

VICTORANA

Agnes Willoughby, notorious at seventeen, loved Giuglini, the famous tenor, but married 'Mad' Windham, of Felbrigg Hall. ...and mid-Victorian England was thereby treated to an extraordinary scandal.

Mr and Mrs Windham

A Mid - Victorian Melodrama from Real Life

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TODAY when some big country house becomes a school, an institution, or a hotel, those who inherited it are congratulated on having rid themselves of an .incubus. It was otherwise a century ago. Then the change of ownership of some ancient family seat was a subject for deep commiseration. It rarely came about, and when it did the cause, more often than not, was the folly of a youthful heir.

In this way Felbrigg Hall, Norfolk, passed in 1862 from the Windhams, a name famous in East Anglia for many centuries. Its loss was the climax, long foreseen, of a series of legal causes which had filled the newspapers for eleven months. The first and longest of these, the Windham Lunacy Enquiry, lasted thirty-four days. Even today the rights and wrongs of the affair seem inextricably tangled.

At twenty-one William Frederick Windham, known as 'Mad' Windham, inherited the Felbrigg Estate worth £4,000 a year, together with the prospect of other estates worth £12,000 a year more when he should reach twenty-eight. To these estates, if he died without issue, his uncle, General Windham, was in entail. But what did Windham do? As soon as he came of age he ran up hair-raising debts which had to be settled out of the property .Then he married a notorious woman and made on her a preposterous settlement. Then he arranged for the execution of a deed whereby the entail was barred and his uncle prevented from succeeding to anything. Of course, could he be proved of unsound mind when he did these things, the marriage, the marriage-deed, the barred entail, and his control of the property could all be erased. Surely, the General reasoned, a *Commission de Lunatico Inquirendo* was in order?

Throughout England the subject was debated. At the outset most people held that young Windham's conduct had been so exorbitantly odd that an inquiry became a public duty. But a few contended that the General was trying to get his nephew locked away in a madhouse so that his own sons might inherit the property. Only since the marriage, and with it the likelihood of an heir, they pointed out, had the General troubled about his nephew's state of mind. And Felbrigg Hall, with its park and its woods, was undeniably a prize worth winning.

'MAD' WINDHAM WAS GREAT-NEPHEW of William Windham, Pitt's Minister and Dr Johnson's friend. He was born, the only child of his parents, on August 9, 1840. Undoubtedly his beginnings were ill-starred. His father could be hot-headed enough, but his mother, the former Lady Sophia Hervey, was highly strung and unpredictable to a degree. She would pet and caress her son one day. and flog him quite causelessly the next.

When Windham was fourteen his father died, having appointed General Windham and Lady Sophia his son's guardians. But the General could be a guardian only in name. The Crimean War claimed his services six months after his brother's death, then the Indian Mutiny broke out, and after the peace he remained in command at Lahore until 1861, the year of Windham's majority. And Lady Sophia, upon whom the duties of guardianship devolved, had during the earlier years of her widowhood, two Italians ostensibly music-teachers to live with her at the Hall. She wound up by marrying one of these, an effeminate creature young enough to be her son. Her own son she neglected completely.

Windham grew up quick-tempered and unruly. He was removed from his preparatory school, and later from Eton. On a tour of the Rhine he behaved, and looked, 'like a wild animal. ...I left before the scheduled time,' observed the Colonel who had been engaged to conduct him, 'as I found I could make no improvement at all adequate to the remuneration I was receiving.'

The next experiment, an attempt to induct Windham into the county society of Norfolk, proved, if anything, more calamitous. At one ball he turned a large dog loose among the dancers.

Ill at ease in the company of his equals, and agonized by ladies' society, Windham sought refuge among his social inferiors. First it was men-servants whom he cultivated. During the German tour he had once been discovered acting as a waiter, and in a relative's house he was found after dinner helping the footmen clear away the dishes. Now, at eighteen, he consorted chiefly with railway porters, engine drivers, and guards.

The railway was to hold for him a lifelong fascination. His love for his toy train had outlasted his schooldays, and his new and, of course, lavishly tipped friends allowed him to play with a real one. Rigged out as a guard 'in his cap and his belt,' he would stride up and down the platform of some station on the Great Eastern line, herding passengers into the carriages, slamming doors, blowing his whistle; and then, shouting that the train would be off in a minute, he would jump into a third class compartment and repeat the performance at every stopping-place. No word of all this reached the authorities. He was even allowed more than once to drive the engine of the night mail between Norwich and London.

When General Windham returned to England he took the rather unusual course of installing the boy in an apartment in Duke Street, St James's, in the house of some people called Llewellen. 'I will not allow you to keep low company,' said the General. 'I have given you the reins three months before your coming-of-age, and I trust that you will behave like a gentleman.'

IN LONDON, AS WAS TO BE EXPECTED, Windham soon found opportunities to make himself conspicuous. Whether deliberately or no (and this question was later much debated) his uncle was inviting calamity.

Windham became a byword in the Haymarket, then the night centre of London. There, we are told, 'Mr Windham did not behave like other young men.' Dressed in a police constable's uniform, he would plant himself firmly at midnight on the thronged pavement, to round up the women as they came out of the wine-saloons and to order the police to take them to the station. Back in Duke Street, he would brag to the Llewellens about the number of women he had had taken in charge.

But he himself was never taken in charge, because he could tip like a lord, and almost all London policemen in 1861 were corruptible. Even when in broad daylight he chivvied the 'pretty horsebreakers' or smart courtesans in Rotten Row, he was unhindered by the police.

