## THE DUKE'S REAPPEARANCE--A FAMILY TRADITION

According to the kinsman who told me the story, Christopher Swetman's house, on the outskirts of King's-Hintock village, was in those days larger and better kept than when, many years later, it was sold to the lord of the manor adjoining; after having been in the Swetman family, as one may say, since the Conquest.

Some people would have it to be that the thing happened at the house opposite, belonging to one Childs, with whose family the Swetmans afterwards intermarried. But that it was at the original homestead of the Swetmans can be shown in various ways; chiefly by the unbroken traditions of the family, and indirectly by the evidence of the walls themselves, which are the only ones thereabout with windows mullioned in the Elizabethan manner, and plainly of a date anterior to the event; while those of the other house might well have been erected fifty or eighty years later, and probably were; since the choice of Swetman's house by the fugitive was doubtless dictated by no other circumstance than its then suitable loneliness.

It was a cloudy July morning just before dawn, the hour of two having been struck by Swetman's one-handed clock on the stairs, that is still preserved in the family. Christopher heard the strokes from his chamber, immediately at the top of the staircase, and overlooking the front of the house. He did not wonder that he was sleepless. The rumours and

excitements which had latterly stirred the neighbourhood, to the effect that the rightful King of England had landed from Holland, at a port only eighteen miles to the south-west of Swetman's house, were enough to make wakeful and anxious even a contented yeoman like him. Some of the villagers, intoxicated by the news, had thrown down their scythes, and rushed to the ranks of the invader. Christopher Swetman had weighed both sides of the question, and had remained at home.

Now as he lay thinking of these and other things he fancied that he could hear the footfall of a man on the road leading up to his house--a byway, which led scarce anywhere else; and therefore a tread was at any time more apt to startle the inmates of the homestead than if it had stood in a thoroughfare. The footfall came opposite the gate, and stopped there. One minute, two minutes passed, and the pedestrian did not proceed. Christopher Swetman got out of bed, and opened the casement. 'Hoi! who's there?' cries he.

'A friend,' came from the darkness.

'And what mid ye want at this time o' night?' says Swetman.

'Shelter. I've lost my way.'

'What's thy name?'

There came no answer.

'Be ye one of King Monmouth's men?'

'He that asks no questions will hear no lies from me. I am a stranger; and I am spent, and hungered. Can you let me lie with you to-night?'

Swetman was generous to people in trouble, and his house was roomy. 'Wait a bit,' he said, 'and I'll come down and have a look at thee, anyhow.'

He struck a light, put on his clothes, and descended, taking his horn-lantern from a nail in the passage, and lighting it before opening the door. The rays fell on the form of a tall, dark man in cavalry accoutrements and wearing a sword. He was pale with fatigue and covered with mud, though the weather was dry.

'Prithee take no heed of my appearance,' said the stranger. 'But let me in.'

That his visitor was in sore distress admitted of no doubt, and the yeoman's natural humanity assisted the other's sad importunity and gentle voice. Swetman took him in, not without a suspicion that this man represented in some way Monmouth's cause, to which he was not unfriendly in his secret heart. At his earnest request the new-comer was given a suit of the yeoman's old clothes in exchange for his own, which, with his sword, were hidden in a closet in Swetman's chamber; food was then put

before him and a lodging provided for him in a room at the back.

Here he slept till quite late in the morning, which was Sunday, the sixth of July, and when he came down in the garments that he had borrowed he met the household with a melancholy smile. Besides Swetman himself, there were only his two daughters, Grace and Leonard (the latter was, oddly enough, a woman's name here), and both had been enjoined to secrecy. They asked no questions and received no information; though the stranger regarded their fair countenances with an interest almost too deep. Having partaken of their usual breakfast of ham and cider he professed weariness and retired to the chamber whence he had come.

In a couple of hours or thereabout he came down again, the two young women having now gone off to morning service. Seeing Christopher bustling about the house without assistance, he asked if he could do anything to aid his host.

As he seemed anxious to hide all differences and appear as one of themselves, Swetman set him to get vegetables from the garden and fetch water from Buttock's Spring in the dip near the house (though the spring was not called by that name till years after, by the way).

'And what can I do next?' says the stranger when these services had been performed.

His meekness and docility struck Christopher much, and won upon him.

'Since you be minded to,' says the latter, 'you can take down the dishes and spread the table for dinner. Take a pewter plate for thyself, but the trenchers will do for we.'

But the other would not, and took a trencher likewise, in doing which he spoke of the two girls and remarked how comely they were.

