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THE LIFE

OF

Long Meg of Westminster:

CONTAINING

THE MAD MERRY PRANKES SHE PLAYED IN HER LIFE TIME,
NOT ONELY IN PERFORMING SUNDRY QUARRELS
WITH DIVERS RUFFIANS ABOUT LONDON:

BUT ALSO HOW VALIANTLY SHE BEHAUED HER SELFE IN
THE WARRES OF BOLLOINGNE.



LONDON:

PRINTED FOR ROBERT BIRD, AND ARE TO BE SOLD AT
HIS SHOP IN ST. LAWRENCE LANE, AT THE
SIGNE OF THE BIBLE.

1635.

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THE Reader would perhaps take but little interest in the inquiry whether the Heroine of the following amusing Tract, was a real or fictitious personage; yet the discussion of the question might furnish a dissertation of no trifling extent. The present writer, however, deems it sufficient to say, he inclines to the opinion that Long Meg, Gillian of Brainford, Dobson, and others of the same stamp, whose tricks have given rise to similar narrations, were real characters of notoriety.

Our Heroine must have died previous to 1594, in which year her exploits were exhibited in a dramatic form by my Lord Admiralls men.*

Gabriel Harvey, in his "Peirce's Supererogation, or a New Praise of the Old Asse," London, 1600, 4to. pp. 145, 6, speaks of her in the following terms:

"Phy, long Megg of Westminster would have bene ashamed to disgrace her Sondag bonet with her Satterday witt. She knew some rules of decorum: and although she were a lustie bouncing rampe, somewhat like Gallemella, or maide Marian, yet was she not such a roinish rannell, or such

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iii. p. 362.

ADVERTISEMENT.

a dissolute gillian-flurtes, as this wainscot-faced Tomboy."

In a rare tract, entitled "Hollands Leaguer, or an Historical Discourse of the Life and Actions of Dona Britanica Hollandia the Arch Mistris of the Wicked Women of Eutopia; London, printed for Richard Barnes, 1632;" mention is made of a house kept by Long Meg on the Southwark Side. "It was out of the *Citie*, yet in the view of the *Citie*, only divided by a delicate *River*; there was many handsome buildings, and many hearty neighbours, yet at the first foundation, it was renowned for nothing so much as for the memory of that famous *Amazon*, *Longa Margarita*, who had there for many yeeres kept a famous *infamous* house of open Hospitality." Prefixed to the tract is a wood cut view of the house.

Most of the readers of this will recollect a large stone in the Cloisters at Westminster, known by the name of Long Meg: whether any relation may exist between this stone and our personage it is not our present purpose to discuss, and the circumstance is mentioned here merely on account of the coincidence of names.

This rare tract is given to the reader with confidence, as an amusing specimen of the popular stories of our ancestors.



TO THE GENTLEMEN READERS.

GENTLEMEN, to please your fantasies, many men haue made many pleasant jiggges, as the Iests of Robin-hood, and Beuis of South-hampton, and such others, as serue to procure mirth, and driue away melancholy. Now at last, because amongst the three Doctors of health, Doctor Merryman is not the least, and that longer liues a man of pleasant disposition, than a sad Saturnist; when I was idle, I be-thought me of Long-Meg of Westminster, and her merry pranks, as pleasant as the merriest Iest that euer past the Presse; a woman she was of late memory, and well beloued, spoken on of all, and knowne of many; therefore there is hope of the better acceptance.

Gentlemen, *Augustus* would reade our Riddles, when he had tossed ouer *Virgils* Heroicks, and *Cicero*

TO THE READER.

would oft delirate after his weighty affaires; so I hope
you will vse Long Meg as a whetstone to mirth after
your serious businesse: and if shee haue any grosse
faults, beare with them the more patiently,
for that she was a woman; and pre-
suming thus farre on her
behalf, I bid you
farewell.

THE CONTENTS OF THIS BOOKE.

- T**HE first Chapter containeth where she was borne, how she came up to London, and how she beat the Carrier.
- The second containeth, how she placed herselfe at Westminster, and what she did at her placing.
- The third containeth, how she used one of the Vicars of Westminster, that was a morrow Masse priest, and how she made him pay his score.
- The fourth containeth, a merry skirmish that was betweene her and Sir Iames of Castile a Spanish Knight, and what was the end of their combat.
- The fifth containeth, the courtesie shee used towards Souldiers, and other men that carried good minds.
- The sixth containeth, how she used the Bailiffe of Westminster, that came into her Mistresse house, and arrested one of her friends.
- The seuenth containeth, how shee used Woolner the singing-man of Windsor, that was the great eater, and how she made him pay for his break-fast.
- The eighth containeth a merry jest, how she met a Nobleman, and how she used both him and the watch.
- The ninth containeth, how Meg went a shrouing, and how as she came home she fought with the Theeves at S. Iames corner, and helpt Father Willis the Carrier to his hundreth markes againe.

THE CONTENTS OF THIS BOOKE.

- The tenth containeth how Harry the Hostler was prest, how she used the Constable and Captaine, and how shee tooke presse money to goe to Bulloigne.*
- The eleuenth containeth how she beat the French-men from the walles of Bulloigne, and behaued her selfe so valiantly, that the King gaue her eight pence a day for her life.*
- The twelfth containeth her combate shee had with a Frenchman before the walls of Bulloigne, and what was the issue of the combat.*
- The thirteenth containeth her comming into England, and how she was married, and how she behaued herselfe to her Husband.*
- The foureteenth containing a pleasant jest, how she used the angry Miller of Epping in Essex.*
- The fifteenth of the mad prank shee plaid with a Water-man of Lambeth.*
- The sixteenth how shee kept a house at Islington, and what lawes she had there to be obserued.*
- The seuenteenth how she used Iames Dickins, that was called huffing Dicke.*
- The eighteenth how shee was sicke, and visited by a Frier who enioyned her Penance, and what absolution she gaue him after for his paines.*



THE
LIFE AND PRANKES
OF
Long Meg of Westminster.

CHAP. I.

Containeth where she was borne, how she came vp to London, and how she beate the Carrier.

IN the time of *Henry* the eighth of famous memory, there was borne of very honest and wealthy Parents, a Maid called for her excellence in heighth, *Long Meg*: for she did not onely passe all the rest of her Country in the length of her proportion, but every limbe was so fit to her talnesse, that she seemed the picture and shape of some tall man cast in a womans mould. This *Meg* growing to the age of eighteene, would needs come vp to London to serue, and to learne City fashions: and although her friends perswaded her to the contrary, yet forsooth she had determined, and vp she would. Wherefore she resolved to come vp, with a Carrier a neighbour of hers, called *Father Willis*, and so she did, accompanied with three or foure Lasses more, who likewise came to London to seek seruice. Well, hauing taken their leaue of their friends, forward they goe on their Journey, and by long trauell at last got within the sight of London, which joyed their hearts greatly. But when they drew nigh, her fellow

