

## “TRING, WING, AND IVINGHOE.”

### I.

The curious stanza of which these names form the first line must be known to every reader of the “Records,” and most of us probably regard it as a piece of ancient local folklore, dating, perhaps, as far back as the fourteenth or fifteenth century. This impression has obtained a world-wide diffusion from the circumstance that Scott borrowed the last of the three names to denominate one of his characters, changing it from “Ivinghoe” to “Ivanhoe,” adopted this as the title of a romance which will ever be conspicuous in English literature as a matchless picture of mediæval life and character, and quoted the stanza in his preface, introducing it thus:

“The name of Ivanhoe was suggested by an old rhyme. All novelists have had occasion at some time or other to wish, with Falstaff, that they knew where a commodity of good names was to be had. On such an occasion the Author chanced to call to memory a rhyme recording three names of the manors forfeited by the ancestor of the celebrated Hampden, for striking the Black Prince a blow with his racket, when they quarrelled at tennis:

Tring, Wing, and Ivanhoe,  
For striking of a blow  
Hampden did forego,  
And glad he could escape so.

The word suited the Author’s purpose in two material respects, for, first, it had an ancient English sound; and, secondly, it conveyed no indication whatever of the nature of the story.”

“Ivinghoe” undoubtedly has an ancient English sound; whether as much can be said of “Ivanhoe” let experts in the ancient English language decide. Altering “Ivinghoe” into this mongrel compound is not the only liberty taken by Scott with his authority. The story, we shall find, as Scott received it, was to the effect that the prince and his host were “exercising themselves in feats of chivalry,” which can only mean that they were tilting in armour on horseback. Giving and taking blows is the essence of this species of exercise. Scott therefore changes the incident into a game of tennis, and leaves us to infer that the blow was the result of a quarrel about the scoring. He ought, however, to have known that in the fourteenth century the racket was not yet invented. Long after the Black

Prince's time the ball was struck with the bare or gloved hand, and the racket was ultimately developed out of a rigid kind of glove made for the purpose. It would have been better to represent Hampden and the prince as playing the more ancient game of hockey. A hockey-club would have been a more effective weapon than a tennis-racket. But anything whatever would have been an improvement on the account given by the original authority, who states, expressly or by implication, that Hampden, in the most boorish fashion, dealt the prince a blow on the face with his clenched hand, or, as boys would say, "punched his head."

It was recently stated in the "Bucks Herald," on the authority of a correspondent, that Sir Walter picked up the rhyme on one of his journeys, "as he passed through Aylesbury." I should like to know what journey that was, and when it took place. Scott's journeys in England are regularly chronicled by his biographer, and in none of them, so far as I am able to make out, is it probable that he would have "passed through Aylesbury." Even if he had passed through Aylesbury, and picked up the rhyme from some post-boy or other local authority on his way, it is tolerably certain that he would have heard it in another and a garbled version which was then locally current; and it was in this garbled version that the rhyme first found its way into a printed book. The book is entitled "A Tour to the West of England in 1788. By the Rev. Stebbing Shaw, M.A., Fellow of Queen's College, Cambridge," and was published in 1789. Mr. Shaw started for the West of England by way of Uxbridge and Amersham, and must have been one of the last travellers to set eyes on the old farmhouse which until 1789 represented the ruins of Missenden Abbey. Passing the village of Missenden, he proceeds thus:

"About three miles on the left of this, we had a view of Great Hampden, the seat of the Hampdens, a most ancient family, by some said to be Saxon, and certainly a most extraordinary one. In the reign of Edward III. they were very opulent, though their fortune is reported then to have received a great blow—For,

'Tring, Wing, and Ivengo did go

For striking the Black Prince a blow.'

In the last century the family made a very conspicuous figure whether good or bad I leave for others to discuss."

Evidently Mr. Shaw, who seems to treat the rhyme as generally known in the district, heard it from some one on the spot; but either he failed to report it accurately, or his informant had dropped something in repeating it. There is nothing in these two lines to connect the “blow” with the name of Hampden. From the version given in Lord Nugent’s “Memorials of John Hampden” it appears that Mr. Shaw’s version drops the greater part of a line. Lord Nugent’s version, which seems to represent accurately the stanza in its current oral form, is as follows:—

“Tring, Wing, and Ivingho  
From the Hampdens did go,  
For striking the Black Prince a blow.”

