



British Horology Times

NAWCC CHAPTER 159

Notes FROM CHAPTER 159

Due to the lead time required, this is being typed on a snowy January day here in Michigan. I trust that your entry into 2005 has been pleasant. By the time that you read this the first chapter meeting of the year will have taken place in Orlando and we will be preparing for the meeting in Ft. Mitchell at the Southern Ohio Regional. Chapter 159 is a co-sponsor of that Regional.

Ken Johnston will have given his presentation on Coventry watches at the Orlando meeting and Frank Del Greco is to give a presentation on English tower (turret) clocks in Ft. Mitchell. Much of what Frank will present was gleaned during the chapter's English tower clock tour in 2000.

Although no chapter tours are scheduled at this time, if and when the value of the dollar recovers on the world market, I'm certain that another tour will be in the preparation stage. Having gone on three Chapter 159 tours since 1998, I can say that it will provide a lifetime of memories.

For those of you who could not attend the Orlando meeting, I have received the 2004 financial report for the chapter from our Treasurer Dave Kern. We have a reasonable amount of money in the bank, but during 2004 our excess of income over expenses was only \$149.40. As publication and mailing costs escalate it won't be too long before we are necessarily using our reserves. Dave and Paul Odendahl have done a terrific job in keeping costs reasonable, but there are limits.

One subject that was raised during 2004 was the possibility of having an occasional issue of British Horology Times in color. As an experiment, Paul ran a couple of copies of Dennis Radage's article *The English Longcase Clock* in color and the results were most impressive. This is something to think about but it cannot be done using the present dues structure.

-Roger Gendron

EDITOR'S CORNER

Isaac Watts lived from 1674 to 1748 which was about the same time period as Daniel Quare and the others that we admire. Watts didn't make clocks or watches although he may have had one made in the Fleet Street area.

What Watts did was write and he wrote this:

*"Time, like an ever rolling stream,
Bears all our years away;
They fly, forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the opening day."*

Well, that ever rolling stream has indeed made the almost 12 years together in our British Horology Chapter fly away. But "forgotten", probably not. In BHT27, 28 and 29 we reprinted BHT1 dated April 1993. The appearance of BHT1 is quite different from

today's newsletter. And the content has expanded thanks to the willingness of members to produce articles for publication.

However, two things have not changed. One, the goal of the chapter and the newsletter was, and still is, to provide helpful, informative and interesting support to all who wish to take part in our chapter's activities.

Secondly, since the beginning, dues have been \$5 per year for US and Canada, and \$6 overseas. We have held that because of unusual thriftiness and generosity on the part of all concerned. But now things that we can't control, like postage and printing costs, are catching up with us so that the dues that really have been "a steal" are becoming "next to impossible" for us to carry on in a meaningful manner. What can we do?

-Paul Odendahl

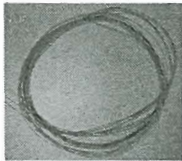
SECOND LINE



SOFTENING NEW CLOCK GUT

New coils of gut are very stiff and brittle as purchased. Here are two recipes for softening.

The first is from an old English clock repair book: "Before inserting into the clock, grip one end of the gut in a vise and pull it to full length. Then with a drop of oil on the gut, slide your finger and thumb along it being careful not to get any kinks in it."



The second suggestion is from member Tom Spittler: "Moisten the dry gut under warm running tap water. Do not soak it in standing water. When the gut feels pliable, tie one end to something and stretch it out. When the gut is almost dry, but before it hardens again, run your fingers along the length (to check for kinks and to lubricate it slightly) and install in the clock before it dries completely hard again."

Given the poorer condition of today's gut compared to the old days, I'd personally use Tom's suggestions. ☺

-Doug Cowan

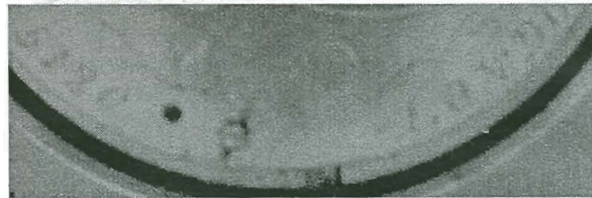


Doug Cowan (OH) gives another of his meaty tips.

