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THE INTRIGUING HISTORY OF HONEYTHUNDER TROTWOOD

*Prologue.*

*It was around the early 1980’s that I was asked by a friend to help him move the contents of a distant relative’s home . He was doing it as a favour for his extended family as this particular family member lived alone, was very old and was now in need of care.*

*We arrived at the small hamlet of B\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* which consisted of a rambling warm coloured stone Jacobean Manor House, a Norman church with a dark yew tree filled, crumbling and overgrown graveyard, and an old Roman Road, amongst which were dotted various old houses and cottages built of the same stone of the Manor.*

*As we drew up to one of the cottages, I noticed an elderly woman stood waiting at the garden gate, she had a black lace shawl draped over her head and around her shoulders, under which she wore a black frilly fronted shirt and Victorian looking, long black satin skirts. She reminded me of a regal witch from a fairy tale, but as I stepped down out of the van and walked towards her, what threw me were her eyes. Set in her ancient, aged but still beautiful face were the most piercing light grey eyes of a young woman in the spring of her life. It was hugely disconcerting, and it was as much as I could do stop myself staring at her.*

*“Great Aunt” Constantia, smiled and in quite a deep, yet feminine, and unusually sensual voice, invited us in. As we followed her down the path I noticed her garden, it appeared ramshackle, but on closer inspection it had obviously been planted with a deep knowledge and love for plants. It was filled with rosemary, roses, thyme, hollyhocks, apple, and pear trees and amongst it were areas of a kitchen garden that were still abundant as I saw tops of beetroot, carrot and onion. There were also cabbages, lettuces, peas on runners and amongst them, hand thrown terracotta rhubarb forcers. It was a ramshackle simplicity and yet perfect, even to this day, it is undoubtedly the most beautiful garden I have ever visited. Numerous attempts have been made by painters through the ages to capture the bucolic cottage garden and none have come close to meeting the impossibly beautiful perfection of Constantia’s simple creation.*

*The cottage was another revelation, entering was like stepping back a hundred years….the whole ground floor consisted of just one large light filled room. In front of an open fireplace sat a rocking chair on a washed out Anatolian rug, behind that was an ancient oak gate-leg table with two wicker seated ladder back chairs either side, an ornate but small iron stove was sat by a scrubbed wooden worktop set with an earthenware coloured butler sink, and on shelfs and hanging from hooks on the white lime painted walls were various steel and copper cooking pots and pans…….jugs, plates and cups decorated a tiny but ornate and very beautiful oak Welsh dresser. The overall sense was that you were stepping into another time filled with a Victorian innocence that never really existed and which was only ever found in children’s fairy books. It was an utterly serene, simple, and welcoming space.*

*The dust mottled light which slanted in through the windows seemed to fill the room with a golden hue, and as I looked around, I realised that the reason the room hummed with such a golden glow was that the light was bouncing off gilded mirrors and groups of gilded and silver candlesticks scattered throughout the space. Only later did I notice there was no electricity in the house and realised then that “Great Aunt” Constantia lived her whole life by candlelight, fire from the hearths in the various rooms and the water and heat produced by her wood and coal fired stove and boiler.*

*Eventually, when we had what we thought was everything loaded on to the van, a car drew up and another of Constantia’s relatives came into the house to take her to her niece’s home. According to my friend, all his Great Aunt was taking was one small suitcase containing her nightwear, a single change of dress, and most importantly, her great grandmothers Cross, Rosary Beads and “ Holy Nightdress” all which had been passed down through the generations on to herself.*

*As we were about to leave what we thought was a now empty cottage, Constantia motioned towards me, guiding me in towards her by gently taking my elbow and spoke in her deep, feminine voice, “ There is something else that I would wish to bequeath to you. It has no monetary value but is extremely precious to me and I know that if I ask this of you, someday you may carry forward our story. Will you try to promise me this? ”, I was completely taken aback but said, of course, but surely it would be more suitable for a relative to take whatever this item may be. especially as I was no more than a stranger to her, “ No” she replied “ I can see certain things which is hard to explain, and I can see that at some point in the future, you will use what I pass to you in the manner for which it was made. My heartfelt wish is for my great grandparent’s story be told and their name displayed and used as it once was ”, I nodded my agreement, feeling equally a sense of unasked for responsibility coupled with an intense curiosity as to what this item might be. She motioned us to what we thought was a panel on the stairwell wall and told us to pull at it. We pulled and eventually after some coercion it came away. As we turned it around it became apparent it was a very old sign, albeit indecipherable as it was covered in thick dust and cobwebs. I brushed away at the top and slowly a name started to tease itself at us, I used my hand to rub away more of the dust until finally the name HONEYTHUNDER TROTWOOD revealed itself, I turned around to look at Constantia “My Great Grandparents…their story is all there” she said smiling, her disconcerting grey eyes and looking deep into my own, she said “For you to tell !”*

*As we drove away , I turned to my friend and said that his Great Aunt Constantsia looked fit and healthy to me and that I felt very guilty that she bequeathed me the sign. He explained that he hardly knew his Great Aunt, and that stories were always being told of her being related to gypsies and that apparently she had some form of psychic powers, could read palms and tell the future, so who was he to dispute the gift…besides it was just an old sign and wasn’t really worth anything…..He then shook me by explaining his Great Aunt would be 104 on her next birthday.*

*When home, I cleaned off the sign as best I could and saw it, just as you can all see it now, I also found a parchment envelope pinned to the bottom that I had originally missed due to the build-up of dust and cobwebs. It contained some aged and folded paper which told the story that has now been reproduced, admittedly a little edited and in some places enlarged upon, so that you can all share in this intriguing adventure.*

*Constantia passed away not long afterwards, in fact on the morning of her birthday on September 5th. I remember this as it’s my own birthday, so I always spare a thought and touch my forelock to Constantia on this day.*

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***This history is transcribed by Josiah Silver, clerk of Ambrose, Ambrose & Archibald solicitors at law , 2nd Floor Rooms at 4 Cheapside, Lond, EC2 on August 6th in the year of our lord 1873.***

***Where we have no records to rely upon, we have taken verbatim the testimony of Honeythunder and Sabine’s three surviving daughters as recounted to them by their mother Sabine Constantia Roma & father Honeythunder. We have no reason to doubt the veracity or authenticity of the testimonies as all three daughters were agreed upon the history put forward with only minor variations on details of no concern.***

***This record is to lay down the history of Messrs. Honeythunder & Sabine Constantia Roma Trotwood at the request of their children and for the benefit of future generations should they be so curious.***

