

XI.—THE MURDER OF WILLIAM DELAVAL IN
NORTHUMBERLAND IN 1618.

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In the accounts of the constables of Manchester, under the date of 23rd July, 1618, there occurs an entry of tenpence paid for making of precepts for hue and cry after one Richard Cowpman, who had committed a grievous murder on one Mr. Delaval in Northumberland. A number of depositions taken in connexion with the murder are to be found in a manuscript book at Ford castle, entitled, *A Book of the Examynatyons touchinge Mr. William Delavale's death*, and tell the following story.

William Delaval is entered in Dugdale's *Visitation of Northumberland, 1666*, as younger son of Joshua Delaval of Rivergreen, in the parish of Bolam, a cadet of the great house of Seaton Delaval. He was betrothed to a widow, Anne Ridley, who lived at Westwood house, near Hexham. The ownership of Westwood was disputed by Mr. Robert Thirlwall, who claimed it in right of his wife, and determined to make his claim good by force. Together with his wife, his two servants, Richard Cowpman and John Pott of Blackhall, a boy named Matthew Liteskeill of Blackhall, John Robson of Hexham, who victualled for Mistress Thirlwall, Cuthbert Hymers the piper, Thomas Dickson, and William Leachman, he made his way to Westwood at five o'clock on the morning of May 15th, 1618. The band entered the house, and required three women who were there to go forth, which one of them refused to do, so they put her out and shut the door. This done, John Robson returned to Hexham and sent his servant, John Robinson, with a supply of food and drink to those that kept the house.

At the same time Mr. Thirlwall sent his servant, Pott, to John Ridley of Baggraw. Pott got to Baggraw about six. He found Ridley in bed, and told him that his master was at Westwood and desired to speak with him. Ridley rose and went and met Thirlwall at the hill before Westwood. Thirlwall told him that he had quietly got possession of Westwood and asked if he would take part with him. Ridley replied that he had not got it quietly, and he would have no hand in the business. After entering the house, they returned to Hexham, where Ridley parted from Thirlwall in the street near the door of Richard Carr, the bailiff. Meeting George Errington, Ridley went with him into the house of Edward Crooser, where they drank together; and presently Thirlwall came in and joined in their conviviality. Ridley's part in the proceedings is not very plain. He was asked if he had not brought keys for the doors of Westwood, but denied the charge.

Meanwhile news of the outrage had spread. Sir John Delaval of Dissington, Mr. Thomas Middleton, and Archdeacon Cradock came to Westwood to restore possession to widow Ridley. They sequestered the house, committing it to the charge of Thomas Todd of Hexham, chapman, and a butcher named James Oliver. After the justices had departed, Cowpman and Robinson and Pott came out from their hiding places with drawn swords in their hands, and departed, remarking to the two men in charge of the house that they were glad they had escaped the justices. Mr. Thirlwall, the piper Hymers, and Thomas Dickson were not so fortunate, being committed as prisoners to the castle of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. A warrant also went out for John Robson's arrest, but he kept out of harm's way for the next two weeks, as did Richard Cowpman.

Cowpman is described as of middle stature, thick-set, broad-shouldered, of a reddish complexion, having a thick brown beard and a big voice. He was a man whose company all

right-minded people avoided, being of a turbulent and malicious disposition, reputed to be of rude behaviour, 'a drunken, base, and bad fellow.' A year previously he had been met with in the house of Mr. Richard Gibson, the Hexham postmaster, with a sword in his hand. When asked why he wore a sword, he had replied that he feared there was a warrant for him from the Delavals, and that he would not willingly be taken. Ten days after the affair at Westwood, at a quarter past eight in the evening of 25th May, his half-brother, Robert Wynne of Nether Warden, overtook him, while going down the lonning towards Hexham green, walking on foot, in a brown cloak with a sword under it. Wynne felt some surprise, seeing that his half-brother had nothing to do to revenge his quarrel with Mr. Gibson the postmaster, since that had been submitted to the mediation of John Heron of Birtley and Robert Fenwick of Hexham. So he asked him, 'Brother, where are you going thus late?' Cowpman replied, 'What is that to you? Go, hang thyself!' What occurred close to that place within the hour may best be told in widow Ridley's words:

