

eColenso

Ghost story

Supplement to Volume 7 number 8 August 2016.

ISSN 1179-8351.



Introduction

Two papers by Wiliam Colenso have been overlooked by historians and biographers.

On Christmas Eve 1884, 50 years after leaving his home town, a nostalgic Colenso wrote a paper for Penzance: "A few stray thoughts on W. Cornwall (Mount's Bay) and our Cornish Botany."

His manuscript is preserved in the Morrab Library, Penzance (Ref: ER234); it will be published in the June 2017 issue of *eColenso*. It was written as a communication to the Penzance Natural History and Antiquarian Society and was read by the secretary Mr E.D. Marquand on 19 March 1885. The *Cornish Telegraph* report of the meeting in the Society's minute book concludes, "The paper was listened to with close attention, and at its close a vote of thanks was cordially awarded to the author, who is a member of the society and actively interested in its proceedings."

A year later the *Royal Cornwall Gazette* of Friday 19 February 1886 reported,

Natural History Society. — The Natural History and Antiquarian Society held their monthly meeting on Friday evening. The chair was occupied by Mr. W. Bolitho, jun. (president). The following papers were read:— "Marazion," by Mr. R. N. Worth, Plymouth; "The Solomon Islands," by Mr. Guppy, R.N.; "Ghost Story," by the Rev. W. Colenso, of Napier, New Zealand; "An Old Cross," by the Rev. S. Rundle; and "Plants and Animals," by Mr. Ralfs....

"Ghost Story"? An unlikely William Colenso subject. Fortunately Colenso's paper was published in two issues of the *Cornishman* on 18 and 25 February 1886. It is transcribed here.

THE PENZANCE NATURAL HISTORY AND ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

Held a monthly meeting on Friday, the president, Mr. W. Bolitho, of Ponsandane, in the chair. There was average attendance....

Papers were read on Marazion (Mr. Worth the author) on the Solomon islands, by the author, Mr. Guppy, R.N., interesting in its account the various modes of fishing there and illustrated by a large number of photographs taken by himself, and by specimens of the *foraminifera* of the group; on recollections of Old Penzance, by the Rev. W. Colenso, of Napier, New Zealand, read by Mr. G. B. Millett; and on plants and animals, by Mr John Ralfs....

RECOLLECTIONS OF OLD PENZANCE, BY A PENZANCE SEPTUAGENARIAN ; WRITTEN FROM THE ANTIPODES, AFTER 50 YEARS' ABSENCE FROM HIS NATIVE TOWN AND LAND.

"I could a tale unfold!"—*Shakespeare*

Lord Byron has somewhere said, "Nothing as difficult as a beginning;" and this remark, I think, is just that old and practical adage of the English school-boys that "the first blow is half the battle," only put into more poetical or polite language.

For some time I have been thinking of putting down on paper a few jottings, or reminiscences, of Old Penzance; including two veritable ghost-stories! Nay, don't start, reader or hearer, for while they were true enough, they were soon proved to be as illusory and foundationless as the modern raisings by Professor Pepper, and others of that ilk.

One of the chief causes that have led me into this direction is a remark in a paper by a member the Penzance natural history and antiquarian society, Miss Courtney, on "Ghosts

and witchcraft," (*Trans*, 1881-2;) another is the very clear recollection I have of Old Penzance—of very Old Penzance, I think I may say, (and as some will allow, ere I close this portion of my subject;) a third being a desire that I have of my truthful relation of local ghost-stories proving beneficial towards dispelling any remaining tendencies in that direction still upheld or believed in Penzance or West Cornwall.

The Penzance of the last century and the Penzance of to-day are two widely different places, objects, subjects. And that not merely in its enlarged area, new and improved streets and the modern buildings, both public and private, but also in its manners, customs, and beliefs; which, no doubt, arose, and in a great measure confirmed and continued, through its great and peculiar isolation at the extreme end of England. Of the inhabitants of West Cornwall, descendants of the ancient Britons, it might again be truly enough said,—

*"Penitus toto divisos orbe Britannos."**

My clear, aye vivid, recollection goes back to that peaceful and homely time when the little, old, quaint, queer, and quiet town was contented and comfortable in her seclusion and in her ignorance, and in being quite out of the way of the world. When a resident, a retired gentleman, who had seen much of life at home and abroad, (Mr. Anstey,) could praise her highly in a poem he there published, entitled "Penzance;" in which two lines ran—

