Some Passages from the History of the Chomley Family

Elizabeth Gaskell

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The majority of men are so much occupied now−a−days with the present and the future, that they are unwilling to cast a glance upon the past. It seems a matter of little importance to them that even the very names of families, the members of which played a busy part in the history of their country, should die out unnoticed and uncared for. Yet it would not surely be so if we were better aware how much of interest lies in the story of the lives and careers of some of the "forebears" of our English gentry. Still it is not often that a fortunate chance enables us to see our ancestors as they lived and moved among their cotemporaries. Too frequently the details handed down respecting them are so few and meagre, that it is impossible to form out of them a faithful picture of either the men or their surroundings. These remarks do not, however, apply to the memoirs of Sir Hugh Chomley, in which he gives "some account of his family, and the distresses they underwent during the wars between the King and the Parliament." For a long period these memoirs existed in manuscript only. But, towards the close of the last century, Mr. Nathaniel Chomley, one of Sir Hugh's descendants, had them printed for private circulation amongst the members of his family. Thanks to the kind permission we have received to make what use we please of the volume, we are in a position to give an abstract of their contents.

Every autobiography, whatever its merits or its defects may be, will present some points of interest. These will be increased in proportion as the writer neither attempts to glorify his own doings nor to paint his contemporaries in any colours save their true ones. Moreover, when the memoir has not been written with a view to the public eye, but has been intended solely to keep the memory of their ancestor fresh in the breasts of his descendants, the probabilities become very great that in it we shall have a faithful representation of the life and times of the writer.

Many have been the motives which have induced men to record the story of their lives. In this case, Sir Hugh Chomley tells his sons that he was "first and chiefly moved to the work by the love he bore to their indulgent mother, his dear wife. Being desirous," he says, "to embalm her great virtues and perfections to future ages, I consider it would not be so proper, nor so much for her honour, to speak of her single as to bring her in her proper range and place among those preceding deserving women, mothers of families, amongst which she will be found a prime flower in the garland. And this," he goes on to say, "could not be done without mentioning their husbands, who, in respect of their sex, may not only claim to have the greatest honour and reverence ascribed to them, but commonly are the greatest actors in the scene."

Sir Hugh begins his narrative with a sketch of the first of his progenitors, who planted himself in the East Riding. In the reign of Henry VII., Sir Roger Chomley, a "black, proper, stout man," having married a daughter of Sir Marmaduke Constable, of Flamborough, quitted Cheshire, his native county, in order to settle in Yorkshire. In the fifth year of Henry VIII. Sir Roger was knighted, and on the 28th of April, 1538, he fell sick and died. Of the four children who survived him, Richard, the eldest, was made a knight at the battle of Musselburgh, in which he had commanded a regiment raised merely by his power and interest in his own county. Nor was he eminent as a soldier only; he was also a great improver of his estates, and added considerably to their extent. His chief place of residence was at Roxby, near Pickering, where he lived "in great port," having a large family, comprising at least fifty or sixty men−servants. But although there used to be often as many as twenty−four pieces of beef put in the morning into the pot, yet sometimes it so happened that but one would be left for Sir Richard's own dinner. The idle serving men, it appears, were accustomed to have their breakfast in the house, and going into the kitchen would use so much liberty as to stick their daggers into the pot and take out the beef without the leave or privacy of the cook. On such occasions Sir Richard would merely laugh and cry out, "What! would not the knaves leave me but one piece for my own dinner?" Nevertheless, he always liked to have a great train of these menials about his person. Even when he journeyed to London on business, unaccompanied by his wife, he used to be attended by never less than thirty, and sometimes even forty of them. And as there chanced to be a great feud between Sir Richard and his brother−in−law the Earl of Westmorland, who had married successively two of Sir Richard's

sisters, the retainers of the gentlemen never met, whether in London streets or elsewhere, but a fight took place. These brawls were, however, attended with less danger to life and less bloodshed than they would have been in succeeding times; for the men fought with buckler and short swords, and it was counted unmannerly to make a thrust.

In his youth Sir Richard had married Margaret, the daughter of Lord Conyers. She dying before him, he took for his second wife the beautiful widow of Lord Scroope of Bolton. Soon after the birth of their first child a difference, caused no doubt by Sir Richard's conduct, arose between the pair and continued many years. At last, coming to a gentleman's house where they were strait of lodging, the husband and wife were perforce thrown together. The consequence was a reconciliation, which was soon afterwards still more closely cemented by the birth of a son, whom they named Henry, and who in course of time succeeded to his father's estates.

At the age of 63, in the year 1589, the "great black knight of the north" died, and was buried in the chancel of Thornton church. He was tall of stature, "and withal big and strongly made, having had in his youth a very able body." His hair was black, his eyes the same hue, and his complexion a clear brown. Nor was he great only in stature; but also in power, estate, and fortune. A wise and prudent man, too, as regarded the management of his estates, a kind master, a liberal landlord, a loving father, and a tender husband, albeit "extraordinarily given to the love of women."

In his choice of wives he was peculiarly fortunate. His second wife, the Lady Katharine, was not only a gentlewoman of great piety, but endowed with a more than ordinary share of beauty. Outwardly a Roman Catholic, she seems to have been at heart a Protestant; for almost the last words she spoke were, "Daughter, let the priests be put out of the house." She died in the year 1598, having survived her husband nearly twenty years, and was buried in the chancel of Whitby church "under the great blue stone."

By his first wife Sir Richard had three sons and several daughters. By his second wife he had a daughter named Katherine after her mother, and a son named Henry. His eldest son, Francis, succeeded to a brief enjoyment of the title and estates. He was, like his stalwart father, a right proper man, and had been bred a soldier. Sir Richard loved him entirely, and if he had but married with his approbation would have left his estates freely to him. But the young man was obstinately determined to take to wife one Mrs. Jane Boulmer, who though of good family was not equally fortunate in the matter of reputation. In fact, her character and manner of life were such that Sir Richard was accustomed to say she was of a humour he liked better for a mistress than a wife for a son. When, however, he saw that Francis was not to be dissuaded from the match, he determined to settle his lands in such a way that his heir should have power to dispose of only £500 a year by will. If he had not made this arrangement, he was sure, he said, that after his death his Aunt Frank — for so he always called Mrs. Jane — would have made her husband cut off the entail, and so settle the estates that not a foot should come to any of his blood. The event proved that he had been right. No sooner had the old man gone down to his grave than Aunt Frank so wrought upon her husband that he settled on her all the lands he had at his disposal.

