The George Borrow Society Newsletter
No. 2

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Introduction

George Borrow by John Thomas Borrow, oil on canvas, circa 1821–1824, NPG 1651 © National Portrait Gallery, London.

The above portrait of George Borrow was painted by his brother John, a pupil of the great artist John Chrome, and the picture was exhibited by John in the 1821 *Norwich Society of Artists* exhibition: George would be around 18. George talks of his brother

in *Lavengro*, and you can view the above portrait at the National Portrait Gallery's website.

We're gradually catching up the gap left between the last *Bulletin* and the first *Newsletter* and are pleased to include Simon's excellent talk from our Chester 2019 meeting in this newsletter. We hope to include the other talks in our next newsletter, and have realised that we've missed out the Shrewsbury 2018 talks, and so will attempt to publish them too. If you have anything you'd like to contribute to the next newsletter please let David Price (ccx074@pglaf.org) know: there's plenty of material for the newsletter but it's especially valued when it comes from our current members.

Lastly, we've made some changes to our website (georgeborrow.org) and on the main page now have news items, adding a few each month. Our newsletter will unfortunately lag the website by a few months, so it's worth looking at the website now and then.

Coming Up

Stay home and stay safe.

That said, here's a few things you can access on the Internet to while away the time.

a) All of Borrow's books published before 1923 and a great many more are available for free to download from Project Gutenberg (https://gutenberg.org) for your PC, Kindle, iPhone etc. If you're not keen on reading (shame on you!) you can also get free audio books from https://librivox.org, including the whole of *Wild Wales*, *The Welsh and their Literature*, extracts from *Lavengro* and *Romany Rye*, and quite a few of the poems (from the Thomas Wise pamphlets).

b) With our libraries and archives shut it's possible to access a great deal from home. E.g.

> https://archive.org and https://hathitrust.org contains hundreds of thousands of digitised old books: If you want to read Grellman's 1783 German work on the Gipsies, you can get it there.
>
> Various Universities offer recent books (mainly academic) in electronic format to their subscribers, and many local libraries also offer electronic books, although it's mainly restricted to fiction.
>
> There's free, limited access, to decades of scholarly papers (including ones on George Borrow) at https://www.jstor.org/
>
> Major reference sources such as the Dictionary of National Biography, the Times etc. are usually available via your local library's "eResources" and can be used from home.

Some libraries provide access to Ancestry, British newspaper archives etc. at home, at least while the lockdown is on. E.g. Leicestershire provide Ancestry, Kent provide Gale Newsvault etc.

Most electronic resources are available via the Internet for a subscription if you cannot otherwise get access. E.g. https://www.irishnewsarchive.com/ which contains digitised copies of Irish newspapers from 1738 to today.

c) Whilst there aren't many Borrow videos on the Internet, there is *La Asociación George Borrow* (with Ken Barratt, in Spanish); *In the footsteps of George Borrow* from SpainToday; *Sample Language Analysis of* 19th *C Non Fiction* (some English examination boards have *Wild Wales* as a set text), *Exposición: Tesoros de la Hispanic Society of America* etc. Did you know that George Borrow was responsible for the founding of that Society? Watch the video to find out how.

d) Google Street View, although awkward, can be used to "walk" around many places in the UK and the world. E.g. Clonmel in Ireland, Kirk Yetholm in the Scottish borders etc. Google the name of the place, click on Maps, and drag the little person shown and drop them on the map. See Google for better instructions!

e) If you haven't seen them before, there are various Internet sites about George Borrow. E.g. the greatly missed Peter Missler's *George Borrow Studies*, our Society's website (georgeborrow.org), *Borrow's Gypsies Blog* etc. Then there are numerous pages about Borrow (search for "george borrow" with the quotes.)

Peter Missler

Society member, Peter Missler, passed away on the 25th January. Peter had been a regular contributor to the George Borrow Bulletin, largely in relation to Borrow's time in the Iberian Peninsula. He also produced the thematic index to the First Series of the Bulletin.

Peter was born in 1959 in Amersfoort, in the Netherlands. He briefly studied Philosophy at the University of Utrecht before moving to Paris, where he worked as a bookseller, house-cleaner, electrician, hotel attendant and metro-busker. After 4 years, he returned to Holland to earn a degree in Egyptology from the University of Leiden. In 1993, he moved to Granada, Spain, and later to Santiago de Compostela. He leaves an 18 year old son, his wife Palmyra having passed away six years previously.

He wrote two books on Borrow. The first, *A Daring Game* (Durrant Publishing, Norfolk, 2009) is the story of Borrow's printing and distribution of the Scio New Testament between 1837 and 1839. It offers a wealth of information on Borrow's book-peddling expeditions, on contemporary Spanish printing practices and bookselling, on horse-travel and popular literacy, and on the profound spiritual controversy which surrounded the edition. It also covers interesting and detailed information on the expense accounts which Borrow sent to his employers, the British and Foreign Bible Society.

In the second, *The Treasure Hunter of Santiago* (Durrant Publishing, Norfolk, 2010), Peter tells the true story of Benedict Mol, one of the most remarkable characters in the *Bible in Spain*. Although Borrow changed many details, Peter's research proves that the Swiss vagrant did indeed exist, and went to Santiago de Compostela in August 1838, sponsored by the Spanish Minister of Finance, to dig for treasure hidden by Napoleon's French soldiers.

Two websites that Peter created with his friend Ronald Lamars, http://georgeborrowstudies.net/index.html and https://bible-in-spain-annotated.net, are still in existence, and I encourage readers of the Newsletter to have a look at them. The Society is currently looking at how we may preserve the information within these sites as a tribute to Peter.

Peter's last book, a novel with a message, *In Pursuit of the Perfect Muse,* can now be bought online via the publisher, Kabeljauws (ISBN number 978-90-77747-73-5).

Put together by Mark Mawtus, with the assistance of Colin Davies, Ronald Lamars and David Price.

Penrhos Arms
By Dylan Jones

Whilst working for the National Museum in Wales and later running my own historic tours company I've been fortunate to travel the length and breadth of Cymru. Countless times I've passed the Penrhos Arms in Cemmaes on my journey from south to north or vice versa but strangely enough never having the time to stop and have a quiet drink. Being interested in public houses I always knew of Borrow's visit to this establishment and having later read *Wild Wales* it made be more compelled than ever to visit, not only the Penrhos Arms, but indeed all watering houses associated with the great man!

Unexpectedly last May, me and another father and son, were able to visit whilst on the way up to Bala to watch the final of the Welsh Cup. Cemmaes was as good as place as any to stop for a Sunday roast prior to the match and thankfully not being the driver on this occasion was able to enjoy the real ales of the house – Cwrw Teifi Ale highly recommended!

Unlike Borrow we were the first to arrive on that Sunday and were warmly welcomed. Drinks and food were ordered at the bar and one could not but notice how lovely a fireplace they had. Not sure how much of the exterior and interior has changed since Borrow's day but the real ale on offer was lovely and it was rude not to have another for the road. We were taken to the lounge for the meal and by this time the pub had filled up with locals and travellers passing through like ourselves. It was a lovely meal but spoilt rather by two local middle aged men sitting on bar stools by the bar. Strangely enough all meals served during our time there were meticulously viewed and commented upon by these couple of gentlemen. I thought of George Borrow and wondered what he would have done – pretty sure he would have confronted them and have a damn good conversation with them? On leaving we said "hwyl fawr" to our new friends, who were rather quite taken aback

and surprised on discovering we spoke Welsh as well. I will definitely drop in again one day and have a good chat with the locals and hopefully take some more interior shots. The customary photos of the establishment were taken outside but unlike Borrow we were not followed and leered upon. I mentioned this tale to the driver on our onward journey who smiled and aptly said 'some things never change'.

For those interested, Cardiff Mets won the cup and progressed nicely into Europe. A smashing day all round!

Dylan Jones
Tours of Wales

Editor's note: Borrow visited the Penrhos Arms on Tuesday 31 October 1854: you can read of what happened in Wild Wales, Chapter 76.

George Borrow's Turkish Studies
By Simon Hopkins

Meeting of the George Borrow Society, Chester, 12th October 2019
In memoriam Ann Ridler

Introduction
George Borrow (1803–1881) dealt, in one way or another, with a very large number of languages. To some of these languages he returned repeatedly and never lost interest in them, e.g. Welsh and Romani, both of which he studied as a youth and loved until the end of his life. Another such language was Turkish.

It is not known exactly when GB began to take an interest in Turkish, but given his youthful passion for languages and the availability of materials for study, Turkish must surely have been in his sights at an early stage.

GB's early study of Turkish
The earliest known example of GB's signature appears on his copy of a bilingual Dutch-Hebrew Psalter and bears the date 1821. Above the signature appear two mottos, consisting respectively of three words in Greek and below them two words of Ottoman Turkish (in Arabic script). The Greek ἀντιλυτρον ἀντι πολλῶν is a conflation

of two New Testament passages and means “a ransom for many”; the Turkish چوقلروڭ فداسي = *çokların fedası* is its translation.

