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FIELDING'S 'CHAMPION' AND CAPTAIN HERCULES VINEGAR.

LITTLE attention seems to have been given to Captain Hercules Vinegar of Hockley in the Hole, the pseudo-editor of the *Champion*, to which Henry Fielding is known to have contributed for several years. The following will show that Vinegar was not a fictitious personage created for the occasion, but was an actual man who had received considerable advertisement as a prize-ring 'champion' in and about London.

The first *Champion*¹, that of November 15, 1739, begins thus: 'It is sufficiently known² that some Years since, to the great Terror of the small Vulgar, I entered upon the Title of *Captain*; this I did without the Consent of any one Person living, or without any other Commission or Authority than what I immediately derived from myself. I have now determin'd to lay aside the Sword, which, without Vanity, I may boast to have us'd with some Success, (though few Captains now living, can say the like) and take up the Pen in its Stead, with a Design to do as much Execution with the one, as I have already done with the other; or, in other Words, to tickle now, as I before bruised Men into good Manners.'

¹ It is an odd coincidence that just before (November 15, 1739) the first issue of the *Champion* appeared, all London was wrought up by a contest for the election of a Lord Mayor, in which Sir George Champion was one of the candidates. The matter came to a vote on September 29, 1739, and Champion was defeated. See *Gentleman's Magazine*, September, 1739, pp. 494—5, October, pp. 548—51, November, pp. 594—5; *London Magazine*, September, 1739, p. 465, October, pp. 499—505. Pamphlets in the contest were issued, as is shown by the Register of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, October, 1739, items 4, 6, 7, 8, 9; and the *London Magazine* booklist for October, p. 450, items 24 and 25.

² The first issue of the *Champion* was advertised in the *Daily Post* and the *London Daily Post* of November 12 and 13, 1739: 'On Thursday next will be publish'd for the first Time, | (To be continued every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday | Morning) | THE CHAMPION; or, BRITISH MERCURY. | By the celebrated Capt. HERCULES VINEGAR, of | Hockley in the Hole, | Containing Essays on various Subjects, and the | freshest Advices, both Foreign and Domestick. | —Quod optanti Divum promittere nemo | Auderet Volvenda dies en attulit. Virg. | Printed for T. Cooper at the Globe in Pater-noster-Row.' The advertisements in both papers of November 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, put the same stress on the 'celebrated Capt. HERCULES VINEGAR, of Hockley in the Hole.'

In the paper of November 17, 1739, Vinegar declares: 'As for myself, I am so far from desiring to derive any Honour from my Ancestors, that I have retired to so obscure a Place as *Hockley in the Hole*, where my humble Habitation often reminds me, that *Hercules* himself was no more than a Descendant of *Adam*.'

In the paper of December 4, 1739, among other complaints Vinegar's 'Bookseller, *A. Moore*, of — near *St. Paul's*' 'humbly hopes to be pardon'd when he represents to your Mightiness that some dislike the word *Champion*, some *Hercules Vinegar*, and some *Hockley in the Hole*....'

In the paper of December 4, Paul Serious objects: 'But why *Champion* and *Vinegar*, and Stuff? If you will not acquaint us with your own Name, why not subscribe *Alg. Sidney*, or *Osborne*, or *Wal-singham*¹, or some other grave Man's which might avoid the least Appearance of a Jest.' In reply to these letters Vinegar declares on December 4: 'I am a Person of more Consequence than I appear to be, and may have dated these Papers 'from *Hockley in the Hole*, as a Propitiation to that beautiful Goddess of Envy, whom I have before-mentioned...that the Humbleness of my Situation might lessen the Malevolence which might attend my Abilities; nay, perhaps, I may have deeper Reasons still, which, as I shall not yet discover, it will be in vain for any one, who can't cast a Figure, to trouble his Head about.'

Going farther, Fielding decided to sever connection with Hockley. In the paper of December 11 is a letter from Vinegar which, without any direct statement of the fact that it implies, is headed: '*From my Dining Room in Pall-Mall, Dec. 10th, being the first Night of my Arrival from Hockley in the Hole*.' A letter to the authors of the *Gazetteer* in the issue of December 25 says: 'Since I had left *Hockley in the Hole*, and you in full Possession of the *Bear Garden* there, I did not expect to have heard any more of you.'

The *Index to the Times* of December 13 (the only Index bearing either of Fielding's signatures) opens: 'As the Play-House, since some ingenious, young Gentlemen have turned it into a *Bear Garden*, falls naturally within my Province, I shall think proper to animadvert on such Occurrences there, as occasionally happen:....'