After his father's death, Sir Francis resided for the most part at Whitby, where he built a house. Yielding to Mrs. Jane's persuasions, the dwelling was constructed entirely of wood, although the country afforded plenty of good stone. "Wood would serve them well enough for their time," the lady was wont to say, knowing she should not have a child, and therefore caring little what destruction she did to the woods. She was, moreover, of a most haughty spirit, and had such a hold over her husband, who was a very valiant man and a complete gentleman in all points, that it was thought her influence over him could only proceed from witchcraft. So exceedingly over−topped was he by her that he even submitted to have the first letter of her name carved upon the door−post before his. Moreover, though Sir Francis died at Whitby, she would not permit him to be buried in his own church, but caused his body to be carried to Beverley, a place with which the Chomley family had no relations. There, in the church of St. Mary's, she laid him in his grave; but though she had vowed he should be buried in "a place where never a Chomley should set his foot on," her purpose was afterwards frustrated, "as it were by Divine Providence," piously observes Sir Hugh. After the death of Sir Francis, his widow married a man of mean quality, to whom she gave all the land which her late husband had settled upon her.

Sir Francis Chomley having died childless, his half−brother, Henry, became heir to the estates. Previous to the death of Sir Francis, Henry had married Sir William Babthorpe's daughter. The lady being a Roman Catholic, and the husband and wife living then at Whitby, their house became a sort of receptacle for seminary priests coming from beyond the seas, and who landed frequently at that port. Sometimes as many as three or four of these gentry

would come together; and as they generally made their appearance with but a scant supply of clothes and money, Sir Henry was accustomed to send them away, being so charged by his wife, with a great supply of all kinds of both necessary and superfluous garments. Thus those who entered the house in rags might be seen leaving it clad in scarlet and satin, and attended with men and horses, the better to disguise their profession. Sir Henry himself seems to have somewhat inclined to Catholicism, though he attended the services of the Reformed Church. His tendencies, and perhaps the imprudent conduct of his wife, often brought him into trouble. On several occasions he was not only called upon to pay heavy penalties, but had the grief of seeing his wife carried off, not merely once, but again and again, to prison, and kept there for a long time. However, as years passed by, his opinions underwent a change, and at last both he and his wife became not only Protestants, but very zealous ones too.

Sir Henry had shown by the liberal way in which he had treated the seminary priests that he was a man of generous nature. Nor was he a person to care very much about curbing his expenditure. Being, moreover, very nearly allied to the Earl of Cumberland, who loved him dearly, he frequented his company much, and was thereby led into expenses beyond what his means could afford. He was also much addicted to fleet hounds and horses; "vain, chargeable sports," Sir Hugh terms them. Worst of all, he trusted too much to his servants in the management of his estates. The consequence was that in a very short time he fell into debt, and then, in order to free himself from his embarrassments, cast about for a way to cut off the entail. Although poor Sir Richard had thought he had so settled the succession that it would be impossible to alter it, yet by the cunning invention of the lawyers employed by Sir Henry the matter was effected. "Which shows," says Sir Hugh, "that it is not good to be too solicitous in settling an estate or thinking to perpetuate a man's name and family, but leave it to succeeding Providence." Still, notwithstanding that Sir Henry had sold much land, his debts were on the increase. At length he determined to turn over to his eldest son, Richard Chomley, the land which remained for the payment of his debts and the increase of his children's portions. Being much given to the pleasure of the chase he had always continued to hunt until, in the fifty−sixth year of his age, he fell from his horse while leaping a hedge. Tall and corpulent as he was, he was bruised to such a degree that he was never afterwards able to take any part in active life. So he removed from Roxby, where he had been residing for some years, and retired with his wife and family to York. There he continued to live until his death, which took place in the September of the year 1617.

Mr. Richard Chomley was about thirty−seven years old when his father died. At the early age of sixteen, Sir Henry, having then cut off the entail, had sent for his son from Cambridge and married him to Mistress Susanna Legard. The lady, who had lost her father and mother when quite a child, had been brought up by her cousin, Mrs. Hotham, mother to that unfortunate "yet truly honest and noble gentleman," Sir John Hotham, who was beheaded by the Parliament of 1645. Mistress Susanna was two years older than her husband, and brought him a fortune of £2000 in ready money, which was considered a fair portion at the time. A lovely and gracious creature she appeared in the eyes of her boy husband. She was tall, slender, and of an elegant figure, her hair a bright chestnut, her eyes grey, and her face oval. She had, moreover, a complexion in which white and red were perfectly blended. But she had something even better than beauty and fortune for her dowry, for she was virtuous and religious. A loving wife too she proved, and one who soon acquired great influence over her husband. After the couple had been married about six weeks, Sir Henry, having regard to the bridegroom's tender years, thought fit to send him back to Cambridge. The young man, however, proved that he had a will of his own. He had not been persuaded to go more than half way on his journey before he turned restive and went back to his bride. Thenceforth he showed himself to be of an active spirit; and before he was twenty one years of age became implicated in several matters which caused his father no small trouble and anxiety. Among these was the affair of the rising of the Earl of Essex, in the forty−third year of Queen Elizabeth, which, says Sir Hugh, cost him £3000. A few years afterwards the fiery young man struck a gentleman in the Star Chamber, and had it not been for the intercession of friends and a liberal payment of money, would have lost the offending member of his body. Richard Chomley was a handsome young man, being exceedingly tall, slender, and well formed. While very young his complexion was so fair and his features so delicate that he was able to act the part of a woman in a comedy at Trinity College, Cambridge, with great applause. Later in life he became swarthy, which yet might be ascribed, thought Sir Hugh, ' rather to his riding in the sun and much using of field sports in his youth than to nature; for the skin of his body was passing white, and of a very smooth grain.' He had, moreover, "a most incomparable sweet breath insomuch as many times it might have been thought it had carried a perfume or sweet odoriferous smell with it. The hair of his head was of that loveliest shade, a chestnut's ruddy brown, and the ends of his locks curled and turned up very

gracefully, without that frizzling which his father, Sir Henry's, was inclined to. His beard," continues Sir Hugh, "was of a yellowish−brown and thin upon the chin; his eyes grey; his face long, with a handsome Roman nose. His aspect also was very winning: he had a most manly and graceful presence." Nor was this all: he possessed a rare voice, sweet and strong. Nature had moreover endowed him with those graces which others endeavour to attain by art and practice. All these things rendered him famous among the fair sex. Great too was the valour he displayed on various occasions, especially in duels. These he had to fight pretty often, though never without provocation, for he was as far from giving offence as from taking it on slight causes, as will be seen from the following anecdote: —