partners waxed sad; which *Meg* espying, cheared them vp thus: What Lasses in a dumpe, and we so nigh London? cheare vp your hearts; though we be come from our friends, yet here shall we haue good Mistresses, that will allow vs good wages: here at London may wee winne gold and weare gold; and there are not so many Maides before vs, but we may finde husbands as well as the rest: all is not broken stuffe the Carrier brings, and if it were, what then? that the eye sees not, the heart rues not; let vs doe well, and we shall haue well. Tush *Meg*, quoth one of her fellowes, it is not that grieues me; but father *Willis* the Carrier you know is a hard man, and he asketh more than wee haue in our purses, for letting vs ride a little on his packsaddles. If that be all, quoth *Meg*, feare not, He speake the Carrier so faire, and if words will not preuaile, He so rib-roast him with a cudgell, as he shall wish he had neuer beene Cole-carrier to such shrewd wenches. This somewhat cheared them; and euen as they were in this talke, Father *Willis* ouertooke them, and seeing they were beyond Islington ready to enter into Saint *Iohn's* street, he demanded money of them for riding. What will you haue of vs, quoth *Meg*? Marry quoth Father *Willis*, ten shillings a peece. What? what? answered she, you are a merry man, ten shillings a peece, 'tis more than we haue in our purses: no Father *Willis*, you are our Countrey-man and our neighbour, and we are poore wenches, and farre from our friends, you shall haue a gallon of Wine, and if euer we come to keepe houses of our owne here in London, looke for amends; in the meane time to make vp the bargaine, you shall haue of euery one of vs a kisse for a favour. At this the Carrier storm'd and *Meg* smilde, which made him so mad, that he swore if they would not pay him his money, he would cudgell ten shillings out of their bones.

Marry content, quoth *Meg*, and she vp with her staffe and laid him on the shoulders, where shee so beswinged the Carrier and his man, that poore Father *Willis* desired her for Gods sake to hold her hands. Not I base knaues, quoth shee, vnlesse vpon conditions, and that is this, that first thou bestow vpon each of us an Angell for a handsell to our good lucke hereafter in London; and that thou swear, not to depart out of this Towne till

thou hast placed vs all three with Mistresses: otherwise, as I am a true Lancashire Lasse, I will so bumbaste thee, as all Carriers shall take examples by thee for displeasing a Countrey wench.

The Carrier hauing felt the weight of her armes, thought better to giue three Angells, than to haue so many lambasts as she would bestow vpon him; and therefore not onely out with his Pouch, and gaue them the coyne, but swore not to depart before he had seene them placed.

CHAP. II.

Containing how he placed her in Westminster, and what shee did at her placing.

AFTER the Carrier had set vp his Horse, and dispatcht his lading, hee remembered his Oath, and therefore bethought him how he might place these three Maides: with that hee called to minde that the Mistresse at the Eagle in Westminster, had spoken diuers times to him for a seruant, he with his Carriage passed ouer the fields to her house, where he found her sitting and drinking with a Spanish Knight called Sir *James of Castile*, Doctor *Skelton* and *Will Sommers*; told her how hee had brought vp to London three Lancashire Lasses, and seeing she was oft desirous to haue a Maid, now she should take her choyce which of them she would haue.

Marry quoth shee (being a very merry and a pleasant woman) Carrier thou comest in good time, for not onely I want a Maid, but heere bee three Gentlemen that shall giue me their opinions, which of them I shall haue. With that the Maids were bidden come in, and she intreated them to giue their verdict. Streight as soone as they saw Long *Meg*, they began to smile; and Doctor *Skelton* in his mad merry veine, blessing himselfe, began thus:

Domine, Domine, vnde hoc?

What is she in the gray cassock?

Me thinks she is of a large length,

Of a tall pitch, and a good strength,

With strong armes and stiffe bones
 This is a wench for the nones.
 Her lookes are bonny and blithe,
 She seemes neither lither nor lithe,
 But young of age,
 And of a merry visage,
 Neither beastly nor bowsie,
 Sleepy nor drowsie,
 But faire fac'd and of a good size,
 Therefore Hostesse, if you be wise,
 Once be ruled by me,
 Take this wench to thee.
 For this is plaine,
 Shee'l doe more worke than these twaine,
 I tell thee Hostesse, I doe not mocke,
 Take her in the gray cassocke.

What is your opinion, quoth the Hostesse to Sir *James* of *Castile*? Question with her, quoth he, what she can do, and then He giue you mine opinion: and yet first Hostesse, aske *Will Sommers* opinion. *Will* smiled, and swore that his Hostesse should not haue her, but king *Harry* should buy her. Why so *Will*, quoth Doctor *Skelton*? Because (quoth *Will Sommers*) that she shall be kept for breed: for if the King would marry her to long *Sanders* of the Court, they would bring forth none but souldiers. Well, the Hostesse demanded what her name was? *Margaret* forsooth, quoth she. And what worke can you doe? Faith little Mistresse (quoth she) but handy labour, as to wash and wring, to make cleane a house, to brew, bake, or any such drudgery: for my needle, to that I haue benee little vsed to. Thou art, quoth the Hostesse, a good lusty wench, and therefore I like thee the better: I haue here a great charge, for I keepe a victualling house, and diuers times there come in swaggering fellowes, that when they haue eat and dranke, will not pay what they call for; yet if thou take the charge of my drinke, I must be answered out of your wages. Content Mistresse quoth she, for while I serue you, if any stale Cutter comes in, and thinkes to

pay the shot with swearing, hey, gogs wounds; let me alone, He not onely (if his clothes be worth it) make him pay ere hee passe, but lend him as many bats as his crag will carry, and then throw him out of doores. At this they all smiled. Nay Mistresse, quoth the Carrier, 'tis true, for my poore pilch here is able with a paire of blew shoulders to swears as much; and with that he told them how she had vsed him at her comming to London. I cannot thinke, quoth Sir *James* of *Castile*, that she is so strong. Try her, quoth *Skelton*, for I haue heard that Spaniards are of wonderfull strength.

Sir *James* in a brauery would needs make experience, and therefore askt the Maide, if she durst change a box on the eare with him: I sir, quoth she, that I dare, if my Mistresse will giue me leaue. Yes *Meg*, quoth she, doe thy best. And with that it was a question who should stand first, Marry that I will sir, quoth she; and so stood to abide Sir *James* his blow; who forcing himselfe with all his might, gaue her such a box, that she could scarcely stand, yet shee stirred no more than a post. Then Sir *James* he stood, and the Hostesse willed her, not spare her strength. No, quoth *Skelton*, and if she fell him downe, He giue her a paire of new hose and shoone. Mistresse, quoth *Meg*, (and with that she strooke vp her sleene) here is a foule fist, and it hath past much drudgery, but trust me I thinke it will giue a good blow: and with that she raught at him so strongly, that downe fell sir *James* at her feet. By my faith quoth *Will Sommers*, she strikes a blow like an Oxe, for she hath strooke down an Asse. At this they all laught. Sir *James* was ashamed, and *Meg* was entertained into seruice.

CHAP. III.

Containing how she vsed one of the Vicars of the Church, that sung Masse, and how she made him pay his score.

IT fortuned that not long after shee was placed, but her Mistresse liked passing well of her; and *Meg* proued so good a Wench, that she was cal'd of euery body *Long Meg* of Westmin-

ster : much talke went on her, shee was in euery man's mouth, for her talnesse and her strength, insomuch that one of the Vicars of Westminster, that was a tall lusty lubber, and a stout Franion, who trusted much of his strength, thought to buckle with her, and to giue her the ouerthrow.

