

**CARABOO: A NARRATIVE OF A  
SINGULAR IMPOSITION PRACTISED  
UPON THE BENEVOLENCE OF A  
LADY RESIDING IN THE VICINITY  
OF THE CITY OF BRISTOL**

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Residing in the Vicinity of the city of Bristol by John Mathew Gutch

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**JOHN MATHEW GUTCH**

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# Caraboo.

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A  
NARRATIVE  
OF A  
SINGULAR IMPOSITION,

PRACTISED UPON THE BENEVOLENCE OF A LADY

RESIDING IN THE VICINITY OF THE CITY OF BRISTOL,

By a young Woman

OF THE NAME OF

MARY WILLCOCKS, *alias* BAKER, *alias* BAKERSTENDHT, *alias*  
CARABOO, PRINCESS OF JAVASU.

*Illustrated with TWO PORTRAITS, engraved from Drawings by*  
*E. BIRD, Esq. R.A. and Mr. BRANWHITE.*

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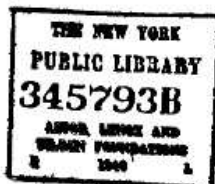
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1817.

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☞ *The following Narrative, having been compiled in great part from conversation, it has in many instances been printed verbatim, as it was spoken or dictated by the party; many tautological, ungrammatical and vulgar expressions may therefore occur, for which the indulgence of the reader will no doubt be granted.*

J. M. G.

**O**N Thursday evening the 3rd of April 1817, the Overseer of the Poor of the parish of Almondsbury, in the county of Gloucester, called at Knole Park, the residence of Samuel Worrall, Esq. to inform that Gentleman and his Lady, that a young Female had entered a cottage in the village, and had made signs, that it was her wish to sleep under its roof; but not speaking a language, which its inhabitants or the Overseer understood, the officer thought it right to refer to Mr. Worrall, a Magistrate for the county, for his advice; knowing also, that there was a man servant residing in Mr. Worrall's family, who was conversant with several foreign languages, and who could probably comprehend that in which the stranger spoke. The female was in consequence ordered to be brought up to Knole Mansion, but to which removal she shewed signs of strong reluctance; and when there, refused for some time to enter its doors. After some entreaty, she was prevailed upon to go in, and was presented to Mr. and Mrs. Worrall; who, with their servant, were unable to understand the language in which she addressed them; but intimated to her by signs, that they wished to ascertain, whether or not she had any papers in her possession; upon which she took from her pocket a few halfpence, with a bad sixpence, and implied, that she had nothing else. She had a small bundle on her arm containing a very few necessaries, and a piece of soap pinned up in a bit of linen. Her dress consisted of a black stuff gown, with a muslin frill round the neck, a black cotton shawl on her head, and a red and black shawl round her shoulders; both loosely and tastefully put on, in imitation of the Asiatic costume; leather shoes and black worsted stockings. The general impression from her person and manners was attractive and prepossessing. Her head

small ; her eyes and hair black ; forehead low ; nose short ; complexion a brunette ; her cheeks faintly tinged with red ; mouth rather wide ; white teeth ; lips large and full, under lip a little projecting ; and her chin small and round. Her height about five feet two inches. Her hands were clean, and apparently unaccustomed to labour. No ear-rings, but the marks of having worn them. Her age appeared about twenty-five. After a short consultation, Mr. and Mrs. W. deemed it most advisable to send her for the night to a public house in the village ; and as Mrs. W. felt much interested by her apparent distress, she ordered her own maid and footman to accompany her, it being late in the evening, and to request that the landlady would let her sleep in a private room, and provide her with a good supper and a comfortable bed ; and that Mrs. W. would call upon her early the following morning. The young woman seemed much fatigued, and walked with difficulty. Upon being shewn into the parlour of the public house, she was particularly struck with a print on the wall, representing the Annana, and made those present understand, it was a fruit of her own country, the representation of which afforded her much pleasure. Upon some preparation being made for her supper, she expressed a wish that she preferred tea ; and before she partook of it, she covered her eyes with her hand, and appeared to repeat a prayer, bowing her head at the conclusion. Upon a second cup of tea being poured out, she refused taking it, until the cup was thoroughly washed ; and when she had drank it, she repeated the same form of prayer with much seeming devotion. When shewn to the room in which she was to sleep, she appeared reluctant to go to bed, and pointed to the floor ; but upon the landlady's little girl getting into the bed, and making her understand the comfort of it, she undressed, and after kneeling, and appearing to say her prayers, she consented to lie on the bed. At seven the next morning Mrs. W. walked down to the public house, and found the stranger sitting by the fire, apparently very disconsolate, and as she thought with strong traces of sorrow



