

Sir John Statham, of Wigwell.

BY JOHN SLEIGH, J.P.



FROM the sweepings of an old lawyer's office at Bake-well, I have rescued several letters in the handwriting of that worthy, though somewhat querulous and overweening old knight, Sir John Statham, which seem worthy of enshrinement in our Journal. The description of Wigwell itself, more especially, reads like an idyl, and in these troublous times makes one almost long to revert to an age when everything accommodated itself so charmingly to the comfort and delectation of mine host and his guests. I append a short explanatory pedigree; though in the Derby Free Library may be found a very elaborate genealogy of the family, drawn up by Sir John himself at the beginning of last century.

COM. DARB: VII^{MO}. DIE MENSIS JUNII ANNO REGNI REGIS
CAROLI ANGLLÆ, &C. DECIMO, ANNOQ' DOMINI 1634.

Receiued the day and yeere aboue sayd of George Poole of Spinckhill in the said County Esq^r the summe of Tenne pounds. And it is for one halfe yeere's Rent due to his Maiestie at the Feast of Pentecost comonly called Whitsunday last past, before the date hereof, according to a Composition formerly made with his Maiesties' Commissioners for compounding for Recusants Lands and goods, the same being for the Recusancie of him the sayd George Poole—I say receiued by the Right Honourable Thomas Lord Viscount Wentworth, Lo: President of His

Maiesties Right Honorable Councill established in the North parts : and Receiuer of such Rents, and other summes of money as are paiable to his Maiesty by the Recusants of the Northerne Counties.

d/- Ri : Elmehurste.

Adjutor meus Deus

Is Statham's Family Motto.

Wigwall, in Derbyshire, the 19th of March.

1757

Whilst the Devil, and Evil Spirits, have Power in the World, so long will Envy, Malice, Lies, & Detraction, continue. No Person in the County has suffer'd more by vile Calumnies, than Sir John Statham, who for many years has been the Mark, at which the Faction have shot their envenom'd Arrows, and bent their whole Efforts.

His neglecting, despising, & contemning them, gave them too much Encouragement, to continue their Reproaches. What Wrongs, Injustice, & Oppression, have they not charg'd him with ? And what Mortgages, Judgements, & other Securities, have they not loaded his Estates with. These Wrongs were Thirty Years ago exposed, & made evident by publick Advertisements, through the whole kingdom, which then crushed that villainous Attempt. After all these Years, The Faction have again revived their Calumnies, which compells Sir John for his own Reputation, & to comply with the Importunity of his Friends, thus publickly to Advertise.

' That if any Person can prove, that he hath done them any 'manner of Wrong, or Injustice, he promises to restore them ' Four-Fold. And if any Person whatsoever, have any just Debt, ' or Demand on him, he desires they'll apply to him for immediate Payment, & if delayed, desires not to have it conceal'd. ' But if after this Notice, those wicked Wretches, shall have the ' Impudence, to continue their *impudent* villainous Falshoods, ' he resolves to prosecute them with the utmost Severity. Or

‘ otherwise use them as such Miscreants deserve. And for the
 ‘ Publick Good, he heartily wishes, The Faction would do the like
 ‘ in their own Affairs.

J. STATHAM.

N. B. For the Comfort of the Envious, It happens, Sir John is so far from having incumbred Estates, that he can on any good Occasion, raise out of his Soughs, Mines, and Other Personality, and Effects, above Ten Thousand Pounds, without loading or incumbring, any of his Real Estates.

printed broadside.

(Sir Jno. Statham to Charles Stanhope Esq^{re} Elvaston.)

