

DID
DOROTHY VERNON
ELOPE?

Edited by David Trutt

DID DOROTHY VERNON ELOPE?

BY JAMES MUDDOCK, 1907

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SOURCES:

James Muddock: *Did Dorothy Vernon Elope?*, 1907.

G. Le Blanc Smith: *Haddon: The Manor, The Hall, Its Lords and Traditions*, 1906.

A. E. Watkin: *Absalom Watkin: Extracts From His Journal 1814-1856*, 1920.

SOURCES ON WEB SITE www.haddon-hall.com:

Haddon Hall's Dorothy Vernon - The Story Of The Legend.
Pages 43-52

Haddon Hall's Poems - Nineteenth Century Sentiments

Haddon Hall's Poems - An Afterword - Nineteenth Century Sentiments.
Pages 42-45, 78.

This editor continues the story of Haddon Hall. Notable is the JOURNAL OF ABSALOM WATKIN and the entry describing his visit to Haddon Hall in 1817. It casts a clear light on the probable beginnings of the circulation of the Dorothy Vernon elopement story and lends further credence to the arguments of James Muddock, which are the focus of this book.

ELOPEMENT OF DOROTHY VERNON AND JOHN MANNERS

Absalom Watkin (1787-1861) kept a personal journal. It was edited and published by his great-grandson in 1920 under the title ABSALOM WATKIN: EXTRACTS FROM HIS JOURNAL 1814-1856. The journal contains an account of his visit to Haddon Hall in May of 1817. Watkin wrote the following.

“Among the pictures we saw that of the lady by whose marriage with Sir John Manners this house and the estates came from the family of Vernon into that of Rutland. We learnt that the gallant Sir John stole her away, and that the door through which she passed was fastened up and has never been opened since.”

This journal entry predates Allan Cunningham’s 1822 KING OF THE PEAK as the earliest recorded mention of a possible elopement. It therefore becomes the earliest written record of the occurrence.

It becomes clear that caretakers William Hage and his wife are the source of the elopement story. It would seem probable that unusual details relating to the Vernon - Manners liaison were closeted within Haddon for over two centuries, and passed down as general gossip from servant to servant, until a version of the story emerged to the public by way of the Hages.

The Dorothy Vernon - John Manners elopement legend therefore takes a step closer to leaving the ‘realm of myth’ and becoming ‘a story handed down from early times.’

The association of the lady in the picture with Dorothy Vernon is not supported by any evidence. The picture was removed from the Hall some years later and hung in the caretaker’s cottage. It was re-discovered there and re-hung in the Hall, where it was observed by later visitors.

THE PICTURE OF DOROTHY VERNON



The tale of the picture noticed by Absalom Watkin resurfaces in 1880 as part of the introduction to James Muddock's *DOLL: A DREAM OF HADDON HALL, BEING THE STORY OF DOROTHY VERNON'S WOOING AND FLIGHT*.

"Dorothy Vernon: This portrait is an authentic likeness of Dorothy when a girl. It is copied by permission from an old oil Painting in possession of his Grace the Duke of Rutland."

In the 1890 edition, Muddock adds the note: "For a number of years it hung on the wall of the parlour in the little cottage occupied then by the widow of Travis Bath [died 1861], the caretaker of the Hall. During one of my many visits to Haddon, Mrs. Bath told me that the picture had come out of the Hall with a lot of 'other rubbish.' With Mrs. Bath's permission I subsequently took the picture down, carried it into the sunshine, and sponged it with soap and water, the result being that I brought to light a sweet womanly face, which, from all I had heard of Dorothy Vernon, struck me as being that of the celebrated beauty. I at once communicated with the late Duke of Rutland, asking his permission to photograph it [from which the print was made]. Subsequently, I learned that His Grace the Duke of Rutland, being convinced of the authenticity of the oil painting, had it restored, and I understand it now hangs on the walls of Belvoir Castle."

THE FLIGHT OF DOROTHY VERNON



The romance gains strength with time.
A scene from the 1892 operetta 'Haddon Hall.'

THE TOMB OF DOROTHY VERNON



This is the effigy of Dorothy Vernon decorating her tomb in Bakewell. It is quite unflattering and would belie the legend of her beauty. In the story which is to follow, Muddock vehemently denies that this effigy could be an accurate representation of “beautiful Dorothy Vernon, with the mass of golden reddish hair.”

Muddock, however, does not mention the flattering portrait which he had discovered. Probably, the Duke of Rutland concluded that it was some other attractive lady of the period. It did however again hang in Haddon Hall for a short period; a visitor calls attention to it being observed during a visit in 1880.

JAMES MUDDOCK AND DOROTHY VERNON

The Dorothy Vernon elopement story first came to public attention with the publication in 1822 of *THE KING OF THE PEAK* by Allan Cunningham. For nearly seventy years thereafter, storytellers and novelists and poets repeated, embellished and expanded on the tale. Historians and antiquaries accepted the premise of the elopement and uniformly included it in their books delineating the particulars of Haddon Hall and its past owners.

During the next twenty year period, a number of skeptical experts perused obscure records and concluded that many events associated the elopement story were anachronisms, there were no records to support the story, there were no substantiated reasons to require an elopement, and finally, the probability of an elopement was nearly non-existent. The Manners family thought that it was obvious that a Manners would be an appropriate match for a Vernon, and so treated the elopement as a legend: romantic but unlikely.

The respected G. Le Blanc Smith published *HADDON: THE MANOR, THE HALL, ITS LORDS AND TRADITIONS* in 1906. He sums up the elopement in the following: “We now turn to Dorothy Vernon, celebrated the world over as a high born heroine of a runaway love affair. Unfortunately, the grounds on which this story is based are, to all intents and purposes, non-existent.”

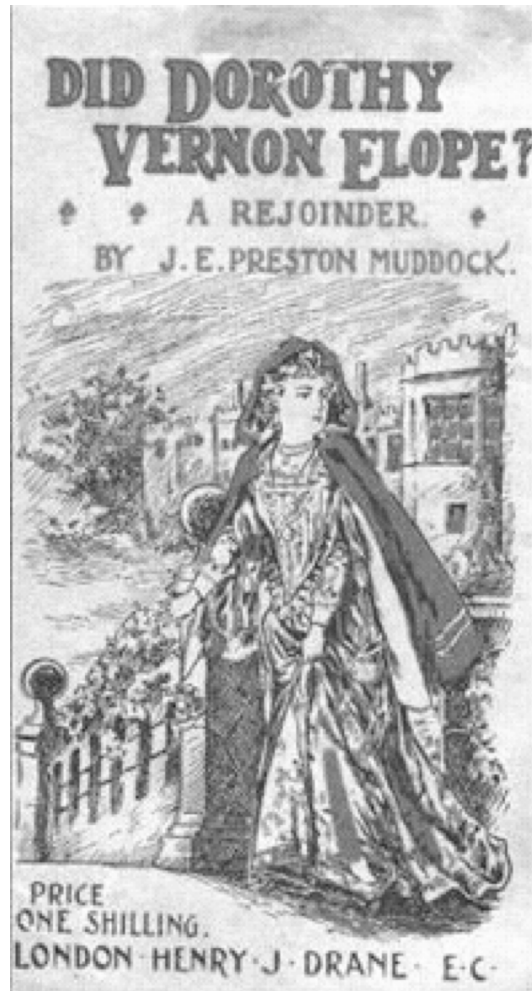
James Edward Muddock (1843-1934) was a prolific writer of novels and a staunch believer of the Dorothy Vernon - John Manners elopement story. *DOLL: A DREAM OF HADDON HALL* (1880) and *SWEET DOLL OF HADDON HALL* (1903) were best-selling versions of Muddock’s interpretations of the romance and elopement. He also named one of his daughters Dorothy Vernon Muddock.

