

## A Description of Nottinghamshire in the Seventeenth Century.

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Communicated by  
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**I**N 1694 there was published in London a book that has now become rare under the following quaint title: "Northern Memoirs, Calculated for the Meridian of Scotland. Wherein most or all of the Cities, Citadels, Sea-ports, Castles, Forts, Fortresses, Rivers and Rivulets are compendiously described. Together with choice Collections of Various Discoveries, Remarkable Observations, Theological Notions, Political Axioms, National Intrigues, Polemick Inferences, Contemplations, Speculations, and several curious and industrious Inspections, lineally drawn from Antiquaries, and other noted and intelligible Persons of Honour and Eminency. To which is added *The Contemplative and Practical Angler*. By way of Dialogue. With a narrative of that dextrous and mysterious Art experimented in *England*, and perfected in more remote and solitary Parts of Scotland. By way of Dialogue. Writ in the Year 1658, but not till now made publick, By Richard Franck, Philanthropus. *Plures necat Gula quam Gladius*. London, Printed for the Author. To be sold by *Henry Mortclock* at the *Phenix*, in St. Paul's Church-yard. 1694."

The work is as curious and eccentric as the title, being written in an affected and pedantic style. The author's confession that his fancy was too flatulent and his strain too turgid to do justice to the beauties of

Nottingham, may be extended with justice to the entire work. He was born in Cambridge, and served in the Parliamentary army. He is addressed in a poem prefixed to the volume as Captain Franck, and is, no doubt, the Cornet Franckes who was arrested with Colonel Hutchinson and others and detained at Newark on suspicion of being concerned in a plot in 1663.<sup>1</sup> He seems to have resided at Nottingham<sup>2</sup> for some time, but was living in London at the date of the publication of his book. Prior to this he had been to America, and had resided in Scotland, in which country he travelled widely. His book was, in consequence of its value for Scotch topography and its interest for anglers, republished in 1821 with an introduction by Sir Walter Scott. A notice of the author will be found in the twentieth volume of the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

The course pursued by the author commences in Scotland, and comes southwards through York and Doncaster to Nottinghamshire. The portion dealing with our county begins at p. 225, corresponding to p. 267 of Scott's reprint. In the dialogue Arnoldus is obviously Franck himself. The curious punctuation of the original is here reproduced in the following extracts.

“*Th[eophilus]*. Whereabouts are we now ?

*Ar[noldus]*. On the skirts of *Doncaster*, so called from the river *Dun*, portable<sup>3</sup> sometimes to the Verge of the Town ; at other times hardly Water enough to turn a Mill, or float a Cock-boat. It's a Corporation, and

(1) Brown, *History of Newark*, ii., p. 141.

(2) One of the four dedications prefixed to the book by him is “to the Gentlemen Piscatorians Inhabiting in or near the sweet Situations of *Nottingham*, North of *Trent*.” Of the *Trent*, “upon whose delightful Banks I formerly used to spend some solitary Hours,” he states it gave him his education as a fisherman, the rudiments of which he acquired on the *Cam*.

(3) Meaning “navigable,” capable of carrying, not of being carried.

a Manufacture; if weaving and knitting Stockings, and Wastcoats will warrant it: Now you must know that this Town stands in the Post-road, where a Man may be welcome that brings Money; otherwise he may step by the Borders of Bawtry, and consult the melancholy Streams of *Idle*, whose Banks are burdned with Segs' and Bulrushes. But these glittering Streams over which we now pass, flow from the Sharps of merry *Merial*.<sup>2</sup>

*Th.* Why then we touch on the Skirts of the Forest.

*Ar.* We have pass'd through the Heart on't; for now we discover the weather-beaten Walls, and the ruinous Battlements of the Town of *Newark*, whose flourishing Fields are bath'd with the slippery Streams of silver *Trent*, that glides along through the fragrant Fields, to wash the Foundation of her florid Meadows; so tumbles down, but with a soft and murmuring Noise, from her more remote and Westerly Fountains. Thus *Trent* slides along through diversified Mixtures, and various Soils, (besides polite<sup>3</sup> and glittering Sands) amalgamiz'd with marly Oakry<sup>4</sup> Earths, Alabaster Rocks, red and discoloured Clays, and polish'd Pavements of transparent stones. So that from the West, with a strong and swift Current, *Trent* drinks up the torpid surly *Sow* that floats near the Walls of the Town of *Stafford*. And then the timorous *Tame* falls in, that glides below the Town of *Tanworth*: the silent *Dove* also, that melts the smiling Banks of *Tidbury*,<sup>5</sup> mingles her streams with *Trent* below *Monk's* Bridg. And the resolute *Darwin*<sup>6</sup> that salutes the Ports<sup>7</sup> of *Derby*, falls into *Trent* below *Wilden-Ferry*. So the sullen *Soar* that leads

(1) Sedges.           (2) Merrills Bridge, West Drayton.

