

Tom Coryate; and Forks.

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THE village of Odcombe has been made famous as the birth-place of Thomas Coryate. Born in 1577, in the reign of our great Queen Elizabeth, a son of the then rector, Thomas in due time went to Oxford, and his studies being finished, he seems to have entered the service of Prince Henry as a comic attendant. Sweetmeats and Coryate made up the last course at all entertainments. He was the courtiers' anvil, says Fuller, to try their wits upon; and sometimes the anvil returned harder knocks than it received. He next conceived the idea that he would become the greatest traveller ever known, or, as he later puts it himself in a letter to his "right worshipful neighbour, Sir Edward Phellips: I doubt not but that your Honour will congratulate the felicity of our Somersetshire, that in breeding me hath produced such a traveller as doth for the diversity of the countries he hath seen, and the multiplicity of his observations, far outstrip any other whatever that hath been bred therein since the incarnation of our Saviour. Following up his plan, Coryate made two journeys; the result of the first being a thick quarto book, printed in 1611, which he entitled:—

Coryates' Crvdities, hastily gobbled up in five moneths travells in France, Sauoy, Italy, Heluetia *alias* Switzerland, some parts of high Germany, and the Netherlands. Newly digested in the hungry aire of Odcombe, in y^e County of Somerset, and now dispersed to the nourishment of the travelling members of this kingdome.

Other matter was added or inserted, without pagination, necessitating a second title, which reads:—

Three crvde veines are presented in this booke following (besides the foresaid Crvdities) no lesse flowing in the body of the booke, then the Crvdities themselves, two of Rhetoricke and one of Poesie. That is to say, a most elegant oration, first written in the Latine tongue by Hermannvs Kirchnervs, a Ciuill Lawyer, Oratour, Cæsarean Poet, and professor of Eloqvence and Antiquities in the famous Vniuersitie of Marpvrg in the Langrauiat of Hasia, in praise of Trauell in generall. Now distilled into English Spirit through the Odeombian Limbecke. This precedeth the Crvdities. Another also composed by the Author of the former in praise of Trauell in Germanie in particular, sublimed and brought ouer the Helme in the Stillitorie of the said Trauelling Thomas. This about the Center or Nauell of the Crvdities.

Then in the Posterne of them looke, and thou shalt find the Posthume Poems of the Author's Father, comming as neere kinsmen to the worke, being next of blood to the Booke and yonger brothers to the Author himselfe.

As will be perceived by these title-pages, our hero was a facetious, comical fellow, a "bold carpenter of words and phrases." He was, too, a good companion; his manners and behaviour being always studied to make merry. But also was he a scholar and an antiquary, and his book is by no means without value, quaint as it may be, as containing the laboured observations of an educated traveller nearly three centuries ago.

Setting out from Dover at ten o'clock in the morning, 14th May, 1608, he arrived at Calais about five in the afternoon, having "varnished the exterior of the ship with the excrementall ebullitions of his tumultuous stomach." He then begins his observations, from which, omitting the usual descriptions of towns and buildings, the following notes are extracted, either as relating to curious customs or to habits or fashions now passed away.

Leaving Calais town, he went on to Paris, and then passing on he saw "a very doleful spectacle," the bones and ragged fragments of clothes of a murderer remaining on a wheel; the bones miserably broken asunder and dispersed upon the wheel in divers places. A little farther he saw ten men hanging upon a goodly gallows of freestone; their bodies being consumed, only their bones and rags remained. Here he saw

wooden shoes for sale. At Lyons he observed that the windows were generally of white paper; but some few had glass on the upper part, and white paper below.

Getting to the Alps, he notes and wonders at the many small cultivated plots,—not bigger than little beds,—high up the mountains, and he concluded that the corn must be set with the hand, as had been then lately recommended for England in a book not long before published. In Savoy he noticed a lake, the waters being so swift no fish could live therein, as they were dashed against the big stones which were in it, many of the stones being even bigger than the “great stone upon Hamdon Hill in Somersetshire, so famous for the quarre which is within a mile of Odcombe, my dear natalitial place.”

Arriving in Italy, he noticed the high beds in use; and records as a manorial or lordly custom, that when passing (not entering) Susa, at the town’s end he was searched for money, for if he carried more than was “warranted or allowed,”—he does not tell us how much was allowed,—the surplus was confiscated to the lord. He observed the pretty and delicate straw hats; and gladly met a merry Italian, who lived cheerily, having for his motto, “Courage, courage; for the devil is dead!” Here he saw a strange kind of corn, called Panicke, having very large leaves, growing like a herb, green as a leek; the grain, as large as a bean, was used for bread by poor folk, and for feeding quails. The children, he noticed, wore breeches so made that their hinder part was naked; a plan, he concludes, adopted for the “more coolnesse of the ayre.”