Before long he began to chatter about one of these 'horsebreakers,' Agnes Willoughby. As soon as he came of age, he told the Llewellens, he meant to marry her. Mrs Llewellen guessed that so sought-after a girl would never look at an unkempt creature like their lodger. But before long she heard that he had been seen in Miss Willoughby's box at the Lyceum Opera. Then one evening, after a three days' absence, Windham burst into the house covered in soot. This surprised nobody, it merely meant that he had been stoking an engine. But he arrived 'in an elegant miniature brougham,' and Mr Llewellen recognized the coachman's livery as one recently ordered by Miss Willoughby from Poole.

Then, a fortnight after his twenty-first birthday, Windham disappeared again. This time he did not return. But at the end of August the Llewellens received a note from him asking that his belongings be sent on to Felbrigg. He had married Agnes Willoughby.

FOR FOUR YEARS NOW, AGNES WILLOUGHBY, though still only twenty one, had been stared at and glared at in public places—at race-meetings, the Opera, meets of the Royal Buckhounds, where she wore a 'scarlet riding habit' and was escorted by 'a posse of lieutenants from the Queen' Dragoon Guards.' When she cantered in Rotten Row, on a huge jet black Belgian mare or a cavalryman's charger, she seemed, we are told 'quite a star of attraction, even to ladies.' And no wonder. Agnes was a disconcertingly pretty girl of the childlike Victorian type: small, pale rather sulky-looking, with a heart-shaped face and deep blue eyes. But her real charm lay in her hair. It was of light gold. 'You cannot gaze upon it without wishing to make the acquaintance of the possessor,' a contemporary observes; 'when looking at these charming tresses the imagination is never satiated.'

She was really Agnes Rogers, daughter of a village sawyer in Hampshire. Her mother, a former nursemaid, was unable to read or write. In after years Agnes named the then Lord

Willoughby de Broke as her initial betrayer, but this is probably no more true than her other statement, that her father had been a clergyman. At any rate, in 1861 she was the incumbent of two villas in St John's Wood and a house in Paris: The £2,000 a year allowed her by her current protector, Jack Garton, was only part of her livelihood; and that very year an ecclesiastic bigwig, the Vicar-General of Canterbury, had 'bought her off' at a cost of £8,000.

Men of the world connected her chiefly with a smart gambling hell in Piccadilly. James Roberts, its proprietor, made a picturesque appearance about town, driving his four-in-hand in Hyde Park; and he hunted his own pack of staghounds. He it was who had groomed the sawyer's daughter. At night in the card-rooms she would wander round the tables with three or four other beautiful girls, distracting young men at their play. People sometimes wondered that Agnes, so invaluable to his business, should still allow Roberts to dictate roughly to her; why, indeed, so well-off a woman still chose to be his stool-pigeon at all. There was a certain abjectness in her demeanour to him. The truth is that Roberts, who drew his revenues mainly from brothels, was a swindling bully who wielded an inviolable power. Agnes had conceived a profound respect for him; but she was not in love with him.

She frequented Hyde Park and elsewhere as a decoy for his gambling den, and he in turn arranged assignations for her with likely admirers. He also provided her with a solicitor and a doctor, highly competent men to whom, as to himself, she would always refer her following. All three were to play parts in the complicated game that followed. In this the first move was made by Roberts when, after much beseeching from Windham, he presented to her, without her leave, the heir to the Felbrigg property.

The meeting was at Ascot Heath. There, seated with Jack Garton in an open carriage, Agnes was entertaining a little levee of swells. After being introduced to her, Windham found himself tongue-tied. Then suddenly, in front of them all, he blurted out a proposal of marriage. Naturally, everybody laughed. Nevertheless, towards the end of the afternoon, Garton, with Roberts beside him, approached 'Mad' Windham in his dog cart and, as was later adduced at the Trial, 'some negotiation took place between them.' How much it was is not stated, but after that Windham's suit prospered.

To do Agnes justice, she at no time pretended to care for her fiancé. It was not likely that this swarthy-complexioned Norfolk lout, with his outlandish clothes and his rustic dialect, could please *her*, the incomparable Willoughby. 'I feel a repugnancy for him,' she told her solicitor in Windham's presence. 'I will marry for a good settlement and for the sake of my two little sisters whom I desire to bring up as ladies. Mr Windham has promised to introduce my sisters into good society in Norfolk. ...Mind, I won't agree to an annuity. This settlement I must have in perpetuity, so that I may will it away to my sisters.'

After some palaver she induced Windham to settle on her £800 a year, chargeable on the estate, the figure to be increased to £1,500 when he should come into his full property. Roberts and her doctor, she decreed, should be her finance's trustees. 'But,' said her solicitor to Windham, 'I see that you have a life interest only in part of your property. What do you intend to do with regard to that?' 'Windham replied, 'I will cut off the entail directly, and get you to do it.' And there was a ring of purpose in his tone. For somewhere in his fuddled brain Windham, too, had his money calculations.

He appeared to be wholly infatuated. Youths of the hobbledehoy type, though shy with women, are perhaps more easily smitten by them than any, and it was the excitement of Agnes's notoriety that at once inflamed Windham's fancy. And two remarks of his, quoted at

the Trial, shed light on his fitful musings. 'My uncle,' he said, 'wants to prevent me marrying and having children, so that my cousins may one day get Felbrigg.' And again, 'Mama has married a young man, and they and my uncle make game of me.' By marrying a strumpet, he saw, he could at once foil his uncle's designs and punish his mother. And what a lot of attention he would attract to himself in the doing of it. .

For the next three weeks Agnes had it all in her power. She led her fiancé first to Attenborough the big pawnbroker, where he paid £400 to redeem some antique jewellery for her: then to a diamond merchant in Brook Street, where he bought her £13,000-worth of diamonds on credit. She also stipulated that an enamel bath with hot and cold water laid on be installed for her use at the Hall. The marriage-deed was signed on August 29. The wedding took place on the 30th.

