

THE LOST AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF JAMES HENRY FROWDE

By John M. Turner

The story of 'Frowde the Proud - the Clown Evangelist' was published in *Gloucestershire History* in 1994.¹ A biographical sketch, published in 'Victorian Arena' the following year, outlined that James Henry Frowde, the famous equestrian clown, was born in 1831, at Portsea, the son of James Frowde and Georgiana Margareta née Hengler of the famous circus family. His mother died when he was only six and the arrival of a stepmother, within a year, led to great unhappiness for James and his younger brother George. At age fifteen James visited Hengler's circus, at nearby Portsmouth, and determined to be a clown. When Hengler's circus was re-formed, by his uncle Charles Hengler, in 1847, James joined the company at Stamford. Within a year he appeared in the arena and by 1850 was an athletic clown, billed at Newcastle-on-Tyne as "A Man of Many Forms", a reference to his contortionist skills. From then on he went from strength to strength. By 1852, James Frowde had become the main attraction at Hengler's. In the mid-1850s, it was reported "Frowde, as a clown, is what a Yankee would call 'a whole team and a horse to spare'. His benefits were always bumpers. Religiously inclined, he received a presentation bible, at Chester in 1856, "In appreciation of his conduct as a clown, Christian and gentleman". Regarded as second only to the great W.F. Wallett, "Frowde the Proud", with his occasional covert sneer at the audience, used to dress as near the original jester style as possible. He married first a clergyman's daughter Elizabeth Hayden, in Liverpool in 1857, but she died in childbirth in 1858. He then went into business on his own account, in 1859 forming "Frowde's Cirque Modele". He remarried, to Susan Mary Harrison, another clergyman's daughter, at Leamington in 1861, and retired from the ring at age thirty. For the next thirty-eight years he managed the three estates that he had purchased in Gloucestershire. Living at Walden Court, he built a mission-room there becoming a lay preacher with a Bishop's Licence. He died, in Gloucester, on 28th August 1899, aged 68, leaving a family of two sons and two daughters.² The article in *Gloucestershire History*¹ included information gleaned from the first part of James

Frowde's edited autobiography, published in the *Gloucester Journal* within a fortnight of his death.³ The family's permission to publish later parts was withdrawn.⁴ Although Frowde left behind many papers relating to his public career, in the care of his son Charles,⁵ the fate of these, including his autobiography, remained unknown until 1997. Then, David Stabb of Folkestone seeking information on his forebear, at the Theatre Museum in London, was alerted to my work and contacted me directly. The Frowde papers were in his possession, including the manuscript autobiography, and he kindly loaned these to the Museum. The five-volume manuscript was difficult to read, written mainly in faded blue pencil, with some sections written and overwritten or annotated in ink. In total there were over 500 pages. Transcription of the original was a daunting task but was eventually accomplished, admittedly with some gaps where the palaeography was indistinct. This transcript is deposited at the Theatre Museum and is now available for consultation, although subject to revision. The story of Frowde's early life with a famous circus, travelling the length and breadth of the nation, is particularly interesting, full of incident and drama illustrative of the age.

The autobiography, covering the years 1831 to



James Henry Frowde as a Young Man

1857, was written in 1894 apparently at the request of James Frowde's children. "In order to keep me out of mischief, or possibly thinking there may be acts I have committed they think they should avoid".