Milan he found in possession of Spain. At Cremona he writes:—“Here I will mention,—although it may seem frivolous, yet will be a novelty,—that many do carry a thing which they call in the Italian tongue umbrellaes. These are made of something answerable to the form of a little canopy, and hooped inside with divers little wooden hoops, that extend the umbrella in a pretty large compass. They are used especially

by horsemen, who fasten the end of the handle to one of their thighs." At Cremona he ate fried frogs,—the head and forepart cut off,—so very "curiously dressed, they did exceedingly delight my palate." Mantua was his especial delight, as being the birth-place of Virgil. Here he saw a mountebank for the first time. Leaving Mantua at eight a.m., he arrived at Sangona (twenty miles) at one o'clock. The flies being so very troublesome,—every dish at dinner being covered with them,—the inhabitants carried wooden flaps to beat them away. He observed here, as in other parts of Italy, that immediately after any corn was carried, "about four-and-twenty hours or so," the stubble was turned in, and another crop sown. He saw wheat sown on the 19th June. At Padua, where he was "entirely drawn away with the pleasure of the rarities and antiquities," he saw Livy's house, which he esteemed precious ; and saw also, for the first time, a stew, stove, or hot baine,—the only one he saw in Italy ; but in High Germany he found such frequent use of them that he "lay not in any house but it had a stove."

Now he comes to the "most glorious, peerlesse, and mayden" city of Venice. Criticising the Piazza, which was paved with brick, he would have preferred it paved with diamond pavieur of "free stone," as the hall of his Honourable and thrice worthy Mœcenas "Sir Edward Phelipps, in his magnificent house at Montague, in the county of Somerset, within a mile of Odcombe, my sweet native soil ;" or with squared stone, which "we call ashlar, in Somersetshire." He notes the prison and "the marveilous faire little gallery inserted aloft in the midst of the palace." He saw a horse in Venice, whereat he "did not a little wonder." He got into the Ghetto, amongst the Jews ; many of them, he much regretted, "goodly, proper men ;" "elegant and sweet-featured." The women were "as beautiful as ever" he saw, having "marveilous" long trains like Princesses, borne up by waiting women, and generally so gorgeous in their apparel, jewels and gold, and precious stones,

that "our English Countesses do scarce exceed them." Meeting here with a Rabbi who spoke Latin, Tom "insinuated himself" into conference with him, and talked of Christ, and, in fact, commenced an argument; until the Rabbi "seemed exasperated against me," and many "vehement speeches" passed between them. Tom now became aware that forty or fifty other Jews had gathered round; and noticing that some had put on an insolent swagger, he withdrew himself little by little towards the bridge, with intent to fly, fearing the possibility of a compulsory circumcision. But by good fortune the English Ambassador, passing in his gondola, espied him, and rescued him from these "unchristian miscreants," who would have "given me just occasion to forswear any more coming into the Ghetto." In Venice he for the first time saw women act on the stage. He noticed the "wonderful plenty" of melons, advising however their cautious use, as being sweet to the palate, but sour to the stomach. He saw, too, many tortoises, having seen but one before in England. There was one custom or fashion which especially annoyed him: the common use by women, both in the house and abroad, of a most uncomely thing worn under the shoes, called a chapiney, made of wood and covered with leather of sundry colours—some white, some red, some yellow or gilt, or curiously painted; "frivolous, ridiculous instruments." Many were even half-a-yard high. The more noble the dame, the higher her chapineys. He saw one lady wearing them have a dangerous fall down some stone steps, but he "did nothing pity her." These things were very high-heeled shoes, invented, some said, to keep the ladies at home, it being so very difficult to walk in them; in fact, this usually was managed with assistance, by placing the hands on the heads of two servants, who walked by the side. The quiet habits of the men,—sober black,—met his approval, as against the many colours, "more than there were in the rainbow,—light, garish, and unseemly,"—used in England. Venice was the place for mountebanks, and in his notice of these, one,

“who gave most excellent entertainment” by his songs, made “a pretty kind of music with two bones betwixt his fingers.” Tom’s delight with Venice was so great, that when leaving he moralises, with the conclusion that had an offer been made to him of four of the richest manors in Somersetshire,—wherein he was born, he adds again,—not to see Venice, he would choose to see Venice; as the sight of her beauty, antiquities, and monuments, had by many degrees more contented his mind than those lordships could possibly have done.

Up to this time our hero had travelled, for the most part, either on horseback or by the usual wheeled conveyance of the country; but now, leaving Venice, he turned homewards, and made the whole journey on foot—going down the Rhine, however, by boat.

As may be supposed, Coryate often notices and criticises Popish ceremonies, which he saw for the first time. At Brixia, there happened to be a dedication of a new image of the Virgin, when a great many “toyes,” “a great multitude of little waxen idols,—some only arms or thighs,”—were brought to the church. A “marvailous itching desire to finger one of them,” to show in England, came to him; but how to do it was the difficulty. Standing in a corner, quietly, he “very secretly conveighed” his fingers into the basket where the images were laid, and secured one; a proceeding, he adds, had it been perceived, that “might have cost me the lying in the Inquisition longer than I would willingly” have done.

At Bergamo, it being fair time, he could not get a bed, so was “faine to lye upon straw” in a stable, at the horses’ feet. Even this favour was obtained only through the courtesy of a priest he had met; who left him, promising to return in the morning to visit the antiquities of the place with him, but “he was prevented by one who owed him a grudge, who shot him in his lodging with a pewternell.” Coryate’s knowledge of Latin constantly brought him in contact with these strangers, and observing the difference in pronunciation, he became in-

quisitive for the reason of it, and eventually concluded the English way to be wrong, and that he would abandon it.