If Scott, therefore, had learned the rhyme from local tradition, it may be assumed that it would have reached him in this altered form. But while Scott was yet a young man the rhyme had been obtained by a literary man from an older source, and printed in its true form: and the work in which it appeared was probably on the shelves of the Advocates’ Library at Edinburgh, where Scott would quickly have found it out. The book is William Seward’s “Anecdotes of some Distinguished Persons,” a collection in four volumes which was published in 1795, and passed through several editions. It contains a good deal of information about Hampden and the civil war. Scott might also have seen the rhyme in Lysons’s “Britannia,” the Bucks section of which was published about 1806. Messrs. Lysons may have copied from Seward, or each may independently of the other have obtained the rhyme from the original source: and this undoubtedly was a volume of the Browne Willis manuscripts in the Bodleian Library. The earliest authority for these lines, so far as I can ascertain, is the return made by John Yate, then rector of Great Hampden, to Willis’s circular of interrogatories, sent round by him to the clergy of the county in 1712.\* In answer to Willis’s question whether any ancient traditions are preserved in his parish, Yate writes as follows:—

“There is an antient Tradition of King Edward 3d and his son Edward the black prince’s being entertain’d at Hampden,

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\* Willis’s MSS., Vol. I.

But the prince and Hampden exercising themselves in feats of Chivalry, they differd (*sic*) and grew so hot that Hampden struck the Prince on the face, which made the King and prince to go away in great wrath, upon which came this Rime:

Tring, Wing, and Ivingo	For striking of a blow,
The Hampden did forgo,	And glad he could 'scape so."

It is not easy to settle which ought to be read as the second line of the stanza, and which as the third: but probably the reading column-wise, and not cross-wise, was intended, though Scott, evidently quoting from memory, wrote it the contrary way. "The" Hampden is, of course, a mistake, and the true reading is apparently "These."

Although Yate does not definitely explain the connection between the rhyme and the local names mentioned in it, some such explanation as that given by Seward and Lysons, to the effect that the King "seized on these valuable manors," then belonging to his host, in retaliation for the alleged blow, was probably in his mind. Messrs. Lysons rather mildly object to the story on the ground that none of these manors ever belonged to the Hampden family; and criticism, so far as I know, has not hitherto ventured beyond this negative position. When we come to closer quarters with facts, and enquire to whom, in the reign of Edward III., these manors really belonged, the answer is as conclusive as it is surprising. All three were then and long afterwards held in mortmain by ecclesiastical corporations! Tring belonged to the abbey of Faversham; the right of free warren, moreover, was vested by special grant in the Archbishop of Canterbury, who might probably have done worse than resort hither, now and then, for a day's rabbit-coursing. Wing belonged to the Benedictine abbey of St. Nicolas at Angers. Ivinghoe, like West Wycombe, formed part of the ancient Saxon endowment of the see of Winchester. The facts relating to Wing and Ivinghoe were perfectly well-known to Messrs. Lysons, and it is odd that they should keep them in the background. Perhaps they had a liking for the rhyme, and shrank from seeing it deprived, in the sense in which it was then explained, of every vestige of credibility. It never seems to have occurred to them that this explanation might be a false one, though the

rhyme itself might be perfectly genuine, and have been misinterpreted by some one strange to the district, and ignorant of the history of the manors in question.

