

ANECDOTES AND TRADITIONS.

PART I.

NO. I.—SIR DRUE DRURY'S PENMANSHIP.

SIR DRUE DRURY being an ill scribe, having writt a thing very ill, Sir Robert Bell check't him thus:—"Fie, Drue, pr'y-the write so that a man may be saved by the reading on't however."

L'Estrange, No. 2. My Father.

The allusion here made is to the reading, by which criminals proved themselves entitled to the benefit of clergy. The passage actually read upon those occasions is a subject of some doubt; or perhaps the custom differed in various places. The first verse of the 51st Psalm, "*miserere mei*," &c. was often selected, and from that circumstance acquired the name of the neck verse. See a note by Sir Walter Scott to Canto I. of the "*Lay of the Last Minstrel*." Barrington, however, in his "*Observations on the Statutes*," p. 350, states, on the authority of Lord Bacon, that the Bishop was to prepare the book, and the Judge was to turn to what part he should think proper.

At present no one can claim the benefit of clergy; it is entirely abolished by the Act 7 and 8 Geo. IV. c. 28, and every one guilty of felony, whether peer or commoner, layman or spiritual, learned or unlearned, gentle or simple, is made liable to the same punishment.

NO. II.—LADY HOBART'S GRACE.

The Lady Hobart, every one being sett at the table and no body blessing it, but gazing one upon an other, in expectation who should

be Chaplaine—"Well," sayes my Lady, "I thinke I must say as one did in the like case, 'God be thanked, nobody will say grace.'"

L'Estrange, No. 7. Lady Hobart.

We have here an anticipation of Sheridan's well-known speech when unexpectedly called upon to say grace at a public dinner,—“What no clergyman present? Thank God for all things!” So true it is that there is nothing new under the sun, and so justly may all professed sayers of good things exclaim with Donatus, the preceptor of St. Jerome, ‘Pereant qui ante nos nostra dixerunt!’” One of the most striking cases is that of Talleyrand's well-known apophthegm,—“Language was given to man to conceal his thoughts!” The wily diplomatist, no doubt, *thought* so, and said so; but so had Goldsmith long before him, who tells us in his fifth essay, “that the true use of speech is not so much to express our wants as to conceal them.”

Lady Hobart was probably Dorothy, wife of Chief Justice Sir Henry Hobart, daughter of Sir Robert Bell, Lord Chief Baron (see hereafter, No. 24), and aunt of our author.

NO. III.—SHAKSPEARE'S GIFT TO HIS GOD-CHILD.

Shake-speare was god-father to one of Ben Jonson's children, and after the christ'ning, being in a deepe study, Jonson came to cheere him up, and ask't him why he was so melancholy? “No, faith, Ben, (sayes he) not I, but I have been considering a great while what should be the fittest gift for me to bestow upon my god-child, and I have resolv'd at last.” “I pr'y the, what?” sayes he. “I' faith, Ben, I'le e'en give him a douzen good Lattin Spooones, and thou shalt translate them.”

L'Estrange, No. 11. Mr. Dun.

The MS. from which we are selecting, is the original authority for this anecdote, which we cannot forbear inserting, although we know it has frequently been printed. To omit it would be to destroy the completeness of our selection; and few persons will object to be reminded of so pleasant an illustration of the friendship betwixt the Bard of Avon and rare old Ben. It gives us, as it were, a taste of the combats between the wits of those days, so charmingly described by Beaumont in his letter to Jonson—

“What things have we seen
Done at the Mermaid! heard words that have been
So nimble and so full of subtle flame,
As if that every one from whom they came
Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest!

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The practice of giving apostle spoons at christenings has been thus described by Steevens in a note to Henry VIII. Act v. sc. 2. "It was the custom formerly for the sponsors at christenings, to offer gilt spoons as a present to the child. These spoons were called *Apostle spoons*, because the figures of the apostles were carved on the top of the handles. Such as were at once opulent and generous gave the whole twelve; those who were either more moderately rich or liberal escaped at the expense of the four Evangelists, or even sometimes contented themselves with presenting one spoon only, which exhibited the figure of any saint in honour of whom the child received its name."

