

PYE'S PROGRESS PART 2

PYE IN HEREFORD

The Lord Burghley sends Pye to Hereford - The Nag's Head Controversy - Pye Transformed - John Pye of Dewchurch (who lived a hundred and six years truly) meets John Oldcastle - Owain Glyndwr's Ruse - Oldcastle's Christian Supper - Bodica's Shade - Oldcastle Captured - Pye's Transition

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LORD BURGHLEY

"Come here to me young Robert Pye and bring hence my tennis raquettes, I am not so old I can't wield one against a sword if assassins be waiting in the poppies. You must have come straight from Lyon's Inn, where I'm told you help with scriveny, though wish to study Law".

PYE

"An orphan such as I have cobbled workmanly to rise so high, my Lord Burghley, but I would to the Inns of Court ascend, for Lyon's is a bawdy-house, that keeps the worst accounts of disreputable yeoman. Each ledger I see there is a great tome of error. I can scarce unpick the good deeds recorded ill from the ill deeds recorded good. The Earl of Cumberland sent a man to lodge there overnight whilst his accounts were found. His horse he found asleep on them in the stable".

LORD BURGHLEY

"It is refreshing to meet a young stripling that would ascend from the bawdy house to the courts. I am used to old men that would descend the other way".

PYE

"I am at your service, my Lord".

LORD BURGHLEY

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"At this time of War and Plague, when Death spares not the rich, I see many orphaned sons of Noble men. Their titles and estates are held by the Crown until they reach the age of inheritance and for this, the Crown takes a third. To perform this great duty of paternalism, we have the Court of Wards, and I, young Pye, am the Court of Wards. Duty can be a most expedient thing. Do you know how much I paid to the Lord High Admiral for the ward-ship of Wriothesley's Son? Not as much as he will be worth! Promising youngsters require good direction, and the State requires promising youngsters".

PYE

"My Lord, do so many things find ready answers by their proposition?"

LORD BURGHELY

"We will find out, quick-wit. Here is my proposition for you. You will travel to Hereford to see Bishop Scory. You will take his account of the late Archbishop's Ordination and make sure it isn't going to change. Now Mathew Parker is dead I'd like to keep it that way. Scory is currently reviewing the lands and holdings of his Bishopric, and I am willing to turn a blind eye. Do you understand?"

PYE

"So far, my Lord".

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LORD BURGHELEY

"Good. There is a family called Pye from Hereford. If you do not find your father there, you will return as a scholar of law".

PYE

"Thank you my Lord, you will next hear the Bishop's words yourself."

BISHOP SCORY

"Indeed, my son, the ordination of Archbishop Parker was a most solemn occasion. Write that I have said it so. Myself, Bishop Barlow of Chichester, Bishop Coverdale of Exeter and Bishop Hodgkins of Bedford did solemnly conduct the ancient and holy rite known as the Laying on of Hands and said solemn words that did transfer the succession to Archbishop Mathew Parker, thus continuing the direct line of decent from the apostles themselves so that the Archbishop could continue God's work amongst the flocks of England in a most rightful, just and holy manner, with the full countenance of God and the Queen, and with the full authority that Jesus bestowed on his most Godly followers...most Godly followers, that's right...and I John Scory Bishop of Hereford say that it was so. And put the date. What is it 1570 yet? That's that then. Well, got everything you need? Do have a drop more of this wine will you?"

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PYE

"Thank you Father. It was really all quite simple then?"

BISHOP SCORY

"Pass me that letter will you? I'll just stamp the seal on it shall I? Good. Now what did you just say, my son?"

PYE

"I was saying it all sounds like a lot of fuss to me over such a simple affair".