Now sir his custome was euery morning after Masse, hee would come in and call for a pot of Ale and a toste, and euer he set it vpon the score, till it came to a Crowne or a Noble, and then he paid. One frosty morning amongst the rest, he came with halfe a dozen of his friends, whom he had made priuate to his practice, and cal'd for Ale. *Meg* was ready, and brought Master Vicar his morning draught. After he and his companions had drunk a while, he said, he was come to cleere his score, and askt what was on it? Marry Master Vicar, quoth *Meg*, just five shillings and three pence. Five shillings and three pence, quoth he; why I tell thee foule Stallion, I owe but three shillings and a penny, and no more shalt thou haue of me. What a coozening queane haue you got here Hostesse, that misreckons mee at one time but two shillings and two pence? she may well be cal'd Long *Meg* of Westminster.

I haue referred all to my Maid, quoth the Hostesse, and I maruell shee would deale worse with you than with all the neighbours; but howsoever, shift it betweene you two.

The foule ill take me Mistresse, quoth *Meg*, if I misreckon the limmer Lowne one penny; and therefore Vicar I, tell thee, 'fore thou goe out of these doores, He make thee pay euery farthing, if thy Cap be of wooll.

Away you foule rake-sham'd whore, quoth he, If thou pratest to mee, He lay thee at my foote. Marry there goes the game, quoth *Meg*, we'll to it for a plucke or two, I'le giue the Vicar the first handsell; and with that she reach'd the Vicar a box on the care, that he reel'd againe. The Vicar stept to her, and together they goe by the eares; where betweenc them was many a sore blow. The Vicars head was broken, *Megs* clouts were puld off, and he held her by the haire of the head. The Vicar was shauen, and so *Meg* could take no vantage, but at last shee pummeld him so, that hee was cleane out of breath, and then

Meg (as lusty as shee was at the first) tooke Master Vicar by both the eares, and holding his head to a post, ask'd him, how much he owed her? Marry quoth he, three shillings and a penny. Then *Knaue*, quoth she, must I knocke out of your bald pate, two shillings and twopence more, and so oftentimes will I wring your head against the wall: and with that shee began to sing a faire plaine song betwene the post and Master Vicars pate. But hee in his triple voice cried out, Fine shillings and three pence, five shillings and three pence. With that she swore shee would not let him goe till hee did lay downe the mony: which he did; and for his jest was wel beaten home to his chamber.

CHAP. IV.

Containing the merry skirmish that was betwene her and Sir Iames of Castile a Spanish Knight, and what was the end of their combat.

THERE was a great Suter to *Megs* Mistresse, called *Sir Iames of Castile*, to winne her loue: but her affection was set on *Doctor Skelton*; so that *Sir Iames* could get no grant of any fauour. Whereupon he swore, if hee knew who were her Paramour, hee would runne him thorow with his Rapier. The Mistresse (who had a great delight to bee pleasant) made a match betwene her and *Long Meg*, that she should goe drest in Gentlemans apparell, and with her sword and buckler goe and meet *sir Iames* in *Saint Georges* field, if she beat him, she should for her labour haue a new Petticote. Let me alone, quoth *Meg*, the deuill take me if I lose a petticote. And with that her Mistris deliuered her a suit of white Satin, that was one of the Guards that lay at her house. *Meg* put it on, and tooke her whinyard by her side, and away she went into *Saint Georges* fields to meet *Sir Iames*. Presently after came *Sir Iames*, and found his Mistris very melancholy, as women haue faces that are fit for all fancies. What aile you sweet heart, quoth he, tell me? hath any man wronged you? if he hath, be he the proudest

champion in London, Ile haue him by the eares, and teach him to know, Sir *James* of *Castile* can chastise whom he list. Now (quoth she) shall I know if you loue me, a squaring long Knaue in a white Sattin doublet, hath this day monstrously misused me in words, and I haue no body to reuenge it: and in a brauery went out of doores, and bad the proudest champion I had come into Saint *Georges* fields, and quit my wrong if they durst: now Sir *James* if cuer you loued mee, learne the knaue to know how he hath wronged me, and I will grant whatsoever you will request at my hands.

Marry that I will, quoth he, and for that you may see how I will vse the knaue, goe with me, you and Master Doctor *Skelton*, and be eye-witnesses of my manhood.

To this they agreed, and all three went into Saint *Georges* fields, where Long *Meg* was walking by the wind-mils.

Yonder (quoth she) walkes the villain that abused me. Follow me Hostesse, quoth Sir *James*, Ile goe to him. As soone as hee drew nigh, *Meg* began to settle herselfe, and so did Sir *James*: but *Meg* past on as though she would haue gone by. Nay sirrah, stay quoth Sir *James*, you and I part not so, we must haue a bout ere we passe, for I am this Gentlewomans Champion, and flatly for her sake will haue you by the eares. *Meg* replied not a word: but only out with her sword, and to it they went. At the first bout *Meg* hit him on the hand, and hurt him a little, but endangered him diuers times, and made him giue ground, following so hotly, that shee strucke Sir *James*' weapon out of his hand; then when she saw him disarm'd, shee stept within him, and drawing her Ponyard, swore all the World should not saue him. Oh save mee Sir (quoth hee) I am a Knight, and 'tis but for a Womans matter, spill not my blood. Wert thou twenty Knights, quoth *Meg*, and were the King himselfe heere, hee should not save thy life, unlesse thou grant mee one thing. Whatsoever it bee quoth Sir *James*. Marry quoth shee, that is, that this night thou wait on my trencher at Supper at this womans house, and when Supper is done, then confesse me to be thy better at weapon in any ground in England. I will do it sir (quoth he) as I am a true Knight. With this they departed, and sir *James* went

home with his hostesse sorrowfull and ashamed, swearing that his adversary was the stoutest man in England.

Well, Supper was provided, and Sir *Thomas Moore* and divers other Gentlemen bidden thither by *Skeltous* means, to make up the Jest: which when sir *Iames* saw invited, hee put a good face on the matter, and thought to make a slight matter of it, and therefore beforehand told Sir *Thomas Moore* what had befallen him, how entring in a quarrell of his hostesse, hee fought with a desperate Gentleman of the Court, who had foiled him, and given him in charge to wait on his trencher that night. Sir *Thomas Moore* answered Sir *Iames*, that it was no dishonour to be foyled by a Gentleman, sith *Cæsar* himselfe was beaten backe by their valour.

As thus they were discanting of the valour of Englishmen, in came *Meg* marching in her mans attire: even as shee entered in at the doore. This, Sir *Thomas Moore* (quoth Sir *Iames*) is that English Gentleman, whose prowess I so highly commend, and to whom in all valour I account my selfe so inferiour. And Sir, quoth shee, pulling off her Hat, and her haire falling about her eares, hee that so hurt him to day, is none other but Long *Meg* of *Westminster*, and so you are all welcome. At this all the company fell in a great laughing, and Sir *Iames* was amazed, that a woman should so wap him in a whinyard: well, hee as the rest was faine to laugh at the matter, and all that supper time to wait on her trencher, who had leave of her Mistris, that shee might be master of the feast: where with a good laughter they made good cheere, Sir *Iames* playing the proper Page, and *Meg* sitting in her Maiesty. Thus was Sir *Iames* disgraced for his loue, and *Meg* after counted for a proper woman.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Containing the courtesie shee used towards Souldiers, and other men that carried good minds.