***It is also incumbent upon my person to lay down this testimony in as truthful a manner as possible for future generations. No thought has been given to the morality of the characters within this account, and being appointed to transcribe, to transcribe in as truthful a manner and without judgement is what my employers have requested. This is a private document for the forbears of the Trotwood family and therefore cannot be reported in a manner that is adapted and made suitable to the sensibilities of today’s society. Truth is the uppermost principle in this document and where truth may be distasteful to readers of today’s august society, it matters not, it shall be laid down as recounted and experienced.***

*\*It is imperative that whilst perusing this history, that each note as it is encountered is read so that context can be given to the paragraph to which it is ascribed to.*

***The True & brief history of the life and early times of Jack Lickbrake and how he acquired the name of Honeythunder Trotwood.***

*How Jack grew from boy to man and took to the open seas with His Majesty’s triumphant naval fleet .*

Honeythunder was born Jack Lickbrake, he told his own children that his father, Jerusalem, was a blacksmith and his mother, Isabella, a woman of the tavern who claimed the right of marriage on learning of her increasingly enlarging predicament. It is unclear whether Jerusalem Lickbrake was Jack’s true father, but he took to his responsibilities with true parental devotion ensuring Jack’s character developed in a good Christian and patriotic manner. Regular floggings coupled with long hours of labour at the smithy ensured that Jerusalem and Isabella’s rearing of the boy was successful. Jack grew into carefree, happy young man with a gregarious and generous nature, a quick temper if challenged, as quick to forgive and also with great physical strength in body. He eventually entered adulthood a little over 6ft, (*tall even for this day)* , sturdily built and strongly muscled. His face was wide, honest, and open, but a bullish, stubborn mentality was forever evident in his expression. His square head was topped with dark black, loosely curled hair that fell haphazardly around his face and his smile was never far away, always hovering in his eyes and the corners of his mouth. His carefree, positive, and fun-loving nature made him popular amongst those around him. He was identifiable from a distance due to his regularity of stance; he was always to be seen with his legs slightly spread and his arms placed akimbo on his hips. Over time he gained local notoriety as well as camaraderie for his pugnacious and some would say reckless attitude to the world. Many a tavern became a boxing ring, as the love of the pugilistic sport was evident in Jack, and many a local father carried the scars after learning that this young man could not be forced by stick or cudgel to refrain from being taught acts of tenderness by their daughters.

Unfortunately for Jack, this reckless nature also led to his inadvertently becoming an unenthusiastic but patriotic member of His Majesty’s victorious Navy. One evening whilst carousing in a favourite tavern, Jack on emptying his ale, discovered a shilling laying at the bottom of his tankard and was then set upon by a press gang to persuade him in the merits of defending our Empire. The gift of a “Kings Shilling” to Jack was not easily given ﻿and it is reported that it took six of her majesty’s press gang to finally influence Jack Lickbrake to join them as comrades. Jack entered this fray with his usual reckless abandonment and roar of aggression as he saw it a matter of principle and pride to ensure his persuaders understood his insistence that his feet should remain on terra firma. The fray, or war as it was described in local folklore, took almost a whole half hour, and not a stick of furniture was left intact by the time the remaining members of the press gang came to the aide of their colleagues and subdued Jack by rendering him unconscious with their cudgels.

His majesty’s Navy knew they had landed a man equipped to show the French what a true Englishman was made of, and Jack Lickbrake, reluctantly, became a proud defender of our Empire.

Jack whilst at service, was immensely popular amongst his shipmates but his rebellious spirit continued and he was also known for continuing in his pugilistic ways including the sport of flooring bosuns, (not an easy task by any means). He was moved amongst the ships of the line, but for all his unruliness and insubordination, he was respected by all he encountered for both his bonhomie and selfless courage. Many a time he led the boarding of an enemy ship with no thought for his own safety and his trademark thunderous roar ,and thus Jack acquired the nickname of “Thunderer” amongst his shipmates. He was treated lightly by the naval officers as his bravery had become a byword amongst the fleet, and whichever ship of the line he alighted upon, they could rely on his carrying out of his duties impeccably during battle and then leading in any fight without encouragement. Unfortunately, it was between battles that Jack Lickbrake’s proud and pugilistic nature sometimes resulted in acts of insubordination and confrontation. He was never punished with more than a dozen lashes of the cat at any one time and Jack would smilingly have the date of each punishment tattooed against the scars after each flogging. (When he was laid to rest, they counted 11 tattoos dotted amongst the map of scars on his back). Eventually, due to insubordination and low regard for the authority of officers, Jack Lickbrake found himself placed aboard the 98 gun HMS Dreadnought a ship captained by the highly respected Capt. Edward Rotherham Esq. Also on board was the heroic Vice Admiral Cuthbert Collingwood acting commander of the fleet. Collingwood immediately took an interest in the proud and fearless “Thunderer” Lickbrake, whom by this time had developed a reputation that had already reached the ears of our magnificent naval hero.

Jack carried many scars from battles as well as his all too regular floggings, regardless of which his face still easily broke into a wide smile that was infectious to his shipmates and many an officer. Jack developed a reciprocal and mutual respect for both Captain Rotherham and Vice Admiral Collingwood and from the outset of their acquaintance Jack became less unruly and quick to follow orders, again always first into battle stations and then when boarding enemy vessels leading with sabre and his customary roar. Jack being favoured, followed both Captain Rotherham and Vice Admiral Collingwood onto the now heroically famous 100 Gun, HMS Royal Sovereign whose role at Trafalgar was pivotal in the history of our great Nation and Empire. Jack was most pleased arriving on this magnificent vessel, not least because he found that the majority of crew were from his home county of Northumberland. It gave him great comfort to hear voices natural to his home.

At the glorious Battle of Trafalgar, HMS Royal Sovereign was the first ship to face action as she sailed alone directly into the middle of the French and Spanish fleet, splitting both their formation and line. Collingwood opened continuous broadsides on the Spanish Santa Ana rendering her unfit for action. HMS Sovereign was forefront in engaging the enemy fleet and was in the midst of the bloodiest and fiercest of the fight before another English ship had even managed to engage the enemy. It is the opinion of many that this action was the factor in our great Victory at Trafalgar.

Jack was at his post in the thick of battle as Admiral Collingwood turned to both Capt. Rotherham and (as Jack claimed) himself and remarked “What would Nelson give to be here”,

Shortly afterwards, HMS Sovereign’s main and mizzen masts were blown away by canon and grape fire. Amongst many injured or killed, both Collingwood and Jack took injuries to their legs from flying splints and shards of timber. Jack’s injury was severe and required immediate surgery. The wound was stemmed with stitch then pitch and Jack rather than recuperate returned directly to his post and duties. It was remarked by his fellow seamen that although he had to be in great pain, he acted seemingly unaffected by such a severe wound and carried on in his duties with his usual bravery and humour.

