Introduction

This piece by the late Yowann Parker relates to the aftermath of the famous **Prayer Book Rebellion of 1549**. That rebellion was an outcome of the Reformation, and proved to be a significant event in the decline of the Cornish language.

In the reign of young King Edward VI, parliament’s First Act of Uniformity required English to be used in all church services in England, Wales and Cornwall, imposing Archbishop Cranmer’s **Book of Common Prayer**, with its Reformed theology. The Cornish were used to Catholic services in Latin; its cadence and rhythm were thus familiar, even if they didn’t understand the meaning.

In response to the Act—and smarting from the closure and destruction of Glasney College in 1548, plus unrest from heavy taxation (e.g. poll tax on sheep) and the enclosure of lands imposed by the English—the Cornish rebelled, led by 36-year-old Humphry Arundell of Helland (near Bodmin). They declared that the new English liturgy was ‘but lyke a Christmas game’.

The rebels laid siege to Exeter in July, but were crushed by the king’s forces. These pursued the retreating remnants right into Cornwall, after which **Sir Anthony Kingston** was left with the job of continuing reprisals against those rebels who had returned home to Cornwall. The leaders of the rebellion were executed.

The Prayer Book thus became an instrument of English incursion into the Cornish language—though sermons in Cornish remained lawful. Permission for the Bible to be translated into Welsh was granted in 1563, but there was no parallel for Cornish, and so this means of perpetuating the language was lost. Also, in the uprising, some 5500 men—about a quarter of Cornwall’s male population, many of them Cornish-speakers—were killed.

In this piece, Yowann Parker describes the activities of Sir Anthony Kingston through the eyes of an imaginary servant of his: his farrier.

---

**The Story**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yowann Parker’s Cornish text</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sir Anthony Kingston? An den jentyl na? Sur, y’n aswonnis vy. Pur dhiogel, y’n aswonnis, an den jentyl na. Gyllys dhe ankow ywa lemmyn, dell glewav, mes yn fyw ova kyns, yn tevri. Marthys bywek o ev, avel ebel nag yw terrys hwath. Bedhewgh sur, a vester, anodho y porthav kov fest yn ta.</td>
<td>Sir Anthony Kingston? That gentleman? Sure, I knew him. Most certainly, I knew him, that gentleman. He’s dead now, I hear, but he was alive previously, most definitely. He was full of life, like an unbroken colt. Be assured, master, that I remember him very well indeed. How did I come across him, you ask? In the year 1549 I was chief farrier to King Edward’s cavalry in London. The king was only a child, twelve years old, with stacks of people around him to advise him. As you know, at that time there was a rebellion in Cornwall—to do with the Prayer Book, it was said. Personally, I wasn’t fussed about things like that; I was a soldier and smith, happy enough if there was iron to make horseshoes from, and horses to be shod. But suddenly this man came, strutting like a peacock through the stable, dressed, fittingly, like a peacock, and calling out, ‘Where’s the Cornishman, that fellow Peter?’ I didn’t know how he’d found out my name, but I replied, very politely, ‘I’m...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatell dheuth vy er y bynn, a wovynnowgh? Y’n vlydhen 1549 yth en vy pennferror an marghoglu Myghtern Edward dhe Loundres. Nyns o an huni na saw maw hepken, dewdhek bloedh y oes, ha kals a dus oll a-dro dhodho rag y gusulya. Dell wodhowgh, yth esa y’n eur na rebellyans yn Kernow, yn kever lyver pysadow, dell leverys. Ha my, nyns en vy prederus a daklow a’n par na: souder en vy ha gov, lowen lowr mars esa horn dhe wul hern-margh anodho, ha mergh dhe vos arghenys. Mes a-dhesempiy y teuth an den ma, ow payoni dres an margthi ga gwiskyrs gans henna yn payon, yn-dann elwel yn-mes, ”Pl'ema an kernow, py'ma an polat Peder?” Ny wodhyen fatell gavsa ow hanow, mes yn pur gortes y</td>
<td>Sir Anthony Kingston? That gentleman? Sure, I knew him. Most certainly, I knew him, that gentleman. He’s dead now, I hear, but he was alive previously, most definitely. He was full of life, like an unbroken colt. Be assured, master, that I remember him very well indeed. How did I come across him, you ask? In the year 1549 I was chief farrier to King Edward’s cavalry in London. The king was only a child, twelve years old, with stacks of people around him to advise him. As you know, at that time there was a rebellion in Cornwall—to do with the Prayer Book, it was said. Personally, I wasn’t fussed about things like that; I was a soldier and smith, happy enough if there was iron to make horseshoes from, and horses to be shod. But suddenly this man came, strutting like a peacock through the stable, dressed, fittingly, like a peacock, and calling out, ‘Where’s the Cornishman, that fellow Peter?’ I didn’t know how he’d found out my name, but I replied, very politely, ‘I’m...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
hworthyb is vy, "Myyw Peder, syrra," yn-dann dhiwiska ow happa.