THERE resorted to the house where *Meg* was resident, all sorts of people, and the more for to see her, insomuch that shee was famoused amongst all estates, both rich and poore, but

chiefly of them which wanted or were in distresse, for whatsoever shee got of the rich (as her gettings were great) shee bestowed it liberally on them that had need: there was no poore neighbour dwelling nigh, whom shee would not releue: and if shee had seene one come in, that looked like a man, and was in distresse, if hee called for a pot of Beere, and had no more money in his purse than would pay for his pot, shee would straight of her owne accord, set before him Bread and Beefe: and if the man sayd hee wanted money, eate knaue (quoth shee) for they must eate that are hungry, and they must pay that haue money: And when he had done, shee would giue him pence in his purse, and so let him goe: for this cause was she generally loued of all good fellows about the City. On a day there came a poore Souldiour to the house, that was in great distresse, simply attired, and worse maimed, and sitting him downe, called for a pot of Beere, and with that fetcht a great sigh. How now man quoth *Meg*? what cheere? faint not, after a deare yeere comes a cheape, an ounce of care payes not a dramme of debt: bee merry and fall to some service, for such idle slaues as thou art, are moathes of the Common-wealth, that take no other delight but to live of the sweat of other mens browes. Thou art big enough, and God hath done his part in thee, a man proper enough, and now for to liue in this distresse? if I were a man, by Cockes bones I would rather with my sword teare money out of the peasants throats, than liue in this want: but see the slavish and base humors of Cowards, that for feare live in misery.

Oh *Meg* (quoth hee) you may say what you please, because you are a woman, but divers in the City haue knowne mee, and seene the day when I lived like a man; but falling into extreame sicknesse, so lost my seruice, and now beeing recovered of my health, because I am poore, I cannot get entertainment: and for to picke a pocket, to filch any thing out of a house, or to steale a sheete from the hedge, or to rob any poore Man, Women, or Children as they travel, I hold it in scorne, and had rather bee famisht, than incurre such base discredite. Marry, now that distresse wrings mee, though I haue beene true all my life, yet if I had a good sword, and a good Horse, perhaps I should bee so

bold as talke with a purse. Thou (quoth *Meg*) trust mee I thinke thou darst not looke on a Sword? If thou darst, wilt earne a brace of Angels? I will lend thee a Sword and Buckler, goe thy wayes into Tuttlefieldes, and walke there, and when thou seest a Servingman, a tall knave, with a blew Coat, and a white sattin doublet to passe by, pick some quarrel with him, and well beswinke him, and I will beside, giue thee a new suit of apparell. It is a match quoth the fellow, and after hee had drunke his pot off, shee gave him his tooles and sent him packing, and straight slipt on a doublet and a paire of hose, and her blew coate, tooke a Sword and Buckler, and downe to Parliament staires, there tooke Boat, as though she had crost the water from Lambeth to the Fields. She was no sooner on land, and walking towards Chelsey, but the fellow spied her, and crost the way, and began to give some crosse language, whereupon together they went by the eares: *Meg* loath to hurt, was almost put to her shifts, for hee being a marvelous tall fellow, and one that feared not his flesh, layd on such a load, that *Meg* was faine to bid him stay his hand, and to discover her selfe who she was. Then home they went together, and straight she gave him a faire suit of apparell, a good sword and money in his purse, and bad him be a true man, and get him a service, and when that money was spent, come to her for more.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Containing how she used the Baily of Westminster, that came into her Mistresses house, and arrested one of her friends.

ON a time it so fell out that a Gentlemen whom *Meg* much favoured for his courteous and honest conditions, was sitting drinking in the house, being a man that was greatly indebted; and his creditor having intelligence where he was, went to the Bayly and desired him to arrest him, but when hee told the Bayly where he was, hee was very loath, yet for that hee promised him forty shillings, hee undertooke the matter, and away he went with his processe: And comming into the place where he sate, cal'd

for a pot of Beere; after he had sitten a little, he stept to the Gentleman and arrested him, and desired the rest of the company in the Kings name to see the peace kept.

The Gentleman at this lookt as pale as ashes, and *Meg* comming in, askt what's the matter? Oh *Meg* (quoth he) and fetcht a great sigh, I am arrested and alas utterly undone: for if I go to prison, I shall have so many actions clapt on my back, as I shall never be able to come out. Arrested (qd *Meg*) what in our house? Why Master Bailly is this a neighbourly part, to come into our house and arrest our guests? Well, 'tis done and past, and therefore play the good fellow, take an angel quoth shee and see him not, here be none that be blabbes, hold thy hand here's the money, man, Ile pay it for the Gentleman my selfe. No quoth the Bayly, I cannot doe it, for the Creditor stands at the doore. Bid him come in quoth *Meg*, and we will see if we can take up the matter. So the Creditor came in, but was found very obstinate. Whereupon *Meg* made no more adoe, but rapt him on the pate with a quart pot, and bad him get him out of doores, for knave quoth shee, he can but go to prison, and that is the worst, and there he shall not lie long, if all the friends I have will serve to fetch him out.

The man went away with a good knocke, and then the Bailly would have bin gone with his prisoner. Nay quoth *Meg*, Ile fetch a fresh pot to drinke with my friend, and then fare you well: presently she came into the parlour againe, and brings a great Rope in her hand, and knitting her browes: sir knave quoth she, Ile learne thee whilest thou livest to arrest a man in our house. By gogs bloud you villaine, Ile make you a spectacle for all such Catchpoules; and with that shee fell upon him, and with the helpe of another Mayd, tyed the Rope fast about his middle: then quoth she to the Gentleman, away sir, shift for your selfe, take no care, Ile pay the Bailly his fees before he and I part. Away slipt the Gentleman, as glad as a man might be. Then she dragged the Bailly into a backside where was a great Pond, and setting him to one side, she went to the other, and bade the Bailly either wade thorow the Pond, or else she would dragge him thorow. Whereupon the poore Bailly was faine up to the chin

to go thorow the water; and when he was on the one side, she ran on the other, till she made him goe thorow five or six times: then assoone as he was come out, Now Master Baily (quoth she) Ile pay you your Fees, and so up with a holly Cudgell, and did ribroast him, that he lay for almost dead: when she had done, shee bade him beware and alwaies know, that their house was a Sanctuary for any Gentleman, and not a place for Bailies and Catchpoules.

The poore Bayly went thence well beaten and with his mends in his hands: for shee was so generally well beloved, that none durst meddle with her.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Containing how she used Woolner the singing man of Windsor, that was the great eater, and how she made him pay for his breakfast.

A COMPANY of pleasant Gentlemen, that thought to bee merry with long *Meg*, went and got one *Woolner*, a singing man of *Windsor*, that was a great trencher man, and would eate more at once then five or six men: him they made privy to their conceit, and hee being a mad companion, was as willing as the rest, and so they agreed, that when the meat stood on the boord ready for guests to come to dinner, *Woolner* should aske what he should pay to breake his fast, for that his businesse was great, and he could not tarry till others came in: so hee resolved and went to the house where *Meg* dwelt: The Gentlemen before were come in, and in a roome hard by, were set at breakfast, looking when *Woolner* should come in: At last came in *Woolner* with a great staffe in his hand, as though he had beene a traveller.

Hoe Hostesse quoth he, is there any meate for men? I that there is quoth *Meg*, looke man the table is full, we tarry but for guests, and they will bee here presently: what shall I give you quoth *Woolner*, because I cannot stay, to eate my breakfast? Six-pence, quoth *Meg*, eate and spare not whiles thy belly cracke. You shall have it quoth *Woolner*, with that he sat

him downe, and she fetcht him drinke, having businesse other where, came not to him almost in an howers space: In which time *Woolner* had eaten up all the meat; as much as would have served ten men; with that taking his staffe in his hand, came out, and called for his hostesse: I thanke you quoth he, here is six pence, and so fare you well.