"when Sir Richard was of about the age of twenty−three years (i.e., in 1603), coming to London, he went to see a play at Blackfriars, and coming late was forced to take a stool and sit on the stage as divers others did, and, as the custom was, between every scene stood up to refresh himself. Whilst he was in that posture, a young gallant, very brave, clapped himself upon Sir Richard's stool, which he conjecturing was only to ease the gentleman for a while, did not demand his seat; which the gallant perceiving, he began to laugh and sneer, saying, "here is a young gentleman I have not only put by his seat, but he takes it very patiently." And so continued jesting and making sport, insomuch as the company took notice thereof. Whereupon Sir Richard said "Sir, is it not sufficient to do me an injury but you must boast of it?" and, whispering him in his ear , said, "If you be a gentleman follow me;" and presently Sir Richard went out. The gallant followed, and, coming to an open place close by, the gentleman said, "What do you mean?" Saith Sir Richard, "That you give me immediate satisfaction with your sword for the affront you have done me." "Sir, replied the gallant, "I have no sword." "Then buy one, saith Sir Richard. But I have no money about me," quoth the gallant. "I will furnish you, saith Sir Richard. So carrying him to a cutler's shop close by, the gallant turned over many, but could find none to please him, insomuch as Sir Richard offered his own, and would take any other. But neither did that please the gallant, who, whilst he there trifled away the time, his man came and brought with him a constable, and suddenly clasping his arms about Sir Richard's middle said, "Mr. Constable, lay hold on him: this is he; he will kill my lady's eldest son." And the constable presently commanded him to keep the peace. Sir Richard, seeing himself surprised, said, "He meant the gentleman no harm, though he had done him an injury, of which," said Sir Richard, "i will make you, Sir Constable, the judge." And so, drawing the gallant out of the shop upon the pretence to relate the matter to the constable, as soon as they were in the street Sir Richard gave the gallant two or three good blows, and withal struck up his heels, and then turned to the constable and said, "I, Mr. Constable, promise you not to meddle further with my lady's eldest son." So he was willing to be gone with his beating. And though a great gallant and gamester about the town, and one that much frequented the ordinaries and places where was then the most resort of company, he never appeared amongst them after."

As soon as young Richard came of age he left his father's house where he and his wife had been living ever since their marriage, and went to board with his brother−in−law, Mr. Legard of Ganton. In 1608 he took up his abode at Whitby, where he gained the repute of being a wise man and great husbander of his property. By degrees he came to be looked upon as a person likely, not only to support, but to aggrandise his family. This doubtless he would have done had he not been drawn into various law suits, and had it not been for the death of his wife, which took place in 1611. This sad event plunged his domestic affairs into confusion, and occasioned him to break up his household. Having moreover, undertaken to pay some of his father's debts, and also his brothers' and sisters' portions, he resolved to live very quietly. Unhappily for him, his cousin, Lord Scroope, came to Yorkshire in the year 1619, in the capacity of Lord President of her Majesty's Council in the North, and Lord−Lieutenant of Yorkshire, Lord Scroope, soon after his arrival in the county, made Sir Richard Deputy−Lieutenant and one of the Council. Friendship and kindness increasing more and more between the two cousins, Sir Richard was drawn much to York, and his expenses proportionately increased. In the eighteenth year of King James's reign he was chosen burgess for Scarborough, and went with all his family to London; but being at the time in very indifferent health, he scarcely went half a dozen times to the Parliament House.

When his wife died she had left him with six children; and just about this time he married his eldest daughter, Margaret, "a very personable and beautiful woman," to Mr. Strickland of Boynton, and his eldest son, Hugh, to Elizabeth, eldest daughter of Sir William Twisden of Peckham, in Kent. In the year 1624 he was made High Sheriff of the county; and not long afterwards, writs being issued for a new Parliament, Sir Thomas Wentworth and Sir John Savill stood to be Knights of the Shire for the county of York, and Sir Richard, being distantly

related to Wentworth, declared himself for him, and did him all the favour he could. The expenses to which he was put on this occasion increased his debts to a sum "mysterious and incredible." "All that can be said and imagined to account for it," says Sir Hugh, "is that his carrying his family to London did not only put him out of his ordinary way of living, but drew him to an extraordinary charge." Moreover, on account of the excessive cheapness of all goods about that time Sir Richard made little or nothing of those in his own hands. Besides Lord Scroope, affecting running horses had put him into a humour of breeding (which, observes Sir Hugh in a parenthesis, I have found to be vain and unprofitable), and which obliged him to keep two or three horses in constant training at several different places the year through. Then his shrievalty had been a great expense to him. But one of his greatest cankerworms was the interest he had to pay on borrowed moneys. It seems that he was also, like his grandfather, a great admirer of the fair sex; but, observes Sir Hugh, "I have heard him protest that it was not costly to him."

As if this had not been enough, a cousin of Sir Richard's, one Mr. Gascoign, went to live in his house when he came to London. This gentleman being much addicted to the search after the philosopher's stone, Sir Richard also fell in love with it. Accordingly Gascoign not only got money out of him for these purposes, but Sir Hugh discovered among his father's papers a cancelled bond, binding him to pay one of the adepts in that profession £200 for a certain secret. Sir Richard was always very slow in acknowledging how much these occult studies had cost him, but it is certain the money he spent on them tended very greatly to the increase of his debts. "Strange and remarkable it is," Sir Hugh philosophically observes, "that a man who had passed the greatest part of his life with the reputation of one of the ablest and wisest gentlemen of the country should now, at the age of forty−seven years, when commonly men's judgements are ripest and grown more sage by experience, not only be tempted into such a foppery and delusion, but even desire to intricate his eldest son therein too, for he would often try to persuade him to join him in his researches, and when the young man refused would remark he was so increduluous he should never be better for his studies." Then his son would reply, "Sir, let me be no worse and I will never desire to be better." There being now no other way to get rid of his debts, he made over to his eldest son the whole of his estate for ten years, reserving only £400 a year for himself to live on.