"Osta kernow?"

"Ov, mar pleg dhywgh, syrra."

"Dell leverir dhymm, ty a woer klappya kernewek. Yw henna gwir?"

"Yw, syrra."

"Ytho, edhomm a'm beus a dreustrelyyer, neb a woer klappya an yth ywls na. Yma ober an myghthern dhe wul yw Kernow, pow mollohek dell ywa, ha ty ha my y fydhyn y'gan fordh di haneth yn nos. Ow ferror ty a vydh ynwedd - kuntek warbarth dha dhaffar ha deus dhe'n porth dhe hwegh eur. Agan dew, y hwelvydhyn ni meur a sport, orthis y'nam bos sav."

"Wosa ev dh'advoda, my a woyynnas orth ow howetha, "Pio o henna, re Varia?" mes nagonan ny'n wodhya.

Ha my ow kortos dhe'n porth an gorthugher na, parys dhe vos y'n fordh, an porther a dherivis orthiv oll yn kever an estren. Syrr Anthony Kingston ova, Provost-Marshael an lu ryal yn Kernow. Yth o y soedh dhe weres dhe'n arloedh Russell, o pennhembreknys Lu an Howlsedhes, ow suppressya an rebellyans y'n vro na. Prevys o Kingston seulabrys yn ober a'n par ma - boghes moy es maw re bia, neb seytek bloedh y oes, pan hembronkas yn unn seweni mil souder erbynn an "Bhergeringes a Ras", rebellyans y'n gledhbarth a Bow Sows. Awos an gonis ma ev re bia henvys avel "Marghek" gans an myghthern Hal.

Y'n pols na y teuth Syrr Anthony dhe'n porth ha ganso hwegh souder, keffrys ha margh brav rago. Oll warbarth ni a varhogas tri dydh war-tu ha'n Worlewin bys pan dhrehedsyn Karesk. Yn ker ma y teuthen ni erbynn an arloedh Russell. An dhow seodek a gusulyas warbarth dres an nos, ha ternos vytta parys en ni oll dhe vos yn-rag dhe Gernow.

Py par den o Syrr Anthony Kingston? Den yowwyn o ev, namoy es deg bloedh warn ugens pan dheuth wy er y bynn dhe'n kynsa torn. Ow hwerthin yth esa pub eur oll, pub toch a'n jydh, ha dell heveli yth o an nor ma plegadow dhodho oll yn tien. Mes, yn despit dhe henna, bythkweythyns en vy attes ganso yn kowal.

Yth esa gans Syrr Anthony rol hir a henwyn, henwyn tryatours. An henwyn ma re bia res dhe'n arloedh Russell gans aspiysi esa owth oberi yn-dann gel a-berth y'n lu kernewek. Kyn fia fethys an lu kernewek yn Dewnens gans an lu ryal, an rann vrasa a gernowyon re wruusa fia yn kerdh ha dehweles tre pubonan a'y du yn Kemow. Yn mysk an re ma y kevs preydh Syrr Anthony, drefenn bos mernans piwas trayturi.

My a lever "preydh", ha henn yw an ger ewn. Dell wodhowgh, dhe'n re vryntin yma pup-prys meur a dhelit a helghya gam. Ny wrons i forsy py par gam a vova Peter, sir’, while doffing my cap.

‘Are you Cornish?’

‘Yes, if you please, sir.’