In 1821, the date of the signature, GB was aged 18 or 19. Although among oriental languages he had definitely begun Arabic and Hebrew already in his teens, we cannot be sure that he had also started to study Turkish at such an early date. He may well have done so, but there seems to be no concrete indication of the fact. The Turkish motto above his signature is inconclusive, for even supposing it to be in GB’s hand, it may have been added by him long after 1821. We cannot, therefore, be certain that GB’s Turkish studies had already begun while he was a teenager.

The earliest Borrovian reference to Turkish seems to occur in a letter to John Bowring of 21st May 1830, during the famous “veiled period”, when GB was 26. He was at the time interested in obtaining a military position in Greece in the service of the newly-established Greek monarchy. One of the reasons he gave for wanting such an appointment was that in Greece what he calls the “mines of Eastern Literature” would be open to him, adding that: “I should soon become an adept in Turkish”. We shall return to these “mines of Eastern Literature” shortly.

Bluebeard

In the early 1830s, at about the time of this letter, GB in fact devoted a good deal of energy to Turkish, i.e. Ottoman Turkish, the standard language of the Ottoman Empire. Turkish during Ottoman times was of course written in Arabic script, not in the in romanized Latin script of the modern language. During the period of these early Turkish studies, GB met Mary Clarke, the lady who was later (1840) to become Mrs Borrow. He had evidently told her of his interest in oriental languages and impressed her with his ability to write in Arabic letters, for on 22nd October 1832 he presented her with an example of his Turkish calligraphy, with a covering note:

> “Dear Madam, – According to promise I transmit you a piece of Oriental writing, namely the tale of Blue Beard, translated into Turkish by myself”.

GB liked to learn a language by trying his hand at translation, and one of his linguistic exercises at this time was this rendering of Bluebeard into Turkish, which he presented to his future wife as proof of his accomplishments. Several pages of his draft translation, in his handwritten Arabic, Ottoman script, survive.

Manchu

We should mention at this point GB’s study of Manchu, the Far Eastern language which was the reason for his mission to Russia in 1833–1835. GB was in the employ of the Bible Society in London, tasked with overseeing the translation of the scriptures into Manchu. This Manchu mission in Russia was an episode of decisive importance in GB’s biography and subsequent career.

Manchu is not “Turkish” in the normal meaning of that term, but the language does show Turkoid characteristics and is a member of the wider Turkic (Turanian) family.

GB himself had noticed some typological similarities between Manchu and Turkish. This is the reason that in addition to "Mandchou", he also calls the language "Manchu-Tartar" or "Chinese Tartar" and its speakers "Mandchou Tartars". Manchu is today often said to belong to the Tunguz division of Altaic, but we should note that the classification and affinities of the languages of Siberia and Eastern Asia are matters of great uncertainty. In GB's day very little was known about the languages in question and even less about the relations between them. Nevertheless, Manchu, if only indirectly, also belongs to our general Turkish topic.

GB's study of Manchu and the translation of the scriptures into that language are a rather large subject, which requires specialist treatment which I am unable to give. Here we can be brief. GB studied some Manchu before his arrival in Russia. He was required to do so by his employers, the Bible Society, who early in 1833 provided him with various books for study and may later have examined him in the language.

Unlike Turkish, with which GB dealt on and off over long periods, his occupation with Manchu lasted for less than three years: a few months of self-study in preparation for his particular task, followed by the two years he spent in Russia, where he carried it out. He himself has recorded how he studied, took lessons in, read, spoke and translated from and into Manchu, which he wrote in his own hand. Most of the relevant material is conveniently found together in GB's letters to the Bible Society written before and during his Russian mission, and has been treated in some detail by Ann Ridler, whose discussion provides a coherent account of the principal facts. After his return from Russia in 1835, GB seems not to have taken further interest in Manchu.

"The Tartar or broken Turkish of the Russian steppes"

In his aforementioned (n. 4) letter to Bowring of 1830, in which he had hoped to become "an adept in Turkish", GB had in mind the living encounter with Ottoman Turkish in the Balkans. At the time, parts of E. Europe were still in Turkish control.

Ottoman Turkish, however, was not the type of Turkish of which he was first to have person-to-person experience. During his stay in St Petersburg from 1833-1835, he came into contact with Turkish of a different type, what he calls "the Tartar or broken Turkish of the Russian steppes" or "the Russian-Tartar language". He means one (or several) of the Eastern Turkish, Turkic languages of Asiatic Russia. In St Petersburg of the time, GB tells us that there were "upwards of three thousand Tartars" and that from one of them in particular, his servant Mahomet Djaffier, he had acquired some conversational skills in the language. Since Mahomet Djaffier was a native of Bukhara, the language in question was in all likelihood Uzbek.

GB found this Turkic of Central Asia pleasing to the ear, and some years later, in 1841, he writes to John Hasfeld, his old polyglot Danish friend from St Petersburg days:

> "Did you ever attempt Turkish – that is the most graceful language in the world when spoken by a polite Turk …".

Since, as far as is known, GB had not yet come into living contact with Ottoman Turkish, the "polite Turk" referred to here may very well be Prince Abbas Khoulgi, a native speaker of Russian-Tartar, whom GB had known in St Petersburg and of whom he said (with typical hyperbole) that the Prince was "without one exception the most interesting man I have ever met".

When GB was recommending the study of Turkish to Hasfeld in the early 1840s, he himself had clearly been at it for quite a while. He writes, in a somewhat superior tone, to the same friend in 1842:

> "… ha, ha! by this time you have discovered that *Turkish is not Russian*, not a language to be picked up in two months, but one to which you must devote years, before you can read speak or understand it passably – The Turks are orientals, and do not *think* as we do: That is the secret".

The kind of Turkish intended here is not fully clear. On the one hand, the mention of ***speaking*** Turkish seems to refer to the colloquial "Russian-Tartar language" which GB had learned from his servant Mahomet Djaffier in St Petersburg. His correspondent Hasfeld still resided in St Petersburg and would have been exposed to this spoken Turkish of Asiatic Russia. On the other hand, the reference to ***reading*** Turkish and the long years of study required suggest a more bookish experience, such as GB's lengthy occupation with the written Ottoman language.

GB's East European tour (1844)

GB continued intermittently with Turkish during the 1830s. In 1837 he asked for a copy of "Davison's Turkish Grammar" to be sent from the library of the Bible Society to him in Spain – GB had sensed an affinity between Basque and Turkish (see below n. 67) and somehow imagined that the Turkish grammar book would help with editing the Basque St. Luke.

We have seen that already in 1830 GB had hoped to find employment in Greece and thus come into contact with living Ottoman Turkish. His opportunity to encounter that language in person, however, came only in 1844, when he visited E. Europe, travelling to Constantinople through various parts of the vassal states and Balkan possessions which still remained of the shrinking Ottoman Empire.

A particularly notable incident took place en route in Vienna. GB writes to Mary Borrow from Pesth in Hungary in 1844, saying that

> "Before I left Vienna Baron Hammer, the great Orientalist, called upon me; his wife was just dead, poor thing, which prevented him showing me all the civility which he would otherwise have done".

His host then took him to the Imperial Library, where both *The Zincali* and *The Bible in Spain* were held, and afterwards arranged access for GB to see the Habsburg Imperial treasure. He received very special treatment.

This telling of this episode is revealing of GB's character. He relates it in a private letter to his wife as if such generous hospitality were the most natural thing in the world: a great Viennese orientalist, a Baron, having heard of GB's arrival in town would of course wish to meet him, take him to the Imperial library to see his own books on the shelves and then show him some of the most exclusive sights of the capital. And were it not for the death of his host's wife, the civility shown to the guest would have been even greater. GB reports the meeting in a way so casually matter-of-fact that one gets the impression it just happened by itself.

But who was the person who just "called upon" GB in Vienna? He was no less than Joseph Freiherr von Hammer-Purgstall (1774–1856), a Knight of the realm, owner of a magnificent country mansion (Schloss Hainfeld) and famous not only throughout the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but also throughout Europe. He had for long been at the Austrian Embassy in Constantinople and was an important figure at the Imperial Court, where he served as interpreter and from which he had recently retired. He was a famous scholar of Turkish, Persian and Arabic and had produced an astonishing amount of work on the literature and civilisation of the Islamic world, including a gigantic history of the Ottoman Empire in 10 volumes = *Geschichte des osmanischen Reiches* (Pesth 1827–1835). Shortly after GB's visit, von Hammer-Purgstall founded (1847) the Austrian Oriental Society, a society of which he was the first president and which to this day bears his name.

