

A PLEASANT AND DELIGHTFUL HISTORY OF THOMAS HICKATHRIFT.

[From a Chap-book, printed at Whitehaven by Ann Dunn, Market Place. Probable date 1780.]

In the reign before William the Conqueror, I have read in an ancient history that there dwelt a man in the parish of the Isle of Ely, in the county of Cambridge, whose name was Thomas Hickathrift – a poor man and a day-labourer, yet he was a very stout man, and able to perform two days' work instead of one. He having one son and no more children in the world, he called him by his own name, Thomas Hickathrift. This old man put his son to good learning, but he would take none, for he was, as we call them in this age, none of the wisest sort, but something less, and had no docility at all in him. His father being soon called out of the world, his mother was tender of him, and maintained him by her hand labour as well as she could, he being slothful and not willing to work to get a penny for his living, but all his delight was to be in the chimney-corner, and he would eat as much at one time as would serve four or five men. He was in height, when he was but ten years of age, about eight feet ; and in thickness, five feet; and his hand was like unto a shoulder of mutton ; and in all his parts, from top to toe, he was like unto a monster, and yet his great strength was not known.

The first time that his strength was known was by his mother's going to a rich farmer's house (she being but a poor woman) to desire a bottle of straw for herself and her son Thomas. The farmer, being a very honest, charitable man, bid her take what she would. She going home to her son Tom, said – " I pray, go to such a place and fetch me a bottle of straw ; I have asked him leave."

He swore he would not go.

" Nay, prithee, Tom, go," said his mother.

He swore again he would not go unless she would borrow him a cart-rope. She, being willing to please him, because she would have some straw, went and borrowed him a cart-rope to his desire.

He, taking it, went his way. Coming to the farmer's house, the master was in the barn, and two men a-thrashing. Said Tom – " I am come for a bottle of straw."

" Tom," said the master, " take as much as thou canst carry."

He laid down the cart-rope and began to make his bottle. Said they – " Tom, thy rope is too short," and jeered poor Tom, but he fitted the man well for it, for he made his bottle, and when he had finished it, there was supposed to be a load of straw in it of two thousand pounds weight. Said they – "What a great fool art thou. Thou canst not carry the tenth of it."

Tom took the bottle, and flung it over his shoulder, and made no more of it than we would do of a hundredweight, to the great admiration of master and man.

Tom Hickathrifts strength being then known in the town they would no longer let him lie baking by the fire in the chimney-corner. Everyone would be hiring him for work. They seeing him to have so much strength told him that it was a shame for him to live such a lazy course of life, and to be idle day after day, as he did.

Tom seeing them bate him in such a manner as they did, went first to one work and then to another, but at length came to a man who would hire him to go to the wood, for he had a tree to bring home, and he would content him. Tom went with him, and took with him four men besides; but when they came to the wood they set the cart to the tree, and began to draw it up with pulleys. Tom seeing them not able to stir it, said – " Stand away, ye fools!" then takes it up and sets it on one end and lays it in the cart.

" Now' says he, " see what a man can do ! "

" Marry, it is true' said they.

When they had done, as they came through the wood, they met the woodman. Tom asked him for a stick to make his mother a fire with.

" Ay," says the woodman. " Take one that thou canst carry."

Tom espied a tree bigger than that one that was in the cart, and lays it on his shoulder, and goes home with it as fast as the cart and the six horses could draw it. This was the second time that Tom's strength was known.

When Tom began to know that he had more strength than twenty men, he then began to be merry and very tractable, and would run or jump ; took great delight to be amongst company, and to go to fairs and meetings, to see sports and pastimes.

Going to a feast, the young men were all met, some to cudgels, some to wrestling, some throwing the hammer, and the like. Tom stood a little to see the sport, and at last goes to them that were throwing the hammer. Standing a little to see their manlike sport, at last he takes the hammer in his hand, to feel the weight of it, and bid them stand out of the way, for he would throw it as far as he could.

"Ay," said the smith, and jeered poor Tom. " You 'll throw it a great way, I 'll warrant you."

Tom took the hammer in his hand and flung it. And there was a river about five or six furlongs off, and he flung it into that. When he had done, he bid the smith fetch the hammer, and laughed the smith to scorn.