He died ultimately, at the age of sixty−two, of a surfeit of oysters. He was buried in the chancel of Whitby church, under the great blue stone where his grandmother had been laid twenty years before him.

Sir Richard was twice married. By his first wife — the beautiful Susanna Legard, who died in 1611 of a fever she had caught in going to see her son Hugh, who was ill at Scarborough — he had four sons and two daughters. His second wife was Margaret Cob, with whom he had become acquainted and married during one of his visits to London. He was then about thirty−three years of age, and the lady some ten years his junior. Like her predecessor, she proved a loving dutiful wife, living many years at Whitby with her husband in great retirement, but with much content. She had four sons of her own, and was a good kind step−mother, bringing up her husband's two daughters with great tenderness, and when they died, grieving for them as if they had been her own children. On their part, they loved and honoured her as much as though she had been their own mother.

Having given an account of his ancestors and of his family, Sir Hugh begins his own autobiography. Being about to write the story of his own life, it puts him in mind, he says, of that fancy of the Emperor Charles V., when he would have the ceremony of his funeral procession performed upon himself while he was living. "Nor am I insensible," he continues, with what difficulty and prejudice I undertake this work, considering when I am to mention my own blemishes and imperfections, the frailty of human nature is such I shall scarcely discern or rightly judge of them; and if I mention aught may be to my commendation or advantage, it will be thought pride or vain glory." Accordingly, he requires his sons, if they know of any remarkable infirmities in him which he has not mentioned, that they should add it by way of a postscript to his biography. For the rest it is his desire to use as much truth and clearness as the frailty of human nature will permit.

Sir Hugh was the first child of his parents, his father being just twenty years of age when his son was born, at Roxby, on Mary Magdalen's Day, A.D. 1600. The little boy was unfortunate in his nurses, and for many years was but a weak ailing child. At three years old he also met with an accident which might have proved fatal. The maid who attended him let the child tumble out of the great chamber window at Roxby, and had it not been that in the act of falling he was espied and caught hold of by a servant who was waiting upon his grandfather at dinner in the room below, his life would have ended then and there. When he was but seven years old, his father and mother went to keep house at Whitby, and the little fellow accompanied them on horseback. He had just begun to ride a

little way in advance with one of his father's servants beside him, when, on passing over a common called Paston Moor, he put his horse to a gallop. The animal running away, the child got alarmed and called out to the servant who, taking hold of his arm intending to lift him from his horse, let him fall to the ground. Fortunately, though one of the horses passed so near him as to tread on his hat, the little fellow escaped without hurt, as also did his mother, who in her fright had leaped off her horse. The following year, on the feast of St. Mary Magdalen, he was exposed to and escaped another great danger. It chanced that at his father's house there was a great fierce sow, which had two pigs about a quarter old. As the three were lying close together asleep near the kitchen door, young Master Hugh, out of folly and waggery, as he terms it, began to kick one of them. While he was doing so, the other got up, on which he fell to kicking them both to make them squeak. The sow hearing the cries of her young ones, rushed to the rescue, caught the young gentleman by the leg, and before he could recover himself, dragged him about twenty yards under the window of the larder. The three then began to bite him, and would soon have made an end of him had not the butler, who was carrying a glass of beer to his master, hearing him cry, set down the beer on the hall table, and running out snatched him away from the sow, who was just proceeding to attack her victim in the throat.

At eleven years of age Hugh was sent to the free school at Beverley, where he was attended by his usual ill fortune. Soon after he had gone there he took a fever which was prevalent there. Hearing of his illness, his cousin, Mrs. Hotham, sent for him to her house at Scarborough, where his mother going to see him caught the fever and died. The poor boy felt her loss greatly, for she had been a tender mother to him, and adds Sir Hugh, "I loved her dearly." After the boy had been about two years at Beverley school, Mr. Petty, the head master, was chosen Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge. He had, by that time, become so much attached to his pupil, as well as thinking him apt to learn, that he persuaded Hugh's father to let the boy accompany him to Cambridge, though he was then only just past thirteen years of age. Sir Richard gave consent, and he was entered as a fellow commoner. There being a youth there who some years before had been at Beverley school, Mr. Petty introduced him to young Chomley. But the acquaintance proved a very undesirable one: the young gentleman in question being a loose liver of questionable habits, and likely to ruin his companion as well as himself. Circumstances happily led to the breaking up of the set to which they belonged; and Hugh, though idle to the last, shook himself clear of dissipation.

He was seventeen years old when he finally left the university. He then spent a year in the country with his father, and became so fond of hunting, hawking, and horse races, that he could not easily put aside those pastimes, when he afterwards saw the vanity of them. On his going to London the following year, he was admitted a member of Gray's Inn, at the end of Michaelmas Term. But he totally neglected the study of the law during the whole of his three years' residence in the metropolis. After he had quitted the Inns of Court he took a lodging in Fleet−street, then a very fashionable part of London, and misspent his time more than ever, doing nothing but frequenting bowling−houses and gaming−houses. "Though for other extravagances, I was," he says, "very temperate. So matters went on until he had arrived at the age of twenty−two, when he was married, at the church in Milk−street, to the daughter of Sir William Twisden. The wedding breakfast was held at Sir William's town house in Redcross−street, "which was so good a house," says Sir Hugh, "as few gentlemen in town had the like, and bravely was it furnished." There, in the year 1624, Mrs. Chomley presented her husband with a son and heir. The baby was as fair and fine a child, in its father's estimation, "as ever was born of a woman, and the instant after it came into the world looked broad with its eyes and as pert as if it had been a month old."

Not quite two years after this event Mr. Chomley went to Yorkshire to make some arrangement for the payment of his father's debts, for which he had rendered himself responsible. It was finally settled that he should go over to France, where he would be out of the reach of the creditors. But when he was just on the eve of setting off, he received a passionate letter from his father, full of love and grief, begging him to return to Yorkshire, and speak with him. Mr. Chomley consequently altered his resolution, wherein, he says, he had cause to acknowledge God's good providence. For he soon saw his father could not have carried on any business without him, and that his going beyond the seas would have occasioned great disorder, if not ruin to the estates.