(3) Polished (Latin *politus*.)           (4) Of the nature of ochre.

(5) Tutbury, co. Stafford.

(6) The Derwent.

(7) Gates.

through *Leicester*, glides into *Trent* near to *Red Hill*. Besides, the little *Leen*, whose limpid Streams wash the beautiful Rocks and the Shores of *Nottingham*, she also pays Tribute at *Trent-Bridge*, and the smooth fac'd *Snite* that scours the Vale of *Belvoir*, slides into *Trent* near the sandy Foundations of *Newark*. But nearer the Marshes falls in the *Merial*; so does the *Idle* in the Isle of *Axholm*. The portable streams of *Owse* also salute the Torrents of *Trent*, before her espousals with the spacious *Humber*; for till then *Trent* retains her Original Name, notwithstanding the various and complicated mixture of Streams, which are many more than glide into *Trent*, and would swell my Volume if but to name them.

*Th.* If they be nameless, let them alone; and proceed if you please with the Corporation of *Newark*.

*Ar.* *Newark*, you may see her Antient Ports stoop with Age, and her Bulwarks lie buried in sandy Earth, and amalgamiz'd together with the surface of the Soil, whose banks are saluted with the Torrents of *Trent*, and whose sandy Foundations, and cultivated Fields sweetned with the Fragrances of her Florid Meadows, adorn the North; but most pleasant and delectable Pastures adorn the East, whilst her Southern Fields are fill'd with the Treasures of Corn; besides the Fertility of the Flourishing Vale of *Belvoir* supplies her Granaries; as her Western fragrant Meadows reach up to *Nottingham*—So that upon the matter this Town of *Newark* (but not *Noahs-Ark*)<sup>1</sup> is besieged with Plenty.

In the Center of this Town is an exact Pavement, Quadrangular, Regular, Uniform and Spacious; and in the Center of this Center stands a Market-House, piazza'd or bolstred up with Wooden Props, commoded<sup>2</sup>

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(1) A play upon the *-ark* of *Newark*.

(2) Provided with.

with a Roof of Lead and Tile ; but the general scope of this fair Pavement requires a more exact method of Pen than mine is, to describe it. For that end I proceed to some other particulars, as their Gates ; because when to consider that this Town of *Newark* (to my Observation) has but one fair Street, which is called by the Name of *Todman-Street* ; but the Gates are *Miln-gate, Middle-gate, Kirk-gate, Castle-gate, Nor-gate, Appleton-gate, Barnby-gate, Bolderton-gate* and *Carter-gate*. There is also *Beamont-Cross, Potter-Dike, Hell-end,* and *Cotes-Bridg*.

From the South-West end of this Maiden Garrison, stood the Queen's Sconce, facing the *Trent*, but the King's Sconce (or Sconce Royal) was to the Eastward. So that the whole Town seemed almost Invincible, (as it was Defensible) because so well defended with Men, Arms, Ammunition and Artillery, besides such deep Grafs,<sup>1</sup> Bastions, Horns, Half-Moons, Counter-scarps, Redoubts, Pit-falls, and an impregnable Line of Sadd<sup>2</sup> and Turff, palizadoed and stockaded, and every Fort so furnished with great Guns and Cannon, that this bulky Bulwark of *Newark* represented to the Besiegers but one entire Sconce ; and the two Royal Forts, the formidable Flankers : Nor was there a Tree to hinder her prospect.

At the North End of *Newark*, supervising the *Trent*, (and her redolent Meadows) stands to this Day the Relicks and Ruins of a fair Castle, whose solid Foundations were cemented with Stone ; and all the Walls, Buttresses and Battlements with the same Material ; whose embellished Front overlook'd the fragrant Meadows of *Trent*, and was the last reception for King *John* ; who after his return from *Swinsted-Abby*<sup>3</sup> (where the

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(1) Trenches.      (2) A typographical error for "sand."

(3) Swineshead Abbey, co. Lincoln.

Monk poisoned him) lodg'd within the Portals of this fair Palace. There it was that he seal'd the Decrees of Death that compell'd him to take leave of the World. Another Curiosity is their Collegiate Church, beautified and garnished with fair Free-stone. The Quire or Body, and the Isles, very large and spacious; the Roof covered all over with Lead, but the Broach and Tower excels (*sic*) in height, because (*sic*) to vie with most Parochial Churches in *England*. This Maiden Garison had her Ports guarded with Artillery (as above exprest) and was made equal in success with the most fortunate Garisons relating to the Royal Interest.