It is obvious that the story of the king and prince is a foolish fiction invented for the purpose of explaining a rhyme which survived in Yate's generation, while its meaning had been lost. Yate had in 1712 been rector of Hampden more than 48 years, having been inducted in 1663 in the place of an ejected Nonconformist. Coming early in life as a stranger among country folk strongly imbued with Commonwealth principles, he probably heard the rhyme from the parish clerk or some other parishioner. Possibly it was he who first connected it with the king and prince. He does not describe it as an *ancient* rhyme. “Upon which came this Rime” is consistent with the possibility of its being, for all he knew, of comparatively recent origin; and the suggestion that in fact it was so is confirmed by the circumstance that in the course of the 77 years between 1712 and 1788 oral tradition so mangled it as to destroy almost every trace of the original metre. No one would suppose, from Lord Nugent's version, that “Tring, Wing, and Ivinghoe” was once an iambic stanza. Yate's return evidently gives the rhyme very nearly in its original form; and this, taken in connexion with the textual corruption which so quickly supervened, points to the conclusion that it was written not very long before Yate's own time.

It is possible that Yate is right in the first statement in his return—that there existed in his time an ancient tradition of King Edward and his son the Black Prince being entertained at Hampden. According to tradition, it was a common thing for English sovereigns to be entertained at Hampden: and it was inevitable that Edward III. should be in the list, for the simple reason that he was father of the Black Prince, who was believed, and is to this day believed, to have had a “palace” hard by at Prince's Risborough. This fiction is probably a very old one, and it appears in the return made to Willis's circular by Nathaniel Anderson, the vicar, who writes as follows:—

“So called from the Black Prince (*sic*) who in former days lived and resided here. He had a palace near the church, which

is now totally demolished, and nothing but corn and grass grows where this famous palace one (*sic*) stood."

The Black Prince probably never heard of Prince's Risborough, or of Hampden, in his life. "Great" Risborough, as it was once called, was an obscure fraction of the extensive crown estates assigned to the Earldom of Cornwall, and granted by Edward III. in the first place to his brother John of Eltham, and after his death to his own youthful son, already created Prince of Wales and Earl of Chester.\* Considering that these estates included the Castles and Honours of Berkhamstead and Wallingford, it is extremely improbable that the Black Prince, who had a strong predilection for Berkhamstead and Ashridge, would ever have "resided," much less erected a "palace," on a manor the poverty of which was specially pleaded as a sufficient excuse for the small returns yielded by it. But Willis's clerical correspondents are prone to infer a palace from an old moat wherever they have a chance. The vicar of Dinton writes thus about Moreton, an outlying half-hide of land belonging to the manor of West Wycombe, though in Dinton parish and close to Dinton village:

"There is a tradition that the Bishops of Winchester had formerly a Palace at Moreton in a certain ground now called the Grove, where they did sometimes reside; which I take to be very probable."

Very probable indeed! The evidence consists in the fact that there were some old foundations and ditches hereabouts. Still, the returns made by Willis's correspondents are very interesting. Occasionally they show gleams of robust sense, and even a touch of humour. Crofts, the vicar of Winslow, after quoting a well-known inscription which according to the tradition of his time was once on the wall of Sir John Shorne's well at North Marston, makes these caustic remarks on the virtues of the water:

"Perhaps he built this well, or blest it. Good water is scarce there. This, not excellent, passes there; it retains to this day an excellent virtue to wash dishes, boile the pot, and is a comfortable cordiall in a summer day to a thirsty cow."

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\* In John of Eltham's time it was called "Earl's" Risborough and this title continued in use during the Black Prince's minority.

Having established the Black Prince in his “palace” at Risborough, it was natural enough for tradition to represent him as visiting the neighbouring gentry; and when the real meaning of “Tring, Wing, and Ivinghoe” had been forgotten it was natural to connect the stanza with such a visit, and to explain the “blow” in some way as an incident belonging to it.

II.

Setting aside, for the moment, the question of the meaning and application of the stanza, and regarding it merely as a metrical composition, the first thing that strikes one is that it is not a piece of rude folk-lore. Nor is it the production of some unskilled parochial rhymers. It is of a different class to such stuff as the Bledlow rhyme—

They that live and do abide,  
Shall see Bledlow Church fall into the Lyde.

It is the work of one who was a poet by profession; who was not merely in the habit of putting pen to paper, but was master of an easy and vigorous style. If this is conceded, the presumption follows that the stanza forms part of a poem or ballad of some considerable length, of which neither the beginning nor the end are before us. Its diction is obviously post-Shaksperian; and there is a passage in the “*Tempest*” (Act III., Scene 3) where two of the words are employed in a way which furnishes a clue to the true meaning.