He now passes into Switzerland, where he noticed the cheapness of all provisions; and that every one had "a light down or very soft feather bed laid upon him at night, which was very warm, and nothing offensive for the burden." At Higher Baden (Hinderhove) he noticed the custom of the sexes bathing together naked; the young ladies having their hair very curiously dressed, and with pretty garlands on their heads, many being of fragrant and odoriferous flowers. He remarked the large number of baths,—sixty altogether; and later, at Lower Baden, he records there were as many as three hundred; "marvailous" in comparison with the fewness of our baths at Bath, in "my country of Somersetshire," where there were no more than five.

Like a good Somerset man, Coryate calls the Rhine, the Rheene; and when passing by it, near Worms, he had an unpleasant adventure. In Italy he had oftentimes "borrowed a point of the law," and refreshed himself with grapes from the vineyards," which the Italians, "like good fellows, did wink at." In Germany, trudging along, he now did the same thing, "pulling two little clusters," and proceeded on his journey "securely and jovially." Suddenly he was attacked by a "boor," who came upon him with a halberd, and, in a great fury, swaggering most insolently, his eyes fierce with anger, he violently pulled off Tom's hat, abusing him in "Almaune" words, which he understood not. Tom was no fighting man, and having only his "weak staff," brought with him out of Italy, resistance seemed useless, so that he was in deadly fear lest he should be made food for the worms before he entered the city of Worms. He therefore simply stood before his assailant mute as a "Seriphian frog or an Acanthian grasshopper," until a thought struck him, and taking heart of grace, he "discharged a whole volley of Greek and Latin shot upon him," supposing such a show of learning would pacify him.

But it rather the more exasperated the man, and matters were looking very serious, when three other travellers by chance came by, and one being able to speak Latin, the matter was explained, and Tom's hat redeemed on payment of twenty-pence. On another occasion he met two other "boors," who, being ragged and ill-favoured, "strooke no small terror" into him, especially as he perceived they were armed. Fearing they would rob him of his gold, quilted in his jerkin, and then cut his throat, he conceived the idea, his own clothes being thread-bare and mean, to undertake "a politic and subtile action;" and just as they all met he took off his hat "very courteously," and holding it in his hand very humbly, like a mendicant, begged money of them with signs and gestures, in a language they did "but poorly recognise, even Latin." Thus he not only saved himself secure, but obtained enough tin money to "pay for half his supper, even four-pence half-penny." Tom saw the great tun of Heildeberg, and gives us a drawing of himself standing on it, exhilarated with two sound draughts of Rhenish. As he passed down the Rhine, he tells us of the castles and towns, and noticing that one bank has many of these, and the other side hardly any, he concluded, after long rumination, that the Romans built the cities as a defence against the Germans on the other side. Then there were the customs towns, where he was stopped for toll: if any boat dared to pass, presently a piece of ordnance was fired at it. Again he noticed the many gallows and wheels, "more than ever he saw in so short a space," especially near Cologne, on account of the many robbers thereabouts, who, if taken, were "excarnificated" and tortured on these wheels, their bones broken and divided remaining a "doleful spectacle." Speaking of the Archbishop's palace at Cologne, he does not think it equal to many English houses; "superior to it there is in mine own county of Somerset, even the magnificent house of my most worthy and right worshipful neighbour, Sir Edward Phillips, Master of the Rolles," in the town of Montacute.

Whilst diligently writing his notes in Cologne Cathedral, a canon seeing that he was a stranger, and that he "loved antiquities," invited him with a "courteous and civil importunity" to his house, where he entertained him with much variety of good cheer, a civility which "yeilded me a recompense for my labour in writing." Passing still down the Rhine, he eventually embarked at Flushing, 1st Oct., at four p.m., and arrived at the Custom House, London, 3rd Oct., at four p.m., having enjoyed a very prosperous gale all the way. The journey out and home, from Odcombe to Odcombe, was 1975 miles.

As already noticed, he left Venice on foot, and he tells us he "walked a foote, with only one pair of shoes, from Venice to Flushing," some 900 miles. These shoes were hung up in Odcombe church, and are said to have remained there until 1702. It is to be regretted they were removed, or, being removed, that they were not preserved.

Tom Coryate's shoes hang by the bells,
At Odcombe where that beldam dwells,
Who first produced this monster.

Being at home again, Coryate busied himself with his notes in his hungry native air, two years being thus occupied before the *Crudities* were ready. There was extant in 1808, and printed in that year in the *Censura Literaria*—an original letter of Coryate's, addressed to "The Right wor^{sh} S^r Michael Hixes, Knight. From my Chamber in Bowelane, 15th Nov., 1610, begging Sir Michael to use his interest with the Lord Treasurer for the necessary license to print, "for which not only myself, but many notable members of the Commonwealth will doubtless render no small thanks." Tom appears, in a moment of his usual merry mood, to have in some way committed himself at Sir Michael's table, as he apologises, and begs that it should not be imputed to "any voluntary malipartnesse, but rather to the merry prompting" of a "certain jovial blackbearded gentleman" who sat next him, who

was so much "given to liberty of speech, and to exercise an exquisite strain of wit, even on his dearest friend."