BISHOP SCORY

"I should say so! Never seen anything like it, total farce! You'd think Coverdale would keep it together, but he almost had a little cry because of what the others were wearing, then demanded to see the records of Barlow's own consecration saying he should not even be there. Barlow for his part was ranting about some kind of fee, totally of his pot from the Sac and that was before we went over to the Nag's. As for Hodgkins, hail Mary. Poor old sod didn't know where he was and kept telling the other two he'd call the bailiff if they didn't bring him his bible *which he had in his hands the whole time by the way*. I had it from him just long enough to grab his cuffs and place his fingers on Parker's neck, then he bit me and the bible dropped in the font *that someone had left open*. He soon cheered up when we got him down the Nag's Head, but it was a close call. Strong he was for his age was Hodgkins. Died soon after that

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though, didn't he? And we all heard Coverdale go. That's when I started this little review that you seem to know all about. Barlow too. So I'm the last, and that's why you're here then".

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PYE

"Mostly that's why I'm here".

BISHOP SCORY

"Well, allow an old fool his stories. As far as I can see it was technically sound. Two Dominicans and two Austins. In older times they would have called that a sturdy case for the unity of the Church. Now, I have a very good Library, with many books I've never read from Glastonbury and Monmouth. Here is the key. I am going to check up on our wine cellar and think fondly of the Palace at Lambeth".

PYE

"What books the old drunk has never read! Why here perhaps is Abelard of Bath's own copy of *Elements* if I should read it by these geometric principals drawn within. God's physic laws, described by Euclid, when both still wrote in Hebrew. I will wrap it in this prayer-book to take it with me. I'm sure it won't be missed but why chance it on the road back to London. And look here! Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. A pagan work on transformation, made meet for Church fathers when there were still five Popes in Christendom. I will have to wrap that in this bible in case some stationer should throw it on the fire. Oh Fie! No churchman shall read any of these now that the monasteries are all gone. Young men go to Sea or to the theatres and I have the better need if I am to be a

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poor scholar. I shall have to fetch my saddlebags, there are so many. I will return post-haste to take them all”.

BISHOP SCORY

“My son? My son? How doth thee in my library? Ah, I see he is not here. Well I only came for my bible and prayer book. I have thought much on old times tonight and feel like a midnight mass. Where are my bible and prayer book?” Oh here they are...they seem heavy, how much wine did I drink? Well I will take them down to the chapel”.

PYE

“Was that the Bishop I just saw come from here? Fie! He has taken Euclid and Ovid hence. I will have to follow the rogue before he finds out my plan!”

PYE

“Father! Father! How do you in this Chapel? The hour is late!”

BISHOP SCORY

“Ah, young Robert Pye! I wish to do a mass!”

PYE

“But no one is here to receive it, Father!”

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BISHOP SCORY

“Indeed, but the Spirit fills me. And now I have a soul before me! Kneel my son, receive grace! Then I will to bed and perhaps my end”.

PYE

“I dare not deny him with my future so in balance, but it is a most damnable mass!”

BISHOP SCORY

“What say you there? Anyway, let me begin...Hocus...Hocus...Oh I can't remember the words. Where is my bible? Oh my eyes are dim...Pye you will have to read it for me. Here I will hold it open for you...”

PYE

“...my Lord, this is not your bible you hold out...”

BISHOP SCORY

“...I know it well young Pye, I can tell by the clasping. Read now, from where my finger points...”

PYE

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“...It is some pagan story about a singing contest my Lord Bishop. Pierus’s Daughters can’t accept that they loose the contest, and so the muses turn them into birds...”

BISHOP SCORY

“...ah, you interpret from Philippians, ‘Do all things without Grumbling or Questioning’ and ‘count others more significant than yourself’”

PYE

“No Father, I translate from this text! But my Lord Bishop, I feel as if I’m turning into a bird myself!”

BISHOP SCORY

“Why Pye! So you are! I see feathers sprout from your jerkin! What devilry? Quick, I must sanctify thee with a goodly prayer from my prayer-book!”

PYE

“Good Father, I beseech you not to use that prayer book!”

BISHOP SCORY

“Why, this is mine very own! Accurse me if I have not read it each evening for 30 years. Oh but here’s a prayer I don’t remember – two straights into infinity meet...well it sounds godly enough...I will avert this yet Pye, grow not another

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feather! Draw straight from point to point...and extend on straight...and
righteous angels each other to be..."