When Tom had done this exploit he would go to wrestling, though he had no more skill of it than an ass but what he did by strength, yet he flung all that came to oppose him, for if he once laid hold of them they were gone. Some he would throw over his head, some he would lay down slyly and how he pleased. He would not like to strike at their heels, but flung them two or three yards from him, ready to break their necks asunder. So that none at last durst go into the ring to wrestle with him, for they took him to be some devil that was come among them. So Tom's fame spread more and more in the country.

Tom's fame being spread abroad both far and near, there was not a man durst give him an angry word, for he was something fool-hardy, and did not care what he did unto them, so that all they that knew him would not in the least displease him. At length there was a brewer at Lynn that wanted a good lusty man to carry his beer to the Marsh and to Wisbeach, hearing of Tom, went to hire him, but Tom seemed coy, and would not be his man until his mother and friends persuaded him, and his master entreated him. He likewise promised him that he should have a new suit of clothes and everything answerable from top to toe, besides he should eat of the best. Tom at last yielded to be his man, and his master told him how far he must go, for you must understand there was a monstrous giant kept some part of the Marsh, and none durst go that way, for if they did he would keep them or kill them, or else he would make bond slaves of them.

But to come to Tom and his master. He did more work in one day than all his men could do in three, so that his master, seeing him very tractable, and to look well after his business, made him his head man to go into the Marsh to carry beer by himself, for he needed no man with him. Tom went every day in the week to Wisbeach, which was a very good journey, and it was twenty miles the road-way.

Tom - going so long that wearisome journey, and finding that way the giant kept was nearer by half, and Tom having now got much more strength than before by being so well kept and drinking so much strong ale as he did - one day as he was going to Wisbeach, and not saying anything to his master or to any of his fellow-servants, he was resolved to make the nearest way to the wood or lose his life, to win the horse or lose the saddle, to kill or be killed, if he met with the giant. And with this resolution he goes the nearest way with his cart and horses to go to Wisbeach ; but the giant, perceiving him, and seeing him to be bold, thought to prevent him, and came, intending to take his cart for a prize, but he cared not a bit for him.

The giant met Tom like a lion, as though he would have swallowed him up at a mouthful.

"Sirrah," said he, "who gave you authority to come this way? Do you not know I make all stand in fear of my sight, and you, like an impudent rogue, must come and fling my gates open at your pleasure! How dare you presume to do this? Are you so careless of your life? I will make thee an example for all rogues under the sun. Dost thou not care

what thou dost; Do you see how many heads hang upon yonder tree that have offended my law? Thy head shall hang higher than all the rest for an example! "

Tom made him answer" A fig for your news, for you shall not find me like one of them."

"No" said the giant. " Why? Thou art but a fool if thou comest to fight with such a one as I am, and bring no weapon to defend thyself withal."

Said Tom- " I have a weapon here will make you understand you are a traitorly rogue."

" Ay, sirrah," said the giant ; and took that word in high disdain that Tom should call him a traitorly rogue, and with that he ran into his cave to fetch out his club, intending to dash out Tom's brains at the first blow.

Tom knew not what to do for a weapon, for he knew his whip would do but little good against such a monstrous beast as he was, for he was in height about twelve feet, and six about the waist. While the giant went for his club, Tom bethought himself of two very good weapons, for he makes no more ado but takes his cart and turns it upside down, takes out the axle-tree, and a wheel for his shield and buckler, and very good weapons they were, especially in time of need. The giant, coming out again, began to stare at Tom, to see him take the wheel in one hand, and the axle-tree in the other, to defend him with.

" Oh," said the giant. " you are like to do great service with these weapons. I have here a twig that will beat thee and thy wheel and axle-tree to the ground."

That which the giant called a twig was as thick as some mill-posts are, but Tom was not daunted for his big and threatening speech, for he perfectly saw there was no way except one, which was to kill or be killed. So the giant made at Tom with such a vehement force that he made Tom's wheel crack again, and Tom lent the giant as good, for he took him such a weighty blow on the side of his head, that he made the giant reel again.

"What," said Tom, "are you drunk with my strong beer already?"

The giant, recovering, laid on Tom, but still as they came, Tom kept them off with his wheel, so that he had no hurt at all. In short, Tom plied his work so well, and laid such huge blows on the giant that sweat and blood together ran down his face, and, being fat and foggy with fighting so long, he was almost tired out, and he asked Tom to let him drink a little water, and then he would fight him again.