EARLY DAYS AT HOME

Following his mother's death and his father's remarriage, James left school and contemplated a number of careers, including that of a sailor on 'HMS Victory', with two spells as a grocer's assistant and a period with a whitesmith. In July 1846 his life was changed by the arrival of 'Hengler's Circus Royal' at Portsmouth, housed in a special wooden building. His brother George, already with the circus, introduced him to his grandfather, Mons Hengler (1784-1861), uncles Charles Hengler (1821-1887) and John Hengler (1831-1919), two uncles by marriage William Powell (1816-1900) and Richard Beacham, and three of his aunts. Another uncle by marriage, John Henderson (1822-1867) came as a visitor. James wrote; - "I was at the circus one evening and saw Dad listening to and watching Billy Taylor, a funny but very coarse clown ... I saw my father laugh and thought how I should like to be a clown! I remember grandfather coming before the audience to work a trick horse. I have never seen a man make his obeisance to the audience with the grace and command that he did, except perhaps his son Edward (1819-1865) who was not then with the concern". It was during this stay in Portsmouth, that James' uncle Charles met his wife-to-be, Mary Sprake (1828-1902), and after an apparently brief courtship married her! "She was the daughter of the Bandmaster of the 11th Hussars, a very eminent musician and composer. To say that the young lady was very pretty is like saying that honey is not sour. Before long my uncle cast longing eyes on this angel in human mould and on the 19th day of August 1846 they walked from the church in the parish of Portsea, as handsome a couple as ever swore fidelity".

One day James' brother George returned home with the news that Hengler's circus was disbanded and that Uncle Charles had joined the circus of William Cooke (an uncle to Aunt Charles). A year later; - "A circus was being sold up and Edward bought the nucleus that forms Hengler's (Circus), now of world renown and repute. Aunt Charles by this time ... had given

birth (to Susannah Jane) and I think (it was) in September Uncle Charles' show was started. In October of that year I found myself with him".

EARLY HARDSHIPS WITH THE CIRCUS

Although it might be imagined that James would be helped by his uncle to develop a clown act,¹ his autobiography makes clear that this was not so. In fact he seems to have been discouraged, disparaged and indeed treated harshly. This may explain why his 'family' withdrew permission for the rest of his story to be published in the Gloucester Journal in 1899.³ James' account also hints at some rift between his mother and her younger brother Charles Hengler (the 'Governor').

At Nottingham, for Christmas 1847, "Uncle John was poorly and I had to sleep at one of the performer's (lodgings). A lie was told of me. One morning, after I had counted the checks, etc., the Governor, with whip in hand, asked me a question. I would not answer! In the presence of Aunt I might have done. He swore I should! No dog ever got a worse whipping. The door was locked, no one could come in, but the landlady kicked up a row. My skin and bones were in a miserable condition, as was my shirt". The Hengler family, including James, was lodging at a confectioner's and they lived sumptuously. But James' aching bones and wounded spirit put him off his food. "The whip, already frayed, was again threatened, but a word of pity and supplication from the liquid eyes of Aunt Charles prevailed ... I am still a kind of outcast, sitting by the wall. Father and mother (Hengler), with Uncle John, are at the supper table, the old man having a discussion with his wife. Her repartee is too smart for his expletives. He taunts her with her nationality (Irish). 'Oh, ah', said she, assuming a brogue you might have hung your cap upon, 'More power to my elbow' ...I gave an involuntary laugh, in a second hot potatoes were smacking the wall around my head". On Christmas Day, "Uncle and Aunt Henderson have come, all available relations were present. We had a jolly dinner, table replete, with fruit etc., and general chatter and laughter. I'm in a corner, busy with my thoughts. Revenge or envy has no place but I wonder why I was born. I think of Her and remember hearing how, on her dying bed she grieved and prayed for a blessing on her then-despised brother Charles, now the head of the family".

In February 1848, at Derby, James suffered two blows. "A cuff on the ear from grandmother, that knocked me off the corner of a box, simply because I stared at Uncle, who had come to see her, instead of answering her question. It was here I heard of my Father's (financial) failure, near all was sold and all (creditors) were paid. Speculative builders had much to do with it". James went with the circus to Nottingham, then to Coventry for the fair. "I was sketching Coventry's arms, an elephant, and was wholly absorbed ... when I was called back from a brutal idea to a brutal fact. Uncle Edward, thinking I was larking, came behind and gave me such a whack with a stick across the ribs as left me writhing on the tan. Charles came in just as this affectionate attention had commenced and stopped further display by an explosion which might have put his brother to shame! Whatever licking I got from Charles was, as his idea, all right, but I don't think he would allow others to bully me. And Aunt, gentle and



Contortionist

beautiful as she was then, was always my champion and often shielded my faults".