PYE

"Desist, my Lord! Do you not see the walls spinning so! The light at the
windows – is it dawn already? Regular panels of glass twisting over each other!
Oh the floor slips away, but I must make use of these wings I have just sprouted
and fly!"

BISHOP SCORY

"...And all the righteous angels equal to each other be!"

PYE

"Read no more, Bishop Scory, I will fly out to get help, though whether to take
the rood stairs from your eye, or your chin from the font, I know not...The
world is turned upside down...I will fly out to get help!"

JOHN PYE OF DEWCHURCH

"A traveller back from Jordan me,
I carry holy reliquaries,
And ancient texts from Araby,

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To sell at sundry monasteries...

...What ho, there is John Oldcastle sat by the brook! I know him from my boyhood, but he has not showed in Hereford since – what year is it now? Why, 1417 perhaps. He has not showed since long before I went to Jerusalem at any rate. How, How, John Oldcastle!”

OLDCASTLE

“Good Morrow, pilgrim, but I know not this Oldcastle, I am but a simple crone of the valley – look here is my cowl”.

JOHN PYE OF DEWCHURCH

“John Oldcastle! You jest but by your full beard I know it is you! And that device on your breastplate, it is not the device of a crone!”

OLDCASTLE

“Old John Pye, is that you? Well met old and faithful friend, indeed it is I John Oldcastle, just escaped from the Tower of London in this rude disguise and come to find Sanctuary amongst my kinsfolk.”

JOHN PYE OF DEWCHURCH

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“Escaped? But John when I left for the Holy land, you were in fine favour with the King Henry, you had fought for him at Usk. I was there!”

OLDCASTLE

“When Usk began, indeed I was newly a knight, but there I learnt to doubt the bonds of Chivalry. I rode up to John Greyndour, my captain and mentor. His armour shone, a sight! Later in the woods, I saw that armour again, steaming in the mist, sword in arcs of crimson. But from the visor peered another man”.

JOHN PYE OF DEWCHURCH

“They say that battle changes people?”

OLDCASTLE

“It was not the same man. A treason made flesh”.

JOHN PYE OF DEWCHURCH

“With dualistic shrouds does Hereford protect its favourite ones. Long has it been so. They thought they had killed Owen Glyndwr at Usk, but it was his brother Tudur, so alike they were. Some still think Owen dead. Did this galling doubtful sight you saw take you from your own duties?”

OLDCASTLE

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“Never! I sought to turn Greyndour’s ruse to goodly purpose. I would put on a play for the King, and in disguise tell him that he need but place an Englishman in Popish clothes, and no more send a Penny to the French. But Lords there are throughout the land that still to Rome must bend. Before the play had scarce begun, they took the actor’s crowns and sackcloth bishop’s cloak, and libelled me to Henry. ‘Look’, they said, ‘Oldcastle means to make himself both king and Pope, and here’s the props to prove it!’”

JOHN PYE OF DEWCHURCH

“Libellous lies! They sent you to the tower then?”

OLDCASTLE

“With just a bag of actors clothes, with which I made escape. Now I must hide until such time as I can put things right”.

JOHN PYE OF DEWCHURCH

“Well, my old friend, I know some Local Lollard monks who might more like your play. Perform it for their mass tonight, and with them you may stay”.

OLDCASTLE

“Well look my pilgrim John! A magpie flying upside down, flies yonder overhead. A sure sign, I think that I should go to ground, for the world is turning upside down”.

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PYE

“Beneath me the Sky, and above me floats Hereford! Good to be a bird, when all the world is upside down. I must find help for old Scory, but are these ghosts I see? Oldcastle was dead a hundred and fifty years back in London. I grow so tired and must somehow find a perch on that great globe above, before I fall into that abyss of sky below. Who is that by the fire there? I will take a closer look!”