MY LATEST WATCH PURCHASE

Leu Miller (CA) makes it clear that an account of "search and purchase" can make for enjoyable and instructive reading.

Ever since we lived in Oxford, England in the late eighties I have been interested in collecting pocket watches. I have tried to limit my collecting to key-wind silver hallmarked cased English watches. I have approximately 44 watches at the present time and I especially like pair cased watches. Some of my watches are not my first choice, i.e., some are stem wind and others are special stopwatches.



DETAIL SHOWING "5120" AND "LONDON ON BACKPLATE OF LEU MILLER'S LATEST WATCH.

In May of 2004 we visited friends in London and Oxford and rented a flat in the Pimlico section of London. On the first Saturday we decided to go to the Portobello market at Notting Hill. We arrived about 9:30 AM by underground. We have never seen this market so full of strolling people. Because of the crowds it was very hard to walk down the street, look at the stalls on the sidewalk or enter the various shops.

I have memorized the date of the "A" and letter arrangement for each set of hallmarks that would be found on silver cased watches for the period from 1776 to 1890 which is the period for watches that I am interested in. This covers not only London, but Chester and other towns involved. I can then count up for any letter in that group.

Continued

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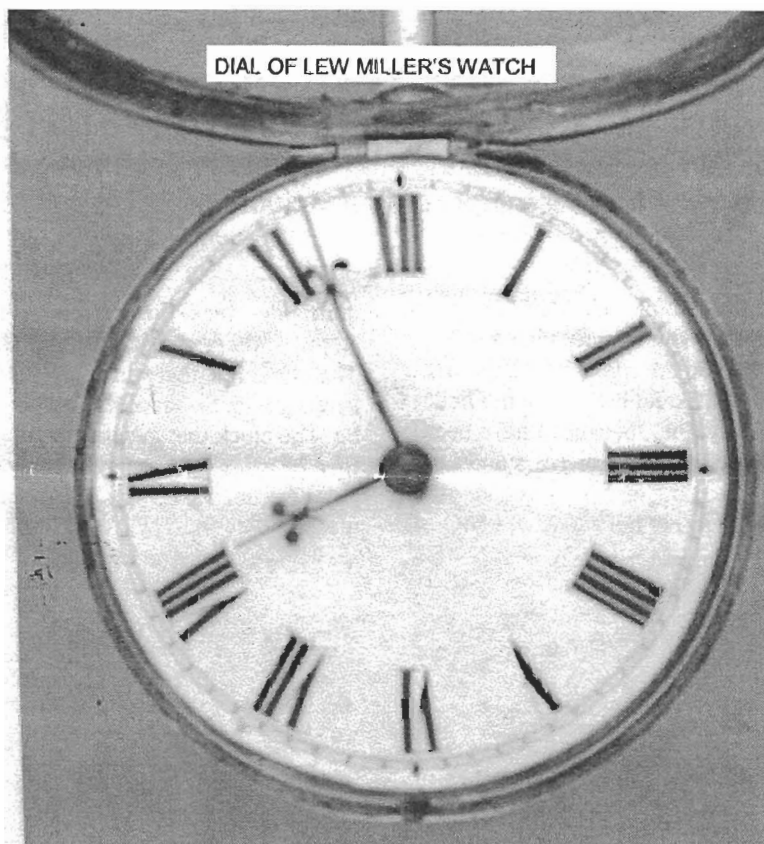
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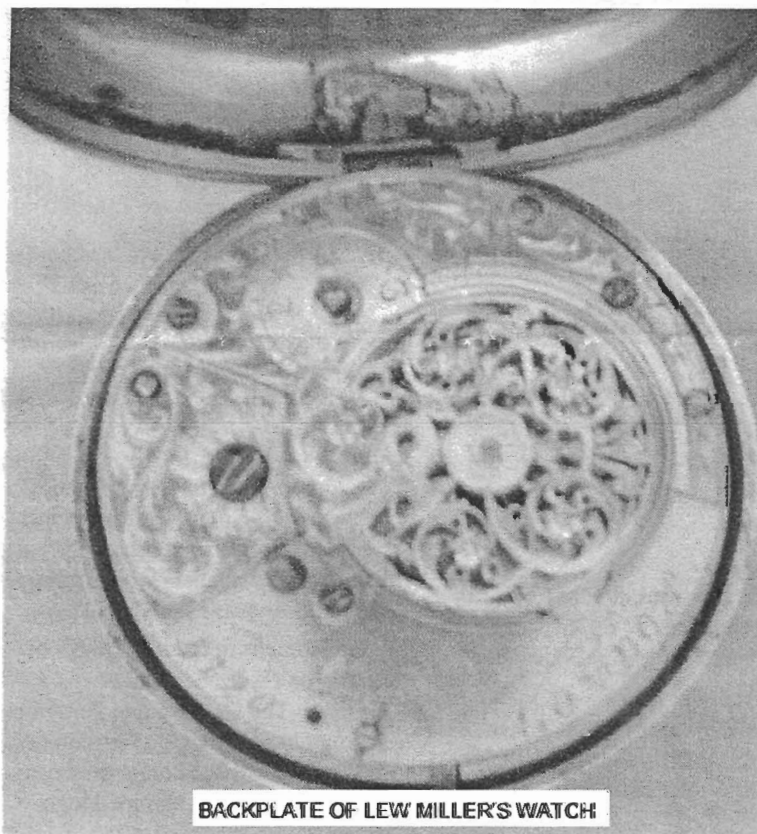
Lew Miller's latest watch, continued