Shakspeare following this custom, and willing to show his wit, if not his wealth, gave a dozen spoons, not of silver, but of latten, a name formerly used to signify a mixed metal resembling brass, as being the most appropriate gift to the child of a father so learned.

NO. IV.—A LONG SERMON.

There was one preach't in summer and stood two houres; and one say'd at dinner that 't was a very good sermon, but halfe on't would have done well cold.

L'Estrange, No. 12. Mr. Dun.

This sermon must have been preached by the Rector of Bibury, of whom Fosbroke, in his *British Monachism*, speaking on the subject of hour-glasses as furniture for pulpits, tells us, he used always to preach two hours, regularly turning the glass. After the text, the 'squire of the parish withdrew, smoked his pipe, and returned to the blessing.

NO. V.—A SHREWD LOSS.

Doctor Pearne, preaching a funerall Sermon for a townsman's wife in Cambridge (that had beene a very curst wench), told his auditorie that none could judge of the losse of a wife till they had had one; but beleeve me, brethren, whosoever looseth such a wife as this was, will find it a shrewd losse, a very shrewd losse.

L'Estrange, No. 13. My Mother.

Andrew Perne, D.D. Fellow and Master of Peter House and Dean of Ely, was a divine of considerable celebrity. His conformity and zeal for Romanism during the reign of Mary, rendered him suspected and disliked by the Protestant divines of the succeeding reign; but he had a powerful and generous friend in Archbishop Whitgift, who protected both his person and his fame. "I know him," said the Archbishop, "to be a wise and learned man; and howsoever the world judgeth of him, and of me for using his familiarity (being by sundry

means bound to him, and knowing him very well), yet the day will come, when both they and we shall be known as we are." Wood says, he was reported to be "a man of a facetious nature, yet a great Mecænas of learning." He was a liberal benefactor to his college. In the latter part of his life he was much at Lambeth Palace, and dying there April 26, 1589, was buried in Lambeth Church. (Vide Wood's *Fasti Oxon.* i. 141, Bliss's edition; and Bentham's *Ely*, 228.)

The task imposed upon this facetious divine, who, as Fuller relates in his *Worthies*, was himself killed by a jest, reminds us of what Granger (iv. 219), tells respecting Mother Creswell, a famous procuress of Charles the Second's time, who left by *will* ten pounds for any clergyman that should preach a funeral sermon, and say nothing but what was *well* of her. A preacher was with some difficulty found, who undertook the task; and concluded a sermon, on the general subject of morality, with saying, "By the will of the deceased, it is expected that I should mention her, and say nothing but what was *well* of her; all that I shall say of her, therefore, is this, she was born *well*, she lived *well*, and she died *well*, for she was born with the name of Creswell, she lived in Clerkenwell, and she died in Bride-well."

NO. VI.—WITHIN AN ACE ON 'T.

A Falconer of Sir Robert Mordant's, not knowing his dogges names, called one of them Cinque whose name was Sice, and my cozen Harry Mordant telling him his error, "Faith, Sir," says he, "'t was well I came so neare: I am sure I was within an Ace on 't."

L'Estrange, No. 15. Phil. Calth.

Sir Robert Mordaunt, of Massingham, in the county of Norfolk, received the honour of knighthood during the lifetime of his father Sir L'Estrange Mordaunt, who having signalised himself in the reign of Elizabeth, as a military commander in the wars of the Low Countries, and in Ireland, was among the first raised to a baronetcy, being so created 29 June 1611, soon after the institution of the order. He succeeded his father as second baronet in 1627. "My cousin Harry Mordaunt" was no doubt Henry, second son of Henry Mordaunt, the brother of Sir Robert.

NO. VII.—A THOROUGH-BRED FOOL.

Jack Paston began one time to jeast upon Capon (who sat very silent and reply'd nothing), and told him merrily he never met with such a dull clay-pated Foole, that could not answer a word, and bade him remember he out-fool'd him once. "No, faith," says Capon, "I were a very Foole indeede, to deak with you at that weapon: I know

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the straine of the Pastons too well, and you must needs be right-bredd for't, for I am sure your Race has not beene witho't a good Foole these fifty yeares and upward." *L'Estrange, No. 19. Mr. Rob. Wallpoole.*

The bitterness of this jest against the Paston family, some of the earlier members of whom evince, in the well-known Collection of Letters, both talent and a fondness for literature, is to be found in the fact, that at an inquisition taken at Norwich Castle, Sept. 3, in the 9th year of James I. the jurors found that Sir Christopher Paston appeared before them personally, and that he was *Fatuus et Idiota*, and had been so for twenty-four years past, &c. (See Blomefield's Norfolk, iii. 698.)

