from Henry VII. Mary could claim it through Henry VII's sister and Elizabeth could make the claim from Henry VII's son, the larger-than-life Henry VIII.

But a crowning as an infant, a betrothal and subsequent marriage as a teenager to the heir to the French throne, and a return to Scotland to rule all before the age of nineteen, were just overtures to a life resplendent with plots and counter-plots. There were two more marriages after her early widowhood. The second was ended by murder, the third begun by a rape. All these intrigues were to end with her beheading by Elizabeth's orders after nineteen years of imprisonment.

It is little wonder that history has considered Mary Queen of Scots a most noteworthy person.

Some Conclusions

No problem exists with the murder of Rizzio. Eye-witness accounts tell of Lord Ruthven and the other lords slaughtering the little Italian before Mary's very eyes with the complicit Darnley looking on.

The murder of Lord Darnley is a more difficult matter. Moray, Morton, Maitland, and another less important lord, Balfour, were involved. Bothwell, although protesting his innocence, was, at the very least, in on the plot. It was probably Balfour's men who strangled Darnley after he escaped the blast in his night shirt.

And what of Mary? She had been seeking the possibility of divorce from Darnley. Lord knows she had reasons aplenty to want to get rid of him. But the conclusion of most authors is that she understood the rules of kingship (or queenship) well enough to know that the murder of a queen's husband would produce more problems than it would solve. It is possible that she wasn't unhappy that Darnley was done in, but, more likely, she entered into a period of depression and seclusion after his death because she recognized the problems ahead. In this emotionally debilitated state, and after having been raped by Bothwell, she drifted into marriage with him in a sort of desperate move. Even the Casket Letters prove nothing. The verdict on Mary, with respect to the murder of Darnley, is that she was innocent of the plot and guilty only insofar as she inadvertently encouraged his removal by voicing her exasperation with him.

Mary Queen of Scots was an ineffective ruler, even in the short time she actually held power in Scotland. She certainly was a failure in her selection of men. Rizzio, upon whom she depended, became an arrogant obstacle to her establishing reasonable working relations with the Lords who had ruled Scotland before her return from France. Darnley was not only a scheming, ambitious, self-indulgent husband who sought to rule Scotland (and, eventually, he hoped, England as well), but as divisive as Rizzio when it came to establishing a working government with the lords. And Bothwell, essentially an adventurer, was as ambitious as Darnley, but more ruthless and more prone to intrigues and plots.

Against this dismal picture we have Mary the woman. She was intelligent, charming, beautiful, and loyal. Most of all, she was tragic, because she was "... born to supreme power [and] wholly unable to cope with its responsibilities." (Wormaid, 1988)

As was suggested earlier, what would have happened if Mary had been able to prevent the murder of Darnley? It is possible that, if Darnley had lived, some accommodation could have been fashioned between Mary and Darnley. Perhaps Darnley would have eventually died from "the pox" acquired from the whores of Edinburgh. Even if he had lived and he and Mary were able to rein in the ambitions of the Scottish lords, the outlook for the two of them was promising. If nothing more had gone amiss, and Mary had been able to stay alive until 1603 (when she would have been sixty-one), undoubtedly she and not her son would have been Elizabeth I's successor. And even if she had died before Elizabeth, her son, James (who eventually was Elizabeth's successor) might not have been a Protestant, but a Roman Catholic, like his mother.

The possibilities of all these “what-ifs” point out that the murder of Lord Darnley was not an isolated or trivial matter. Its consequences were as dramatic as the actual events.

Lesson #52: The Kensington Runestone (1362)

The Kensington Runestone is a slab of Graywacke stone, grey in color, measuring 36 inches long, 16 inches wide, and 6 inches thick. It contains runic writing along the face of the stone and along one edge. The stone was found on the property of a Minnesota farmer named Olaf Ohman in November of 1898. Upon finding the stone, Mr. Ohman and his sons noted the runic letters, but could not decipher them. The stone was thereafter examined by many runic scholars, who discovered that the runes claimed to be an account of Norse explorers in the 14th Century. Many scholars who have since examined the stone have claimed it a childish forgery, while others have testified to its authenticity.

The inscription is in two parts. The portion on the face of the stone says: **“Eight Goths and 22 Norwegians on a journey of exploration from Vinland very far west. We had camp by 2 rocky islands one day’s journey north from this stone. We were out fishing one day. After we came home we found 10 men red with blood and dead. AVM save from evil.”** The portion along the edge of the stone says: **“Have 10 men by the sea to look after our ships 14 days’ journey from this island. Year 1362.”**

The inscription, if genuine, would be one of the longest ancient runic inscriptions in the world. It is certainly one of the most controversial.