Muddock published *DID DOROTHY VERNON ELOPE? A REJOINER* (to G. Le Blanc Smith), in 1907. Muddock uses Smith’s book as the vehicle upon which to build his contention that the elopement was an actual historical occurrence. Excerpts from this and from Smith’s book are included in *HADDON HALL’S DOROTHY VERNON* (2006) and annotate the countervailing arguments in some detail.

Smith made the unfortunate mistake of overlooking the early elopement tales, and seized instead on Eliza Meteyard’s *THE LOVE STEPS OF DOROTHY VERNON*, the version published in the 1860 edition of *THE RELIQUARY*, as the source of the story. Muddock used this error in an attempt to discredit Smith’s other historical claims.

Following is the complete text of the scarce *DID DOROTHY VERNON ELOPE?* In general Muddock is accurate in his factual statements. Clarifications by this editor are shown in [square brackets]. But we will let Muddock speak for himself.

[“Three centuries are nearly past and gone, three hundred gilded summers have waned into russet autumns—and autumns brought their winters rough and cold—and yet no drear oblivion has fallen on a sweet old story: it is as new as though of yesterday, and hallows Haddon Hall.” Introduction to *THE LOVE STEPS OF DOROTHY VERNON* by Eliza Meteyard, 1860.]



DID DOROTHY VERNON ELOPE? BY JAMES MUDDOCK

The question which forms the title of this pamphlet, may, without any straining of language, be said to have become a burning one, so far as Derbyshire is concerned. Indeed, interest in it extends far beyond the borders of the county where Dorothy's father at one time wielded a power and influence which won for him the proud title of "King of the Peak." Nor is it claiming too much to say that the name of Dorothy Vernon, of Haddon Hall, is known throughout the English speaking world. The cause of this is beyond all doubt due to the fact that a halo of romance surrounds her, owing to her marriage with John Manners, son of the then Earl of Rutland; and it was through that marriage that the noble family of Belvoir came into possession of vast estates and great wealth, and that in itself is not without a touch of romance. It may be premised that Dorothy Vernon was co-heiress with her sister Margaret to the Vernon property, and they were the daughters of Sir George Vernon, the owner of the beautiful old baronial mansion known as Haddon Hall. Sir George himself was the representative of an ancient family, his pedigree stretching far back through the feudal ages, during which his people had been distinguished for their wealth, their power and influence. The two young ladies were the issue of his first marriage. His first wife was Margaret, daughter of Sir Gilbert Taylebois, Knight. His second wife was Matilda, daughter of Sir Ralph Longford, Knight, of Derbyshire.

Margaret Vernon was wooed and won by Sir Thomas Stanley, of Winwick, in Lancashire, and some curious old documents, still in existence, prove that the wooing was done at Haddon Hall; while in Sir George Vernon's private chapel attached to the Hall the wedding was celebrated, presumably, in accordance with the Roman Catholic Ritual, for it is important to remember that Sir George, his wife and his children still clung to the old faith, notwithstanding Queen Elizabeth's severe edicts against the Papist. It can hardly be doubted that the occasion of the marriage was marked by festivity and merry-making on a very extensive scale. The King of the Peak was renowned for his hospitality, and entertained his guests in princely fashion. It cannot, therefore, be supposed for a moment that so important an event as the marriage of the eldest daughter with a scion of the noble family of Stanley would have been passed over without being celebrated with fitting ceremony, and we can well imagine that many a goblet was drained in wishing the young married couple health and happiness. So much then is clear, as regards Margaret. We will now turn to Dorothy, who became the wife of Mr. John Manners, second son of the first Earl of Rutland, and the mystery surrounding her wedding prompts three questions.

1. Where was Dorothy Vernon wooed?
2. Where was she married?
3. And when was she married?

To answer these three questions with any regard for accuracy is absolutely impossible; for there is not one single shred of documentary evidence to show where the young lady was wooed and won, and where she was united in the bonds of holy matrimony with the man of her choice.

Last year, 1906, a work of considerable historic pretensions was published under the title, HADDON: THE MANOR, THE HALL, ITS LORDS AND TRADITIONS. Its author, Mr. G. Le Blanc Smith, is a member of the Derbyshire Archaeological Society; and not only does this writer dogmatically assert that Dorothy did not elope, but he seems to have been as dogmatically certain that Miss Dorothy Vernon was excessively ugly, and he advances no better reason for his opinion than that the hideous effigy over her tomb in Bakewell Church makes her so. The idea of the elopement, and of a secret wooing and secret marriage, apparently, has had the same effect on Mr. Smith as the colour crimson is generally supposed to have upon a bull: it has made him a little mad, and he accuses a very well known and distinguished historical writer, Miss Eliza Meteyard ("Silverpen," as Thackeray christened her) of having *invented* the story. This remarkable error is in keeping with other errors which appear in Mr. Smith's book, and they seem to indicate that he is unreliable as an historian. Indeed, it may almost be said that the charge brought against Miss Meteyard is one of the very few original things in Mr. Smith's book, if I except a letter said to have been written by Dorothy Vernon, and bearing in facsimile what is alleged to be her signature; but, as I shall be able to prove, I think, it is not her signature at all, nor is the letter one that is likely to have been written by that young lady.

To deal firstly with the charge against Miss Meteyard. The lady was very well known as a prolific and brilliant writer who flourished during the first half of the last century. And if she had never written anything else but her splendid LIFE OF JOSIAH WEDGWOOD, she would have earned for herself a place among the immortals of literature. But she was also the author of A GROUP OF ENGLISHMEN (1795 TO 1815): BEING RECORDS OF THE YOUNGER WEDGWOODS AND THEIR FRIENDS, EMBRACING THE HISTORY OF THE DISCOVERY OF PHOTOGRAPHY, AND A FACSIMILE OF THE FIRST PHOTOGRAPH. Besides this she is credited with a score or more of clever works, and she contributed largely to periodical literature on antiquarian subjects. A statement of these facts is necessary to establish the lady's position as an authority of far greater weight and mental calibre than Mr. Smith.

In the year 1860, there was published the first volume of *THE RELIQUARY*, a quarterly magazine dealing with historical and antiquarian subjects, particularly those in connection with Derbyshire. It was edited by Llewellynn Jewitt, F.S.A., himself an author of repute, and a distinguished antiquary. In that volume appears a short story, occupying a few pages only, entitled, *THE LOVE STEPS OF DOROTHY VERNON*, the writer being Miss Eliza Meteyard, "Silverpen." The story is prefaced by these lines "From the Pedigrees in the Harleian MSS. and in Nichols' History of Leicestershire."

