

was attended with considerable aggravation, from the nature of the strong circumstantial evidence which had been adduced in his favour. The whole trial, indeed, presented such an immense variety of evidence, that it required men of no ordinary talent to weigh the circumstances with due consideration, in order to obtain a complete development of the case. After a full and fair investigation, however, the jury had pronounced a verdict of guilty, and it only then became his imperious duty to pass that sentence which the law enjoined as the penalty for such offences. He thought it necessary, however, to observe that a variety of circumstances, favourable to the prisoner, had transpired which the more he considered led him to think there was still a mystery about the whole case that he could neither unravel nor understand. These favourable circumstances, said his lordship, would necessarily have the effect of postponing the execution of the sentence till the case should be submitted to the consideration of his gracious Majesty. Sentence of death was then passed in the usual form.

Four prisoners in all were cast for death at these assizes. But, before the judges left Newcastle, they were pleased to reprieve all who had been sentenced to be hanged, except John Bowman, a horse-stealer, who was left for execution, but who also was afterwards reprieved.

The sentence on James Charlton was commuted to some penalty short of death; but we find no record of the particulars, and what became of him ultimately does not seem to be known.

At the request of several respectable persons, who felt for Charlton's distresses and those of his family, a subscription was opened for the purpose of defraying the expense of an application for his Majesty's pardon, and also for the support of his family—a wife and four helpless young children. Subscriptions were received by E. Humble and Son, booksellers, Newcastle; but as to the precise amount raised, or the way in which the money was spent, it would perhaps be impossible at this distance of time to discover.

And who it was that really robbed Kirkley Hall is still a mystery, and will most likely ever remain so.

The Assassination of Gustavus of Sweden.



USTAVUS THE THIRD ascended the throne of Sweden in 1772. The king, who was then in his 25th year, solemnly swore at his coronation that he would support the government of the kingdom as then established; that he would maintain the rights and liberties of the States, consisting of the four orders, nobles, clergy, citizens, and peasants; and that he would reign over his subjects with gentleness and equity, according to the laws. But these

oaths he soon after determined to disregard. It is said he secretly fomented the disunion between the nobles and the inferior orders of the people, so that the business in the Diet came to a deadlock. Having thus prepared the ground, Gustavus effected, in a manner similar to that afterwards adopted by Napoleon the Third, the complete overthrow of the Constitution.

It was on the 19th of August, 1772, that the Swedish *coup d'etat* was accomplished. Massing in and around Stockholm a great array of officers and soldiers in whom he could place reliance, Gustavus seized the absolute power he coveted, and that without shedding so much as a single drop of blood. All the members of the Senate who were obnoxious to him were, however, made prisoners. A new Constitution was proclaimed, and an assembly of the States invoked. The new Diet accordingly met on the 21st of August, but the hall in which the members assembled was surrounded by troops, while loaded cannon were planted in the streets commanding it. Seated on his throne and protected by his guards, Gustavus, after addressing a speech to the Diet, ordered a secretary to read the new form of government offered for its acceptance. This new form of government made the king absolute master of all the powers of the State. The members of the Diet, knowing that they were at the mercy of an armed force, thought it prudent to comply at once with what was required of them. The marshals, acting for the nobles, and the speakers of the inferior orders, acting for their respective constituents, accordingly signed the Constitution in due form.

The system which was established in this arbitrary fashion lasted for twenty years. Gustavus is alleged to have exercised his despotic power with creditable moderation. Under his "firm but wholesome rule," we are told, Swedish industry, commerce, credit, and political influence revived. The abilities he displayed in the course of a war which was waged in Finland against Russia in the autumn of 1788, helped to consolidate his authority. But great discontent was aroused against him four years later when he announced that he had matured a plan of coalition between Sweden, Russia, Prussia, and Austria, against Revolutionary France. Discontent took the form of conspiracy. Seeing no chance of relief through the ordinary processes of agitation, since Gustavus was absolute master of the State, the conspirators, most of whom were members of the aristocracy, entered into a scheme for removing the king himself.

Repeated warnings, it seems, had been sent to Gustavus of the danger which threatened him. One of these warnings reached his Majesty on the 16th of March, 1792, when he was about to attend a ball at the Opera House. Disregarding the information he had received, the king entered the ball-room, whereupon he was instantly surrounded by a crowd of maskers in black dresses, one of whom lodged the contents of a pistol in his left hip. The king immediately removed his own

mask, asked his master of the horse to take him back to his apartment, and a fortnight later expired of his wounds.