On November 8, 1898, a farmer named Olaf Ohman, several of his sons, and some men from neighboring farms were clearing lumber and pulling stumps in preparation for plowing. Ohman was having considerable difficulty digging one tree, a poplar estimated to be between 10 and 40 years old, which was on the southern slope of a 50-foot knoll between his farm and that of Nils Flaaten, Ohman’s closest neighbor. When the tree was finally uprooted, the cause of Ohman’s trouble came into view: entwined in the roots of the aspen was a 200 pound slab of graywacke, the Kensington Runestone. The roots of the tree, especially the largest root, were flattened by contact with the stone, as was noted by several people who were there and by later visitors to the site. The stone was found face down in the soil, about six inches below ground level.

The history of the stone since Ohman found it has been an interesting one. After the initial discovery of the stone, it was sent to the University of Minnesota for scholars to examine. The stone made its way to Chicago, where several Swedish, Danish, and Norwegian scholars declared it a fraud of recent date. The

stone was then returned to Mr. Ohman, who put it to use as a doorstep for his granary.

In 1907, a young scholar named Hjalmar R. Holand purchased the stone from Mr. Ohman and began to promote it, giving speeches and writing books about the stone, Viking settlements in America, and the “Holy Mission” of Paul Knutson, which supposedly left the stone behind. For most of 1948 the stone was on exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution, where the Curator and Director publicly praised it as “probably the most important archeological object yet found in North America.” The stone was returned to Minnesota in March of 1949 to be unveiled in St. Paul in honor of the state’s centennial. In August it came to a permanent home in Alexandria, Minnesota, at the Runestone Museum, where it resides to this day.

What was the “Holy Mission”? According to Holand, a Swede named Paul Knutson was sent in 1354 by King Magnus Ericsson of Sweden and Norway to discover why settlements in Greenland were disappearing, and to bring some pagans into the Catholic fold. [See “The Disappearance of Greenland’s Vikings“]

Arriving in Greenland, Knutson found nothing but a few cattle, no settlement was in sight. Again, according to Holand, the mission then continued west to Vinland, and west from Vinland, entering Hudson Bay and traveling up the Nelson River and the Red River (into Minnesota), then the Buffalo River to establish a camp at Lake Cormorant. The party was attacked by pagan Vikings (rather than the usually-blamed Indians) at that site. The remnants of the party then fled south and carved the runestone on the “island” where it was discovered by Farmer Ohman. Knutson himself never returned, although 7 men (including navigator Nicholas of Lynn) are claimed to have made it back to Europe.

Are there other runestones in America? There are many claims of other runestones, along with assorted relics and “mooring holes” found in areas of Minnesota, Iowa, and South Dakota, lending evidence to the idea that there were significant Norse incursions into the continent. The relics include halberds, battle axes, spears, and boat hooks. Many of the relics have been claimed by critics to be modern items mistaken for ancient relics, although some (like the “Beardmore Relics”) are known to be ancient, but are claimed to have been planted in order to fool the gullible.

The mooring holes are a different story, however. Mooring holes are holes in large boulders into which the Vikings dropped a peg, attached to the ship, to “anchor” it to the shore. Friedrich claims that more than 200 such holes have been

found, from South Dakota to Michigan, and that they show that there was a significant Viking presence in North America from about 1000 to 1400. Critics argue that the holes were drilled by modern folk for blasting, but Friedrich argues, who would go to the trouble of drilling a blasting hole and then fail to blast it? Also, drilled holes are round with “V” shaped bottoms, while the mooring holes are rounded triangles with “U” shaped bottoms.

On the subject of rune stones, there is one which is worth mentioning: the “Heavener Runestone” of Oklahoma. The Heavener Runestone is a slab about 12 feet high, 10 feet wide, and 16 inches thick with runic letters spelling out the word “Gaomedat.” By reversing two runes which appear to be different from the others, the inscription becomes “Glomedal,” or “Glome’s Valley”. It could also be rendered “G. Nomedal,” Nomedal being a Norwegian family name.

Several smaller runestones are claimed to have been found (Poteau, Shawnee, Tulsa, all found in the area of Heavener, Oklahoma), although none so famous (or controversial) as the Kensington or Heavener stones.