In the course of the tale the writer makes one of the characters say "Dame Maude (Matilda, the second wife of Sir George Vernon) is so watchful, and my lord so wrathful against all that be of her Highness's religion." The religion here referred to is, of course, the Protestant Faith; and her "Highness" is Queen Elizabeth. Dorothy Vernon is called "Doll" in the tale; and Margaret's marriage is described as having taken place in the chapel of Haddon Hall "with popish ritual."

It is interesting and instructive to remember that John Manners was a Protestant, and a member of a Protestant family. Miss Meteyard knew Derbyshire well; she was the daughter of a surgeon who, I believed, practised in Derbyshire, and that she based her story upon tradition is proved in her own words, "This story is hallowed by the tradition of something like three hundred years."

Mr. Smith is furious with people who believe in traditions, forgetting or ignoring the fact that tradition is almost invariably founded upon truth. The author of *THE LOVE STEPS OF DOROTHY VERNON* makes "Doll" effect her escape from the Hall to the arms of her waiting lover through the doorway and down the steps, now known as "Dorothy Vernon's Porch." This fires Mr. Smith's blood, and he cries out in his wrath, "Those steps were not built at the time." Here he is upon safe ground, because as it so happens there is an account in existence for the cost of building those identical steps, and that identical doorway, and it shows that they were built in 1650, sixty years after Dorothy's death. But that doesn't prove that the tradition of the elopement was not true. There were plenty of other exits from Haddon Hall, nor does it prove that there was no door at that end of the building affording access to the Terrace, now called "Dorothy Vernon's Walk." Anyway it is a mere detail, and precisely one of those details likely to be inaccurate, for it is difficult to point to any historical or traditional event which is flawless with respect to accuracy of detail.

But now we will travel back still further in the last century, to find further proof of Mr. Smith's unreliability as an historian and of the antiquity of the story of the elopement.

In THE LONDON MAGAZINE, vol. 5, Jan. to June, 1822, is to be found a short story called THE KING OF THE PEAK. It forms the third of a series under the generic heading of THE TWELVE TALES OF LYDDALCROSS. It is curious that in this version of the tradition Dorothy is called "Dora." It opens with some lines quoted from a poem called "Old Derbyshire Rhyme of Dora Vernon." The date of the "Rhyme" I have been unable to determine, but its style suggests the early part of the eighteenth century. There is a ring of the metrical style of narrative, then in use, and later adopted by Sir Walter Scott with such excellent effect. However, the reader shall judge for himself.

FRAGMENT FROM AN OLD DERBYSHIRE RHYME OF DORA VERNON.

"What time the bird wakes in its bower,
 He stood and looked on Haddon tower;
 High rose it o'er the woodland height,
 With portals strong and turrets bright,
 And gardens green; with swirl and sweep
 Round rushed the Wye, both broad and deep,
 Leaping and looking for the sun;
 He saw the red deer and the dun;
 The warders with their weapons' sheen,
 The watchers with their mantles green;
 The deer hounds at their feet were flung,
 The red blood at their dew-laps hung.
 Adown he leaped, and awhile he stood,
 With a downcast look, and pondering mood;
 Then made a step, and his bright sword drew,
 And cleft a stone at a stroke in two—
 So shall the heads of my foemen be,
 Who seek to sunder my love from me."

Of course, the gentleman of the ballad who draws the bright sword and utters such dire threats against his foemen, is John Manners, and the foemen are those who will not permit him, a Protestant, to woo the beautiful Dora (Dorothy) Vernon, a Roman Catholic. In the above lines we have the crystallised germ of the secret wooing and the midnight flight.

One of the characters in the story refers to Dora Vernon thus:—

“She was a lovely lass and as proud as she was lovely; she bore her head high, and well she might for she was a gallant knight’s daughter, and lords and dukes and what not have descended from her. But for all that I cannot forget that she ran away in the middle of a moonlight night with young John Manners, and no other attendant than her own sweet self.”

To this another answers:—

“Aye, and instead of going out regularly by the door she leapt out of a window; more, by token she left one of her silver-heeled slippers fastened in the grating, and the place has ever since been called the Lady’s Leap.”

There is another illuminating passage in the work which speaks of Sir George Vernon being strongly opposed to John Manners, and he exclaims to a guest who has spoken of Manners as a “goodly person,” and pleaded for him:—

“Sir Knight, I court no man’s counsel; hearken to my words; look at the moon’s shadow on Haddon-dial; there it is beside the casement; the shadow falls short of twelve. If it darkens the midnight hour and John Manners be found here, he shall be cast fettered, neck and heel into the deepest dungeon in Haddon.”

What does Mr. Smith say to this? Does it not prove that long and long before Miss Meteyard’s time the tradition of the secret wooing and the elopement formed the subject of ballad and story. How, then, can Miss Meteyard be said to have *concocted* the story?

According to this tale of THE KING OF THE PEAK, John Manners disguised himself as a minstrel during a great feast given by Sir George, and sang some verses he had composed descriptive of Dorothy’s beauty, and that very night she eloped with him. Dorothy, according to the writer, was her father’s favourite daughter, and he, it is stated, carried on his breast a gold rosary in which she had twined some of her mother’s hair.

The name of the author of the Lyddalcross stories is not given, but possibly they were from the pen of various writers. [Allan Cunningham wrote all Lyddalcross stories, *and* the poems contained therein.]

The following year, that is in 1823, the old firm of publishers, Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, of Paternoster Row, issued in three volumes, a tale called *THE KING OF THE PEAK*. It has no connection whatever with the short story in the Lyddalcross series. The only similarity is in the title, which of course was common property. The author gives his name as "Lee Gibbons," but it is now known that his real name was William Bennet, a solicitor. As a legal man it is hardly likely that this writer would have written such a story, dealing with such great families as the Vernons, and the Dukes of Rutland, unless he had data, in the shape of traditions, to go upon. Indeed in his Preface he says:—

"That the ancestor of his Grace, the Duke of Rutland, did gain his bride in the manner described in the following sheets, the whole neighbourhood of Haddon will bear me out, at least if tradition be regarded as any evidence."

We gather further that Mr. Lee Gibbons was a frequent visitor to Haddon, and had contemplated his story for a long time, and studied the Hall and its surroundings with a view to the *mise en scene*.

During the latter half of the decade of the seventies, I myself was a frequent visitor to Haddon Hall, the beauty and repose of the venerable pile proving a source of great attraction to me. I became much interested in the story of the elopement, and in the course of my wanderings about Derbyshire I met old people who had heard the story from their parents. On one occasion I conversed with a very old woman about ninety years of age, who was then residing in Derby, but whose mother was, I believe, a Bakewell woman. She told me that when she was a girl she remembered that her mother used to talk about the elopement of Dorothy Vernon with John Manners. In the end I wrote a version of the tradition, under the title of *DOLL: A DREAM OF HADDON HALL*, which is still extant. Curiously enough, although I had not read *THE LOVE STEPS OF DOROTHY VERNON*, I made Dorothy leave the Hall by the much-discussed doorway and steps. I confess that at that time I did not know the steps were built long after Dorothy's time.