"Prevailing fashion here on Sabbath days,
In gilded show ne'er dares to lift her head,"

The antiquated and peaceful town of my birth and earliest recollection presented many curious features; chief among them were—its low-roofed houses, with very small windows, many of them being thatched with straw (or wheaten reed,)—its narrow, irregular streets, often without any curb or way for foot-passengers, and where such did exist only very narrow and curiously paved with small and slippery blue beach

pebbles set on their edges, (admirable walking in times of frost!)—its numerous, large, bulky, granite steps, outside the stairs of private houses as well as shops, with a few inches of space substantially fenced and railed in under their small and often angular jutting bay-windows, and all three encroaching terribly on those narrow streets and still narrower foot-paths. There were also the huge stone horseblocks by most of the ***-doors, and the wide, open shallow gutters, across which, when water was plentiful at the public shoots and they were filled to overflowing, (which was always the case save in the short dry season,) it took us (little hoys) a good jump, with a run, to cross clean over dry-footed.

Then there were the many large, dilapidated, and ruined houses, or blocks of houses, in the heart of the town, that had long been in that wretched state (owing, I believe, to some Chancery suit, a kind of "*Jarndyce and Jarndyce*"!) As, for instance, where the "London" inn now stands, and all the houses adjoining in North-street up to the "Duke of Cumberland" inn; and all the block between the "Globe" and the "Seven stars" inns; and last and chiefest, where the "Western" hotel now stands, and all that south entrance to Clarence-street, of which particular spot and its "Old house" I shall have more to say further on, the same being the scene of one of my ghost stories. This old ruin was celebrated by the Rev. C. V. Le Grice, in a rather long but very spirited and agreeable dithyrambic poem, entitled, "The petition of an old uninhabited house in Penzance," (published by T. Vigers, and embellished with a truthful copperplate frontispiece of that very ancient building in its ruinous state). Mr. Le Grice, who very frequently walked into Penzance from his house at Trereife to his ministerial duties at St. Mary's, having to pass and repass the same on his way.

But the corners!—the principal corner-houses and shops of the *old* town; what pen can fully describe them as they once really existed? Not a few of them were pulled down and rebuilt in my early days, and no doubt many more since. The first corner-house (and shop) that I clearly recollect being

* even to Britannia, that land completely separated from the world (Virgil)

rebuilt was that of Messrs. Broad and Sens, drapers, in the Lower Market-place. Well do I remember the great sensation caused by the erection of that (then) splendid building, with its granite pillars! Then came the demolition of the old, low-roofed shop of Messrs. Brinsel and Sons (corner of the Green-market; then followed that Mr. Pidwell, draper, directly opposite, whose shop-roof was even lower still, as the passer-by could place his hand upon it! Then came that of Mr. Lavars, draper, at the corner of New-street; then that quaint old building, with its low thatched roof, ye!ept the "Shoulder-of-mutton" inn, at a projecting corner in the Green-market, long kept by William Tryshall. This building was both the *bête noir* and the dread of the folks of Penzance every June,—in the two jolly fireworks' seasons of the olden time, Midsummer and St. Peter's eves,—owing to its large thatched roof and to the open space in the Green-market being one of our places of head quarters for flinging squibs and crackers and serpents and rockets. Then there was another great alteration at the corner of Queen-square and Market-place, when Mr. H. Molyneux, draper, made his wonderful transformation of the large private dwelling-house that stood there with its immense, high, double flight of steps! (completely blocking the whole curb, which at that one spot happened to be wide,) to be a large draper's establishment, by far the largest shop in the whole town. That alteration was followed by the destruction of the next building to it—a small low shop, occupied by a Mr. Bullock, ironmonger, which formed the corner of the narrow irregular street leading to the South-parade and the Folly fields.

There were also the few old public buildings of the same grade—all low! very low! 1st, the market-house, with its guildhall and its big, carved, and brilliantly-coloured royal coat-of-arms over its inner entrance, fronting the judicial seat; with the town-arms—John-the-Baptist's head in a charger, boldly done in *alto relievo*, and fixed on the wall over the outer entrance; where, also, in the olden time, a low flight of well-worn semi-circular stone steps led straight up to

it, with an additional flight of narrow break-neck, wooden stairs within. These however, were afterwards all removed, and one long narrow stone approach placed sideways instead. This building was standing in its entirety when I left England. Of this edifice the "Old House," its "complaint" (*supra*), says

"Old market-house, that look'd so grim.
Is now a beau, quite spruce and trim:
The Baptist's head, in profile larger,
Spreads o'er the margin of the charger."

