Caledonian Mercury (Edinburgh, Scotland),
Monday, June 30, 1817; Issue 14915

CARRABOO.

[A Bristol paper, after giving a *fac simile* of the characters employed by this young woman, when she wished to pass for a *Princess of Javasu*, and of her real hand-writing as *Mary Baker*, thus adds her history]:

This girl was born at Witheridge, in Devonshire, in the year 1792, where her parents (poor but industrious honest people) are still living. From a very early age, she was accustomed to roaming about. Her mother taught her to spin wool, and obliged her to work as much as she could, and in the season she was employed in weeding in the corn fields; but Mary evinced a strong inclination to follow the occupations and amusements of a boy. She therefore used to drive the farmer's horses, and when she was fatigued, would go into the water, and thus soon learned to swim and to dive. Her mother being uneasy at her way of life, procured her a place of service at Exeter; but she soon left it and commenced, in earnest, the life of a wandering mendicant. Sometimes she met with encouragement and sometimes with rebuffs; but she soon acquired the habit of tearing her clothes to tatters, and to appear as miserable as possible. In a word, she became a proficient in all the artifices, and was exposed to all the vicissitudes of the trade she had chosen. From Exeter she wandered to Taunton—sleeping under hay-ricks and in barns, and, when in good luck, at farm-houses—always exciting compassion rather than importuning for alms. In this way poor Mary's stars guided her to Bristol about four years ago. When she had expended all the money she had collected on the road, she applied to "The Stranger's Friend Society;" but an inquiry having been set on foot into her character and history, she deemed it prudent to decamp, and set off for London. On the road, she was taken ill, and the future Princess of Javasu was conveyed in an humble waggon to St Giles's Hospital, where she was confined a considerable time with a frenzy fever. Her youth and engaging manners induced the chaplain of the institution to commiserate her forlorn situation, and he humanely procured her a situation, as servant to a family, with whom she remained three years; but her mistress being very strict, and refusing to allow her as much liberty as she wished, Mary packed up her little wardrobe, and bade her mistress farewell. Her wages were soon expended; and having heard that the Magdalen was a nunnery, she determined to see the inside of it. For this purpose she invented a story, which her appearance rendered very probable, and was admitted. Her curiosity, however, (for she had no other motive in going there) was soon sufficiently gratified, and she embraced the first opportunity of taking French leave. Being of an exceeding romantic turn of mind, she now assumed male attire, and procured a place as footman; and in this disguise she actually lived in her native place, close to her father's house, without exciting the slightest suspicion, having acquired the art of altering her features so completely that no one knew her.

After residing at Wetheridge some time she removed to a neighbouring village; but being sent with a message during the deep snow about three years ago, she was overwhelmed, and lay buried all night. In the morning, she was found benumbed and insensible. The removal of her wet clothes discovered her sex, and she was obliged to leave the place, and set out in pursuit of new adventures. Having begged her way to London, she again went to service; and again in a few months became weary of restraint, and resumed her wandering habits of life.

She now met with a foreigner, who, smitten with her charms, married her, and they travelled both together to Brighton, and other places on the southern coast. But the silken bonds of matrimony soon became irksome to Mary; and one morning she gave her husband the slip, retraced her steps to the metropolis, and again got into service. Her present condition, however, prevented her from retaining her place. She soon became a mother, and having placed her child in the Foundling Hospital, again decamped. If this part of her story is to be credited, the infant is dead.

Once more she turned her back upon London, and wandered in the old way to Exeter, where she fell in with a gang of gypsies; she left them however in three days; but not without profiting by their tuition; for she was an apt scholar, and learnt a great deal in a little time.

She now bent her steps towards Bristol, and on her arrival took up her abode in the house of a Mrs Neale, in Lewin's Mead. Here she soon became tired of a stationary life; and hearing a good deal of that modern paradise, America, she determined to shift the scene of action from the old to the new world. For this purpose she applied to a Captain on the quay, who promised to take her for five guineas, she finding her own provisions. But whence was the money to come? There was the rub! In this dilemma, she wandered to the end of Park Row, unnoticed by any of the passengers, and she began to perceive that the little attention paid her would render her efforts to raise the money by begging very tedious, and perhaps fruitless. In a lucky moment she encountered two or three of the French lace-makers from Normandy. She watched their movements, and perceived that every body stared at them. This was enough for Carraboo. She fixed her eyes on the French girls' peculiar head-dress, and it immediately occurred to her, that in the garb of a foreigner she might obtain that which was denied to an English woman. She soon twisted her handkerchief into a turban, outlandished her general attire, and set off on the Gloucestershire road. After walking a few miles, a gentleman accosted her; and perceiving that she was fatigued, took her to the next public house, and gave her meat and spirits and water, which she, not being as yet an Hindoo, demolished, *a la Francoise*, for she was now a Frenchwoman!