Lesson #53: The Lost Colony (1587)

The Lost Colony was Elizabethan courtier and adventurer Sir Walter Raleigh's third expedition to "Verginia" (they spelled it that way). Raleigh sent the expedition in 1587, right after the return of two previous expeditions by Sir Richard Grenville and Ralph Lane. Part of Raleigh's expedition was to check on the 15 men left by them at Roanoke, on the coast of what is now North Carolina.

Raleigh didn't want to land on Roanoke Island. He wanted to look farther north, to perhaps the Chesapeake Bay area, in order to find a suitable place for settlement. He was not impressed with the swampy coast and dangerous shoals of Roanoke Island and the Outer Banks and would have preferred the stretch of America now known as New England. Roanoke didn't have enough farmland to feed a lot of people, the water around it was too shallow to anchor large ships, and Grenville's men had already clashed with hostile Indians there, who might attack the colony.

On April 26, 1587, about 170 men, women and children left England, intending to set up a colony in the Chesapeake Bay area. Their first stop was to be Roanoke Island to check on the men left by Grenville. Sir Walter Raleigh appointed John White as the colony's governor, and Simon Fernando as the ship's captain. Others on this voyage included John White's daughter and son-in-law, Eleanor and Ananias Dare.

The trip to North Carolina was tense, for White and Fernando were constantly fighting. When the ship, the Red Lion, stopped at Roanoke Island to check on the 15 men, left by Grenville, Simon Fernando refused to go any farther. Fernando was greatly trusted by Sir Walter Raleigh and no one knows the true reason as to why he stopped. He may have been worried about hurricane season. Others say he was more interested in imitating Sir Francis Drake and he wanted to go pirating gold-filled Spanish ships. The fifteen men who had been at the Roanoke fort were all gone and the stockade they had built was deserted. This should have given the colonists pause, but the captain more or less dumped them on Roanoke and sailed away.

The stranded colonists did their best to rebuild the houses built by Grenville's men, and to learn to use the foods around them. On August 18, 1587, Eleanor gave birth to her first child. She was named Virginia after the queen and their new home. Virginia Dare was the first English child born in America.

After a while, the colonists started running out of supplies. Luckily, a passing English vessel put in and visited the colony and was able to help out with some basics like powder and nails, although not much with food. The colony wanted John White to go back for more supplies. John White didn't want to leave the colony, especially his new granddaughter, Virginia. But he agreed in the end. The colony wanted more food, supplies, and people. Around August 25, John White set sail for England.

Unfortunately he sailed right into the "Year of the Armada," 1588, and every English ship was pressed into service to fight off the Spanish invasion. Due to England's war with Spain and also due to assorted bureaucratic and logistic cock-ups, it took three years for John White to return to Roanoke to find the colony.

To his lifelong horror and grief, he found—nothing. The settlement was deserted and the cabins and stockade were decaying. Even the Indians wouldn't go near the place, believing it to be haunted. He looked around the log boundary of the fort. On one of the post was the word "Croatoan." White desperately wanted to sail to Croatoan Island to find his daughter, but a storm was coming and the ship couldn't make it. The captain turned back to England, carrying the broken-hearted White into obscurity.

For years after the disappearance of this group, English explorers and travelers tried to locate the missing group. Jamestown was settled twenty years later, in 1607, and over the next thirty years a number of expeditions went south into the Carolina swamp country to try and find any survivors of the Roanoke colony, or at least some clue to what happened. The Indians clammed up and refused to say anything, and were of course blamed for massacring the English, but the still-standing site had shown no signs of violence or destruction when White found it in 1590.

Stories of blue-eyed, English speaking natives were told, but no hard evidence of connection to this particular group was ever found. To this day people are looking for reasons for the colony's disappearance. Clues and theories have been created and tested, but no one knows for sure what happened. The only possible clue to the settlers' fate lies in several very odd groups of "Indians" which were found in North Carolina several generations. One of these, who call themselves Lumbees, are a mulatto people centered in Robeson County, North Carolina, and have among them a number of very old names such as Locklear, Oxendine, Brayboy, Spaulding, Hunt, and Swet—names present among the 170 Roanoke colonists who came over in Elizabethan times.

Of little Virginia Dare no trace was ever found, but to this day there are legends among both the black and white people of the coast, stories that speak of a ghostly figure that walks the swamps and sand dunes around Manteo, North Carolina—a golden-haired little girl, crying for parents and a people long vanished.