I did not find an unusual watch but I did find one that interested me. I noticed it among other items in a shop. It was not a shop catering exclusively to watches and clocks but had a general mix. The watch was pair cased with a plain RN dial. There was no maker's mark or retail name on the dial. I determined that it was hallmarked for 1808-09 in London. Every part of the watch was in excellent condition. There was only a very small dent in the outer case. There was no watch paper or jeweler's repair marks. The watch came with two keys to wind and set the hands. It has beetle hands. I wound it in the customary counter-clockwise direction and it ran very well—with a loud tick!

It had a verge-fusee swing-out movement with Tompion's Balance Spring Regulator. The movement was marked with the maker's name: Lang. I looked into Britten's *Old Clocks and Watches and Their Makers*. The only Lang that I saw was Samuel Lang lo-



DIAL OF LEW MILLER'S WATCH



BACKPLATE OF LEW MILLER'S WATCH

cated in London with a date of 1772. I am not sure that this is the correct maker as the date seems very early. Both cases look original with the same mark of *L.G.* Maybe someone can help me with this problem. 🕒



Lew Miller is a retired physicist/engineer. In 1987-88 he taught engineering and computer science at Oxford University in England. Traveling during this time in England and Scotland he began collecting silver cased key-wind watches.

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TWO PARANORMAL CLOCKS

Paul Odendahl (LA) seems to have bitten off more than he can chew when he tries to peer into the strange behavior of two seemingly ordinary clocks.

If you think that what I am going to tell about is more than a little odd, you are right and I hope that you will treat me with a modicum of pity. Pity, because I have been living with this for years and I can't figure it out and I can't do anything about it. I'm not sure that I should

during the week, the one that I forgot stops. Nothing unusual about that. The other one, that which I wound, keeps going. So far all is as it should be. The clock that keeps going loses time or gains time, unpredictably. At a pretty good rate, maybe 5 to 8 minutes in 24 hours. The clock that



Fig. 1. The German clock. It has no reason to think that it is anything but perfect.

do anything about it because, well, as the gals would say, it's kind of "cute".

There are two clocks in my house which I wind every Sunday — most of the time. It's the times when I forget to wind one of them that the trouble starts. On one day

stopped gets wound either sometime during the week or on the following Sunday and, of course, it resumes running.

OK, you say, where's your problem? Simply adjust the pendulum bob on the errant one. You know that.

Now comes the part where you'll have to stick with me. When I wind the clock that stopped, I set it to coincide with the time that shows on the one that kept running. The time on the one that kept running is now the correct time because I adjusted it before I set the other one. So now they are both running and are showing the same time — the correct time.