Here are four Fairs quarterly proclaimed every Year by the Mayor and Aldermen of the Town of *Newark*; besides the Weak-day Market, and a running Trade with the Country round about them. From the North come those large and fair fronted Cattle, that fill *Newark* Folds; and on Wednesday every Week their Market is duly observed, where you may see this large Pavement as 'twere overspread and crouded with Corn, and the Shambles, as any Market in the County, furnish'd with Flesh: Besides in the very front of this general Exchange, the Stalls are as well burden'd with Fish. Moreover, Fowl, with Fruits, and many other Entertainments, they have in abundance. But now I think it high time to relinquish the Ports of *Newark*, to scale the famous Ascents of *Trent*, whose generous Streams invite us Westward.

*Th.* This Corporation (I perceive) by your relation, has been a Fortress almost impregnable.

*Ar.* There was none beyond it Northward, and I'm sure Southward there was none comparable to it. So that above and beneath this Town of *Newark*, as we ride along, you may observe mighty blough<sup>t</sup> Banks, and

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(<sup>t</sup>) Bluff.

incomparable Deeps, with pleasant slaty and secure Fords, polished with Gravel, and enamel'd with Sand; but in some other parts, you shall observe but little disproportion betwixt the Surface of Earth, and the level of *Trent*; when on a sudden again, some knotty Coagulum of incrustated Earth (sometimes Rocky and sometimes Marley) steps up to secure the Continent<sup>1</sup> and rebuke her swelling murmuring Streams, seemingly discontent to leave the amorous Shores in their more rapid and violent precipitation.

*Th.* What Town call you this, about some two Miles from *Newark*?

*Ar.* This is *Farnton*,<sup>2</sup> which fares very well from the benevolent Breasts and amorous Arms of *Trent*; whose shores are saluted with her silent Streams, as her Meadows are enrich'd with the sovereign Soil of *Trent*, that makes glad her Inhabitants. So that from *Farnton* about a Mile or two stands *Stoak* in a sweet Soil, whose Banks and shady Bowers are perpetually bathed with the solitary gliding Streams of *Trent*, that smile on her florid Fields, whilst the beautiful fragrant Meadows are constantly courted with soft Salutes and Embracements from the mild and moderate Streams of our Western Fountain.

*Th.* What a pleasant part of a Country is this!

*Ar.* Pleasant do you say! do but propound what Pleasure is, and see if any place in *England* excels it. This is the place that's call'd *Hazelford-Cleft*, from a stately embellished flourishing Wood, that borders South on the side of *Trent*, that climbs up a Rocky and Mountainous Elevation, facing the North, and the delectable Shades of the Forest of *Sherwood*; whose beautiful Banks and

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(<sup>1</sup>) Dry land as distinguished from the river.

(<sup>2</sup>) Farndon.

delightful Shores, are celebrated to the pleasant Amours of *Trent*, defended on the South by the Vale of *Belvoir*, and guarded from the North by the shady Trees of the Forest: but her East is refresh'd by fragrant Meadows, cultivated Fields, and delightful Pastures, adorned with most excellent Rills, Rivulets and Fountains. This is our inamouring Northern prospect, the Anglers *Arcadia*, the greatest *Aviary*, and the most mellifluous Consort<sup>1</sup> in *Nottingham-Shire*. Nay, it's *England's Elizium*, if *Elizium* be any where. Of which if any doubt to trace or find out, it's here to be found, if any where in *England*; otherwise he may conclude that *Elizium's* but a fiction; for if not understood in these fragrant Fields, pardon me to think, nay I dare to assert it's no where else.

*Th.* Indeed it's a sweet place, I have never seen the like before; but what Town is that?

*Ar.* This Town we call *Knieton*; it stands yet more West, elevated on a Rocky Precipice of Alabaster, and red Marly Earth, hovering over the Streams of *Trent*; and borders on the skirts of the Vale of *Belvoir*, facing the Forest; and *Bridgeford* lies much on the same Level, West South West, guarded with Rocks and stately Mountains, opposite as I take it to the Inundations of *Trent*. But the Town of *Gunthorp* stands directly North, blest with flourishing and florid Meadows; whose Fragrancy oftimes perfumes the Shores, as *Trent's* proud Waves besprinkle her Sands. *Shelford* you may see inclines yet more Westward, whose Foundations I have not considered lie so low and flat, that they level the very Surface of *Trent*; but *Burton* and *Bulcoat* stand North of her Ruins, and are shaded by the flourishing Trees of the Forest.

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(1) Concert.