Would such a man, a knighted Austrian nobleman, famous throughout the realm as a scholar and diplomat, an international celebrity who moved in the highest circles of Viennese society, really be interested, ***at his own initiative***, in meeting an unknown English visitor nearly 30 years younger than himself, who had produced virtually nothing in the way of oriental literature? Von Hammer had probably never heard of GB and would have had no reason of his own to be aware of his arrival in Vienna.

It is hardly credible that von Hammer would have initiated the meeting. What is highly credible, on the other hand, is that GB would have been very interested indeed in making the acquaintance of the celebrated Austrian. Von Hammer had produced a veritable flood of anthologies of oriental literature and German translations of Turkish and Persian poetry. These were in fact the direct inspiration for Goethe's *West-östlicher Divan* (1819).

I have not checked, but (in the wake of a highly plausible hunch expressed by Ann Ridler) I would be willing to bet that von Hammer's translations were a key factor in GB's oriental interests from the beginning. I think there are even a few clues to this effect in the aforementioned letter of 1830 to John Bowring.

There GB uses the term "***mines*** of Eastern Literature". From 1808-1818 von Hammer had published the first oriental journal in Europe. Its bilingual title was in German *Fundgruben des Orients* and in French *Mines de l'orient*, i.e. "Mines of the East". It is very tempting to think that GB was alluding precisely to the oriental "mines" of von Hammer's journal. He would certainly have been familiar with the publication in question. When studying Manchu in preparation for his Bible Society mission in

Russia, one of the books he used was the *Chrestomathie mandchou* (Paris 1828) of the great pioneer of the study of Central Asian and Far Eastern languages Julius (Heinrich) Klaproth (1783–1835). Klaproth was a well known figure in the orientalist circles in St Petersburg in which GB had moved. Klaproth also happened to be a frequent contributor to von Hammer's *Fundgruben des Orients* = *Mines de l'orient* "Mines of the East", a fact of which GB would certainly have been aware.

GB continues in the same letter:

> "I should soon become an adept in Turkish, and would weave and transmit to you such an anthology as would gladden your very heart."

GB's plan, in as far as it was clearly formed at all, was probably to produce a collection of translations of Turkish poetry. This is very much along the lines of von Hammer's anthologies of oriental literature and GB's own *Targum* (St Petersburg 1835). GB's *Targum* in fact included a few Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Tartar pieces.

It is very easy to imagine that GB would have been keen to meet the man who had been so influential in introducing oriental literature not only to Europe in general, but to GB in particular. The opportunity was now at hand, for GB was to pass through Vienna, von Hammer's home town, on his way to Turkey and Constantinople, where von Hammer had for years served at the Austrian Embassy. The motive for the meeting seems rather obvious. The initiative certainly came from GB, who would have arranged for a suitable letter of introduction to be written by some influential person of high standing, informing von Hammer of GB's interest in oriental subjects, his authorship of *The Zincali* and *The Bible in Spain* and his planned visit to Vienna. There can be no real doubt that GB had carefully prepared the ground for his meeting with von Hammer in advance.

Constantinople 1844

On his E. European trip of 1844, GB would hardly have been exposed to Turkish among the local populations in the Balkans, but opportunities to hear and speak the language would have been available among the ruling Turks, for the Ottomans still possessed some of the European territory through which GB passed on his way to and from Constantinople. It is not known whether he sought such contacts, but he does write to his wife Mary from Bucharest saying:

> "I have been chiefly occupied of late in rubbing up my Turkish a little, which I had almost forgotten; there was a time when I wrote it better than any other language. It is coming again rapidly, and I make no doubt that in a little time I should speak it almost as well as Spanish, for I understand the groundwork."

This "rubbing up" of his Turkish was in preparation for his imminent arrival in Constantinople.

This trip in 1844 was almost certainly GB's first (and only) visit to the Ottoman capital. Despite the odd hint that he had been there earlier, there is no verifiable

evidence that such was the case. What we do know is that he arrived in Constantinople at the end of August 1844 and spent three weeks there in August-September. Not much is known about his stay in the city. He seems to have enjoyed his visit and his dealings with the local inhabitants, for years later he exclaims:

> "Oh yes! I have been in Turkey, the people of which are not Christians, but frequently put Christians to shame by their good faith and honesty".

One supposes that, according to his wont, he would have sought contact with the local Gypsies and Jews. The details which his writings contain on these subjects, however, all precede 1844 and must have been derived from hearsay or the accounts of previous writers rather than from personal experience. Thus, in the Introduction to *The Zincali* of 1841 he talks about the Gypsies of Constantinople, and in *The Bible in Spain* published in 1842/1843 he is aware that the Jews of that city speak "the old ~ pure Spanish language", i.e. (Judaeo-)Spanish or Ladino. But from his own visit in 1844 he says nothing about these his favourite subjects. In contrast to his previous stay in a Muslim city, in Tangiers in 1839, which he described so brilliantly in *The Bible in Spain*, he never wrote an account of his visit to Constantinople, and apparently never intended to do so. All we have are a few letters and stray items of information.

One such stray item of information is Knapp's report that GB "was presented to the then reigning Sultan Abdûl Medjîd". This, to say the least, is highly unexpected. It is hard to see why either party would have had any reason to meet the other, and even harder to understand what possible access GB could have had to the royal presence. I very much doubt that any such meeting took place. Unless some hard evidence turns up, I suspect that the story may have arisen in oral tradition in and around the Borrow family in Norfolk.

A hint in this direction is found in the diary of Lucy Brightwell, a longstanding family friend of the Borrows and a particular admirer of George. She quotes GB as saying that on his E. European tour he "saw the most remarkable men", among them Victor Hugo and the Pope. Now he did not actually meet these people; he just "saw" them. Immediately afterwards the diary adds: "I saw the Grand Seignior", i.e. the Turkish Sultan.

In this short sentence, all that is reported is that GB "saw" the Sultan – and "saw" here means, I think, exactly what it says. He was probably referring to an imperial pageant, such as the ceremonial procession of the Sultan to midday Friday prayers at one of Constantinople's many magnificent mosques – possibly the Beyazit Mosque, which GB tells us he visited. This glittering weekly spectacle (*selamlık*) always drew large crowds of onlookers, eager to behold their ruler in the flesh and enjoy the elaborate accompanying entertainments. Any visitor to the Ottoman capital would have wished to behold such a scene. GB actually tells us that he was present at a public parade in the city (see below). It seems likely that by frequent telling and re-telling, GB's glimpse of the Grand Seignior had gradually been amplified into a personal audience with the Sultan of Turkey. Knapp had heard the story too, and records it as a fact in his biography. From there others have copied it.

Even supposing that this royal audience actually occurred, it does not follow that GB would have spoken Turkish, the question we are interested in here. The conversation would more plausibly have been conducted in French, which the Sultan knew well, or through an interpreter, of which the Ottoman court had many.

During his day to day activities in the Ottoman capital, GB would certainly have wanted to exercise his Turkish. We know he was busy shopping, for he reports in his only extant letter from Constantinople that he had bought for his step-daughter Henrietta a curious Armenian coin in one of the bazaars. He also bought a chest and a great many books. In these transactions GB would of course have tried out his Turkish.

Another occasion on which he spoke Turkish is mentioned in a rather unexpected place: a passage added to the 4th edition (1846) of *The Zincali.* Here he records a heated verbal exchange between himself and an armed Turkish janissary outside the shop of an Armenian in Constantinople, where both parties were waiting to behold the spectacle of a passing procession. The presence of the janissary makes it likely that this was a royal occasion, very probably of the kind we have mentioned. The janissary had taken exception to GB's staring glance, which he interpreted as the evil eye. The subject of the evil eye had been treated in *The Zincali*, and while preparing the new edition of that book GB inserted in the appropriate place this new passage, describing an evil-eye incident from his recent experience in Constantinople. What is interesting here is that the altercation was clearly conducted in Turkish (or is presented as having been conducted in Turkish). GB even quotes some of the Turkish words used, both by the janissary and by himself.

Later study of Turkish in the 1850s – *The Turkish Jester*

GB's visit to Constantinople took place in 1844. He was busy again with oriental subjects and Turkish in particular in the 1850s. An entry in his Manx notebook of 1855 mentions his current occupation with translating Turkish. At this time he was also in correspondence and exchanged visits with his friend Edward Fitzgerald. GB had a number of linguistic and oriental literary interests in common with the translator of Omar Khayyam's Persian *Rubāʕiyyāt*. GB had never lost his early interest in Persian, and Persian poetry is mentioned in their correspondence.

It was at this period that GB composed what was to be the most significant result of his Turkish studies, and indeed of his oriental studies in general. This was his English translation of a famous collection of Turkish anecdotes subsequently published as *The Turkish Jester; Or The Pleasanteries of Cogia Nasr Eddin Effendi*, Translated from the Turkish by George Borrow (Ipswich 1884). These amusing anecdotes are popular to this day throughout the Middle East, Central Asia and North Africa in Arabic, Persian, Kurdish, Turkish and many other languages. The stories are also known in parts of Europe adjoining the Islamic world, notably Sicily and the Balkans. During the work of translation GB will surely have put to good use the copy of J.W. Redhouse's *An English and Turkish Dictionary* which Fitzgerald had sent to him hot off the press in 1856.