DEAR SIR,

It was uneasy to leave you, but night at hand, I almost overtook Sir N. I did not drive up to him, but went strait home. I begun to consider how to engage you to come hither. If I cu'd form a delicious place by poetical description I wu'd do it to intice you, but I'll give you a plain natural discription, & then you'l not be deceived, since youve seen into nature as far as any man. This was the cheif seate of the great Abbot of Darleigh; I stand in clear air in the region of Health, am not confined, for am above 7 miles in circumference, a Mann^r without one foot of any one's interfeiring. In that district is all the convenience of life, Wood, Coal, Corn of all sorts, Park Venison, a Warren for Rabbits, Fish, Fowl, in the utmost perfection, exempted from all Jurisdiction, no Bishops, Priests, Proct^{rs}, Apparato^{rs}, or any such last mentioned Vermine can breath here. Our way of life here is, Every one does that wh. is right in his own eyes, go to bed, sit up, rise early, lie late, all easy, only we are confined to meet at breakfast, and then order by agreem^t what's for dinner; the pastures are loaded with good Beif & Mutton, the dove-coats with pidgeons, the Mews with partridges, the Canals and Steues with excellent fish, & the

barne doores with the finest white, plump Phesant fowles, out of those you order your dayly entertainm^t. After this, if you're for shooting, Moor game, partridges, Wild Ducks, &c at the door ; if exercise, a good bowling green & many long walks ; if reading, a library ; if walking, a dry Park, with a delicious nut wood, full of singing birds, turtles & Guinea hens, a delicate Eccho, where musick sounds charmingly. In it are labarinths, statues, arbors, springs, grottos & mossy banks, in the middle a large clear fish Pond with a draw bridge & Close Arbor, in the Water a Cellar for choice liquor, & the whole stow'd full of nimphs kind & obliging without art or designe more than Love for Love. Theres about 30 families in the liberty, & in every house you may discern some good blood. If retirement be irksome, on notice to Wirksworth theres loose hands, Gentlemen, Clergyymen &c Ever ready at an hour & stay just as long as you'd have 'em and no longer & easy to be told so. This is really a genuine and true description of this place & way of life, if you'l come & try it & use it as your own, as the master is intirely yo^rs I do think you'd say as the first Duke of D. s^d, the 3 days he was yearly lost in Needwood forest, those were the only days wherein he tasted life. If rainy weather confines you, I have a library & the famous Chimist M^r Harris to amuse you with experiments & a Playwright author of some Comedies to divert you. And as I know you rather delight in giving life than taking it away your visit would give new life to D^r S^a yr most &c. J. S.

(*in dorso*) "To the Hon^{ble} Charles Stanhope Esq at his Seate at Elvaston."
(*Sine date.*)

July ye 8th 1723.

An Abstract of my Title to my Estate at Matlock & Tansley.

It's the small remaind^r of a very plentiful Estate w^{ch} the Stathams had in Derbyshire ; their ancient seat was at Morley, Com. Derb' & Barton com' Lanc' which last they lost by the

match wth an heiress to S Thomas Booth of Barton, now Earles of Warrington.* And the estate at Morley John Sacheverell acquired by marriage of Joan the Daughter & Heir of Henry brother of S^r Thomas Statham of Morley, and Sacheverell enjoys Morley and y^e Earles of Warrington Barton to this day. But diverse of the Collaterall branches of Statham's Family flourished in the neighbourhood and Match'd with some of the Best Familys in Derb' Lanc' Nott. : as y^e Curzon's, Cliftons &c. † Were owners of Horsley, Edlestall, Tansley & Matlock com' Derb' & diverse of them served for Sherriffs of the said Countys & were eminent in their generations, as S^r Rowland Statham & S^r Nicholas were Barons of y^e Exchequer,‡ and S^r John Statham an eminent Lawyer who wrote Statham's Abridgement of y^e Law, and was afterwards a Judge of y^e Comon Please (were my lineal Ancestors).§ He amonge other things in his Abridge^{mt} takes notice of his Miller of Matlock Mill who hearing y^e Preist at Mass say tolle, tolle, went home & tolled twice, which Mill my great grandfather sold to M^r Hodgkinson for 860^{li}

Another branch of the Family went into Cheshire where they lived in very great repute, till y^e Eldest branch haveing only one Daughter, S^r Thomas Booth y^e ancestor of y^e Earle of Warrington married her & had a great estate by her, & y^e whole Towne call'd Statham in Cheshire still enjoy'd by y^e Earl of Warrington ; there is a Constabery there call'd Statham's Constabery within which High Legh stands. The remainder of the estate which descend'd to my Father's great grandfather was only 360^{li} p' Ann' w^{ch} was kept till y^e Rebellion in K. Charles y^e 1st time,|| & then my Fathers' Grandfather raised a Troop of Horse for y^e King's service, was long a Prisoner in Nott : & Derby Goales for his

* V. Herald's Office, Earle of Warrington tombs; mon^{ts}, &c. at Morley, Horsley, &c.