This quietude was put an end to by a stir out of doors, which was sufficient to draw Swetman's attention to it, and he went out. Farm hands who had gone off and joined the Duke on his arrival had begun to come in with news that a midnight battle had been fought on the moors to the north, the Duke's men, who had attacked, being entirely worsted; the Duke himself, with one or two lords and other friends, had fled, no one knew whither.

'There has been a battle,' says Swetman, on coming indoors after these tidings, and looking earnestly at the stranger.

'May the victory be to the rightful in the end, whatever the issue now,' says the other, with a sorrowful sigh.

'Dost really know nothing about it?' said Christopher. 'I could have sworn you was one from that very battle!'

'I was here before three o' the clock this morning; and these men have only arrived now.'

'True,' said the yeoman. 'But still, I think--'

'Do not press your question,' the stranger urged. 'I am in a strait, and can refuse a helper nothing; such inquiry is, therefore, unfair.'

'True again,' said Swetman, and held his tongue.

The daughters of the house returned from church, where the service had been hurried by reason of the excitement. To their father's questioning if they had spoken of him who sojourned there they replied that they had said never a word; which, indeed, was true, as events proved.

He bade them serve the dinner; and, as the visitor had withdrawn since the news of the battle, prepared to take a platter to him upstairs. But he preferred to come down and dine with the family.

During the afternoon more fugitives passed through the village, but Christopher Swetman, his visitor, and his family kept indoors. In the evening, however, Swetman came out from his gate, and, harkening in silence to these tidings and more, wondered what might be in store for him for his last night's work.

He returned homeward by a path across the mead that skirted his own orchard. Passing here, he heard the voice of his daughter Leonard expostulating inside the hedge, her words being: 'Don't ye, sir; don't! I

prithee let me go!'

'Why, sweetheart?'

'Because I've a-promised another!'

Peeping through, as he could not help doing, he saw the girl struggling in the arms of the stranger, who was attempting to kiss her; but finding her resistance to be genuine, and her distress unfeigned, he reluctantly let her go.

Swetman's face grew dark, for his girls were more to him than himself. He hastened on, meditating moodily all the way. He entered the gate, and made straight for the orchard. When he reached it his daughter had disappeared, but the stranger was still standing there.

'Sir!' said the yeoman, his anger having in no wise abated, 'I've seen what has happened! I have taken 'ee into my house, at some jeopardy to myself; and, whoever you be, the least I expected of 'ee was to treat the maidens with a seemly respect. You have not done it, and I no longer trust you. I am the more watchful over them in that they are motherless; and I must ask 'ee to go after dark this night!'

The stranger seemed dazed at discovering what his impulse had brought down upon his head, and his pale face grew paler. He did not reply for a time. When he did speak his soft voice was thick with feeling.

'Sir,' says he, 'I own that I am in the wrong, if you take the matter gravely. We do not what we would but what we must. Though I have not injured your daughter as a woman, I have been treacherous to her as a hostess and friend in need. I'll go, as you say; I can do no less. I shall doubtless find a refuge elsewhere.'

They walked towards the house in silence, where Swetman insisted that his guest should have supper before departing. By the time this was eaten it was dusk and the stranger announced that he was ready.

They went upstairs to where the garments and sword lay hidden, till the departing one said that on further thought he would ask another favour: that he should be allowed to retain the clothes he wore, and that his host would keep the others and the sword till he, the speaker, should come or send for them.

'As you will,' said Swetman. 'The gain is on my side; for those clouts were but kept to dress a scarecrow next fall.'

'They suit my case,' said the stranger sadly. 'However much they may misfit me, they do not misfit my sorry fortune now!'

'Nay, then,' said Christopher relenting, 'I was too hasty. Sh'lt bide!'

But the other would not, saying that it was better that things should

take their course. Notwithstanding that Swetman importuned him, he only added, 'If I never come again, do with my belongings as you list. In the pocket you will find a gold snuff-box, and in the snuff-box fifty gold pieces.'

'But keep 'em for thy use, man!' said the yeoman.

'No,' says the parting guest; 'they are foreign pieces and would harm me if I were taken. Do as I bid thee. Put away these things again and take especial charge of the sword. It belonged to my father's father and I value it much. But something more common becomes me now.'

Saying which, he took, as he went downstairs, one of the ash sticks used by Swetman himself for walking with. The yeoman lighted him out to the garden hatch, where he disappeared through Clammers Gate by the road that crosses King's-Hintock Park to Evershead.