It was a hole-and-corner business. The ceremony was performed at All Saint's Church, St John's Wood, and the reception held in one of Agnes's villas-immediately opposite. Agnes's doctor gave her away, and the guests were a handful of Agnes's relations. When it was over, the pair, accompanied by Agnes's sister Thirza, Agnes's French maid, and a valet whom Agnes had provided for her husband, journeyed to Paris. They were there ten days. They had one visitor from London-Agnes's solicitor. 'I brought Mr Windham the disentailing deeds which had been prepared in London,' the solicitor deposed at the Trial. 'They were executed at the Hotel Meurice. The effect of the deeds was to bar the entail to the Felbrigg Estate.'

ON THEIR WAY HOME FROM PARIS to Norfolk the Windhams broke the journey in London for a night and two days, staying at Morley's Hotel. Here they picked up Roberts, who was to be their first guest at Felbrigg, Agnes's youngest sister and a page whom Agnes had employed. They then took the night train to Norwich, Agnes and Roberts occupying a first-class compartment, Windham riding on the engine, and the rest of the party travelling third. The last lap of the journey was covered in the Windhams' battered old family coach, along with two luggage vans and a dog cart. They arrived at Felbrigg in the small hours.

Imagine the headshaking and the glum looks at Felbrigg when the tenantry learned what manner of woman was she whom the young squire had chosen for their mistress. Imagine, too, on this night of the home-coming, the hostile eyes that must have darted at Agnes as she and Thirza (a girl of seventeen), wearing marvellous Parisian crinolines, swept into the lamplit hall. They were followed by the master, soot-begrimed as of old, a Frenchwoman holding a tired little girl by the hand, and three sinister-looking men.

The next six weeks were tempestuous. Half the Felbrigg domestic staff left abruptly, to be replaced immediately by Agnes's aunts and cousins. The Windham family physician and lawyer were insulted and forbidden the house. (Agnes's doctor and Agnes's solicitor on the other hand were to stay, like Roberts, for an indefinite period.)

Although it had been agreed that Agnes should retain her own carriages and horses-including her favourite black one-after her wedding, she had, within a month of the ceremony, persuaded Windham to buy for her two riding-horses, two carriage horses, a brougham, and a pony phaeton: himself he treated to a four-horse drag. Then the diamond merchant of Brook Street was summoned to Felbrigg, and Agnes bought a further £4,500-worth of diamonds and emeralds. Poor Windham could with difficulty gulp down his porridge in the mornings for

dread of opening the fabulous milliners' and dressmakers' bills that daily confronted him. By October 1 his liabilities amounted to £19,000.

But Agnes could not stay to laugh at her good man, up to his eyes in bills. On September 23 she bolted-and was next heard of in Dublin. But she left her sisters and the aunts and cousins behind her at Felbrigg. Roberts also remained with Windham.

ONE MORNING, SOON AFTER HIS WIFE'S DEPARTURE, as Windham was riding about Felbrigg with Roberts, his guest suddenly said to him, 'Why do you go on borrowing, paying interest on interest, when you have all the money you want here on the place? Your timber is worth a good deal. Now, if you ever thought of selling it I could introduce you to a timber merchant who would not try to cheat you by taking it all in a lump, but would give you so much a foot for it.' (Roberts, among much else, had once been a timber contractor.) .

Well, Windham had only to say the word, Roberts assured him, and the timber-brokers would be at Felbrigg in three days. Windham said it, and they came. So did a surveyor from Norwich whom Windham himself summoned. This last gentleman, accompanied by one of Windham's foresters, trudged conscientiously over the three thousand acres of Felbrigg, blazing, often after a good deal of hesitation, such trees as could, in his estimate, be cut down without injury to the value of the estate. Afterwards he told Windham that he had blazed 536 trees-all of them oaks; if any of the larch, the Spanish chestnuts, or the sycamore were felled, he explained, it would impair the beauty of the park. He also named the price that he would advise Windham to stand out for- £2,586. But the timber-brokers had been too quick for him: the day before Windham had sold every tree on the place to a Government contractor, and had signed a document in the presence of this person, of the timber-brokers, and of Roberts, whereby he was to receive £1,000 down and £5,000 a year for four years. No, there was nothing in the agreement about the ornamental timber in the Park, 'but that,' Windham quickly added, 'would be safe as there was a verbal agreement that it should be spared.' Whereupon, one supposes, the Norwich surveyor shrugged his shoulders and wished Mr Windham good morning.

'It was the most extraordinary contract that any timber-broker had ever entered into,' said Counsel for the petitioners at the Trial, 'and only an idiot could have supposed that the ornamental timber was excepted by it. If the order had been carried out Felbrigg Estate would not have had a tree left standing. Never before had a contract been drawn up for taking growing timber.' And never before, it is safe to say, had timber been priced and measured by the methods of these particular brokers. By measuring the girth of each tree at two-thirds of the way up instead of at the base, they had contrived to allow 2s. for 3s. worth of goods: Windham had sold all his timber at two-thirds of its value. The Trial also revealed that the brokers were not partners in a firm, as they had led Windham to suppose, but merely Roberts's agents: while the buyers were family connections of the brokers. The deal, in fine, was a plant. The real purchaser of the timber was Roberts.

Happily it all came to nothing. The General, apprised by his agent of the planned disforestation of his future property, came hurrying to Felbrigg, to offer the brokers the immediate return of the £1,000 advanced to his nephew if they would cancel the agreement at once; and Roberts, seeing that news of his shady bargaining had somehow leaked out, was glad to accept the reimbursement. The deal was off and so, in a few hours, was he. What had

Felbrigg to offer now, with its host who could no longer be gulled and its amiable hostess enjoying herself in Dublin, two hundred miles away?