" No," said Tom, " my mother did not teach me that wit. Who would be the fool then?"

Tom, seeing the giant began to grow weary, and that he failed in his blows, thought it was best to make hay while the sun did shine, for he laid on so fast as though he had been mad, till he brought the giant down to the ground.

The giant seeing himself down, and Tom laying so hard on him, made him roar in a most lamentable manner, and prayed him not to take away his life and he would do anything for him, and yield himself to him to be his servant.

But Tom, having no more mercy on him than a dog or a bear, laid still on the giant till he laid him for dead. When he had done, he cut off his head, and went into his cave, where he found great store of gold and silver, which made his heart leap. Now, having done this action in killing the giant, he put his cart together again, loaded it, and drove it to Wisbeach and delivered his beer, and, coming home to his master, he told it to him. His master was so overjoyed at the news that he would not believe him till he had seen ; and, getting up the next day, he and his master went to see if he spoke the truth or not, together with most of the town of Lynn. When they came to the place and found the giant dead, he then showed the place where the head was, and what silver and gold there was in the cave. All of them leaped for joy, for this monster was a great enemy to all the country.

This news was spread all up and down the country, how Tom Hickathrift had killed the giant, and well was he that could run or go to see the giant and his cave. Then all the folks made bonfires for joy, and Tom was a better respected man than before.

Tom took possession of the giant's cave by consent of the whole country, and every one said he deserved twice as much more. Tom pulled down the cave and built him a fine house where the cave stood, and in the ground that the giant kept by force and strength, some of which he gave to the poor for their common, the rest he made pastures of, and divided the most part into tillage to maintain him and his mother, Jane Hickathrift.

Tom's fame was spread both far and near throughout the country, and it was no longer Tom but Mr. Hickathrift, so that he was now the chiefest man among them, for the people feared Tom's anger as much as they did the giant before. Tom kept men and maid servants, and lived most bravely.

He made a park to keep deer in. Near to his house he built a church and gave it the name of St. James's Church, because he killed the giant on that day, which is so called to this hour. He did many good deeds, and became a public benefactor to all persons that lived near him.

Tom having got so much money about him, and being not used to it, could hardly tell how to dispose of it, but yet he did use the means to do it, for he kept a pack of hounds and men to hunt with him, and who but Tom then? So he took such delight in sports that he would go far and near to any meetings, as cudgel-play, bear baiting, football, and the like.

Now as Tom was riding one day, he alighted off his horse to see that sport, for they were playing for a wager. Tom was a stranger, and none did know him there. But Tom spoiled their sport, for he, meeting the football, took it such a kick, that they never found their ball more. They could see it fly, but whither none could tell. They all wondered at it, and began to quarrel with Tom, but some of them got nothing by it, for Tom gets a great spar which belonged to a house that was blown down, and all that stood in his way he knocked down, so that all the county was up in arms to take Tom, but all in vain, for he manfully made way wherever he came.

When he was gone from them, and returning homewards, he chanced to be somewhat late in the evening on the road. There met him four stout, lusty rogues that had been robbing passengers that way, and none could escape them, for they robbed all they met, both rich and poor. They thought when they met with Tom he would be a good prize for them, and, perceiving he was alone made cock-sure of his money, but they were mistaken, for he got a prize by them. Whereupon, meeting him, they bid him stand and deliver.

" What," said Tom, " shall I deliver ? "

" Your money, sirrah," said they.

" But," said Tom, " you will give me better words for it, and you must be better armed."

" Come, come," said they, " we do not come here to parley, but we come for money, and money we will have before we stir from this place."

" Ay ! " said Tom. " Is it so? Then get it and take it."

So then one of them made at him, but he presently unarmed him and took away his sword, which was made of good trusty steel, and smote so hard at the others that they began to put spurs to their horses and be-gone. But he soon stayed their journey, for one of them having a portmanteau behind him, Tom, supposing there was money in it, fought with a great deal of more courage than before, till at last he killed two of the four, and the other two he wounded very sore so that they cried out for quarter. With much ado he gave them their lives, but took all their money, which was about two hundred pounds, to bear his expenses home. Now when Tom came home he told them how he had served the football-players and the four highwaymen, which caused a laughter from his old mother. Then, refreshing himself, he went to see how all things were, and what his men had done since he went from home.