Lesson #54: The First Thanksgiving Proclamation

June 20, 1676

“The Holy God having by a long and Continual Series of his Afflictive dispensations in and by the present Warr with the Heathen Natives of this land, written and brought to pass bitter things against his own Covenant people in this wilderness, yet so that we evidently discern that in the midst of his judgments he hath remembered mercy, having remembered his Footstool in the day of his sore displeasure against us for our sins, with many singular Intimations of his Fatherly Compassion, and regard; reserving many of our Towns from Desolation Threatened, and attempted by the Enemy, and giving us especially of late with many of our Confederates many signal Advantages against them, without such Disadvantage to ourselves as formerly we have been sensible of, if it be the Lord’s mercy that we are not consumed, It certainly bespeaks our positive Thankfulness, when our Enemies are in any measure disappointed or destroyed; and fearing the Lord should take notice under so many Intimations of his returning mercy, we should be found an Insensible people, as not standing before Him with Thanksgiving, as well as lading him with our Complaints in the time of pressing Afflictions:

“The Council has thought meet to appoint and set apart the 29th day of this instant June, as a day of Solemn Thanksgiving and praise to God for such his Goodness and Favour, many Particulars of which mercy might be Instanced, but we doubt not those who are sensible of God’s Afflictions, have been as diligent to espy him returning to us; and that the Lord may behold us as a People offering Praise and thereby glorifying Him; the Council doth commend it to the Respective Ministers, Elders and people of this Jurisdiction; Solemnly and seriously to keep the same Beseeching that being perswaded by the mercies of God we may all, even this whole people offer up our bodies and soulds as a living and acceptable Service unto God by Jesus Christ.”

* * *

Note that the actual first Thanksgiving was proclaimed 56 years after the landing at Plymouth Rock, and so it had nothing to do with the Pilgrims. Note also that it was in June, which actually makes a lot more sense than a cold Massachusetts November. Finally note that the first Thanksgiving was to celebrate a White military victory over the Indians, not to invite them all to sit around the same table over turkey and cranberry sauce.

The present third Thursday in November holiday originated as a propaganda stunt proclaimed by Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War, in order to distract the North's attention from the fact that at the time, the Union was getting its ass kicked by the Confederate Army.

The Immortal Trooper (1930)

Horst Ludwig Wessel was a National Socialist hero during the *Kampfzeit*, the Time of Struggle from 1919 to the day of the German Revolution on January 30th, 1933. He was the author of the lyrics to the song *Die Fahne Hoch* (“Raise The Banner”), usually known as Horst Wessel Lied or Horst Wessel Song, which became the Nazi Party anthem, and which was also part of Germany’s dual national anthem from 1933 to 1945, along with *Deutschland Über Alles*.

Wessel was born on September 9th, 1907 in Bielefeld in Westphalia, the son of a Lutheran pastor, Dr Ludwig Wessel, who from 1913 until his death in 1923 was the minister at the Nikolaikirche, one of Berlin’s oldest churches. His mother also came from a family of Lutheran pastors. Although he was later portrayed by hostile liberal and Jewish sources as an illiterate thug, Wessel had a good education and was of at least average intelligence. He attended the Volksschule des Koenigischen Gymnasiums (primary school) from 1914 to 1922, and the Gymnasium (secondary school) in Koenigstadt from 1922. For his final year of school he attended the Luisenstadt Gymnasium, where he sat and passed his Abitur (the German school leaving examination). In April 1926 he enrolled in the law faculty of Friedrich-Wilhelm University (now Humboldt University) in Unter den Linden, and appears to have been a satisfactory student until he decided to devote all his time to the Nazi movement.

Wessel was politically active from an early age. His father was a supporter of the conservative German National People’s Party (DNVP), and when he was 15 Wessel joined the DNVP youth group, the Bismarckjugend. He soon became a local leader, engaging in street battles with the youth groups of the Social Democrats and Communists. By 1926, however, Wessel had grown too radical for the DNVP, and in December of that year the 19 year-old youth joined the Nazi Party and its paramilitary organisation, the SA or Brownshirts. Until this time the Nazis had been very weak in “Red Berlin,” but from 1926 under the energetic leadership of the new Gauleiter, Dr Joseph Goebbels, the Nazis rapidly displaced the other parties of the right. Wessel was one of the wave of new young recruits Goebbels brought into the party.

Wessel soon impressed Goebbels and in January 1928, during the period when the Berlin city authorities had banned the SA in an effort to curb political street violence, he was sent on a study trip to Vienna, to study organizational and tactical methods of the Nazi movement there. In May 1929 Wessel was appointed

leader of SA-Troop 34, based in the Friedrichshain district where he was now living. In October 1929 he decided to devote himself full time to the Nazi movement and dropped out of his university studies.