‘They tell me you can speak Cornish. Is that so?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘Well then, I need an interpreter who can speak that uncivilised language. There is business to do for the king in Cornwall, cursed country that it is, and you and I will be on our way there tonight. You will also be my farrier—get your tackle together and come to the gate at six o’clock. The two of us will be seeing a lot of sport, I promise you.’ After he had gone, I asked my friends, ‘Who was that, by Mary?’ but none of them knew.

While I was waiting at the gate that evening, ready to set off, the gatekeeper told me all about the stranger. He was Sir Anthony Kingston, Provost-Marshael of the royal forces in Cornwall. His job was to help Lord Russell, who was general of the Western Army, put down the rebellion in that land. Kingston was already experienced in that type of work—he had been little more than a boy, some seventeen years old, when he successfully led a thousand soldiers against the ‘Pilgrimage of Grace’, a rebellion in the north of England. Because of this service he had been knighted by King Hal.

At that moment Sir Anthony arrived at the gate with six soldiers, as well as a fine horse for me. Together we rode westwards for three days until we reached Exeter. In the castle there, we encountered Lord Russell. The two officers consulted together overnight, and the next morning we were all ready to proceed to Cornwall.

What sort of man was Sir Anthony Kingston? He was a young man, no more than thirty years of age when I met him for the first time. He was forever laughing, every moment of the day, and it seemed as if this world was fully pleasing to him. But, despite that, I was never totally at ease with him.

Sir Anthony had a long list of names, the names of traitors. These names had been given to Lord Russell by spies working undercover inside the Cornish army. Although the Cornish army had been defeated in Devon by the royal army, the majority of Cornishmen had fled on foot and returned home, each to his place in Cornwall. Among them were Sir Anthony’s prey, because death was the reward for treachery.

I say ‘prey’ and that is the right word. As you know, high and mighty people always find great pleasure in hunting game. It doesn’t matter what kind of game it
With pleasure, sir,” replied the mayor, and

“Ah, Nicholas,” said Sir Anthony, “before we
came into town, there was the mayor to greet us
town. Kingston had me write a letter to Nicholas, saying
lived a man called Nic
I remember the day we came to Bodmin, where there
branch, it
asking him about his family
killing him straightaway, Kingston would chat with him,
When we
galloped across the moors, our horses s
the hunt was on. ‘Ah, Peter,’ he would say to me as we
last drag out of him the information he sought. Then
beating him cruelly. Without fail, Sir Anthony would at

were
people who
region of tinners
region of tinners
that went on day and night without stopping. It was a

a stage, a rabbit, a pigeon, a man—they are all the
same, as they see it.
Sir Anthony was no exception to that rule. There was a
savage look in his eyes when we found the first man on
the list. This was a preacher, who lived in a cottage
next to the church. He was a mild man, who welcomed us
with a blessing. He showed no obvious surprise on
hearing he had been condemned as a traitor. He quietly
crossed himself and closed his eyes, while saying Ave
Maria, which is ‘Hail, Mary’, and Pater noster, which is
the Lord’s Prayer. It was clear to me that he was a good
man, but nevertheless a rope was thrown over the
branch of a tree, and the preacher was hung, praying
right to the end. Some soldier set fire to the wretched
cottage, with the body of the dead preacher—or half-
dead, I couldn’t tell—inside it. ‘He got what he
deserved,’ said Sir Anthony, with a smile, and went
after the next name on the list.

We spent some months in this way, a work of slaughter
that went on day and night without stopping. It was a
region of tanners and miners, of poor farmers and
traders, and labourers, clearly with no possessions at
all, living for all the world like slaves. Sometimes we
would come across spies who informed Sir Anthony
where some traitor lived. If there was no spy in a place,
Sir Anthony’s plan was simple. He had me read out, to
anyone we met on the road, a short list of names of the
people who used to live in that area, and ask if they
were still living nearby. If no ready answer was
forthcoming, Sir Anthony would threaten to set fire to
the wretched man’s house, or to hang him, after
beating him cruelly. Without fail, Sir Anthony would at
last drag out of him the information he sought. Then
the hunt was on. ‘Ah, Peter,’ he would say to me as we
galloped across the moors, our horses sweating and
gasping, ‘this makes your heart leap, don’t you agree?’

When we found the prey, whoever it was, Sir Anthony
would often play a cruel game with him. Instead of
killing him straightforward, Kingston would chat with him,
asking him about his family and his work, perhaps
offering him something to eat or drink, but, every time,
it ended the same way—the rope thrown across the
branch, with one end of it round the dying man’s neck.