and distress on her countenance, though she expressed much joy at the sight of Mrs. W. and accepted with visible marks of gratitude a change of linen, which Mrs. W. had brought for her. While her breakfast was preparing, the Clergyman of the parish, who had heard of her arrival, came in, bringing with him several books, thinking it probable she might recognize some one of the countries described in the plates they contained; and upon looking them over, she gave the spectators to understand, that she had some knowledge of the prints which were descriptive of China; but made signs, that it was not a boat, but a ship which had brought her to this country. Gaining very little information from this enquiry, Mrs. W. determined to take her back with her to Knole, and keep her under her roof, till something satisfactory transpired concerning her; and upon being invited, she followed Mrs. W. again exhibiting symptoms of reluctance and apprehension. Upon passing through the church-yard in her way to Knole, she tried, if the church door was open, and seemed much disappointed to find it fastened. Upon her arrival at Knole, she was led to the house-keeper's room, where the servants were at breakfast; and observing some cross-buns on the table (it being Good Friday) she took one, and after looking earnestly at it she cut off the cross, and placed it in her bosom. Upon Mrs. W.'s return from church, she summoned the young woman before her; and fearful of imposition, she attempted to interest the stranger by addressing her in the following soothing and compassionate language; "My good young woman, I very much fear that you are imposing upon me, and that you understand and can answer me in my own language; if so, and distress has driven you to this expedient, make a friend of me; I am a female as yourself, and can feel for you, and will give you money and clothes, and will put you on your journey, without disclosing your conduct to any one; but it must be on condition that you speak the truth. If you deceive me, I think it right to inform you, that Mr. W. is a Magistrate, and has the power of sending you to

prison, committing you to hard labour, and passing you as a vagrant to your own parish."—During this address, the countenance of the stranger evinced an ignorance of Mrs. W.'s intentions, at the same time, making it apparent that she did not comprehend what Mrs. W. had said to her; and she immediately addressed Mrs. W. in her unknown tongue.—Mrs. W. then attempted to ascertain her name, by writing her own upon paper, and placing it before her, and pronouncing it several times, and putting a pen in her hand, intimated her wish, that she would write her name; but this she declined, shaking her head, and crying CARABOO, CARABOO, pointing to herself. Upon shewing her some of the rooms at Knole, she appeared delighted at seeing some pieces of furniture with Chinese figures, &c. upon them, making signs that they belonged to her country, or that she had been in the country from whence they came. At dinner she declined all animal food, and took nothing to drink but water; shewing much disgust at meat, beer, cyder, &c. On the following day (Saturday) it was thought advisable to take her into Bristol to examine her before the Mayor at the Council House; where no discovery could be made of her country or language, or whence she came, or whither she was going.\* She was therefore in the regular mode of commitment of persons in such situations, taken to Saint Peter's Hospital, the receptacle for vagrants and the poor of the city of Bristol. Here she remained till the following Monday, and it is well authenticated, that during her continuance in this

\* During her examination there was an observation of a magistrate present, which impressed her very forcibly, and which probably first induced her to persevere in acting the character she had assumed. The magistrate declared, that her language and manners were such as he had never before heard or seen.

It is not inappropriate to the development of the imposture here also to mention, that it appears on her first essay to have been her intention to personate a French character. Before she had left the confines of the city, passing through Park Row, she encountered two or three of the French lace-makers from Normandy, who have established a manufactory in that part of the city. She watched their movements,

house, she refused food of every description. On the Monday Mrs. W. whose solicitude for the welfare of her strange and singular guest had rather increased than diminished, went to Bristol and visited her at the Hospital. Her friendless situation had in the interim become public, and several gentlemen had called upon her, bringing with them foreigners of their acquaintance in the hope of discovering who she was. One gentleman who had travelled much in the East, and was about to embark immediately from Bristol to Malta, was trying to converse with her, when Mrs. W. called at the Hospital. This gentleman, some weeks after he left Bristol, addressed a letter to Mrs. W. on the subject, and the impression which this interview had made upon his mind was so strong, and is by himself depicted in such lively colours, that the insertion of his letter entire, in this place, will best explain what passed on this occasion.

"MADAM,

"Leith, 16th June 1817.

"The peculiar case of the unknown female foreigner, who at present is fortunate enough to enjoy the shelter and protection of your hospitable roof, must naturally excite in the breast of every feeling creature emotions of interest and of sympathy. These emotions I perhaps feel in a double degree, from having seen her when in distress. I never can forget the circumstances of my first interview with her, nor the gratitude she so eloquently expressed on recognizing you, Madam, in the Hospital at Bristol.

"Probably, Madam, you may have no recollection of me, and were it not that I have been an eye-witness of your goodness, I should hesitate much to use the liberty which I now do in addressing you on this subject. You must, however, be so kind as pardon me for my intrusion, and believe that I should not have troubled you, had I not felt extremely interested in the fate of your protégée.

and perceived that every body stared at them. This was food enough for the impostor's inventive genius. 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, *à la Française*, for she was now a French woman!