GLYNDWR’S SHADE

“...Gam, you wretch, if I wanted to kill you I would not wait so long, but I do grow tired of your gibbering. Tell me now, where did you see my ancient foe Oldcastle?”

GAM’S SHADE

“Oh, worthy my Lord Glyndwr, true King of Wales, he rested in Kilpeck Church the night before last, the priest did inform me only this morning, else I would have that Englishman’s dog here now”.

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GLYNDWR'S SHADE

“Guards! Take this Turncoat Gam and see if the English will buy him back, I am done with him. Then leave me in peace. Are you gone? Good. You may now reveal yourself, strange bird, we are alone. Oh come now, you hang upside down on that branch. Come sorcerer, come witch, it is plain you are no normal Magpie. What are you? Show yourself to me!”

PYE

“I know not how! I am under a spell or a prayer I think, that has changed me thus. Do I speak with Owen Glyndwr? When I was born in Cambridge you were dead a hundred years! What think you of this?”

GLYNDWR'S SHADE

“I think an older magic has brought you here. Used to such wylds am I, most men would not think to pay your song a thought. However much you know of times to come, I will take all you say as lies until I know you as yourself, another shade of madness, nothing else, you may be nothing more. I will allow you this – help me and I'll help you”.

PYE

“What do you ask, Owen Glyndwr?”

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GLYNDWR'S SHADE

“I wish to make a peace with England, before I grow to ruin. I have heard that John Oldcastle is soon arrived in Hereford, and he will help me broker peace with his friend the King. Take me to him, if you can.”

PYE

“Oh, should I tell him what I heard, that Oldcastle no longer has the ear of the king, and then I might remain a bird forever! Oh, but I can try as best I can, if he will try with me. This way!”

YOUNG MONK

“Here, through here John Oldcastle, it looks like a fork in the tunnel, but these are but the turns of a circle. Glyndwr's Men led prisoners round and round it for hours to confound their wits! But here we are, a passage leads off here to the Church, follow it along and you'll see. My grandfather told me his grandfather's grandfather took Templar Knights down here long ago and they found vellum from the time of the Conqueror. Malvern still has a copy I believe. The original had its clasping boiled down for the gold, they say, and set in the bishop's staff. They fed the pages to the pigs, faith it!”

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OLDCASTLE

“Never have I heard a monk talk so!”

YOUNG MONK

“God’s Mind we are down here, John. I pray freely and you answer”.

OLDCASTLE

“I answer ‘I am not thy spittoon’”.

YOUNG MONK

“Aye, Often Have I heard it from God”.

OLDCASTLE

“How many await?”

YOUNG MONK

“Scores”.

OLDCASTLE

“A monk can’t count?”

YOUNG MONK

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“Don’t think you of it. I know them by name”.

OLDCASTLE

“Good Brother, I have not prepared a sheaf to read!”

YOUNG MONK

“Then speak the truth child, and thou shall not err. Our brothers await, come now John, speak your mind”.

OLDCASTLE

“Well...err...Good evening, people of Hereford! Your good brother told me the old Bishop fed his bible pages to the pigs, but I think I remember his mass by heart. As the fat old rogue used to say, HOCUS PORCUS! Here is the meat! And so the lesson, which we will take from Bede. Hwaaat! As they used to cry. King Edwin, before he was the first Christian king of England, was King of the Mead Hall. He was the loaf-king and his duty was to slice up bread for the men and women of his hall so that each took an even slice. Then came to England that emissary of Rome, Paulinus. His golden cloak caught King Edwin’s eye. ‘Look to yourself!’ Paulinus implored. ‘Take your own soul in hand. Look to your own salvation. This Mead Hall business is only vanity! God will provide as he gave me this cloak! But look first to yourself!’ And so Edwin did. No more the loaf-king, the Mead Hall was riven with chaos as the strongest Lords fought amongst themselves for bread. All ate as much as they could tear from