Since the anecdotes of *Cogia Nasr Eddin Effendi* have for centuries traditionally provided basic practice material for the study of Turkish in Europe (a selection of them regularly appears in Turkish grammars and reading-books), it is very likely that GB's acquaintance with *The Turkish Jester* began a good while before his translation of it in the mid 1850s.

It has been suggested (but evidently without much conviction) that he had already started work on the translation on his return from Russia in 1835. As a more plausible speculation, we could suggest that he had acquired a copy of the book in Turkey in 1844. In the aforementioned (n. 48) letter to Mary Borrow describing his purchases in Constantinople he writes:

> "I have bought a chest, which I intend to send by sea, as I have picked up a great many books and other things, and I wish to travel light".

I would think it rather likely that a copy of the popular and readily available *Turkish Jester* was to be found in GB's chest of books.

Be that as it may, GB's work on *The Turkish Jester* coincided with the publication of *The Romany Rye* in 1857. There is a connection between the two. Following the *Advertisement* preceding the text of *The Romany Rye* there appears one of the anecdotes which were later published in *The Turkish Jester*. As an epigraph to *The Romany Rye*, GB chose an edifying little story which formed part of the Turkish translation on which he happened to be working at the time. The anecdote in one form or another is well known from at least New Testament times (Matthew 22:11) and exists in many cultures of the world. The gist of the story is "that it is worth makes the man and not embroidered clothing". The version published in *The Romany Rye* is slightly different from that in *The Turkish Jester*, in which it runs as follows:

> "One day Cogia Efendi went to a bridal festival. The master of the feast observing his old and wretched garments, paid him no consideration whatever. The Cogia saw that he had no chance of notice; so going out he hurried to his house, and putting on a splendid pelisse, returned to the place of the festival. No sooner did he enter the door than the master advanced to meet him, and saying, 'Welcome, Cogia Efendi,' with all imaginable honour and reverence placed him at the head of the table, and said, 'Please to eat, Lord Cogia.' Forthwith the Cogia taking hold of one of the furs of his pelisse, said, 'Welcome, my pelisse, please to eat, my lord.' The master looking at the Cogia with great surprise, said, 'What are you about?' Whereupon the Cogia replied, 'It is quite evident that all the honour paid is paid to my pelisse, so let it have some food too.'

Already in 1857 GB had announced publication of *The Turkish Jester*, but for some reason or other he never sent it to the printer. The complete autograph is still extant in the library of the Hispanic Society of America in New York. It appeared as a posthumous booklet (Ipswich 1884), published by William Webber, an Ipswich bookseller, who had acquired a large number of GB's papers after the author's death.

It would be interesting one day to have a closer look at the literary background and textual basis of GB's *Turkish Jester*. Meanwhile, all we have are a few general characterizations of its contents. GB's biographer Edward Thomas said that "It is a diverting book and illustrates Borrow's taste". What exactly that taste was he did not say. Edward Fitzgerald had been more specific. GB had read aloud to Fitzgerald one of his Turkish translations. This was not improbably *The Turkish Jester*. The recitation prompted Fitzgerald to say in 1857 in a letter to a third party:

> "He read me a long Translation he had made from the Turkish: which I could not admire, and his Taste becomes stranger than ever".

Conclusion

Having reached the posthumous *Turkish Jester*, it is time to sum up and conclude.

GB was interested, on and off, in Turkish for most of his life. He translated into and out of the language and also used Turkish words for some of his many etymological comparisons and wider linguistic speculations. *The Turkish Jester* was his only independent publication in the field of oriental studies. It was issued posthumously. During his lifetime GB himself published only a couple of his translations of Turkish poetry. These appeared in his early *Targum* anthology of 1835; other translations from Turkish exist in manuscript.

...

I end this outline of GB's Turkish activities on a sombre personal note. GB's Turkish writings form part of his wider interest in oriental literature. He also translated from Arabic and Persian and a fair amount of published and unpublished material exists. These fugitive pieces deserve a closer look. Ann Ridler and I had several times discussed collecting GB's occasional oriental works, trying to put some order into a confused mass of scattered bits and pieces and writing up our results for the *Lavengro Press*. Ann was the only person in the world who knew where the dismembered and dispersed material could be located and she had actually seen most of it with her own eyes. The idea of a joint venture arose again last year, shortly before Ann's death, when a new autograph of GB's Turkish translation of *Bluebeard* turned up in Kentucky. Alas, this plan to collect GB's oriental works will now never be realized.

In search of a summer-house,
By Keble Howard

Keble Howard wrote a column called *Motley Notes* in *The Sketch*. On 1st October 1924, he wrote the column below, which has a little bit of us all in it.

> I have found it. I have not seen it, I admit, and they tell me; the local worthies, that it is "not shown"; so I suppose, after coming two hundred miles in search of it, I shall have to go away without seeing it.

No matter. I know where it is. It is just over the hedge to my right.

Unfortunately for me, this is a very thick, very high hedge. I cannot see through it or over it. So I must content myself by looking at a photograph of the summer-house which I bought in the village, and knowing full well that the actual summer-house is just over the hedge.

It is private property. The house which originally "went with" the summer-house has been pulled down, more's the pity, but the summer-house itself, they say, is as good as ever. Well, after all, it is only forty-five years since the man died who made it famous, and forty-five years is not so very long. Some day or other, the summer-house will go as well. But, at the moment, it is just over the hedge.

Perhaps if I went to the new house, and sent in a card—a thing which I don't possess—and wiped my shoes on the mat, and bowed low, and made a long story about being a pilgrim to the shrine of a great man, they might show me the summer-house.

On the other hand, they might not, and there's the rub. It would be too awful to be turned away, like a tramp or a tripper. I have no intention of risking that.

And, after all, my surroundings are pleasant enough. He must often have gazed on these trees, and lanes, and the little green meadow, and the water that I can just discern over the saplings at the bottom of the meadow. Yes, it is just the spot he would have chosen. So quiet, so remote, so unostentatious. The very place in which to end his days, as he did end them, five-and-forty years ago.

And I have lunched just as he lunched a thousand and more times—bread, cheese, beer, and a pipe of tobacco to follow. The vault of heaven for a roof, and the wind from the west in my face as I sit here writing about the summer-house which is not shown.

Immediately in front of me is a narrow, unpretentious drive, with chestnut trees on either side. The drive gate stands open invitingly, and yet *verboten*. It is not anything very grand in the way of a gate—just a simple wooden gate, painted white. Some people would say, I suppose, that it wanted another coat of white paint, but I don't know about that. I like the gate as it is. I do not think he would have cared to have it too spick and span.

On the gate is painted the name of the house to which the drive leads.

And the name is "Lavengro."

Now you are on to it. Now you know why I came two hundred miles to see the summer-house which is not, so they say, shown. It was in this summer-house that George Borrow, of immortal memory, completed "The Bible in Spain." And it was in the small house, now pulled down, that he died in 1881.

The water I told you about which is just visible over the saplings at the bottom of the little green meadow is Oulton Broad. You can't get at the Broad except by boat, and I did not wish, as it happened, to hire a boat and pull about on the Broad. I wanted to see the summer-house.

"Lavengro." Here it is, as quiet, and still, and modest as you please. Just to the right of that gate there is a narrow lane, very green, very well shaded by trees that must have been standing in his day. I am quite certain that he often wandered down that lane, musing on the noise and folly and vanity of the outer world.

I bought a little guide-book in the village. Most of it, and quite rightly, is about the position and "accessibility" of Oulton Broad. It tells you the price of the railway fare to London, whether first or third class. The railway didn't bother George Borrow. He came by road. So, for that matter, did the pilgrim looking for a summer-house.

The guide-book tells me that the Coast Development Company's popular "Belle" line of steamers leave Fresh Wharf, London Bridge, daily in the summer months, and land their passengers at the fine Claremont Pier erected for this purpose.

I wonder if any of the passengers, after they have finished admiring the fine Claremont Pier, wander off in search of Borrow's summer-house? If they do, there can be no "Belle" steamer in to-day. No visitor from London has passed down this lane since I took up my position outside the gate of ''Lavengro." I have had it almost to myself.

Almost, but not quite. Two old men have passed by. The first had a white beard, and walked with his hands clasped behind him. He did not go down the drive that leads to "Lavengro," but took the little shady lane to the right. I did not speak to him. He was too serious and silent for that. Perhaps it was the spirit of George Borrow himself. The second was like unto him, but he carried on his shoulder an enormous iron bar. No Long Melford could have stood up to that iron bar for a tenth of a second. It was this old man who told me that the summer-house was not shown. I made no comment. It is not wise to get up an argument with a man armed like that.

