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The Emma Hardinge Britten Archive

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# Module 2

1810-1823  
Pre-History



# 1810 - Laying The “Sandford” Ghost

"It is now some thirty years ago since my mother (then a young unmarried girl) went to reside with her parents at the small collegiate town of Tiverton, in Devonshire, England. It was summer time, and during her first evening in the place, she remarked with surprise the immense throng of carriages which woke up the echoes of the quiet, secluded square in which she resided, all passing one way, and seemingly crowding forth at one especial hour. Upon inquiry, she learned that her host (a doctor, and the mayor of the town) was going to join the throng, and that the object of the assemblage (of whom the principal portion were clergymen of the Episcopal church) was to proceed to the village of Sandford, some four or five miles distant, there, in solemn and reverend conclave, to spend the night in a certain haunted house, for the purpose of "laying the ghost".

Emma Hardinge, “The Sandford Ghost”, in The Wildfire Club (1846?, 1856?, 1861)

- Ann Sophia Bromfield, b. 1793
- Ebenezer Floyd, b. c. 1790
- The daughter of a well-to-do Liverpool merchant (on his second marriage and perhaps his third career), and the son of a Minehead merchant, shipowner and “gentleman”
- Did they meet in Sampford Peverell in 1810?



# 1819 - The Marriage

- 9 December 1819, by license, in an apparently private ceremony, in Minehead
  - Ebenezer Floyd, “mariner”
    - Corruption --> “Floyd Hardinge, sea captain”
  - Ann(e) Sophia Bro(o)mfield
- Ann Sophia was, either at the time, or instantaneously thereafter, pregnant with the Floyds’ first child, Frances Ann, named (I believe) for Frances Bromfield, Ann’s elder sister
- The marriage does not have the “shape” one would want it to have
  - The bride is married in the groom’s home town
  - No banns -- but licenses were also an indication of means
  - Ann Sophia may have paid a significant price for love, or necessity....



# 1819 - The Milieu of the Marriage

- The French Revolution, the Napoleonic Reaction, the Congress of Vienna, the Six Acts
  - No training, no assembly, no revolutionary speech acts -- but why a tax on paper?
- The de-stabilization of European national economies
- The second wave of industrialization: steam, speed and concentration
- The omnipresent fear of revolution, and enthusiasm
- The acceleration, and devolution, of literacy and numeracy
- The real beginning of globalization, and policed civilization

Northamptonshire Record Office

## Arson.

### Thrapston Association.

#### SIXTY GUINEAS REWARD.

WHEREAS some evil-disposed Person or Persons did, on the Night of SATURDAY the 24th INSTANT, WILFULLY and MALICIOUSLY

## SET FIRE

TO A RANGE OF

## HOVELS OR SHEDS,

is, and partly with Straw, ARM YARD IN THE

### RINGSTEAD,

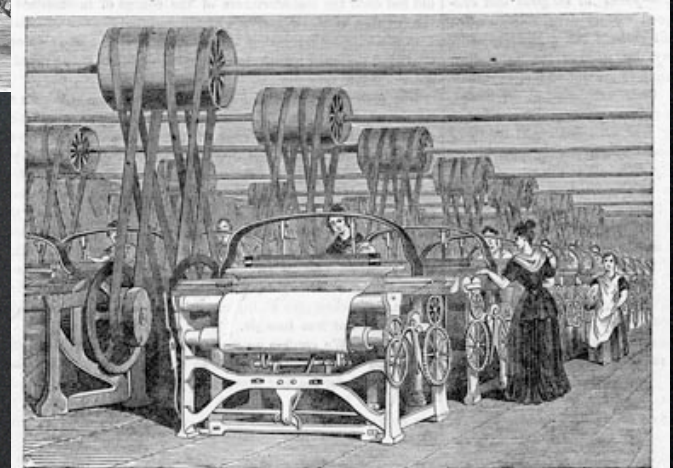
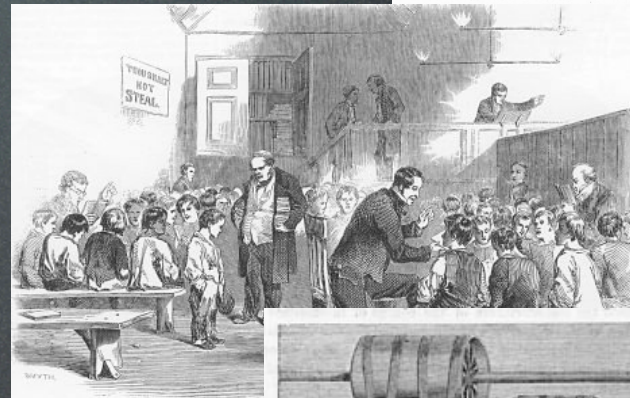
of Northampton.

Mr. W.M. COLEMAN.

Discover the Offender or Offenders, so that he, it, or his, her, or their Conviction, receive a FIFTY GUINEAS REWARD, and TEN GUINEAS Rewarder to the Thrapston Association. Rewards will be paid, on Conviction as aforesaid, on the Premises, who shall discover the Offender or Offenders.

HARD & ARCHBOLD,  
Solicitors to the said Association.

25, PARADE, NORTHAMPTON.



INTERIOR OF A POWER-LOOM FACTORY.



# 1819 - The Milieu of the Marriage

- Independent judgment is by no means considered a 'natural right'
- Plurality of opinion is considered by most commentators to be a sign of a diseased culture
- Science has not, as yet, undermined the (religious) basis of consensual truth... although that process is beginning
- Class, station, place are viewed as hard-and-fast boundaries
- Women's existence is largely privatized
- Men's existence is largely monetized, but there is as yet no understanding of "unemployment"
- A great deal of submerged anger, in every class

I met Murder on the way -  
He had a mask like Castlereagh -  
Very smooth he looked, yet grim;  
Seven blood-hounds followed him:

All were fat; and well they might  
Be in admirable plight,  
For one by one, and two by two,  
He tossed them human hearts to chew  
Which from his wide cloak he drew.

Next came Fraud, and he had on,  
Like Eldon, an ermined gown;  
His big tears, for he wept well,  
Turned to mill-stones as they fell.

And the little children, who  
Round his feet played to and fro,  
Thinking every tear a gem,  
Had their brains knocked out by them.

Clothed with the Bible, as with light,  
And the shadows of the night,  
Like Sidmouth, next, Hypocrisy  
On a crocodile rode by.

And many more Destructions played  
In this ghastly masquerade,  
All disguised, even to the eyes,  
Like Bishops, lawyers, peers, or spies.

Last came Anarchy: he rode  
On a white horse, splashed with blood;  
He was pale even to the lips,  
Like Death in the Apocalypse.

Shelley, "The Masque of Anarchy", 1819  
(written after the Peterloo "Massacre")



## 1819 - The Milieu of the Marriage

- John Varley the Elder, whom we will meet in a couple of decades, is a confirmed occultist and expert astrologer who is frustrated by his inability to see spirits
- His friend and colleague, William Blake, has no such difficulty
- During seances in 1819 and 1820 in Varley's home, Blake described encountering spirits, and Varley asked him to draw what he saw in his vision
- This is one of those drawings



William Blake, The Ghost of a Flea, 1819