

INTRODUCTION TO CAPTAIN FRANCIS HAVILAND

Captain Francis Haviland (born in Romford Barracks, 1796) moved with his wife Mary (née Nagle, born in Eire in 1799, descended from the ancient Barons of Navan and the Noble House of Desmond) to Saltford Villa (subsequently renamed Tunnel House) in 1862. He was a Captain in the 2nd Regiment of Dragoons (Queen's Bays) and reached the position of Major in the North Somerset Yeoman Cavalry where he was closely associated with the Queen Charlton troop.

Mary died at The Villa in 1870 and Francis died there 10 years later in 1880, aged 83 years. There are no records of any children.

On 6th August 1863, the year following his arrival in Saltford, Captain Francis Haviland wrote the following letter to the Editor of the Bristol Mercury to show his concern over the "many instances" of wife beating he had read in that paper and giving his advice to try and prevent this practice of "ill-using Women".

The Bristol Mercury, Saturday, August 8, 1863

WIFE-BEATING

To the Editor of the Bristol Mercury.

SIR, - Having read in your valuable and widely-circulating papers many instances of "Wife-beating," may I request your insertion of this letter, with the hope that, if published, it may be read by those unruly members of society who degrade human nature by ill-using Women.

MARRIAGE

I am sure there is no situation in life so happy as the married state, when both parties consult each other's peace of mind. It heightens every joy, it lessens every anxiety, it contracts our wants and our desires; we find every comfort at home, and calmly enjoy those blessings which others are pursuing but never reach. Hurry and dissipation may amuse for a time, but we must return home, the hour of reflection will intrude, when we cannot fail of condemning a life passed in idleness and vanity.

In a single person this conduct is blameable, but in the married woman, unpardonable; for she should have no view, no desire, but to make her husband happy. Many women are ambitious of admiration, they endeavour to please everyone more than the man whom they marry; good-humoured abroad, peevish and discontented at home, or if they avoid such flagrant misbehaviour, by a want of compliance in little things, and not consulting the disposition of their husbands, they frequently throw away that happiness they might enjoy.

The care of supporting a family lies wholly on the man, and a variety of circumstances frequently occur to vex him. Prudence, perhaps, prevents him from showing his disgust to those who occasion his uneasiness, and he will be ready to quarrel with those whom he dearly loves. If at these times a woman can preserve good temper and behave pleasantly, can be quiet, though she is right and he wrong, and can endeavour to soothe him by not opposing him, she will gain his affections, and he will, when he is cool, reflect on himself for having been unreasonable and admire her for meekness and forbearance.

It is so much the wife's interest to render herself agreeable to her husband that there is no sacrifice too great to obtain this end, and there are very few men whom a sensible and virtuous woman could not attach. But as trifles opposed to essentials, she should be particularly attentive not to be contentious about things of little moment.

If a woman really loves a man it grieves her to see him vexed and discontented; surely then she ought to avoid every thing that may ruffle him, more especially in spending his hard-won wages or income in expensive dress or in intoxicating liquors; what is more likely to destroy the comfort of a man, on his return home from a day's toil, than to see his children neglected, and his wife dressed out in unbecoming finery, with skirts expanded with crinoline, and often under the influence of intoxicating drink, no comfortable meal awaiting his return, the house in disorder, and the children crying for bread? It drives the man to the public-house, it leads to quarrelling, wife-beating, and often to Murder.

I am, sir, your often-obliged servant,
FRANCIS HAVILAND, Captain Unattached.
Saltford, 6th August, 1863.

**Transcribed by
Phil Harding for Saltford Environment Group
July 2016**