It is already known how she went to a cottage at Almondsbury, and was there humanely taken to the house of Mrs Worrall. At first she was suspected, and threatened if she did not speak the truth;—but, alas, English was to her an unknown language. They addressed her in French:—*Non tong pau*—no *savez*.—Then she must be Spanish. Wrong again:—No *Espagnol*. Now it happened that one of Mr Worrall's domestics was a Greek, who had travelled to India, and he thought he could discern the Oriental manners about the girl easily enough—but still she might be a Portuguese, or a German, or a Pole, or a Russian, or a Bohemian—no one could tell what; but after putting her to the question, at the Stamp Office, the Council House, and elsewhere, it was concluded that she was a Malay; and a sailor was found out who could speak to her. By the girl's confession, all the palaver that passed between her and the sailor was mere *gibberish*; but Jack clapped the Knowle shot into his locker, put his helm hard up, and bore away for Marsh Street, to drink the Princess of Javasu's good health in a glass of Castle and Co.'s best—having, he said, met with no such flats for a long time before!

Shoals of books were now conveyed to Knowle, to find out from what part of Terra-Incognita she came. Maps were shown her of the Indian and Chinese Seas. Fry's Pantographia was pored over, together with various plates exhibiting the customs of the East. The girl had access to these books, maps, and plates, at her leisure, and she made a good use of them. From them she obtained her cue. She quickly observed, with a Carraboo eye, how the inhabitants of the different nations dressed, what they are, how they wrote, how they saluted, &c. the whole of which she imitated as well as she could, and in some instances with no small degree of dexterity. It must be remembered, also, that although she could not speak English, she could hear it, and she took good care to profit by the different remarks made by the multitude of persons who came to see her.—The wonderful thing, therefore, and almost only the wonderful thing, is, her amazing self-command, her astonishing powers of face. An instance of this we will mention here. One gentleman tried flattery. He drew his chair close to the girl; looked steadily in her face, and observed, "You are the most beautiful creature I ever beheld!—You are an angel!" Not a muscle of her face moved; her countenance remained as unshaken as a stone. The domestic already mentioned, when she first came to Knowle, observed, in the girl's presence, that if she was an East Indian, she would refuse brandy, or any kind of spirits. She profited by the remark. A glass of brandy and water was offered her, and she rejected it with a truly religious abhorrence.

But nothing perplexed the *cognoscenti* by whom this gay deceiver was visited, so much as her pronunciation of the language of Javasu. Her articulation was unlike any thing ever heard before. The only sound which was intelligible to the ear was her own name—and this she uttered distinctly and rapidly, "Carraboo! Carraboo! Carraboo!" leaving her wonder-struck admirers to translate the rest of her gibberish as well as they were able.

Still Carraboo was restless, and panted for America. One morning she suddenly disappeared; and returning in the evening with a bundle, and her clothes, shoes, and hands dirty, gave the people to understand, that she dug them up from a place where she (*risum teneatis amici*) had buried them, to hide them from the Mackratons! The real truth was, that during her short absence she had hastened to Bristol; but fearing that she might be pursued, she cut across the country by the Duchess's Woods, making her way through hedges, and over ditches, till she reached her old landlady's in Lewin's Mead. There she packed up her trunk, and leaving it ready at her lodgings, she ran to the quay, to look for the ship; but the vessel had sailed! At this moment, observing a man look at her attentively, and suspecting him to be a spy upon her actions, she contrived to elude him for a moment, and then leaped into an empty barrel, where she actually remained nearly two hours. Emerging from this awkward retreat, she conveyed her trunk (having first paid for her lodgings) to the Devonshire waggon, and sent it to her father's—returning with the bundle to Knowle with all possible expedition. Is it any wonder that the girl should have been foot-sore, and sick? Having thus disposed of her heavy baggage, she had nothing to look to but herself and bundle, and was thus ready for a march, at a moment's warning, whenever an opportunity might offer.

