way the visitor looked much as expected, no doubt; but what I saw was as unexpected as a midnight rainbow, for she came from India. What would Sir Walter have made of this surprise, or Douglas Haig, or Hertford, or stubborn John Haig and his adversary, Abbot David of Melrose? Thomas the Rhymers might have predicted the coming of a dark stranger from a far continent, but he omitted to do so.

Apologising in pure Queen’s English for her slight knowledge of Scotland in general and Bemersyde in particular, my guide led the way up a narrow and twisting stone stair to a massive bedchamber, heavily beamed, where sleeps in impregnable state the thirtieth Laird of Bemersyde. Another cavernous room above it contains now no weapons, no shields—no sign either of that fiery distillation to which this branch of the Haigs has given its name—nothing more warlike than brushes and palettes on deep window-sills, and canvases stacked against walls and in the gallery. The Haig swords have turned, not into ploughshares, but into the armoursy of an artist.

The final section of stairway leading up to the gallery and thence to parapets was perilously black. My companion paused, casting about for a light switch. I begged her to leave the dark tower in its original gloom, and spiralled upwards with cautious steps. Doors at either end of the gallery opened to north and south, giving access to the separate parapets. We stood together in silence for a few moments on the southern look-out beneath a crow-stepped gable. Below us the wooded policies, green slopes, winding river, sheep folded on turnips, looked too much like some theatrical back-drop to be real. Large flocks of starlings and rooks swished overhead, reminding us that the shades of evening were already gathering.

This was, after all, a living landscape in which I had to find my way back to the Dryburgh Abbey Hotel ere night fell. Before we descended, the secretary confided to me that she found the atmosphere of the place conducive to her study of world religions. Christianity she thought a little frightening, with too much blood sacrifice about it. Although as yet uncommitted, she felt most in tune with Buddhism. Those powerful monastic influences which I believed I had sensed seemed to be turning her Anglicised Oriental mind towards contemplation of The Light of Asia. It is always the unexpected that fixes itself fast in human memory. Drythelm the monk who immersed himself fully clothed in the Tweed every day of the year, and John Haig who dared to defy the Church and survived its condemnation, have become legendary characters. Equally memorable to me were the transformation of the dark tower into a painter’s studio, and the tour of it shared with a gentle lady from India who would not hurt a fly.

Blast and Counterblast

BY JAMES HALLIDAY

Population, 4,050. Market-day, Tuesday. Early closing, Thursday. When it is added that the George Inn is in the High Street, that the church is a fine example of Perpendicular and that the castle is a mile distant from the town-centre, the intending visitor gets a good notion of what he is likely to find.

Happily for us, thousands of such cozy townlets are recorded in the guide-books; indeed in aggregate they represent the essential fibre of our realm. Students of the late P.G. Wodehouse will recognise specimens of the happy family in Market Snodsbury, Worcestershire (the Bull and Bush), Loose Chippings, Sussex (the Rose and Crown), and, most memorable of all, Market Blandings, Shropshire (the Emsworth Arms). The particular townlet now ‘under advisement’, as the Master might have said, is Winchcombe, in the County of Gloucester. Here the visitor, while refreshing himself at the George, finds it easy to let his mind slide back into the past. Having viewed the noble ‘wool’ church in the Perpendicular style, it may occur to him that this fifteenth-century edifice is one of the modern phenomena of the place. Winchcombe’s great period was six hundred years and more earlier. It was once the capital not only of a shire but of a kingdom. It was the seat of government of the kings of Mercia. Among its important institutions was the abbey founded by King Offa of Offa’s Dyke fame, and an earlier shrine of St Kenelm. Thus, in addition to the affluence that flowed from the flocks of sheep grazing far and wide over the uplands, Winchcombe enjoyed the very tangible benefits of being a place of pilgrimage.

It must have been a busy spot in those days and full of alarms and excursions, for the kings of the Saxon heptarchy were for ever at war, first between themselves and later against the Danes. The invaders gradually occupied half the country, and among the many things they burned was the abbey of Winchcombe. The town echoed then to the march of soldiers and the tramp of horses; gallopers dashed hither and thither on the pack-trails and droveways to Gloucester and Tewkesbury and Oxford and Stratford. Stirring events diminished, first with the decline of Mercia and the rise of Alfred the Great of Wessex, and finally with the decline of the Saxons as the rulers of England. Winchcombe was no longer the
Wherever they landed, whether in North or South America and on both the Atlantic and the Pacific sides, they found the natives smoking the weed, either powdered in pipes or rolled into vast cheroots shaped like blunderbusses. A voyager up the St Lawrence in 1535 describes the pipe technique and adds: 'We ourselves tried the same smoke and having put it into our mouths it seemed almost as hot as pepper.'