*Th.* What have we here ?

*Ar.* *Gedlin* and *Carleton*, these lie yet more West, and incline, if I mistake not, two Points to the Northward ; but the Palace of *Holm-peirpoint* adorns the South : From whose beautiful Elevations we discover the Battlements, and some part of the Situations of famous *Nottingham* ; whose odoriferous Gardens perfume the Air ; and whose florid Fields, and fragrant Meadows, glut the Scickle, and satiate the Sithe.

*Th.* Grant my Allowances, and I'll give you my Opinion ; and not stick to tell you, that *Trent* surpasseth *Tagus*, notwithstanding the boast of her Golden Sands.

[*Here follows the praise of the Trent, and of its thirty sorts of fish, followed by a poem enumerating the latter.*]

*Th.* . . . What are these ! the stupendous Fabricks of *Nottingham*, whose Foundations are laid in Rocky Sand, and so firmly rivited into the Bowels of the Earth, that neither Age nor Time can hardly decay them ? And was this that impregnable Castle, elevated on a Rock, and lifted up so high as to storm the Air, and supervise the bordering Inhabitants that dwell in the florid Vale of *Belvoir* ? Was this that great Ornament that adorn'd the Country, that sleeps now in dust ?

*Ar.* These are the Relicks of that famous Antiquity, where Art and Industry discovered themselves inseparable Companions. Let us approach her beautiful Ports, inrich'd with three Parish Churches ; but one of them of late was torn in pieces with Martial Treats. But to speak the Truth, it was by provocation : For the Pulpit you must know vied with the Peerage for Superiority ; and that made the Souldiers commit Sacrilege, and undress this beautiful Relick, that lies now in silence, and hudled in ashes becomes her own Sepulchre. Now the Cellerage in these Situations of *Nottingham*, are the

most commodious that I know in *England*; whose descents you may trace twenty or thirty Foot from the surface of the Soil. But there are other Cellars that almost court Day, where they make their Malt, and lodg Commodities either for a Domestick or Foreign Trade. For so great is the Plenty she draws from the breasts of the Country, that were she wanting in her self, they would want themselves in wanting her. Another Rarity it behoves the Reader to observe; and that is, upon examination her Wells will be found as deep, if not in some places deeper, than their Cellars. Yet amongst all her stately Imbellishments, we petrole as I remember but two fair Streets; the rest are Gates, Allies, Rows, Lanes, Marshes, &c. But the Prospect as we advance, presents to the South, and the generous Streams of Silver Trent, directing to the *Leen-Bridg*, facing the hollow Stone; or rather, as I may term them, habitable Rocks, through which we ascend to consult those splendid Inhabitants, that live under a well-polished Government, and those other Circumstantial of Civility and Ingenuity.

Now this Avenue of *Fishergate*, we leave on our right hand; and that on our left, is the Marshes, as we ascend to climb up the hollow Stone, and mount the Elevations of a large and spacious Street, called the *High Pavement*: but *Stony-Street* and *Pepper-Street*, are all the Streets in *Nottingham*. The rest are either Lanes or Gates: as *Mary-Gate*, *Pilcher-Gate*, *Fletcher-Gate*, *Well-Gate*,<sup>1</sup> *Boyard-Lane*, *Swine-green*, *Saint-Jones's*,<sup>2</sup> and *Hockly* in the *Hole*, &c. But the Week-day Shambles we leave on our right hand; and on our left, those sandy Foundations that face the south; whose Skirts are moistened with the generous *Leen*, and there live the Tanners, Tawyers, Fell-mongers, Parchment and Vellum-

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(<sup>1</sup>) Bellar Gate.

(<sup>2</sup>) St. John's.

dressers, besides the Glutiners,<sup>1</sup> that dwell in Houses contiguous with the Rocks; but the Buildings are not under-ground, though stooping so low as to level some part of the very surface, refresh'd with fragrant Aromas, sent from the florid Meadows of *Trent*. But this *Terra Nova*, or *Terra Incognita*, they generally call it the Narrow-Marsh.

*Th.* Whereabouts are we now?