On hearing of the tragic but heroic death of the Admiral Horatio Lord Nelson, Vice Admiral Collingwood took command of the fleet, and in doing so ignoring his own injury in despatches so that he could maintain command.

Two greater English heroes than Admiral Horatio Lord Nelson and Vice Admiral Cuthbert Collingwood have never been.

God Rest and glorify their Souls.

After battle, it much amused the crew of HMS Sovereign to see Jack occasionally limping in tandem and in step behind Admiral Collingwood, which they thought great entertainment. It has to be remarked that Admiral Collingwood feigned ignorance but on occasion broke into laughter and guffaws and shouted “Huzzar “to the crew.

Jack , due to being favoured, followed Admiral Collingwood joining him abroad the HMS Euryalus, HMS Queen, HMS Ocean and eventually on HMS Ville de Paris where in 1810 Admiral Collingwood took to his quarters and joined his great friend Admiral Horatio Lord Nelson in the heavenly pantheon of Britain’s Heroic Great.

Jack took the loss of his benefactor and superior badly and within time had returned to his previous unruliness and was again being passed around ships of the line and encountering floggings. Jack found himself eventually placed aboard HMS Hero a 74gun ship of the line which was lying of the ottoman-controlled coast of Anatolia. It was making repairs, ready to sail to join others in the escorting and protection of English merchant ships being harassed and taken or sunk in the Baltic seas.

Jack had very little or no respect for many of the officers aboard this vessel and one afternoon, bored and unhappy at having both his beef and pint ration of flip suspended for insubordination, he attempted to raise the situation with a bosun to no avail and then a junior officer. This discussion descended into a melee and both officer and bosun were unfortunately rendered unconscious. When brought in front of the distinguished and redoubtable, Captain Newman Newman, a man Jack obviously held in little or no regard, ( and whom Jack described as a bloated molly), Jack called into question the virtue of the Captain’s mother and claimed her infamy spread throughout our great Empire. He was ordered to hang, at which point he then also accused the same Captain of enjoying the ships boy.

Jack’s hanging was delayed by a day to allow for a further flogging , as much to demonstrate to the crew that discipline was not only to be enforced in His Majesty’s Navy but to ensure the seamen understood the severity which could result from such insubordination towards officers.

It did not bode well. Once secured to the rack, Jack refused the leather bit normally used to silence the screams of pain as each lash would tear at a seaman’s back. Instead, Jack used the opportunity as each lash struck, to inform the ship’s crew of how the Captain’s mother enjoyed her nuptials in ever more imaginative and descriptive manners and how Captain “Molly” enjoyed the ships boy, ….Able and Ordinary seamen exploded in laughter bringing the Captain close to a state of apoplexy, which only had the effect of making the rest of the crew (and for that part most of the officers) unable to contain themselves every time Jack responded to each lash with ever more descriptive rejoins and insults. By the end of the flogging, the whole of the ships crew were doubled over in uncontrollable laughter.

Jack was cut down and secured ready for his hanging at 8 bells of the morrow. The sailors who cut him down and were meant to chain him to the deck were either affected from the extra pint ration of rum or flip that the crew were granted for the flogging, or through compassion, they neglected to shut tight the padlock holding the chains to the deck rail, thus giving Jack an opportunity for escape. Jack throughout his life swore that these seamen winked at him as they chained him, still choking back the laughter and whispering encouragement.

Jack waited until nightfall rendering darkness to prevail and all that could be heard was the occasional sound of the odd crewman snoring and the lapping of the swell against the hull of the ship, he then quietly stole out of his chains, ensuring that those on watch were none the wiser, and silently slipped overboard hardly breaking the water and swam to the relative safety of the Ottoman controlled shores of Anatolia and a whole new life of adventure.

How Jack encountered adventure, advanced his position in society, and was beguiled by a Siren.

Our hero, *(for that is how we can now refer to Jack, as he had shown great and selfless bravery fighting for King and Empire and had the scars to show for that service and bravery),* was of an optimistic nature, unworried and unfazed at anything that the world threw at him. He had a twinkle in his eye and a spring in his step, so arriving upon the shore of the strange and exotic land was for him was not just an exercise for survival but an opportunity for advancement and adventure. He possessed nothing other than his single golden earing, bought to meet the cost of a decent funeral and a respectable coffin, *(as was custom amongst some seafaring folk who wished to be returned to terra firma rather than be wrapped in sailcloth and launched overboard),* which he sold for what little silver he could argue for as soon as he alighted onshore . Within days of being helped ashore by the tide , he was well fed, sleeping in hostelries (of the sorts that were attended to by women who would keep one warm for the cost of a meal) and was making a handsome profit on the money he had gained on the sale of his golden earing. He had found that the locals in the villages and towns that he travelled through enjoyed nothing more than to watch wrestling, be it man or women it did not seem to matter such was their enthusiasm and zest for this sport of little rules. To secure a win, the opponent had to be either dead, unconscious or slap the ground to relinquish. Jack’s strength and love for any form of combat made him a champion from the outset and soon he had defeated all opponents including amongst them one woman, not unhandsome, who surprised him as she was far more a formidable foe than he anticipated. She used a pelvic thrusting motion when they were enjoined, which useless in itself, did throw off an opponents’ concentration. After a couple of her ungentlemanly attempts, Jack was back to business, and regardless of her looks and enthusiasm for the pelvic manoeuvre , decided to bring an end to the combat due to her pervasive perfume ‘eau de chevre’.

Our Hero was soon jingling plentiful silver coinage in his purse as he travelled through villages and towns, eventually finding himself in the beautiful, bustling, overcrowded, and ancient city of Smyrna. The not unkindly and tantalising smells hit him before he had even reached the gates, and as he entered, he found narrow crowded streets, which, as he drove a path through the throng, he discovered opened onto beautiful tree lined avenues, boulevards, parks and squares. Our hero meandered through the thoroughfares, marvelling at this ancient, wondrous, biblical city, which felt as old as time itself and carried the beauty of each of its ages with it. As he walked, he eventually arrived at streets which were bustling with trade, hubbub and chaos seemed to dominate, the calls and fragrances from the never-ending stalls of street traders selling everything and anything filled the air. Pearls and jewels of every hue and size were sold next to stalls of spices and herbs never seen by good English stock , copper and brassware in every form, sponges, dyes, silks, leather, fish…. frankincense stalls vied with roasting meat sellers, brothels vied with smithies fashioning daggers, tailors called out trying to outshout the fruit seller beside them, it was gloriously noisy, colourful and a feast for the senses. Jack was exhilarated by the richness of this beautiful city and decided that Smyrna would be the place to make his temporary home, satisfy his thirst for adventure, meet his romantic yearnings and give him ample opportunity to advance his prospects and wealth.