Then going into his forest, he walked up and down, and at last met with a lusty tinker that had a good staff on his shoulder, and a great dog to carry his leather bag and tools of work. Tom asked the tinker from whence he came, and whither he was going, for

that was no highway. The tinker, being a sturdy fellow, bid him go look, and what was that to him, for fools would be meddling.

" No," says Tom, " but I 'll make you know, before you and I part, it is me."

" Ay ! " said the tinker, " I have been this three long years, and have had no combat with any man, and none durst make me an answer. I think they be all cowards in this country, except it be a man who is called Thomas Hickathrift who killed a giant. Him I would fain see to have one combat with him."

" Ay ! " said Tom, " but, methinks, I might be master in your mouth. I am the man : what have you to say to me ? "

" Why," said the tinker, " verily, I am glad we have met so happily together, that we may have one single combat."

" Sure," said Tom, " you do but jest!"

" Marry," said the tinker, " I am in earnest."

" A match," said Tom. " Will you give me leave to get a twig? "

"Ay," says the tinker. " Hang him that will fight a man unarmed. I scorn that."

Tom steps to the gate, and takes one of the rails for his staff. So they fell to work. The tinker at Tom and Tom at the tinker, like unto two giants, they laid one at the other. The tinker had on a leathern coat, and at every blow Tom gave the tinker his coat cracked again, yet the tinker did not give way to Tom an inch, but Tom gave the tinker a blow on the side of the head which felled the tinker to the ground.

" Now, tinker, where are you? " said Tom.

But the tinker, being a man of metal, leaped up again, and gave Tom a blow which made him reel again, and followed his blows, and then took Tom on the other side, which made Tom's neck crack again. Tom flung down the weapon, and yielded the tinker to be the best man, and took him home to his house, where I shall leave Tom and the tinker to be recovered of their many wounds and bruises, which relation is more enlarged as you may read in the second part of Thomas Hickathrift.

II.

[From a Chap-book. The book bears no date or note as to where or by whom it was printed. It was probably printed at London about the year 1780.]

In and about the Isle of Ely many disaffected persons, to the number of ten thousand and upwards, drew themselves up in a body, presuming to contend for their pretended ancient rights and liberties, insomuch that the gentry and civil magistrates of the country were in great danger, at which time the sheriff, by night, privately got into the house of Thomas Hickathrift as a secure place of refuge in so imminent a time of danger, where before Thomas Hickathrift he laid open the villainous intent of this headstrong, giddy-brained multitude.

"Mr. Sheriff," quoth Tom, "what service my brother " (meaning the tinker) " and I can perform shall not be wanting."

This said, in the morning by daybreak, with trusty clubs, they both went forth, desiring the Sheriff to be their guide in conducting them to the place of the rebels' rendezvous. When they came there, Tom and the tinker marched up to the head of the multitude, and demanded of them the reason why they disturbed the government, to which they answered with a loud cry - " Our will 's our law, and by that alone we will be governed."

"Nay," quoth Tom, "if it be so, these trusty clubs are our weapons, and by them you shall be chastised," which words were no sooner out of his mouth than the tinker and he put themselves both together in the midst of the throng, and with their clubs beat the multitude down, trampling them under their feet. Every blow which they struck laid twenty or thirty before them, nay - remarkable it was, the tinker struck a tall man,

just upon the nape of the neck, with that force that his head flew off and was carried violently fourteen feet from him, where it knocked down one of their chief ring-leaders, - Tom, on the other hand, still pressing forward, till by an unfortunate blow he broke his club. Yet he was not in the least dismayed, for he presently seized upon a lusty, stout, raw-boned miller, and made use of him for a weapon, till at length they cleared the field, so that there was not found one that dare lift up a hand against them, having run to holes and corners to hide themselves. Shortly after some of their heads were taken and made public examples of justice, the rest being pardoned at the humble request of Thomas Hickathrift and the tinker.