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each other's hands, while King Edwin wore a gold cloak and prayed only for himself. Paulinus looked at the starving children in the mead hall and said 'Come, there are crumbs at my table, the table of Rome. Come serve me here and you will eat and learn to read'. And the children became his monks and forgot their warring mothers and fathers. And as the Mead Hall burnt to the ground, Paulinus said 'Your Lords have abandoned you, Loaf-King! You must be stern with them. Tax them when they quarrel. Look to the monasteries I have built. Protect your children first of all and feed them best of all and they will help you keep the peace and judge your warring Lords!' And then the monks wrote Latin laws that Edwin's men couldn't read. Adrift they were from their laws and their land. And there was less and less bread to fight over...well you get the message. Some of you met Wycliffe and he argued it best of all. The only real things are the things we share, so share all things well. Lesson Ended".

OLD MONK

"Well John Oldcastle, a good sermon! Now we must get out from this cave. We will not be safe here for long".

OLDCASTLE

"I know it, good Monk. The king has sent envoys to the Pope".

OLD MONK

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“Which one is that now?”

OLDCASTLE

“The Pope in Rome, old man. Now there is only the Pope in Rome. Dost you hear not a word of news here?”

OLD MONK

“I meant which king”.

OLDCASTLE

“I see. Glyndwr is long dead, father. There is no Welsh king now. Get used to it. There is one Pope and one king. There is one God”.

OLD MONK

“There is one word. There is one Earth, under one sky, where walk all of Christendom, and the rest is error and heresy. But amongst the gaps, Glyndwr lives!”

OLDCASTLE

“By the Lord! You are no monk! Glyndwr himself!”

GLYNDWR’S SHADE

“It is I! Put away your sword, I bid you return to London.”

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OLDCASTLE

“I daren’t do so, until I have won back the favour of the King.”

GLYNDWR’S SHADE

“Then I will help you. You may take back this writ, in which I submit to your king. With such a prize can you win back your favour. Now, we will go to my camp, come old man of Hereford, fore we both grow to our dotage”.

OLDCASTLE

“I would not trust you, but look, there in the rising moon is that Magpie that flies upside down! Again my sign. I will follow thee!”

PYE

“What shades blow forth on clouds of oak and ash? I see a new figure amongst the trees!”

SHADE OF BOUDICA’S SHADE

“Pye! Do you hear me? Can you see me? What visage do I take to half a bird?”

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PYE

“I see you! Rough woman I think, for no other with eyes so wise has skin so fair. But wrapped in silks or furs, or leaves I cannot decry.”

SHADE OF BOUDICA’S SHADE

“I am a shade of Boudica, Queen west of Christendom. When Suetonius brought his rapacious legions full across this Isle, he cornered all our Druid-Kings in Anglesey and almost wiped them out. I was sent from there to burn London to the ground, and buy the Druids time to say their rights and disappear into the western setting sun, to be once more reborn, as it rose again in the East. London is a beacon, but in its shadow do more precious gems lay hidden. The young King must keep the Bishop of Rome in belief that these Isles submit to Rome, until such time as Welshmen are strong enough to hold out in full daylight. Glyndwr will send Oldcastle back to London, a sacrifice to appease the Pope. You must not try to stop him, or you will remain forever a bird, be warned!”

PYE

“And now she fades! And now I wake! Where is Glyndwr gone? And Oldcastle? Into the air I fly, and see him bathing in the brook. Two men ride up! Their villainous looks bode ill for the man in the stream! I hear their surprise!”

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IEUAN

“Gruffudd, look there! A breast-plate by the stream, is it not the crest of Old John of the Castle?”

GRUFFUDD

“Why Ieuan, so it is! And that old man that now does creep amongst the reeds. Is it not John Oldcastle himself? Before he died, Lord Glyndwr always said he would return to Hereford. I heard the English King has offered 1000 marks for his capture. Who knew that Gold could float?”

IEUAN

“John Oldcastle! Come out from the reeds, we have come to take you back to the King!”