The plant here alluded to was *Nicotiana rustica*, the smaller and hardier of the two main varieties and the one most suitable for cultivation in the wetter and colder regions of the world. The other, *Nicotiana tabacum*, originated in South America, was later adopted in Virginia and is now the principal plant recognised as tobacco for smoking. It was *Nicotiana rustica* (the inferior variety) which was grown in England, a fact that had a bearing on the ultimate extinction of its cultivation here. It is said to have been first planted in this country in 1571—when, incidentally, Raleigh was only nineteen and still unknown in the world—and from the outset was connected with Winchcombe in Gloucestershire. Thomas Fuller, in his History of the Worthy of England (1662), says that 'tobacco was first planted in England about Winchcombe, and many got estates thereby notwithstanding the great care and cost in planting etc. etc.' There is, however, another attribution—that it was introduced by Sir John Hawkins in 1565 and first planted by Sir Francis Drake, who would hardly have come to Winchcombe for that purpose. However that may be, we know that by the end of Elizabeth's reign the cultivation of tobacco in England was common, and that Gloucestershire and in particular Winchcombe was the biggest producer.

Naturally, imported tobacco continued to arrive in increasing quantities, and no official notice was taken of that until 1590, when the government thought it worth while to impose a customs duty, initially of a penny a pound. This impost was greeted with indignation and opposition, and was at once evaded in a big way, with the incidental result that figures of the quantities actually brought in for the next century or so are not available. Another factor of uncertainty is superimposed on that, because until the successful founding of Virginia in the next reign—for Raleigh's attempts were not successful—the only sources of imported tobacco were Spanish; and since we were at war with Spain tobacco could only have reached us from abroad by illicit trading with the enemy, or as booty captured either in the West Indies or at sea. Cultivation of the plant at home remained on a small scale during Elizabeth's reign, but there was good reason for it to increase; and Winchcombe, along with other areas, was finding it very profitable.

With the accession of James the First the use of tobacco became an issue of public importance and controversy. That lightweight monarch, whose own tastes have been rank in the nostrils of men for centuries, 'compounded for the sins he was inclined to by damning those he had no mind to'. And the sin which above all worried him in other people was that of smoking. Much pamphleteering and argument went on about it at that time. From the first there had been propaganda in favour of tobacco on medical grounds, most of which seems nowadays untenable and bizarre. A Spanish doctor of Seville was a typical protagonist. His essay, 'Joyful Newses out of the New Founde World', included the following claims: 'It can be bound together and used to heal wounds; it reduces filthy wounds and sores to a perfect health. It is useful also for evil of the joints, cold swellings, toothache, chilblains and venomous wounds. It heals venomous carbuncles, bites of venomous beasts, wounds newly hurt, strokes and prickes and old sores.' For some reason he does not mention that tobacco might also be nice to smoke.

Such ideas were anathema to the king. In the year after his accession he entered the field of printed controversy with a brain-child of his own, the tract entitled A Counterblast to Tobacco. He soon made mincemeat of the medical arguments of the good Dr Monardes and others like him. 'No one remedy could suit all diseases, any
more than one shoee can wcl serve
all mens feete.' Further, although
in medicine everything should be
done in order and in due season,
this was not so with tobacco. 'At
times, all houeses, and of all per-
sons this Indian stranger was most
familiarly received.' So far as such
negative argument went he was on
reasonable ground; but when he
got over to the offensive he was
no more sensible than the doctor of
Seville. 'That no small part of our
nourishment is drawn away by this
Tabacco may manifestly appear by
those men who before the use
thereof were grosse and foggy, but
with this kind of practice they
become very lean and slender.' If
these contrasting illustrations of
'before' and 'after' are not really
convincing, still less are the asser-
tions that tobacco is a violent purge,
that it is 'the occasion of raw and
undigested humour in the body',
that it causes 'an unnatural melan-
choly, quite different from the sort
of melancholy praised by the philos-
ophers', and that it makes men
sterile. Its very smell was proof
enough of its poisonous nature.
At the present day the doctors
have gone over to the king with
new proofs of hitherto unsuspected
but even more lethal qualities in
the weed. But in these weaking
times the result is nothing more
dynamic than 'a government warn-
ing on every packet'. King James
could never have conceived such a
faint-hearted measure. In contrast
he went into action in truly au-
ocratic style, with royal decrees and
orders in council. In the end the
blasts of the churchwardens and
briars of the world were too much
for the king's counterblast. And
even in the short run his decrees
served only to make the supposed
evil worse than it had been before.
As a first step, orders were issued
to customs officers that all tobacco
brought into the realm must pay a
duty of no less than six shillings
and eightpence per pound in addi-
tion to the existing duty of twopence
per pound. The chief effect
was to give a terrific boost to
smuggling and bribery, and also to
tobacco-growing in England.