2nd, the Post-office. This was a remarkably small building: indeed only a private residence. Its post-office was one small room with a very small window. It was kept by a peculiar-looking old gentleman named Fleming, who was one of the few in the town who still retained the *queue* to their hair. It was situated in Chapel-street, next door the "Turk's-head" inn, between it and the residence of a Mr. Cornish, just opposite the Wesleyan chapel. Well do I remember it, and what trouble it caused me, when a child and sent thither by my grandfather to post a letter or to ask for any, as the narrow post-office window was high up, off a flight of stone steps, and I had to climb on to a very narrow plinth and hold on, while I tapped at the little delivery pane or dropped in a letter, and not unfrequently slipped down in so doing.

3rd, the dear old St. Mary's church, with, its humble, white-washed spire, and very low roof. This building, however, had been pulled down, and the walls of the present church nearly completed at the time of my leaving Penzance (early in 1834.) Well do I remember my *last* visit thither, in company with my very dear and highly respected friend, the Rev. T. H. Vyvyan, then its minister, whose valued letters to me in this land I still possess. I (or I may truly say we,) lost him too early. Our last conversation within its rising walls was as to the state I might probably find it on my return! Then spoken of as seven years!

And here (since I am on ghost stories) I may mention that, in the old times the common roadway for foot-passengers to and from the Quay, and places adjacent, lay through the

churchyard. 'The gates used to be regularly locked by the old sexton (Mitchell) about sunset. In my boyish days I was a great fisher, especially on a Summer evening, either from the outlying point of the Battery dock, or from the pierhead. Few of us, boys, ever liked, ever thought, of using the carriage-road below and round the old churchyard: indeed we very rarely ever did so. Rather than go by that way I have climbed the iron gates when locked, although not an easy task. In returning from fishing, when late and getting dark, we had to pass through the churchyard, if still open, and, of course over the many well-worn and flat tombstones beneath the pathway—a thing I never liked. And then nonsensical ghostly fears have arisen, and strange fancies carried the day, causing me to imitate Blair's frightened school boy:—

"Sudden! He starts, and hears, or thinks he hears,
The sound of something purring at his heels;
Full fast he flies, and dare not look behind him
Till, out of breath, he overtakes his fellows."

I most not omit to mention the big and coarse granite cross that formerly stood boldly out in the open space in front of the public shoot on the eastern edge of the Green-market, and while there much in the way of increasing carriage traffic. Both, however, of these were removed, and relegated to the side-wall near by before I left. And then there were, also,

"Heavy penthouses, which frown'd,
A shadowy horror, on the ground."

(So said the Rev C. V. LeGrice, in his spirited dithyrambic,) though I confess, I like them much, with their ancient and bulky granite supports. Two were in the Green-market, and another at the "Star" inn corner of New-street.

Having pointed out what Old Penzance had and possessed in the building way, I will now briefly indicate what she lacked—in common matters.

(To be Continued.)

The *Cornishman* Thursday 25 February 1886

RECOLLECTIONS OF OLD PENZANCE, BY A PENZANCE SEPTUAGENARIAN ;

WRITTEN FROM THE ANTIPODES, AFTER 50
YEARS' ABSENCE FROM HIS NATIVE
TOWN AND LAND.

(Continued.)