The curtain now draws up for the fifth act. She was about to present herself before the great folks in London.—She had been in the metropolis before, and she knew that it was not like the House on the Hill, or the Stamp Office, or the Council House of Bristol. She therefore became sick—this was the only remedy for the disease which now threatened her. She discovered that a little black currant jelly would give her mouth and tongue the appearance of a typhus fever; and who shall say that she did not dread the *tactus eruditus* of her medical attendant?—it might quicken the pulse even of Carraboo. Indeed she felt now that the crisis was at hand, and her uneasiness on that head might derange her animal functions. Many who now laugh, might themselves have been deceived. When Columbus showed the courtiers how to make an egg stand upon one end, they all wondered that they had not found it out themselves.

By this time, however, Mrs Worrall had received information which opened her eyes. Dr Wilkinson's letter had mentioned Carraboo's antipathy to spirits. The gentleman who accosted her on the road to Almondsbury, as already mentioned, having read the Doctor's letter, immediately recognised what he had supposed to be a poor French girl, who had drank his brandy and water at the public-house. The gentleman wrote to Mrs Worrall, and this circumstance led to the *denouement*.

Soon after the letter had reached Mrs W. Carraboo thought she observed a very material alteration in the conduct of her kind protectress. The latter would not be left alone with her; and every thing looked shy and suspicious. She perceived all was not right, and decamped for Bath. On the way thither she preserved her *incog.* and arriving at a cottager's on the road, frightened the poor old man and woman by her singular gestures so much that she could scarcely prevail upon them to admit her into the house. During the night she was separated from the old couple only by a thin partition; and whilst listening to the dialogue which they maintained respecting her, she was compelled to stop her mouth with the bed-clothes, to prevent her from laughing at them.

Her reception at Bath is perhaps the most curious part of her adventures. She was there recognised in the street by Mr Carpenter, we believe—who not being a true believer, and fearing the girl might have robbed her protectress, immediately sent for Dr Wilkinson. She was taken to the Pack Horse Inn, and thither the Ladies of Bath hurried in crowds to do honour to the supposed *Princess of Javasu*.—Here the scene was ludicrous in the extreme. The ladies kneeled before her—one took hold of her hands—another wiped her Royal face—a third covered her with a rich lace veil—and then it was "Poor dear creature!"—"What shall we do to make her comfortable!"—"Poor dear creature!"—The girl herself laughed heartily at it afterwards, and she declares that she knows not how she withstood all the "*fuss*" that was made about her.

It seems, however, that the girl herself, subdued by the kindness of her protectress, seemed disposed to confess how she abused her generosity; but the catastrophe was somewhat unexpected. On her return from the Bath expedition, she was conveyed to Bristol, and on entering the parlour of a gentleman's house, there were waiting to receive her (*horresco referens!*) the kind gentleman who had treated her on the Almondsbury road, and her former landlady from Lewin's Mead! The *Princess of Javasu* immediately sunk upon her knees—and by one of those beautiful and mind-bewildering metamorphoses, one of those transmigrations, which is not surpassed by any thing in Ovid, or in any novel, ancient or modern, this eldest Daughter of the Sun, this Moon of Moons, this inhabitant of Sirius, was in an instant "fallen from her high estate," and changed to Mary Baker, of Witheridge, in Devonshire? "*Sic transit gloria mundi!*"

That the girl's mind has been cast in no common mould is certain. Since her residence in this neighbourhood she has in no instance been accused of dishonesty; and her conduct towards her parents has been exemplary, as it appears that during her service in London she regularly sent them half her wages, and at other times whatever she could spare. She avoids all mention of them, as if the subject were a painful one. Her memory is singularly retentive. She went to hear the Rev. Mr Day preach at St Philip's church some time ago, and on her return home she repeated to her landlady all the leading points of the discourse with surprising accuracy. All she knows of writing she learned from the daughter of one of her mistresses; but (if we may believe her) she cannot spell any words—nor can she write them without a written copy—not even her own name—though she handles the pen dexterously. For this reason, all her autographs differ. In fact, she imitates what is set before her, and that is all she can do.—Her drawings and maps, which we have heard some people praise, are mere scrawls.

A question now naturally intrudes itself, what can be done with her? "Pack her off to her parish," say some. And what then? Why, in a few days she will return again, if she wishes to do so, in spite of the great *scare crow* boards from St Peter's Hospital. Besides, after all, this unfortunate girl seems to be as much an object of pity as of blame in this affair. Like poor *Malvolio*, she had "her honours thrust upon her." Her throne was ready to receive her, and she had nothing to do but to seat herself gracefully upon it. Her vassals were determined to make her a Princess, and what could she do but bear the load of royalty which they had "buckled on her back." Poor girl! she had picked up some shillings on the road, and had it been as many pounds she would now have been ploughing the Atlantic, instead of being under the necessity of concealment a few miles off, to screen her from the gaze of the multitude.