

## Literature, &amp;c.

## The British Magazines

FOR JULY.

From Blackwood's Magazine.

## NARRATIVE OF A TRIAL FOR WITCHCRAFT.

FROM SOME FAMILY PAPERS.

In the year of our Lord 1679, I, being one of his Majesty's Justices of the peace, was present at the assizes, held according to law at the town of Leicester.

For many years the realm had been grievously afflicted by the diabolical crime of witchcraft, and great numbers of witches were, about the time of which I speak, convicted of dealing with evil and familiar spirits, and accordingly suffered the just penalties of our righteous laws.

On the second day of the assizes, there was a woman to be tried for this deadly sin, who, inasmuch as she differed from those poor and decrepit hags who had before been proven guilty, did cause that people would talk and think of nothing but her case; and as it was both wonderful and uncommon, I have judged fit to preserve a full and true account of all that then and there happened.

This suspected person was in the second year of her widowhood; her husband had been a gentleman of repute, who left her a substantial household and estate.

When she was brought into court, she appeared of very comely and modest demeanour, of some thirty years of age or thereabout, and wore her widow's weeds.

She was charged by the name of Margaret Hubert, "That being reprobate and given over to God, the devil had seduced her to compact and league with him to work evil, and to inflict various grievous torments upon John Burt and his household, more especially his daughter Alice." And being called upon to plead, she stood up, and, with surpassing courage and firmness, said—"I am not guilty of this great crime. So help me God."

Then they called John Burt, who was some seventy years of age, by trade a cordwainer, and he deposed—

"That he lived in ease, and without any outward cares or vexations, till May last, which was about six months after that William, the husband of the said Margaret Hubert, died; but from the same beginning of May till she was committed to prison, he had no pleasure of his life, and while these torments lasted, he had been tempted to pray God to release him from the wretched burthen of his days."

And all the people murmured at the prisoner, as the old white-headed man complained thus; but she only smiled a little, and remained silent.

The deponent further said—

"That on the evening of the 5th of May, his family being within, preparing for rest, and the whole house shut up, there came suddenly a violent noise of knocking at the door; that thereupon they demanded who was there, but receiving no answer, the knocking still continuing, they supposed it to be the thieves, and winding a horn which was with them in the house, roused the town, and the neighbours coming in, there was no more noise that night. But it came again every evening after dark, in the same way, and they, fearing to open the door, looked out of an upper window but saw nothing. This piece of trouble did continue till the middle of June, at which time the devil came with new and extraordinary assaults, by throwing of stones in at doors and windows, and down through the chimney head; also at night they wanted liberty to sleep, something coming and pulling their bed clothes and linen off their bodies; also their chests and trunks were opened, and all things strewed about. However, it was not till shortly afterwards, that they suspected who worked them all this evil and tribulation, and then the witchcraft settled upon his daughter Alice only, leaving the rest of the family free. This damsel was afflicted with strong and violent fits, which lasted often for an hour, during which time she did vomit small stones, stubble and various strange things, calling frequently on them to take away Dame Margaret, for she was tormenting her; and even when the fit was ended, she said it was Dame Hubert who had been there, and that as soon as she went out her pains ceased. Dame Margaret was told by some of the neighbours of these strange passages, and how the girl cried out upon her, would her to bring an action of slander; but she would not, and held lightly on what they repeated. One day she came to see Alice, and rebuked her smartly for setting about this report, giving her some apples, fair and mellow to look upon; but after, on Alice eating a part of one, her fits came on worse than ever.

All these things and many more very curious, which I have not set down, were confirmed by the daughter in court, and numbers of worthy and creditable witnesses were brought forward, who spoke to the truth of the same.

Also, it appeared that Dame Margaret, having many reputable friends of gentle blood, and those who thus charged her being humble people, it was long time slightly thought of, and held to be the fond fancy of ignorant, deluded folks; but at the last, the great noise it made, and the complaining of the poor that she would not have escaped trial had she been one of them, compelled the justices to take cognizance of the charge. It seemed now, however, that Dame Margaret's friends were backward to support her in her day of sorrow, for there were none near to sustain and comfort her; yet did she bear herself very courageously, and showed no fear.