STREETS, PAVEMENTS, CONVEYANCES NEWS
PAPERS, &c

In those earlier days we had no flat stone pavements or curb, save a very small portion in front Mr. Giddy's residence in Chapel-street (Mr. E. C. Giddy being often the Mayor of the old town);—no gas lamps; instead thereof, the most wretched and far-between little round-bottom lamps, fed with train oil, that only served make darkness visible in a dark winter's night; when, if it were stormy, they frequently, alas! Went out; and, too often, merely a single tallow candle, with a long, black, unsnuffed wick, burning by night in a shop window! No public coaches, or cabs, save the one royal mail-coach to and from Truro, which, to see depart from the "Union" hotel, in Chapel-street, was quite the event of the day! No local newspaper. The weekly *Royal Cornwall Gazette* and the *West Briton*, both hailing from Truro, were always anxiously sought and waited for, the coach sometimes belated in winter weather. No police: only three or four quiet, elderly townsmen, annually sworn-in as constables (turn and turn about,) who had, in those piping times of peace and quietness, nothing to do! While, in matters of religion, the little peaceful town had no assuming Ritualistic priests, on the one hand, nor blatant misnamed Salvation army, on the other, disturbing its quietude; all such heterogeneous, aberrant, and bizarre creatures not having then been hatched! Which of these two classes being the worse, and the furthest from reason and truth, I do not care to decide.

I have said, Penzance then possessed no public coaches nor cabs. This, however, I must qualify: for I recollect the *one* cab, car, or vehicle, called a "kittareen." It was so named by Rev. C. V. Le Grice, in his poem abovementioned; and whence or how that unique name originated I don't know. Certain I am it is not the true Cornish. Besides this there were also a couple of sedan chairs, often called into use by nights. I wonder if there are any such now in use!

BUT TO RETURN TO THE "OLD HOUSE."

Penzance men of my age will, no doubt, recollect its main features. It was a large, square, three-storey, granite building, retired from the street, having had originally a pretty large garden in front (in which, however, nothing grew for many years but very large docks (*rumex obtusifolius*), and through which, from their undisturbed rankness, it was a difficult matter to force one's way. The entrance from the street was through massy, square-built, granite columns with a flight of semi-circular steps leading up to the front door, and very high brick walls enclosing the garden at its sides. Its roof was flat, and covered with lead. The glass of its rectangular and small windows had long disappeared, together with much of their frame-work (in part, through us boys!) Inside was its furniture, once handsome, in miscellaneous heaps, all rotting. Among it were crimson-seated chairs, studded with large brass nails; and mahogany tables, higgledy-piggledy, anyhow, partly broken and covered deep with dust and dirt. The stairs had given way in many places, so that it was almost a perilous task to climb to the top of the house by the front or main staircase. To do this one had to dive below the cellar and work one's way up, anyhow, through the mouldering and dusty furniture and rotten structure. The uppermost floor, however, of the big room, the eastern end, was in a little better state, but the doors of the room were all more or less unhinged and broken, the only apparently sound one still standing in its place being the big, thick, front door.

Our aim, as boys, was to get on the flat roof. Once there all was well, the view being extensive. But (as far as I can recol-

lect) only two lads besides myself ever got on to the roof. I, however, made several solitary visits there. One, and the principal, of our fears was that the ruins were haunted, which everyone thoroughly believed; and I confess that the getting down and out into the open was almost invariably accompanied with much fear and dread, as we had to go warily about it, no one liking to be the last! It was then truly a helter-skelter, *saute qui peut*! I have been on the top of that building exulting at having attained my object; suddenly I have heard some noise in the ruins below my feet (perhaps a rat, or some falling rotten furniture, or the queer moanings of the wind,) when such a tremor and fear has taken hold on me that I would have "given the world" to get down by some other way. Such is the result of evil, or thoughtless teachings in childhood.

The old, uncanny premises bore a very bad name. Many were the strange stories I had heard of it and of its former owners, in my infancy, and well do remember that not a few grown-up persons disliked passing by the ruins at night.

One early and dry winter there was suddenly a talk, *oui dire*, raised among the residents in Alverton-street, that

THE GHOST

had been seen the night before in those premises; those who saw it having fled in terror and dismay. And, sure enough, on the following night, about 8 o'clock, a pretty large number of superstitious expectants were gathered together in the usually quiet and empty street to see the said ghost! And I, too, half believing the report, had joined them. I well recollect that they kept pretty far away from getting directly in front of the old building, fearing, perhaps, the probable consequence of their temerity. Hence those who were behind were the more inclined to press and shove forward those who were before them, because from where they (the hindmost) stood they could not even see the ruins. In a short time, however, the fearful cry was raised. "*The ghost! the ghost! there it is !!*" Some women among the crowd shrieked, and withdrew pretty fast; others half fainted; and there was great confusion

though not much noise.