At Birmingham, in 1848, James decided to become a contortionist. "I had a very idle time of it and resolved to learn the tricks of posturing. How to begin? I enquired and for reply was told to practice. I commenced with the splits, at all times, in all places, Church, home or abroad, from the time I awoke until I went to bed I was training my muscles".

Tenting was resumed in April 1848. "It was at Oxford, in 'Dick Turpin', I first spoke a part, that of a tinker trying to evade a toll. If I had stuck to the text all might have been well but I did a mild gag and told the gate-keeper he ought to let me go

through ... out of respect to my cap and gown. I thought I had done something wonderful. I had got a laugh. I got something else as soon as I was out of the audience's sight! 'Turpin' and 'Tom King' gave me a taste of their whips, both thinking I had committed a species of sacrilege and insulted the University".

Later, at Oxford, his little cousin Susie was treated badly by the nurse and James had 'dealt' with her. This was to have an unexpected consequence. "One night I was writing out orders for bill-board displayers when I received a command to go to the circus. There was Uncle Edward, with his fiddle, and some performers sitting round the ring fence. As soon as I appeared he called me into the ring. In the centre was a 'rough'. As I came into the ring, Edward played a chord of introduction and then described me as 'The boy that pushed the nurse, head-over-heels into the cradle. Now', said he, 'let us see how he can push the Oxford Chicken'. I had to take off my coat and vest, and tuck up my sleeves from my skinny arms ... my opponent grinned as he took stock of me and contemplated which part of my physiognomy he would first attack. He soon made up his mind and I found myself on my back. Again and again I received his gracious attention. At last I resolved not to spar but receive and give. This tactic was right, my opponent was wrong and I gave him one on the nose that made him smile with tears in his eyes. I got in another and then I became dazed. Uncle Charles coming, the fight was over, but he did let Edward and others have the lash of his tongue. For many days I was quite ill and very sore, unable to practice. Grandmother heard of it and she was angry. That fight had this effect on one of my tormentors. On the last night we were pulling down decorations and he shoved me. We were both in the ring, the performers and musicians in various parts of the building, and in their presence I gave him as big a hiding as probably he ever had. Evidently this was to the secret pleasure of Uncle Charles and the dismay of Edward and the others. Ever from that time no one cuffed or bullied me". At the end of 1848, the company moved to Portsmouth and James received a salary for the first time and lived in his own lodgings. He ate his Christmas dinner with Aunt and Uncle Charles and his Aunt and Uncle Beacham joined them from London.

In 1849 the company went to Brighton then Lewes. James recalled how; - "The Governor caught me practicing and gave me a good

slanging. By now I could do a few tricks in posturing. This I could practice in my bedroom, but I wanted to do a fore spring ... a kind of flip-flap but forwards instead of backwards. I made miserable attempts at this and deserved all the compliments the Governor gave me on my clumsiness! ... I had to submit to much hardship and having a row with John I determined to see whether I could not get a living as a posture master (contortionist)".

JAMES GOES HIS OWN WAY

James went back to Portsmouth, and spent a few days with his Uncle Frowde. He overheard his uncle discuss apprenticing him to a draper and was so alarmed that, in spite of having only half-a-crown in his pocket, he set off for London! There he saw his father who had set up a gutta-percha business, with the help of his wife's family, and was persuaded to work in the factory. "Was all the effort and practice to become a posture master, all the aches and pains, to be thrown away?" James soon took refuge with his Aunt Powell, who seems to have temporarily left the equestrian profession, perhaps to raise a family, and had taken a house and shop in Westminster Road. James continued to practice his 'posturing'. "When the coast was clear I used to undress and have a good practice ... One night after 'hopping the frog' I rested, sitting down with my legs behind my back. By some means I fell on to the fender, which made a great clatter. I feared I had disturbed the house and, in fear, I listened, for I had the gas burning which ought to have been out an hour ago! All was silent so off I went at it again. I was sitting on the chair, preparatory to hopping to the ground on my hands, when I thought I heard a noise. I looked up through the skylight and through it I saw three ladies looking at me from the passage window! Down I came, out went the gas ... in despair and shame I listened to their peals of laughter. Next morning I went to Church Square, off the New Cut, and that night I was performing at the gaff". This was at Dick Moffatt's circus, New Cut.