May 26th, 1618. Deposition of Anne Ridley of Westwood, widow. The said Anne Riddley sayeth upon her oath that yesterdaye, beinge the xxvth of Maye, 1618, she was rydinge toward Westwood one horseback behynd Mr. William Delavale, and in there compenye Mr. Edward Delavale, Joseph Ward, and Thomas Hebourne, servant to the said William Delavale. And as they came to Hexham grean about nyne of the clock in the eveninge, there Edward Delavale gott a fall, wheruppon the said Joseph Ward and Thomas Hebourne went back to helpe him, and the said William Delavale rydd one with this examynat behynd him. And as soone as they came to the allors at the weste end of Hexham greane, there came south to the allor bushes there a man of middle stature, thick shouldred, brownishe bearded, bigg faced, apperelled with a sadd-cullered cloak under which he carried a drawn sword; which man presently steept before the said William Delavale in the high waye, who asked who he was. The man aunswered: 'Thou art noe justice of peace to examyne me; and although thou knowe not me, I knowe the,' and presently strook at the said William Delavale with his sword, who instantly fell of horsback therewith, and then gave the said William Delavale ane other stroke one the hynder parte of his head, and said to him: 'Thou art

Delavale, and I have vowed thy death,' and then went his wayes into the allorr bushies: whom this examynat purseweinge, he said unto her: 'Goe thy waye or els I will thrust my sworde in the.' And theruppon she lost sight of him, and the said William Delavale presently dyed of the said strokes.

John Robson, still anxious to avoid arrest for the Westwood affair, had been sitting quietly in his house all day. Mr. Aynsley, the preacher of Hexham, Robert Wade, Mr. William Shafto of Ingoe, and others had come in at various times to see him, and now he was alone with James Yeldart of Hexham, who was to pay him some money, when shouts came to the town, and in the streets he heard them cry that Mr. Delaval was slain.

All this time Mr. Thirlwall had lain a prisoner in the castle of Newcastle. He was not without company. There were in gaol at that time, Dayrell Anderson (one of Mr. Francis Anderson's sons), Mr. James Clavering, Dolly Baker (one Robert Dent, shoemaker's man), and John Wad, a fuller in Newcastle. On the morning after the murder there came to the gaoler's door, the Hexham carrier, Thomas Wilkinson, and with him a little boy, Richard Wood of Hexham, who had been sent to buy cattle from Mr. James Clavering for his father, Robert Wood. They had started from Hexham at four in the morning, and reached Newcastle about nine. On coming to town they made their way to the castle to find Mr. Welton in order to give him a message from his youngest son that the ston'd horse had broken its tether and could not be found. They stood at the gaoler's door and called in to Mr. Thirlwall through the windows, asking him whether he wanted anything from home. Mr. Thirlwall looked out and asked them what news. They said there was heavy news. The gentleman that should have married the widow of the Westwood was slain. Mr. Thirlwall said that he was very sorry, and asked who the doer of it was. The boy answered that the constables reported it was one Cowpman. Then Mr. Thirlwall asked the carrier to come in

and drink with him, which he fain would do; so he brought him inside. The carrier wished to pay for the beer, but Mr. Thirlwall would not let him. Efforts were made afterwards to show that some secret communication had passed between them, and that Thirlwall was the real instigator of the murder; but this could not be proved.

That same day some under-officers of Richard Carnaby of Hexham came to John Ridley's house at Baggraw, with a warrant for his arrest on suspicion of killing William Delaval. Ridley was at Coastley that night with Mr. Henry Widdrington, and, returning home late, went at once to bed. He did not hear of the issue of the warrant until the following day, and then went that afternoon to Hexham to give himself up; but Mr. Ralph Delaval of Seaton Delaval and Sir John Delaval of Dissington, who had been down at Hexham the previous day taking depositions, had already left the town. On the Sunday following, while he was out walking in the fields, Richard Carr, the Hexham bailiff, came to Baggraw, and told Ridley's wife that her husband had best repair to the Delavals. That day he stayed at home with his brother Nicholas Ridley, and on Monday went to Richard Greene's house at Morpeth, intending to proceed to the house of his uncle, George Ridley, at Ellington, and entreat him to accompany him to Sir Ralph Delaval; but before he could carry this plan into execution, he found himself arrested.

Search for Cowpman proved unavailing. It was generally supposed that he had fled. His half-brother, Robert Wynne, was credited with having assisted him to escape, and was said to have ridden home on the morning after the murder on a horse of a different colour from that on which he had gone out. The Ford castle manuscript ends with the account of Wynne's arrest on June 10th. Six weeks later the constables were raising hue and cry after Cowpman in Manchester.