A few years ago I was induced to write a much longer story on the same subject, and this I called *SWEET DOLL OF HADDON HALL*. The title, *SWEET DOLL*, would seem, according to his own statement, to have much perturbed the pure, historic soul of Mr. Smith. It made him "shudder" and "set his teeth on edge," the "Doll" affecting him most.

And yet this dry-as-dust [a phrase used by Smith to distance himself from the easily convinced “romantically inclined”] gentleman, who has grubbed and delved among mouldy archives, ought to know that *Dorothea*, which means, given by God, has been a favourite English name for centuries, and that the corruption, “Dol,” spelt with one L, is as old as the name itself. Why Mr. Smith should have been so severely affected because I called my heroine “Doll,” is difficult to understand. He makes it clear, however, that when he had made up his mind to give his lucubrations to the world, he resolved at the same time to pulverise with a sweep of his dry-as-dust pen every one who had had the temerity to turn to account a very pretty tradition for literary purposes, and with a cock-sureness that is laughable he declares that the “grounds on which this story (the elopement) are based are not even slight, but are to all intents and purposes, non-existent.” He asks “Why should a young man of such good family, son of an Earl, heir to fine estates, though not the eldest son, but the second, be considered no suitable husband to a second daughter of a *country squire*, important though he was, and possessed of fine estates?”

The italics are mine, and I will endeavour to the best of my ability to answer the question. Firstly, the country squire, as this remarkable writer dubs him, was of a family as great and noble, or even greater and nobler, than the Manners family, although John’s father had been created an earl. Secondly, the country squire’s second daughter was co-heiress with her sister, and as such entitled to an equal share of her father’s enormous wealth. Thirdly, there is no warrant for the assertion that the second son of the earl was entitled to fine estates. His father was by no means a wealthy man according to our present-day idea of wealth, and John’s prospects at that time could not have been particularly brilliant. Fourthly, and this is by way of emphasising my previous statement, Dorothy and her people were Roman Catholics; John Manners and his people were Protestants. Does Mr. Smith seriously mean to say that this difference in faith was not a weighty matter at such a period? Queen Elizabeth had but recently ascended the throne, and though the royal ruffian, Henry VIII, partly out of spite, and partly for the sake of the wealth he would acquire, had despoiled the monasteries, his high-handed, and strong-minded daughter hadn’t yet been able to make her influence felt by some of the old and powerful families who still clung to the faith of their fathers with grim tenacity. And Sir George Vernon for one, the “country squire,” was strong enough to defy even his queen. He had married his second wife a few weeks after Elizabeth was crowned, and his lady was a member of an old Catholic family.

Of course, Mr. Smith has no sympathy with “the romantically inclined,” as he calls those who believe in the elopement, but psychologically, hypothetically, as well as logically, the weight is on their side, and as Mr. Smith is well aware there is not even a microscopical piece of evidence forthcoming to show that Dorothy was married at Haddon. Now, according to the laws of probability, if Sir George Vernon had approved of John Manners as a suitor for Dorothy, there would have been some documentary evidence of it. And it is almost an outrage upon common sense to ask anyone to believe that this proud and haughty gentleman, Sir George Vernon, “a country squire,” as Mr. Smith somewhat flippantly dubs him, who was regarded as a little king in his own county, would have sanctioned a hole-and-corner marriage for his youngest daughter.

Mr. Smith, with the remarkable dogmatism which is such a conspicuous feature of his book, says on page 34, “The marriage of John Manners with Dorothy Vernon must have been with the consent of the latter’s father, Sir George Vernon.”

But why *must*? Mr. Smith doesn’t even advance a single argument to justify his “must.” On his own showing, this marriage was an important and a great match for the House of Vernon. The Boar and the Peacock were to be blended. The second daughter of the country squire was to wed with the second son of an earl. Does it occur to Mr. Smith that as things human go, Sir George Vernon would have regarded the marriage, if it had been with his consent, as such a commonplace event as to leave it absolutely unrecorded. But Mr. Smith is not only dogmatic, he is inconsistent, for on page 23 of his work he thus refers to Sir George:—“His huge wealth and great position in the county gained for him a notoriety for government in his estates which he fully lived up to.”

Just so, Mr. Smith, and yet elsewhere you speak of him as a mere country squire, and suggest that he would regard the marriage of his daughter with the second son of an earl as a supreme honor for his house. All the human probabilities are in favour of the theory that this gentleman of huge wealth, of proud lineage, and great influence, did not consider the honour so great as Mr. Smith would have us believe. Nevertheless, important enough to be celebrated with feast and dance, and recorded for the sake of the children that might result from the union. And to still further labour my point of the difference of faith, it may fairly be asked if Mr. Manners, as a Protestant, consented to wed in accordance with the Roman Catholic ritual, or did Sir George, avowedly a devout Catholic, allow his young daughter to be wed according to the Protestant ritual?

If the young people were married in the private chapel at Haddon, it is safe to say it must have been in accordance with the ritual of the Church of Rome. If they were married at Bakewell, or elsewhere it would be in accordance with the ritual of the reformed church. How is Mr. Smith going to get off the horns of the dilemma? Wherever the marriage took place, if it was with the consent of the bride's father, it would surely have been what we should now term "a grand wedding," having regard to the high social position of the contracting parties. But not a sound nor a sign comes to us from any source.

In 1885 Mr. Maxwell Lyte, now Sir Henry Maxwell Lyte, K.C.B., M.A., F.S.A., acting on behalf of the Historical Manuscripts Commission, visited Belvoir Castle, the seat of the Duke of Rutland, and discovered a number of old and interesting documents, which were subjected to critical examination. Some years later the Commission published some of these documents, and thereafter we hear of the romance being entirely shattered. Yet as far as I have been able to gather not a single fact was brought to light that would tend to disprove the elopement story. There wasn't a scrap of writing found tending to prove that Dorothy was married at home, and with her father's consent. In 1890 the late Duchess of Rutland contributed an essay to the QUARTERLY REVIEW, afterwards reprinted in pamphlet form, and in it her Grace refers to the "shattering of the romance." But this lady, while scouting the *popular* version of the story, had the courage to admit that *there might be some historic foundation for the belief in the elopement*. It will thus be seen that the Duchess of Rutland was not quite so cocksure as Mr. Smith.

In vol. xxii of the JOURNAL OF THE DERBYSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY, published in 1900, there is an article from the clever pen of the late Mr. W. A. Carrington, entitled HADDON: THE HALL, THE MANOR, AND ITS LORDS. In referring to the Dorothy Vernon legend this gentleman says:—

"Whether the popular legend of the elopement in question has any foundation or not will probably remain an unsolved problem. It is a tradition in the family that the marriage was celebrated at Aylestone, near Leicester. If it was a clandestine marriage it seems rather singular it should have been celebrated at Aylestone, as it was one of the Rutland Manors, where John Manners would surely be known, as the family had a residence there long before that time."