I saw, myself, through the broken windows a spectral looking light, moving slowly about in the upper eastern room, which it was easy to magnify and distort. Sometimes it disappeared altogether. Again one could see the reflection of it in the back part of the room. And, anon, it would be brighter, and apparently be nearing the broken window-apertures, as if coming out. And then a regular stampede took place. It certainly moved for some considerable time in this manner before it finally disappeared, when the crowd dispersed: some, may be, to go home and dream, if nothing worse.

Now at that time and for long before, a Mr. James Pascoe lived a little above, on that same side of the street in a large stone house whose front was closely covered with trained myrtles, up to the very eaves, with lilac trees growing in the narrow garden, and a splendid red peony and a fuchsia at the front of the inner flight of steps. (These I have often admired in their flowering season). Mr. Pascoe had a large walled garden behind, which was attended-to by a quiet, deaf, old gardener, named Stephen Bond; and when, on the day after this last appearance of the ghost (?) the matter became so much talked-of in that locality, it came out that old Stephen Bond had been up in that very room on the two nights in question, stringing up and laying out onions and other esculent roots and seeds for the winter; and the flickering moving light that was seen was that of his dim horn lantern!! It was a sad, sad, fall! *Sic transit gloria umbræ* I think the "Old House" never afterwards recovered its old haunted reputation.

THE REV. C. V. LE GRICE AND HIS POETRY.

I have more than once mentioned the name of a former minister of St. Mary's, Penzance—the Rev. C. V. Le Grice; also his peculiar poem *re* the "Old House." As I knew him

well, and have much to thank him for,* and very often of a Summer's evening met with him about the Alverton walks or rivers, or even in the pathway of Trereife fields, either coming into Penzance from his residence at Trereife or returning thither, (for he was a great pedestrian,) I would further remark that Mr. Le Grice was a not an unfrequent writer of poetry, mostly all serious or highly intellectual and scholarly. I make this observation here lest anyone of to-day, not having known him or his writings, might be led to suppose that Mr. Le Grice, in his poetical effusions, only wrote in a similar strain to that of the one poem I have quoted. I would, however, hope, that both the Rev. C. V. Le Grice and his numerous writings are still better remembered by my native townsmen. Among his later poetical pieces was a neat and simple hymn, which he wrote for the reopening of Morval church; and, as I happen to remember a couple of its stanzas I will set them down,—although I am not quite sure of the last two lines being correct; (I often repeat them.)

Though built by man this temple-gate,
The way by which it leads
The one not made with hands is straight,
If faith for mercy pleads.
For Mercy, while 'tis called to-day,
To plead, we'll hasten near;
E'en the first bell that bids to pray
Should greet our coming bier."

MY SECOND GHOST STORY.

Of this I cannot give the exact, or even the approximate, date, other than I think it must have happened early in the third decade of this century. Yet I shall give you such a distinct and positive relation as will enable you, there resident, to ascertain with very little trouble the exact date of the very day.* This affair which I am about relate, took place on Marazion-green, and eventually proved of great service to me, in curing me of believing any longer that fond and foolish su-

* Among other things his kindly giving me, on my leaving Penzance for the Southern Hemisphere, a letter of introduction to a gentleman high in office in Van Diemens' Land, should my ship touch there, which, however, it did not.

* I suppose this could be easily ascertained at the custom-house.

perstitious trash of ghosts and ghost-stories with which my youthful mind had been unhappily too well stored.

Before, however, that I begin story, let me say a few words respecting Marazion-green; that is the Marazion-green of old, such as I once knew it to be. At that time the walk from Penzance to Marazion was pre-eminently a lonely one; a traveller might not meet with foot-passenger during the whole journey; rarely so after passing over Ponsandane bridge. (And I well recollect the little old bridge, which stood much more on the Gulval side of the present turnpike road.) It was, however, a walk that always delighted me; up and down over the undulating grassy turf, where a few of my prized and scarce botanical treasures were to be found: and anon down on the sandy beach, conning its many denizens—the various sea- and shore-birds, especially at low water: the beach being then so level and so hard, proved very nice walking.

I, too, had to visit Marazion pretty often; for my uncle (whose name I bear) resided there, and with him my eldest sister, then very young; and to my uncle I often had to take letters; the post office, I presume, being then under far different regulations to what it is now, both as to the frequency of the mails and the amount of postage for letters. (One thing anent the same I well remember—that a letter from London to Penzance always cost one shilling! To which I may add that the modern luxuries of envelopes and postage-stamps were still unknown!)