OLDCASTLE

“Boys! Boys! And not a moment too soon, why I was just off back there myself! Owen Glyndwr will come with me too, look, he still sleeps just yonder in that Glade!”

GRUFFUDD

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“Do you mock us, sly old Knight? Glyndwr we know was buried there, two years now dead! Already they will hang you for treason, and burn you for heresy, what will be left to try for a gravedigger!”

OLDCASTLE

“I walked with him last night! You think him dead? Well you think me dead, it seems but here I walk!”

IEUAN

“Watch him, Gruffudd, I will go and see what the old man has done to Glyndwr’s grave.”

GRUFFUDD

“Tarry not long, Ieuan. He may yet try to run. Ieuan? I hear your cry! What goes in those bushes beyond the glade?”

IEUAN

“Gruffudd! Look what I have found, another man was waiting there! Speak now, filthy man, what sport have you with Oldcastle?”

GLYNDWR’S SHADE

“Meeee Sir? Oh well, I am just a wandering monk, a hermit – yes a hermit of the woods. Old Castle? I haven’t been to any old Castle in a loooong time!”

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OLDCASTLE

“Glyndwr, what is this game? You walked with me last night and spoke precise and goodly things! You know who I am! Where are your men? Check the woods again, good boys, and you’ll find his camp!”

GRUFFUDD

“Can you watch these mad old fools, Ieuan? I will check the woods myself”

IEUAN

“I can Gruffudd, and good sport to watch them caper!”

OLDCASTLE

“Glyndwr, look, this man is now alone! Let us take him from his horse, I will grab my sword! Come now!”

GLYNDWR’S SHADE

“Does he speak to me, good Sir Ieuan? So old and crooked are my hermit ears, but even I know Glyndwr only as a dead man! Look, here comes your friend from out my wood, what does he carry with him?”

GRUFFUDD

“Ieuan, I found no camp. Only this Magpie, it shot out and startled me, so I shot it from the air. Could have sworn it flew upside down but I shot it from the air”.

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GLYNDWR'S SHADE

“Oooo, that’ll be lovely for my hermit pot, if your good self can spare the bird
for an old man?”

GRUFFUDD

“Take it, twisted monk. Tonight we will return Oldcastle to the King and dine
on wild boar! Farewell. Ieuan, lift Sir John from the stream. Now we will
away. Farewell good Hermit, and pray for us!”

JOHN PYE OF DEWCHURCH

“A traveller back from Jericho,
To Hereford I homeward go
With calloused feet to children show
And stories give the cleric-oh...

...What fine smells come from yonder wood? I can put off my pilgrim’s fast no
longer, after all I am near enough home I suppose. I will go and see...oh look, a
hermit!”

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GLYNDWR'S SHADE

“Good tidings, weary traveller, pull up to my hermit hearth, I see you carry many books and scrolls. Eat some of this Magpie stew and allow me to peruse your wares!”

JOHN PYE OF DEWCHURCH

“Good hermit, that is a worthy exchange. Mmm, this soup is excellent fare!”

GLYNDWR'S SHADE

“You are welcome, John Pye of Dewchurch. What texts are these? Metamorphoses I think? And is that a work by Euclid? Oh yes, I read both Greek and Hebrew, and much more besides.”

JOHN PYE OF DEWCHURCH

“Your lips move when you read and you mutter, but who am I to doubt your learning. Neither book sounds churchly enough for the monasteries to buy, so how about I finish this fine stew and you can keep the texts?”

GLYNDWR'S SHADE

“Oh, I say! A worthy exchange indeed, John Pye. Eat it all up. I promise you it will sustain your life long, and you will have many children and your last grandchild will see a Welsh King of England and one day write the English Laws!”

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info@samuelthomson.org

JOHN PYE OF DEWCHURCH

“You flatter me, kind Hermit. Now I must away. Good Morrow!”

GLYNDWR’S SHADE

“Good Morrow!”

[And now the hermit takes a pipe, and on it softly plays.]

END OF PART 2

PYE'S PROGRESS 2
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