James found new lodgings and graphically described the death, from cholera, of his neighbour 'Professor Hemmings', an acrobat who 'foot juggled' some boys *a la* Risley. "His face was an awful hue and expression, but more terrifying was the grief and language of his wife. She must have been demented, her language was

blasphemy, she was hideous, and she threw herself by his side, embracing him, saying he should not be taken away. The next day, both were in coffins ... As a preventative to cholera I used to take spoonfuls of salt. Lots were dying of it".

James then met his Uncle Henderson who told him he had started a new circus and would give him something to do. "Aunt Powell found me and I went to help her. As soon as I got a few shillings I resolved to walk to Henderson's, at Rugby. My father was living in Islington ... and on the eve of my departure I went to call ... I tried to comfort him. He would have given me all, but not a cent would I see, not a crust of bread. He gave me the certificate; he still seemed to expect that he or his heir would come in for some Devon property. He gave me his blessing and prayers. I gave him a promise that I would no longer neglect Sundays but attend a place of worship, and from that time I have obeyed ... I never saw or heard him again. I



Bottle Equilibrist

went back sorrowing. Next morning, I started for Rugby. I was willing to work as an apprentice, but saw no prospect of advancement".

James left his uncle Henderson's circus, at Stourbridge, from where he went to Birmingham and got a trial at one of the halls. He got on well and received a few shillings. By Christmas 1849 his money was gone! He walked to Coventry, the journey taking him all day, and went to the Red Lion where the landlord was a friend of Uncle

Edward. He was remembered, given a bed, and provided with some Christmas cheer! Next morning he found a local publican with a concert room, who needed someone that very night. The audience initially received him without enthusiasm but his tricks and contortions won them round and he was engaged. One day his Uncle Charles visited him: - "Well", said he, 'Have you had enough of vagabonding?'. 'Yes!'. 'Well', said he, 'Meet me at such a time, come to us, and for goodness sake get that hair cut, here', giving me half a sovereign, 'and get some grub into you'. I went and had some grub, then with some pain to have my hair cut".

BACK WITH HENGLER'S AND GIVEN A CHANCE

"We got to York, I had a kind reception from Aunt ... It was Sunday, I went to the arena, saw the horses, saw Susie much grown and very pretty. The circus stood in a meadow between the castle and river ... My wages were 15/- a week, my duties to count the checks and make up check boxes, to help the Governor, attend the box office, take money in the evening and see the horses feet got cleaned and made comfortable for the night ... All very well, but (what) about performing? I alluded to it, in a most modest manner, but got chaffed ... Within a few weeks, after the box office was closed, I saw Uncle and Edward in the promenade, intent on some business. I slipped into the dressing room, doffed my clothing, took two chairs into the ring and came in as a performer. I could hear Edward's hush, I made my bow and did all my tricks as though I was before the public, finished, made a bow and heard a laugh and applause. Edward came down, patted me on the back and otherwise praised me. Charles came after, 'So you think you would like to be a performer, I'll give you a chance". James was put on with Jem Ryan, a juggler of about his own age, to do some tricks between Ryan's. "Two pretty objects we were for public affection. However the many-headed monster gave me a good turn and the Governor came round and told me I should perform on his benefit night and he would make me a present of a dress. This was ordered and delivered, a pair of red tights with a headpiece and horns, only eyes, nose, mouth and ears were at liberty. I was now duly advertised and announced as the 'Red Man of the Mountains', and received 20/- per week".

At North Shields James received a letter from his father, telling him that he was mortally ill, asking him to think kindly of his stepmother and letting him know that there would be no inheritance 'for any of you' but promising him 'the likeness of your Mother'. A letter from his stepmother, dated 16th April, told him of his father's death that day. "Grandmother sent for me, she and Uncle (Charles) showed great sympathy. I returned to my duties, am 19 years of age. Had father lived a few hours longer he would have been 50." Newcastle was the next town, with the circus standing by the railway station. Shortly afterwards tenting resumed.