It was in the spring of this year 1626 that Sir Richard made the arrangement by which he leased his estates to his son for ten years. Mr. Chomley was consequently obliged to remain in Yorkshire, and take up his abode in the gate−house at Whitby. Meanwhile, his wife, who was still in London had been making preparations to rejoin her husband. Having been informed that it would be much more convenient to forward her goods by sea, she sent by

water not only the household stuff and plate, but the whole of her wearing apparel, excepting what she had on her back, or in a small cloak bag. Unfortunately, the vessel was seized by a Dunkirker before it could make the port of Whitby; Mr. Chomley chanced, to have a suit of hangings in the gate−house and a bed for one chamber, so that they were not left utterly destitute. "Though it was a time of trouble," says Mr. Chomley, "I have heard my dear wife often say she never lived with more content any part of her life; and though myself," he adds, "had many hot businesses to perplex my head in the day, God gave me ability to lay all under my pillow at night, so that then they were no more trouble to me."

The payment of his father's debts was indeed no trivial business which Mr. Chomley had set himself to perform. As for Sir William Twisden, he gave up his son−in−law for ruined, and would not stir a finger to assist him. Seeing this, other of his friends, with the exception of his cousin, Mr. Legard, and Sir John Hotham, stood aloof, so that at first he had no other resource than what was to be found in his own wits. However, through the blessing of God on his endeavours, by the end of the ten years he had either paid off the debts or given such security as fully contented the remaining creditors. On this affair being brought to a conclusion, he was able to say that it had neither prejudiced his health nor depressed his spirits. For he had ever, he said, carried in his mind, a speech of Sir Ralph Babthorp (a wise gentleman and his grandmother's brother) which was, "Not to be dejected for any troubles or crosses, for when a man's own heart fails him all the world forsakes him."

In the midsummer of this year 1627 Mr. Chomley sent for his little boys, who had hitherto been staying at their grandfather's house in Kent. At that time Dick was just three years old, and Will a year and a half. The day they were expected, Mr. Chomley and his father rode out to meet them on the moors. Dick, who was a weak, tender child, took little notice of the gentleman, but drooped, and seemed tired with the journey; but Will, as soon as he saw Mr. Chomley at the coach−side, fell a whooping and hallooing, and staring at his father as if they had been well acquainted. At this, old Mr. George Conyers, who had travelled with them from the south, said, "Sir, you must be very indulgent, and take care of this eldest child, for he is very weak and tender. But if you turn this other on the moors, he will live and thrive there." "Which I beseech the Lord he may, observed Sir Hugh, "they being fallen to his lot and portion by the death of his elder brother." Two years after Dick had been brought to Yorkshire, the always ailing little fellow died.

"He was much fairer and more beautiful [says his father, lamenting his loss] than any other of my brood; for his hair was amber colour, his eyes grey, and his complexion as fair white and red as ever I saw. He died at the age of five years, yet had the courage and resolution of a man. For being to have an incision on a lump which rose on his right arm, he would say, "Father, would you have it done?" And when I made answer, "Yes, sweetheart; the doctor thinks it necessary;" then he would hold out his little arm without shrinking or whining. The same resolution he would show in taking medicine, which he could not endure."

The following year Mr. and Mrs. Chomley had a daughter born to them, whom they named Elizabeth. But when she had reached her fourth year she fell suddenly sick, and died within a fortnight's time. "Then," says Mr. Chomley, the Lord, who after the saddest and blackest storms causeth the sunbeams to break out and refresh all his creatures, was pleased to cheer up our hearts with the birth of our son Hugh." Mrs. Chomley, after her recovery, was obliged to leave her home for a time. On her return an incident occurred which Sir Hugh thus relates: —

"My wife, longing to see her boy, whom she had left but two months old, being nursed near hand, at a place called Southward House, I gave orders the nurse should dress her own boy (but half a year older than mine) in my boy's coat, and to have him in her arms when my wife came into the house. And though the nurse's boy had grey eyes and mine black, I had told my dear wife they were grey, like my Dick's, which was dead, which she much desired; so that when she saw the nurse's boy she took it in her arms and kissed him, and seemed very well contented with him; till going into an inner parlour where the nurse's maid had our boy Hugh in her arms, as soon as ever my dear wife cast her eyes upon him she gave a start, and all her blood coming into her face, she said, "O Lord, sweetheart, this is my boy;" and running to him caught him in her arms and kissed him with much more fondness and earnestness than she did the other; though I, keeping a sober countenance, told her that was the nurse's boy. But she replied, "if I must have the other, I will have this too; for I am sure this is my own boy." And in earnest, it was pretty and admirable to see how, by the instinct of nature, she had found out her own child."

But she could never quite forgive the trick which had been played upon her. In long after years her son often heard her condemn this action of his father's, and say that the deceit put upon her from the nurse's child had bred

such a fluctuation in her mind, that she could neither then willingly part with it, nor, for some time after, without a troublesome doubting be assured of her own.

In the spring of 1653, Mr. Chomley, now become Sir Hugh, removed with his family from Fyling Hall to the Gate House as Whitby, where he remained until his own house had been repaired, and rendered habitable. When it was fit to receive them, Lady Chomley, who was excellent at dressing and making all handsome within doors, put it into a "fine posture, and furnished it with so many good things, that there were few gentlemen in the country that had better." Having, moreover, mastered his debts, Sir Hugh did not only appear at all public meetings in a very gentlemanly equipage, but he also lived in as handsome and plentiful a fashion at home as any gentleman in all the country of his rank. He had between thirty and forty in his ordinary family: a chaplain, who said prayers every morning at six, and again before dinner and supper; a porter, who merely attended the gates, which were ever shut up before dinner, when the bell rung to prayers, and not opened till one o'clock, except for some strangers who came to dinner, which was always abundant enough for three or four besides the family, without any trouble; and whatever their fare was, they were sure to have a hearty welcome. Twice a week a certain number of old people, widows, and indigent persons, were also served at the gates with bread and pottage made of beef.