In addition to his political activities, Wessel had some musical talents. He played the schalmei (shawm), a kind of oboe popular in Germany, and founded an SA *Schalmeienkapelle*, or shawm band, which was used to provide music during SA parades and meetings and to attract new followers. In early 1929 Wessel wrote the lyrics for a new Nazi “fighting song” (Kampflied), which was published for the first time in Goebbels’s newspaper *Der Angriff* in September, under the title “*Der Unbekannte SA-Mann*” (the Unknown SA-Man). This was the song later known as *Die Fahne Hoch* from its opening line, or as the Horst Wessel Song. It was later claimed by the Nazis that he also wrote the music, but in fact the tune was taken from a World War I German Navy song, and is probably originally a folk tune.

In September 1929 Wessel met an 18-year-old woman named Erna Jannicke. The usual litany of hostile sources have claimed that Erna was a prostitute, but no one has ever produced any actual proof of this allegation. Shortly after he moved in with her, at her apartment in Grosse Frankfurter Strasse (today Karl-Marx-Allee). This may have contributed to the later slanders against Erna’s character, since in those days cohabitation was still considered highly immoral.

The landlady was one Frau Salm, whose late husband unknown to Wessel had been an active Communist. Frau Salm seems to have developed an active dislike for Wessel. Exactly why she would rent to a National Socialist couple living in “sin,” or why they would rent from a Communist-connected landlady, was never clarified, but that appears to have been the situation.

On the evening of 14 January 1930 Wessel answered a knock on his door, and was shot in the face by an assailant who then fled the scene. He was gravely wounded and lingered in hospital until he died on 23 February. His assassin was Albrecht “Ali” Hoehler, an active member of the local Communist Party (KPD) branch. The KPD denied any knowledge of the attack--but then they would, wouldn’t they?--and said it resulted from a dispute over money between Wessel and his landlady. It is possible that the shooting was revenge by local Communists for Wessel’s alleged role in the murder by local Nazis of a 17-year-old Communist, Camillo Ross, earlier in the day. Later romantic embellishment claimed that Hoehler was a former lover of Erna Jannicke and the handsome young Stormtrooper had stolen his girl. At this distance in time it seems impossible to establish the exact details of what happened.

Wessel was buried on 1 March in the graveyard of the Nikolaikirche, his father's old church. It was reported that 30,000 people lined the streets to see the funeral procession. Goebbels delivered the eulogy in the presence of Hermann Goering and Prince August Wilhelm of Prussia, son of former emperor Wilhelm II, who had joined the SA. When the Nazis came to power in 1933, an elaborate memorial was erected over the grave, and it became the site of annual pilgrimages by the Nazis, at which the Horst Wessel Song was sung and speeches made. With the fall of the Third Reich in 1945, the memorial was destroyed and Wessel's remains were apparently disinterred and also destroyed. The grave site has recently been discovered by amateur historians.

Wessel was elevated by Goebbels' propaganda apparatus to the status of leading martyr of the Nazi movement. Nazi propaganda glorified his life. *Die Brnnen*, the SA journal, declared, "How high Horst Wessel towers over that Jesus of Nazareth - that Jesus who pleaded that the bitter cup be taken from him. How unattainably high all Horst Wessels stand above Jesus!" Wessel was commemorated in memorials, books and films. Hans Heinz Ewers wrote a novelistic biography of him. One of the first films of the Nazi era was an idealised version of his life entitled *Hans Westmar*.

The Berlin district of Friedrichshain, where Wessel died, was renamed Horst Wessel, and a square in the Mitte district, Blowplatz, was renamed Horst-Wessel-Platz, as was the U-bahn station nearby. After the war the name Friedrichshain was restored, and Horst-Wessel-Platz (which was in East Berlin), became Liebkechtplatz (after Karl Liebkecht). In 1969 it was renamed Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz after the socialist heroine Rosa Luxemburg, the name by which it is still known.

In 1936, the German Navy commissioned a three-masted training ship and named it the *Horst Wessel*. The ship was taken as a war prize by the United States after World War II. After repairs and modifications, it was commissioned on 15 May 1946 into the United States Coast Guard as the USCGC Eagle, and is still in service.

The martyrdom of Horst Wessel led directly to the promotion of his song *Die Fahne Hoch* as the official Song of Consecration (Weihelied) for the Nazi Party. From 1933 it was adopted as the unofficial second part of the German National Anthem, to be played and sung immediately after the Deutschlandlied.

The song was banned along with all other Nazi symbols in 1945, and both the lyrics and tune remain illegal in Germany to this day.