Roberts knew why Agnes had fled to Ireland, and so did Windham: she went to join a man with whom half London knew her to have been for four years ostentatiously in love. She had paraded her attachment from choice, but in fact she could not have hidden it had she wanted to, her beloved being at this period an international celebrity. But though the applause of the crowd and his aura of success had been for her, at seventeen, his most beguiling features, she was, as the years passed, to look on him mainly as an anodyne for what she regarded as her life's pains. The puerilities of her soldier and sportsmen lovers, Roberts's brutishness, and now the boorishness of Windham: these she could forget when she was with him. Indeed, his glory blazing constantly before her, reduced all other men who crossed her path to mere silhouettes, nonentities, useful perhaps to get money out of but from whom it would have been unthinkable not to take frequent holidays.

A Dublin journalist gives us the first hint of her beloved's identity. Agnes was, he tells us, while in his city, 'a constant attendant at the Theatre Royal during the Opera Season at the close of September when Signor Giuglini and Mdme Tietjens were the "particular stars..." At a performance of Verdi's *Un Ballo en Maschera* during Act Two, 'the attention of the fashionables was attracted by a young lady, a decided blonde, who entered the right hand stage-box on the first tier, ...An attendant moved from her shoulders a black velvet mantle trimmed with magnificent Russian sables, displaying thus a white silk dress cut very low. ...On her head was a coronet of sky-blue velvet ornamented with diamond stars. Her necklace, earrings, brooch and bracelets were all of diamonds. ...Many were the inquiries "who is the lady?" By and by it was whispered round the house "Her name is Windham. She is very rich. ..and...she cherishes a *penchant* for a celebrated Italian tenor."

ANTONIO GIUGLINI WAS, AT THIS EPOCH, 'the tenor in possession. ... He stood undisturbed on his pedestal. "Have you heard Giuglini?" "What do you think of Giuglini?" were questions asked in every fashion- able assembly.'

In person the great tenor was short-no taller than Agnes-and 1 smooth-faced and plump. He had black curls, and glistening black eyes. And for a man of thirty-three he was prone to very infantile enthusiasms. .For example, kite-flying. 'Often in the Brompton Road, at the risk of being crushed to death by omnibuses, he would be seen lost in admiration of a kite.' Another weakness, and one that it pleased Agnes to flatter, was a taste, amounting to mania, for self-adornment. In the most fantastic trim he would sup with her on summer nights, after the Opera, in the gardens of the Star and Garter at Richmond. Everybody there knew the couple: the small imperious blonde lady in evening dress with her bouquet, fan, and gloves: the midget Corsair in his brigand's cloak, with his sombrero, sash and boots: they seemed to be visitors from Lilliput in that Chinese lantern-hung arbour.

The world said that the lady was the master. She provided the jewels that her paramour rather too abundantly wore, and his fur cloak. To a point this was true. In the circles in which Agnes moved, the degree of a man's love was gauged by the sums that he spent on his mistress~ so when Agnes treated herself to that time-honoured appanage of the courtesan, an *amant-de-coeur*, she wooed him by such methods as h~ savage little soul could understand. Moreover, she was at pains to let the world know of her munificence. Shakespeare tells us that:

'Tis the strumpet's plague, To beguile many, but b-e beguiled by one. Agnes was not averse from the notoriety attendant on being known as one torn by a grand passion for a popular favourite.

But there was more. She genuinely strove to identify herself with her lover's genius. Her daydream of one day singing beside him in the capitals of Europe was perhaps no more realizable than her ambition that the Norfolk county families—the Nevills, the Gurneys, the Cokes—should take up her sisters after her marriage. But the fantasy persisted, and she engaged a singing master for herself and even, spasmodically, took lessons from him. And from first to last her conduct of the liaison was in the grand prima donna style. Her *loge* at Her Majesty's Theatre, and afterwards at the Lyceum, was hung in amber satin damask, and heads would emerge from each cell in the vast honeycomb whenever she took possession of it. Only after the stir caused by her entry had subsided could she relapse into her imaginings, soaring with Giuglini's over-honeyed voice. For when the curtain fell she must again outstare the lorgnettes that confronted her. In the stalls every night were Lady Molesworth and Lady Waldegrave, rival musical hostesses of the hour: 'Cherub' Giuglini, as they called him, was the lion of their conversaciones. What shifts they were put to secure him! Whereas she, his concubine in her *loge*, held him clasped, as it were, in her jewel-case.

There were, of course, complaints in the press about the 'impudence and scandal' of these 'scenes.' A moralist wrote to a Sunday paper asserting that Giuglini ought to be 'scouted into obscurity' "since the writer's family 'could not go to the Opera without being reminded that a tarnished creature, who occupies the best box in the house,' was there 'because of her connection with him.' For all that, throughout Britain, in every city where 'operas were performed, the 'scenes' were duplicated. In a concert-hall in Aberdeen the guilty pair were 'pelted with bad oranges.' In Edinburgh the City Fathers moved to have the Opera Season curtailed because, 'though Signor Giuglini's deeds were known to all,' the Queen's Theatre continued to be 'stormed by inquisitive playgoers.' Further south the lovers received ovations. At Folkestone, on their return from a European tour, 'news of their landing soon spread, and a crowd of at least a couple of hundred persons followed them to their hotel.'

In addition, during the last two years of her liaison, Agnes had yearned at Giuglini from proscenium boxes all over the Continent: in Paris, Vienna, Milan, Padua and Barcelona. And wherever they went she engaged apartments for both of them. In Dublin (whither she now had fled) she took a house on the city's outskirts called—somewhat inappropriately—'the Monk's House.'