The counsel who was hired to defend her cause, was a young man, hot headed and full of new fangled notions, who scrupled not to deny that there was any diabolical dealing in the business, affirming that the girl Alice was troubled with epileptic fits, and that of a certainty there was proof wanting that Dame M. did compass these things that were laid to her charge. But all this served little her cause, the court scarce showing patience to hear him unto the end, and the jury speedily finding her guilty. Whereupon the judge bid her to renounce the devil who had so long strengthened her in her contumacy, and haste to confess and bewail her heavy sins—sentencing her body to be burned on that day week, publicly in the market place. At the which doom her cheek blanched a little; but she said firmly—"I will pray to God to forgive them who have thus slandered and murdered the innocent." There were none wanting who maintained that it was innocence made her so confident, but most believed that devilish counsels upheld her.

Now, while she remained in prison till the time of her execution came, the sheriff who had been of her acquaintance in her prosperity, was grieved for that the exhortations of the minister could not move her to confession, and not wishing she should perish everlastingly also they never ceased importuning and arguing with her; all which she answered by protesting she had no such things upon her conscience, and did but beseech to be left in peace for the little time she had in this world, nothing doubting that God would forgive her many sins, because of the great cruelty and persecution that had fallen upon her.

When the time came, there were two others to die also, and the sheriff, minded to try once more upon her obdurate soul, ordered that she should first see them endure the burning, that so the knowing of what horrible pain was in store for her, might happily move her to confess. So there was a high chair placed by the pile, and she seated therein, clad in a loose white robe, fashioned like a shroud, only her head was uncovered, her long hair being smoothly parted on the forehead, and flowing in very seemly guise upon her shoulders. Her small hands were tight clasped in gyves—of a truth, it was a piteous sight for one so young and fair to be subjected to so fearful torments. The crowd exceeded in number all that was ever remembered in that place, and the two women died very penitent; loudly acknowledging their guilt, in that they had suffered Satan, by false promises, to beguile from them their souls, yet repenting them bitterly of their intolerable wickedness, they trusted to find grace, and they cried to her, who turned away, and would not so much as look towards them—"Margaret Hubert, thou art black as we; confess thy misdeeds also," the crowd shouting and reviling her; but she showed no signs of contrition, and shed no tears, only was very pale.

Then the sheriff approached her, and said, "Margaret, does not this move thee?" and she replied, "Yes, to grief, that thou shouldst have inflicted upon me this further pain. May God forgive these, and charge not my blood upon thy head."

This fell out in the year of our Lord 1679, it being the winter assize. In the spring following, I, visiting my worshipful friend, Sir John Talboys, who lived at the Grange, about 20 miles from my house, the minister, a very worthy person, one Mr Gresham, did send to Sir John, saying, that a man, who was a stranger, lay dying at a lone house, about a mile off, and longed to disburthen his mind of a matter that would not let him pass peacefully, and it was much to be wished that a justice of peace should take down the matters he had to speak of. Sir John having the gout, I offered to go in his place, and accompanied the parson thither. I have here preserved a faithful copy of his words, since they explain the history of Dame Margaret Hubert, heretofore set down in my diary—

"I, Walter Philipson, full well knowing that I am about to die, and wishing to ease my conscience, which is sore disturbed with a heavy crime, do solemnly make oath that I will relate the truth, and the truth only, thereby that the guilty may be punished, and the innocent may rest in peace—

I was violently enamoured of Dame Margaret Hubert, she being a fair widow, and having a good estate—I, a thoughtless young fellow, given to bad companions and dissolute ways. I was ever reproved by Margaret, who spoke me fair, and used gentle words, as was her nature, but would heed nothing of my suit; nevertheless, whenever I could in any manner to win to her presence, I still wooed, though I seemed never the nearer to winning her. At last, being wearied by the importunity, and fearing her good name should be spoken against if I so much frequented her company, she forbade me her presence, and when I desperately waylaid her, to urge my love once more, she would not speak to me.

From that day I pondered how to gain my ends, and at last Satan suggested to my wicked mind to charge her with witchcraft, only meaning by this desperate scheme to frighten her into terms with me.

I had consorted some time with Alice Burt, who was a bold, bad girl, and whom, being tired of, I gave up, when I fell into this frantic passion for Margaret. I spirited my lost creature to help me in various devices for alarming her father's family, and they, in these credulous times, easily believed that it was the work of some enemy who had joined with the devil. Alice had discovered my love for the widow, and womanly jealousy made her hate her rival, and overstep the limits I wished to set to my plan.