Much good doe it you quoth shee, and going in to see what hee had eaten, found nothing of all her meate but the bare bones, and cleane Platters: with that shee whipt out againe, and as hee was going out of doore, tooke him by the cloake and puld him backe: Friend quoth she, you should be sicke by your stomache, need you not a little *Aqua-vitæ*? Sirra thou hast eaten up all the meate. I that I haue quoth he, and if I haue pocketted up any crumme but in my bellie, Ile giue thee ten pound for it. And shall I have but sixe pence for all quoth shee, there being so much as would haue serued ten men? No quoth *Woolner*, not a farthing more of me, for I agreed with thee for so much and so much thou hast, and more thou shalt not haue. Then quoth she sit still, and see how honestly I will deale with thee: Shee went into the Larder, and filled all the boord againe with good meat, and at every messe set a pottle of Wine, and at the boords end laid a good pike staffe.

Now fellow quoth shee, of three things choose one: seeing thou hast eaten so much meat for thine owne pleasure, eate this for mine, and so drinke off all the Wine and pay nothing: or else take that staffe and haue a bout with me for thy brakefast, hee that gives the first three Venies scape free: Or lastly, faire and orderly pull forth your purse, and pay me for my victuals: If you will doe none of these three, by Heavens maker, wert thou a devill (as I think thee little better by thy belly) I would bumbaste thee till thy bones cracke, or mine armes be weary.

I will do none of them quoth *Woolner*, I haue paid you what I promised, and so farewell: and quoth shee you shall haue what I promised, and so fare you well: with that she shut the Parlour doore, and with a eudgel began to labour him, insomuch that he cryed out, and the Gentlemen hearing, burst in, and in a merry mood told her all, and paid for the brakefast, and so made them friends.

THE EIGHT CHAPTER.

Containing a merry Jest, how shee met a Nobleman, and how she used both him and the watch.

IT chanced in an Evening, that *Meg* would needs be pleasant, and so put on a suit of mans apparell, and with her Sword and Buckler walkt the streets, looking how shee might find some means to be merry: the same night it so fell out, that a Nobleman, being a very wagg, would needs go abroad with one man to see fashions: and comming downe the *Strand* he spied *Meg*, and seeing such a tall fellow swinging vp and downe, thought to haue a cast at him, and came to him. How now fellow (quoth he) whither walke'st? Marry quoth *Meg*, to S. Nicholas shambles to buy calues heads. How much monie, quoth the Nobleman, hast in thy purse? In faith quoth *Meg*, little enough: wilt lend me any? I marry, quoth the Nobleman, and putting his thumbe to *Megs* mouth, said, that's a tester. *Meg* with that up with her fist, and tooke him a good box on the care, and sayd, there sir knave, there is a groat againe, and now I owe you but two pence. With that the Nobleman drew, and his man too, and *Meg* was as ready as they, and together they go, but *Meg* hous'd them both into a Chandlers shop: so the Constable rose to part the fray; and when he came in and asked what they were, the Nobleman told his name, wherat they all put off their Caps. And what is your name qd. the Constable to *Meg*? Mine, master Constable, quoth shee, is *Cutbert Curry-knave*. Upon this the Constable commanded to lay hold upon her, and to carry her to the Counter. *Meg* out with her sword, and set upon the watch, and behaved her self very resolutely: but the Constable called for clubs, and then was *Meg* faine to cry out: Masters hold your hands, I am Long *Meg* of *Westminster*. With that they all staid, and the Nobleman would needs have her, the Constable, and all the rest in a *Taverne*, and there ended the fray in a cup of Wine.

CHAP. IX.

Containing how Meg went a shroving, and as shee came home how she fought with the Theeves at S. James corner, and helpt Father Willis the Carrier to his hundred Markes again.

WHEN Shroue-tuesday was come, then maides must abroad with Young men for Fritters; *Meg* with two more of her companions, and *Harry* the Ostler of the house would needs to Knights-bridge a Shroving, where they had good cheere, and payed frankly: for *Meg* would make euery man drinke that she saw passe by: and seeing that day, came but once a yeere, she thought to lay it on, and spare for no cost. Well, the day slipt away, and night came on before they were aware, that they payd what they ought, and took their leaue to depart.

Father *Willis* the Carrier that brought *Meg* vp to London, and had been thereaway to take money, and had received an hundred Markes; and for the next day he must out of Towne, he would that night needs to Westminster to see Long *Meg*. Hee and his man trudge downe apace, and as they came just against Saint *James* corner, there were they met by two tall fellowes, and rifled of all they had, their money taken from them, and they throwne bound in a ditch. When they had this coyne, saith the one, Now let vs be gone. Nay by the Masse, quoth the other, we haue sped well, and seeing wee haue so good hansell, wee'll haue one fling more whatsoeuer fall out. As thus they stood talking, they spyed Long *Meg*, and her companions: yonder are three wenches, quoth he, will yeeld vs something, and a tall squire that goes with them; lye that we be not spied. As *Meg* was coming downe, shee sayd to the two other Maides, Come set the better foot afore, 'tis late, and our Mistresse will think much we tarry so long. Lord blesse vs and send vs well home, quoth the other, for this is a dangerous corner. I haue heard them say, that Theeves lye heere and rob men as they passe. Theeves, quoth *Harry*? feare not theeues as long as I am in your company, for he dye before you take any wrong.

With that on they went, and as they past by where Father *Willis* lay, he saw them and cryed out; Alas good Gentlemen and Gentlewomen, helpe a poore man that lies bound here, robbed of that he bath. And there let him lye, quoth *Harry*, for I warrant they are theeues, that counterfeit themselves bound, to haue vs come to them. What man, quoth shee, art afraid? giue mee thy staffe; for by the grace of God I will goe see who it is: and if they be any false knaues, 'tis Shroue-tuesday at night, and I will giue them ribroast for a farewell to flesh: with that she tooke *Harris* staffe, and forward she went, and when shee came at them, Father *Willis* knew her, and cried out, Ah good *Meg*, helpe to vbinde mee, for I am vndone, and almost kild. Why what art thou? I am, quoth hee, *Willis* the Carrier, who brought you vp to London. Alas poore man quoth shee, and so she vnloosed him, and questioned with him how the matter fell out? He told her all, that coming to see her he was rob'd. She bade him be of good cheare, and take no care, for she would do her best towards his losses. And as they were walking homeward, one of the theeues with a good sword and buckler stept before, and said, Stand. Stand, quoth *Meg*, what meane you by that? Marry, quoth hee, Gentlemen, 'tis hot weather, and you must goe lighter home by your gownes and purses. You looke not with the face, quoth *Meg*, as though you would hurt women. As thus they were talking together, *Harry*, Father *Willis* and his man, ran away and hid themselves, and the two wenches stood quaking for feare, and presently put off their gownes and their purses. Dispatch, quoth one of the theeues, and off with your gowne, and so fare you well. It shall be done sir, quoth shee. As soone as *Meg* had stript her into her petticoate, and was light and nimble, she stept to her staffe, and stretching her selfe, said: Sirs, this is the matter, you tooke euen now a hundred Markes from a poore Carrier, now you rascals I am come to claime it, and I will haue it enery penny ere I passe, or I will leaue my carkasse here for a pawne. Shee is a good Wench I warrant her, quoth one of the Theeues; and therefore for thy sake take vp your gownes and your pursues, and farewell, and pray for good fellows. Nay, you cowardly knaues, quoth she, we must not part so. I must

haue a hundred Markes out of your flesh ; and therefore play me this faire play : you are two to one, lay me downe the hundred Markes to our gownes and our purses, and they that win all weare all, I or you. Content, quoth the theeues, and because thou art so lusty, when we haue well beswindged thee, wee'll turne thee into thy smocke, and let thee goe home naked. Doe your worst, quoth she : now lasses pray for me : With that she buckled with these two sturdy knaues, and hurt the one sore, and beat downe the other, that they intreated her vpon their knees to spare their liues. I will villaines, quoth she, vpon Condition. Any condition Mistresse, quoth they whatsoever. Marry then, quoth she, the conditions shall be these :