I remember the day we came to Bodmin, where there
lived a man called Nicholas Boyer, the mayor of the
town. Kingston had me write a letter to Nicholas, saying
we were coming to have lunch with him. So, as we
came into town, there was the mayor to greet us
promptly. ‘Ah, Nicholas,’ said Sir Anthony, ‘before we
eat, there’s a small matter to sort out. Would you set
up a gallows for me, because there’s a hanging to do
today?’ ‘With pleasure, sir,’ replied the mayor, and
ordered it to be done. After eating and drinking, with lots of laughter and good cheer, Kingston thanked the mayor if asked if the gallows had been set up.

‘I think it’s all finished,’ answered the mayor.

‘Great, show it to me,’ said Kingston, taking hold of his hand.

‘Here it is,’ said the mayor.

‘Do you think it’s strong enough?’

‘I do, sir.’

‘Fine. Then get up there, Mr Mayor, because it’s ready for you.’

‘Sir, I trust you’re not wanting to do anything like that to me!’

‘Sir,’ said Kingston, ‘there’s no help for you, for you were a prominent rebel, and therefore, in nomine Regis— that means, ‘in the name of the King’ — this is your appointed reward,’ and thus the mayor of Bodmin was hanged.

A short time after this, a spy informed Sir Anthony of a certain miller who had been a rebel, who lived near Bodmin. When we arrived at the mill, a tall, fine man was working inside.

‘Who are you?’ Kingston asked him.

‘I’m the miller,’ was the reply.

‘Since when?’

‘Three years.’

‘Then you’re a traitor who deserves to be hanged!’

‘Oh, sir,’ cried the man, with great fear on his face, ‘I’m not the miller. I told a lie. Forgive me, I beg you. My master, who is the real miller, ordered me to say that I was the miller. He left two days ago, and I don’t know where he is staying now.’

‘No matter,’ replied Kingston, ‘you’re a knave to enter into two stories. Hang him!’ And thus was hanged the miller’s servant.

Afterwards, one of our group said to Kingston, ‘Sir, that man was honestly just the miller’s servant.’

‘So what?’ said Kingston, laughing. ‘Could he ever have served his master better than by dying in his place?’

Kingston had no shame at all about his actions. ‘Just like a wild deer that hears the baying hounds some distance away, they could all have taken flight and perhaps escaped, if they had wished, just as the jolly miller did.’

That’s how Kingston’s mind worked, like a hunter trying...
Some of the maltreatment was really without parallel. But I can't describe what happened to me… The minister of this parish told me that Sir Anthony Kingston’s father, a certain Sir William Kingston, was Keeper of the Tower of London when Queen Ann Boleyn was executed, thirteen years ago. No doubt the young Sir Anthony was watching that grim act, as his father personally led the queen to the block. Can we be surprised at the actions of Sir Anthony when young and comely queens are treated in this way?

But all those words were cold comfort to me. There was sorrow in my heart as I mourned for my people’s pain. I know Kingston was doing his duty, obeying the orders of his superiors, but surely there was no need for him to take pleasure in that horrific and bloody work. There was one preacher—but no, I can’t describe what happened to him… A good while afterwards, even though I am back home in Cornwall now, I still dream that I am reliving those same vile happenings that Kingston carried out. As it is written somewhere, ‘He who is without mercy will be cursed for his threefold cruelty,’ and threefold indeed was the cruelty of that evil man.

In my youth, I was taught by monks of Cornwall and hanged by Kingston. The fact is, I began my work again in the king’s cavalry, but I no longer found pleasure in the life of a soldier. Now I’m
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Welsh</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dhymn nafella bywnans souder. Lemmyn pes da lowr ov ow tendil ow fygans yn mysk ow neshevin y’n tyller ma, koweth a seul a drikko ynnw. Yn sempel, Peder an gov o’ma hepken, gov par dell o ow hendasow dres an kansblydhnyow y’n dreveglos hweg ma a Lannaghevran.</td>
<td>happy enough earning my living among my kin in this place, as the friend of all who live in it. Simply put, I’m just Peter the farrier, a farrier as were my forefathers through the centuries in this pretty village of St Keverne.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>