The guide-book has exactly twenty-five lines about George Borrow. It says—

> "His small estate extended up to and partly beyond the church, and though Borrow himself is buried in Brompton Cemetery, yet his mother and step-daughter rest in this secluded spot. It is only in the summer-house beneath the firs, and in this secluded churchyard on the border of the marshes, that one now feels conscious of being, in a way, in touch with the restless wanderer who, when life had nothing more for him, crept into this quiet corner of Suffolk to die."

I go to seek the churchyard. Good-bye, invisible summer-house over the hedge.

* * * * *

Editor's query: does anyone have a postcard of Borrow's Summer House, as sold at Oulton to Keble Howard?

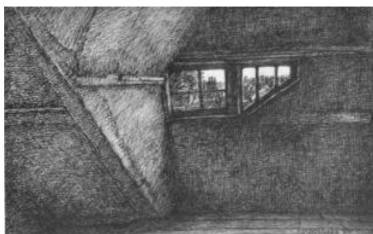
Picture Competition

Alas! there are no prizes, but here's a few images with connections to George Borrow, and an occasional clue: can you work out what they are and how they relate to Borrow?

On the left a *friend* but not a *pal*, who was to "come to me immediately; I am, I believe, dying." On the right, related to a *pal*.

The next chap is so easy, the clue is in the picture, but he's not painting the horse:

On the left: Borrow spent a lot of time there; on the right, we didn't spend much time there.

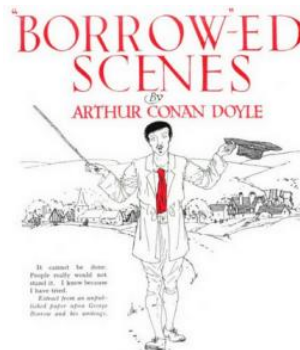


No way will anyone get the one on the left, even Google won't help that much, so there's a very easy one on the right:

Providing the editor can remember the details the answers will be on our Website (georgeborrow.org) in late June, early July. If you have any images you'd could provide for another competition in the next newsletter, let David Price know.

Borrow-ed Scenes
By Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

The following short story by Sir Arthur Conon Doyle has often been mentioned when we've gathered together, but perhaps not everyone has read it, so we'll let Sir Arthur have his say in our newsletter, and no doubt cheer a few folk up with it. It first appeared in the *Pall Mall Magazine* in September 1913, and the version below is taken from *Danger and Other Stories*. Doyle knew his Borrow well.



> "It cannot be done. People really would not stand it. I know because I have tried."— *Extract from an unpublished paper upon George Borrow and his writings*.

Yes, I tried and my experience may interest other people. You must imagine, then, that I am soaked in George Borrow, especially in his *Lavengro* and his *Romany Rye*, that I have modelled both my thoughts, my speech and my style very carefully upon those of the master, and that finally I set forth one summer day actually to lead the life of which I had read. Behold me, then, upon the country road which leads from the railway-station to the Sussex village of Swinehurst.

As I walked, I entertained myself by recollections of the founders of Sussex, of Cerdic that mighty sea-rover, and of Ella his son, said by the bard to be taller by the length of

a spear-head than the tallest of his fellows. I mentioned the matter twice to peasants whom I met upon the road. One, a tallish man with a freckled face, sidled past me and ran swiftly towards the station. The other, a smaller and older man, stood entranced while I recited to him that passage of the Saxon Chronicle which begins, “Then came Leija with longships forty-four, and the fyrd went out against him.” I was pointing out to him that the Chronicle had been written partly by the monks of Saint Albans and afterwards by those of Peterborough, but the fellow sprang suddenly over a gate and disappeared.

The village of Swinehurst is a straggling line of half-timbered houses of the early English pattern. One of these houses stood, as I observed, somewhat taller than the rest, and seeing by its appearance and by the sign which hung before it that it was the village inn, I approached it, for indeed I had not broken my fast since I had left London. A stoutish man, five foot eight perhaps in height, with black coat and trousers of a greyish shade, stood outside, and to him I talked in the fashion of the master.

“Why a rose and why a crown?” I asked as I pointed upwards.

He looked at me in a strange manner. The man’s whole appearance was strange. “Why not?” he answered, and shrank a little backwards.

“The sign of a king,” said I.

“Surely,” said he. “What else should we understand from a crown?”

“And which king?” I asked.

“You will excuse me,” said he, and tried to pass.

“Which king?” I repeated.

“How should I know?” he asked.

“You should know by the rose,” said I, “which is the symbol of that Tudor-ap-Tudor, who, coming from the mountains of Wales, yet seated his posterity upon the English throne. Tudor,” I continued, getting between the stranger and the door of the inn, through which he appeared to be desirous of passing, “was of the same blood as Owen Glendower, the famous chieftain, who is by no means to be confused with Owen Gwynedd, the father of Madoc of the Sea, of whom the bard made the famous cnylyn, which runs in the Welsh as follows:—”

I was about to repeat the famous stanza of Dafydd-ap-Gwilyn when the man, who had looked very fixedly and strangely at me as I spoke, pushed past me and entered the inn. “Truly,” said I aloud, “it is surely Swinehurst to which I have come, since the same means the grove of the hogs.” So saying I followed the fellow into the bar parlour, where I perceived him seated in a corner with a large chair in front of him.

Four persons of various degrees were drinking beer at a central table, whilst a small man of active build, in a black, shiny suit, which seemed to have seen much service, stood before the empty fireplace. Him I took to be the landlord, and I asked him what I should have for my dinner.

He smiled, and said that he could not tell.

“But surely, my friend,” said I, “you can tell me what is ready?”

“Even that I cannot do,” he answered; “but I doubt not that the landlord can inform us.” On this he rang the bell, and a fellow answered, to whom I put the same question.

“What would you have?” he asked.

I thought of the master, and I ordered a cold leg of pork to be washed down with tea and beer.

“Did you say tea *and* beer?” asked the landlord.

“I did.”

“For twenty-five years have I been in business,” said the landlord, “and never before have I been asked for tea and beer.”

“The gentleman is joking,” said the man with the shining coat.

“Or else—” said the elderly man in the corner.

“Or what, sir?” I asked.

“Nothing,” said he—“nothing.” There was something very strange in this man in the corner—him to whom I had spoken of Dafydd-ap-Gwilyn.

“Then you are joking,” said the landlord.

I asked him if he had read the works of my master, George Borrow. He said that he had not. I told him that in those five volumes he would not, from cover to cover, find one trace of any sort of a joke. He would also find that my master drank tea and beer together. Now it happens that about tea I have read nothing either in the sagas or in the bardic cnylynions, but, whilst the landlord had departed to prepare my meal, I recited to the company those Icelandic stanzas which praise the beer of Gunnar, the long-haired son of Harold the Bear. Then, lest the language should be unknown to some of them, I recited my own translation, ending with the line—

> If the beer be small, then let the mug be large.

I then asked the company whether they went to church or to chapel. The question surprised them, and especially the strange man in the corner, upon whom I now fixed my eye. I had read his secret, and as I looked at him he tried to shrink behind the clock-case.

"The church or the chapel?" I asked him.

"The church," he gasped.

"*Which* church?" I asked.

He shrank farther behind the clock. "I have never been so questioned," he cried.

I showed him that I knew his secret, "Rome was not built in a day," said I.

"He! He!" he cried. Then, as I turned away, he put his head from behind the clock-case and tapped his forehead with his forefinger. So also did the man with the shiny coat, who stood before the empty fireplace.

Having eaten the cold leg of pork—where is there a better dish, save only boiled mutton with capers?—and having drunk both the tea and the beer, I told the company that such a meal had been called "to box Harry" by the master, who had observed it to be in great favour with commercial gentlemen out of Liverpool. With this information and a stanza or two from Lopez de Vega I left the Inn of the Rose and Crown behind me, having first paid my reckoning. At the door the landlord asked me for my name and address.

"And why?" I asked.

"Lest there should be inquiry for you," said the landlord.

"But why should they inquire for me?"

"Ah, who knows?" said the landlord, musing. And so I left him at the door of the Inn of the Rose and Crown, whence came, I observed, a great tumult of laughter. "Assuredly," thought I, "Rome was not built in a day."