Do not, *for one repulse, forego* the purpose  
That you resolved to effect.

The coincidence suggests that the author of the stanza may have had this passage in his mind. To “forego” a thing means to desist from an attempt to attain or get possession of it. To forego a thing, in this sense, “for one repulse,” or as the stanza has it, “for striking of a blow (that is, of one blow, as in the common expression “at a blow,”) shows, to say the least, faint-heartedness; and when it is added that the agent in the matter, whatever it may have been, was “glad he could scape so,” faint-heartedness becomes positive cowardice. On the face of it, the purpose of the stanza is to impute these qualities to a Hampden, who, if I am right in assigning it to the post-Shaksperian age, can be no other than the celebrated John Hampden, in conse-

quence of a failure to get possession of the three villages mentioned in it, all of which at a certain conjuncture early in the great civil war were positions which might have been made important military posts; and it is easy to identify the occasion on which an attack on each of these places by the Parliamentary force in Buckinghamshire might have been anticipated by those who were watching events from a distance. All of them were in the hands of persons whose attachment to the king's cause was either notorious, as in the case of Wing and Ivinghoe, or presumable, as in that of Tring, which was a Crown manor occupied by a farmer. The great mansion of Wing was the principal seat of the royalist Earl of Carnarvon, who fell at the battle of Newbury in 1643. Ivinghoe, where the old manor house (Burystead) still existed, belonged to the Earl of Bridgwater, a nobleman advanced in years who excused himself on that ground from attendance in Parliament. He took no active part in the war; but as his epitaph (at Little Gaddesden) describes him as "a loyal subject to his sovereign in those worst of times when it was accounted treason not to be a traitor," it would seem that his sympathies were with the Crown. I find it stated in a lecture recently delivered at Great Berkhamstead, and reported in the "Bucks Herald," that he was "nominally a Parliamentarian." Evidently, however, he had not declared himself so: and the suggestion is not altogether consistent with the fact cited by the lecturer that on a certain Saturday early in the troubles "Captain Washington, Captain Kemsey, and Captain Burr, with their soldiers, entered into the park and house at Ashridge, detained the Earl's servants as prisoners, beat down the ceilings, broke open and hewed down all the doors of his house, searched all the evidences, rooms, studies, and closets, took away plate, arms, etc., and destroyed his deer, taking away 44 horses." Later in the lecture the old earl is confused with his son, notorious in the following reign for his persecution of Nonconformists and Quakers, including William Penn. Ivinghoe, then, being a natural outpost to Ashridge, it was likely that this place, like Wing and Tring, might be occupied in force and held for the Crown. As it happened, no such occupation took place in the case of any of them, and it was therefore never



necessary to attack them. The most important of the three, from a military point of view, was Wing, which commanded the direct road between Aylesbury and the Watling Street. On November 30, 1642, the Earl of Carnarvon's house at Wing was searched, pursuant to an order of the Parliamentary Committee of Safety, without resistance, and some important documents, one of which is printed in the Appendix to Seward's second volume, were taken. The idea that Wing, with the other places, might be fortified and require to be attacked in force by the Parliamentarians, clearly belongs to the time before this took place, and probably arose about a month earlier, when the king's forces were making a forward movement from Oxford in the direction of London. At this time it seemed necessary to concentrate the Buckinghamshire force at some place in the Chiltern Hills. Pym, in a letter dated from Brill on October 18, suggests that they should be removed to Wycombe. It was, however, decided to concentrate at St. Albans; and Essex, in a letter dated from Woburn on November 4, directs this to be done on the following day—on November 5, 1642. On that day, then, the Buckinghamshire force was under orders to march to St. Albans. Obviously if Tring, Wing, and Ivinghoe had been fortified and held for the Crown this movement could not have been executed. For Tring commanded the road by way of Berkhamstead and Boxmoor, which would naturally be taken by men quartered at Aylesbury and southward of that town; Wing commanded the road by way of Dunstable, which would be the route taken by the force in the north-west of the county; while Ivinghoe commanded a route intermediate between the two, and from its position on the Icknield Street its occupation was desirable in order to secure communication between them.

