

**V. C.: A CHRONICLE
OF CASTLE BARFIELD
AND OF THE CRIMEA**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649728558

V. C.: A Chronicle of Castle Barfield and of the Crimea by David Christie Murray

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

DAVID CHRISTIE MURRAY

**V. C.: A CHRONICLE
OF CASTLE BARFIELD
AND OF THE CRIMEA**

V. C.

A CHRONICLE OF CASTLE BARFIELD
AND OF THE CRIMEA

NOVELS, ETC., BY D. CHRISTIE MURRAY

Crown 8vo. cloth, gilt top, 6s. each.
DESPAIR'S LAST JOURNEY.
VERONA'S FATHER.

Crown 8vo. cloth, 3s. 6d. each ; post 8vo. picture boards, 2s. each.

A LIFE'S ATONEMENT.
JOSEPH'S COAT,
COALS OF FIRE,
VAL STRANGE.
A MODEL FATHER.
HEARTS.
BY THE GATE OF THE SEA.
THE WAY OF THE WORLD.
BOB MARTIN'S LITTLE GIRL.
A BIT OF HUMAN NATURE.
FIRST PERSON SINGULAR.
CYNIC FORTUNE.
OLD BLAZER'S HERO.
TIME'S REVENGES.
A WASTED CRIME.
IN DIREST PERIL.
MOUNT DESPAIR.
A CAPFUL O' NAILS.

Crown 8vo. cloth, 3s. 6d. each.

TALES IN PROSE AND VERSE. With a Frontispiece by
ARTHUR HOPKINS.
A RACE FOR MILLIONS.
THIS LITTLE WORLD.
HIS OWN GHOST.
THE CHURCH OF HUMANITY.
V.C. : a Chronicle of Castle Barfield and of the Crimea.

Crown 8vo. cloth, 3s. 6d. each.

THE MAKING OF A NOVELIST : an Experiment in Auto-
biography. With a Portrait.
MY CONTEMPORARIES IN FICTION.

NOVELS BY CHRISTIE MURRAY & HENRY HERMAN

Crown 8vo. cloth, 3s. 6d. each ; post 8vo. picture boards, 2s. each.

ONE TRAVELLER RETURNS.
PAUL JONES'S ALIAS. With Illustrations by A. FORESTIER, &c.
THE BISHOPS' BIBLE.

LONDON : CHATTO & WINDUS, 711 St. MARTIN'S LANE, W.C.

V. C.

A CHRONICLE OF CASTLE BARFIELD AND OF THE CRIMEA

BY

DAVID CHRISTIE MURRAY

AUTHOR OF 'JOSEPH'S COAT' 'DESPAIR'S LAST JOURNEY' ETC.



LONDON
CHATTO & WINDUS
1904

V. C.

CHAPTER I

THE people of Castle Barfield boast that the middle of their High Street is on a level with the cross of St. Paul's Cathedral. The whole country-side is open, and affords a welcome to storm from whatever corner of the compass it may blow. You have to get right away into the Peak district before you can find anything like an eminence of distinction, though the mild slopes of Quarry-moor and Cline, a few miles to the westward, save the prospect from complete monotony. East, and a trifle to the north, rises Beacon Hargate, on the top whereof one of the innumerable bonfires which warned England of the coming of the Armada hung out its

flaming banner in the sight of three counties. Topping that high tableland, Beacon Hargate is familiar with wild weather at the proper seasons, and by dint of use takes very little notice of it. But on the evening on which this story has its proper beginning such a storm raged round and over the old Beacon as no man or woman of that region could even remember. It began in the grey of the dawn in wild and fitful gusts, driving thick squalls of rain before them, but long before midday it lost its first waywardness and settled down to business with a steady purpose. It grew in force from hour to hour, and almost from minute to minute, until all living things sought shelter. The disconsolate cattle huddled under the sparse hedgerows, looking down their broad, dripping noses in a meek abandonment to fate. The sheep packed themselves in any hollowed corner they could find, and hugged their soaked fleeces close to each other in uncomplaining patience. The trees fought the blast with impotent arms, and shrieked and groaned their protest against it. Flying

boughs, like great grotesque birds, went hurtling through the air.

As the brief March day fell towards its close, the storm seemed suddenly to double in fury. Oak and elm went down before it bodily, torn from the stout anchorage of many years, and before the wind had raged itself to rest many scores of patriarchal landmarks were laid low. Roar of tormented woods, howl of wind, crash on crash of breaking boughs or falling trees, blended to one tune, and a plunging rain came down in ropes rather than in lines, driven at a fierce angle.

Night fell, and the pitiless tempest raged on, but with the coming of the darkness one sign of cheer displayed itself. From the windows of the plain old grey-stone mansion on the eastern side of the Beacon Hill lights began to glow, first in this chamber and then in that, until the whole squat edifice seemed charged with warmth and comfort. The tempest poured its full strength against the grey-stone house. It shook the windows with its frantic hand, it shrieked and howled

and roared amongst the chimney tops and gables, it strained the hasps of the staunch oaken doors, and the old house faced it with a broadening smile, and shone the brighter by contrast as the night grew blacker.

In the whole roaring region there was but one man to be found abroad, and he was making for the grey-stone house. He was a portly person with a prosperous-looking development about the neighbourhood of the lower waistcoat, and he was sorely tried, though he was as yet on the sheltered side of the hill. His heavy black broad-cloth was soaked through and through, and weighed him down. The icy wet had chilled him, and he breathed hard at every laboured step. One stiff slope of some fifty yards had still to be surmounted before he reached the hill-top. Twenty yards further lay the house, with all windows beaming. It was as yet invisible to him, but in his mind's eye he could see it, and the thought of it gave him courage. He turned his back to the plunging rain, and paused to