At about the same time a new
factor arose. The colonisation of
Virginia, after two failures, at last
made a small beginning near
Chesapeake Bay. After the usual
hardships, mistakes, and decad-
ation of the settlers, an experiment
was made of planting the South
American strain of tobacco. Soil
and climate were found to be ideal,
and the project caught on. The
chief contributor to that early suc-
cess was Sir John Rolfe, who dis-
covered ways of improving the
strain and the methods of curing
and packing. He is even better known
as the husband of Pocahontas,
daughter of the local chief. Before
receiving Sir John's honourable
attentions this pretty girl had as a
child run about the streets of
Jamestown and charmed the settlers
by turning cartwheels in the nude.
Rolfe took his bride home and pre-
sented her at court. Sadly enough,
she died soon after of smallpox,
but not before she had given her
husband a son and heir. Rolfe was
the first Virginian to ship a cargo
of tobacco to the home country. It
was a tiny quantity, about a ton,
but the idea had come to stay, and
the colony was soon growing little
else. The king urged the settlers
to devote all their land and
energy to this one deleterious crop.
They paid no attention, and James
was disgusted with them. But he
felt obliged to keep American
colonisation going, and to do that
he had to protect their trade, how-
ever objectionable.

From then on he developed a
split personality on the subject of
tobacco. With one part of his mind
he detested it, and thought its
cultivation to be a waste of good
land. With another part he
realised that if Virginia was to live,
its trade must be preserved. More-
over, in spite of all the smuggling
and bribery, he was beginning to
receive cash both from the customs
duty and from farming out his
self-granted monopoly of importa-
tion and distribution. However,
while he was forced to steer a
middle course between those two
concepts, they coincided on one
issue—the wickedness of growing
the plant in England. That horrid
practice damaged the Englishman's
health while abusing the surface of
his homeland, and at the same time
interfered with the livelihood of
Virginia. Storm clouds were gather-
ing over Winchcombe.

It was in 1619 that James
decided to launch his crusade
against home-grown tobacco. He
first covered himself by getting the
support of the College of Physi-
cians, a less independent body than
it is today, which had nasty things
to say about Nicotiana rustica: 'It
cannot but be very hurtful and
unwholesome, falling far short of
the perfection of other tobaccos
that are brought in from more
Southern parts.' The opinion was
passed on, as a very mild begin-
ning, to the Justices of the County
of Middlesex with an order to put
an end to the many small plantations
which had sprung up in the back-
yards and gardens of London and
Westminster. Soon afterwards a
more draconian proclamation was
issued which forbade the planting
of tobacco throughout England and
Wales. The fate of this procla-
mation set the pattern for the future.
It was ignored. The orders were
repeated in 1621, accompanied by
a nasty reprimand: 'His Majesty
was resolved not to endure such
insolence, but to let those offenders
know what it was to contemn his
princely pleasure.'

Meanwhile Winchcombe and
Hailes, a league or so distant, were
growing large quantities. For
example, John Stratford of Farmco
e, a hamlet on the upland above
Hailes Abbey, 'having the first year gained
well, was so greedy after more gain
thereby that he engaged his whole
estate for tobacco, of which he had
so much that it was valued to be
worth £20,000', Unluckily he
came unstuck over this venture—
presumably something went wrong
with the crop—and he had to sell up his property. Although the king’s ban was generally ignored, it was not devoid of all effect. One result was the emergence of a class of privileged and licensed informer-cum-bailiff. One Henry Somerscales, having been caught out himself, obtained a warrant giving him a roving commission throughout the land to search for and seize any home-grown or smuggled tobacco he could find. The owners were to give a bond to appear to answer for their contempt. Similar warrants were later directed in particular to Gloucestershire in favour of one William King. The local Justices of the Peace were commanded to help King, and forty places in the county were specifically mentioned as tobacco black-spots. It is not hard to imagine what a cozy business could be developed from the possession of those warrants. William King soon became the doyen of a prosperous fraternity. He was always complaining of affronts and resistance, thereby exhibiting his zeal to his employers; but he never failed to apply for the renewal of his powers. Fifty years later, by which time he was an old man and Surveyor of Customs at Bristol, he was still at it.