AN AWFUL ACCIDENT

During a journey from Haydon Bridge to Haltwhistle, the circus was travelling in convoy; - "Charles was driving the band carriage, Edward on the box by his side ... all at once a succession of screams was heard, and from the rear of the cortege coming at an awful speed was the horse 'Battleaxe' with six of the ladies in the trap. Aunt Powell was one of them but she was not driving, for the horse had shaken its bridle off and ... was coming towards us at racing speed ... Aunt Charles was on the rear seat ... As they passed me, Charles turned round, saw what had occurred and in a moment, as the runaway came (along) side, leapt from the box seat and had the horse by the nose and held on like grim death, stopping the horse but running the cart up the bank. Over went the trap and Aunt was thrown out ... in the agony of the moment the Governor or Edward let the reins go ... the carriage came up as she fell, her head against the spokes of the wheel. To me they seem to have struck her head two or three times .. her face but a few moments ago a perfection of womanly beauty was bathed in blood. The skin of her forehead seemed to have fallen over her face ... William Powell had replaced the bridle, jumped in the trap and was off as hard as he could make the horse gallop, for the doctor. Charles was wringing his hands, women were weeping and horror-stricken men could not, without emotion, look upon her ... I was sent off at once to the hotel to prepare a bed and met Powell and the doctor. I don't think the doctor looked as easy as he would in his study or surgery for Powell was rushing the horse. The whole was to me like a hideous dream. Presently, as I sat in despair expecting to hear of her death, Uncle came to me

but so broken". At this point James was sent ahead to discover the whereabouts of the circus's agent, a 'jossler', who had lost contact with the company. "I got back to the concern and learnt that Aunt's injuries had been sewn up and treated by the doctor and nurse. She was at Haltwhistle". Some time after this, when the circus had resumed its travels, Aunt Charles caught-up with the company, at Aspatria. James went to see her at the hotel. "She was very bad, but not so much disfigured as I feared, but yet marked for life and always, I think, different in temper. Of course her nerves were much shaken".

IN CHARGE OF THE MONKEY

Between Haltwhistle and Aspatria, James carelessly allowed a white-faced monkey, 'Jimmy', to escape. Purchased by Uncle Charles, from a penny circus at the North Shields fair, the monkey had been the star rider of the show, and catching lighted candlesticks. Jimmy became one of Hengler's principal attractions, "The promoter of more laughter than either clowns or comic acts". It was just outside Aspatria, while the company was preparing for entry to the town, that Jimmy escaped. "I had put myself tidy and was now attending to Jimmy's dressing. Something was the matter with his breeches. I took them to the wardrobe van for repair, leaving Jimmy in the care of the clown Adrian. On my return, the monkey gave Adrian a grin, Adrian dropped the chain and Jimmy was off. I went after him but he got into a coppice ... and was lost. There was awful consternation, the parade delayed until the last moment. Then off they went and I was left with the injunction not to come without Jimmy. Presently a young farmer came, to know my business. I told him I dare not go without the monkey and begged his assistance ... he was giving up the search when, to my great joy, I found Simpson the musician's pipe. 'Oh', said I, 'He can't be far, here is the pipe he was smoking when he ran away'. 'What', said he, 'Do you mean to say he smokes?'. 'Yes, one a day is his allowance'. 'Well, Jim, I'd like to see him', and he renewed his assistance. The search was useless and we had to separate. Said he 'Will he do any harm to the game?'. 'No' said I. I was afraid he would go for his gun and shoot Jimmy, 'He won't touch game unless it is well hung' ... the farmer conducted me to the nearest road out of the wood to Aspatria. Here I went to Aunt Powell and told

her I would leave at once". Shortly afterwards, "An immense load of faggots passed and on top was Jimmie, holding the end of his chain ... I think he was as pleased to see me as I was to see him. I carried him proudly to the tent, performed my act of posturing and all was well".