Soon he had found rooms above a Greek sponge merchant whom fortuitously also happened to add to his income by keeping an adjacent property of perfumed ladies whom slept by day and worked by moonlight.

Times were beneficent and it was not long before Jack had gained a citywide reputation for being a most formidable wrestler, a respectable drinker with a most prodigious appetite for the charcoal grilled meats famous in this city, and just as prodigious an appetite for the charming but mostly infamous ladies in this city of ancients. He became content and happy and after long nights of wrestling, drinking, and feasting he had not far to stumble to fall into the arms of one of the many willing women of his Greek host’s adjacent hostelry.

It was not uncommon to sometimes see one of these esteemed women scratch and tear at one of their closest friends just to be the first to Jack as he entered the said hostelry, and it was also not unusual for sometimes the Greek host to demand reparation from Jack for the loss of earnings that these catfights sometimes resulted in. The Greek was clever though, he found soon enough that refusals of payment by some courtiers that attended his exotic hostelry had almost evaporated since Jack had taken residence above his premises, and he therefore became extremely fond of his tenant and, smilingly, never charged extra if Jack decided that two perfumed ladies would keep him better shielded from the chilly late night breezes that occasionally came in from the coast.

Both men soon became fast and strong friends and would spend many evenings feasting and drinking resulting in them forming a strong bond and a happy, unspoken understanding that benefited them both.

One early evening, nearly a year after taking residence in Smyrna, our Hero decided to take in some entertainment in one of the nearby market squares. There was always something to delight, intrigue or cause outrage and sometimes if one were truly lucky, a brawl would break out between territorial performers. One could always be assured of an entertainment unique in this city of ancients.

Our Hero settled himself against a post amongst a slowly gathering crowd in front of an open stage being made up and bordered by Roma gipsey carts on three sides. Black curtains were draped between them acting as backdrop to this improvised theatre. A growing sense of excitement and anticipation grew in the air as the stage was close to being finalised. Jack glanced around him and noticed that the crowd had now grown to maybe two or even three hundred curious onlookers . A strange, almost mystical wail then started to emanate and build until a group of around ten to twelve swarthy weather-beaten gipsey men entered the stage from behind each of the curtains. All wore brightly covered headscarves and just as brightly coloured scarves around their waists and were dressed exactly as romantic gipsies should be. They were each carrying fiddles and violas of varying shapes and sizes and started playing in unison as they gathered in the centre. Dusk had descended and torches were lit, which gave the scene a more dramatic feel. The music from the violas and fiddles was melodic and enchanting, full of tales of unrequited love, jealousies, thefts, murders in the night, trysts, and lost times, all of the Roma clan folklore, tales that everyone understood were told around campfires under full moons. The crowd were spell bound as the music washed over and through them, our Hero included, and a dreamlike state permeated the crowd as they experienced the strange romantic tales being sung by the gipsey fiddles.

Out of the corner of his eye, Jack noticed a number of gipsey children start to mingle into the crowd, the music entranced him but not quite enough to curb his curiosity, so he watched as the children hidden in the quickening darkness, started to slowly work their way through the crowd, sliding hands into pockets, cutting purse strings, and pilfering the enchanted onlookers. Jack’s strong hand gripped his own purse protectively, and at that same moment the gipsey fiddlers retreated to the back of the stage, built up the music and hit a crescendo at which point a woman, in rhythm to the music stepped out from behind a curtain onto the makeshift stage.

The whole crowd expelled their breath in unison, pressed forward and craned their necks to closer see this beguiling siren. She was an enchantress and to describe her movements as dance was inadequate, she moved with a visceral sensuality that would test the spirit and resolve of every sainted being throughout time. Sabine, (for that was her name) danced as her body felt the rhythm, no steps had ever been taught or learnt, instead her body danced from the thousands of years of her people’s music and tales being sung by the gipsey fiddlers.

Her hair was so black that it shimmered and ended where her legs began, her face was angular but beautiful in a slightly harsh way, her lips were full and sensual, her piercing liquid grey eyes flashed with laughter, lasciviousness, anger and daring, her tall, strong feminine body resonated with untamed lust held just in check by a will that demanded love before she would give of herself. It was at this point that our Hero fell in love, and at the same time lost the small fortune of gold and silver coins he had kept about his person for safekeeping.

*Jack knew the safest place for his fortune was close to him as only a small army could wrest his fortune from him….or as on this occasion, a small gipsey child !*

*Jack not only found his new wife and great love (or did his new wife find him) , but discovered he was also penniless, a predicament that the male of our species knows only too well to be prevalent when love comes beckoning.*

Our hero was a good foot taller than those around him and as he stared entranced, Sabine turned as she danced and without intent was caught by Jack’s broken yet handsome features. They stared at each other for what seemed like eternity, the world slowed and came to a stop .“Ahh, there is my man ” she thought to herself and both her own and Jack’s life changed from that moment on.

*(You will note that our hero just fell in love and was smitten, yet Sabine used the term “Ahh there is my man”…..a term that implies not just love, but that our hero has no choice in the matter….)*

How Jack Lickbrake took the name of Honeythunder

In a few short weeks Jack & Sabine were married. (*What occurred between the time the two lovers first locked eyes and arranging a union has been lost in the fog of time, but we are assured that the father of Sabine was pleased to welcome such a formidable man as Jack as a son in law)*. The ceremony took place as was the custom amongst this particular clan of Roma folk. Our hero had invited his by now close and good friend the Greek sponge dealer to act as his second as is English custom. Amongst much revelry, food, drink, music and dancing, Jack & Sabine became betrothed, clasping hands, they stepped over a rush broomstick, each calling out their given and family name, and under which star sign they were born and were thus considered man and wife. \*note 1

Once the celebrations had concluded, the clan gathered to see Jack and Sabine to the marriage wagon. This was the home of the parents, prepared ready for the nuptials with freshly laundered white linen sheets and bunches of rosemary twigs hanging from the ceiling to signify long life, all as in the tradition of this clan of travelling folk. As our hero and his new wife took each other’s hands to head to the marriage wagon , the Greek sponge dealer stepped forward and with a huge smile explained that as a wedding gift , he had arranged for them to holiday at his family’s farm on the beautiful & sacred isle of Simi…..Sabine was delighted as she had never sailed and was entranced by tales of the sea and lands yet unvisited

*\*Note 1 Jack did not quite know the year he was born ,he thinks it around 1780, but he knew his birthday as being 29th April . Sabine knew her birthday by the Romani custom as 31st Dec 1790.*

Sabine’s father was waiting at the steps of the wagon, and with tears of joy in his eyes he pushed a heavy purse into Jacks hand as dowry for his daughter. A purse that when Jack looked down, he immediately recognised as his own.