AGNES RETURNED HOME on October 8, having spent a fortnight in Dublin. Three days later, however, she again left husband and sisters, this time to hunt with Jack Garton at Melton. She would be away for a week, she had announced, but in fact a month passed before Windham had word of her. Then came an anonymous letter; Agnes, it said, had rejoined Giuglini: she had toured the North of England with the opera company, and was now with it in Glasgow. She and Giuglini were staying at the Victoria Hotel, Glasgow.

Then Windham saw red. He rushed from the breakfast-parlour to his study, tore open his desk, and flung into the fire a will that he had had drawn up and witnessed, whereby he left his whole property to his wife. An hour later he was journeying to London.

Nine hours afterwards he and a doctor friend were on the night train to Glasgow. The doctor slept as best he could in his compartment while Windham rode, of course, on the engine. In Glasgow, in the small hours, they hastened to the Victoria Hotel. There the landlord appeared in his shirtsleeves and mumbled, in reply to Windham's agitated questions, 'The lady took the last train to London.' 'Then we must take the next one,' said Windham, and back they rushed to the station. That evening they found Agnes in a private room in the Euston Hotel.

She was dining with three men, none of whom was Giuglini. Just the same, Windham created such a shindy, threatening Agnes and breaking the furniture, that the proprietor had to send for the police. He also told Agnes that she must leave the following morning.

After that the Windhams separated. She retreated to one of her St. John's Wood villas, where Giuglini presently joined her. Windham, too, stayed in London. He boarded, at Agnes's suggestion, with Roberts in Piccadilly. His uncle, his solicitor had informed him, was instituting an inquiry into his sanity, and, since he meant to fight this, he would, during the next six weeks, have much to do.

THE ENQUIRY OPENED ON December 16, 1861, in Westminster Hall, Mr Samuel Warren, Q.C. (author of *Ten Thousand a Year*) being the Master in Lunacy. Some two hundred witnesses were convoked 'from all parts of England, Scotland, Ireland, and even Russia.' The petition was 'garnished with an array of names of very considerable position in Society.' Of all Windham's relatives, only his mother did not concur in the petition against him.

At the outset, as has been observed, public opinion tended to support General Windham. He showed rare moral courage, people said, to pursue his convictions in the teeth of motives bound to be imputed to him. What a conscientious citizen this brave soldier was! And certainly the General's witnesses, former tutors of Windham's and Norfolk acquaintances, told some alarming stories of the respondent's childhood. But Mr and Mrs Llewellyn were the really important witnesses. On their representations as to Windham's conduct in Duke Street the whole process seemed likely to turn.

The boy's manners in their house, Mrs Llewellyn told the Court, had been outrageous. He was, to begin with, such a glutton. 'Once as many as seventeen eggs were served for his breakfast, and on another occasion twelve. If his dinner were not ready the moment he ordered it he would fling open the windows and howl, so that the whole street might hear him.' Then, too, he would act quite dementedly, running about 'all over the house stark-naked and bellowing.' In the course of three weeks, seventeen pairs of boots had been delivered for him from one bootmaker, and he had ordered two sets of boot trees for each pair. Patently Windham was mad! ...

Then on the twelfth day the Master asked the petitioners themselves to step into the box to confirm in full court the allegations that they had made in private before the Lords Justices. But the box remained empty. The Marquis of Bristol and Lord Alfred Hervey, who had so blackened their young relative's name in the Courts of Chancery, shied, when it came to it, from submitting their charges to a public cross-examination. And the General, who had sat in court throughout, whispering to his counsel and organizing his witnesses - the General refused to repeat what he had declared upon oath in four affidavits.

Public opinion veered. That the whole litigation ought then and there to be closed was a feeling pretty generally voiced. Yet Mr Warren, the Master, prolonged the Enquiry for another twenty-two sittings. The respondents witnesses, he maintained, should in equity be heard. So Windham's supporters, servants from Felbrigg, railway porters, policemen, stepped, one after the other, into the box.

After hearing their evidence it was difficult not to conclude that Windham was merely a gross noisy fellow, and a bit of a poltroon, whose follies had been no worse than those committed daily and nightly in any barracks. His upbringing explained his predilection for low life. His driving the engine did not seem to be so strange after one witness asserted that 'he had heard in Society how no less than three young noblemen were thus addicted.' Moreover, Mrs Llewellen's cook denied that she had ever sent up more than three eggs for his breakfast. 'High-spirited he might be,' she said, 'but Mr Windham was always the gentleman. He never over-ate. And if he did run naked about the house it was because he had scalded himself in the bath. Mr and Mrs Llewellen are slandering him.'

None of the Duke Street servants could say any good of their master and mistress. Mr Llewellen, they said, had induced Windham while yet under age to run up huge debts for wine. He had not only persuaded the youth to purchase litres of champagne wholesale from the Docks, but also on credit from Barnes's tavern in the Haymarket, of which he was an agent. If Mr Windham had fallen in with bad company it was Mr Llewellen who had introduced him to it. And Mrs Llewellen was worse. She had tried to bully all her staff into defaming Windham on the General's account. After the respondent had left them, the General was always visiting the house and having long talks with Mrs Llewellen in private. Mrs Llewellen was in love with the General.

