

**THE FOSSIL BRIDE; A
LEGEND OF FOLKESTONE,
AND OTHER VERSES**

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The fossil bride; a legend of Folkestone, and other verses by W. H. Harrison

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W. H. HARRISON

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AND OTHER VERSES**

THE FOSSIL BRIDE,

A Legend of Folkestone,

AND OTHER VERSES.

BY
William Henry
W. H. HARRISON.

There are more things in heav'n and earth, Horatio,
Than are dream't of in your philosophy.—*Hamlet.*

M.DCCC.LXVIII

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List of
Prof. Chas. C. Norton,
of Cambridge. (16. U. 1846.)

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The Fossil Bride.

A LEGEND OF FOLKESTONE.

Gay Folkestone, though now such a flourishing town,
Was, forty years since, of but little renown;
The ostensible trade of the small population
Was in fish, and their soles had a great reputation;
But, besides catching fish, it was more than suspected,
Other sources of lucre were far from neglected,
And that many who seem'd merely fishing-smack skippers,
Took a spell, now and then, in the fastest of clippers;
But, whatever their traffic, it seem'd of a sort
That kept revenue cruisers from rotting in port.
And I heard of such bargains in things which elsewhere
Were all of them costly, and some of them rare;

The choicest Havanas,
Brocades, and Bandanas,
Gloves of Gallic extraction—
The price a mere fraction—

And Schnaps, neat from Holland, as Pat says, *galore*.

Then, invitingly handy,
Was the best of French Brandy,
Maraschino, Noyau,
And superb Curaçou,

And, in *sucà* pets of bottles, delicious Eau d'or,
Such as Sardanapalus,

Had he reign'd in our day, had uncork'd to regale us.

Now some antiquary may ask the narrator
 How the town got its name—*unde hoc derivatur?*
 But thereby hangs a tale, which I'll tell as 'twas told
 To me, though some say I was cruelly *sold*.

There once was a giant
 On his great strength reliant—
 Perhaps one of the Titans who warr'd against Zeus—
 Or, opinions are various,
 It might be Briareus,
 And he need be well *arm'd* who goes out on the loose
 With such thievish intentions as those, 'twill be seen,
 Which impell'd this huge knave to a trip transmarine.
 From the coast *vis-à-vis*,
 And not heeding the sea,
 Which e'en in mid-channel scarce reach'd to his knee,
 He landed near Folkestone, intent on the pillage
 Of out-lying village.
 His water-proof camelot
 Hid homestead and hamlet;
 The while, a huge sack,
 Cramm'd full of miscellanies, hung at his back.

Now you must not imagine the people unheeding
 This very remarkable mode of proceeding:
 For to tradesman or peasant,
 Thus to lose his belongings was not at all pleasant.
 So, pursued by the natives,
 This vilcst of caitiffs,
 While missiles fell thick,
 In all shapes—stone and brick,
 Was fain to decamp,

The larcenous scamp!
 When a truculent cobbler,
 In a foot-race no hobbler,
 Hurl'd his lapstone at once
 At the pillager's sconce;
 Which compell'd him to drop
 Stall, stable, and shop;
 Nor for terms ever higgled he,
 But higgledy piggledy,
 Shot down in a flarry
 His load, hurry scurry.

And just as it lay
 It remains to this day,
 As regards the *old* town,
 Whose streets fairly bother one,—
 From one house you look down
 On the roof of another one.

Every street, lane, and court out of shape is;

But touching the stone
 By the stout cobbler thrown,

'Twas long honour'd as *Populi Lapis*.

Thus this stone of renown
 Gave its name to the town,
 And oft by this Roman
 And classic cognomen,
 In old charters and deeds,
 Of Folkestone one reads,

Although I, of all scribes, on abstruse archæology,
 Am the first to promulgate the true etymology.

Now tradition—as true to my thinking as history,
 Which, though many defend,
 Is full of fables from end to end—
 Tradition, I say, has a “tale of mystery,”
 Of a certain young lady,
 In her beauty’s hey-day,—
 Old legends a marvel of loveliness make her—
 Who, A. M. 95,
 Was buried alive

By an oversight of the undertaker;
 And that, somewhere or other, near Folkestone town,
 She reposed in the chalk cliffs, some ten fathoms down,
 In all her charms so many and great,
 Quite as good as new, in a fossil state.

Most who heard of the tale were inclined to quiz it,—
 A young gentleman, though, who was there on a visit,
 Remark’d—for it happen’d that, when up at college, he
 Got deep in the science that’s now such a pet—
 “I’ve heard of some wonderful things in geology,
 And it don’t at all follow she’s not alive yet.”
 Then a pickaxe and shovel he cramm’d in a satchel or
 Bag, and *instantly* set out, for he said,
 “Be she fossil or flesh, the damsel I’ll wed,
 Or else I’m determined I’ll die an old bachelor”:
 A method of wooing no doubt rather novel,
 To make one’s advances with pickaxe and shovel.

He dug and he delved, through limestone and chalk,
 Till at last he broke into a stratum of *tale*;
 “Eureka!” he cried, “I’ve found my divinity,
 For *talk’s* a sure symptom of woman’s vicinity.”

And there, sure enough, a few feet in advance,
 The lady reclined in a species of trance.
 The youth gazed enrapt, for he saw at a glance
 That the charms in the books which her story related,
 So far from o'er-praised, had been much under-rated.
 Then said he, *sotto voce*—he fear'd to alarm her,—
 "Have I found thee, my antediluvian charmer!"

But the words that fell

On her ear broke the spell,

And the damsel awoke with a scream and a start,
 Gazed wildly about, and then said "Bless my heart!
 I've over-slept sadly—I feel such a dizziness—"
 Then perceiving the stranger—"Pray, Sir, what's your
 business?"

He politely explain'd he'd no business at all,

But having heard of her inhumation,

He had vow'd himself to her extrication,

And hoped, on that plea, she'd excuse the call.

The lady then begg'd that he'd make no apology,

Inasmuch none was needed,

And to thank him proceeded,

In a speech quite unique for its terse phraseology.

Then he takes her fair hand, which in his own lingers,

And she puts on no starch look,

But says, with an arch look,

"If you love me, Sir, say so, but don't pinch my fingers:"

"Love you! do you doubt me?—be mine, my queen,

And we will be married by Westminster's Dean":*

And to show that he meant it, and having a nice sense
 Of decorum, he pull'd from his pocket the license.

* Buckland.