According to Mr. Smith, the problem is solved. He himself solves it by simply saying the legend is not true. And this in the face of a much greater authority, the late Duchess of Rutland, who admitted that the elopement might be true. Then we have it from Mr. Carrington, also a much more reliable authority than Mr. Smith, that the tradition in the Duke of Rutland's family is that the marriage was celebrated at Aylestone, though Mr. Carrington thinks it rather singular Aylestone should have been chosen. For the adjective "singular," I would substitute the adjective *significant*, for to my mind it is extremely significant, and I fancy it will appear so to most people who will go to the trouble to examine all the facts; let us inquire into them.

Sir George Vernon, the proud and wealthy King of the Peak, refused to recognise in John Manners, the Protestant, a possible husband for his favourite daughter. Whereupon that young gentleman, faithful to the traditions of love-sick swains the world over, found some means, in spite of watch and ward, bolts and bars, to communicate with his lady love. She was very young, hardly more than a child, and, doubtless, impressionable, sentimental and romantic. John so played upon her feelings that she, recognising the hopelessness of obtaining her father's permission to marry this young man who was dying for love of her, consented, after much persuasion we may believe, to run away with him. This consent having been won, or wrung from her, the question would arise, "But where shall we be married, John?" They could not go to Bakewell, to Rowsley, to Matlock, to Buxton, nor, indeed to any part of Derbyshire. The name of Vernon was too well known all over the county to make it possible for them to conceal their identity. To whatever clergyman in Derbyshire they had gone they would have faced the risk of awkward questions that might have led to their undoing. Dorothy would be fearful of discovery; and John, for reasons that will at once suggest themselves, was not going to take any such risk. Having got his lovebird out of the parental nest, and having a wholesome dread of pursuit and capture by an irate father and his minions, he would lose not a moment of the precious time through any indecisiveness. He had worked the whole plan out, and timed the flight with mathematical accuracy. There were no telegraphs, no railways. A swift horse with a fair start could keep the pursuers at a distance. And in the darkness of night there would be no fear of encountering anyone on the lonely roads who could put the pursuers on their track, if there were pursuers. So night time was chosen.

As regards the place John could never have had any hesitation. Aylestone was his father's manor, and there he would find a clergyman under the influence of his family, no member of which, it is presumable, would raise any objection to a wealthy heiress like Dorothy, more particularly as the young lady, having consented to fly with her lover, would not allow the question of ritual to influence her; for was she not youthful; was she not terribly in love; was she not anxious to be John's wife? And so long as she was legally married to him, what mattered it about the ritual.

Now, is it not clear that Aylestone was the one and only place to which John could carry his lady love with the certainty of being successful in accomplishing his purpose of marrying her. Once married he knew that all the King of the Peak's horses, and all the King of the Peak's men could not unweave them again. Nor can it be supposed that he left anything to chance. The flight must have been talked over, and discussed from every point of view; and the bold young man had probably taken his father into his confidence; or at any rate the clergyman of his father's manor. Here then we see a justification for the Rutland family belief that the marriage took place at Aylestone. But of course Mr. Smith will pooh-pooh the whole thing, and will tell you it was impossible that Dorothy could have fled with John, for there were no steps, and no doorway then, on that side of Haddon Hall, where now the guides point, with their tongues in their cheeks, to "Dorothy Vernon's Porch." Poor Mr. Smith! will it not occur to him, antiquary, archaeologist, and historian though he be, that Dorothy being very much in love, and very wayward, as love-sick young ladies usually are, might have jumped out of a window, or have gone through the chapel and so out into the grounds. But seriously, doesn't it show that you have a very weak case to dogmatically deny a highly probable story, because one teller of it happens to have been wrong in a detail. It is obvious that when Dorothy consented to elope she and her lover would discuss the ways and means of getting away. Nor is it stretching a point too far to suppose that the young lady had some faithful attendant in whom she could place confidence, and to whom she could look for help. John, for his part, would have a well-filled purse, and would be no niggard at such a time. The golden key has been potent in all ages to unlock doors and keep wagging tongues still. Sir George, as became one of his station, had a very large number of menials and retainers on the premises, and at night sentinels kept watch and ward round the residence.

John no doubt would have to “square” some of these people. Subsequently, when the young people returned to the parental roof, and had received the parental blessing, the servants when they had their “evenings off,” and went to the village ale houses at Rowsley and Bakewell, would talk about the matter, and the story of the elopement would become public property, and would ultimately crystallise itself into a tradition as the stream of time rolled on. Long before the first generation had passed, the details would be forgotten, but the story itself in broad outline, remembered. And so the tale would be told, with such embellishments and additions as pleased the fancy of the teller. There would be many versions, but the main incident would remain.

Let us now examine another phase of “The Romance,”—the wooing. It goes without saying that the final step—the flight in the dead of night to Aylestone, must have been led up to by much love-making. But how did the young couple manage to communicate? will be asked. The modern Swain or Miss will write pages of idiocy, and despatch them to the loved one by the unromantic penny post; and there comes a time occasionally when these love-lorn simperings are read in the modern divorce court to the amusement of an unsympathetic public. But in John Manners’ time there was no vulgar penny post; no romance destroying railways, no wireless or other forms of mechanical telegraphy. Men wore swords in those days, and knew how to use them. The fastest means of locomotion was the long enduring horse. The houses of rich people were isolated, and carefully guarded by retainers against marauders and undesirable visitors. And the will of the owner of such a noble mansion as Haddon Hall would be rigorously enforced by men armed with lethal weapons which were used upon very slight provocation. It may therefore be assumed that if John Manners was a *persona ingrata* to Sir Vernon and his lady, he would have little chance of wooing Dorothy unless it was by stratagem. Young, unmarried women of that period were very carefully looked after, and closely guarded against the attentions of gallants. As to how Dorothy and John first met, must necessarily be the merest conjecture. That they did meet is as certain as that Princess Elizabeth, daughter of Henry VIII, came to the throne of England, and that Drake smashed the Spanish Armada with the help of God, and a great storm. Whether it was love at first sight or not is also conjecture. Anyway the young people being in love did manage to hold communication with each other, no doubt with the connivance of some of the retainers.

One account says John assumed the character of an outlaw, a rather vague term; another that he took service as a woodman under her father's chief forester. Sir George Vernon was much given to hawking and hunting the deer. The woods around Haddon were rich in game, and afforded the sportsman plenty of exciting exercise. Hawking parties, as we know from old records and prints, were invariably attended by ladies; it was a sport that appealed to ladies. It is in the highest degree probable, therefore, that Dorothy was the frequent companion of her father when he was hawking. At the period I am dealing with Margaret, the elder sister, was much occupied with the attentions of her acknowledged lover, Sir Thomas Stanley, who by the way, was also the second son of an earl, the Earl of Derby. Assuming that John was playing the role of a woodman, it is quite conceivable that Doll would have opportunity of occasionally meeting the bold young man who was running such risks on her account. Letter writing was not indulged in as at the present day, and though the lovers would be educated people, it is doubtful if they resorted much, if at all, to pen and paper as a means of making known their sentiments. They would have to depend a good deal on a go-between, either male or female, possibly both. The "tip" and bribe were as much a force then as in our own dull prosaic times. As the final stage of the wooing was reached, and John had exacted a promise from the fair Dorothy that she would fly with him on a given date, he would set about making preparations for the successful carrying out of his project, and to that end some trusted servitor would be instructed to have a horse or horses ready at a given spot at the time fixed upon. Everybody rode in those days, therefore it would be an easy enough matter for Dorothy to manage her horse during a night ride along rough country roads. The popular version of the story is that Dorothy eloped on the night of the very day on which Margaret was joined in the bonds of holy matrimony to Sir Thomas Stanley. There are reasons, however, for rejecting that theory, but it is highly probable an evening was selected when some revels were going on. At such a time the usual vigilance would be to a certain extent relaxed. Guests would be attended by their servants, and strangers about the Hall would be less likely to be challenged. During all festivities in country houses at that time men generally indulged freely in wine, and on the principle of like master like man, servants would regale themselves with extra potations of beer, and even wine if they could manage to ingratiate themselves with the chief vintner.