Now Mr Llewellen's being a wine merchant as well as a lodging-house keeper was true: he had formerly been General Windham's butler, and his old master had set him up in both businesses. For that matter, the General himself had substantial interests in the wine trade. These facts accounted, of course, for General Windham's frequent appearances at Duke Street, and what the Court had just heard would have been dismissed as malicious fabrication-servants' evidence-had it not been for the behaviour of the Llewellens themselves when recalled to the box. For husband and wife not only contradicted their former testimonies, and each other, but corroborated unawares nearly all that their servants had said. Theirs was indeed a strange household. The General, it seemed, exchanged endearments with Mrs Llewellen whenever he visited her. He wrote to her as his 'dearest Augusta.' Further, he-a decorated General-frequently sat down to dinner with 'these common lodging- house people.' Most odd. As to another statement that young Windham had met Roberts through his landlord and landlady, it appeared only too likely. Mrs Llewellen had been seen in Roberts's phaeton in the Cremorne Gardens, and a sister of hers was an inmate of one of his brothels. Mrs Llewellen, to whom the care of a boy of twenty had been confided, was actually the half-way-person between her charge and Roberts's gambling den. And then Windham's behaviour in her house. Was it really as insufferable as she had said? If so, how came it that, the day before he had left Duke Street for good, Mrs Llewellen had taken from him a year's rent in advance? Rather than wanting to lose her lodger, had she not done everything that she could to retain him, so as to fleece him? And had it not been to the General's purpose that the wretched boy should fall into trouble?

General Windham's turpitude, it was felt, now stood revealed. He had let this weak-headed boy loose in London, with wads of pocket money and nothing to do, hoping and intending that the young man would go to the devil; the Llewellens were merely hired agents

with their orders. And it now appeared that Mrs Llewellen was a former mistress of the General's; and that, following a custom perfectly understood in those days, he had married her off to his majordomo. He had counted on these people drawing his nephew into dubious circles. That the boy should finally be pronounced unfit to control his property seemed provably now to have been the General's motive. Only Agnes Willoughby had stood outside his reckoning.

Two further disclosures about the General landed him, bump, at the very foot of public opinion's slope. When he instituted proceedings in October, he had said that he believed his nephew's idiocy to be congenital. Yet in August, on the boy's coming-of-age, he had tried to negotiate with him for a resettlement of the family estates. Again, in September he had paid a surprise visit to Felbrigg and offered to sell his nephew some land for £1,000. So then! General Windham of the high moral sentiments had tried to bargain with a youth whom he believed to be a lunatic.

On the last day of the trial Windham underwent a mental test before the Master, jury, and counsel. It lasted four hours. It was severe, but, like many another public nuisance on such an occasion, Windham 'astonished everybody by the readiness and intelligence of his answers.' Afterwards, while the jury was considering the verdict, 'he chatted and laughed with his counsel as though he had no concern in the result.' Nor had he. Like everybody else in court, he knew what the result would be.

And he was right. The jury pronounced him 'a man of sound mind sufficient for the government of himself, his manors, and his messuages.' So the ownership of Felbrigg and the matrimonial position of its chatelaine were secure.

'The moment the verdict was uttered,' reported The Times, 'a loud and enthusiastic cheer rose from the crowded court, and was repeated again and again. An attempt was made by the Master to secure order, but in vain and "one cheer more" made the Westminster Sessions House ring like an alehouse. Meanwhile everybody who could get near Mr Windham was shaking hands with him. ...His face glowed. ...When he left the Court the admiring crowd almost carried him to the cab, in which he drove away amid a thundering cheer.'

But that was not the end. The Lords Justices were empowered to order or refuse costs, and six weeks later, when Windham appealed against having to pay those of the whole process, he was met with a rebuff. Lord Justice Knight Bruce 'could not question the motives of the original petitioners... Their application, as he saw it, was riot made from personal motives, but with a view to the best interests of the present petitioner.' This brought the whole business to a final stop. For the privilege of having had his deplorable private life exposed in public, and in print, for a month and a half, Windham was obliged to pay £20,000.

Five months later there was an anti-climax. Public indignation had been aroused by the length and appalling expense of the litigation, and to prevent further abuses of the kind the Lord Chancellor brought in a bill to abridge and limit the scope of inquiries into sanity.

AFTER THAT 'SHARP REMINDER,' THE expensive enquiry, Windham played ducks and drakes with his fortune more wildly than ever. A few nights after the verdict, happening to stroll into Weston's Music Hall, he was immediately recognized, mobbed, cheered, and

hoisted on to the stage, where he made a speech 'to the clattering of clay pipes, and the jingling of grog glasses.' Tipsy with joy at this reception, he treated the whole company to brandies and soda. A few days later he presented a gold cup to a boxing champion in a Leicester Square Hall. Then in the middle of February he retired to board with his old nanny in the Felbrigg dairy house. He planned to retrench there, and did in fact recoup some of his losses by letting the Hall on good terms to the Marquis of Abercorn.

But his pastimes were still expensive. He had an Express Mail van made, painted red, and on the panels the Windham arms in gold. On this he set out for Norwich every morning to fetch his letters—a journey of thirty-six miles there and back. Soon afterwards he bought a big private coach. On this, wearing the many-caped surcoat of the traditional coachman, he tooled passengers free of charge between Cromer and Felixstowe. And he still haunted the railway. During 1862 *The Times* published three letters complaining of his appearances as a guard on G.E.R. stations, of his playfully locking passengers into some compartments and out of others, and of his uncouth demeanour. But he continued to frequent the line.

Agnes, meanwhile, was living openly with Giuglini. The lease of both her St. John's Wood houses having expired, she purchased the freehold of a large house in then-fashionable Upper Westbourne Terrace, and ordered from an upholsterer £3,000 worth of furniture. The upholsterer agreed to let her have this on the instalment plan after he had been shown a copy of her marriage settlement, but a few days before she was due to move in he said that the security was not good enough. He had heard that Felbrigg was likely to be sold to cover 'Mad' Windham's debts, and since his client's annuities were chargeable on the estate, they would in that event be valueless. Moreover, Agnes's solicitor, also mindful of these things, refused to disburse any part of her rent charges until his own bill was settled.