But now, when the two clocks are both wound and running they **keep the correct time. Both of them.** No adjusting needed. I say the correct time and what I mean is they are as close to the exact time as you can expect a mechanical clock, properly rated, to be. And they are each showing the same time. They do not deviate from each other's time except at the most about 2 minutes in a week.

To sum up: when running alone, neither one of the clocks is a good timekeeper. When both clocks are running simultaneously, both are good timekeepers without any adjusting.



Fig. 2. The German clock logo on the back plate.

In case we have any psychoanalysts in the membership, or just in case there is somebody who would like to analyze what's going on. I will give some details.

I'll identify the two clocks by saying one is French and one is German. The German one I am not absolutely sure that it's German. It looks German, but I have not been able to identify the stamped logo

on the back plate. The French one has a stamped logo on the back plate stating that the movement is from Japy Freres & Co. and that it won the grand medal of honor.

So right off the bat I wonder how a German clock and a French clock can get along so well.

In addition to the logos on the back plates, there are stamped numbers:

On the German clock: 1103 29

On the French clock: 69995 38

Is it a clue to discover that

German suffix 29, $2 + 9 = 11$

French suffix 38, $3 + 8 = 11$?

Both clocks strike the hours and half hours on gongs.

The German clock is walnut veneer and has beveled glass in the front door and on the side panels. The other clock is straightforwardly French with walnut veneer and a convex glass front door with a brass bezel.



Fig. 3. The French clock logo on the back plate.

Where, you ask, are the two clocks located? The German one is in a dressing room on a plastic laminate counter. The French one is in a bathroom on a ceramic tile counter. They are about 20 inches apart, center to center. One faces at about 8 o'clock and the other faces at about 4 o'clock (military orientation). There is a stud wall between them.

So they can't see each other but they can hear each other (am I getting a bit paranoid?).

Paranoid - maybe. But if one could attribute something akin to human sensitivity to clocks, the ability to hear each other in close proximity might be a clue.

Or could it be a psychic phenomenon?

What about supernatural mechanics guiding both clocks but only when they are in each other's presence?

Don't know.

Are they married, as defined in the clock universe?

Another angle: it is true that a person can take on the facial characteristics of one that he holds dear, such as a dog or other pet. Whatever that force is could it apply to one clock's ability to mimic another in timekeeping ability?

Meanwhile, across the channel - er, hall - from these two sits an English single fusee bracket clock signed *M. Phillips, London*, just ticking away and smiling at them. ☺



Fig. 4. The French clock. It's hard to believe that it would willingly follow along with anything Teutonic.

I like to think they are happy clocks and with happiness almost anything is possible. For sure they are compatible despite the nationality difference.

Paul Odendahl finds something to write about in almost any old clock that comes along.



HENRY - Part 13 by Paul Odendahl LA

In the previous installment, Henry and his English clockmaker colleagues were engaged in their craft but time and events gave them pause to consider life and its meaning. Henry convinced Tom Tompion to make a clock movement for him to give to his friends the Buffingtons and to have it cased in the French manner by Andre Charles Boulle. The project took time but eventually was completed.



FIGURE 1. BACKPLATE AND BACK DOOR OF THE BOULLE TOMPION

On the morning of April 16, 1690, Tom, Henry and his wife Hannah were up with the jolly bird of light and, with frost on the rooftops, rode forth in a carriage bound for Bedford. Safely tucked on the seat between Henry and Hannah was a small oak casket. It was a wonderful day for travel and they relished the holiday from the pressure of work. They talked and passed some of the time in silence as only old friends can. Henry was 58 years of age; Tom was 52.

Purposely Henry had refrained from advising the Buffingtons of the visit. He knew them well enough that a surprise of themselves and of the clock would be acceptable. As they drove up the entrance drive to Bedford House, there was Mrs Buffington near the front door on her hands and knees digging away at a bed preparing for some spring flowers. Even at age 83 she was active.