Besides the additions to the *Crudities* mentioned in the second title, some encomiastic and panegyric verses were inserted, the "elegant inventions of the chief wits and poets of the time." This addition was made by the "strict and expresse commandment" of the Prince, and to it, probably, the book owes much of its notoriety, although as being the first giving any account of the several places visited, it must have had then, as it has now for us, a special interest. When presenting a copy to Royalty, Tom could not resist the chance for making orations. That to the Prince begins—"Most Scintillant phosphorus of our British Trinacria." To the King he spoke of the book as "Spunne into a threed by the wheele of my braine in my native cell of Odcombe, in the County of Somerset." The Queen was the "Most resplendent gem and radiant Aurora of Great Britain," by whose patronage the book would be current through all kingdoms, and make the name of Coryate the Traveller, and Odcombe, his nataliall parish, known to all posterity. From the Duke of York, who was the most "glittering Chrysolite of our English diadem," he asked to be entitled His Grace's Traveller; and then he related curiously how he had overcome his adversaries in Yeovil, who thought to have sunk him in "a bargain of pilchards," as the wise men of Gotham tried to drown an eel. This was in allusion to a law-suit between him and Joseph Starre, respecting a debt of a hundred marks due from Starr, who put the matter in Chancery. To this proceeding Tom wrote—"An Answere to the most scandalous, contumelious, and hybristical Bill of Joseph Starre, of Euill, Linen draper, wholly conflated and compacted of palpable lies, deceitful prestigiations, injurious calumniations, cluding evasions, and most fraudulent tergiversations"—much complaining that Starr not only thus "coacervateth a farrago of lies," but traduced him about the smallness of his voyage of only five

months. The lies Tom could perhaps have overlooked, but after such risks and dangers as he had passed through, the traducing was more than he could bear from a "vilipendious linen draper."

These orations he printed in a little volume, entitled:—

Coryat's Crambe or his Colwort twice sodden, and now served in with other macaronicke dishes, as the second course to his Crvdities.

Then came, also in a separate form, the poems preceding the Cruditites, with the title of:—

The Odcombian Banquet: dished forth by Thomas the Coriat, and served in by a number of Noble Wits in prayse of his Crvdities and Crambe too.

Asinvs portans mysteria.

There are about sixty pages in the book, each with one or more short poems, some intending praise, others, with a "free and merry jest," are, perhaps, satirical. Some one now criticised these proceedings, and ventured to assert that of the Cruditites not four pages were worth reading. Chastised by the "ensorious rod of this malevolent traducer and hypocritical momus," Tom asserted in the *Cramb* that at least five hundred out of the six hundred and fifty-four pages were good; and to clear his credit from this "base lurking, pedantical, tenebricious Lucifuga," he asked, "let any one, if he can, show larger annotations for quantity or better for quality gathered in five months, since the incarnation of Christ." Having made this demand, he appeared satisfied that no contrary answer could be given, and so he claimed "with all perspicuity and plainness to overthrow, pessundate, and annihilate all fained objections."

But Tom was not destined to have all praise, especially was he met by John Taylor, known as the Water Poet, a facetious, satirical, writer, in whom Coryat had his match. Taylor printed:—

The Sculler Rowing from Tiber to Thames, with his boate laden with a hotch potch, or Gallimawfy of Sonnets, Satyres and Epigrams. With an addition of Pastorale Equivoques, or the Complaint of the Shepherd.

In this poor Tom was so “nipt, galled and bitten,” that he vowed revenge. To make amends, as he said, Taylor next issued a little pamphlet:—

. Laugh and be Fat; or a Commentary on the Odcombian Banquet. This was a criticism by means of paraphrase of the various verses, each, as in the *Banquet*, under the author’s name.

Four of the original poems were from local men ; one from Robert Phillips, one from George Sydenham of Brympton, one from John Paulet of Hinton St. George, and one from John Harington of Bath. The first demanded,

If that an ass
Could have observed so much as he did pass.

Taylor wrote:—

An ass, I am sure, could ne’er observe so much,
Because an ass’s business is not such ;
Yet if an ass could write as well as run,
He then, perhaps, may do as thou hast done,
But ’tis impossible a simple creature
Should do such things (like thee) above his nature.

Mr. George Sydenham’s lines are,

Vpon the cloying Crvdities chewed in the braines of the author, and cast up in the press of the printer, by the sole travell and proper charge of Cordate Coryate, my conceited countryman and neighbour.

Mr. John Paulet’s lines, Coryate,—through vanity, not perceiving the satire,—considered so flattering that he wished to exclude them. They are addressed:—

To the Darling of the Muses and Minion of the Graces, my dear countryman and friend, Mr. Thomas Coryate of Odcombe.

Some call thee Homer by comparison ;
Comparisons are odious, I will none,
But call thee (as thou art) Tom Coryate,
That is, The Man the world doth wonder at.
Whose brain pan hath more Pan than Braine by odds,
To make thee all Pan with the semi-gods.
Which pan, when thy fleet wits awandering go,
Is rung to keep the swarm together so.