NO. VIII.—A SON-BURNT WOOER.

Sir Henry Yelverton's lady us'd to say of any one that was a widdower, and had a sonne to inheritt his estate, and desir'd a second wife, that nobody would have him he was so sonne-burnt.

L'Estrange, No. 21. My Mother.

If this lady was the wife of the celebrated Sir H. Yelverton, who was, in the reign of James I. Solicitor and Attorney-general, and eventually one of the Justices of the Court of Common Pleas, she was the daughter of Robert Beale, Esq. Clerk of the Council, the bearer of the warrant for the execution of the Queen of Scots to Fotheringay.

NO. IX.—DOD THE DECALOGIST.

One Dod, who was nephew to the minister who wrote upon the Commandments, went up and down Paule's Churchyard amongst the Stationers, enquiring for his uncle upon the Commandements.

L'Estrange, No. 26. Mr. Donne.

The uncle of this simple gentleman, who was unquestionably the party recorded in Joe Miller as having inquired at the Post Office for a letter 'from his father in the country,' was the celebrated Hebrew scholar John Dod, of Jesus College, Cambridge. He was an eminent puritan divine; and from his Exposition of the Ten Commandments here alluded to, and which he wrote in conjunction with Robert Cleaver, he was commonly called the Decalogist.

Granger, in his Biographical History (i. 370, ed. 1779), tells us, "His Sayings have been printed in various forms; many of them, on two sheets of paper, are still to be seen pasted on the walls of cottages. An old woman in my neighbourhood told me, 'that she should have gone distracted for the loss of her husband, if she had been without Mr. Dod's Sayings in the house.'"

NO. X.—SOBER CRITICISM.

Tho. Hobart, delivering his judgment of verses that were written in sacke and yet scarce sence, [said] that it was impossible to understand them unlesse a man were first drunke.

L'Estrange, No. 29. My Coz. T. Hobart.

Sack was the Poet's drink; and Hobart's opinion in favour of lines written in Sack was that generally entertained. In a Poem "Upon the Vertue of Sack," written by F. Beaumont, he declares of "sprightly sack," that

—————" It can
Create a brain, even in an empty pan."

Jonson, as is well known, considered his Volpone, Alchemist, and Silent Woman his best works, as owing their excellence to the influence of good sack; while the "Devil is an Ass" was written, he says, "when I and my boys drank bad wine at the Devil."

NO. XI.—A MATHEMATICIAN DEFINED.

Edm. Gurney used to say that a mathematician is like one that goes to markt to buy an axe to breake an egg.

L'Estrange, No. 30. Ed. Gurney.

The following is Fuller's account of the perpetrator of this satire upon mathematics :

"Edmond Gourney, born in this county [Norfolk], was bred in Queen's and Bene't Colledge in Cambridge, where he commenced Bachelour of Divinity, and afterwards was beneficed in this shire. An excellent scholar, who could be *humorous*, and would be *serious*, as he was himself disposed; his *humours* were never profane towards God, or injurious towards his *neighbours*; which premised none have cause to be *displeas'd*, if in his fancies he pleas'd himself. Coming to me in Cambridge when I was studying, he demanded of me the subject whereon I studied. I told him, 'I was collecting the witnesses of the truth of the Protestant religion through all ages, even in the depth of Popery, conceiving it feasible, though difficult, to evidence them.' 'It is a needless pains,' said he, 'for I know that I am descended from Adam, though I cannot prove my pedigree from him.' And yet, reader, be pleased to take notice he was born of as good a family as any in Norfolk. His book against Transubstantion, and another on the Second Commandment, are learnedly and judiciously written. He died in the beginning of our Civil War."

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NO. XII.—THE FOOL NO FOOL.