*\*Note 2 In Jack’s reckoning, Sabine’s father still displayed huge generosity , for how was he to know that the purse had earlier been lifted from Jack by the gifted hands of one of the gipsy thief-children. In Jack’s estimation his father in law was a gentleman gipsy and thus he forever thought of him with filial respect and affection.*

﻿That evening, roars emanated from the marital wagon which shook the night and rolled like thunder through Smyrna*\*Note 3*.. The gipsey women were seen to be laughing uproariously especially the elders amongst them who squealed and sputtered with delight from their toothless faces, the younger gipsey girls cast furtive, sullen, and jealous glances at each other . Sabine’s father beamed proudly as he sat through the night keeping vigil, clasping his precious cross to his bosom and his rosary wrapped around his gnarly fist. Whenever the air cracked with the roar of Jack’s passion, he would look lovingly at his wife raise his cross to heaven and kiss his frankincense scented rosary 3 times*.*

*\*Note 3. In the scrupulous records kept by the civil servants of Smyrna/Izmir, , they recorded , very unusual for that time of year, a dry thunderstorm occurring directly above the city.*

*The father had “acquired” the Cross along with the Rosary in what he believed were sacred circumstances and was certain that they were placed in front of him by God to protect his family and allow him to enact acts of penance (thus gaining forgiveness) each time he committed an act of theft, robbery or slit the throat of an adversary.*

*\*Note 4 . Sabine’s father had “acquired” the Corpus Christi cross and Rosary, when he had stumbled across a naked Armenian priest explaining God’s wonders to a similarly naked Nubian eunuch in a glade by a riverbank one evening. He knew he was in the presence of true holiness as the priest was self-flagellating with one hand whilst gripping the kneeling eunuch around the waist with the other and shouting out Latin prayers in ecstatic terms.*

*Sabine’s father signed the cross at the mysterious way God’s wonders to perform and took his once in a lifetime opportunity to acquire the gold and silver coinage hidden in the priest’s garments and the sacred holy gifts from this truly holy man.*

The following morning the Romani clan were gathered around the couple’s wagon, gossiping, and engaging in the serious matter of casting wagers on the issue of whether Sabine’s much argued virtue had been intact until her wedding. Sabine’s father walked confidently amongst those shamefacedly offering wagers, surreptitiously looking for the best odds.

He agreed a wager of a small fortune at by far the most generous of odds being offered by an extremely handsome and arrogant young Roma man, whom, it appeared seemed equally, if not more confident than even Sabine’s own father.

Hands were spat upon then shaken.

Sabine’s mother walked towards the couple’s wagon, up the three steps and on entering, gestured for Jack to leave. As Jack exited, a cheer went up amongst the clan, causing him to smirk, he lifted his hands over his head, clasping them together in a victorious gesture and let out a triumphant roar. Inside Sabine’s mother started to inspect the sheets so she could display them to her clan. *(Being a wise woman, she was prepared and had taken upon her person a small bladder of sheep’s blood. We will never know whether she had cause to use it).* Sabine told her mother that throughout the night Jack had regaled her with words of love that fell like honey to her ears (a Roma expression), her mother reminded her of the roars like thunder bursting through the night and Jack’s triumphant roar on the steps of the wagon just then. Both laughing, they decided between them from then on to refer to Jack as “Honeythunder”.

The mother exited the wagon and held up a blood covered sheet for all the clan to behold, a huge cheer went up, money changed hands, some young women’s faces twisted into grimaces of spite and envy and one extremely handsome and until that point supremely confident young gentleman’s jaw dropped to the floor. Very reluctantly the handsome young man handed his life worth’s of silver to Sabine’s father.

***From that day on Jack was only ever known as, or referred to as Honeythunder.***

The Rather Remakable time together as man and wife and how our hero took upon the full name of Honeythunder Trotwood.

Our hero and his new spouse had decided to set out together to forge their own path in life and take whatever opportunity they might encounter as they looked to advance themselves in the world, make their fortune and eventually find a place to call home. First, they would spend some time learning more of each other’s ways and peculiarities, and thus took up the generous gift from the Greek sponge dealer to holiday on the sacred isle of Simi. When Honeythunder & Sabine were ready to say their farewells to her parents, Sabine’s Father & Mother gifted them a wagon to use as their travelling home and then both with tears streaming, pressed their most treasured possessions into Sabines hands , informing her that the Corpus Christi cross and the rosary were the most holy of possessions as they had been honestly stolen from a real priest and true holy man of God. These treasures were to be revered and kept safe as they would guard and protect her family and all her forbears. The parents then set off with the rest of their clan to continue their nomadic way along the routes travelled by these people for thousands of years. Not once did they turn to look back, as to do so for them was to bring bad luck. This is their way.

The Greek sponge dealer had everything arranged for their marriage voyage. He took our hero and his new wife to the harbour at Smyrna and pointed out a largish caique \*note 5 lying ready to weigh anchor. After seeing both Jack and Sabine safely on board he turned to them both and wished them a happy journey. Before taking his leave and feeling that he should impart some advice before he left , he ruefully mentioned to our hero *“ You know my friend, I was once married to a woman born under the sign of the goat, just like Sabine, she was also a wonderful woman”*, as he jumped off the caique to the harbour side, he shouted over his shoulder *“but only when she was fast asleep !”* Jack laughed uproariously, Sabine’s eyes narrowed and her nostrils flared slightly before she joined our hero laughingly waving off his close and fast friend.

The sailors pulled up the anchor, set the sails and caught what little wind they could to zig zag up out of the Smyranus Bay until they rounded the headland, where they caught the wind funnelling south through the strait between Anatolia and the isle of Chios. The canvas cracked and filled and they launched as if Poseidon himself was blowing into their sails and the caique shot through the waters leaving a wake behind them . They saw flying fish catch the air alongside the caique sometimes remaining in the air for many hundreds of feet which intrigued and fascinated Sabine. The caique tore through the sea and it was not long before, having navigated past a group of tiny islands, that the Greek sailors pointed out Samos to their East, the island that Pythagoras was born on, and the isle of Icaria to the West where it was said that all the natives lived past the age of 120. As they continued South, they passed the divine island of Pathmos , *(where the apocalyptic Book of Revelation was revealed to John the Elder and put down by him for all civilised man to behold),* at a particular spot where a mountain could be seen, the sailors took to their knees and crossed themselves.