Taylor’s paraphrase runs:—

Now here’s another in thy praises ran,
And would entitle thee the great god Pan.
No warming-pan thou art, I plainly see,

No fire-pan, nor no frying-pan canst thou be.
 Thou art no cream-pan neither, worthy man,
 Although thy wits lie in thy head's brain pan.

Mr. John Harington wrote :—

Thou glorious Goose that kept the Capitol,
 Afford one quill, that I may write one story yet
 Of this my new come Odcombe friend, Tom Coryet.

Taylor met this with :—

The Goose that guarded Rome with senseless gagging,
 Is here implored t'assist the Gander's straggling.
 A pen made of her quill would lift thee soon,
 As high as is the thorn-bush in the moon.

This attack was more than Tom could bear, so that

Made madder than before,
 He did storm and chafe, and swear and ban,
 And to superior powers amaine he ran,
 Where he obtained "Laugh and be Fat's" confusion,
 Who all were burnt.

About a year had now elapsed since the publication of the *Quinque-mestrial Crudities*, and content, perhaps, with his influence at Court resulting in the burning of *Laugh and be Fat*, Coryate determined to satisfy his desire to make a longer journey and to see more of the "goodly fabric" of the world. He accordingly left London on the 20th Oct., 1612, and arrived at Zante 13th Jany., 1613. The ship in which he sailed was called the "Samaritan." Says Taylor :—

He only for her name did choose
 In detestation of the faithless Jews,
 For they by force would have surprised him
 T'excoriat Coriat and t'have circumcised him.

His first letters home have not been published, but a report arrived or was spread that he had been drowned in the Mediterranean. John Taylor was again ready :—

Odcomb's Complaint: or Coriat's Funerall Epicedium or Death Song, upon his late reported drowning. With his Epitaph in the Barmuda and Vtopian tongues: and translated into English by John Taylor.

No sooner news of Coriat's death was come,
 But with the same my Muse was strooken dom,
 Odcombian, Grecian, Latin, Great Thom Asse
 Being dead.

Other lines in the *Complaint* he heads :—

A Sad, Joyful, Lamentable, Delightful, Merry-go-sorry Elegie, or Funeral Poem, upon the supposed Death of the famous Cosmographical Surveior, and Historiographical Relator, Mr. Thomas Coriat of Odcombe.

These begin :—

Oh for a rope of onions from St. Omer's,
That I might write and weep, and weep and write,
Odcombian Coriat's tuneless last good night,
And weep in tears of Claret and of Sack.

This report of his drowning was in due time found to be untrue, when Taylor was at him again in :—

The Eighth Wonder of the World ; or Coriat's escape from his supposed Drowning.

Taylor denied that in these writings he intended either harm or injury ; but, addressing Coryate, he asserted that :

His love had evermore been such,
That in thy praise I cannot write too much,
And much I long to see thee here again
That I may welcome thee in such a strain ;
Let Eolus and Neptune speed to blow thee back,
That we may laugh, lie down, and mourn in Sack.

From Zante, Coryate sailed in an English ship to the Trojan shore. After revelling in the ruins of Troy, he sent a long description, "given in a Trojan spirit for the profit of the studious antiquary, and to resolve and thaw the stupidest stoic." A companion seeing how eagerly and carefully he had been searching out the antiquities, in a merry humour drew his sword, and Tom kneeling in due form, he knighted him as the first English Knight of Troy, saying impromptu :—

Coryate no more, but now a Knight of Troy ;
Odcombe's no more, but henceforth England's joy.

Some musketeers who accompanied them, then fired two volleys, all to the surprise of the wondering Turks looking on, who expected to see Tom's head come off. To the impromptu of his friend, the new knight answered :—

This noble knighthood shall Fame's trump resound,
To Odcombe's honour, maugre envy fell,
O'er famous Albion.

At Constantinople he was annoyed by the musquitos: "sat on his tail" like a Turk; and saw a pelican for the first time. He also noted that the Turks did not salute as in Europe, but had a prayer, "that their enemies may have no more rest than a Christian's hat." Leaving Constantinople in an English ship, in a snow-storm in January, he next passed to Lesbos, skirting the coast to Alexandria. Then he went to Scanderoon, where he landed, and rode to Aleppo. Here he met the Consul, Master Bartholomew Hagget, "his countryman, born at Wells," who accompanied him on his first excursion. March 15th, 1613, he set out on foot, on his "horse with ten toes," for Jerusalem, where he was tattooed on the left arm. From Jerusalem he walked on, "but with divers pairs of shoes," passing through Persia, to Asmere, having been robbed on his way by a Spahi. The journey altogether occupied fifteen months, the cost being but three pounds, for which he fared reasonably well every day, and even of this sum he was "cosened" of ten shillings; so that his actual outlay was only two pounds ten. The distance traversed was two thousand seven hundred miles; and for this exploit Tom dubbed himself the Odcombian Leg-stretcher.

From Asmere he sent home letters in 1616, which were printed, with the title:—

Thomas Coriate, Traveller for the English Wits, Greeting. From the Court of the Great Mogvl, Resident at the Towne of Asmere, in Eastern India.