The Lord North begged old Bladwell for a foole (though he could never prove him so), and having him in his custody as a lunatick, he carried him to a gentleman's house one day that was a neighbour. The Lord North and the gentleman retired a while to private discourse, and left Bladwell in the dining-room, which was hung with a fair hanging. Bladwell walked up and down, and viewing the imagery spied a foole at last in the hanging, and, without delay, draws his knife, flies at the foole, cuts him clean out, and lays him on the floor. My Lord and the gentleman coming in again, and finding the tapestry thus defaced, he asks Bladwell what he meant by such a rude uncivil act: he answered, "Sir, be content, I have rather done you a courtesy than a wrong, for if ever my Lord North had seen the fool there, he would have begged him, and so you might have lost your whole suit."

L'Estrange, No. 32. My Mother.

"To beg a man for a fool," was to apply to the Crown for the custody of his lands and person, he having been found *purus idiota* by a jury. (*Vide* Blackstone's Comment. book i. ch. viii. ; and Nares's Glossary, *voce* Beg.) The biographer of Lord Keeper Guildford, who was probably a grandson of the Lord North referred to in the anecdote, gives a *bon mot* of Charles II. which proves the commonness of the practice. "It is very strange," said the witty monarch, "that every one of my friends keeps a tame knave." (*Lives of the Norths*, ii. 247.) William Bladwell, esq. living temp. Jas. I. was possessed of large estates at Grimston and elsewhere in Norfolk (see the History of that county by Blomefield and Parkin); and to him or one of his family this anecdote must relate.

NO. XIII.—THE GOLDEN FLEECE.

Old Lambe of Burry us'd to goe very brave in apparell, and King James seeing him one day in the field a-hunting, so glittering and radiant as he eclips't all the Court, the King ask't what he was. One of his followers told him it was one Lambe. "Lambe," sayes the King,

“ I knowe not what kind of Lambe he is, but I am sure he hath a good
 fleece on his backe.” *L'Estrange, No. 33. Mr. Alderedge.*

I have not found any other trace of this “ Lambe of Bury.” There was a family of that name at Ufford in the same county; and several of them were especial benefactors to the church there. “ Their names,” remarks Weever, “ with the pictures of lambs, are depenciled in many places of the wood-work and ceiling of the church.” (*Fun. Mon. p. 490.*)

NO. XIV.—“ AN OLD COURTIER OF THE QUEEN’S.”

Mrs. Ratcliffe, an old Courtier in Queen Elizabeth’s time, told a Lord, whose conversation and discourse she did not like, that his witte was like a custard, nothing good in it but the soppe, and when that was eaten you might through away the rest.

L'Estrange, No. 34. Lady Hobart.

Mrs. Mary Ratclyffe was one of the Queen’s Maydens of Honour as early as New Year’s day 1561-2; and she was still living to offer a gift to her Royal Mistress on New Year’s day 1599-1600; so she is with justice termed, “ an old courtier ” of the Queen. (See Nichols’s Progresses, &c. of Queen Elizabeth; Index to New Year’s Gifts.) She was a daughter of Sir Humphrey Ratcliffe of Elstow in Bedfordshire, a younger son of Robert Earl of Sussex. (*MS. Harl. 2040, f. 173.*)

NO. XV.—RECONCILING THE FATHERS.

The Deane of Gloucester, having some merry divines at dinner with him one day, and amongst other discourses, they talking of reconciling the Fathers in some points, he told them he could show them the best way in the world to reconcile them in all points of difference: so after dinner he carryed them into his study and shew them all the Fathers classically ordered, with a quarte of sacke betwixt each of them.

L'Estrange, No. 36. Mr. Garnons.

Could this merry divine, who thus availed himself of the well-known *love-compelling* properties of wine, have been Dr. Richard Field, who is again referred to in No. 25 of this Collection?

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NO. XVI.—SMALL BEER.

One used to say of very small beere, that it was but strong water at the best.

L'Estrange, No. 39. N. Kett.

NO. XVII.—MR. BACON THE LAWYER.

Mr. Bacon the lawyer sayde of Mr. Pooly, a wrangling, dunsicall parson, that his sunne-burnt face shew'd he look't more upon the ayre and a tithe-sheave then on his booke.