Charles the First disliked tobacco and the tobacco trade almost as much as his father had done, and faced the same situation, except that its features were becoming ever more strongly marked. The public demand for the stuff was insatiable both in England and abroad, and the world’s supplies were coming largely through England. The colony of Virginia depended on it entirely, and its legal shipments to England amounted to one hundred and fifty tons a year and were increasing. Simultaneously, cultivation in England was spreading steadily throughout the land to a sustained chorus of protest from Virginia and the Bermudas and the Virginia merchants at home. Charles had no option but to continue his father’s unavailing struggle against the English growers.

In 1627 a fresh proclamation went forth, conveying a Resolution of the Privy Council passed in His Majesty’s presence, to the old effect that henceforth no tobacco should be grown in England and Ireland and that it should be destroyed wherever found. Undeterred by obvious failure, the authorities issued a similar edict in 1631, and this time the Justices of the Peace of Gloucestershire came in for a special, dishonourable, mention. Using the language of an angry nanny the Privy Council told them: ‘We could not have believed that after so many commands by His Majesty and by his royal father of blessed memory any man would have presumed to have planted or maintained any English tobacco.’ But they had lately been informed that ‘in diverse parts of the kingdom, more particularly in that county of Gloucester, great quantities were still planted.’ The Justices were ordered to rally all the local officials, to go personally with such assurance as they needed to supervise the work of destruction, and to report the names of resisters and negligent officials to the Privy Council for punishment. William King was sent to take charge of operations. In his usual style he reported that he received many affronts in divers places, and that although some offenders were actually charged before the Star Chamber the planting still went on. ‘The offenders, having gathered their tobacco, daily bring it to London by secret ways and sell it for Virginia and Bermuda tobacco.’ It seems more than likely that the ineffectiveness of the Gloucestershire Justices arose in part from their own interest in growing tobacco.

In the year 1634, when yet another proclamation was issued, William King was still working away and feathering his nest in the neighbourhood of Cheltenham, Winchcombe and Tewkesbury. In those days Cheltenham was by far the smallest of the three places, a village of two hundred houses straggling for six furlongs along the Gloucester to Coventry road about five miles south of Winchcombe. The people of Winchcombe refused to let their crops be destroyed by William King or anyone else, and when the constables were ordered to take with them a more adequate force the farmers were joined by many others in the county in threatening to do battle with anyone who molested their crops. This resolute resistance seems to have worked for the time being, the Establishment contenting itself with a continuation of the series of proclamations, culminating in 1638 with particularly explicit orders to the Gloucestershire Justices, who by now were involved up to the neck with the offenders. ‘We do hereby in His Majesty’s name and by his express command strictly require you to proceed roundly and effectually according to the laws for the indicting and punishing of such.’ But hard words break no bones. A year later William King was again reporting the affronts, evasions and resistance of the people of Winchcombe, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury. For the dozen or so years that followed there was a moratorium for the tobacco-growers, the reason being that both King and Parliament had other far more important fish to fry. It was not until after the Battle of Worcester in 1651 that the Commonwealth government had leisure to restore its attention to the screams of indignation from Virginia. The in-fighting with Winchcombe and its neighbourhood then began again. The new régime saw that the long series of royal proclamations and orders in council had had no good result; so, in keeping with its own image, it fancied that an Act of Parliament might do better and proceeded to draft one. The preamble referred to the ‘divers great quantities of tobacco that have been of late years and now are planted in various
parts of this Nation, tending to the
decay of Husbandry and Tillage
and the prejudice and hindrance
of the English Plantations abroad'.
The operative clauses prohibited
the planting of tobacco from the
following 1st May on pain of a
fine of twenty shillings for every
pole or rod so planted. The
custumary approach to law
enforcement was reflected in the
 provision that half the fine would
be made over to the informer; and
lastly any person was authorised
to enter any tobacco plantation and
to 'grub up, destroy and utterly
consume all and every such
tobaccos'.