Mrs Buffington arose and turned toward the carriage. As it stopped and the passengers alighted, she dropped her trowel hurried toward them and broke into smiles for each, accompanied with big hugs. Henry introduced his wife, Hannah, and Hannah got another big hug. Then, taking Hannah by the arm, she escorted them through the front door. When they were seated she went to the kitchen door to call the Major. Yes, three claps on the bell, pause, then three more claps.

Continued on page 8

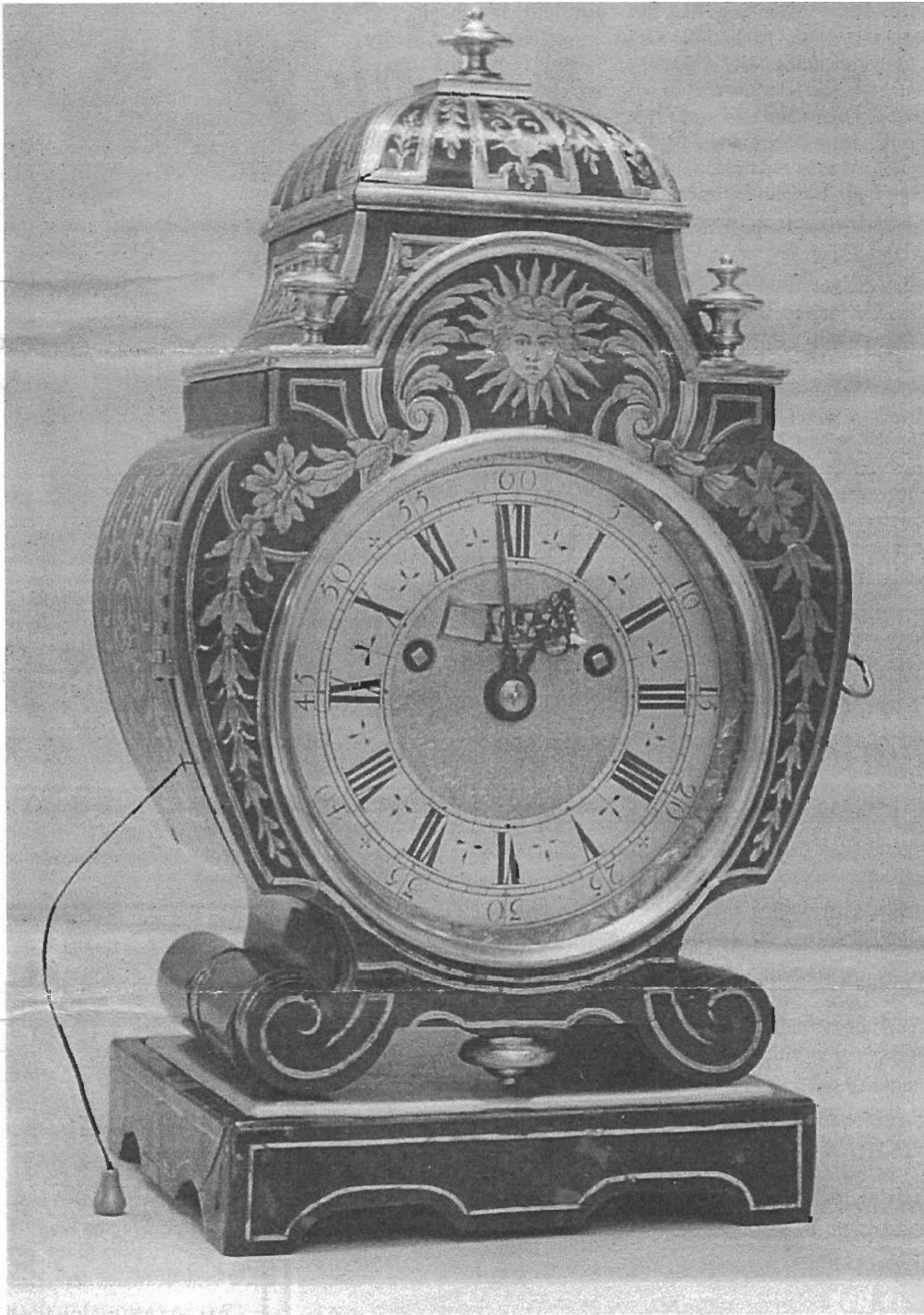


FIGURE 2. THE BOULLE TOMPION

HENRY from page 6

Tea was served during which news was swapped back and forth about the activities that each was pursuing. The Buffingtons were doing just about the same things they did when Henry lived with them, except they were visibly older and their pace was slower. Henry and Tom, now practicing clockmakers (and famous ones at that, although neither would admit to that description) gave their insights about their businesses and told some cautious tales about their unnamed clients. Here were the two protégés and the Buffingtons gathered together just as in old times. The Major and his mother were simply enjoying it all. Hannah felt accepted as a daughter.

At an opportune moment Henry said, "There is another surprise in the carriage. I shall fetch it."

Back in the parlor, he placed the casket on the table and said, "Major, Mrs Buffington, this is in grateful appreciation of the love, the encouragement, the interest and the help that you have given to me. For years and years you have given much to me and this gift is inadequate but I hope it will be a marker of memories. It was made for you by Tom here who is a craftsman of sterling reputation and fame, now known throughout England as well as the Continent, who can claim Kings and Queens as his patrons and yet who has never forgotten his humble beginnings not over six miles from this spot. Major, Mrs Buffington— father and grandmother— here is a clock for you. It is English and French all in one. May it please both of you."