Then Agnes had a brain-wave. She dashed off a letter marked 'Urgent' to Windham requesting an immediate interview. They met in her solicitor's office, and had half an hour's *tête à tête* ... When it was over Agnes announced that Windham had consented to buy back her rent charges for £20,000. On the strength of this the now obliging upholsterer consented to furnish her house from attic to cellar on credit. And crate by crate the goods were delivered.

Shortly before Agnes and Giuglini moved into their new home, Windham had filed an affidavit for divorce. The hearing was booked for December, and it occurred to Agnes, and also to her solicitor, that, in the course of another *tête à tête*, he might be persuaded to undo his own plans. Accordingly, in late July, when Giuglini was in Italy, Windham received from his wife three 'urgent' letters, and two from her solicitor ... He consented to stay with her at Westbourne Terrace for two months. During this time they went on an excursion in Windham's schooner-yacht to Boulogne, and, he also leased for her a hunting-box at Market Harborough. But they separated when London began to fill in the autumn.

Nevertheless, the suit *Windham v. Windham and Giuglini* was heard. When asked why she had left her husband a second time, Agnes pleaded cruelty. Once, she said, Windham had jumped out at her from a window recess and pointed a pistol at his head. Another time, when a friend of his was staying at Westbourne Terrace, he burst into the parlour where she and their visitor were sitting, and shouting that 'Nobody should marry his wife after his death,' threatened to slit her throat from ear to ear. On a third occasion he had pinioned her with one hand in a corner while he cut off all her hair. In proof of this last charge, Agnes removed her bonnet. Her much-admired golden hair had, it was seen, lately been cropped as close as any charity-boy's.

For all that, the Judge announced a second hearing in February. Infidelity could not then be established, however, and the case was adjourned until July. But it never came on. A month before the third hearing was to take place Windham rejoined his wife in Westbourne Terrace, and the judge was so exasperated that besides his own costs and Agnes's, he made him pay Giuglini's into the bargain. Further, by condoning his wife's lapses Windham had to meet the upholsterer's bill for £3,000.

Nor were the rent-charges that he had bought back of the smallest service to him. Eight months before this the long foreseen, the unpreventable, had happened. Felbrigg was sold. The ancient habitation and lands of the Windhams were bought by a Norwich merchant named Kit ton. 'Windham has gone to the dogs, Felbrigg has gone to the Kit tons' was for months a certain hit in every music hall.

BY 1863 GIUGLINI NO LONGER TOWERED for opera patrons as 'a god of song.' Those protracted top-notes of his were, the critics began to discover, 'cloying.' And reading their unsympathetic reviews Agnes realized, perhaps, that she would never, after all, share with her lover his public's acclamations. He was dwindling. Dwindling, too, she now saw, had been for many months the excitement of her *grande passion*. It had become a habit.

In December Giuglini and Agnes quarrelled. Details are lacking, but it seems that Giuglini had been contracting debts on the assumption that his mistress would, as so often before, come to the rescue the moment he was embarrassed, and that Agnes, seeing her deity suddenly tumbled from his high place to the position of a suppliant before her, had refused to meet them. Her refusal was in every sentence barbed with scorn and disgust.

She never saw him again. During the next eighteen months she must have heard of his engagement to sing opposite Patti in St Petersburg, his chagrin at never being called, his sudden return to London in the charge of a hired courier, and his instalment in a private lunatic asylum at Chiswick. But she remained incurious.

Yet when, in October 1865, news came of his death in Italy, she acted, said her housekeeper, 'like one demented.' She ran yelling to the kitchen and tried to stab herself with a bread knife... In November she resumed the old life in Paris. There was the horsedealer Abell, whom she replaced by Allen the pad-groom, who was in turn superseded by Silvio, a wealthy Cuban tobacco-planter. She also attended Thirza's wedding to a Portuguese grandee. She had forgotten Giuglini as an animal forgets its last year's mate.

THOUGH MR AND MRS WINDHAM'S second reunion survived for nearly a year, they had spells as long as eleven weeks apart from each other. Agnes spent these holidays in Paris, Windham among his usual companions in Norwich. When, however, they were together, they elected that, for the sake of form, the world had better see them so. Hence they were remarked at race-meetings, regattas, and 'driving a four-horse drag down King's Street, Brighton.'

Before their third parting in July 1864, the condition of both parties had altered. Agnes was the mother of a son and Windham, by his own petition, a declared bankrupt. In February that year he had sold all his remaining estates and effects to Agnes for £11,000. His life had

been insured in five offices and she now held the policies of these also. In effect, he made over to her everything he possessed.

When he learnt this, the General sounded the war-note a second time. He was actuated by two reasons. In the first place there was his doctor's pronouncement that his nephew could not hope to live another seven years. In the second place there was the Hanworth property, that other estate, contiguous to Felbrigg, which his nephew, if alive, would succeed to in 1868. If Windham were to die childless in the interim, Hanworth would go to the General. Agnes's baby therefore was going to present difficulties. But they could stand. First he meant to revoke the deed whereby Agnes had bought up Windham's life interest in Hanworth.

So he instructed Mr Dolman, his solicitor, to try to extricate Windham from his self-imposed penury. And for all Agnes's assertions that she had 'purchased the annuities solely for her husband's benefit' and in order to 're-invest them so as to secure him a yearly income that could not be encumbered or disposed of,' Dolman induced her at the end of a twelvemonth to agree to a compromise: she was to meet her husband's debts in bankruptcy and to settle on him £500 a year. Meanwhile the draft to this effect would take time to prepare, and the question arose what Windham should do for a livelihood.

