

Drake's Drum

WILLIAM HUNT

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SIR FRANCIS DRAKE who appears to have been especially befriended by his demon is said to drive at night a black hearse drawn by headless horses, and urged on by running devils and yelping, headless dogs, through Jump, on the road from Tavistock to Plymouth.

Sir Francis, according to tradition, was enabled to destroy the Spanish Armada by the aid of the devil. The old admiral went to Devil's Point, a well-known promontory jutting into Plymouth Sound. He there cut pieces of wood into the water, and by the power of magic and the assistance of his demon these became at once well-armed gunboats.

Queen Elizabeth gave Sir Francis Drake Buckland Abbey; and on every hand we hear of Drake and his familiars.

An extensive building attached to the abbey which was no doubt used as barns and stables after the place had been deprived of its religious character was said to have been built by the devil in three nights. After the first night, the butler, astonished at the work done, resolved to watch and see how it was performed. Consequently, on the second night, he mounted into a large tree, and hid himself between the forks of its five branches. At midnight the devil came, driving several teams of oxen; and as some of them were lazy, he plucked this tree from the ground and used it as a goad. The poor butler lost his senses, and never recovered them.

Drake constructed the channel, carrying the waters from Dartmoor to Plymouth. Tradition says he went with his demon to Dartmoor, walked into Plymouth, and the waters followed him. Even now as old Betty Donithorne, formerly the housekeeper at Buckland Abbey, told me, if the warrior hears the drum which hangs in the hall of the abbey, and which accompanied him round the world, he rises and has a revel.

Some few years since a small box was found in a closet which had been long closed, containing, it is supposed, family papers. This was to be sent to the residence of the inheritor of this property. The carriage was at the abbey door, and a man easily lifted the box into it. The owner having taken his seat, the coachman attempted to start his horses, but in vain. They would not they could not move. More horses were brought, and then the heavy farm-horses, and eventually all the oxen. They were powerless to start the carriage. At length a mysterious voice was heard, declaring that the box could never be moved from Buckland Abbey. It was taken from the carriage easily by one man, and a pair of horses galloped off with the carriage.