† Naston's Book of Heraldry in possession of H. Bradshawe, of Marple, Esq.

‡ History of Exchequer; Fuller's Worthies; Statham's Abridg^{mt}.

§ V. Descent in Her: Office.

|| Vide Deeds, Evidences in my Father's possession hereafter named, but many were lost when plundered.

Loyalty, was frequently plundered & sequestred* & had a Brother his cornet killed in y^e King's service, by which means' having a numerous Family of Children & being driven from place to place by y^e Rebels being voted a notorious Delinquent & a reward offer'd to any that cu'd take him dead or alive & his goods & effects to be free booty, & his Sovoraigne being martyr'd & y^e Loyall party ruin'd, he was forc'd to compound with y^e Committee of y^e Rebels at Goldsmithshall for his Estate;† but just before y^e Restauration had sold & convey'd his seat & estate at Edlastall where my great Grandfather, and Grandfather were born, to Thomas Gladwin (who was then in possession und^r y^e sequestration,) for about 1000^{li}, altho' worth 3000^{li} and upwards. Shortly after God Almighty restored the Royall Family but my great Grandfather gained nothing, was only Provost Marshall of y^e County, (at that time of some command) by which he only kept more Company & incumbred^d the remaind^r of his Estate, & his eldest son John being a Captⁿ in y^e Army & very Expensive was kill'd before y^e walls of Mons and then my Grandfather was heir & my great Grandfather dying in 1679 (1619?) my Grandfather was forced to sell great part of his Estate at Matlock & Tansley ‡ to pay debts, the residue he settled on my Father on marriage 1700, which small remaind^r my Father hath given to me which I now enjoy but part of: it is intailed on heirs-males.

“I begg your indulgence to hear me a few minets, on acc^t of the great Value I have for you all, & that I may not leave the world with yo^r mean or ill opinion of me. Everyone desires to live in the thoughts of those he has an esteeme for; that is my only inducem^t. In the course of this Dispute, I apeale to the whole world, as to the false charges & contemptuous treatm^t I have rec^d, and that eaven from the hand of a friend w^{ch} wounds the deepest. A man wu'd think '41 was returned & levelling Principles had poss'ed the world, to corrupt gentlⁿ of great learning & worth. A mob has been brought to appear to countenance one

* Vide Sequestration Book for y^e Co. of Derby.

† V. Orders Inde.

‡ Vide Matlock C^t Rolls and Books.

of the Vilest of the people, a man for theft publicly whipt thro' a town; that has fled his Country for wicked practices; that has been of a night gang of thieves in London: a Deer Stealer of the Kings Deer & lately of my own; that has killed at least one man, & lain in waite to murder me & the Peace sworne ag^t him by Numbers; that whilst under security for his good behaviour, broke his own house on their not readily hearing him on his returne from his night adventures, & near murdering his son and serv^t. Nay eaven since the last Assizes on his comeing late home & his daught^r wearied with her journey & fast asleep, when he got in he drag'd her out of bed, beat her & kick'd her on the floor till she alarm'd the neighbourhood by crying out Murder, & on her getting into bed again, after some time, compelled his wife to pull her again out of Bed, & beat her & abuse her in a most barberous manner. Sure they must be persons of abandoned Charect^{rs} that can countenance such a man, & must be as bad, if they screene him or support him in his Villany, as many have done, who have industriously run from Alehouse to Alehouse round the whole Country to belie & vilify the P^t & bespatter him as a cruel, unjust man, as a proud vain-glorious man, fond of title, & of being called his hon^r without any proper claime to it; my Charect^r and circumstances run down without foundation, & all the contemptuous usuage that can be offered to any gentl^m. And am sorry to say it, eaven had its effect on a gentⁿ of great worth, to use unbecoming language, neither Justifiable by the Laws of God or man, & w^{ch} sort of Barr oratory has left a mark of Infamy on the memory of S^r Edward Cooke the Oracle of the Law, without considering as Solomon says, It's a fool casting about ffirebrands & death, & what cannot be restored to the Party his credit, & therefore cannot be repented of & no atonem^t for it in this world. Fable of Boys & ffrogs, I am put on a level with the Def^t the same snubs, & treatm^{ts}. Have told me, the Def^t was not bred to the Law, or as good a man, another said my proceedings were barbarous & scandalous, & that Gentlⁿ wou'd appear, wu'd trust the def^t more than they wu'd me, and much more in the most contemptuous manner, and this without the Check of the Referrees but rather