*\*Note 5. A Caique, pronounced “cake” is a traditional Greek fashioned boat of varying sizes and uses. It has remained the same in design for over 3000 years and is not dissimilar to a Turkish “Gulet”. It is one of the safest boats to sail the treacherous Aegean seas.*

Our couple were delighted by the dolphins dancing and playing alongside as the caique shot through the translucent and sapphire seas . Our hero helped the sailors tack and trim the sails and they marvelled at his strength when pulling on the ropes and remarked that he was a true man of the sea. The sailors fished as they sailed and caught a small tuna which they put aside, the other fish, they fed to their guests, served raw, thinly sliced with squeezed lemon juice, olive oil, sea salt scraped from the sail and tiny cracked capers washed down with an aniseed flavoured spirit local to the islands. On the evening of their first day, they scudded to a stop and anchored in a bay on the isle of Leros, home of Artemis God of war. Here the sailors roasted the tuna over charcoal embers and served it together with sliced tomatoes, all dressed and flavoured with oregano, olive oil and lemon juice. They washed it down with more of the aniseed flavoured spirit and then retired to hammocks hitched on deck, slowly being rocked to sleep by the gentle swell of the sea.

At sunrise, they weighed anchor and caught the wind whipping down the Anatolian coastline pushing them past the island landmasses of Calymna and Cos to their west. It propelled them on as they navigated between the coastline and the islands dotted starboard of the caique, until in the distance, they spied their destination, Simi, the island of miracles, of Archangel Michael, and, according to the poet Homer, the island that built the Argonaut for Jason and his own hero’s.

As they drew closer towards the harbour at Simi, Honeythunder & Sabine marvelled at the beauty of the bay. It was surrounded on three sides by steep verdant green slopes dotted with many a pastel coloured arcadian mansion and a multitude of huge boulders and rock formations. All three sides sloped down to meet the sapphire blue water and was to our hero and his new spouse, one of the most beautiful sights they had seen.*\*Note 6*

*\*Note 6. The anchorage at Simi is now more built up but has also achieved more beauty as the marriage between man and nature has resulted in what many regard as the most beautiful harbour in the world.*

Sabine was the first to spot the Greek sponge dealer waiting on the harbourside, and both herself and Honeythunder were dumbstruck as to how he had managed to arrive before them after having waved them off from Smyrna. As they disembarked it became clear the man had to be the Greeks twin brother, as even though he was identical in nearly every respect to the Greek in Smyrna, he didn’t have the large heavy golden loops adorning each ear and the scars that the Greek sponge dealer had acquired in dealing with some of his hostelry’s more difficult patrons. As they looked around the harbour, they realised now where the Greek acquired his sponges, the whole harbour being full with bales of sponges stacked so high and deep that there was hardly room to navigate between them. Their new Greek host, after smilingly welcoming them both, explained that they were in fact not disembarking but taking on provisions as the caique was taking them on to the island where the family farm was situated and where they were to make their marriage home for the next few weeks. Provisions were brought onboard, and another short leg of the journey took them along the east coast of Simi, stopping once to bathe at a most beautiful bay, where a sheer cliff touched the sky, and the waters were of the deepest sapphire turning a clear aquamarine as they neared the white stoned beach. After bathing, they waited for the wind and then continued their journey, eventually arriving at a small green island sitting alone in translucent waters of every shade of blue. This was to be their marital home for the next few weeks.

Honeythunder & Sabine were put ashore along with provisions of a sack of flour, a huge terracotta jar of olive oil, a small crate of goats’ cheeses wrapped in vine leaves and another of onions, large jars of raisins, honey, pickled capers, and 4 large flagons of the spirit that smelt of aniseed and tasted so good with the raw fish. The Greeks brother explained that the island had a freshwater well, was abundant with pomegranates, rosemary bushes and herbs of every description, had a grove of olive and lemon trees, and that every edible fish they could imagine swam the waters surrounding their new home. He then handed them rods and a net to fish by and turned to leave. As a parting shot, he told them that they were welcome to slaughter one of his goats and that when they were out of provisions and ready to leave, to hoist the low fluttering flag of Archangel Michael on the improvised mast over the cottage and he would spot it on one of his regular fishing trips and know to pick them up.

Honeythunder & Sabine settled their provisions into the one roomed stone cottage and then took time to explore their new island home. The air of this little paradise was suffused with the scent of pine resin, sage and other herbs burning in the heat of the sun and they kept catching wafts of it caught on the breezes as they explored what looked to be the only path.

As they walked, the path took them around and through the island, over a little stone bridge that arched itself over a seawater inlet, it then turned sharply, and they found a long avenue bounded by rosemary shrubs and pomegranate trees heavy with fruit. The avenue arrived at a huge but picturesque olive grove with a small orchard of lemon trees in the corner, surrounding a large stone olive press. The path then took them through a pine forest and as they crunched their way along the track they found it slowly snaked its way up a large hill until delivering them at a massive flat rock formation cantilevering off a shear edge and affording them a view of the whole small but beautiful little island and out across the sea to the Anatolian coast. They soaked in the scene for some time then took the path winding back down the other side of the hill until it eventually arrived at the edge of the large crescent shaped bay where they had been set down earlier. .\**Note 7*

 *\*Note 7. We have looked to find the name of this island and believe it to be Iskalia, lying south and east off the coast of Simi, close to the bay of the most holy Monastery of Panorimitis.*

For around five to six weeks\*Note 8, they bathed in the sun, swam in the sapphire blue waters, fished, cooked their catch over herb and wood fires, and forgot about everything other than each other. Our hero’s favourite time was just before sunset, Sabine would bathe using the water collected from the well each morning which she had infused with twigs of rosemary herb and which by evening was not only warmed by the sun but perfumed with the gentle rosemary oils. Our Hero would watch as Sabine stood naked and used a sponge to wash away the salt from the sea, the cooking smoke, and oils from her bronzed, toned, and rounded woman’s body. She would then comb through her long black hair with olive oil, coil it into a shimmering ponytail which fell past her round buttocks and then slowly work the oil into her whole body. They would watch the sun set and consummate their love until they fell into deep contented sleep, exhausted, replete, and happy.

*\*Note 8.* *Our hero & his wife were never really sure of how much time they spent on the beautiful paradise of an island and judged the time spent on the basis of how long they felt their provisions had lasted.*

Every night light thunder echoed across the water sometimes reaching Simi.

Days melted into each other and soon they both lost track of time. It was the happiest time of our hero’s life and he often told how he knew of the garden of Eden as he had spent his happiest time there.

Eventually, after a few weeks of paradise, they knew their time had to come to an end and they raised the flag to request their Greek host. He arrived two days later and as they boarded his Caique he explained to them that before they were to return to Smyrna , he would take them first to visit the Holy Monastery of Panorimitis. Believers from every corner of the world had made pilgrimages to this shrine and it was part of his brother’s gift that they should visit such a holy place.