Christopher returned to the upstairs chamber, and sat down on his bed reflecting. Then he examined the things left behind, and surely enough in one of the pockets the gold snuff-box was revealed, containing the fifty gold pieces as stated by the fugitive. The yeoman next looked at the sword which its owner had stated to have belonged to his grandfather. It was two-edged, so that he almost feared to handle it. On the blade was inscribed the words 'ANDREA FERARA,' and among the many fine chasings were a rose and crown, the plume of the Prince of Wales, and two

portraits; portraits of a man and a woman, the man's having the face of the first King Charles, and the woman's, apparently, that of his Queen.

Swetman, much awed and surprised, returned the articles to the closet, and went downstairs pondering. Of his surmise he said nothing to his daughters, merely declaring to them that the gentleman was gone; and never revealing that he had been an eye-witness of the unpleasant scene in the orchard that was the immediate cause of the departure.

Nothing occurred in Hintock during the week that followed, beyond the fitful arrival of more decided tidings concerning the utter defeat of the Duke's army and his own disappearance at an early stage of the battle. Then it was told that Monmouth was taken, not in his own clothes but in the disguise of a countryman. He had been sent to London, and was confined in the Tower.

The possibility that his guest had been no other than the Duke made Swetman unspeakably sorry now; his heart smote him at the thought that, acting so harshly for such a small breach of good faith, he might have been the means of forwarding the unhappy fugitive's capture. On the girls coming up to him he said, 'Get away with ye, wenches: I fear you have been the ruin of an unfortunate man!'

On the Tuesday night following, when the yeoman was sleeping as usual in his chamber, he was, he said, conscious of the entry of some one. Opening his eyes, he beheld by the light of the moon, which shone upon the front

of his house, the figure of a man who seemed to be the stranger moving from the door towards the closet. He was dressed somewhat differently now, but the face was quite that of his late guest in its tragical pensiveness, as was also the tallness of his figure. He neared the closet; and, feeling his visitor to be within his rights, Christopher refrained from stirring. The personage turned his large haggard eyes upon the bed where Swetman lay, and then withdrew from their hiding the articles that belonged to him, again giving a hard gaze at Christopher as he went noiselessly out of the chamber with his properties on his arm. His retreat down the stairs was just audible, and also his departure by the side door, through which entrance or exit was easy to those who knew the place.

Nothing further happened, and towards morning Swetman slept. To avoid all risk he said not a word to the girls of the visit of the night, and certainly not to any one outside the house; for it was dangerous at that time to avow anything.

Among the killed in opposing the recent rising had been a younger brother of the lord of the manor, who lived at King's-Hintock Court hard by. Seeing the latter ride past in mourning clothes next day, Swetman ventured to condole with him.

'He'd no business there!' answered the other. His words and manner showed the bitterness that was mingled with his regret. 'But say no more of him. You know what has happened since, I suppose?'

'I know that they say Monmouth is taken, Sir Thomas, but I can't think it true,' answered Swetman.

'O zounds! 'tis true enough,' cried the knight, 'and that's not all. The Duke was executed on Tower Hill two days ago.'

'D'ye say it verily?' says Swetman.

'And a very hard death he had, worse luck for 'n,' said Sir Thomas. 'Well, 'tis over for him and over for my brother. But not for the rest. There'll be searchings and siftings down here anon; and happy is the man who has had nothing to do with this matter!'

Now Swetman had hardly heard the latter words, so much was he confounded
by the strangeness of the tidings that the Duke had come to his death on the previous Tuesday. For it had been only the night before this present day of Friday that he had seen his former guest, whom he had ceased to doubt could be other than the Duke, come into his chamber and fetch away his accoutrements as he had promised.

'It couldn't have been a vision,' said Christopher to himself when the knight had ridden on. 'But I'll go straight and see if the things be in the closet still; and thus I shall surely learn if 'twere a vision or no.'

To the closet he went, which he had not looked into since the stranger's departure. And searching behind the articles placed to conceal the things hidden, he found that, as he had never doubted, they were gone.

When the rumour spread abroad in the West that the man beheaded in the Tower was not indeed the Duke, but one of his officers taken after the battle, and that the Duke had been assisted to escape out of the country, Swetman found in it an explanation of what so deeply mystified him. That his visitor might have been a friend of the Duke's, whom the Duke had asked to fetch the things in a last request, Swetman would never admit. His belief in the rumour that Monmouth lived, like that of thousands of others, continued to the end of his days.

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Such, briefly, concluded my kinsman, is the tradition which has been handed down in Christopher Swetman's family for the last two hundred years.