

The Supposed wealth in Chancery

In January 1839, Mrs. Georgina Grinstead (nee Miller), widow of Richard Hawkins Grinstead, wrote to Charles Stainer saying there was a tradition in their family that there was money from Thomas Wyatt Randall's will awaiting heirs in the US which had been thrown into chancery to await claimants. It evoked the following two comments.

1. John F R Stainer writing to Edward Stainer on 21.2.1939.

"Of course, that story of the money in chancery is all moonshine as far as the Randall's (sic) are concerned, one of them having been a stone-mason and the other a linen draper and boot-maker.

I think it is possible that Mrs. Grinstead has heard something of the "Manila Ransom" of which Herbert Spearing used to speak. There was some large sum payable – but never I fancy paid – for the ransom of the town of Manila when it was captured in 1762, but the share of the Lieutenant Spearing who took part in the siege, presumably the Captain Thomas Spearing who died in 1785, however large would, if it ever should be paid (which is nconceivable now 137 years after the event) be divisible among children and grandchildren and great grandchildren – but it is all of course, as extinct as the Dodo."

2. Dr. Edward Stainer, writing in his Randall notebook, January 1940.

"Family tradition tells us that Captain Thomas Spearing of the Royal Marines took part in the capture of Manila in 1762, and that he should have been entitled to receive his rightful share of the "Manila Ransom" which however was never paid... What actually happened at Manila may be gathered from :-

Col. Draper's Answer to the Spanish Arguments in a letter addressed to the Earl of Halifax, published in London 1764.

An English fleet under the command of Admiral Cornish attacked Manila, Col. Draper undertaking the landing operations. The latter tells us of the action in his own words.

"We entered Manila by storm on the 6th October 1762, with an handful of troops whose total amounted to little more than two thousand; a motley composition of Seamen, Soldiers, Sepoys, Cafres, Lascars, Topasees, French and German Deserters."

The Archbishop of manila (Governor) and the chief magistrates were summoned and given the choice of two evils – either to have the town sacked and pillaged or to submit and sign terms of capitulation. The lesser of the two evils was decided upon and the articles of capitulation were duly signed.

The conditions of surrender consisted of four articles, the first three of which dealt with the disarming of troops, the surrender of guns, etc., and the dismantling of forts. The fourth article read as follows :-

"The Propositions contained in the Paper, delivered on the part of his Excellency the Governor, and his council, will be listened to and confirmed to them, upon their payment of Four Millions of Dollars, the half to be paid immediately, the other half to be paid in, at a time to be agreed upon: and Hostages and Security given for that purpose."

The above mentioned Paper consisted of a series of proposals put forward by the Archbishop and Council for safeguarding the lives, properties, religion etc. etc. of the citizens of Manila.

Such then, was the story of the origin of the "Manila Ransom", but there was more to follow. Peace seems to have been declared between England and Spain – Spain then proceeded to repudiate the whole business. She held that the authorities at Manila had

no right to make any such agreement on their own behalf and further, accused Col Draper of sacking and pillaging the town with four thousand after the agreement was signed and therefore nullifying the Terms of Surrender. Col. Draper in his letter to Lord Halifax attempts to refute the arguments and charges made by the Spanish Government, but the final result seems to have been that the Ransom was never paid. Captain T. Spearing, therefore, never got his share and his descendants must rest content with this bare story of the "Manila Ransom".