The king, being truly informed of the faithful services performed by these his loving subjects, Thomas Hickathrift and the tinker, he was pleased to send for them to his palace, where a royal banquet was prepared for their entertainment, most of the nobility being present. Now after the banquet was over, the king said unto all that were there -

" These are my trusty and well- beloved subjects, men of approved courage and valour. They are the men that overcame and conquered ten thousand, which were got together to disturb the peace of my realm. According to the character that hath been given to Thomas Hickathrift and Henry Nonsuch, persons here present, they cannot be matched in any other kingdom in the world. Were it possible to have an army of twenty thousand such as these, I dare venture to act the part of Alexander the Great over again, yet, in the meanwhile, as a proof of my royal favour, kneel down and receive the ancient order of knighthood, Mr. Hickathrift," which was instantly performed.

" And as for Henry Nonsuch, I will settle upon him, as a reward for his great service, the sum of forty shillings a year, during life," which said, the king withdrew, and Sir Thomas Hickathrift and Henry Nonsuch, the tinker, returned home, attended by many persons of quality some miles from the court. But, to the great grief of Sir Thomas, at his return from the court, he found his aged mother drawing to her end, who, in a few days after, died, and was buried in the Isle of Ely.

Tom's mother being dead, and he left alone in a large and spacious house, he found himself strange and uncouth, therefore he began to consider with himself that it would not be amiss to seek out for a wife. Hearing of a young rich widow, not far from Cambridge, to her he went and made his addresses, and, at the first coming, she seemed to show him much favour and countenance, but between this and his coming again she had given some entertainment to a more genteel and airy spark, who happened likewise to come while honest Tom was there the second time. He looked wistfully at Tom, and he stared as wistfully at him again. At last the young spark began with abusive language to affront Tom, telling him that he was a great lubberly whelp, adding that such a one as he should not pretend to make love to a lady, as he was but a brewer's servant.

" Scoundrel ! " quoth Tom, " better words should become you, and if you do not mend your manners you shall not fail to feel my sharp correction."

At which the young spark challenged him forth into the back-yard, for, as he said, he did not question but to make a fool of Tom in a trice. Into the yard they both walk together, the young spark with a naked sword, and Tom with neither stick nor staff in his hand nor any other weapon.

" What ! " says the spark, " have you nothing to defend yourself ? Well, I shall the sooner despatch you."

Which said, he ran furiously forward, making a pass at Tom, which he put by, and then, wheeling round, Tom gave him such a swinging kick as sent the spark, like a crow, up into the air, from whence he fell upon the ridge of a thatched house, and then came down into a large fish-pond, and had been certainly drowned if it had not been for a poor shepherd who was walking that way, and, seeing him float upon the water, dragged him out with his hook, and home he ran, like a drowned rat, while Tom returned to the lady.

This young gallant being tormented in his mind to think how Tom had conquered and shamed him before his mistress, he was now resolved for speedy revenge, and knowing that he was not able to cope with a man of Tom's strength and activity, he, therefore, hired two lusty troopers to lie in ambush in a thicket which Tom was to pass through from his home to the young lady. Accordingly they attempted to set upon him.

" How, now," quoth Tom, " rascals, what would you be at? Are you, indeed, weary of the world that you so unadvisedly set upon one who is able to crush you in like a cucumber ? "

The troopers, laughing at him, said that they were not to be daunted at his high words.

" High words," quoth Tom. " No, I will come to action," and with that he ran in between these armed troopers, catching them under his arm, horse and men, with as much ease as if they had been but a couple of baker's babbins, steering his course with them hastily towards his own home. As he passed through a meadow, in which there were many haymakers at work, the poor distressed troopers cried out - " Stop him ! stop him ! He runs away with two of the king's troopers."

The haymakers laughed heartily to see how Tom hugged them along. Ever and anon he upbraided them for their baseness, and declared that he would make minced meat of them to feed the crows and jackdaws about his house and habitation. This was such a dreadful lecture to them that the poor rogues begged that he would be merciful and spare their lives, and they would discover the whole plot, and who was the person that employed them. This accordingly they did, and gained favour in the sight of Tom, who pardoned them upon promise that they would never be concerned in such a villainous action for the time to come.

In regard Tom had been hindered by these troopers, he delayed his visit to his lady till the next day, and then, coming to her, gave her a full account of what had happened. She was pleased at heart at this wonderful relation, knowing it was safe for a woman to marry with a man who was able to defend her against all assaults whatsoever, and such a one she found Tom to be. The day of marriage was accordingly appointed, and friends and relations invited, yet secret malice, which is never satisfied without sweet revenge, had like to have prevented the solemnity, for, having three miles to go to church, where they were to be married, the aforesaid gentleman had provided a second time Ruffians in armour, to the number of twenty- one, he himself being then present, either to destroy the life of Tom, or put them into strange consternation. However, thus it happened. In a lonesome place they rolled out upon them, making their first assault upon Tom, and, with a spear, gave him a slight wound, at which his love and the rest of the women shrieked and cried like persons out of their wits.