Terrible was the punishment that befel the assassin and his accomplices. As soon as the fatal shot had been fired in the Opera House, an officer of the guards ordered all the doors and gates to be shut. Two pistols were found in the hall, the one lately discharged and the other loaded with points and heads of nails. There was also found a large carving knife, sharpened on both edges, and full of hacks, rendering a wound from it the more dangerous. It was ascertained that these weapons had belonged to Johann Jakob Ankarstroem, who had formerly been a captain in the Swedish service, and who was known to be violently opposed to the measures taken by the king to curtail the power of the nobles. Ankarstroem was arrested, confessed his guilt, and, when threatened with torture, implicated some of his accomplices, among them Count Horn, Count Ribbing, Baron Ehrensward, Baron Bjelke, and Major Hartmanstroff. It transpired at the trial that the principal conspirators had drawn lots to determine which of them should assassinate the king, and that the duty of discharging this dreadful office had fallen to Count Ankarstroem. Several of the conspirators were condemned to death, accompanied by barbarous and degrading circumstances. Ankarstroem himself was conducted to the Knight's Hall Market, fastened by an iron collar upon a scaffold for two hours, and afterwards tied to a stake and whipped with a rod of five lashes. The punishment inflicted on the first day was repeated on the two following days—first at the Haymarket, and then at the Market of Adolphus Frederic. A few days later his right hand was chopped off by the executioner, who subsequently beheaded him, and then divided his body into four quarters, which were hung up at different parts of the city, there to remain until they rotted away. Four of the other prisoners were treated in much the same manner. It is stated, however, that Ankarstroem, instead of being executed in the way just described, was fixed alive to a gibbet in the Market Place, where he was compelled to remain till he died of starvation.

But what has all this to do with North-Country lore and legend? Well, one of the officers of the Swedish guards who was on duty at the Opera House when Gustavus was assassinated, and who was afterwards present with his regiment when Ankarstroem was barbarously punished, became in later years a well-known resident of Newcastle. Of this gentleman, of Major Thain (his father), and of Lord Dundonald, the father of the celebrated Lord Cochrane, some reminiscences were supplied to the *Weekly Chronicle* in 1876 by the late Mr. John Theodore Hoyle, then coroner for Newcastle. Mr. Hoyle prefixed to these reminiscences the following statement:—"You may place implicit reliance on the memorandum I have drawn up, for I had

every word of it from Major Thain (the father) himself."

We now subjoin Mr. Hoyle's narrative:—

About the year 1800, the Lord Dundonald of that day paid great attention to, and was well acquainted with, chemistry, and studied it with the view of its application to arts and manufactures. About that time he resided at Scotswood, near Newcastle-upon-Tyne, in a respectable brick house there, facing the river, and not far from the place where the well-known Kitty's Drift, which was made for the underground waggon-way from Kenton, discharged itself on to the Tyne. He had a small manufactory near there, which was more for experimental purposes than anything else.

A gentleman, who afterwards became well known on the Tyne, connected with chemical works, resided for some period with Lord Dundonald. This gentleman's name was James Thain, and his father resided for some time in Wales, and his will is proved there.

Mr. Thain's career was a remarkable one. In early life he was an officer in the Swedish Guards, and was on duty at the opera at Stockholm the night Gustavus was shot by Count Ankarstroem, and was afterwards present with a guard of his regiment when Ankarstroem, after he had been tried and condemned to death, was affixed alive to a gibbet in the Market Place at Stockholm, and allowed to remain there till he died of starvation.

We then find Mr. Thain at Scotswood, where, after devoting himself for some time to learning chemistry, he became an officer in the Northumberland Militia, where he attained the rank of major, and for some years accompanied the regiment to various parts of England and Ireland.

Mr. Thain had a son and daughter. The son became an ensign in the same militia, and obtained his commission in the Line by getting the requisite number of Northumbrians to volunteer with him into the regulars. He accompanied his regiment, and was present at the storming of Bergen-op-Zoom, and he was also present at Waterloo; and at the end of the war he was quartered with it at Sunderland and Newcastle-upon-Tyne, where he was much in society in the North of England, and was highly esteemed. The sabre he wore at Waterloo is now in possession of the writer's family.

In the summer of 1839 he went out to the East Indies as aide-de-camp to General Elphinstone, who had been his colonel when in the 33rd Regiment, and was killed, as appears by all the narratives of the Afghan war, at the retreat through the Cabul Pass, from which there were only two survivors of all the Europeans who attempted to make their escape by that means.

Major Thain, the father, was for many years the superintending manager of the Walker Alkali Works when belonging to the Losh family. He passed the latter part of his life in Newcastle, and translated "Frithiof" and other poems from the Swedish, and died about 1837 or 1838 at his lodgings in Brunswick Place. He was buried in St. Andrew's Churchyard. The writer was much with him for ten or twelve years, and was greatly indebted to him in the direction of his studies.

The Tyne-mouth Volunteer Life Brigade.

IT is needless to remind those who, twenty-five years ago, witnessed scenes of shipwreck and death at the mouth of the Tyne, of the motives and feelings that induced a party of compassionate gentlemen to band themselves together just after the lamentable wreck of the steanship Stanley, to obtain a knowledge of the use of the rocket apparatus, and thus be enabled to render efficient assist-