In one letter he says that England will one day say that Odcombe may be truly so called for breeding an odd man; one that had not his peer in the whole kingdom. Having been away now three years, he had learned four new languages, and had resolved, so insatiable was his greediness to see strange countries, to spend yet seven years more before returning. In India he saw an elephant for the first time, and sent home a drawing of himself riding on one. At Asmere he found ten English men, "resident upon terms of negotiation" for the

“right worshipful Company of Merchants in London, that trade for East India.” He particularly requests to be remembered to his uncle Williams; this to be done with convenient terms and “pathetical perswasions,” that he might not forget his poor peregrinating kinsman, but remember him with some gratuity. Another letter in this pamphlet is addressed to the “Right Worshipful Fraternity of Sireniacal Gentlemen that meet on the first Friday of every month, at the Mermaid, in Bread Street.” It begins:—“Right generous, jovial and Mercurial Sirenaicks,” and proceeds to say it would be pervacaneous on his part to tell of the incredible distance he had traversed, and prays them to exhilarate the bearer with the purest quintessence of the grape which the Mermaid yieldeth. Then he signs himself:—“Your generosities most obliged Countryman, the Hierosolymitan, Syrian, Mesopotamian, Armenian, Median, Parthian, Persian, Indian Legge-stretcher of Odcombe in Somerset.” He desires to be remembered to each one by name and so shows us his friends, all lovers of literature, the goodly company he met at the Mermaid. There was that famous antiquary, Sir Robert Cotton; Ben Jonson, the poet; John Bond, his countryman; Samuel Purkas, and Inigo Jones; and Mr. Geo. Speake, his countryman, who was “to be found either in the Middle Temple,” or “in some barber’s shop neere.”

Another letter was to his mother, “Mrs. Garthered (Gertrude) Coriate, at her house in Evill—to be forwarded by carrier from Gerrard’s Hall.” A second lot of letters was printed in the same form, entitled:—

Mr. Thomas Coriat, to his friends in England, sendeth greeting: from Agra, the Capitall City of the Dominion of the Great Mogoll in the Easterne India, the last of October, 1616.

This contains a portrait of him riding on a camel.

John Taylor now appeared again, and paraphrased this tract under the title:—

Master Thomas Coriat, to his Friends in England, sends Greet-

ing: from Agra the Capitall City of the Dominion of the Great Mogoll in the Easterne India.

Printed according to the true Copie of the Letter written with his own hand, in the Persian paper, and sent home in the good Ship called the "Globe" belonging to the Company of East India Merchants.

With an addition of 200 verses, written by J. T., that, like a Gentleman Vsher, goes before his pragmatistical Prose, in commendation of his Travels.

It was Coryates constantly occurring, "big-swollen, strange-tired, travelling words," and the pedantic use of unnecessary Latin and Greek, that brought upon him much of this ridicule. Thus Taylor attacked him again in:—

Three Weekes, three daies, and three houres observations and travel from London to Hamburgh, in Germanie: amongst Jews and Gentiles, with descriptions of Townes and Towers, Castles and Cittadels, artificial gallowses, Natural Hangmen: And dedicated for the present, to the absent Odcombian Knight Errant, S^r Thomas Coriat, Great Britain's Error and the World's Mirror.

The address is—"To the Cosmographical, Geographical describer, Geometrical measurer, Historiographical Caligraphical Relator and Writer, Enigmatical, Pragmatistical, Dogmatical observer, Engrosser, Surveyor, and Eloquent British Grecian Latinist or Latin Grecian Orator, the Odcombian Deambulator, Perambulator, Ambler, Trotter or untired Traveller, Sir Thomas Coryat, Knight of Troy, and one of the dearest darlings of the blind Goddess Fortune." Then he proceeds to give an oration after Tom's manner and style, beginning:—"Most worthy Sir, as Quintilian in his Apothegms to the naked, learned, Gimnosophists of Æthiopia very wittily says—'*Potanto Machayo Corbatio monomosco kayturemon Lescus, ollipufftingere whingo*;' which is, Knowledge is a main antithesis to ignorance, and pains and travel the highway to experience. I being therefore well acquainted with the generous urbanity innated or rooted in your humanity, in these days of vanity I dedicate out of my affability, debility, ability, imbecility, facility or agility, this poor pamphlet to your nobility, in all servility and humility; not doubting but the fluent secundity of your wisdoms profundity, in your head's

rotundity, will conserve, reserve, preserve and observe what I and my industrious labours deserve."

We have no further account of Coryate from his own hand, but through another traveller—Terry—we learn that Tom being at Mendoa, during a conversation suddenly swooned. Thus unwell, and in low spirits, he was troubled by the sad thought that possibly his journals with the long laborious accounts of what he had seen may never reach England. He feared not death, but, travelling now as he did entirely alone, he dreaded the possibility of dying in a place that would be unknown, and so of being buried in obscurity, without record. He was urged not to proceed on his walk to Surat, three hundred miles distant, but he refused, and lived to arrive there; with what trouble, toil, and suffering we can never know. Here he was kindly received by the English residents. Suffering now from dysentery, by chance he overheard the word sack, when he cried pitifully, "Sack, sack, is there such a thing as sack? I pray you give me some sack." He drank moderately, we are told, but his illness continuing, he lived but a few days, and his travels ended on the 17th December, 1617.