- 1 First, that you neuer hurt woman, nor company that any woman is in.
- 2 *Item*, that you hurt no poore man, or impotent man.
- 3 *Item*, that you rob no children nor innocents.
- 4 *Item*, that you rob no Pack-men nor Carriers : for their goods nor money is none of their owne.
- 5 *Item*, no manuer of distressed persons : but of this I grant you exceptions, that for euery rich Farmer and country chuffe that hoord vp money, and lets the poore want, such spare not, but let them feele your fingers.

How say you, quoth she, are you content to agree to these conditions ? We are, quoth they. I haue no bookes about me, quoth she : but because you shall obserue your oath firme and without wauering, sweare on the skirt of my smocke. Although it grieued them to be thus disgraced, yet feare made them grant to any thing : and taking her smocke, they layd their hands on it, and said thus :

Be we leefe or be we loath,

By the skirt of your smocke, we will neuer breake our oath

With that they kist her smocke, and rose up. And *Meg* shee gaue the wenches their gownes and their purses, and tooke the hundred Markes vp vnder her arme, bade them farewell.

The men desiring to know who it was that had so lustily beswindged them, said : nay Mistresse for all this sorrow, let vs haue

so much fauour at your hands, as to tell your name. She smiled and made them this answer :

If any aske you, who curried your bones ?

Say, Long Meg of Westminster met with you once.

And with that shee went away ; and they full of grieft that a woman had giuen them a foyle.

CHAP. X.

Containing how Harry the Oastler was prest, how she used the Constable and Captaine, and how she tooke presse-money to goe to Bulloigne.

IN these daies while *Meg* flourish't, and was famous thorow England for her doughty deeds : there fell out great strife between the French King and *Henry* King of England : whereupon he resolued to leuie an Army of men, with a mighty Fleet to passe into France ; vpon which there was a general presse through England, and especially about London and Westminster, because the King would leaue the borders of his Land strong. In this hurly burly it so fell out, that the Constable of Westminster pressed *Harry* the Ostler, that was servant with Long *Meg* ; who being very loth to goe, dealt so with *Meg*, that shee began to intreat the Constable, and to tell him that he was the only stay of his Mistresses house : and if that he were prest forth, his Mistresse were vndone.

All this could not persuade the Constable, but *Harry* must needs goe. Whereupon *Meg* said he should not goe. And so they grew at words, till *Meg* lent the Constable a box on the eare. And with that all the street was on an vproare, that the Constable was beaten for pressing of a man. The Captaine hearing this, came downe himselfe, and askt who had strucke the Constable ? Marry, quoth *Meg*, that haue I ; and were it not that I reuerence all Souldiers, and honour Captaines, I would

strike thee too, if thou didst offer to presse our man. At this the Captaine smiled. Nay, neuer laugh, quoth *Meg*, for I dare doe as much as any of thy Troope, either aduancing my Colours, tossing of a Pike, or discharging of a Peece: for prooffe, quoth shee, (and shee snateht a Caluer out of ones hand that stood by) see how well I can both charge and discharge; which shee performed with such nimblenesse and actiuitie, that they all wondred at her: and therefore Captaine, quoth shee, presse not our man; but if thou wilt needs haue one of euery house, giue me presse-money, and I will goe under thy Colours. At this they all laught, and the Captaine drew his purse and gaue her an Angell. Whereupon according to her promise, shee made prouision for her passage, and went with him to Bulloigne.

CHAP. XI.

Containing how she beat the French-men from the walls of Bulloigne, and behaued her self so valiantly, that the King gaue her eight peece a day for her life.

AFTER the KING had passed over the Sea, and had entered vp into France with a strong power, hee encamped before Bulloigne, and then first wonne Bulloigne, and the Oldeman, so that he tooke the 'Towne wholly in possession, and plac'd a garrison in it. The *Dolphin* of France vpon this came downe with a great power, and lay before Bulloigne; and vpon one night taking aduantage of the time, hee slew one of the Sentinels, and came to the walls, where he was discovered by the Watch, who straight rung alarum: but they in the 'Towne wearied with long waking, were in a dead sleepe, so that they made little haste. *Meg* being then a Landresse in the Towne, and vp late at worke, stept vp, and called vp the rest of the women, and with a halbert in her hands, came to the walls, vpon which some of the French were entred, and there shee layd on loade, and caused her women souldiers to throw downe stones and scalding water

in such abundance, that mangre their teeth shee rebatted them from the wals, before the Souldiers in the towne were up in armes; and at the issue was one of the formost with her Halbert to follow the chase.

The report of this valiant deed being come to the eares of the King, he for her life time gaue her eight pence a day.

CHAP. XII.

Containing the combate shee had with a French-man before the walls of Bulloigne, and what was the issue of the combat.

WHILE the *Dolphin* army lay in view before Bulloigne, there was a French-man that sundry times would as on a brauery come within shot and tosse his Pike, and so goe his way. Long *Meg* seeing the pride of this French-man, desired that a Drum might be sent, to signifie that there was a common Souldier, a young stripling, that would at the push of the pike try a vey with their Champion. Upon this it was agreed, and a place appointed between both armies where they should meet, and fight it out to the death. The day came, the French-man all in a jollity came and tost his Pike before the Walles. With that *Meg* was ready, and went out and met him, and without any salutations they fell to blowes, where there was a long and dangerous Combate; but at last *Meg* oucrthrew him, and layd him along; when she had done, she puld out her Symeter and cut off his head: and with that pulling off her Burganet, shee let her haire fall about her eares; whereby the French-men perceined she was a woman: and thereupon the English without Bulloigne gave a great shout; and *Meg* by a Drumme sent the *Dolphin* his Souldiers head, and said, an English Woman sent it him. Whereupon he commended her much, and sent her an hundred Crownes for her valour.

CHAP. XIII.

Containing her coming into England, how she was married, and how she behaved herself to her husband.

WHEN the warres were ended in France, *Meg* came home to her old place of residence to Westminster, where shee was married to a proper tall man, and a Souldier, who vsed her very well, and shee returned him as great obedience, coueting any way that shee might to breed his content: which hee perceiuing, loued her passing well; yet for that he had heard sundry of her exploits that shee had done, and how mankind she was, on a time he sought to pick a quarrell and fall out with her, and calling her aside vnto a backe chamber, stript her into her petticoate, and there deliuered her one staffe, and tooke himselfe another, and told her, that for that hee had heard shee was so mankind as to beat all shee met withall, he would try her manhood, and therefore bade her take which cudgell she would. She replied nothing, but held downe her head. And with that hee layd her on three or foure blowes. And shee in all submission fell downe vpon her knees, desiring him to hold his hands and to pardon her. Why, quoth he, why take you not the sticke and strike? Husband, quoth she, whatsoeuer I haue done to others, it behoueth me to bee obedient towards you; and neuer shall it be said, though I can swindge a Knaue that wrongs me, that Long *Meg* shall be her Husbands master: and therefore vse me as you please. At these words they grew friends, and neuer after fell they at such mortall jarre.