Some weeks after, at Kirby Stephen, the monkey escaped again and injured a boy. "The village was in alarm and many were ready to do fight or had shut themselves in. You should bear in mind that monkeys or any other foreign animal was a much greater rarity than they are today". It was James' task to catch the creature and it was soon spotted on the roof of one of the houses. "I got to the roof and was after the demon when down he scampered into to the arms of the Governor". James took his vengeance on the woman of the house, heard declaiming against circus folk and all other vagabonds, by dislodging a chimney stone which fell, smashing the porridge pot, scattering the hearth fire and sending the inmates screaming out of the house convinced that the monkey was coming down the chimney after them!

The company tented through the Lake District, with James noting that Whitehaven possessed a good beach. He was shocked to see women bathing with the men there, the women undressing on the beach under a shawl, "not a bathing machine near the place".

Sometime during the summer of 1850, Uncle Edward brought a horse and two monkeys, male



In Character

and female. James, inevitably, was put in charge of the monkeys. "The male was of the same tribe as she was, one of the most old-fashioned looking women you ever saw, always smiles, chatter or scold. She bore, as animals of a lower order often do, a comic likeness to Jim Ryan senior, especially when she implored for a favour. She, Mary, was very fond of the other simian, which used to treat her in the most churlish manner. It was funny to watch them. She would, as far as her chain would allow her, get as near to him as possible and in subdued manner converse with him, showing, by tender glances she bestowed on the brute, how loving her communication was. He used to get as far away from her as his chain would permit ... looking straight before him all the time. Poor Mary got me into a sad mess or two". During the journey from Durham to Chester-le-Street, Mary had been bundled into a box upside down. James resuscitated her, in the local inn, with old beer made warm and gingered. "Two men, after my departure, had gone into the tap room in order to eat their mid-day meal, and not observing or caring to examine the box before the fire, sat down to the table and called for their beer. They were recuperating their tissues when poor Mary crawled to the table, stood and putting her hands on the hospitable board, gave the two boys a look which instead of awakening hospitable sensations, or charity, so filled the men with alarm that they scuttled out of the room, locking the door and calling for the landlord ... Mary had satisfied her beery inclination, raised the cup and mauled the food. The Governor arrived just in time to prevent murder ... Had we brought an epidemic to their village we could not have committed a greater atrocity".

JAMES PLAYS HIS FIRST DRAMATIC PART

Early in 1851, at Bradford, James revolted against his duties of counting checks and handed over the responsibility to his Aunt Charles. He got a chance to play a part in 'The Merry Miller's Wedding Day', when a disgruntled actor went missing. Although his offer to play the part was initially met with a tirade of abuse, the Governor was at his wits end and eventually sent the wardrobe mistress to get James ready for the ring. "I had on the big cap and pinafore, proved myself, and did the part. One would have thought this would have pleased the Governor, but no, he was

riled. Every time I made my appearance at the ring doors it was 'Where's Dickie?' (the man who had been playing the part). He never came again and I know not what became of him." James' new cousin Alfred was baptised at Bradford, although James was not invited to the celebrations due to falling out with his uncle over the matter of the checks!

Next, at Halifax, the rumour that James had hanged himself spread after his larking pals got his 'Red Man' dress, stuffed it, fitted a mask and hung it by the neck out of a window! At Leeds, James performed his 'Red Man' act and for the first time a new act balancing on Champagne bottles. In 'Turpin' James played the part of the Beadle, well enough to get a 10/- rise in salary! Within a few weeks it was his 20th birthday. Manager Broadfoot cast him for a part in his new piece on the 'Afghan War'. But in October 1851, at Peterborough, James was dismissed after receiving his salary! Uncle and Aunt Powell also left.