Well, one day I was sent by my father with a message to my uncle. It was, I think, a winter's day; at all events it was a stormy one—a day long remembered there, or, more particularly, the night preceding. On that night the wind blew a hurricane, when an unfortunate ship named the *Claremont*, was driven, stem on, in the darkness and tempest, on that terrible outlying reef of rocks called Long Rock, and all hands on board perished. She was bound from Gallipoli to England and laden with oil.

I cannot say that I knew of this wreck before I left Penzance: indeed I don't think I did, as news in those days did

not travel quickly. Be that as it may, I soon saw the remaining portion of the hull of the ship on those rocks; for she was already broken-up, and the shore for a long distance strewn with the wreckage and cargo. So much of the oil had run out into the sea that the breakers were all coloured with it, and the yellow surf that was furiously blown-in in feathers, over the land, was most disagreeable, being so very oily. Long before I had got abreast of the wreck I saw a great number of countrymen from the villages near down on the beach, but the tide had not yet ebbed sufficiently, and they could not get out to the ship or to what remained of her.

On a portion of the green turf (almost the last before I came to "Half-way house," or the second milestone on that road,) I saw a few articles of wreckage, that had been brought up from the beach and placed there; and, a little further on, on the same turf, a black tarpaulin spread out, as if to cover something beneath it, and kept down by four stones on the four corners. Boy-like, led by curiosity and no one there, I lifted the tarpaulin. Didn't I start! There lay the headless body of a young sailor, with torn and smashed breast, &c., but with a pair of thick blue trousers securely fastened on him, and also his boots. I afterwards learned that this was the body of the unfortunate captain.

Leaving this sad sight I wended my way to the big crowd, below on the beach, but I did not stay long there among them, owing to the strong sea-wind and the unpleasant oily surf flying above our heads and thickly strewn below on the sands. So I resumed my journey to Marazion, and was right glad when I got there.

In the afternoon the weather increased in violence; and, as I had to return that day, my uncle decided that I should do so by the daily Penzance covered waggon, (Pascoe's, I think) which would be going through Marazion about 6 or 7 o'clock in the evening. During the day we heard that three four more of the bodies of the unfortunate crew had been washed-up, and that all of them, including that of the captain which I had seen, were placed in a small solitary rope-walk house,



PENZANCE

FERRY SHIP
Isles of Scilly (P) (Summer)

St Michael's Mount and remains of the Priory (Benedictine)

that stood at the end of an enclosed field and rope-walk not far from the western end of Marazion bridge, there to await the inquest. Now that house with its red-tiled roof had always been well-known to me, for it stood close to the high, wooden, rustic stile which terminated the footpath that lay through that field.

And here I may observe that this eastern end of the Green was narrowed and more broken, and not such pleasant walking as the western end of the same. Hence it was that this footpath, which commenced at Long Bridge (the high-road to Ludgvan) and was smooth, dry, and pleasant walking, was almost invariably chosen by pedestrians.

Owing to the weather and the state of the road, the waggon was late that evening. My uncle resided in a retired street, some distance from the main street, and I had to go up to the inn (twice I recollect) to enquire after that waggon. On my third and last visit, I found the waggon had passed on, but was told that I might overtake it. I set out to do so, rather unwillingly; and I soon found that, do what I could, I should not overtake the waggon: and when, after much stumbling, I got as far as Marazion-bridge (which I could scarcely see in the darkness) I had a great mind to return to my uncle's house. But I knew he would be angry with me, not merely because the letters I was carrying would not reach Penzance that night (which they should do,) but because I had not kept a better look-out for the waggon, which he had particularly enjoined, being taken-up with looking at pictures with my sister, the night, too, being so dark and dreary outside.

Persevering, however, and crossing over the bridge, I soon had to diverge from the main road (always in those days heavy there) towards the stile and red house, when the lonely mournful wail of the sandpiper burst on my ears! Then I suddenly thought on those dead bodies in that house, and, in particular, that of the captain which I had seen in the morning, and I felt indescribably wretched! Words fail me. I would have given any and everything I had to have been far away from that spot; or to have had a companion—one; or ev-

en to have had light. Everything evil, foolish, superstitious, haunted me! However, I kept on, how I scarcely can tell. I could not even whistle, like Blair's schoolboy, to keep up my courage—for I had none left, and my tongue clave to my mouth. And though the wind was high, and the breakers bounding and booming on the beach, and the sandpipers ever and anon fitfully uttering their mournful wail: still, in feeling about in the darkness for that old stile and passing the dreaded spot with averted face, I fancied I heard something rustling within the red-roofed hut.