countenance, w^{ch} compells me to shew I ought not to be thus used, & that some greater respect ought to be shewed me, w^{ch} perhaps they were ignorant of.—As I am very near the end of my life being 70^{ty} I wu'd not have any remembrance in the knowledge of my acquaintance, mean & little, Nor to think I look upon it as a reproach to own I was bred to the Law, tho' the Profession is now sunk very low, or that I am fantastically fond of being called his hon^r or ever promoted it or desired it, & yet have an unquestionable right to it, but no wond^r since they ridiculed S^r N. C. claime to it, that they shu'd laugh at my pride & folly. In ord^r to set this affair in a true light, I am forced to be vain & an Egotist.

1. Then I am of as ancient family as most in England, & can show a descent from the Royal ffamily of the Stewards & all the Crown'd heads in Europe. Vide the Epitaph settled by Garter from the Records.

2. That my family have been K^{ts} of this County & Nottinghamshire United for many yeares appears by the acc^{ts} of the Members on Records, & by diverse Wills and Evidences I can produce.

3. That 3 of them have been Judges appears by the printed Records.

4. That one of them, S^r John Statham wrote the Abridgem^t of the Law, usefull to all thoro Lawyers, w^{ch} might merrit some indulgence to his descend^t the p^{lf} for any m^{re} of inadvertency—Vide the original manuscript.

The Temple of Hon^r was so situated that you must go to it thoro' the Temple of Vertue, if the P^{te} has gained it any other way, it's rather a disgrace, and I beg therefore you'l hear a small historical part. From leaving Oxford and my entry in Grayes-inn in 1692, I continued there till I returned home, & from thence for a yeare under no Article or Ind^{re} but verbally to M^r Turner, & so renewed and continued for several yeares—where no man was a better Lawyer nor more capable to instruct; thence with Entring Clerk. I then returned home, 1696, & had contracted an intimate friendship with Vice-Chamberlain Coke, L^d Bullingbroke, L^d Lansdown, L^d Buckley &c, w^{ch} ever continued to the last; by w^{ch} meanes I neither was called to the Barr, nor admitted

or practiced as an attorney. I name this because it's comonly given out as if I look'd upon it as a disgrace, whereas the greatest of the Lords have had that Education, but it happened thus, my Father had many great suites under his managem^t at his death, of which I was to take care & conduct to their desired period, (which I did by Mr. Bradbury an attorney,) & then to meddle with no new ones, but apply to the direction of these Lords, w^{ch} I did, & was brought into Parliam^t & was so countenanced by them as to have them consulting at my lodgings dayly, where I have had some of the Judges and some that are now Lords come to Visit me &c.

1. Then I was admitted & sworne of the Queen's Privy Chamber, w^{ch} gives the title of hon^{ble} & preceeds the Judges. Then I was appointed Envoy to the Court of Turin & knighted & that Ambassad^r with me in the Country.

2. Then the good Queen died and I fear unfairly, for a Messeng^r comeing for me I never left the Royal Corps. Was one of the 10 Envoys that supported the Canopy, with the 8 Dukes bearers. Tho' my Ambassy was then over, yet it was a 2^d claim to the title.

3. Is as a Knight, w^{ch} is a Degree of hon^{or} of the inferior Nobility, and ever had the title.

4. As I have after one life the contingent claime to a Peerage, & the Estate. In these licencious times when everyone claimes & enjoys titles they have no right to, if I had exerted my right, (which I did not,) no one c'ud blame me.