John Taylor was obliged to give him a farewell in:—

The Praise of Hemp-seed, with the Voyage of Mr. Roger Bird and the writer hereof in a boat of brown paper, from London to Quinborough in Kent.

As also a Farewell to the matchlesse deceased Mr. Thomas Coriat.

Here he says:—

Oh famous Coriat, hadst thou come again,
 Thou wouldst have told us news direct and plain,
 Of men with long tails, faced like hounds;
 Of spiders greater than a walnut shell,
 Of the Rhinoceros thou wouldst us tell.
 Hemp-seed did bear thee o'er the raging foam,
 And oh I wish that it had brought thee home.
 But farewell Thomas never to return,
 Rest thou, in peace, within thy foreign urn.

One observation made by Thomas, hitherto purposely passed,

may now be shortly noticed. On coming into Italy,—even at the first Italian town,—“I observed,” he writes, “a custom that is not used in any other country which I saw, neither do I think it is that any other nation doth use it. The Italians at their meals always use a little fork; while holding the knife in one hand they cut their meat out of the dish, they fasten their fork, which they hold in the other hand, upon the same dish; so that should any one unadvisedly touch the dish of meat with his fingers from which all the table do cut, he will give offence to the company as having transgressed the laws of good manners. This form of feeding is generally used in all places in Italy, the forks being for the most part of iron or steel, and some of silver, but these only used by gentlemen.” Hereupon he thought good to imitate this “forked cutting of meat” during his travels, and on his return home. For this he was once quipped by his friend, Lawrence Whitaker of Yeovil, who, in a merry moment, called him *Furcifer*, “for only using a fork at feeding, and for no other cause,” he naively adds. The joke here is that *furcifer* would mean really a fork bearer, but in a secondary sense may mean a villain who is only fit to be hanged.

It may be observed, he says positively that in no other country had he seen this custom; so that neither through France on his outward road, nor through Germany on his return, did he see it. It does not seem quite clear how much the forks were used for carving and how much for feeding, as, if used for a second help, every one would have had to stick his used fork into the general joint.

When exactly forks thus came into use in Italy must be left open here, but it was at an early date. Notwithstanding that Coryate did not see forks used in France, a writer, in 1589, notes that in that country they never touch their meat with their hands, but with forks, stretching out their necks over their plate. The last words point clearly to our present usage of them, and not only to their use for carving.

In England, in the wardrobe account of Edward I, 1297, there is mentioned a fork of crystal. In 1313, Edward II had three forks of silver, for eating pears. In 1423, 2nd Henry VI, the King's inventory contains: one fork of berill and silver gilt, worth five shillings; also a silver fork, parcel gilt, and a silver fork, gilt in three colours, weight $9\frac{1}{2}$ oz., valued at 11s. 6d. per oz. All these forks, whether of crystal, agate, or silver, were for eating fruit.

The first mention of the use of forks in England is, curiously enough, by a literary friend of Coryate, one of the crew of the "Mermaid." Ben Jonson, in his comedy, *The Devil is an Ass*, published in 1616,—just when Coryate was writing from India,—makes a character speak of his project of the forks; when another enquires—"Forks, what be they?" The answer is—"The laudable use of forks, brought into custom here, as they are in Italy, to the saving o' napkins." The early custom was to carry the fork to the ordinary in a pocket case, and this the gallant party drew out with some show of pride and fashion, for which he was laughed at, as may be supposed, and known as "your fork-carving traveller." Still their general introduction was a long and slow process, for Heylin, in his *Cosmography*, 1652, speaks of them as still a novelty, which came from Italy, "taken up of late" by some of the "spruce gallants." It is not even certain they were used by William III. Not until after 1700, the time of Queen Anne, do we become sure, and curiously, for long after this date the household inventories do not mention forks, although spoons and other articles, as of old, appear regularly. The earliest known forks of silver bear the Hall mark for 1696. A very interesting example of what must be one of the earliest of our forks, is figured in the *Archæologia of the Society of Antiquaries*, vol. xv. It is of silver, made to open and shut, and the end of the handle draws out as a tooth-pick. It bears a name, and possibly the birth-day date, 2nd April, 1610.

A curious notice of our habits, some time after forks were introduced, is noticed by D'Arssay, a French author, in 1782, who says:—"That in England the knife was commonly employed to convey food to the mouth, and that for this purpose it was made broad and round at the end." John Chinaman claims, that in remote ages they had in China no chopsticks, but used knives and forks. The chopsticks he considers better, however; nor does he want a knife at table, as he sits down "to eat, not to cut up carcasses." Another idea from the east will show us that opinions may differ. A Malay gentleman, dining with an Englishman, on the question of fingers *versus* forks, argued that the use of forks was a dirty practice. "What do I know of this fork?" he asked. "It has been in a hundred or more mouths—perhaps in the mouth of my greatest enemy. The thought is repulsive to me."

These notes will sufficiently show, whatever may have been the case in France or Italy, that our domestic dinner fork was not known or used in England until the return of Coryate in 1608. We may, perhaps, venture to picture him rushing off from the Custom House to the Mermaid in Bread Street, to quaff many a goblet of sack with his confreres, and then, full of vanity and conceit, producing his new fangled instrument at supper, to their no small amusement and to the general merriment.