On January 10, 1740, in a letter attacking Vinegar but really aimed at Walpole (a fact confirmed by the note at the end signed **, i.e. Ralph) Fielding writes: 'Who are you? that have set yourself up for a Dictator in this Manner? That you come from *Hockley in the Hole* must be

¹ The *noms de guerre* of well-known political writers of the day.

confest, and do you think your creeping nearer the Court will alter the Manners of *Hockley*, into those of St. *James's*; when it is notorious, that none but your old *Hockleyan* Acquaintance resort to you, Fellows who were never seen in a polite Part of the Town 'till your Arrival there?'

In the paper of January 15 on Authority, Fielding remarks that often 'we owe Esteem and Contempt, to accidental, indirect, and sometimes ridiculous Circumstances; of which I shall give this flagrant Instance, that 'till my Removal to a polite Part of the Town, the World paid very little Respect to those excellent Discourses with which I obliged them, possessing themselves with an Opinion, that nothing worth their reading, could possibly come from *Hockley in the Hole*.'

In the paper of January 26 Vinegar is addressed: 'You have lately surpriz'd the World by two very elaborate, (not to say dull) Essays upon Virtue. Who would have expected, or who indeed can bear such pious and moral Declamations from the Mouth of Capt. *Vinegar*?

Quis tulerit Gracchos de seditione querentes.

It would have been much more consonant with your former Character, to have taken the other Side, and have given a final Kick to this Lady....'

From this date, with exception of passages in the papers of March 25 and April 1 quoted below, nothing more is said of Hockley. With exception of what is in these two passages, Captain Vinegar might be any reformer of contemporary conditions, and might dwell anywhere. Indeed, the fiction of the Vinegar family is not well sustained in the *Champion*; and that of the Captain is practically lost, the papers being written as a rule without regard to his individuality. The papers that I have quoted are all signed C or L (Fielding's signature), except those of November 15 and 17 which I show in an article to appear in *Englische Studien* to be probably by Fielding. It seems that Fielding alone of the writers in the *Champion* from the beginning up to June 19, 1740, made any pretence of keeping up the Vinegar idea beyond so far as to address Hercules Vinegar as editor¹. That in the papers of March 25 and April 1 Fielding again took up the notion and dealt with it more definitely than at any time before, may be accounted for by the facts that (as he declares on June 12) the *Champion* was now in good standing, and that it need not fear the ill effects that it seems to have suffered through association with Hockley and a former superintendent or champion there.

¹ An odd slip occurs in a note in the paper of January 5 following the essay signed C (Fielding). The note is addressed to 'Mr. Champion' and is signed 'Hercules Vinegar'!

On March 25 a letter protesting against the themes of the *Champion* articles concludes: 'Prithee, don't puzzle us with a Parcel of damned Wit and Morality, but let us now and then hear a Word or two from the Amphitheatres, where I should be very glad to meet you when there is a good Battle; you will, likewise, be welcome at my House any Morning you please, and, if you have not quite forsaken your old Exercises, I will take a Bout or two with you at Broad-sword and Quarter-staff, to convince you how much I am, *Dear HERCULES, Thine Sincerely, TOM TOWNLY.*' Though this paper is not signed, in *Englische Studien* I shall show it to be probably Fielding's.

The paper of April 1, signed C, is a letter from *Vander Bruin*, who is concerned about the amusements of England, and declares that the theatres are not worthy of discussion by persons of worth and that Vinegar has 'for this Reason entirely relinquished the Theatres to the most inimitable *Laureat.*' 'But tho' this should be the Case with the Dramatic World, yet, methinks, those gymnastic Encounters, those ruder Exercises which so particularly distinguish the martial Genius of this Kingdom, the Care of which formerly belonged to you, should still engage your Attention, and come under your Notice; for, tho' you have changed your Lodging [i.e. from Hockley to Pall Mall], I presume you still frequent the Arena at *Tottenham*, and your once celebrated Retirement at *Hockley in the Hole*, where I do not doubt but proper Deference is yet paid to you by the Combatants....' The writer points his appeal by stating that he is 'at length reduced to get [his] Livelihood by a Shew,' and continues: 'In short, Sir, I have at present by me two very fine He-Bears, both *Brothers* of the same Litter, which I shall shortly have baited at your Theatre-Royal, otherwise called His Majesty's Bear-Garden in *Hockley in the Hole.*' He says later: 'Besides the Expectation of an advanced Price, I have another Reason for removing to the Bear-Garden, which your Predecessors and your self have brought under such good Order and Regulation;...' His bears have not been fairly treated by the spectators. 'This is a Behaviour, which I am sure all such true Lovers of Sport and Encouragers of fair Play as yourself must detest,....'¹