JAMES WITH COOKE'S CIRCUS

James advertised in the 'Era', to seek fresh fields, and got engagements at Rugby and Sunderland but was then invited to join Mr. H. Cooke, proprietor of a large circus at Plymouth. Although required to assist with box keeping, he also gained new experience. Cooke advertised him as a Dutchman 'Mynheer Frowde'. He used his tricks and posturing for the entrees and his chair trick as a ring act. James was very happy at Plymouth and lived well on 60/- a week. After his spell with Cooke, James had a yearning to get back to his relations.

BACK WITH HENGLER'S – 1852-57

James travelled with his 'family' from 1852 until after his autobiography finished in April 1857. His escapades in many of the towns they visited are described in graphic detail. He describes the towns themselves, people he met both within and outside the 'profession' and he paints a picture of life with a travelling circus company that is unique. His value to the Hengler family became increasingly appreciated and the Governor, only eleven years older than James, became increasingly sympathetic. People would go three or four times a week merely to hear the wit and drollery of Jim Frowde. James proved that by dint

of determination, perseverance and the possession of a fine sense of humour, he could rise above adversity and harsh treatment and succeed in a very competitive world.

Hengler's company tented during the summer, a relentless round of toil and upheaval leavened with artistic endeavour, and overwintered in buildings, either purpose built or modified theatres. The sequence of venues mentioned by



*In Masonic Regalia - Gloucester
(the basis of engraving published in 1994 article)*

James matches that established by independent research using circus programmes and local newspapers.⁶ James refers at various points in his autobiography to his rough notes and collection of cuttings. These papers are still missing.

In his late teens James started to fall in love but suffered many disappointments. Even enthusiastic circus-goers were reluctant for their daughters to become involved with circus folk. James was proud to be a member of his profession, a showman, and had a certain contempt for 'jossers'. On the other hand, young ladies particularly appreciated his popularity as a performer and he gives entertaining accounts of his amorous adventures. It was recalled of him, in 1888,⁷ that when Hengler's circus opened in Liverpool, in 1857, "Being a good-looking young fellow, Jim had a host of female admirers and he

used to be daily inundated with love letters and *souvenirs d'amour*". Eventually, of course, he found his true love and married Elizabeth Hayden, youngest daughter of Revd. Christopher Hayden, at St. John's church, Liverpool, on 4th June 1857.

THE REST OF JAMES FROWDE'S STORY

Although his autobiography deals with his life only until 1857, his career with Hengler's circus continued until just after his second marriage, to Susan Mary Harrison, in 1861.¹ Hengler's circus visited Gloucestershire on many occasions⁸ and indeed Charles Hengler and his family settled in the county. From the 1870s they lived at Cugley Farm, Newent, later at Kent's Green House, Taynton. Meanwhile, James Frowde, aged thirty, had purchased three estates near Newent, at Hayes, Walden Court and Aylesmore, and was able to enjoy his new life as a flourishing agriculturist. His eldest son was born at Cheltenham, in 1862, his younger son and two daughters were born at Newent. It must have been some time in the 1860s that James became a Freemason, occupying the Chair of the Zetland Masonic Lodge in 1866. In 1874 he was Worshipful Master of the Eastnor Lodge, Ledbury. Following the death of his wife in 1895, James took rooms in Westgate Street, Gloucester, close to his beloved Gloucester Cathedral. He died in Gloucester on 28th August 1899, after a short illness, and was laid to rest beside his beloved Susan. He had been a resident of Gloucestershire for thirty-eight years. At the funeral, only Charles Hengler's youngest daughter, Edith Hawkins, of Staunton, attended.¹

Sources

- 1 *Gloucestershire History*, pp.9-14 (1994).
- 2 *Victorian Arena; the Performers*, John M. Turner (Lingdales, Formby, 1995), p.52.
- 3 *Gloucester Journal*, 9 September 1899.
- 4 *Ibid*, 16 September 1899.
- 5 *Ibid*, 2 September 1899.
- 6 *Historical Hengler's Circus*, John M. Turner (Lingdales Press, Formby, 1989).
- 7 Charles Milward, in *Liverpool Citizen*, 12 September 1888.
- 8 *Gloucestershire History*, pp.4-5 (1989)