Having walked down the main street of Swinehurst, which, as I have observed, consists of half-timbered buildings in the ancient style, I came out upon the country road, and proceeded to look for those wayside adventures, which are, according to the master, as thick as blackberries for those who seek them upon an English highway. I had already received some boxing lessons before leaving London, so it seemed to me that if I should chance to meet some traveller whose size and age seemed such as to encourage the venture I would ask him to strip off his coat and settle any differences which we could find in the old English fashion. I waited, therefore, by a stile for any one who should chance to pass, and it was while I stood there that the screaming horror came upon me, even as it came upon the master in the dingle. I gripped the bar

of the stile, which was of good British oak. Oh, who can tell the terrors of the screaming horror! That was what I thought as I grasped the oaken bar of the stile. Was it the beer—or was it the tea? Or was it that the landlord was right and that other, the man with the black, shiny coat, he who had answered the sign of the strange man in the corner? But the master drank tea with beer. Yes, but the master also had the screaming horror. All this I thought as I grasped the bar of British oak, which was the top of the stile. For half an hour the horror was upon me. Then it passed, and I was left feeling very weak and still grasping the oaken bar.

I had not moved from the stile, where I had been seized by the screaming horror, when I heard the sound of steps behind me, and turning round I perceived that a pathway led across the field upon the farther side of the stile. A woman was coming towards me along this pathway, and it was evident to me that she was one of those gipsy Rias, of whom the master has said so much. Looking beyond her, I could see the smoke of a fire from a small dingle, which showed where her tribe were camping. The woman herself was of a moderate height, neither tall nor short, with a face which was much sunburned and freckled. I must confess that she was not beautiful, but I do not think that anyone, save the master, has found very beautiful women walking about upon the high-roads of England. Such as she was I must make the best of her, and well I knew how to address her, for many times had I admired the mixture of politeness and audacity which should be used in such a case. Therefore, when the woman had come to the stile, I held out my hand and helped her over.

"What says the Spanish poet Calderon?" said I. "I doubt not that you have read the couplet which has been thus Englished:

> Oh, maiden, may I humbly pray
> That I may help you on your way."

The woman blushed, but said nothing.

"Where," I asked, "are the Romany chals and the Romany chis?"

She turned her head away and was silent.

"Though I am a gorgio," said I, "I know something of the Romany lil," and to prove it I sang the stanza—

> Coliko, coliko saulo wer
> Apopli to the farming ker
> Will wel and mang him mullo,
> Will wel and mang his truppo.

The girl laughed, but said nothing. It appeared to me from her appearance that she might be one of those who make a living at telling fortunes or "dukkering," as the master calls it, at racecourses and other gatherings of the sort.

“Do you dukker?” I asked.

She slapped me on the arm. “Well, you *are* a pot of ginger!” said she.

I was pleased at the slap, for it put me in mind of the peerless Belle. “You can use Long Melford,” said I, an expression which, with the master, meant fighting.

“Get along with your sauce!” said she, and struck me again.

“You are a very fine young woman,” said I, “and remind me of Grunelda, the daughter of Hjalmar, who stole the golden bowl from the King of the Islands.”

She seemed annoyed at this. “You keep a civil tongue, young man,” said she.

“I meant no harm, Belle. I was but comparing you to one of whom the saga says her eyes were like the shine of sun upon icebergs.”

This seemed to please her, for she smiled. “My name ain’t Belle,” she said at last.

“What is your name?”

“Henrietta.”

“The name of a queen,” I said aloud.

“Go on,” said the girl.

“Of Charles’s queen,” said I, “of whom Waller the poet (for the English also have their poets, though in this respect far inferior to the Basques)—of whom, I say, Waller the poet said:

> That she was Queen was the Creator’s act,
> Belated man could but endorse the fact.”

“I say!” cried the girl. “How you do go on!”

“So now,” said I, “since I have shown you that you are a queen you will surely give me a choomer”—this being a kiss in Romany talk.

“I’ll give you one on the ear-hole,” she cried.

“Then I will wrestle with you,” said I. “If you should chance to put me down, I will do penance by teaching you the Armenian alphabet—the very word alphabet, as you will perceive, shows us that our letters came from Greece. If, on the other hand, I should chance to put you down, you will give me a choomer.”

I had got so far, and she was climbing the stile with some pretence of getting away from me, when there came a van along the road, belonging, as I discovered, to a baker in Swinehurst. The horse, which was of a brown colour, was such as is bred in the New Forest, being somewhat under fifteen hands and of a hairy, ill-kempt variety. As I know less than the master about horses, I will say no more of this horse, save to repeat that its colour was brown—nor indeed had the horse or the horse's colour anything to do with my narrative. I might add, however, that it could either be taken as a small horse or as a large pony, being somewhat tall for the one, but undersized for the other. I have now said enough about this horse, which has nothing to do with my story, and I will turn my attention to the driver.

This was a man with a broad, florid face and brown side-whiskers. He was of a stout build and had rounded shoulders, with a small mole of a reddish colour over his left eyebrow. His jacket was of velveteen, and he had large, iron-shod boots, which were perched upon the splashboard in front of him. He pulled up the van as he came up to the stile near which I was standing with the maiden who had come from the dingle, and in a civil fashion he asked me if I could oblige him with a light for his pipe. Then, as I drew a matchbox from my pocket, he threw his reins over the splashboard, and removing his large, iron-shod boots he descended on to the road. He was a burly man, but inclined to fat and scant of breath. It seemed to me that it was a chance for one of those wayside boxing adventures which were so common in the olden times. It was my intention that I should fight the man, and that the maiden from the dingle standing by me should tell me when to use my right or my left, as the case might be, picking me up also in case I should be so unfortunate as to be knocked down by the man with the iron-shod boots and the small mole of a reddish colour over his left eyebrow.

"Do you use Long Melford?" I asked.

He looked at me in some surprise, and said that any mixture was good enough for him.

"By Long Melford," said I, "I do not mean, as you seem to think, some form of tobacco, but I mean that art and science of boxing which was held in such high esteem by our ancestors, that some famous professors of it, such as the great Gully, have been elected to the highest offices of the State. There were men of the highest character amongst the bruisers of England, of whom I would particularly mention Tom of Hereford, better known as Tom Spring, though his father's name, as I have been given to understand, was Winter. This, however, has nothing to do with the matter in hand, which is that you must fight me."

The man with the florid face seemed very much surprised at my words, so that I cannot think that adventures of this sort were as common as I had been led by the master to expect.

"Fight!" said he. "What about?"

"It is a good old English custom," said I, "by which we may determine which is the better man."

“I’ve nothing against you,” said he.

“Nor I against you,” I answered. “So that we will fight for love, which was an expression much used in olden days. It is narrated by Harold Sygvynson that among the Danes it was usual to do so even with battle-axes, as is told in his second set of runes. Therefore you will take off your coat and fight.” As I spoke, I stripped off my own.

The man’s face was less florid than before. “I’m not going to fight,” said he.

“Indeed you are,” I answered, “and this young woman will doubtless do you the service to hold your coat.”

“You’re clean balmy,” said Henrietta.

“Besides,” said I, “if you will not fight me for love, perhaps you will fight me for this,” and I held out a sovereign. “Will you hold his coat?” I said to Henrietta.

“I’ll hold the thick ’un,” said she.

“No, you don’t,” said the man, and put the sovereign into the pocket of his trousers, which were of a corduroy material. “Now,” said he, “what am I to do to earn this?”

“Fight,” said I.

“How do you do it?” he asked.

“Put up your hands,” I answered.

He put them up as I had said, and stood there in a sheepish manner with no idea of anything further. It seemed to me that if I could make him angry he would do better, so I knocked off his hat, which was black and hard, of the kind which is called billy-cock.

“Heh, guv’nor!” he cried, “what are you up to?”

“That was to make you angry,” said I.

“Well, I am angry,” said he.

“Then here is your hat,” said I, “and afterwards we shall fight.”

I turned as I spoke to pick up his hat, which had rolled behind where I was standing. As I stooped to reach it, I received such a blow that I could neither rise erect nor yet sit down. This blow which I received as I stooped for his billy-cock hat was not from his fist, but from his iron-shod boot, the same which I had observed upon the splashboard. Being unable either to rise erect or yet to sit down, I leaned upon the oaken bar of the

stile and groaned loudly on account of the pain of the blow which I had received. Even the screaming horror had given me less pain than this blow from the iron-shod boot. When at last I was able to stand erect, I found that the florid-faced man had driven away with his cart, which could no longer be seen. The maiden from the dingle was standing at the other side of the stile, and a ragged man was running across the field from the direction of the fire.

“Why did you not warn me, Henrietta?” I asked.

“I hadn’t time,” said she. “Why were you such a chump as to turn your back on him like that?”

The ragged man had reached us, where I stood talking to Henrietta by the stile. I will not try to write his conversation as he said it, because I have observed that the master never condescends to dialect, but prefers by a word introduced here and there to show the fashion of a man’s speech. I will only say that the man from the dingle spoke as did the Anglo-Saxons, who were wont, as is clearly shown by the venerable Bede, to call their leaders ’Enjist and ’Orsa, two words which in their proper meaning signify a horse and a mare.

“What did he hit you for?” asked the man from the dingle. He was exceedingly ragged, with a powerful frame, a lean brown face, and an oaken cudgel in his hand. His voice was very hoarse and rough, as is the case with those who live in the open air. “The bloke hit you,” said he. “What did the bloke hit you for?”