A consideration of these details will show that a night of revelry would best afford the lovers the opportunity they sought, so that whatever the occasion might have been, it is exceedingly probable that Sir George Vernon was dispensing his hospitality to guests on the night when his youngest daughter took that momentous step which changed the fortunes of his house. Of course the dry-as-dust people whose cob-webbed brains will not allow them to view anything except through the medium of time-stained parchment indignantly reject this idea; but as we have nothing concrete and practical to go upon, we are driven to the abstract and theoretical to find a solution for what is mysterious. We have never had any communication with the planet Mars, and have nothing practical or concrete to guide us in the solution of the problem as to whether Mars is or is not inhabited. But he would be a bold man indeed now-a-days, who with Mr. Smith's cock-sureness, exclaimed, "There are no inhabitants in Mars because we haven't a scrap of documentary evidence to prove it." As I have said over and over again, there isn't a scrap of evidence to prove that Dorothy Vernon was married in a dull prosaic way at her father's house, nor is there any evidence to prove that she ran away, but there is tradition, and the overwhelming weight of probability to support the tradition. It is the very essence of absurdity to suppose that any writer would have invented such a story about two great families, unless there had been the *suggestion of tradition*, and all traditions have some foundation.

There is one point which on the first blush seems to support the contention that Dorothy did not elope at the time stated [1558], and that is her age. Sir George Vernon died the 31st day of August, 1565. Both his daughters were then married, and a post-mortem Inquisition was held in the 8th year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, to prove the heirship of Margaret and Dorothy to their father's immense property. Who sat on this Inquisition I have been unable to trace, but it proved for certain that the two ladies had been born in wedlock; and with less certainty that Margaret was 25 years old, and Dorothy 20 years. It is known that Margaret was married to Sir Thomas Stanley about May of 1558, when according to the Inquisition she would be 18 years of age. Her father had married his second wife on or about the 25th of March, 1558. If Dorothy was 20 when her father died, she could only have been thirteen when she eloped. These old Inquisitions often erred, however, with regard to the ages of people concerned in them. And it is clear that if the ages, viz., 20 and 25, are to be taken as literally correct, both young women had their birthday on the same date.

It is highly probable that Dorothy was of full age [21] or more at the time of her father's death, as there is no suggestion anywhere that she did not enter into immediate possession of her property. Consequently at the time of her marriage she would be between 14 and 15 years of age. Although so youthful she would not have been considered of an unmarriageable age at that period. Girl marriages were common enough, especially where property was concerned.

I am now going to suggest another reason why it is in the highest degree probable that it was a runaway match. John Manners at the time of his marriage [age about 28] was probably twice the age of his wife. He was the second son of Thomas, the first Earl of Rutland, the earldom being bestowed upon him by Henry VIII, on the 18th of June, 1525. This nobleman was married twice. There was no issue of the first marriage. His second wife was a daughter of Sir William Paston, Knight, of Paston, in Norfolk. The countess bore him five sons and six daughters. John was the second born. Yet Mr. Smith says he was heir to fine estates. At the time John was making love to Dorothy there was no reason to suppose his eldest brother would not have heirs. With this prospect before him, and a large family of brothers and sisters to be provided for, out of an estate which would not compare with the Vernon estates, he hadn't much to look forward to, and it would be taxing the credulity too much to ask one to believe that Mr. John Manners did not regard Dorothy as a prize well worth struggling for. If the religious difficulty is set aside, there is still the theory that John was objected to by Dorothy's parents (1) on the score of his age, (2) on his lack of fortune, for the "fine estates" at that time must have looked very vague and shadowy. And, as a matter of fact, it was his posterity [grandson] who succeeded to the title and estates of the Manners family [1841], owing to his eldest brother [eldest brother's grandson] having no male heirs. In these facts then we have good grounds for believing that John Manners was not considered an eligible husband for Dorothy by that young lady's proud father.

Now if I am right in my contention that Doll was nearer fifteen than thirteen at the time of her marriage, we get over the age difficulty. That she was very young is proved by the Inquisition, because at the time it was held she had been married some years. The Inquisition gives her age as 20 (about ?). About might mean a little under 21. The Inquisition wouldn't have said she was 20 if she had been under; and by a parity of reasoning wouldn't have said she was 21 if she was only twenty and nine months say.

As I have challenged Mr. Smith's accuracy on several points, I now challenge him on another. In his anger with those who have dared to make Dorothy and John Manners the subject of fiction, and who refer to a ball having been given in the Long gallery or ball-room to celebrate Margaret's marriage, he declares that that was impossible because the room was built by John Manners *after* he came into possession of the Haddon estates; that is to say, after 1565. He had then been married some years. In contradiction to this Mr. Henry A. Rye, a well-informed gentleman well versed in antiquarian lore, and who had charge of the structure of Haddon Hall for something like ten years, says the "*very latest date that can be given for the building of the Long gallery or ball-room is the time of Sir George Vernon, Dorothy's father, and I have good reason to believe it was completed in the lifetime of Sir George's father.*" [It is not conclusively known whether the Long Gallery was entirely built by John Manners or whether he was responsible for the stylish and expensive decoration of what the Vernon family had begun.] Mr. Rye also suggests the possibility of there having been a window where Dorothy Vernon's porch now is, and it was through that window she got when she escaped from the house to join her lover. Having an intimate knowledge of Haddon myself, I am inclined to support that suggestion, for it is difficult to believe that there was neither window nor door at that particular part of the building. The accounts showing the charges for the doorway and steps, which were built in 1650, speak, I believe of "making a new doorway." Might that not mean, making a new doorway where an old one had previously been.

Coming now to the letter alleged to be Dorothy Manners, and bearing a facsimile of Dorothy's signature. This letter appears on pages 37 and 38 of Mr. Smith's book. The account of the finding of this letter was given by Mr. A. E. Cockayne, of Bakewell, and it first appeared in vol. xv of the JOURNAL OF THE DERBYSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY. It appears a firm of solicitors in Bakewell were removing to new offices. In the course of removal a quantity of old papers were turned out from some receptacle where they had lain *perdu* for generations possibly. Amongst these papers was this wonderful letter, said to have been written by Dorothy to a Mr. Swan who was agent for the Haddon estates. In it the writer solicits a loan of money, for which she will give her note of hand, but as she does not understand how to draw up a note of hand, she asks Swan to do it, and promises to sign it, and assures him that the money shall be paid at the next Lady-day [March 25].