The first result of the enactment
was a flood of petitions asking ex-
emption for the crop then in the
ground. It is hardly necessary to
say that Winchcombe and Chel-
tenham were in the lead. Their
petition to 'ye Parliament' began
by describing their farmers as
'obedient and faithful subjects'.
This feat of fantasy would evoke
admiration had it not been care-
lessly contradicted in the next sen-
tence. For the petition went on
without apology to recite that the
petitioners had for many years past
'grown in ye fields ye weed called
tobacco', a proceeding that had
been prohibited over and over
again for thirty years. Cromwell
deemed it expedient to show sym-
pathy, and an amending Act was
passed to allow the planters 'to
enjoy the English tobacco planted
by them this year only, without
interruption'.
The Winchcombe growers were
so encouraged by this success that,
after the harvest, they at once
planted a larger crop than ever.
The antithetical response from
Virginia and Bristol once again
echoed in Westminster Hall and
once again the government replied
with fresh orders that all tobacco
then growing in England must be
destroyed immediately. The people
of Winchcombe were so outraged by
this unreasonable edict that they
raised a company of horse and foot
three hundred strong to resist any-
one, even the government's soldiers,
who might try to injure their crops.
Cessing for the nonce to be
obedient and faithful they sent a
defiant message to the Council;
they were bred to this trade, they
said, and 'if they lost it, they would
lose their lives'. Meanwhile, they
added, they were laying in stocks of
plants to replace any that might be
destroyed.

While the militant Winchcombe
was defiant, other areas in the
neighbourhood were once more try-
ing the soft-soap tactic that had
served so well before. They sent
petitions admitting that they had
naughtily planted tobacco again,
and praying for toleration for their
growing crops. In return for that
they promised they would never
plant in future without licence.
These people obviously knew what
they were about. In consideration
of their humble acknowledgment of
guilt and promise of amendment the
Protector again acceded to their
submission; and the planters were
allowed to harvest their tobacco.
Cromwell's lenience was not really
surprising. His government was far
from secure; and the gathering
together of hundreds of angry
farmers and labourers was not safe.
Royalist agents might too easily
turn their wrath into political chan-
nels. At that very time, indeed,
Charles in exile was receiving
letters to the effect that fourteen
hundred men were ready in Bristol
to march to assist the king if he
landed, and that the gates of
Gloucester would be thrown open
by royalists with the support of six
hundred tobacco-planters belonging
to the area.

As soon as the planters had
gained their point they forgot their
humble submission and promise of
amendment. They not only went
on planting, but kept themselves in
armed readiness to repel all comers.
It was too much even for Cromwell's
lenience. He decided to make one
definitive effort to subdue the
mutinous towns. In 1658 Cornet
Joyce was sent with a troop of
horse from Gloucester to destroy
the tobacco at Winchcombe and
Cheltenham. An eye-witness's
account of the scene says:
'Our hopeful proceedings are
cloaked, for this morning I got
together 36 horse and went to
Cheltenham early, and found an
armed multitude guarding the
tobacco field. We broke through
them and went into the town, but
found no peace officer, but a
rabble of men and women calling
for blood for the tobacco; so
that, had there been any action,
blood would have been split. The
soldiers stood firm, and with
cocked pistols bade the multitude
disperse; but they would not,
and 200 more came from Winch-
combe. Ten men could not in
four days destroy the good
tobacco about Cheltenham. The
cornet would not act, and some of
the county troops are dealers
and planters. I was forced to
retreat. The Justices of the
Peace rather hinder than help
us.'

Elsewhere it is recorded: 'The
County did rise on them—a
500 or 600—threatening to kill
them, horse and men, so that they
were constrained to depart.'

Cromwell's death and the collapse
of the Commonwealth saved Winch-
combe and Cheltenham from pun-
ishment for their mutinous conduct.
The Commonwealth's failure to
cope with them and the many other
offenders was caused partly by its
own insecurity, but more by the fact
that the demand for tobacco was so
strong that there was a consensus
of opinion against its destruction.
The habit was becoming universal.
Children were taught to smoke in
school and addicts would wake up
in the middle of the night to finish
a pipe. It was also taken in the
form of snuff, and chewed. The
last method of ingestion was par-
cularly common with sailors, who
were forbidden to smoke on board
ship because of the danger of fire.
The habit grew so strong among
them that they suffered severely if
deprived. The tobacco they chewed was usually in the shape of a hard, twisted rope, the thinner variety of which was called ‘pigtail’. The dependence of Jack Tar on tobacco is illustrated in an amusing letter written at Gravesend many years later by a sailor newly arrived in port.