Now in the 'sixties the last of the old yellow four-in-hand coaches still plied between Norwich and Cromer, and since the job of coachman fell vacant just then, Windham tendered for it at the regulation fee. His driving exploits have often been described. At first he made a good whip. He talked in the broadest Norfolk dialect, accepted with a touch of his hat and a 'good day, sir' a two-crown tip from every passenger, and exchanged chaff with the ostlers at the inns. But after ten months it palled on him. He began to gallop at breakneck speed into inn yards. He took passengers to the wrong places on purpose. Once he staged an overturn. At last, after coming to blows with the coach proprietor, and spending a night in the lock-up, he 'resigned.'

He was now quite frankly a pauper. He lodged in a Norwich pothouse, on an allowance of £1 a week from the General. Even so, there was still a flicker of hope. Divorce proceedings were again pending, and the General, who employed agents in Paris, had scavenged details of Agnes's life there that might have built up a bonfire of evidence. But Agnes, as usual, extinguished it. She dispatched one of her 'urgent' letters to Windham, enclosing £10, and imploring him to join her at a friend's house in London. When they met, she carried him off in her brougham to a hotel. They were there ten hours. Then they parted. And it was all to do again. Nor did she ever make over to Windham the agreed settlement. Here again she outmanoeuvred the General.

On February 1 some youths called at Windham's pothouse and invited, him to accompany them on a round of the Norwich pubs. He would be their guest, they said. Fourteen hours later Windham staggered home, trembling and blubbing. He was hurried into bed while somebody wired his Uncle. But it was too late. When the General arrived 'Mad' Windham had been two hours dead. A post-mortem revealed nothing suspicious.

THE LUNACY INQUIRY, AS HAS BEEN SEEN, brought General Windham low in the eyes of the public, but the events of the next four years restored him. When, in February 1861, *The Times* had said, 'the Jury must have been as insane as Mr Windham was asserted to be had it come to any other conclusion' every newspaper had concurred. But after the alleged lunatic's

death the entire Press was wondering how a 'British Jury could have been led into the insane belief that Mr Windham possessed a sound mind.'

The long-delayed Knighthood of the Bath bestowed on the General in 1865 assisted his rise in popular esteem. After all, the world now reminded itself, the old boy was a Crimean hero; he *had* led the storming party at the assault on the Redan; his presence on the fields of Alma, Balaclava, and Inkerman *did* redound to his credit. Then the year that his Queen chose to honour him the General married again, and his wife, who was almost young enough to be his granddaughter, bore him, in 1866, a son. If he moved today to have somebody else's son, Agnes's, declared illegitimate, the world would, since he now stood so well with it, surely give him its support. For there was again a prize to be squabbled over.

This of course was the Hanworth property. Hanworth, with its accumulating rental of £9,000 a year, would now revert to Windham's son - if, that is, the infant were Windham's son. But was he? Anticipating war, Agnes had heaped her child with Windham family names at his christening: he was baptized Frederick William Howe Lindsay Bacon Windham. That fired the General. The moment 'Mad' Windham was dead he filed an affidavit stating how the deceased had solemnly sworn before the Courts of Chancery that the infant could not be his.

But Agnes was braced for a tussle. If her late husband had repudiated 'her boy,' she said, he had been coerced into .doing so by the General's lawyers. The Lords Justices would recollect the General's subornation of witnesses at an earlier process. He was impeaching 'her boy's' legitimacy in his own interest. Witnesses could testify that her late husband was living with her on amicable terms when 'her boy' was born. More, he had 'made a very feeling and proper speech' at the christening and 'set all the bells of Norwich ringing.' The battle was tough, but Agnes knew she could smite her way through. She managed to convince the Lords Justices, and the General's attempt to dispossess the child was quashed.

Still, the General was not quite deterred. If the law insisted that the child was a Windham, he said, then, very well, a suitable guardian must be appointed. Plainly the child's mother was unsuitable. How would he himself do? Agnes's instant rage and terror at this suggestion brought her many sympathizers. 'Her boy's' life would be in danger, she cried, if he fell into the General's hands. And the Lords Justices were constrained to admit that that plan would hardly answer. In the end they agreed that Agnes's candidate, the doctor who had brought 'her boy' into the world, was a fit and proper person. And the guardianship was settled.

Once again the General had foundered in public opinion. He was now the Wicked Uncle who sought to deprive the little prince of his birthright. Baffled, huffed, and despairing, he accepted the command of the forces in Canada the next year. He died two years later, in 1870. Agnes married the agent of the Hanworth .Estate a few months before her six-year-old son was to take possession of it, and since George Walker was a block-like, god fearing yeoman many years her senior, and she was a faithful wife to him, they were granted the custody of 'her boy.' It was for both a marriage of convenience. He provided stability, and Agnes supplied the money. Though still under thirty, she had grown dumpy and straight-laced, and now desired to forget the misdemeanours of her youth. She played Lady Bountiful to the tenantry and patronized the .J Hanworth Vicar.

Her son was educated at Eton and Cambridge. All doubts as to his * paternity were cleared up when, at his coming-of-age party, he lost £5,000 to one of his farm tenants at pigeon shooting. His career was a paler version of his father's, and like 'Mad' Windham's, it

soon terminated. He and his mother both died in 1896, and with his death the ancient family of Windham became extinct.

But its memory abides. Felbrigg, three miles from Cromer, is still one of the comelier East Anglian demesnes, and 'Mad' Windham, the unworthy scion, is part of local lore. Even in 1951 the young people of the district have all heard tales of his driving the engine and the Cromer coach. And there is an old lady in the neighbourhood whose aunt had been in the Windhams' service. She could tell how a valise had been found under 'Mad' Windham's deathbed; when it was opened it was found to contain old letters from his mother and legal documents. There was also a very flat brown paper parcel - intimate family papers no doubt. But no. When it was unfastened there fell out of it tress upon tress of brittle, of faded, of once-golden hair.