It was only a short journey before they sailed into a very still, placid, and large bay of beautiful aquamarine water. As the caique coasted in, they faced low green hills covered with pine trees which shelved down to the harbour . Centre stage on the harbourside stood a monastery with a tall square belltower. On the other side of the bay maybe a mile behind them, stood a cliff emerging out of the sea and climbing reaching for the sky and forming a wall maybe a mile long. The bay had a stillness and mystery about it which immediately captivated them and caused them to talk in whispers. They disembarked and went forward to be greeted by black clad priest monks who led them up the stone stepped entrance leading into the Monastery. As the monks ushered them in, they separated the couple as it was not unusual for miracles to be experienced, but, according to the monks, only to lone pilgrims . (*The more miracles, the more visitors, the more visitors, the more money flowed into their monastery coffers allowing them to help the poor and ensure the monks were well fed and watered)*.

Sabine and Honeythunder were led one at a time into the tiny, already ancient holy church and destination for the pilgrims. They each gazed open mouthed and silenced at the holy and sacred wonders within…. beautiful paintings filled every inch of the walls and ceilings, and each told a story that was delivered intuitively, the wooden partly gilded carving at the priest’s end of the church was the width of the wall and was of such intricacy and skill, that neither had seen anything, before or after close to such exquisite workmanship. To the right of the carving was the huge painting and silvered icon of Archangel Michael, again the artistry was beyond comprehension, and it was agreed by both when discussing the visit later, that the artisans and craftsmen working on this church had to have had their hands guided by angels. Heavenly genius being lent to man was the description that Honeythunder later used.

The church was full of the scent of beeswax candles and pine resin burning in the multitude of silver and gilded chandeliers and sensers hanging from the ceiling. It was a mysterious, and holy place that affected them both deeply, Sabine more so, as she then encountered and experienced a miracle.

When kneeling in front of the icon of Archangel Michael and having kissed the feet of the shrine, Sabine started to pray. The icon began to shimmer moving slightly, then more so and then took life but in way, (*as described by Sabine)*, that was three dimensional within the painting. Archangel Michael shimmer-moved, shimmer-gestured and spoke to Sabine in a voice that was deep, round and from another place, a holy place. The Archangel spoke in words that were not of this earth, each word singing like a heavenly bell striking deep within Sabines body, delivering to her a message of such clarity and meaning that she claimed her body resonated with the sound of it.

The experience was described by Sabine as an omnipotent benevolent terror coupled with an awe inspired love and warmth delivered from a heavenly patriarch.

Sabine has always refused to repeat most of what the holiest Archangel Michael shared with her that day, but what she was prepared to relate, was that she was foretold of, and warned that a plague was soon to strike Smyrna, and that if those in Smyrna with sin were not to recant that also a great fire would reduce the city to ashes.

*\*NOTE : As we now know a plague spread through the Ottoman controlled region soon afterwards, striking amongst others Constantinople, Samos, Chios, and Smyrna. It seems that the residents with sin recanted as no fire has raged and this most ancient of Greek cities still stands in the Levant with its arcades, boulevards, towers and buildings of insurmountable beauty in this year of our Lord 1873.*

\*Today’s note Sept 2023. A great fire took hold of Smyrna in Sept 1922 and lasted from 13th Sept to 22nd .Most of the City was raised to the ground and is regarded as one of the darkest events in Greek history.

Since that day Sabine became as fastidious as the most diligent of priests in her religious observances and carried on these same observances throughout her life. She complied with every Holy and Sainted day of the Orthodox calendar throughout the years and on these holiest of days and unfortunately for Honeythunder, she would refuse his advances.

*To Honeythunder’s dismay he learnt over the coming years that the Orthodox calendar carried many Holy and Sainted days. Sabine as part of her religious observances when refusing his advances, would cover her body in a heavy linen shift so that Honeythunder had to sleep without the warmth of his gipsey wife’s naked body on these, all too many nights. Sabine called this garment, which she only used on Sainted and Holy Days her “Holy Nightdress”.*

Sabine was convinced that the Cross and the Rosary gifted to her by her parents guided her to this most incredible Miracle and to ensure that she always had at least one of these holy and sacred treasures close to her, she had the image of the rosary and cross tattooed on to a discrete area of her body.

Our couple were sailed back to Smyrna, enjoying the journey as much as the first and were duly landed safely at the harbour. The Greek sponge dealer had taken care of the wagon gifted by Sabine’s parents and because of his fondness for Honeythunder had stocked it ready for the couple to enter the next chapter of their lives.

Sabine explained the miracle that took place at Panorimitis and fervently urged the Greek sponge dealer to warn all, sell what he could, take his goods and leave Smyrna as soon as he possibly could as a Plague and Great Fire were due to befall the city. The Greek, (as all good Greeks are), was a God fearing man, he knew that Panorimitis was the most holy and sacred place, and he took the news of the miracle as an irrefutable fact and made a solemn oath to both Sabine and Honeythunder to do as they asked.

After an emotional farewell, Honeythunder & Sabine took to the road and the Greek sponge dealer returned to Smyrna and his properties. After arranging his affairs to a very profitable conclusion, he then fulfilled his Christian promise to Sabine and informed all those, (that he held no grudge against) of the impending plague and fire.

He then left Smyrna with an entourage of carts laden with sponges and perfume scented ladies. And a purse bursting with gold.

Our couple travelled the road and Honeythunder continued to wrestle as they drew into the various villages and towns on the ancient trading route they had decided to follow. Unsure of their ultimate destination, they had trusted to God and providence to guide them and to grasp each opportunity as they encountered it. The prize money our hero secured gave them ample income to meet their needs, but it was Sabine that decided that they should invest their silver in the curious, beautiful, and strange goods they came across being sold along this ancient trading road. They would then sell on these goods at a healthy profit once they reached provinces that these same pieces were considered rare and desirable, and so on they travelled and traded.

Soon Sabine had mastered this system such that they had more than quadrupled their original silver and had filled the wagon with such antiquities and objects of delight that they would soon have to sleep under the stars for lack of space.

One Summer, after a year of this contented but nomadic life, they entered the recently named city of Sevastopol. There they encountered Russian sailors that related the calamitous and disastrous story of how, just over a year ago, so many English ships of the line and merchant vessels had been sunk in great storms off the coast of the (then named) Sovereign Principality of United Netherlands. Our hero immediately recognised that his own ship, HMS Hero was amongst those lost with all crew. This tragedy re-ignited what he had till then believed was the impossible dream of one day returning to the England that was his home. Now a return not only seemed possible, but entirely plausible and a deep longing and homesickness gripped our hero. After much discussion with Sabine, it was decided to travel West, acquire what more goods they could fit in and on their wagon and look to set up home and premises in London, the capital of the greatest Empire on Earth.