‘Dear Brother Tom,

This leaves me safe anchored after a pleasant voyage. Dear Tom—hopes to find poor father stout, and am quite out of pigtail. Sights of pigtail at Gravesend, but unfortinately not fit for a dog to chew. Dear Tom, Captain’s boy will bring you this and put pigtail in his pocket when bought. Best in London at the Black Boy in 7 diles, where goacks for best pigtail—pound a pound will do, and am short of shirts. Dear Tom, as for shirs only took 2 whereof one is quite wore out and turther most, but don’t forget the pigtail, as I ain’t had a quid to chew never since Thursday. Be particular to go to 7 diles for the pigtail at the Black Boy, and Dear Tom, asks for pound best pigtail, and let it be good. Captain’s boy will put the pigtail in his pocket; he likes pigtail, so tie it up. Dear Tom, shall be up about Monday. Not so particular for the shir, as the present can be washed, but don’t forget the pigtail without fail, so am your loving brother,

Timothy Price.

P.S. Don’t forget the pigtail!’

Although Winchcombe and other tobacco villages had been willing to raise the flag of revolt on Charles the Second’s behalf, they did not find him at all compliant towards them after his restoration. It is hardly possible that he did not realise he was up against a hopeless task; on the other hand, the complaints from the colonies, the Virginia merchants and his own customs and excise officials were too loud to be ignored. His reign therefore became a period of chronic turbulence in the area concerned. The pattern of events is so regular as to be monotonous in the telling. Three more Acts of Parliament were passed in 1666, 1667 and 1671, purporting to stiffen the penalties and to strengthen the hands of sheriffs, justices and constables. The custom of paying informers a third or half of the fines was routine. The militia were regularly called out, often reinforced by the king’s troopers, to take part in the work of destruction. But it was impossible to discover and destroy more than a tiny fraction of the crop, and Winchcombe continued to spearhead the opposition to the law. The fact that cultivation was illegal means that there is unfortunately no record of its actual extent. One pointer is supplied by a pro-tobacco pamphleteer writing in 1674: ‘There are reputed to have been 6000 plantations in Gloucester, Devon, Somerset and Oxford.’ Whatever the size of these plantations, it is obvious that a few score of militiamen and troopers—even allowing the large assumption that they acted energetically and in good faith—could accomplish little in the way of finding them, and of destroying the crops that were growing in thousands of scattered enclosures all over the West Country.

Contained in the instructions to county officials, there is indeed sure evidence that disobedience tended to increase over the face of the land. In 1663 the officials of the counties of Oxford and Monmouth were added to those of Gloucester and Worcester in the schedule of recipients of the royal fulminations. Shortly afterwards Warwick, Hereford and Brecknock were added to the mailing list, to be followed by York, Essex, Flint and Shropshire. The 1666 bulletin from Westminster said: ‘His Majesty is wearyed with continual complaints and cannot but observe that his clemency is abused and the stubborn spirit of the non-conformists improved, in that they continue to dig up new grounds for planting this illegal crop.’ In truth His Majesty had long ceased to show any clemency, but he was right in observing that the stubborn spirit improved. It soon spread to Lincoln and Nottingham; and indeed the practice was growing far and wide all over England without everywhere attracting attention.

Throughout Charles’s reign Winchcombe continued to steal the headlines of the tobacco news. It got a special mention again in 1664, followed by a visit from the Sheriff of Gloucester and, when he met with violence, by a troop of horse of the Earl of Oxford’s regiment. In the next year the long-suffering Sheriff tried again, and was nearly killed. The town’s mutinous and violent behaviour was made the subject of an official inquiry, but nothing seems to have come of it.

In 1673 the Collector of Customs at Bristol was ordered to get busy at Winchcombe in the usual way, and once more a troop of the king’s horse was sent to help him. These visitations in strength presumably resulted in the destruction of a few fields of tobacco, but did not begin to accomplish anything decisive. Special commissioners visited the place on the same errand six times between 1677 and 1685.