CHAP. XIV.

Containing a pleasant jest, how she vsed the angry Miller of Epping in Essex.

MEG going one day with sundry of her neighbours to make merry in Essex all a foot, because the weather was coole, and it was a great Frost, and none with them but a young strip-

ling of some foureteene yeeres old, for their husbands about businesse were gone another way; it chanced that they went by Epping Mill, where the Miller was looking out, for the wind blew faire, and the Sailes went merrily. The little boy, that was a wag, thought to be merry with the Miller, and therefore called to him, Miller put out, put out Miller. What shall I put out boy, quoth the Miller? Marry, quoth the boy, a theeues head, and a theeues pair of eares, put out Miller, put out. At this the Miller in great rage came running downe and beat the boy. *Meg* stept to him and would haue stayed his hand; and the Miller lent her three or foure good bangs ouer the shoulder. *Meg* felt it smart, and shee got within the Miller, wroong the sticke out of his hand, and beswinged him well: and when she had done sent the boy up for an empty sacke, and put the Miller in all but the head, and then tying him in the rope wherewith they puld vp sackes, hal'd him halfe way, and there let him hang. Where the poore Miller cried out for helpe, and if his wife had not bene comming, himselfe had bene almost kil'd, and the Mill for want of corne set on fire. Thus *Meg* plagued the sawcie Miller of Epping.

CHAP. XV.

Containing the mad prank shee played with a Water-man of Lambeth.

LONG *Meg* on a time had occasion to crosse the water with a Sculler from Westminster: when shee was landed, frankly she drew her purse and gaue him a groat: as she was going vp the staires (for all she had dealt so liberally with him) he began to hum: which she hearing, came backe againe, and questioned which of them all she had behaued her self so ill vnto, as to deserue a hum at their hands? Every man excused himselfe, and seemed verry sorry; for she was well beloued of all the Watermen: but at last one said flat, it was he that brought her ouer. Then Gentlemen, quoth she, give me leaue to reuenge my owne wrong. Doe what you will, quoth they. Then she stept straight

to him that brought her ouer, and with a stretcher beat him while he was not able to stirre him : after by the middle she tyed him to the sterne of the Boat with a great rope, and then taking the sculls her selfe, rowed him over at the boats arse, and so crost the water once or twice ; and when she had well waslit him, she landed him at Westminster, and bade him remember how he misused any honest face, and taking a piece of chalke, wrote on the wall hard by the staires :

If any man aske who brought this to passe,
Say it was done by a Lancashire Lasse.

CHAP. XV.

Containing how she kept a house at Islington, and what lawes she had there to be obserued.

AFTER her marriage shee kept a house of her owne, and lodging and victuals for Gentlemen and Yeomen, such and so good, as there was none better in all Islington, for there then shee dwelt. Now for that oftentimes there resorted Gentlewomen thither, and diuers braue Courtiers and other men of meaner degree, her house was spoken of: and on a time the Constable came to search, and would not bee answered what guests she had, but needs would be an eye-witnesse. Whereupon *Meg* in a great choller started vp in her smocke, and taking a strong cudgell in her hand, opened the doore for the Constable. Come in, master Constable, quoth she, and let me see your warrant, what suspected persons you seeke for in my house, take heed you goe not an inch beyond your text, for if you doe, were you a Constable of Velvet, I will as well beswindge you as any Constable was beswindged since Islington stood ; and when you haue done, you carry none out of my house to night, for I will be answerable for all that are resident in my house. Whereupon master Constable seeing the frownes of *Megs* face, and the fearefull Bastinado, told her quietly, he would take her word, and so departed.

Meg because shee would haue a tricke about all others in her house, as indeed shee surpassed all other victualers in excesse of company: for she refused none of what estate or condition soeuer; so she hanged vp this Table in her house, wherein were contained these principles:

1 *Imprimis*, That what Gentleman or Yeoman came into her house, and had any charge about him, and made it priuy to her or any of her house, if he lost it by any default, shee would repay it him ere he past: but if he did not reneale it, and after said he was rob'd, he should haue ten Bastinadoes with a cudgel, and be turned out of doores.

2 *Item*, Whosoeuer came in and cald for meat, and had no money to pay, should haue a good box on the eare, and a crosse made vpon his backe, that he should neuer be suffered to drink more in the house.

3 *Item*, That if any good fellow came in and bewailed his case, that hee was hungry and wanted money, he should haue his belly full of meat on free cost, and money in his purse, according to his calling.

4 *Item*, That if any Ruffler came in, and made an Alehouse-brawle, and when he had done, would not manfully goe into the field and fight a bout or two with *Long Meg*, the Maides of the house should drie beat him, and so thrust him out of doores.

These and many such principles had she set vp in her house, that made her house quiet.

CHAP. XVII.

Containing how she used Iames Dickins, that was called huffing Dicke.

ONCE it chanced that *Meg* was making her selfe readie to go to dinner with certaine of her friends at the Bell in Aldersgate street, amongst the which was Sir *Iames Withrington*, an old acquaintance of hers: and in the meane time while she was making her selfe ready, came in this huffing *Dicke*, that had made a vow to quarrell with *Long Meg*, and cal'd for Ale. The

Wench brought him a pot. And he straight in a brauery swore gogs wounds whore, what a pot is this that thou giuest me? and threw it against the wall. The wench began to scold with him for breaking her pot. And hee vp with his sword, scabberd and all, and beate her so, that the girle cryed out. And she being aboue, and hearing that noise, came running downe, and askt what is the matter? The poore wench cryed, and told her all. Sir, quoth she, very mildely, what is the reason you breake my pots, and then beat my seruants? Why, quoth *Dicke*, if thou mislikest it, mend it if thou canst. Marry, quoth she, I will; and with that reatcht downe a Pike staffe, and bade him follow. Out went swearing *Dicke*, all in his huffes with *Meg* into a close hard by; and together they goe: where *Meg* so beat him, that she had almost kil'd him. Oh hold thy hands, quoth hee, and spare my life. Then the Deuill take me, quoth shee: for the King hath granted me a pardon for one man; and hang me if it be not thou, vnlesse thou wilt grant me one condition, and that is this: Thou shalt put my Maides Petticotes on, and follow me to day to dinner with a Sword and a Buckler; and I will be drest in mans apparell. Rather kill me, quoth the fellow. Marry content, quoth *Meg*, and began to lay sorer bats vpon him.

