

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 Rhymer 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 armoury 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 cosy 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 hun-

dred 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

capital either of kingdom or county. Long before the Battle of Hastings the latter was merged into Gloucestershire.

Although Winchcombe was destined never to be so important again, it did once more, however, and for a full half-century, attain a strange notoriety. When Charles the Second, six hundred years after the Norman conquest, spoke of "that town of Winchcombe", he was in a bad temper; for 'that' town had defied the king's grandfather, his father, his father's supplanter, the Protector, and the king himself; and would continue to defy his brother James. It would be a good bet that no one not in the know could guess the subject of that defiance. It was tobacco.

It is part of the myth surrounding Sir Walter Raleigh that he introduced tobacco into England. It is possible that he made its use fashionable in society and at court, but it had been introduced and was actually being grown here long before his expeditions were sent to Virginia. All explorers from Columbus onward had noticed its use by the inhabitants of America.

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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 Worthies 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 Newes 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 prickles 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 shoe can wel 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 all times, all houres, and of all persons this Indian stranger was most familiarly received.' So far as such negative argument went he was on reasonable ground; but when he went 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 kinde of practice they become very lean and slender.' If these contrasting illustrations of 'before' and 'after' are not really convincing, still less are the assertions that tobacco is a violent purge, that it is 'the occasion of raw and undigested humours in the body', that it causes 'an unnatural melancholy, quite different from the sort of melancholy praised by the philosophers', 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 weakling times the result is nothing more dynamic than 'a government warning on every packet'. King James could never have conceived such a faint-hearted measure. In contrast he went into action in truly autocratic 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 addition 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 decimation 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 success was Sir John Rolfe, who discovered 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 presented 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 not 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, however 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. Moreover, 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 importation 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 gathering 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 Physicians, 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 beginning, 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 backyards 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 proclamation 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 insolency, 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 Farmcote, 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 cosy 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 assistance 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 straightly 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 customary 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 exemption for the crop then in the ground. It is hardly necessary to say that Winchcombe and Cheltenham 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 carelessly contradicted in the next sentence. 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 sympathy, 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 antiphonal 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 anyone, even the government's soldiers, who might try to injure their crops. Ceasing 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 trying 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 channels. 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 clouded, 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 spilt. The soldiers stood firm, and with cocked pistols bade the multitude disperse; but they would not, and 200 more came from Winchcombe. 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—about 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 Winchcombe and Cheltenham from punishment 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 particularly 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 endearing language in a 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 unfortinly not fit for a dog to chor. 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 go acks for best pigtail—pound a pound will do, and am short of shirts. Dear Tom, as for shirts only took 2 whereof one is quite wore out and tuther most, but don't forget the pigtail, as I ain't had a quid to chor never since Thursday. Be particular to go to 7 diles for the pigtail at the Black Boy, and Dear Tom, acks 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 shirt, 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 complaisant 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 areas concerned. The pattern of events is so regular as to be monotonous in the telling. Three more Acts of Parliament were passed in 1660, 1663 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 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 wearied 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

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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.

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 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 misdemeanour is the parking of cars on the main road, and its principal trade the sale of antiques to visitors.

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### *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 Mushat, 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