But Tom was not inactive at home before he commenced his travels, and from two *Orationes* which he printed we get a glimpse of the man; and, at the same time, of the outing, or holiday, known as a Whitsun-ale. It was the custom in those days to provide funds for church purposes by a big brew of ale, and then, making a holiday, to profit by the sale. Thus it happened that in 1606, the stock at Odcombe church being exhausted,—all but sixteen shillings,—the churchwardens solicited Tom to "set abroach his wits," and invent some conceit to draw a good company to Odcombe. He accordingly planned and arranged that a hundred men should meet him at

Odcombe cross on Whitsunday, duly furnished with muskets, and armour, and music; himself, as Captain, to be mounted on a milk-white steed. This being done, they marched off for Evill, and were met by the way by two "cohorts" from the town,—one masculine, the other feminine,—and all descended by Henford to the cross, where they had a kind of velitation or light skirmish; but merely umbraticall and imaginary. Tom now ascended the cross to a point of advantage, and standing under a canopy, brandished his sword two or three times, and then spake his oration to some two thousand people, many being from the parishes adjoining. He told them they came not for war, but in a league of friendship; determined to spend their money for the benefit of their church, hoping a similar courtesy for the church of Odcombe. He then compared Church-ales to certain Roman feasts and customs of old, as good for breeding love between neighbours, being, kept with moderation, without excess or abuse, or drunkenness and brawling. Yet, he added, be not slaves to your money,—a base excrement,—but spend it without winching. After a long and puzzling speech, full of classical lore, he pretended to—or, perhaps, did—perceive that he "cloyed their ears" with confused words and so he ended. It was this visit which is alluded to in some of the witty verses already noticed, and for which John Taylor wrote—

Ajax of the frothy Whitsun-Ale,
Well did high Odcombe boast her praise of thee,
When thou to Evill went'st in jollity,
And led'st an army forth with bows and guns,
To swill their Whitsun-Ale and crack their buns,
Where thou, on Cross advanced, didst spend more wit
Than man would think thou could'st recover yet.

In due time the Evillians went to Odcombe, when Tom was again the chief. Beginning his oration with a "whole volley of thanks,"—here, by arrangement, a volley of shot was fired,—he thanked them for coming to such a mountainous people. But, he continued, too much could not be said in praise of Odcombe, whose smoke was dearer to him than the fire of a

foreign place; whose air was piercing and of excellent subtilty; whose wool was of the finest; whose springs were sweet and wholesome, endued with orient and cristalline clearness. The men, too, valiant martialists like those present, could maintain right or repulse wrong. Now, however, all weapons were to be laid aside to give their friends an unfeigned welcome.

These traits show us the man ever the same. Over ambitious for praise and fame, he gave the wits their ever-recurring chance to hit him hard. "His head," says Fuller, "was like a sugar loaf, the small end in front," but the portraits given in his book and on the frontispiece do not imply this. It may be considered the contrary, and that, setting aside his inordinate vanity, he was a man of ability and learning, who had always scholars and lovers of virtue for his friends. He had a very covetous eye, never satisfied with seeing: and from his love for antiquities and his delight in seeing them daintily kept, he was known as the Tombstone Traveller. Just as in Turkey he "sat on his tail," or in Italy dubbed himself *Il Signor Thomaso Odcombiano*; so in India he adopted the habits of the country, and got so good a mastery of the language, that a certain laundress attached to the Embassy, who scolded and brawled from sunrise till night without ever meeting her match, was undertaken by Tom, who silenced her in her own language by eight o'clock in the morning.

Poor Tom's notes for his Indian journey have been lost. They fell into the hands of Samuel Purchase, who, in a volume entitled "*His Pilgrimages; a history of sea voyages, etc.*," published in 1624, gives us "*A Letter of Mr. Thomas Coryate, which travailed by land from Jerusalem to the Court of the Great Mogul, written to Mr. L. Whitaker; to which are added pieces of two other, to entertayne you with a little Indian-Odcombian mirth. 'Most dear and beloved Friend, Master L.W.,'*" etc. In a second volume, published in 1625, he tells us that Coryate's books, etc., came to his hands after the first volume was issued. He then gives us—

Master Thomas Coryate's trauels to, and observations in, Constantinople, and other places in the way thither, and his Journey thence to Aleppo, Damasco, and Ierusalem.

An account of his journey was also published in Dutch, as :

Reys Van Thomas Coryat, na Asmere ; zijnde de Hof-Stad van den Grooten Mogol. Van Jerusalem, na derwaards door hem met een Caravan ondernoomen, in het jaar 1615. Briefs-wijse opgesteld, en aan sijnen Vriend Mr. L. Whitaker gesanden. 8^{vo}. Leyden, 1707.

There is a poem in the "Zummerzet" dialect attributed to Coryate, in a little book—"The City of Bath described;" by Henry Chapman, published in 1673.

Had Tom completed his plan and purpose and gone through China, his manuscript would have swollen into so many volumes that "paper would never afterwards have been scarce." The loss to us, however, is as great in proportion. Notwithstanding that his intentions in this respect were never, and can never be, carried out, his ambition may be considered as fairly satisfied : his dear Odcombe in Somersetshire will ever be famous as his birth-place, and his own name associated with it will never be forgotten.