L'Estrange, No. 43. My Father.

Neither this, nor any other of the sayings of this great man recorded in the MS. from which these anecdotes are derived, appears in the Collection of his Apothegms which I have consulted, namely, that published in 1652, in 12mo.

NO. XVIII.—JUDAS'S PAY.

At the Lecture at St. Gregorie's in Norwich the ministers had *2s. 6d.* a sermon, whereupon Mr. Legate, when he preach't, say'd they gave them Judas his pay, which was 30 pence.

L'Estrange, No. 46. Mr. Legate.

The Mr. Legate here alluded to is probably the same with the intruder upon the rectory of Barnham in Suffolk, upon the ejection of William Crofts, D.D. brother to the Lord Crofts, about the year 1644. He is thus noticed in Walker's *Sufferings of the Clergy*: "His (Crofts') successor at Barnham was one Legate, who had personated Ignoramus in Cambridge, when that play was acted there before his Majesty King James I. and continued ever after a *Perfect Comedian* in the pulpit; several stories of which kind I could let the reader know, were it worth the while. Though he had never paid Dr. Crofts the *Fifths* any more than once, yet the Dr. generously proffer'd him £50 a year after he was re-posses't of his living in 1660, on condition he would continue there and serve the cure: but, having been instrumental in bringing K. Charles I. to the block, he was forced to fly beyond the seas, and settled in Maryland; the Governor of which place told Dr. Crofts (who met him one day by chance, and enquired after Mr. Legate) that he had taken him into custody the very morning he came away, for heading a faction; and, as it seems, endangering a tumult there."—Legate had probably personated Ignoramus, but certainly not when it was acted before the King, on its first production: the character was then sustained by Mr. Thomas Parkinson, of Clare-hall. (*Nichols's Progresses, &c. of King James the First, vol. iii. p. 52.*)

NO. XIX.—MANNERS MAKE THE MAN.

The Earle of Carlile was commending one of his new acquaintance, and sayde that he did like him as well as any man that ever he convers't with, and thought him every way as absolute; "but," sayes he, "when we went to dinner, and I perceived that he beganne to draw a knife (the cognizance of a clowne) out of his pockett, I beganne at that instant to abhominat and hate him, and could never endure the sight of him after."

L'Estrange, No. 55. My Co. Jo. Spelman.

The nobleman here referred to was Sir James Hay, who accompanied King James I. from Scotland. Being a younger son of a Scottish family (since Earls of Kinnoull), he received, what was often in those days a younger son's only portion, the advantage of a French education. He always continued one of the King's principal favourites of his own countrymen; and about the period of his first marriage, with the heiress of Lord Denny in 1607, was honoured with the unexampled dignity of a titular Baron, without a seat in Parliament; afterwards, in 1615, he was created a Baron by patent, in 1618 Viscount Doncaster, in 1622 Earl of Carlisle, and in 1625 was made a Knight of the Garter. His second wife was a daughter of the Earl of Northumberland. He was one of the most ostentatious and expensive courtiers of his own or any other age. The pages of Osborne, Wilson, &c. relate several instances of his vain profusion: and in confirmation of the fastidiousness implied in the present anecdote, may be mentioned Osborne's account of his "ante-suppers," which were used only to feast the eye, and then "in a manner thrown away, and fresh set on to the same height, having only this advantage of the other, that it was hot."

NO. XX.—AN AMBASSADOR'S GALLANTRY.

The Earle of Carlile going to a great lady to know her commands, before he went over into France, she told him she had a letter for one of his servants. "Then I beseech you, Madam," sayes he, "let me know which of them it is, that I may have the honour to be his servant."

L'Estrange, No. 485. Mr. Smith.

The Earl of Carlisle was twice sent Ambassador Extraordinary to France, in 1616 and 1622: and intermediately to the Emperor in 1619. On the first occasion, in particular, his excessive magnificence and expenditure became the theme of universal astonishment. Wilson gives a long account of it, which is confirmed in the contemporary letters of Mr. John Chamberlain (see Nichols's Progresses, &c. of King James I. vol. iii. pp. 177, 183 et seq.)