The sons of Dukes wu'd be angry if you wu'd call 'em only 'Squires, & not Lords, & the Barr^{rs} at Law, & Sheriffs after their Shreivalties, or Justices of Peace out of Common, still are called 'Squires, tho' really are not so, nor any but a Knight's eldest son & his eldest son for ever.

I have been more particuler in this, for have had serv^{ts} that have lived with gen^l officers & eaven recruiting Officers they give that title to, tho' I have forbid it, yet I have been despised for it by ignorant, envious & clownish people.

5. The last title to it is by being Surveyo^r Gen by Patent for

life, with precedences of all & the same Degree, & to enjoy all hon^{rs} &c (vide the Patent).

The Monum^{ts} in Morley Church & those of Statham in Cheshire, where sir Tho. Statham, sir Rowland Statham & many others, as by the inscriptions ly buried. Others at Barton where the Earl of Warrington lives, & had that Estate by a Match with a dau^r of Statham ; as Sacheverel had Morley. Vide Deeds, Pedegrees &c.

I was farr from denieing being bred to the Law out of pride or contempt, but the Case was this, after my father's death, I had some warme bills in Equity ag^t me, for some writeings & charged as put into my hands, as an Attorney ; and by that thought to influence a Co^{tt} who seldom have that regard for an Attorney as they ought, nor the Council that subsist by 'em. I answered I had not nor ever saw such Deeds, nor ever was an Attorney &c ; & on that ac^{ct} thro' the course of my life, truly disowned it, tho' often urged in the suites for Charity schools at Tideswell, &c. In ord^r to bring an odium on the managem^t as if an Attorney cu'd not be an honest man.

It has likewise been sworne by some ungrateful people, that it's said few persons have dealt with me, but I have ruined them or given 'em Cause to complain, but this is so cautiously worded that no Information can be brought. It's pittty the Co^{tt} of Hon^r was not yet subsisting. I must therefore with S^t Paul be forced to boast :—

1. Whilst I had power I exerted it for the good of my Country & put in above forty officers into the Excize, Customes &c

2. Augmented 2 poor liveings.

3. Built a Spire on Tideswell Church.

4. Gave & erected them an Organ there.

5. At my own expence preserved the School there, & gave 7£ p' Ann' land for ever to it. And 300^{li} Costs of suites I forgave, & 10^{gs} towards building School.

6. At my own expence got the Augmentation to Sheen, Fenny Stratford.

7. To All S^{ts} in Derby 20^{gs}, As my Ancest^r S^r Tho: Statham built & endowed the Chappel on St. Mary's bridge—See the Deed.

8. Assisted & gave 10^{es} to Augmentⁿ Tideswell Vicaridge.

Have enriched & raised many familys, as Milns, Baker, Nall, ffoxlow &c, and never ruined any one. At Wirks' Shows &c Batty's & Hanson. P.G.

My expectatⁿ from S^r P. Gell destroy'd by attachm^t to M^r Leek &c

Master of the King's Game (as S^r John Arundel,) of High Peak & Wirks', for my life from 1700, all the Town obnoxious, yet never took any person up except S^r P. G. serv^t Stow (q : Storer?) & except M^r Eyre of H. & M^r Wilmot, and no sort of Qualification intitles them to kill the King's Game."

(in dorso: "Duffield, 24 Aug^t 1745. To Referrees & Com^{rs}")

L. S.

These are to certify that I have sworn & admitted John Statham Esq into the place & quality of one of the Gentlemen of Her Majesty's most hon^{ble} Privy Chamber in ordinary. To have hold exercise & enjoy the said Place together with all Rights profits privileges & advantages thereunto belonging in as full & ample manner as any Gentleman of y^e Privy Chamber to Her Majesty now holds or of right ought to hold & enjoy y^e same. Given under my hand & seal this 24th day of May, 1714, in the 13th year of her Majesty's reign.

J. COKE.

(Original given to D' Ewes Coke, Esq : 4 Jan^y, 1833.)