She suggests that if he has any doubts she has friends who she is sure would pass their words, or give their hands, *i.e.*, sign the promissory note. The letter is signed in facsimile—

Dorothy Manners.

That this letter was not written by John Manners' wife is certain. Why should the wife of the second son of the Earl of Rutland, and wealthy woman as she was, write to her agent for a loan of money. It is fair to say that Mr. Smith throws some doubt at first upon the letter being from John Manners' wife, but he winds up with saying: "I believe, therefore, we have here a genuine letter of the celebrated heiress of Haddon." This is inconsistent on the part of such a stickler for proofs as Mr. Smith claims to be. I have not had the advantage of seeing the original, but I have submitted the facsimile to several experts, and they say that the name "Manners" is a clumsy forgery, and was not written by the same hand that wrote the name "Dorothy." [This is a credible analysis of the letter.] The genuineness or not of this letter has no bearing of course on the question "Did Dorothy Elope?" and I have only alluded to it to show that in spite of his claim to be considered a serious historian Mr. Smith is prepared to take a good deal on trust.

Visitors to Bakewell Church will remember that over the tomb where John Manners and his wife sleep are carved effigies of John Manners and his wife Dorothy. The latter is a hideous caricature [an accurate assessment], and if it is a likeness of Dorothy, as Mr. Smith asserts it is, then the renowned Dorothy Vernon, whose beauty is extolled by the novelists, was ugly indeed. But this crude and clumsily carved effigy is no more a likeness of Dorothy than is any one of the gargoyles at Haddon Hall. Mr. Smith says: "If this effigy is a portrait—as that of her husband undoubtedly was—she was by no means a beauty." [The effigy is extremely unflattering.]

Mr. Smith's grammar is a little involved here, and he mixes his tenses up. What he means is that the effigy of John Manners is undoubtedly a portrait. How does he know? And how is he so cock-sure about it? About the year 1846, the church, or portion of it, was being rebuilt, and it was found necessary to disturb the tomb of the Manners. For some purpose or other the coffins containing the bodies of Dorothy and her husband were opened, and the mouldering remains exposed to view. They had been buried in lime. The skull of Dorothy was covered with a mass of beautiful, reddish hair, done up with gold or gilt pins.

The head of Sir John was a withered, fleshless skull, but was said to “*resemble the effigy*.” On this “said to resemble,” our wonderful historian, Mr. Smith, declares that the effigy over the tomb was undoubtedly a likeness, and on that bit of sophism he justifies himself when he tries to prove that poor Dorothy Vernon, the heroine of one of the most romantic love stories in the English language was as ugly as a gargoyle.

There is now another point of view from which the subject under discussion may be examined. If the marriage had been arranged and decided between the parties in the ordinary way it is safe to conjecture that there would have been in existence certain documentary evidence with regard to settlements. Everything points to the fact that Sir George Vernon was a keen business man. He was the owner of vast estates of great value, and he managed them with consummate skill; and it is an outrage on common sense to suppose that he would have married his daughters without concerning himself about their future interests. There was a great deal of property at stake, and Sir George would have shown a sad lack of even the most ordinary caution if he had failed to see that his girls were protected. Marriageable young ladies who were heiresses to estates were no less jealously guarded against adventurers and fortune hunters in Sir George Vernon’s time than they are at the present day. In the case of Margaret, the eldest daughter, who was united to Sir Thomas Stanley, when the marriage was decided upon, the family lawyers on both sides were kept busy, for was not Margaret marrying the second son of an earl, of the ancient family of the Earls of Derby, and was not the Earl of Derby’s second son forming alliance with the daughter of one of the proudest and wealthiest commoners in England. Was it likely that such a union would be regarded as of so little importance from the business point of view that the necessary legal arrangements would be neglected. It is quite true that the Married Woman’s Property Act, as we know it, was not in existence, and when a man married a woman of wealth he practically, in an ordinary way, acquired control over all she possessed. This, however, was subject to a good many conditions, and the stringency of the conditions increased in proportion to the magnitude of the property involved. As regards Margaret Vernon, she had too much at stake to be handed over lightly to a man, even though he was the second son of an earl, unless her rights were clearly defined, and she were given legal control over some of her property. There would be bonds and deeds drawn up by men versed in all the intricacies of the law, and it so happens that some of these bonds and deeds are still extant.

But when we come to Miss Dorothy Vernon's marriage, not a scrap of writing is forthcoming to show that her father took any steps to safeguard her interests. How was that? Wasn't Dorothy as precious to him as her sister? Can any one suggest a single reason based on common sense, why Sir George, shrewd and businesslike as he was, should neglect to do in Dorothy's case what he had done in Margaret's case. It cannot for a moment be supposed that Dorothy was never married. We know that she bore children, and those children were recognised by law as legitimate, consequently she was married beyond all doubt. Yet all the muniment chests of Belvoir and Haddon have failed to furnish us with a line of writing bearing on her marriage. Could anything be more remarkable if, as Mr. Smith says, she was married in a humdrum way at home. Assuming that John Manners was a recognised suitor, and a welcome visitor at Haddon Hall, it is hardly possible that the fact would have gone unrecorded in some shape or form.

The union of the two great houses of Vernon and Rutland was not a mere commonplace affair, for it was destined to effect stupendous changes, humanly speaking, in the fortunes of both families, and more particularly in those of the Vernons. Sir George had no male heir, and he could not be blind to the fact that he would be the last of his race in the direct male line. The marriages that his daughters might contract, therefore, concerned him very deeply, and unless he was a totally different person from what all accounts agree in making him, he was not likely to sit quietly and allow his heiresses to choose anyone for whom they happened to take a passing fancy. When Margaret had been disposed of and had taken her departure with her wedded lord, to, as we are led to suppose, the Isle of Man, of which her husband had been appointed Governor, the anxious father would keep a more than ever watchful eye on his youngest, for on her so much depended. Haddon Hall, his home and birthplace, was a precious heritage, about which he could not fail to feel some concern. He was growing old, and when the time came for him to quit the world Haddon must of necessity pass to a new owner. He would have been a strange man indeed if he had not reflected seriously at times on this matter, and his daughter Dorothy's marriage no doubt occupied his attention as a subject of vital importance. By the exercise of a little imagination we can conjure up the whole situation. The anxiety of this wealthy and powerful landowner—"Country Squire"—as Mr. Smith dubs him, who knew that with his death the direct line of the proud family he represented would be extinguished. The close bond of affection between him and his beautiful young daughter. (Ugly, Mr. Smith tries to make her.)