*Ar.* Now we descend to the lower Pavement, by dividing the Town-Hall from the Leaden Well, near unto which the Week-day Cross is frequently crowded with Country Curiosities: but advancing forward in a direct line, we encounter the Fronteers of *Castle-Gate*, and leave the broad Marsh, and *Grayfrier-gate* on our left hand. Towards the upper end of which, and not far from *Hungate*, stood the Imbellishments of *Nicholas Church*, associating with some inconsiderable Lanes, Allies, and Caves; but inclining yet more Westward, and nearer the Castle, remain the Bogholes, and the Brew-house-yard. But I forgot to tell you, that in the very Centre, or division of the Pavement, there stands a Bow (or a fair Port) opposite to *Bridle-smith-Gate*; adjoining to which, is *Girdle-smith-Gate*; and next unto that, is *Peter-Gate*, a derivative from the Church that fronts the West Angle, and directs into *Hungate*. But pre-supposing your Station at the North end of *Bridle-smith-Gate*; immediately then you face *Hen-Cross*, which in a direct line leads to *Cow-lane-Bar*; but if otherwise you incline to the Left, then you leave the Saturday Shambles, the Fruiterers and the Cage on your right Hand, and *Peck-lane* that directs to *Peter's Church*, on your left; but if pointing your Passage towards the Western Angle, you then enter the Sands, and also the

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(<sup>1</sup>) Glue-makers (Latin *glutinator*.)

Sheep-Market, which is commonly kept upon *Timber-hill*.

Now advancing more Westward, you enter the Friars, but on the left Hand of your Entrance, is *Wheeler-gate*; and on your Right, is the Beast-market that fronts the *Long-Row*, into which, and from the Skirts of the Forest, there presents a small Avenue, some call it *Sheep-lane*; opposite to which is Saint *John's-Lane*,<sup>1</sup> but that descends in a direct Line, either from the Castle, or *Boston-Bridg*; so that the Ornament, Gaity and Beauty, is the *Long-Row*. Beauty did I say? all the Town is a Beauty, if you consider her stately Buildings. Now as you pass through the *Long Row*, it directs to *Bargate*. On the left hand of whose ruinous Antiquities, and upon a rising Elevation of Ground, the Standard Royal was advanced by *Charles* the First, near to the Reliques and Remains of that sumptuous Castle, not far from the obscurements of *Mortimer's-hole*. I must confess there needs no great Noise to trumpet the Fame of this Non-such<sup>2</sup> *Nottingham*, whose plenty, if I mistake not, fills every neighbouring County; and whose generous Breasts recruit not only Travellers and Foreigners, but send supplies to all the Villages that border about her; whose Granaries commode the British Continent; and whose liberality extended to adjacent Parts, interprets *Nottingham* to be no Town, but rather the inland Mart and Storehouse of *Great Britain*.

*Th.* But how will the Reader descant upon all these eminent Encomiums?

*Ar.* It matters not a rush how any Man resents<sup>3</sup> it, since *Nottingham* of it self so well deserves it. For if with freedom I may declare my own Opinion, I must confess my Fancy too flatulent, my Strain too torpid,

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(<sup>1</sup>) A slip of memory for St. James' Lane.

(<sup>2</sup>) Unrivalled, incomparable.

(<sup>3</sup>) Feels, is impressed by.

my Pen not elegant, nor my Stile polite enough to illustrate the Beauty of such stately Inbellishments, the admired Subject of every Man's Praise; which more worthily deserves the Applause of an ingenious Historiographer, rather than the Character of so weak a Surveyer. However, I have done what I was able to do, and shall now leave the Scenes for some other to decipher, that's more intelligible,<sup>1</sup> and capable to perform such a Work than my self. Yet give me leave once again to drive the Nail a little further; when to evince<sup>2</sup> the Dissatisfied that *Nottingham* (as prenoted) is no Town, but rather a beautiful and imbellish'd Seraglio,<sup>3</sup> where every Street, nay every Port, represents as it were the new Face of a Court.

*Th.* Or a Comet.

*Ar.* Then what if I call it our Northern Star, to influence and reflect on the Southern Elevations, and because being bless'd with the Blessings of Trade and Fertility; but could I say she liv'd without the Vanity of Prodigality, then would I stile her a Vertue as well as a Beauty; where Art and Invention have supplied and (*sic*) encouragement; and where new Fabricks are hourly lifted up into the ambient Air. So that a Man would think her to sprout and vegetate, by the daily Progress she make, in her Buildings. So that when you come to see her Arbours and Aviaries, so naturally dress'd up in the Shades of the Forest, and perfum'd with Fragrancies from the redolent Meadows of *Trent*; besides the pleasant Prospect it has into the cultivated Fields in the fruitful Vale of *Belvoir*, then would you say that *Nottingham* is the Magazine for *Cheshire* and *Lancashire*;

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(1) In the sense of "intelligent."

(2) Convince.

(3) In the sense of "palace."

and the daily supply of those Mountainous Parts in the *Peak* of *Derbyshire*. These are those Ports, where the Angler (and Ingenious) never yet extred without sober Accommodation, let us therefore first consult the Virtuoso's of the Rod. [*Followed by discourse on fishes and angling.*]