¹ This letter from *Vander Bruin* concerning the *Brother Bears* is really a veiled political attack. The Great Bear is Robert Walpole. See the following passages in the 1741 and 1743 reprinted *Champion* where the idea is continued: II, 87, par. 1; 96, par. 1; 196, par. 4; 204—5.—The opening of the letter refers to the periodicals *Common-Sense* and the *Craftsman*. In *Common-Sense*, Nov. 12, 1737, is a letter from *Van Bruin*, who as a comic dramatist has been ruined by the Licensing Act, protesting against the Act that caused Fielding's retirement from dramatic writing, and commending (with satirical suggestion) his Siberian Bear. This Bear satire occurs again in *Common-Sense*, Sept. 23, 1738, in an attack on

From all this it appears that to Fielding Captain Hercules Vinegar was a well-known retired prize-ring champion who had formerly exhibited at Hockley in the Hole and in the Arena at Tottenham¹, and had been a sort of director of great efficiency at His Majesty's Bear-Garden². That Captain Vinegar's former association with such a profession was not necessarily so largely detrimental to his high personal excellence and standing in the community as we to-day would suppose, is shown by the esteem in which John Broughton was held from the date of his defeat (1750) until he died in 1789 worth £7000. Further, it should be borne in mind that prize-fighters in the eighteenth century contended with the cudgel, the sword, and the quarter-staff as well as with the fists, one bout often succeeding the other—as witness the exploits of the great Figg³. Often the prize-fighter and also the official now styled 'referee,' were in the eighteenth century styled 'Captain' or 'The Captain'⁴.

'Captain Hercules Vinegar' was the pseudonym of a prize-ring 'champion' of considerable notoriety at least in and about the year 1731.

In his *Pugilistica*⁵ (I. 10—11) Henry Downes Miles notes: 'Besides this nobly patronised amphitheatre of Fig, there were several booths, and rings strongly supported. That in Smithfield, we have it upon good authority, was presided over by one "Mr. Andrew Johnson," asserted to be an uncle of the great lexicographer. There was also that in Moorfields, called at times "the booth," at others "the ring." The "ring" was kept by an eccentric character known as "Old Vinegar," the "booth" by Rimmington, whose sobriquet was "Long Charles"....' Boulton in his *Amusements of Old London* (II. 74) remarks: 'Besides Mr. Figg's establishment there were others conducted on quite similar lines, though with less success, at Smithfield, Moorfields and St. George's Fields. A Mr. Andrew Johnson, who was

Walpole under guise of a record of a manuscript in prose and verse that purports to be an ancient assault on Robert Dudley.

¹ Probably the Great Booth of George Taylor in Tottenham Court Road, whose great ornament at this time was the incomparable John Broughton.

² '...near Clerkenwell Green' in Ray Street, formerly Hockley in the Hole. Pinks, *History of Clerkenwell*, 2nd edit., London, 1881, pp. 157—8.—Hockley was celebrated for its bear-baiting and prize-fights, and had a very unsavoury reputation. Pinks, Index, s.v., Hockley-in-the-Hole; Boulton, *Amusements of Old London*, II. 79 ff.; Thornbury's *London*, II. (see Index).

³ E.g., see Boulton, *op. cit.* II. 70, where is quoted an advertisement of 'a grand parade by the valiant Figg, who will exhibit his knowledge in various combats with the foil, back-sword, cudgel, and fist.'

⁴ Fred Henning, *Fights for the Championship*, London, reprinted from the *Victuallers' Gazette*, I. 46.

⁵ *Pugilistica: Being One Hundred and Forty-Four Years of the History of British Boxing*. London, Weldon & Co., 9, Southampton Street, Strand, W.C.

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said to be an uncle of the great Doctor, presided at Smithfield; a man nicknamed "Old Vinegar" at Moorfields; and a gentleman named Remington, called Long Charles by his clients, was the patron of another establishment known as the Ring.' Apparently Boulton got this matter from Miles' work. I have not succeeded in tracing Miles' original. The copies of Captain John Godfrey's book¹ in the British Museum I have had carefully searched without eliciting material concerning Vinegar.

The following advertisements (with one exception noted below not yet reprinted, I believe) show something of Vinegar's activity in 1731.