“He asked him to,” said Henrietta.

“Asked him to—asked him what?”

“Why, he asked him to hit him. Gave him a thick ’un to do it.”

The ragged man seemed surprised. “See here, gov’nor,” said he. “If you’re collectin’, I could let you have one half-price.”

“He took me unawares,” said I.

“What else would the bloke do when you bashed his hat?” said the maiden from the dingle.

By this time I was able to straighten myself up by the aid of the oaken bar which formed the top of the stile. Having quoted a few lines of the Chinese poet Lo-tun-an to the effect that, however hard a knock might be, it might always conceivably be harder, I looked about for my coat, but could by no means find it.

“Henrietta,” I said, “what have you done with my coat?”

“Look here, gov’nor,” said the man from the dingle, “not so much Henrietta, if it’s the same to you. This woman’s my wife. Who are you to call her Henrietta?”

I assured the man from the dingle that I had meant no disrespect to his wife. “I had thought she was a mort,” said I; “but the ria of a Romany chal is always sacred to me.”

“Clean balmy,” said the woman.

“Some other day,” said I, “I may visit you in your camp in the dingle and read you the master’s book about the Romanys.”

“What’s Romanys?” asked the man.

Myself. Romanys are gipsies.

The Man. We ain’t gipsies.

Myself. What are you then?

The Man. We are hoppers.

Myself (to Henrietta). Then how did you understand all I have said to you about gipsies?

Henrietta. I didn’t.

I again asked for my coat, but it was clear now that before offering to fight the florid-faced man with the mole over his left eyebrow I must have hung my coat upon the splashboard of his van. I therefore recited a verse from Ferideddin-Atar, the Persian poet, which signifies that it is more important to preserve your skin than your clothes, and bidding farewell to the man from the dingle and his wife I returned into the old English village of Swinehurst, where I was able to buy a second-hand coat, which enabled me to make my way to the station, where I should start for London. I could not but remark with some surprise that I was followed to the station by many of the villagers, together with the man with the shiny coat, and that other, the strange man, he who had slunk behind the clock-case. From time to time I turned and approached them, hoping to fall into conversation with them; but as I did so they would break and hasten down the road. Only the village constable came on, and he walked by my side and listened while I told him the history of Hunyadi Janos and the events which occurred during the wars between that hero, known also as Corvinus or the crow-like, and Mahommed the second, he who captured Constantinople, better known as Byzantium, before the Christian epoch. Together with the constable I entered the station, and seating myself in a carriage I took paper from my pocket and I began to write upon the paper all that had occurred to me, in order that I might show that it was not easy in these days to follow the example of the master. As I wrote, I heard the constable talk to the station-master, a stout, middle-sized man with a red neck-tie, and tell him of my own adventures in the old English village of Swinehurst.

“He is a gentleman too,” said the constable, “and I doubt not that he lives in a big house in London town.”

“A very big house if every man had his rights,” said the station-master, and waving his hand he signalled that the train should proceed.

Borrow and the Reviewers

The *John Bull and Britannia* appears to have been an establishment supporting newspaper, published from 1820, which carried anonymous reviews of new books. In summer 1857 Borrow’s *Romany Rye* had just come out (in two volumes) and the newspaper of July 11th carried the review below, which includes some long quotes from Borrow, but as they are good ones they’ve been kept. The Borrows would have been preparing to spend July to November in Shrewsbury at the time.

We are not at all surprised at the popularity of Mr. Borrow’s works. There is an original freshness about them which peculiarly belongs to the writings of a man whose ideas, such as they are, are thoroughly and intensely his own. Moreover, the character which Mr. Borrow impresses very plainly on his works (for he is a considerable egotist) is something to amuse one, even if only from the quaint contrasts which it exhibits. A man with a singular propensity for herding with gipsies and such like vagrants, with an ardent appreciation for good ale, and a readiness to hit out straight from the shoulder whenever occasion may seem to require it,—is no very rare specimen of our British population. But the same man, combining with these qualities a conventional Calvinism of the regular Exeter Hall type, certainly presents a picturesque piquancy of contrast in which Sir Walter Scott would have delighted. Mr. Borrow is but a modernised Balfour of Burley.

“The Romany Rye” purports to be a sequel to “Lavengro, and it contains a great deal of rather dry disquisition in defence of that work against certain real or imaginary assailants. As we must plead guilty to never having read “Lavengro,” and were utterly unaware that it had excited so much censure as Mr. Borrow alleges, we have hitherto missed the benefit of that very useful purpose which the author tells us he had in view, namely that of “pointing out to his country people the nonsense which to the greater part of them is the breath of their nostrils:”—and are, moreover, completely in the dark as to the description of persons indicated by the phrase in which Mr. Borrow disposes of all his detractors as “the very people of whom the country has least reason to be proud:”—a distinction, we should have thought, to which a great variety of classes might aspire with a very good chance of success.

The present work is written in an autobiographical form, and professes, we suppose, to relate the adventures of an individual who had already detailed his antecedents in “Lavengro.” It is obvious that Mr. Borrow intends the narrative to embody his own intercourse with the gipsy tribes, and to convey to a great extent a picture of his own habits and views. Not, however, we presume, that Mr. Borrow is to be identified in all respects with his vagabond hero, as this latter is brought before us at the opening of the

book in rather an equivocal position, abiding at the bottom of a dingle under a tent with a certain Miss Isopel Berners, who appears to be tramping about the country on her own account, and is proprietress of a donkey which carries her wares. Whether the young lady was at all compromised among her vagrant associates by this little imprudence is not made known by the story, as Mr. Borrow's object is to represent his hero and himself also, as gifted with an almost preternatural degree of innocence and simplicity. These attributes would of course be fully appreciated by the keen-witted gipsy-folk, and we have no doubt that they took many an opportunity of making a butt of Mr. Borrow; as in the following scene, which has too much *vraitemblance* to be drawn from anything but actual experience:—

> At length, becoming tired and listless, I determined to return to the dingle, and resume the reading of the Bible at the place where I left off. "What better could I do," methought, "on a Sunday evening?" I was then near the wood which surrounded the dingle, but at that side which was farthest from the encampment, which stood near the entrance. Suddenly, on turning round the southern corner of the copse, which surrounded the dingle, I perceived Ursula seated under a thorn bush. I thought I never saw her look prettier than then, dressed as she was in her Sunday's best.
>
> "Good evening, Ursula," said I; "I little thought to have the pleasure of seeing you here."
>
> "Nor would you, brother," said Ursula, "had not Jasper told me that you had been talking about me, and wanted to speak to me under a hedge; so, hearing that, I watched your motions, and came here and sat down."
>
> "I was thinking of going to my quarters in the dingle, to read the Bible, Ursula, but . . ."
>
> "Oh, pray then, go to your quarters, brother, and read the Miduveleskoe lil; you can speak to me under a hedge some other time."
>
> "I think I will sit down with you, Ursula; for, after all, reading godly books in dingles at eve, is rather sombre work. Yes, I think I will sit down with you;" and I sat down by her side.
>
> "Well, brother, now you have sat down with me under the hedge, what have you to say to me?"
>
> "Why, I hardly know, Ursula."
>
> "Not know, brother; a pretty fellow you to ask young women to come and sit with you under hedges, and when they come, not know what to say to them."
>
> "Oh! ah! I remember; do you know, Ursula, that I take a great interest in you?"
>
> "Thank ye, brother! kind of you, at any rate."

* * * * *

“Brother, I have been with you near three hours beneath this hedge. I will go to my husband.”

“Does he know that you are here?”

“He does, brother.”

“And is he satisfied?”

“Satisfied! of course. Lor’, you gorgies! Brother, I go to my husband and my house.” And, thereupon, Ursula rose and departed.

After waiting a little time I also arose; it was now dark, and I thought I could do no better than betake myself to the dingle; at the entrance of it I found Mr. Petulengro. “Well, brother,” said he, “what kind of conversation have you and Ursula had beneath the hedge?”

“If you wished to hear what we were talking about, you should have come and sat down beside us; you knew where we were.”

“Well, brother, I did much the same, for I went and sat down behind you.”

“Behind the hedge, Jasper?”

“Behind the hedge, brother.”

“And heard all our conservation?”

“Every word, brother; and a rum conversation it was.”

“’Tis is an old saying, Jasper, that listeners never hear any good of themselves; perhaps you heard the epithet that Ursula bestowed upon you.”

“If, by epitaph, you mean that she called me a liar, I did, brother, and she was not much wrong, for I certainly do not stick always exactly to truth; you, however, have not much to complain of me.”

“You deceived me about Ursula, giving me to understand she was not married.”

