

A Remarkable Character

(Headline in the Launceston Examiner, Saturday 14th January 1882)

In Dulford House in Devonshire
 One Bethel Walrond once did live.
But when this worthy did expire
 His will did many problems give
And kept the lawyers occupied
 As through the Probate Court it went;
And those proceedings did provide
 Much insight to the life he spent.
For very eccentric had he been,
 And odd and strange had been his ways;
And ne'er an odder man, I wean,
 You'll meet in all your livelong days.
"A Remarkable Character," th' Examiner said,
And told us of the life he'd led.

His house and grounds, I do aver,
 By wall a mile or so all round,
And twelve feet high encircled were.
 'Twas built of brick, solid and sound.
For none to Dulford House could be
 Admitted till he'd first received
Espacial permit so that he
 The right of entrance had achieved.
For cannons four did guard the drive;
 And four more cannons stood before
The house, that none might e'er arrive
 Unbidden to that guarded door.
"A Remarkable Character," th' Examiner said,
Who fortified his own homestead.

With wife estranged and daughter too
 And having quarreled with his son,
All family he did eschew,
 And disinherited everyone.
This caused the problems with his will,
 After th' eccentric gent had died.
But while alive he'd comp'ny still
 For rabbits and his dogs supplied
His chief companionship; so he
 Converted lawn to warren so
The many thousand rabbits free
 And happy had their own chateau.
"A Remarkable Character," th' Examiner said,
Who shunning kin, loved pets instead.

He believed that whenso people died
 Their souls passed into dogs before
The journey to the other side
 To rest in peace for evermore.
Whene'er a dog had passed away
 Full funeral rites were given it,
And in a grave its body lay
 With headstone scribed that did befit
A being with immortal soul.
 It gave the name, the place and date
Of birth, and date of death to extoll
 The dog who'd shared a human's fate.
"A Remarkable Character," th' Examiner wrote,
Who did a strange belief promote.

And in his dressing room he kept
 A daughter's body all embalmed;
Her soul had left her and had stepped
 Into a dog where now becalmed,
He thought, 'twould bide its time until
 It passed into the after-life
And thus its earthly fate fulfill
 And rest at peace with no more strife.
That death might meet him as a friend
 He slept within a special bed
Designed with symbols to commend
 That death was not a thing to dread.
"A Remarkable Character," th' Examiner penned,
Who strove that he might death befriend.

His massive bed of Dev'nshire oak
 Was canopied and each bed-post
Was fixed with plumage black to invoke
 The hearse and horses that would host
Him as the funeral knell was tolled.
 And, all around, the bed was hung
With drapes of crimson and of gold
 For him to sleep and die among.
And on the footboard were depicted
 Three female skulls to gaze at him;
And thus to deathly thoughts addicted
 He slept within this bedstead grim.
"A Remarkable Character," th' Examiner said,
Who liked his grand funereal bed.

His later years were spent with writs;
 He cared not whom he took to court
Nor what it cost. He plied his wits
 To win each case. 'Twas as a sport
To him, and more than forty men
 Of law he often would employ
To win his case; and then again
 Another suit he'd bring. For joy
He found pursuing legal suits.
 And every document issued
In all his manifold disputes
 His titles *fully* must include.
“A Remarkable Character,” th' Examiner stated,
Whom legal studies never sated.

From Edward First he claimed descent
 And was a high Grandee of Spain,
And held, as further ornament
 The titles which he did maintain
Of various noble orders grand.
 But when he died, his son requested
His father's will be challenged and
 His disinheritance contested.
An out-of-court award did cede
 The estate in Devon to the heir,
With all its debts which were indeed
 So very great, as I'll declare.
“A Remarkable Character,” th' Examiner wrote,
Who all his titles liked to quote.

For mortgages and litigation
 And quite a few bequests outstanding
Had caused th' estate devaluation.
 Then wife and daughter, both demanding
That they receive their proper share,
 Did through the courts their cause pursue.
The courts adjudged it just and fair
 That they receive their proper due.
The contents of the house were sold;
 And ghoulishly inquisitive
Did people flock there to behold
 The place where Walrond once did live.
“A Remarkable Character,” th' Examiner said;
The friend of dogs and death lies dead.