Tom endeavoured all that he could to pacify them, saying-" Stand you still and I will show you pleasant sport."

With that he caught a back-sword from the side of a gentleman in his own company, with which he so bravely behaved himself that at every stroke he cut off a joint. Loath he was to touch the life of any, but, aiming at heir legs and arms, he lopped them off so fast that, in less than a quarter of an hour, there was not one in the company but what had lost a limb, the green grass being stained with "their purple gore, and the ground strewn with legs and arms, as 'tis with tiles from the tops of the houses after a dreadful storm - his love and the rest of the company standing all the while as joyful spectators, laughing one at another, saying -

" What a company of cripples has he made, as it were in the twinkling of an eye ! "

"Yes," quoth Tom, "I believe that for every drop of blood that I lost, I have made the rascals pay me a limb as a just tribute."

This done, he stopt to a farmer's hard by, and hired there a servant, giving him twenty shillings to carry these cripples home to their respective habitations in his cart. Then did he hasten with his love to the church to be married, and then returned home, where they were heartily merry with their friends, after their fierce and dreadful encounter.

Now, Tom being married, he made a plentiful feast, to which he invited all the poor widows in four or five parishes, for the sake of his mother, whom he had lately buried. This feast was kept in his own house, with all manner of varieties that the country could afford, for the space of four days, in honour likewise of the four victories which he had lately obtained. Now, when the time of feasting was ended, a silver cup was missing, and, being asked about it, they every one denied they knew anything about it. At -length it was agreed that they should all stand the search, which they did, and

the cup was found on a certain old woman, named the widow Stumbelow. Then were all the rest in a rage. Some were for hanging her, others were for chopping the old woman in pieces for her ingratitude to such a generous soul as Sir Thomas Hickathrift, but he entreated them all to be quiet, saying they should not murder the old woman, for he would appoint a punishment for her himself, which was this – he bored a hole through her nose, and, tying a string therein, then ordered her to be led by the nose through all the streets and lanes in Cambridge.

The tidings of Tom's wedding were soon noised in the court, so that the king sent them a royal invitation to the end that he might see his lady. They immediately went, and were received with all demonstrations of joy and triumph, but while they were in their mirth a dreadful cry approached the court, which proved to be the commons of Kent who were come thither to complain of a dreadful giant that was landed in one of the islands, and brought with him abundance of bears and young lions, likewise a dreadful dragon, on which he himself rode, which monster and ravenous beasts had frightened all the inhabitants out of the island. Moreover, they said, if speedy course was not taken to suppress them in time, they might overrun the whole island. The king, hearing this dreadful relation, was a little startled, yet he persuaded them to return home and make the best defence they could for themselves at present, assuring them that he should not forget them, and so they departed.

The king, hearing the aforesaid dreadful tidings, immediately sat in council to consider what was to be done for the overcoming this monstrous giant, and barbarous savage lions and beasts, that with him had invaded his princely territories. At length it was agreed upon that Thomas Hickathrift was the most likely man in the whole kingdom for undertaking of so dangerous an enterprise, he being not only a fortunate man of great strength, but likewise a true and trusty subject, one that was always ready and willing to do his king and country service. For which reason it was thought necessary to make him governor of the aforesaid island, which place of trust and honour he readily received, and accordingly he forthwith went down with his wife and family, attended by a hundred knights and gentlemen, who conducted him to the entrance of the island which he was to govern. A castle in those days there was, in which he was to take up his head-quarters, the same being situated with that advantage that he could view the island for several miles upon occasion. The knights and gentlemen, at last taking their leave of him, wished him all happy success and prosperity. Many days he had not been there when it was his fortune to behold this monstrous giant, mounted upon a dreadful dragon, bearing upon his shoulder a club of iron, having but one eye, the which was placed in his forehead, and larger in compass than a barber's basin, and seemed to appear like a flaming fire. His visage was dreadful, grim and tawny ; the hair of his head hanging down his back and shoulders like snakes of a prodigious length ; the bristles of his beard being like rusty wire. Lifting up his blare eye, he happened to discover Sir Thomas Hickathrift, who was looking upon him from one of his windows of the castle. The giant then began to knit his brow and breathe forth threatening words to the governor, who, indeed, was a little surprised at the approach of so monstrous a brute. The giant, finding that Tom did not make much haste down to meet him, alighted from the back of the dragon, and chained the same to an oak-tree. Then, marching furiously . to the castle, he set his broad shoulder against a corner of the stone walls, as if he intended to overthrow the whole building at once, which Tom perceiving, said –