The *Daily Post*, March 16 and 17, 1731, announces for the 17th 'At Mr. Figg's² Great-Room At his House the Sign of the City of Oxford, in Oxford Road' a battle between Andrew Mac-Colley and John Wells. The notice concludes 'N.B. The Boxes will be set at Two and the Champions mount at Four precisely. There will also be good Diversion with Capt. Vinegar's Company, by way of Introduction to a good Summer's Proceedings.'

The *Daily Post*, March 27, 29, 30, 31, announces for the 31st at 'Mr. Figg's Great Room' a contest between William Sherlock and Edward Sutton. The notice ends: 'Capt. Vinegar will entertain the Company with his usual Diversion of Cudgel-playing.'

The *Daily Journal* of March 30 gives notice of Bear-fighting, etc. 'At Mr. Stokes's Amphitheatre,' that ends: 'N.B. There will also be good Diversion of Cudgel-playing, &c. Captain Vinegar being just crept out of his Bottle, where he has been stopt up all Winter, and looking plagu'y Sower and Mothery.'

¹ *A Treatise upon the Useful Art of Self Defense*, London, 1740. A later edition appeared 1747.

² Figg's School is mentioned with praise in Fielding's signed paper of January 29, 1740, as a place where one 'will meet with the best and properest Company.'—Imitative of the style of the advertisements of sporting events such as Vinegar and Figg were interested in, are the notices in the *Champion's* 'Index to the Times' of April 19, 1740.

In the 'Index to the Times' of the *Champion* of March 4, 1740 (in which, by the way, Jonathan Wyld is by name referred to by Fielding) is an elaborate puff of Captain Miller's 'Book of the Ancient and noble Science of the Sword' just 'on the Point of issuing from the Press.' The puff hits at the war with Spain, and is a letter signed by 'TIM. BUCK, junior.' The Captain Miller here referred to was probably the James Miller whom Steele saw contend at the Bear-Garden in Hockley-in-the-Hole in 1712 (see *Spectator*, No. 486; Pinks, *op. cit.* pp. 160 ff.; Boulton, *op. cit.* i. 19 ff.; Castle, *Schools and Masters of Fence*, pp. 204—5). Miller's opponent and conqueror in that contest was Timothy Buck of Claremarket, apparently the 'senior' of the supposed writer of the puff-letter. Miller's book is listed by Egerton Castle (*Schools and Masters of Fence*, London, 1885, p. xlviii; *Fencing, Boxing, Wrestling*, Badminton Library, London, 1893, Bibliography) as published 1738: 'A Treatise on fencing by Captain J. Miller, in the shape of an album of fifteen copper-plates engraved by Scotin, with one column of text.' If Castle is right, the publication announced in the *Champion* would appear to be a reprint. Miller fought for the Government in 1745 and legitimately obtained the title 'Captain.'

The *Daily Journal* of April 20 announces for the 21st 'At Mr. Figg's Great-Room' a contest between Rowland Bennet and Edward Sutton. This statement is made: 'Note, It will be a general Field-Day, with Capt. Vinegar, and his Forces, who will pass tho [*sic*] an extraordinary Exercise on this Occasion, and give uncommon Satisfaction.'

The *Daily Journal* for April 27 announces for the 28th at Figg's another contest between Bennet and Sutton. The notice ends: 'Captain Vinegar will attend as usual, and entertain the Company with some new Improvements of the Leather Bottle, having lately discover'd a far more easy and concise Way of breaking Loggerheads than formerly &c.' This same matter (except '&c.') appears in the *Daily Post* of April 28.

The *Daily Journal* of May 4 and the *Daily Post* of May 5 announce for the 5th at Figg's a contest between Michael Buttler and Edward Sutton. The notice ends: 'Note, Attendance will be given at Three, and the Masters mount at Six precisely. And as great Quarrels have arose amongst the Gentlemen of the Sword, concerning Mr. Mac Guire's Nose¹, as well as Mr. Sutton's, Capt. Vinegar and his Company, are to fight at Blunts for both: So that there will be good Diversion.'

The *Daily Post* of May 10 announces for Wednesday the 12th at Figg's a battle between William Gill and Felix Macguire. The notice ends: 'There will be the usual Diversion before the Masters mount by Captain Vinegar's Company.'

The *Daily Post* of May 17 and 19 announce for the 19th at Figg's a battle between Felix Macguire and Edward Sutton. The notice ends: 'Note, A general Court Martial will be held to divert Company before the Masters mount, by Captain Vinegar and other Field Officers, for the Trial of some new-listed Recruits and old Offenders, on Neglect of Duty, and for disobeying Orders on Wednesday last.'