I was utterly confounded and bewildered, when I found so great a cry raised in the country, and that Margaret was in prison. Then I did indeed bewail my baseness; but there was no help. I trusted that she would be pronounced guiltless, and her condemnation fell upon my head like a thunderbolt. There was a week—only one week; but that would have sufficed to save her, had I used it properly; but I lost two days in vain debating with myself how to act. Then I mounted a swift horse, and pursued the judge who tried her cause to London. I told him the real facts that I alone was guilty, and prayed to be sent back with a certificate to save her, when I would surrender my body to justice, content to suffer gladly the weightiest penalty of the law, so she might be spared.

My Lord judge dealt shortly with me, doubtless holding, that to reverse his own judgment, how good cause soever might be shown, were to discredit his wisdom. Howbeit, in this desperate emergency, I had boldness to apply to one, who had been of my friends, before I threw away good men's friendship, and for Dame Margaret's sake he sped my business. A reprieve was granted; but forasmuch as some forms needed to be observed, beside a special messenger, to be therewith despatched, it was thought meet that I should hasten first upon the way, bearing a private letter to the sheriff, to delay matters till the mandate of the judge should be brought to him in due form. My letter was from the Lord—, who could do more than this to hinder justice, if need were, having mighty power and estates in the county. So I mounted my good steed, and made my journey happily, till a post gelding, for on the road I had exchanged, hoping to be furthered thereby, within ten miles of Leicester, cast a shoe. The frost being hard in the ground, I could not speed without, so stopped at the first smith's he was gone to the town. A little child told me it was to be the greatest holiday ever known in those parts; "they were going to burn that great witch, Dame Margaret Hubert." I had not one moment to spare; I urged my good horse; he felt lame; I urged him still; I came to the entrance of the market-place: the country folks were wedged so thick, I could win no further. I saw over their heads a white form seated in a high chair, and near it burning fagots. I saw dark men lead that figure from its place. I saw no more. I shouted that I brought a pardon. I offered gold to any one who would convey it to the sheriff. I threw myself among the crowd, in a vain endeavour to force my own way. I reeled and fell, and was trampled under foot.

I gave all I possessed to the wretches who bound her to the stake, for a handful of ashes—all that remained of her I so cruelly murdered. I wandered, as soon as I was able to stand, into the open country, and met Alice Burt, from whom I fled as from a demon. The fever having left me, and my mind being clear, I am ready to go to the stake, and joyfully to bear any tortures man can inflict, if you, who are honourable and worshipful gentlemen, will see the memory of Margaret righted, and publish over the nation this confession. And for my ieman Alice, I seduced her; she was a perjured and guilty wretch; but I made her so, and I pray she may escape a heavy judgment, lest her blood also should rest on my head. I have sinned, and must bear my agony, though none can tell how great that is. If the rev. divine who hath listened to this can embolden me to pray to God, I do beseech him so to do; hitherto I have not dared. Surely there is no forgiveness for me? I must not pray"

This wretched man was taken in charge of the constables that night, and next morning betimes they carried him towards Leicester; but he fainted and died before they arrived at their journey's end. The case was brought before a special commission, and his body judged to be hanged in chains, with great ignominy. This affair made much stir in the country, and was the cause that from that time greater caution was observed in the trial of these suspected of witchcraft, seeing that wicked and revengeful persons might otherwise swear falsely to the great detriment of the guiltless.

It appearing that John Burt had been entirely deceived by his daughter and her paramour, he was discharged, but lived only a very little time after his said daughter was hanged, which punishment she justly underwent. A fair marble in her parish church, testifies to the virtuous life, and most undeserved death, of the Dame Margaret Hubert.

"Whom God assoil."

A. M. H.

From the same.

## NATURE.

NATURE I loved. To hear the pine boughs crashing,  
When, black with storms, came on the deep midnight;  
To watch the lightnings, in their fitful flashing,  
Scathe the tall firs and cedars in their might;  
While through heaven's vault the pealing thunders rolled,  
Echoed by every cave an hundred fold;  
This was my joy. Or, by the flood to stand,  
Bursting its bounds to ravage and to spoil  
The works which man had reared with busy hand;  
Destroying in one hour a lifetime's toil;  
Bearing before it in its headlong course,

Earth, trees, and dwellings with resistless force.