She was a mere girl at that period, brought up in the seclusion of the country and with little or no knowledge of the world. Upon the lover that she should choose depended most momentous issues, and her father would certainly seek to influence her choice, for, inexperienced and unsophisticated as she was, she would be sure to be guided by sentiment, rather than by those considerations which weighed with him. Consequently, he would take into account circumstances which she would consider as trivial and unimportant. If John Manners presented himself as a wooer, and was favoured by the doting father of the young girl upon whom so much depended, he would be a frequent visitor at the Hall. In those days lovers of the social position of Manners and Miss Vernon did not enjoy the freedom of our own times—a freedom that cannot be said to be without its drawbacks—and they would have little or no opportunity of going about together. There would be no moonlight wanderings, no visits to the play, no balls, no dreaming delicious dreams by the silver sea. The wooing would be done in Dorothy's home. His comings and going would be marked by certain formalities. He would come and go on horseback, possibly with an attendant, and the horse or horses would be cared for at the Hall, so that his visits would be well known to all and sundry who went to make up the Vernon household, a very numerous one. Moreover, he would be an honoured guest, and the steward would be instructed to see to his comfort. Then, of course, as the wooing proceeded, and they were at last recognised as “engaged,” the young man's prospects must have been a matter of conversation and discussion between him and his future father-in-law. And is it conceivable that proud Sir George Vernon, a gentleman of great wealth and ancient lineage, would not have conferred with the young lover's father, the first Earl of Rutland, who, with his new dignity to support, and burdened with a large family by his second wife, five sons and six daughters—would be no less anxious than Sir George himself about the forthcoming marriage? As the reader knows, John Manners was the second son, and his eldest brother would probably have heirs. Consequently, the noble earl could not have been without some misgivings as to how he was going to make adequate provision for all his numerous brood. The Earl and Sir George resided with easy distance of each other, and if the two families were on friendly terms there would no doubt be frequent exchange of visits.

Now, if the situation here sketched out existed, and it must have existed if John Manners was welcomed as the wooer of Dorothy Vernon, how is it that neither family preserved some record? The mouldy archives and muniment chests of Belvoir Castle have furnished us with an immense amount of information concerning the history and fortunes of the families, but this remarkable incident, the blending of the Boar and the Peacock, which absolutely changed the fortunes of both houses, is allowed to pass unnoticed. The imagination has now only to be exercised in the reverse direction and we get a very different story and one which under the circumstances bears upon it the impress of fact. The Earl and the Knight were not on friendly terms, at any rate, as we should say now, "not on visiting terms," which is the same thing differently expressed. There is no reason to suppose there was anything like a feud, but the neighbourly feeling was not cordial. And so we have to imagine John Manners—and this time we have all the probabilities to guide us—making love to Dorothy clandestinely, and laying siege to her heart by all the subterfuges to which unbidden lovers have had recourse since love-making began. As I have pointed out, Dorothy would have very little freedom, and it is absolutely certain she would not be allowed to wander about unattended. Young ladies of that period did their shopping through the wandering packman who came to the houses, and when they left their homes to go upon a journey they were always well escorted. So the only way that John Manners had to make love was by resorting to some means to prevent his being recognised by anyone but the sweet girl whose heart he was trying to win. No doubt whatever the way was beset with many difficulties, but what would a lover be worth if he couldn't overcome them. Love quickens the wits, and if he was aided by the young lady herself, John would be able to enjoy many a delightful stolen interview. We will not pause to discuss the point whether his father did or did not know of his wooing. If he did it is strongly probable that he opposed no objections. Such a match for his second son was by no means to be despised. The Earl was perfectly acquainted with his neighbour's position, and the vast property to which he could lay claim, and he knew also that the two daughters were heiresses to that property.

In bringing my arguments in favour of the elopement to a close I am well aware that the evidence is purely circumstantial, but I maintain that, circumstantial as it is, it is too strong to be ignored. To say that the match was not a runaway one because there is no documentary warrant to prove it, is as nonsensical as the argument used by the extraordinary people who maintain that the earth is flat.

Derbyshire is rich in legend and story, but there is none more humanly interesting than that which has thrown such a halo of romance round the historic pile of Haddon Hall.

Mr. Smith has done his little best to deprive sweet Haddon Hall of its halo of romance, as other dry-as-dust gentlemen before him have done; but whereas they have spoken with caution, and left a corner in their minds neutral, he, with a ponderosity of assertion that is amusing, says that there never was a secret wooing; there never was an elopement, and, poor man, he believes it. "Give me proof," he cries. We, on the other side, ask him for *his* proof. He hasn't got any. He has toiled amongst dusty archives and failed to find it. A more reliable authority than he, the late Duchess of Rutland, instituted a microscopical search and failed also. Others have searched and failed, and it may be safely predicted that no proof will be forthcoming this side of the end of time. But I have endeavoured to show in these few pages, by a mass of circumstantial evidence, and by throwing the weight of human probability into the scale, that there are very long odds in favour of the secret wooing, of the flight, and marriage at Aylestone. We will give Mr. Smith his steps and his doorway, as they now are. He can take them away, but he must leave us an older doorway, with three or four little steps, or a little window, please: a window just large enough for beautiful Dorothy Vernon, with the mass of golden reddish hair, to jump from and be received in her lover's arms. He has tried to deprive us of the ball-room, and significantly failed, a sorry thing for such a cock-sure gentleman to do. And he has also signally failed in his laboured attempts to prove the story of Sweet Doll of Haddon Hall a myth. That fine old mansion is one of Derbyshire's lions. It has been visited by thousands of people, attracted thither by the love story. It will in time to come be visited by hundreds of thousands—millions more, and they may go with the sweet assurance that Dorothy Vernon was a beautiful woman; that she was secretly wooed by John Manners; that she fled with him one moon-light night to Aylestone, there was nowhere else in broad England they could have gone to with the same certainty of being well received, and experiencing no difficulty in carrying out their matrimonial plans. It was a great marriage for the moneyless son of the Earl. It brought him wealth and power, and wealth to those who came after him. It has stamped his name on the pages of history, and it has thrown a charm over the old feudal mansion which has been the scene of many a stirring story which was forgotten when the actors in it died.

But this true romance of Dorothy Vernon has put life into dead stones, and endowed the home of the Vernons with an interest that will never die as long as human nature is what it is. Haddon and Dorothy Vernon—Dorothy the beautiful—are indissolubly connected, and those who have eyes to see and ears to hear, may see her ghost leaning out of her chamber window; and hear her maiden sighs as she dreams of her absent lover. And if you put the question to the mouldering tapestry, and the decaying stones:—

Did Dorothy Vernon elope? They will answer yes. The babbling Wye as it flows past the old Hall will shout the answer back to you; and the winds that come softly up the valley, and talk to the old trees, will repeat the answer, and tell you that beyond all doubt:

DOROTHY VERNON DID ELOPE!

[Probably the strongest evidence that James Muddock could have provided is the entry from the Journal of Absalom Watkin, (if Muddock had known about it). The thrust of Muddock's argument is that there would have been physical evidence to support 'standard' wedding arrangements and the ceremony befitting the daughter of the King of the Peak. His point is well taken, and in conjunction with Watkin's evidence, serves to shift the balance of evidence in favor of a marriage under unusual circumstances. To place the marriage in 1558 with a fourteen year old bride is, however, not a reasonable explanation. The accepted date is 1563, with Dorothy being eighteen.

Sir George Vernon may have had a different groom in mind, perhaps his cousin's son John Vernon, who would keep the estates in the Vernon name. But John Manners was the brother-in-law of the very wealthy and powerful George Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, and the Earl would favor a John Manners - Dorothy Vernon marriage. The denouement was probably not a midnight elopement, more likely a runaway followed by a return and a quiet affair in the Haddon Hall chapel. The combination of circumstances evolved over time into the elopement story which is told today.]