The time was now approaching when Sir Hugh was to play a more conspicuous part in public affairs than he had yet performed. In June. 1637, two Holland men−of−war chased into Whitby harbour a small Dunkirk vessel belonging to the King of Spain. Sir Hugh, having heard of the circumstance, went to the Dutch captains, and ordered them not to offer any act of hostility, for that the Spaniard was the King's friend. After some expostulations they promised they would not harm the Dunkirker if he offered no injury to them. However, after leaving Sir Hugh, the Holland captains sent for the Dunkirk captain to dine with them, and soon after took occasion to quarrel with him, at the same time ordering their men to fall upon the Dunkirk ship. Meantime Sir Hugh, hearing some pistols discharged, made haste to the shore, having only a cane in his hand. On his arrival at the scene he found one of the Holland captains with a pistol in his hand calling to his men, who were then in the Dunkirk ship, to send a boat for him. Sir Hugh hailed him, and keeping him in talk till he got near him, caught hold of the pistol. Then some one in the ship cocked a musket at him; but Sir Hugh caught sight of him in time, and turning the captain between himself and the ship, prevented the man from firing. As soon as the captain had been arrested, Sir Hugh caused a boat to be manned, in order to recapture the ship. But when the Hollanders saw it approaching they fled out of the vessel to get away to their own ships. In the afternoon, Sir Hugh intercepted a letter on its way to the captain, telling him to be of good cheer, for they would land at midnight with two hundred men to take him away. Sir Hugh finding what was in contemplation, instantly gave notice to Sir John Hotham, who was then sheriff of the county, to come to him with all the train−bands he could muster. Accordingly they had about two hundred men on guard that night, and no rescue was attempted; but they were so inexpert, that not one amongst them, except some few sailors, knew at all how to handle their arms or discharge a musket. "Happy had it been for this nation," adds Sir Hugh, "if they had continued in that ignorance."

In A.D. 1640, at the beginning of the Short Parliament, the Earl of Strafford, then Deputy of Ireland, returned to London. Sir Hugh Chomley, as soon as he heard of his arrival, went to his lodging to do his service to him. To his surprise, however, he was not only barred the freedom of going into his bedchamber, as he had used to do; but when the Earl came out and saluted divers gentlemen, he passed by Sir Hugh as though he did not know him, and moreover with some scorn, which Sir Hugh's temperament could ill bear. The fact was that Strafford was displeased with him because he had refused to pay ship−money. Nor was his anger shown only in his personal behaviour. For he not only put Sir Hugh out of his commissions as Justice of the Peace, Deputy−Lieutenant, and Colonel, but, as soon as the Parliament was dissolved, he caused him to be brought before the Council, and there accused him of words which he had never spoken in the House, nor could they be proved against him. On his return to Yorkshire, Sir Hugh attended a public meeting of the gentry, which was held at the High Sheriff's. There it was agreed that an address should be made to the Lords of the Council, and a remonstrance of the grievances under which the country was labouring. Sir Hugh Chomley, Sir John Hotham, and one or two other gentlemen were accordingly requested to draw up a petition. Having withdrawn into a private room, the business was quickly done, Sir John Hotham and Sir Hugh having already got a petition in their pockets, which they had drawn up previously to the meeting. Although it was couched in what Sir Hugh calls a "pretty high style," it was approved and signed by about one hundred of the nobility and gentry. A gentleman was sent up purposely to deliver it; and

it having been the first complaint which had been made touching the King's prerogative, it somewhat startled the Council. Soon afterwards, the King coming to Yorkshire, and summoning all the train−bands to York, would have returned Sir Hugh to his commission. He refused, however, saying, "Either he did not deserve to have it taken from him, or not so soon to be restored." Afterwards he went privately to the King to thank him for the favour he had done him. He then told him that he had not refused to accept the regiment because he declined to do his Majesty service, but because he would not serve under the Earl of Strafford, who was then general of the army, as he lay under his displeasure. However, his brother, Sir Henry Chomley, might have the regiment, and would be ready to do his Majesty service. To this the King replied, "that they would not march with him;" but Sir High answered that they would, and himself promised to bring them to the place of rendezvous. On the retreat of the King to York, his Majesty desired the gentry to meet the Earl of Strafford at the Town Hall the next day, to consult about the marching of the train−bands; but the gentlemen, as soon as they had left the presence of the King, went to an inn and drew up a statement, showing that they could not consent to his Majesty's proposition, and desiring him to call a parliament. Lord Fairfax was next chosen to deliver the petition, but was unable to do so until the next day, when most of the gentry had left the place. Meantime Strafford, taking advantage of the circumstance, gave the King a notion of the sentiments of the country entirely different from those expressed in the petition. Whereupon Sir John Hotham, Sir John Savill, Sir Hugh Chomley, and some others, to the number of about sixteen gentlemen, met together to consider how they might petition his Majesty once more. However, one the number gave notice to the court of the meeting, on which Sir Hugh, Mr. Bellasis, and Lord Wharton were sent for to the King. His Majesty then told them that "it was not lawful for them to meet in that manner upon petitions; that he might question them in the Star Chamber for it, but would at that time pass it over, because he loved them all so well, but charged them never to meddle more in petitioning him in that kind." After many other good words to the same effect, his Majesty dismissed them. The next morning, however, just as Sir Hugh and Sir John Hotham were ready to put foot into stirrup, Charles sent a man of the name of Stockdale to bring them before him. On entering his presence, his Majesty reproved the two gentlemen in very sharp words, telling them "they had been the chief cause and promoters of all the petitions from that country," adding in plain terms, "that if ever they meddled, or had any hand in any more, he would hang them." To this speech Sir Hugh made the following answer: "Sir, we are then in a very sad condition; for now the Lord President and those you set governors over us may injure and oppress us without hope of redress; since we, being country gentlemen, and without acquaintance in court, have no means but by petition to make our grievances known to your Majesty." Then the King answered, "Whenever you have any cause of complaint come to me, and I will hear it." On which Sir Hugh humbly thanked his Majesty, and the three gentlemen took their leave.

Having on former occasions refused ship−money, and showed himself jealous for the public liberties, Sir Hugh was much looked up to in the Parliament which met in 1641. Accordingly in the following year he was nominated one of the commissioners to go to the King, and give assurance to his Majesty of the sincerity of the Parliament. But when Sir Hugh came to receive his instructions from Pym, he found that they were enjoined to draw the train−bands together, and to oppose the King whenever it was necessary in the interests of the people. These orders Sir Hugh refused to accept, saying, "it were to begin the war, which he intended not;" on which Pym desired him to draw up the instructions in any way he liked. But Lord Fairfax and Sir Hugh departing before they could be finished, the orders were brought by Lord Howard and Stapylton, and, though not so explicit as they had been at first, contained much to which Sir Hugh could not assent. On the arrival of the commissioners at York, they found there were few about the King except such as were soldiers of fortune, or such as were no friends to the public peace.