“She was not married when I told you so, brother; that is, not to Sylvester; nor was I aware that she was going to marry him. I once thought you had a kind of regard for her, and I am sure she had as much for you as a Romany chi can have for a gorgio. I half expected to have heard you make love to her behind the hedge, but I begin to think you care for nothing in this world but old words and strange stories. Lor’ to take a young woman under a hedge, and talk to her as you did to Ursula; and yet you got everything out of her that you wanted, with your gammon about old Fulcher and Meridiana. You are a cunning one, brother.’’

> “There you are mistaken, Jasper. I am not cunning. If people think I am, it is because, being made up of art themselves, simplicity of character is a puzzle to them. Your women are certainly strange creatures, Jasper.”
>
> “Didn’t I say they were rum animals? Brother, we Romans shall always stick together as long as they stick fast to us.”
>
> “Do you think they always will, Jasper?”
>
> “Can’t say, brother; nothing lasts for ever. Romany chies are Romany chies still, though not exactly what they were sixty years ago. My wife, though a rum one, is not Mrs. Herne, brother. I think she is rather fond of Frenchmen and French discourse. I tell you what, brother, if ever gypsyism breaks up, it will be owing to our chies having been bitten by that mad puppy they calls gentility.”

Mr. Borrow’s long conversation with Ursula was chiefly confined to questions put on his part with the view of illustrating the moral and domestic habits of the gipsies, to which she replies in more or less of a bantering vein. But Mr. Borrow’s main curiosity in these interviews seems to have been on philological matters. He makes a great deal of what he seems to imagine is his own discovery, though a very slight acquaintance with gipsy lore might have informed him that the fact had been frequently observed upon, that the gipsy tongue has an obvious affinity with Hindoostannee. Most of these philological investigations are carried on by the aid of one Jasper Petulengro, a thorough gipsy, and by far the most amusing character in the book. Nothing can be better than Jasper’s mode of defending his people when some of the usual commonplaces about their outcast condition are called to his attention:—

> “We are not miserable, brother.”
>
> “Well, then, you ought to be, Jasper. Have you an inch of ground of your own? Are you of the least use? Are you not spoken ill of by everybody? What’s a gypsy?”
>
> “What’s the bird noising yonder, brother?’
>
> “The bird! Oh, that’s the cuckoo tolling; but what has the cuckoo to do with the matter?”
>
> “We’ll see, brother; what’s the cuckoo?”
>
> “What is it? you know as much about it as myself, Jasper.”
>
> “Isn’t it a kind of roguish, chaffing bird, brother?”
>
> “I believe it is, Jasper.”
>
> “Nobody knows whence it comes, brother?”
>
> “I believe not, Jasper.”

“Very poor, brother, not a nest of its own?”

“So they say, Jasper.”

“With every person’s bad word, brother?”

“Yea, Jasper, every person is mocking it.”

“Tolerably merry, brother?”

“Yes, tolerably merry, Jasper.”

“Of no use at all, brother?”

“None whatever, Jasper.”

“You would be glad to get rid of the cuckoos, brothers?”

“Why, not exactly, Jasper; the cuckoo is a pleasant, funny bird, and its presence and voice give a great charm to the green trees and fields; no, I can’t say I wish exactly to get rid of the cuckoo.”

“Well, brother, what’s a Romany chal?”

“You must answer that question yourself, Jasper.”

“A roguish, chaffing fellow, a’n’t he, brother?”

“Ay, ay, Jasper.”

“Of no use at all, brother?”

“Just so, Jasper, I see . . .”

“Something very much like a cuckoo, brother?”

“I see what you are after, Jasper.”

“You would like to get rid of us, wouldn’t you?”

“Why, no, not exactly.”

“We are no ornament to the green lanes in spring and summer time, are we, brother? and the voices of our chies, with their cukkerin and dukkerin, don’t help to make them pleasant?”

“I see what you are at, Jasper.”

“You would wish to turn the cuckoos into barn-door fowls, wouldn’t you?”

> "Can't say I should, Jasper, whatever some people might wish."
>
> "And the chals and chies into radical weavers and factory wenches, hey, brother?"
>
> "Can't say that I should, Jasper. You are certainly a picturesque people, and in many respects an ornament both to town and country; painting and lil writing too are under great obligations to you. What pretty pictures are made out of your campings and groupings, and what pretty books have been written in which gypsies, or at least creatures intended to represent gypsies, have been the principal figures. I think if we were without you we should begin to miss you."
>
> "Just as you would the cuckoos, if they were all converted into barn-door fowls. I tell you what, brother, frequently as I have sat under a hedge in spring or summer time, and heard the cuckoo, I have thought that we chals and cuckoos are alike in many respects, but especially in character. Everybody speaks ill of us both, and everybody is glad to see both of us again."

It would have added a great charm to Mr. Borrow's book if he could have caught from his friend Jasper something of that imaginative faculty which is so strongly exhibited in the analogy here drawn between the cuckoo and the gipsy. But Mr. Borrow it wholly wanting here. It us evidently no love of nature that induces him to herd with gipsies in Mumpers' Dingle. A primrose by the river's brim is no more to him than it was to Peter Bell. And by the way, talking of Peter Bell, he most gratuitously shows the want of any poetry about him by a depredatory and very silly attack upon Wordsworth; and in another place he makes the same unhappy exhibition of himself by a tirade against Scott. He will hardly recommend his writings, we would warn him, by playing Zoilus to these Homers.

* * * * *

Some notes in case you're wondering:

"*Calvinism of the regular Exeter Hall type*": Exeter Hall in London was used to hold large Protestant religious meetings, becoming synonymous with evangelical and activist Protestantism.

"*Balfour of Burley*": character in Walter Scott's *Old Mortality.*

"*. . . we must plead guilty to never having read* '*Lavengro*,'": the reviewer did very well considering he hadn't read the first part of the story.

"*He makes a great deal of what he seems to imagine is his own discovery*, *. . . that the gipsy tongue has an obvious affinity with Hindoostannee*": Heinrich Moritz Gottlieb Grellmann (1765–1804) had speculated this in his 1783 book, first published in English in 1807, although it would appear the English knowledge of such came from Borrow's own books, cf. *Zincali*, pub. 1841.

"*Peter Bell*": poem by Wordsworth published 1819. It contains the lines: "A primrose to the river's brim / A yellow primrose was to him, / And it was nothing more."

"*Zoilus*": Greek grammarian who attacked the Homeric poems.

Lavengro Press and Graham York Books

Many Borrvians will know Graham York, and his bookshop in Honiton, Devon. Graham not only specialises in George Borrow, the Gypsies, and Spain, but also stocks back issues of the *George Borrow Bulletin* and the booklets produced by *Lavengro Press*. The latter are fourteen booklets covering Borrow illustrators, papers by Angus Frazer and others, the Manx notebooks etc. None of them are particularly expensive and they are all very interesting.

Similarly if you are interested in a previous copy of the *George Borrow Bulletin* (index and list of contents on our website), Graham can supply them, although he's informed us he's run out of binders for them. Graham's website has his contact details and he'd be happy to help:

http://www.gyork.co.uk

It's always worth browsing second hand bookshops: you never know what might turn up. By way of illustration, whilst checking the above we came across:

- Sir John Carr's *Descriptive travels in the southern and eastern parts of Spain ... in the year 1809.*
- *The Bible in Spain*, first edition (1843), three volumes. More as in investment than a reading copy.
- Richard Ford's *An Historical Enquiry in the unchangeable character of a war in Spain*, 1837. That's a very rare book.
- George Borrow's signature removed from an 18th century Spanish book.

About our Contributors.

Keble Howard, or in real life, John Keble Bull, was born in Basingstoke on 8 June 1875 where his father, George, was vicar. Soon after George was appointed vicar of Henley-in-Arden, Warwickshire, and John's childhood was spent there. John studied at Oxford, but didn't attend his final year and failed he degree, becoming a journalist instead of a clergyman as was the original plan. As well as working for *The Sketch* and *The Daily Mail*, he wrote novels, and during the war, pamphlets. Although he joined the Royal Navy in 1915 he was invalided out four months later. He and his wife lived in Reigate, Hove and finally Bournemouth, where he died 29 March 1928, aged 52.

Simon Hopkins was born in Hemel Hempstead and grew up in Cambridge. He studied Semitic languages at the University of London. After some years as a research assistant at Cambridge University Library working on the mediaeval Hebrew and Arabic manuscripts of the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Collection, he taught Hebrew at the University of Cape Town. Since 1984 he has taught Arabic at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where he lives with his wife Yehudit and cat Hodge.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was born in Edinburgh, 1859, and developed his story-telling abilities at his senior school, Stonyhurst College, between 1870–5. It was during his student days studying medicine at Edinburgh University that Doyle began writing fiction (first published in *Blackwood's* in 1883), After a period of working in medicine his writing became immensely successful, his most popular character being Sherlock Holmes. He died at his home in Crowborough in 1930.