"Is this the game you would be at? Faith, I shall spoil your sport, for I have a delicate tool to pick your teeth withal."

Then, taking his two-handed sword of five foot long, a weapon which the king had given him to govern with, – taking this, I say, down he went, and flinging open the gates, he there found the giant, who, by an unfortunate slip in his thrusting, was fallen all along, where he lay and could not help himself.

" What ! " quoth Tom, " do you come here to take up your lodging] This is not to be suffered."

With that he ran his long broad-sword into the giant's body, which made the monstrous brute give such a terrible groan that it seemed like roaring thunder, making the very neighbouring trees to tremble. Then Tom, pulling out his sword again, at six or seven blows separated his head from his unconscionable trunk, which head, when it was off, seemed like the root of a mighty oak. Then turning to the dragon, which was all this while chained to a tree, without any further discourse, with four blows with his two-

handed sword, he cut off his head also. This fortunate adventure being over, he sent immediately for a team of horses and a wagon, which he loaded with these heads. Then, summoning all the constables in the country for a guard, he sent them to the court, with a promise to his majesty that he would rid the whole island likewise of bears and lions before he left it. Tom's victories rang so long that they reached the ears of his old acquaintance the tinker, who, desirous of honour, resolved to go down and visit Tom in his new government. Coming there, he met with kind and loving entertainment, for they were very joyful to see one another. Now, after three or four days' enjoyment of one another's company, Tom told the tinker that he must needs go forth in search after wild bears and lions, in order to rout them out of the island.

" Well," quoth the tinker, " I would gladly take my fortune with you, hoping that I may be serviceable to you upon occasion."

" Well," quoth Tom, " with all my heart, for I must needs acknowledge I shall be right glad of your company."

This said, they both went forward, Tom with his two-handed sword, and the tinker with his long pike-staff. Now, after they had travelled about four or five hours, it was their fortune to light on the whole knot of wild beasts together, of which six of them were bears, the other eight young lions. Now, when they had fastened their eyes on Tom and the tinker, these ravenous beasts began to roar and run furiously, as if they would have devoured them at a mouthful. Tom and the tinker stood, side by side, with their backs against an oak, and as the lions and bears came within their reach, Tom, with his long sword, clove their heads asunder till they were all destroyed, saving one lion who, seeing the rest of his fellows slain, was endeavouring to escape. Now the tinker, being somewhat too venturous, ran too hastily after him, and, having given the lion one blow, he turned upon him again, seizing him by the throat with that violence that the poor tinker fell dead to the ground. Tom Hickathrift, seeing this, gave the lion such a blow that it ended his life.

Now was his joy mingled with sorrow, for though he had cleared the island of those ravenous savage beasts, yet his grief was intolerable for the loss of his old friend. Home he returned to his lady, where, in token of joy for the wonderful success which he had in his dangerous enterprises, he made a very noble and splendid feast, to which he invited most of his best friends and acquaintances, to whom he made the following promise -

" My friends, while I have strength to stand,
Most manfully I will pursue
All dangers, till I clear this land
Of lions, bears, and tigers too.
This you 'll find true, or I'm to blame,

Let it remain upon record,
Tom Hickathrift's most glorious fame,
Who never yet has broke his word.
The man who does his country bless

Shall merit much from this fair land ;
He who relieved them in distress
His fame upon record shall stand.
And you, my friends, who hear me now,

Let honest Tom for ever dwell
Within your minds and thoughts, I trow,
Since he has pleased you all so well."

SOURCE: ENGLISH FOLK-LORE AND LEGENDS - W. W. GIBBINGS 18 BURY ST., LONDON, W.C. 1890