Alas, quoth hee, hold your hands, and I will doe whatsoever you will haue me. Upon this she let him goe, and carried him home with her, and drest him full womanlike. Well bodied he was, but hee had a long beard, to couer which, on his knees he craued he might haue a muffler to shadow it; at last she granted it: and hauing drest her selfe in mans attire, tooke a Forest bill on her necke, and forward they went downe to Smithfield. Euery one that saw the wench carry the Sword and buckler, laught, that a multitude of people, of men, women, and boyes followed. When they were right against the Bulls-head at the Barres, a crue of cutters that knew long *Meg*, met her, and askt her how she did, and what quarrel shee had in hand, that her selfe wore a Forest bill, and her Maid a sword and buckler? Faith, quoth *Meg*, a little broyle, and my Boy was not at home, and so I tooke my Mayd, and shee forsooth must

weare a muffler : and with that shee pul'd the clout from his face, and his blacke beard was seene. All the crue straight knew him, and began to fall into a great laughter, demanding the reason of this strange chance. *Meg* told them all what had hapned : whereupon *Dicke* would not follow any further. By gogs bloud knave, quoth shee, goe to dinner with mee, or I will cut off thy legs with my Forest bill. So poore *Dicke* was fain to trudge ; and in she came and shewed Sir *James Withrington* what a proper Page shee had got. Hee and the rest of the guests laugh heartily at the matter ; and full mannerly did he waite upon her trencher all dinner time : and when dinner was done, shee called him to her, and said : Now sirrah I discharge you my seruice, and cashiere you for a brawling Knave ; yet for that you shall not say you served an ill Mistresse, hold, there is forty shillings for thy labour to buy thee a new suit of apparell. *Dicke* took the mony, and for very shame went out of London, and was neuer seene within the City after.

CHAP. XVIII.

Containing how she was sicke, and visited by a Frier, who enjoyned her pennance ; and what absolution she gaue him after for his paines.

IN Queene *Maries* dayes, when Friers and Monks began againe to shew themselues, it chanced *Meg* fell sicke of a grieuous sicknesse, as such grosse bodies are commonly pinched with sorest paines, when they once fall into any infirmity. The disease hauing more matter to worke vpon in a fat body than a leane : an instance of this principle was *Meg*, for shee lay so mortally sicke, that the Physicians gaue her ouer : yet at last her Criticall day came, wherein triall of her health should bee had to see whether Nature or disease were strongest. Nature had the supremacy, and *Meg* began to amend, insomuch that shee could sit vpright in her bed. On a day when shee was growne more strong, it chanced that Frier *Oliuer* who was one

of the morrow Masse Priests, called to remembrance that *Meg* was sicke: whereupon taking his Portuce by his side, hee thought to fetch some spending money from her, and walkt to her house, where he came very grauely; and at that instant were diuers of her neighbours come to see how she did. As they were talking, word was brought to *Meg* that Frier *Oliver* was there with his Portuce and his holy water. What, quoth shee, after meat, mustard; 'tis no matter, bid him come in; and with that Frier *Oliver* comes in with *Deus hic*, and salutes her and all the rest of the Wives, saying, he was very sorry to see *Meg* sicke; but, quoth he, 'tis the Visitation of the Lord for the great sinnes you haue committed: for *Meg*, quoth he, you haue beene counted a lewd woman, a swearer, a ruffler, a fighter, and a brawler, as you may see here in your Chamber the signes; and with that he pointed to the Swords and Bucklers, Pike-staues and Halberts that hung there; these, quoth he, are tokens of your ill life, and how in your sicknesse you haue not repented you of your former ill life. Many such hard words did Frier *Oliver* giue her, and told her that for her offences she must take the pennance of the Church, otherwise, quoth he, I must complaine to the Ordinary, and so to the Bishop, and compell you to it by injunction.

Meg, who fretted at this sawcinesse of the Frier, because her neighbours were there, forbare him, and demanded what her pennance might be? Marry, quoth Frier *Oliver*, because you haue beene a publike offender, you must haue publike pennance; and therefore I doe enjoyne you that presently vpon the recovery of your health, the next Sunday at Masse you come into the Church, and there kneele before the Pulpit, and declare to the people the vilenesse of your life; and so shall you then and there before the Parish aske God and the world forgiuennesse.

At this the very fire seemed to sparkle in *Megs* eyes for anger, but shee concealed it with patience, and intreated Frier *Oliver* to be good vnto her and enjoyne her some other punishment. The good Wives intreated for her, but all in vaine: for Frier *Oliver* swore either she should abide that pennance, or else he would complaine to Bishop *Bonner*.

Why, quoth *Meg*, neuer knew I Frier but he was a good fellow; is there not a shift of descant left for me?

Faith no, quoth hee, vlesse thou bestow five pound for five solemne Masses. Marry Frier, quoth *Meg*, and that shalt thou haue straight, rather than I will abide such publike shame: with that shee cal'd her Maid, and bade her fetch twenty English Crownes, which she gaue to the Frier, whose heart leapt at the sight of the golde: hee soone pocketted it vp, and said, that he would say five Masses himselfe for her soules health. And vpon this *Meg* and the Frier were agreed. Well, all seemed to the best, and the company began to be merry. Frier *Oliuer* hee was blithe and gamesome with the young Wives, and shewed fruits of his life in his outward actions: for a more bawdy Frier there was not in England, and that knew *Meg* well enough: but letting that passe, the wvies said that they must be gone, for their houre was come.

Why, whither goe you, quoth *Meg*? To a Churching at Chelsey, quoth they. Marry and I will be your man thither, quoth Frier *Oliuer*. The wvies were glad of the Friers company, and so they tooke their leaues, and left *Meg* passing melancholy at the knauery of the Frier. Well, revenge broyled in her brest, insomuch that she start vp (sicke as she was) and drest her selfe in mans apparell, and in the afternoone hauing a good bat in her hand, walked easily into Tuttlefields to watch the comming home of the Frier: where she had not walked long, but she espied where the Gossips came, man'd only with the Frier. And *Meg* crost the Lees and met them; and at her first salute, greeted the Frier, and said: *Oliuer*, I am sent to thee from God, not onely to tell thee of thy sinnes, but to enjoyn thee penance for the same. First, as concerning thy offences, thou liuest not as holy men of the Church should: for thou art a whoremaster, frequenting the company of light and lasciuious women, giuen to couetousnesse, and sitting all day bibbing at the Ale-house, when thou shouldest bee at thy booke, with a thousand more other offences, which I cannot rehearse; therefore hath the Lord sent thee thy choice, whether thou wilt from this place be whipt naked to the Priory in Westminster, or else pay

pay twenty Nobles to the poore mens box ; one of these resolve vpon ; for Frier, one thou must doe, and shalt doe, before thou stirre. At this Frier *Oliuer* was amazed, and could not tell how he should like this sudden greeting, but said, Who or what art thou ? No man, Frier (quoth *Meg*) but a spirit, sent from God to torment thee. At this the Wives were all afraid : and the Frier sayd, *In nomine Iesus* auoid Satan, and would haue runne his way. *In nomine Iesus* stand Frier, quoth *Meg*, and with that she reacht him such a rap, that the Frier thought his backe had bene broken : Sirrah, quoth shee, dispatch, either chuse to be whipt from hence to the Doctor, or else pay downe twenty Nobles. Alas quoth the Frier, I haue not twenty Nobles, but here is ten Angels in gold, and foureteene shillings in white money, take that for a satisfaction of mine offences, giue it for my sinnes to the poore.

Giue it me, quoth *Meg*. As soone as she fingered the money, she told him, that seeing he wanted some odde money, that his body should pay it : and with that she light vpon the Friers pilch, and beat him so sore, that he trusted better to his feet than his hands, and so ran away.

The poore Women they were sore agast, but *Meg* straight discouered her selfe. When they saw her face, and knew all, their feare was turned to laughter ; and away they went to the Tauerne, and spent the Friers foureteene shillings in good cheere. The newes of this (as Women are good Secretaries) came to the eares of all the Friers in Westminster, how Frier

Oliuer was serued, which was such a disgrace
to him, that a long while after he was
ashamed to shew his face in
the streetes.

F I N I S.



16-4-75

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