"I discovered also [Sir Hugh says] that there was a party about the King which held intelligence with another prevalent one in Parliament; both of which so well concurred in fomenting distractions, as whensoever the King offered anything that was reasonable, the party in Parliament caused it to be rejected. And whenever the Parliament did seem to comply to the King, that party with him made it disliked; so that the Searcher of all hearts knows I was infinitely troubled at the distractions likely to succeed. After some prayers to the Lord for directions, and in the depth of my trouble taking a little psalter−book in my hand, I used to read in, I first cast my eye on the 6th and 7th verses of the 120th psalm, which was : — "My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace. I am for peace: but when I speak, they are for war.""

Then reading the following 121st psalm, Sir Hugh says his heart was enlightened and cheered up beyond

imagination, so that ever after he went cheerfully on in performance of his duty, without any trouble or disturbance. While his Majesty was at York the commissioners sent a paper of nineteen propositions from the Parliament to the King, which Sir Hugh thought the most unjust and unreasonable that were ever made to any monarch. When the propositions were presented it fell to Sir Hugh's turn to read, but he would not, and passed on the paper to Sir Richard Stapylton. He was afterwards appointed to carry the King's answer to the Parliament. A month afterwards he was again selected to go to his Majesty, who was then at Beverley; but disliking the employment, he declined it, and another gentleman was put in his place.

About the latter end of August, 1624, Sir Hugh was directed to go to Yorkshire and to call together his regiment for the purpose of defending Scarborough. How he conducted himself in that employment he does not state in his memoirs. He merely says, in the account which he has given elsewhere, "that he did not forsake the Parliament till they had failed in performing those things they had engaged to do, and which they had made the basis of the war — namely, the preservation of religion and the liberty of the subject."

Lady Chomley was in London when her husband declared for the King. The Parliament being nettled that it had lost a person who had been so useful, took a mean and petty revenge upon him by plundering his wife of her coach−horses, and otherwise treating her rudely. However, she managed to procure a pass to rejoin Sir Hugh. After two days' sojourn at Whitby, Sir Hugh carried his wife to Scarborough, of which place he had been made governor by the King. There they lived "in a very handsome port and fashion;" but in such a way as not many in employment for either the King or the Parliament did the like. For he had neither pay nor allowance, but maintained the post of governor upon his own purse, not having the worth of a chicken out of the country which he did not pay for till the time came that they were besieged.

When the place was attacked in the month of February, 1644, Lady Chomley, who would not forsake her husband in his time of danger, desired him to send his two daughters into Holland. This he did, though not without great trouble, for he was very fond of them. The siege lasted above twelve months. On the surrender of the castle, Sir Hugh, being in a very indifferent state of health, took ship for Holland at Bridlington, leaving Lady Chomley with not above J in her purse, while he himself had barely enough to defray his passage. As soon as he arrived in Holland, he sent his two daughters back to their mother, and being thus left alone, fell into great sadness and trouble of mind. In a short time he went to Paris where he found a letter written to a merchant there by his son William, who was then on his return from Italy, in which letter he said that unless he had a speedy supply of money from his father he should be forced to turn soldier, and trail a pike in Catalonia for his subsistence. In the spring of 1645, he sent William, who not long before had joined his father in Paris, to England to look after his estates; and fortunate it was that he did so, for, with the help of his uncle Sir Henry, Mr. Chomley was able to get the manors of Whitby and some other lands out of sequestration. In May, 1647, Sir Hugh went to Rouen, where he was joined by his wife, his two sons, and his daughters. Thus the family which had not been together for five years' time, were once more reunited. At Rouen they remained for a year and a half; but the plague having made its appearance in the city, they took house at Gallion, sixteen miles distant, and the seat of the archbishop, and where they remained a short time. Their return to Rouen took place soon after the Parliament had beheaded King Charles, at which the French were so incensed, that the people were ready to stone Sir Hugh and his party at the landing of the river. "And truly," adds Sir Hugh, but that we had formerly lived there and were known by many to be of the King's party, I verily think they would have done us some mischief."

In February, 1648, Lady Chomley went to England, and in the June of the year following, Sir Hugh took ship at Calais and landed at Dover. Thence he went to London and from there to Whitby.

In the spring of 1651, many gentlemen were committed to prison on suspicion of favouring the cause of the King. Amongst them were Sir Roger Twisden and Sir Hugh Chomley, who for some time past had been residing with his brother−in−law at Peckham. One Saturday, early in the morning, they were suddenly carried off by a party of horse and conveyed to Leeds, where they were kept in prison for the space of six weeks.

In July, 1652, the whole family returned once more to their beloved Yorkshire home. The place had, it is true, been plundered of all that had made it pleasant and comfortable. Nevertheless, Lady Chomley, with her own housewifery, had made some bedding, had put it in a condition to receive themselves and a friend. Sir Hugh's intention was to live there as retiredly as possible; nevertheless, even then his family amounted to twenty persons in number.

In October, 1664, Lady Chomley and her husband went to London. They remained there till the following

spring, when Sir Hugh having occasion to go to Yorkshire, and his wife not feeling very well, he left her at her sister's house at Chiswick. She remained there about a month, and then went to the lodgings which her cousin, Lady Katharine Moor, occupied in Bedford−street, Covent−garden. There, after having been ill for a week of fever, she died on the 17th of April, "making," says Sir Hugh, "a most pious and Christian end." The news of her sudden death reached her husband at Whitby, from which place he made haste to remove, not being able to endure the sight of the rooms and places where he had been accustomed to enjoy her society. "It is now a year and a half since she departed this life," he says, "most of which time I have resided among her friends, whom I love very much, and where I shall, I think, for the most part continue, except the Lord change my condition, to whose protection and providence I commit the remainder of my days, the number and nature of which He only knoweth. I beseech they may be for His glory, and then I am pleased however he pleases to dispose of me." Sir Hugh did not survive his wife more than two years. He died at East Peckham on the 30th of November, 1657, about six months after he had brought his autobiography to a conclusion. On a plain monument of alabaster in Peckham church, raised by Sir Hugh to the memory of Lady Chomley, it is stated that for the great love he bore the virtues and worth he found in his wife, he had declined being buried in his own county, among his ancestors, and had chosen to be laid beside her.