Didn't I run! I was not long in that field; for, though I could not well see any thing around, the said footpath was close to the hedge and also well beaten, I kept in it until I got to the Long Bridge, when I halted to draw breath, and sheltered awhile, sitting down under the bank. Continuing my journey, from Long Bridge to the Half-way house I met no one: of course I didn't expect to do so. I was soon abreast of the scene of the wreck, and then had to pass the bit of Green where I had seen, in the morning, the headless body of the poor captain. This was another trial, but it was soon over.

A little longer and more than half of my solitary journey would be over, for I was near Ponsandane; and, wet though was, I was gladdened at the thought.

For the last half-hour, or so, the wind blew in strong gusts, with driving rain, which stung my face considerably, so that I was obliged to pull my hat well down over my eyes and keep my head low down, and breast the weather and stagger on against it as best I could; every now and then making a false step in the narrow, worn, ridgy pathway (like ruts) on that part of the Green, the land there being more open and flat.

Suddenly, on lifting my head, I saw an upright object before me! I stood aghast and trembling! What could it be? There it was—grey and solemn-looking, and, not far off, dimly seen through the driving rain. Everything I had heard or read of ghosts and demons and horrors of that kind rushed vividly into my imagination. I seemed surrounded by all manner of inconceivable and hideous things; the noises of the

wind and sea were transformed into supernatural howlings. My blood ran cold. Such was the effect on my imagination that even now, at this moment of writing, (though sixty years have intervened) I almost feel a return of the same. As a last resource I offered up a short ejaculatory prayer, and rushed towards the dreaded object with outstretched hands! It *was only the granite mill stone!*

In a moment I was frantic with joy. My feelings were overpowering. I stumbled and sat down, leaning against the stone. The cold rain soon brought me round, and I pursued my journey home. I had hurt my right hand a little, through its rude contact with the stone; but I had gained a most salutary and useful practical lesson,—never to be forgotten; one that effectually laid the strong foundation for utter disbelief of the foolish Cornish stories I had repeatedly heard from my childhood; one, moreover, that has proved of eminent service to me on several strange and trying occasions during my long residence in this wild country.

One further particular I may also mention, just to show the very deep impression made on my nervous system from the imaginary horrors of that night. For several years after I should occasionally have vivid dreams, recalling all the circumstances, insomuch that I should awake, or start up, in horror crying out! Sometimes I have even thought that the dream was worse than the reality:

“Such terrible impression made my dream.”

And now I will wind-up my long recital with a few fitting lines from Moore

“On, in the night
Ere slumber’s chain has bound me.
Fond Memory brings the light
Of other days around me;
The smiles, the tears,
Of boyhood’s years,
The words of love then spoken;
The eyes that shone
Now dimm’d and gone.
The cheerful heart now broken!
I feel like one

Who treads alone
Some banquet-hall deserted,—
Whose lights are fled,
Whose garlands dead,
And all but he departed!”

WILLIAM COLENSO.

Napier, New Zealand, Sep. 23rd, 1885

Ann Collins commented, “The eldest sister was Jane Emily, the future wife of the doubtful brother-in-law; the grandfather mentioned was William Thomas, as his father’s father died in 1814; his uncle William Colenso and his wife Frances Flamank were childless.”

Ann sent these clippings: *Morning Post* 22 February 1826,

The Claremont, Raw, from Galipoli, was totally lost on Sunday morning near Penzance, with all the crew.

That would have been the Gallipoli in Puglia, southern Italy and the slick, olive oil. William Colenso would then have been 14 years 3 months.

Bristol Mirror 25 March 1826,

The bodies of the unfortunate crew of the brig Claremont, which was lately wrecked on the Long-rock, between Penzance and Marazion, have been found.

“Nothing so difficult as a beginning
 In poesy, unless perhaps the end;
 —Lord Byron, *Don Juan* Canto IV.