It seems likely that tobacco-growing began to go out of fashion during the reign of James the Second and the early years of William the Third. But the proclamations went on. As late as 1689 an order in council recorded that: ‘In spite of several statutes imposing great and heavy penalties tobacco is still grown in the counties of Gloucester, Hereford, Worcester and Warwick, but more particularly at Cheltenham and other places in County Gloucester.’ This was repeated in 1690 and 1691, in which year the Oscar for rustic humour must go to Richard Teale, miller of Cheltenham. He demanded damages for the destruction of a small plot of tobacco by king’s officers, on the ground that he did not know it was illegal.
Blast and Counterblast

Tobacco-growing had ceased by the end of the century. Seventy-five years of prohibition may have contributed something to this result. Apart from the actual losses of crops destroyed, which were marginal, it had increased the cost of production by imposing the need to grease the palms of would-be informers and officials. But the main reason was more basic. The American colonies had grown enormously during the period; and their skill in cultivating and curing Nicotiana tabacum had grown likewise. After a difficult time in the middle years of the century the colonial growers had contrived both to glut the market and to win over the taste and preference of European consumers to the product now universally known as Virginia tobacco. When the terms of trade went against it the home cultivation of Nicotiana rustica was quickly abandoned. The true counterblast to tobacco did not come from James the First and his successors, but from the economic trends which govern us in all things.

There is virtually no trace left today of Winchcombe’s erstwhile notoriety. A field at the southern end of the town has been bequeathed the name ‘Tobacco Close’ to a modern housing estate, and a plot of land near Hailes Abbey was until lately known as ‘Tobacco Piece’. Those are the sole vestigia of the ancient borough’s years of turbulence and rebellion. For three centuries it has been as law-abiding and peaceful as any Loose Chippings and Market Blandings in the land. Nowadays its principal misdeemour is the parking of cars on the main road, and its principal trade the sale of antiques to visitors.

Plus ça Change . . .

We possessed, fifteen years ago, two line of battle ships, and several strong frigates in the Indian ocean, having their principal station at Bombay—a force amply sufficient to have secured our predominance in the Persian Gulf, and rendered certain the co-operation of Muscat, and all the powers on the shores of Persia and Arabia. We have sold off, or dismantled, the whole of this fleet, in order to make a show of reduced expenditure. (Sir Archibald Alison, *Maga*, December 1838.)

Make Way for a Naval Officer

BY LESLIE GARDINER

Mine was what you might call a petticoat promotion. An officer sent for me and gave me a slip of paper with an address written on it. “What do I do with this, sir?”—“Go there”—“What’s it for, sir?”—“Haven’t the foggiest.”

It was a plain room attached to the dockyard church. Forty-five women were singing a hymn and a forty-sixth played the harmonium.

“No more the foe can harm;
No more of leaguered camp,
And cry of night alarm,
And need of ready lamp;
And yet, how nearly had he failed—
How nearly had that foe prevailed!”

I added my voice to the tremulous “Ah... ah... men!” and then a commanding matron called me to the rostrum and introduced me to the congregation. Some would know, she said, that I had been shipmates with their husbands or sons and they would be anxious to learn, from the first survivor to reach home, how things had gone. I described the battle and the sequel. The commanding woman interrupted me from time to time with shrewd questions. She evidently knew something of naval matters. When I had finished she came forward again—clearly she believed in keeping the meeting on a tight rein—and said that ladies with a special interest in the ship’s company would no doubt like to ask questions, but to keep them short.

The chief bos’n’s mate? Yes, he was well when I last saw him. Coxswain? Fighting fit. Leading Signalman? In and out of hospital, I was sorry to say; there had been talk of repatriation. A plump woman, fortyish, heavily made up and wearing a hat with tall feathers, asked if I knew Ordinary Seaman Maurice Clanford. Yes, I knew—had known—him well. In fact, I had borrowed his fountain pen two minutes before action stations sounded... Yes, she said, they had received the telegram.

Mrs Clanford took me to one side and asked for more details. She began to weep. “But they do make mistakes, don’t they? Even you could be mistaken?” I felt I should tell her bluntly that I had seen what was left of Maurice Clanford going over the side, sewn up in a hammock. But her hat was not quite straight, and her make-up was messed about. Tears from a woman are the ultimate deterrent. I agreed; there had been cases of mistakes coming to light after