The *Daily Post* of May 24th announces for that date at 'Mr. Stokes's Amphitheatre in Islington Road' a battle between Thomas Terriwest and Thomas Siblist. The notice concludes: 'And for the Diversion of the Spectators, before they [the Masters] mount, Capt. Vinegar will present them with a new Tragi-comi-pastoral Farce of one Act, call'd, *Flesh no Fence against a Flail*; or, *The Art of beating Linnen on the Skin*: Wherein several Loggerheads will go near to be broken, and the Best come off with dry Blows.' The same matter is in the notice in the *Daily Journal* of the same date. A part of this paragraph about

¹ The *Gentleman's Magazine* 'Monthly Intelligencer' for April, 1731, page 172, reads: 'Wednesday, April 14. Mr Macguire, a Prize-fighter, had his Noise [*sic*] cut clear from his Face by Mr Sutton, at Mr Figg's Amphitheatre.'

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Vinegar is printed in Pinks, *History of Clerkenwell*, edit. 2, London, 1881, p. 487.

These seem to be all the notices of Vinegar to be obtained from the *Daily Post*, the *Daily Journal*, and the *Daily Courier*, from January 1 to September 1, 1731¹. I have had the *Daily Post* and *London Daily Post* from January to November 1739² inclusive searched in vain for notices of Vinegar³.

The use of Vinegar as editor of the *Champion* is of some little importance. Certainly in view of the humorous treatment of Vinegar in the advertisements, Paul Serious, the *Champion's* correspondent of December 4, 1739, had reason to protest ironically (see above): 'If you will not acquaint us with your own Name, why not subscribe *Alg. Sidney*, or *Osborne*, or *Walsingham*, or some other grave Man's which might avoid the least Appearance of a Jest.' In 1737 Fielding gave up the regular composition of farces and satirical plays. Yet in November, 1739, by his⁴ very choice of title and editor for the *Champion*, he gave to the periodical at the outset a farcical colour of which he himself a number of times reminded his readers in the passages that I have quoted. The situation is odd in face of the fact that many of Fielding's own papers in the *Champion* were evidently written very seriously and were intended to be taken seriously. As I have said, Fielding's collaborators in November 1730—June 1740 did not deal with the Vinegar fiction.

JOHN EDWIN WELLS.

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¹ The following issues seem to be missing in the British Museum: *Daily Post*, Jan. 1; Apr. 30; Aug. 17;—*Daily Courier*, the whole of April.

² The following issues seem not to be in the British Museum: *Daily Post*, Jan. 15; Mar. 10, 12; May 1—7; July 30; Aug. 28; Sept. 10; Oct. 1, 3, 16, 17, 24, 27; Nov. 23, 24;—*London Daily Post*, Jan. 15; Mar. 10; May 1—7; July 30; Sept. 10; Oct. 1, 17; Nov. 23, 24.

³ In *Notes and Queries*, 1883, Sixth Series, Vol. vii. pages 406—7, Mr Austin Dobson inquired concerning a pamphlet ascribed to Vinegar. In the *New York Nation* of January 16, 1913, pp. 53—4, I discuss this pamphlet, which was advertised in the *Grub Street Journal* of July 29, 1731; and which was noticed as follows in the *Daily Post* of July 24, 1731: 'This Day is publish'd, An Answer to one Part of a late infamous LIBEL, reflecting on Captain Vinegar and the late worthy Jonathan Wilde. In a Letter to Mr. James F-gg, the supposed Author thereof. In which Letter the Character and Conduct of the Gentleman, alias Captain Hercules Vinegar, are fully vindicated. By Hercules Vinegar of Hockley in the Hole, Esq.; Sold by A. Dodd at the Peacock without Temple-Bar. Pr. 6d.'

It is of interest to note that in Chapter II of *Jonathan Wild* the 1743 editions state of the hero's father: 'Jonathan married *Elizabeth*, daughter of *Ralph Hollow*, esq.' In the 1754 edition Fielding altered this to read: 'daughter of *Scragg Hollow*, of *Hockley-in-the-Hole*, Esq.'

Well known is the use of Vinegar's name as pseudonym by the authors of the 1742 attacks on Pope, *The Cudgel; or a Crab-tree Lecture*, and *Blast upon Blast, and Lick for Lick*.

⁴ In my article on the *Champion*, to appear in *Englische Studien*, I show that Fielding wrote, or had a chief part in writing, the first four papers of the *Champion*, issues not hitherto claimed for him.