Pride and beauty, but here no competition.

Henry sat down. Mrs Buffington started to cry. Major Buffington got up, opened the casket and took out a small, waisted clock. It was French all right and Mrs Buffington cried again.

"Boulle work", she said, tears on her cheeks. "I've read about it."

The Major walked around to the back of the table, viewing the clock.

"Come, Mother, look at this back door."

"Open it," said Tom.

The Buffingtons could only gasp at the intricately engraved door and backplate.

"And Tom has signed it," from Mrs Buffington.

Then Henry opened the front door, showed the rise and fall regulation, produced a key and wound the clock. Then he showed them the pendulum holdfast for traveling, unhooked it and started the clock running. After setting the correct time, he stood back.

Beauty and pride.

The silence and the mutual love lasted and blessed them all. ☺

To be continued

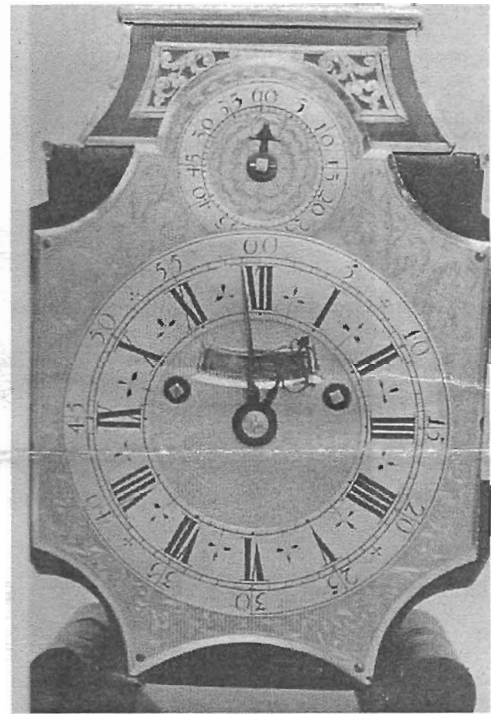


FIGURE 3. DIAL PLATE OF THE BOULLE TOMPION (VISIBLE WITH FRONT DOOR OPEN)

MISTAKE

In the November 2004 issue, BHT34, in the list of chapter officers on page 6, Ken Johnston's last name was spelled wrong—the T was omitted. Please make a suitable correction in your records. It was the Editor's fault and he apologizes to Ken.

CONTENTS

NEWS From President Roger Gendron	1
SOFTENING GUT by Doug Cowan	2
MY LATEST WATCH by Lew Miller	2
TWO PARANORMAL CLOCKS by Paul Odendahl	4
HENRY Part 13 of a 17th century historical story by Paul Odendahl	6



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