Our hero knew he would need to change both his family and forename as there was always the risk that a fellow seaman may have switched ship prior to the disaster and one day might recognise his name. Why indeed tempt fate, so Jack & Sabine thought through a process that allowed Jack to keep his identity hidden, yet it still be evident to himself.

Thus, Jack Lickbrake became Honeythunder Trotwood.

Both Honeythunder and Sabine were delighted at the change as although to all intents and purposes it was a new family name, the meaning of Trotwood was the twin and held exactly the same meaning as Lickbrake, and by that time Sabine had already been referring to her husband as Honeythunder. So, our hero’s identity would now remain with him forever but be hidden from the sight of others. *\*Note 9. The name Lickbrake translates directly to Trotwood as “Lick” can mean “Trot” and “Brake” can mean “Wood”.*

Honeythunder and Sabine continued their travels always aiming west, making their way through the Russian Empire, Moldovia & Walachia, then into the empire of Austria Hungary acquiring more beautiful and interesting goods as they came across them and squeezing them into any space available. They entered the French territories and started to encounter the mustering armies of the upstart scoundrel and false king Napoleon. Given their appearance and mode of travel, they had little trouble convincing any questioning official that they were gipsy traders, and, on some occasions, they even sold goods and traded with the officers and officials they encountered and gained entry to territories they would normally have been excluded from.

On reaching the coastal lands, they were frustrated to find that most ports they entered had no shipping bound for England due to the blockade imposed by that genius peasant emperor Napoleon, so they continued their travels along the coastline until they eventually reached the city of Bordeaux. Here they found a small fleet of “licensed” French merchant ships bound for the Port of London. After settling the extortionate cost for storage and transportation of their goods, they boarded a ship and set sail to the capital of our Britannic Empire, London.

The Ships Register was signed as Messrs. Mr. Honeythunder and Mrs Sabine Constantia Roma Trotwood.

On how adventure ended, their safe return to the capital of our glorious Empire and how Mr & Mrs. Trotwood settled to a life of relative comfort, marital harmony, and wealth.

Honeythunder & Sabine Trotwood disembarked at the Surrey Docks, Rotherhithe where the thronged streets and chaos rivalled that of Smyrna. Honeythunder was overtaken with joy and was heartily seeking out and clasping the hand of all and any Englishman he could find. No-one remarked on this or found it unusual as it was not uncommon to see returning seamen or soldiers stricken with emotion after years away at sea or travelling the Empire. Sabine was enthralled by the skyline and atmosphere of London, and it was not long before she fell in love with the greatest city on Earth and confirmed and endorsed such to Honeythunder.

Being both commercial and astute, they chose to set up premises in Shepherds Market, this area was well positioned as it was only frequented by the better classes of gentlemen visiting the very discrete and slightly less virtuous ladies that kept expensive boudoirs at this exclusive address. It was a discerning and moneyed clientele that frequented these streets and both Sabine & Honeythunder immediately recognised that this clientele would all have to pass by their premises and could not fail to be drawn by the overflowing cornucopia of curious, beautiful, and strange goods they would be displaying. They also knew that if their premises became reasonably well frequented, that these same gentlemen would have a perfect excuse for visiting Shepherds Market. They were not incorrect and within a short period of time a healthy profit was being turned and their premises much visited by, mostly, the gentlemen of society.

Honeythunder sometimes supplemented the family income by engaging in the most noble sport of pugilism, at that date fortunately still unsullied by the Marquess of Queensbury’s new effeminate regime. He gained fame, regard and importantly many a gold filled purse as prize money. He was also a kind and considerate neighbour, and the regard that he was held in by all, afforded him to sometimes attend a distressed neighbour of the gentler sex and help persuade one of the less honourable gentlemen to meet the promised expense of their overnight sojourn. It shows much of the character of the man that these neighbourly acts of compassion and assistance carried no charge to these infringed upon ladies.

In later years a frequent patron and purchaser of goods was the increasingly popular young novelist by the name of Mr. Charles John Huffam Dickens. It is often contested about Mr. Dickens intent as to why he visited Shepherds Market so frequently. The majority would contend he was seen in these streets purely to visit the premises of Honeythunder Trotwood, “purveyors of the Decorative, Interesting, Curious and Beautiful at Kindly and Benevolent rates”.

What can undoubtedly and most certainly be attested to is that the esteemed Mr. Dickens took the inspiration for two of his future much admired characters for his later novels “David Copperfield “ and the sadly recently unfinished “ The Mystery of Edwin Drood” from own hero Jack Lickbrake, now known as Honeythunder Trotwood.

Honeythunder & Sabine lived a contented life, they travelled regularly to their haunts of old returning with ever more desirable and interesting goods. Honeythunder thickened with age, but always retained a formidable strength and was renowned for his bonhomie and kind nature. Sabine somehow grew even more beautiful, eventually her black hair became silver, and she carried an ethereal presence that enchanted everyone. It was rumoured by some that met her that she was born of faerie folk, maybe she was, as it is well known that the gipsey people do trade with the faerie folk.

Sabine bore three daughters to Honeythunder, all of whom survive to this day, and have recounted this history.

Further adventures were to befall them both, but that is to be transcribed at another time. For now, their story is happily concluded, and we allow them to continue in marital harmony, enjoying their life together as solid English man and wife, advancing their position within society, building a profitable business and a happy contented family.

             God Save our glorious Queen and Empire.

                           The End ….*(for now. )*

Epilogue

*Please note, that in the transcribing of Josiah Silver’s document, we have occasionally changed and adapted the language to be more accessible to today’s reader, and, where “Romance” was at play, maybe added a little detail.*

*Almost 40 years later and Great Aunt Constantia’s prediction is finally coming to pass. We have restarted the business in honour of Honeythunder & Sabine, continuing in their tradition begun two centuries ago. We have dusted off the sign that Constantia entrusted to me, and which Honeythunder & Sabine had hanging over their premises in Shepherds Market. After some restoration (mostly a new frame) and a few minor repairs, it is now ready to be displayed and we will be using it as originally intended, just as Constantia predicted.*

*We feel honoured to have been entrusted with their legacy and to have become custodians not only of the sign, but to the adventures of Honeythunder and Sabine, which we are now able to share with you.*

*When you visit us, you will be able to see the sign and some of the artefacts mentioned which may help bring to life some of the events that have been recounted in their story.*

*JA September 2023.*