This being the situation, it looks as if the stanza were a fragment of a contemporary royalist ballad, in which a result unfavourable to the success of the contemplated movements is anticipated. Tring, Wing, and Ivinghoe, it is expected, will be held by the royalists in force, and Hampden must dislodge them if the roads to St. Albans are to be opened. He is effectually deterred by some signal repulse, and barely makes his escape. Nothing of the kind actually happened, because no attempt was

made to hold the places in question. Yet it is worth notice that shortly afterwards an important position between Oxford and the Vale of Aylesbury was actually fortified and held for the King, that a force which included Hampden's regiment, or some part of it, made a determined attack on this post, and that this force sustained an effectual repulse. This position was the almost inaccessible eminence of Brill. Hampden does not seem to have been present in person: but Brill might certainly in the circumstances be pointed to as a place which "Hampden did forego," and, as only a single attempt was made to capture it, it would not be utterly false to say that he did so "for striking of a blow" (i.e., a single blow). A reckless calumniator might be expected to follow this up by the sneering remark that he was "glad he could 'scape so." It is curious that this incident realises, though at some little distance, in the same part of the county, the forecast which the writer of the ballad uttered in reference to Tring, Wing, and Ivinghoe.

Who was the writer of the ballad? I am inclined to attribute it to John (afterwards Sir John) Denham, a writer who occupies an established position on the roll of English poets, rather by reason of his eloquent and stately poem entitled "Cooper's Hill," than of the gross ribaldry which disgraced his pen in his latter years. Denham was connected in more than one way with the county of Buckingham. His father, Sir John Denham, a Baron of the Exchequer, and one of the judges who sat on Hampden's shipmoney case, had been sheriff of Buckinghamshire (but not, as is stated in the "Dictionary of National Biography," of Bedfordshire also) in the 19th year of James I., and must therefore, I suppose, have owned property in the county. I cannot find that he was connected with the family of Dynham or Denham who in the previous century lived at Eythrope, or with the contemporary Dynhams of Boarstall, although in a document cited by Lipscomb (vol. II., p. 332) the younger Denham is described as "Sir John Denham of Boarstall." This must surely have been a clerical error. Baron Denham is described as a native of London, and was probably of a citizen family. The younger Denham told Aubrey that his family was "originally Western," meaning, I suppose,

from some western county such as Devon or Somerset. His main connexion with Buckinghamshire was that he had married a lady named Cotton, who was the heiress of Horsenden, and he is stated by some authorities to have “fortified Horsenden House for the King.” Possibly he may have intended to do so, and gone so far as to talk about it: but the project remained as much in the air as the suggested royalist occupation of Tring, Wing, and Ivinghoe. He had already failed to hold Farnham Castle, and at the time of the occurrences here mentioned was safely ensconced behind the fortifications of Oxford, from whence he did what service lay in his power by bombarding the Parliamentary party with harmless pasquinades. More than one of these were aimed specially at John Hampden, the most conspicuous leader of the party. Two such poems are printed in his collected works;\* and it is reasonable to suppose that he may have been the author of others. Hampden, however, is not likely to have been the only personage at which such a pasquinade as that here suggested was aimed. Probably in other stanzas, now lost, those who were high in command, as well as Hampden’s colleagues, Bulstrode, Grenville, Goodwin, and others, came in each for a share of Denham’s mendacious abuse. Another piece of evidence points to Denham as the author of “Tring, Wing, and Ivinghoe.” The measure in which the stanza is written is a peculiar one. It has four lines of six syllables, all rhyming to a single sound. It is difficult to discover other examples of this peculiar combination of measure and rhyme; and the only other instance of it which I have succeeded in finding is a satirical ballad acknowledged by Denham and printed in his collected works.†

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\* “A Speech against Peace at the Close Committee:” “To the Five Members of the House of Commons, the Humble Petition of the Poets.”

† “On My Lord Crofts’ and My Journey into Poland from whence We brought 10,000l. for his Majesty by the Decimation of his Scottish subjects there.”