Sir Hugh has appended to his biography a "particular relation and description" of her, whose great virtues and perfections he stated in his preface he had been desirous to embalm to future ages.

Lady Chomley was, her husband tells us, of the middle stature of women, and well shaped; yet in that not so singular as in the beauty of her face — her features being very delicate, and yet proportionate to her body. Her eyes were black and full of loveliness and sweetness, her eyebrows small and even as if drawn with a pencil. She had a very small, pretty, well−shaped mouth, which sometimes, especially when in a muse or study, she would draw up into an incredible little compass. Her hair was a dark chestnut; her complexion brown but clear, with a fresh colour in her cheeks. In her looks there was loveliness inexpressible, and in her whole composition she was so beautiful a sweet creature at her marriage, as not many did parallel; few exceeded her in the nation. Yet the inward endowments and perfections of her mind did excel those of her body, for she was a most pious, virtuous person, of great integrity and discerning judgment in most things. Of a sweet kindly nature, she was compassionate beyond imagination, insomuch that there was nothing she took more interest in, nothing that was more agreeable to her disposition than to be helpful to everybody's needs, of what quality or condition soever; being even more touched with others' wants than with her own. She was of a most noble, generous mind, and would not do an unjust or dishonourable act to gain the world; apt to remit trespasses, she did not retain revenge longer that her anger, which was over in a moment. She was of a timorous nature, though in great danger had a courage above her size. Thus, on the capitulation of Scarborough Castle, when the commanding officer threatened that in case one drop of his men's blood should be shed, he would not give quarter to man or woman, but would put all to the sword, Lady Chomley, conceiving her husband would the more resent these menaces on account of her being there, went to him, and without any trouble or dejection begged he would not, for any consideration towards her, do aught that might be prejudicial to his own honour or the affairs of the King. Notwithstanding all the hardships she had to undergo she would never be persuaded to leave her husband. Very great indeed some of these hardships were. On the castle being besieged she had been forced to lie in a little cabin on the ground several months together; neither did she escape a touch of the scurvy, which was then rife in the place, and from which she never entirely recovered. During the time of the siege she took a most extraordinary care of the sick, making such provision for them as the place would afford. After the surrender of the castle, she stipulated that the garrison in her husband's house at Whitby might be removed, so that she might have liberty to dwell there. But the captain, who was in possession, liked his quarters so well, that he would not stir until one of his servants had died there of the plague. Then he left in a fright; and before he could return Lady Chomley had ventured over the moors from Malton, in the middle of winter, in a dangerous season, the moors being then covered with snow, in order to reach her home; she being then in sad condition, for her husband and her two sons were over the seas, and her girls she dared not send for on account of the plague. She had only one maid and one man servant, who acted as cook. And as she was solitary so also was she miserably accommodated. For the house having been plundered, she had nothing but what she borrowed; while her bed was so hard, she would complain she could not get warm, nor was she able to lie on it. This she was accustomed to say was the saddest and worst time of her life. Yet her spirit would not submit to make complaint and application as she might have done to the Parliament

assembled at York.

"The people about Whitby," says Sir Hugh, owe a particular obligation to her memory, their manners being much improved and refined under her influence. For she was very courteous and affable, and many of the best in the country desired to have their daughters in service with her." From their mother, who had been bred up in the court of Queen Elizabeth, she had inherited great taste and skill in needlework. Much of the bedding and the blankets were made by her own hands; and there was a suit of green cloth hangings with flowers of needlework, wrought by herself and her maids, which her husband much esteemed and prized, as he also heartily wished his posterity might do, desiring his children, for her sake, to preserve the hangings with extraordinary care. Her chief delight, however, was in her books, and very well versed was she in history. Though by constitution inclined to melancholy, she was generally pleasant and loved mirth. She was, moreover, as true a friend as was in the world.

By way of foil to set off all these perfections, Sir Hugh says, "she was passionate and soon provoked to anger, saying at times what she did not intend or think. But it was quickly over, and then she would be sorry for it." She was, also, much troubled at evils which could neither be prevented or remedied. "And now," says her husband, "having laid open her imperfections, which may be reckoned rather frailties than faults, and considering how much her virtues overbalanced them, I hope posterity will have the memory of her in great honour and veneration, as I am sure all have that knew her, but especially myself, who best knew her virtues and have the greatest loss of her."

Her death took place on the 17th April, 1665, being Easter Tuesday. Singularly enough, her birth, marriage, and death, had all fallen upon the same day in the week. Before she became ill she had been exceedingly well in health, and although in her fifty−fifth year, she did not look more than forty. She only kept her chamber a week, and the physicians thought her in no great danger even a few hours before she died. On Lady Katharine Moor advising her to send for a divine but mentioning only such as were Presbyterians, Lady Chomley replied, "she needed them not." At last her son−in−law, Mr. Stephens, asked if he should fetch her the Bishop of Armagh. She answered, "With all my heart, I pray you do." He arrived just two or three hours before her death, and knowing her to be well prepared, he said he was come to marry her to the Lord Jesus. To which she answered, "Blessed day that I am to be married to my Saviour, the Lord Jesus." These words were thenceforth never out of her mind, or scarce out of her mouth, for she often repeated them till she died, a true daughter of the Reformed Church of England. Though she often asked for her husband during her illness, she said, "she saw that it could not be, and therefore submitted to God's pleasure."

In conclusion we may mention that in some nursery gardens at Whitby, there is still preserved a memorial of Sir Hugh and Lady Chomley. A stone in the boundary wall bearing the following inscription : —

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   I, Sr. Hugh Chomley, Kt. And Barronet,
And
Elizabeth, My Deare Wife,
Daughter To Sr. Will. Twisden Of Great Peckham, In Ye County Of Kent,
Kt. And Barronet,
Built This Wall And Planted This Bech.
Anno Domini, 1652.
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Under these lines there is a shield bearing the arms of the families of Chomley and Twisden. Beneath the shield are these two lines, —

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"Our handy worke, like to ye frutefule tree,
Blesse Thou, O Lord; let it not blasted be."
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