I loved the mountains and the misty vale,  
Which wreathed around them many a shadowy fold.

I loved to see the kingly eagle sail  
On lofty pinions from his eyrie's hold:  
I loved to watch 'mid rocks the streamlet leaping,  
Or in the vale through weeds and fern leaves peeping.

I loved the ocean onward still to float,  
In calm or tempest o'er its vast expanse.  
I loved the desert, boundless and remote,  
Where nought presents itself to keenest glance  
But burning sand and cloudless sultry sky,  
Save where the treacherous lake recedes before the eye.

Once, as I wandered o'er the desert plains,  
After I saw a green and palmy wood,  
I hastened on; and there, with all its fancies  
Bathed in the evening light, a city stood,  
Glorious as 'twere a city seen in dreams,  
Tower, arch, and column bright with rainbow gleams.

The palm and cypress cast a pleasant shade  
Around; and many a silvery font was there  
With murmuring voice, and many a long arcade,

Lending a shelter from the noon tide glare,  
It was an isle of beauty, placed apart  
From common earth in that wide desert's heart.

Stillness was o'er the plains—a silent gloom  
Brooded above them. But within the town  
All breathed of life, and youth, and joy, and bloom,

As if the dwellers in it had cast down  
All worldly cares, all grief, all dark dismay,  
Making their life one sunny holiday.

City of palm trees, fare thee well! How oft  
Doth memory turn to thee, as if that thou  
Hadst been a place I love; and in her soft  
Dissolving hues she paints thee, till a glow  
Hangs round thee, lovely even as thine own  
When sunset girds thee with a noble zone.

From the same.

## EXTRACTS FROM THE LIFE OF LORD HILL,

LATE COMMANDER OF THE FORCES.

By the Rev. Edwin Sidney.

ROWLAND HILL, the hero of this work, was born at the Hall, in the village of Preet, Shropshire, on the 11th of August, 1772, and was the second son of sixteen children. His father, Mr John Hill, afterwards succeeded to the title and estates of his brother, Sir Richard Hill, and then took possession of Hawkstone, the family mansion. This baronet lived to see five of his sons safe from the perils of Waterloo; four of them had been at the battle of Victoria, and they took part in most of the engagements of the Peninsular War. George IV. made use of a more than courtly phrase when welcoming Sir John Hill, at a levee; he said, "I am glad, indeed, to see the father of so many brave sons." The mother of Lord Hill was Mary, daughter of John Chambre, Esq., of Pelton, Salop. We shall not refer to the Hawkstone pedigree further than to say, that one of Lord Hill's ancestors was the celebrated diplomatist; another was Sir Rowland Hill, the first Protestant Lord Mayor of London; and, last but not least in popular regard, the somewhat eccentric, but holy and eminently useful man, the Rev. Rowland Hill, was his uncle. Young Rowland—our Rowland—was at the age of seven or eight sent to the school of the Rev. Robert Vanburgh, at Chester; and after being there about a year, was placed under the care of the Rev. Mr Winfield, of the same place, where he remained until he was seventeen. He was a very delicate child, of gentle, almost timid manners; and his straitforward disposition gained for him the good opinion of the whole school. Miss Winfield says, "He was remarkable for the mildness and equanimity of his temper, and his kindness and feelings to the sensibilities of others, were evident upon all occasions. His delicate health prevented him from joining in the athletic exercises of his more robust companions; but his little garden, and his numerous pet animals, testified his systematic care and attention, by their succeeding better than those of his school-fellows." "The boy is father of the man;" and in these early records we trace much of the after-character of Lord Hill—his gentle manners and quiet tastes, his attention to duties, his consideration for others, combined with genuine modesty, and that thorough directness which gained for him at all times the confidence and respect of those with whom he had to do. His fondness for tame animals he always retained, and his garden at Hardwick was, Mr Sidney says, the most productive of its size he ever saw, and he usually won the best prizes at the Salop Horticultural Shows. The tenderness of his spirit was almost feminine. "One of the boys," says Miss Winfield, "happened to cut his finger, and was brought by Rowland Hill to my mother to have it dressed; but her attention was soon drawn from the wound to Rowland, who had fainted." This sensibility was, it appears, among his traits in after life. Miss Winfield,