married, Aug. 17, 1768, Rev. Thomas Amyand, third son of the celebrated surgeon Claudius Amyand. Was he in any way connected with Sir Dudley Ryder, Knt., who became in 1754 Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench?—(2) the parentage and family of the Right Hon. Sir John Skynner, Knt., Lord Chief Baron of the Court of Exchequer 1777-88.

F. DE H. L.

ADMIRAL SIR JOHN BALCHIN.—Information wanted as to his parentage and connexion with other Balchins. His monument in Westminster Abbey states that he was born 1669, died 1744. Answers may be sent direct to (Mrs.) H. E. MALDEN. 17 Rose Hill, Dorking.

Replies.

"LA BÊTE DU GÉVAUDAN."

(12 S. i. 267, 315.)

In the year 1765 this famous animal spread terror throughout the Cevennes and all through France. It appeared first in December, 1764, at St. Flour in Provence, and on the 20th of that month it was alleged that the beast had devoured a little girl who was looking after cattle near the town of Mende.

No two accounts of the animal appear to agree. Ridiculous exaggerations were printed, and a most amazing amount of nonsense was circulated and believed to be true in connexion with its ravages. We must not forget that the scene of its encounters was a mountainous part of Central France, and people living in hilly countries are more prone to be superstitious than those who dwell on the plains.

Horace Walpole wrote (from Arlington Street) on March 26, 1765, to Lord Hertford, saying:—

"We are extremely amused with the wonderful histories of your hyena in the Gévaudan; but our foxhunters despise you: it is exactly the enchanted monster of old romances. If I had known its history a few months ago, I believe it would have appeared in 'The Castle of Otranto.'"

Walpole was as highly diverted by "La Bête" as he was by the Cock Lane Ghost or by the Dragon of Wantley. The attitude of the two countries (France and England) towards "La Bête" may be compared. The French were terrified, and lost their heads, and the English found in the stories which reached them a source of endless fun and amusement. Walpole's reference to "our foxhunters" probably had its source in a letter which appeared in a magazine at the time, and in connexion with the matter, signed by "an English fox-hunter." This contained an amusing account of what would happen if the lions "of his Majesty's collection in the Tower" were to escape into Epping Forest, when "half-a-dozen hearty country squires, who perhaps had served a campaign or two in the militia, with a pack of staunch foxhounds to lead them to their game, would presumably give a good account of them."

The argument was intended to show that a tremendous fuss was being made over the capture of an animal which would easily be disposed of in England by any gamekeeper and his gun. In a pretended letter from Paris headed 'Wonderful Intelligence,' it was stated very humorously in the English newspapers:—

"The wild beast that makes such a noise all over Europe, and after whom there are at least thirty thousand regular forces and seventy thousand militia and armed peasants, proves to be a descendant on the mother's side from the famous Dragon of Wantley, and on the father's side from a Scotch Highland Laird. He eats a house as an alderman eats a custard. With a wag of his tail he throws down a church; as he passed the convent of St. Anna Maria, and was smelling a grape vine on the wall, he unfortunately became flatulent, by which means the whole fabric was laid in ruins and one hundred and fourteen souls perished. He was attacked on the night of the 8th instant, in his den, by a detachment of fourteen thousand men under the command of the Duce de Valiant; but the platoon firing, and even the artillery, had only the effect of making him sneeze; at last he gave a slash with his tail by which we lost seven thousand men; then, making a jump over the left wing, made his escape. He unfortunately made water as he passed, by which means five hundred grenadiers were drowned in the puddle; but ten thousand horse and seventy-two thousand foot are in full march to reinforce the army."

Elsewhere another paragraph was printed in similar vein in the London papers:—

"Yesterday, about ten in the morning, a courier arrived [in London] from France, with the melancholy news that the wild beast had on the 25th instant been attacked by the whole French army, consisting of one hundred and twenty thousand men; he totally defeated in the twinkling of an eye, swallowing the whole train of artillery and devouring twenty-five thousand men."

One Scottish newspaper, unable to appreciate these humours, preferred to associate the animal with the number 666, and the Apocalypse and "the scarlet lady" were dragged in.
In France "La Bête" was taken very seriously. A proclamation was posted up all over Languedoc:

"By the King and the Intendant of the Province of Languedoc. Notice is given to all persons that His Majesty being justly affected by the situation of his subjects, now exposed to the ravages of the wild beast which for four months past has infested Vivarais and Gévaudan, and being desirous to stop the progress of such a calamity, has determined to promise a reward of six thousand livres to any person or persons who shall kill this animal. Such as are willing to undertake the pursuit of him may previously apply to the Sieur de la Font, sub-deputy to the Intendant of Mende, who will give them the necessary instructions agreeably to what has been presented by the ministry on the part of His Majesty."

On Jan. 9, 1765, an entire troop of French light horse was dispatched under Capt. Duhamel in quest of the animal, and on this occasion the Bishop of Mende said a solemn mass, and the consecrated Host was elevated in the cathedral, which was thronged by the devout for the entire day.

The most absurdly exaggerated stories were related of the "beast." We are told that it tore the entire cheek off one boy, and gobbled it up before him. It rises on its hind legs and leaps upon its prey, which it seizes by the neck or throat, but is afraid of horned cattle, from which it runs away.

On another occasion it was said to have snapped a woman's head off at one bite.

The career of "La Bête" came to an end on Sept. 20, 1765. On that day M. Antoine de Beanterne, who had come from another part of France on purpose to slay the beast, shot him in the eye at about fifty paces distant. The animal was finished off by Reinhard, the Duke of Orleans's game-keeper. Beanterne set out for Versailles with the body, in order to present it to the King. Walpole wrote to Lady Hervey from Paris on Oct. 3, 1765, saying:

"Fortune bestowed on me a much more curious sight than a set of princes: the wild beast of Gévaudan, which is killed, and actually in the Queen's antechamber. It is a thought less than a leviathan and the Beast in the Revelations. It is imprinted on its dead jaws."

-On the same day Walpole wrote to John Chute:

"In the Queen's antechamber we foreigners and the foreign ministers were shown the famous beast of the Gévaudan just arrived, and covered with a cloth, which two chausseurs lifted up. It is an absolute wolf, but uncommonly large, and the expression of agony and fierceness remains strongly unimprinted on its dead jaws."

The work which Mrs. Anderson refers to, called "La Bête du Gévaudan," was written by M. Élie Berthet and published in Paris first in 1858 (5 vols.), with a second edition in 1862. A poem on the subject, widely read at the time, was called "Sur la Bête monstrueuse et cruelle du Gévaudan." It was written by Baron de R——, a certain "gentilhomme de Picardie." It may be found in Le Journal Encyclopédique for Oct. 1, 1765. Two most admirable articles upon "La Bête" appeared in English magazines: the first in Household Words, Nov. 20, 1858, and the second in The Argosy, vol. iv. pp. 54-62. Larousse's Grand Dictionnaire also has some very interesting details under the heading 'Bête du Gévaudan.'

It is interesting to know that in 1632 the same part of France was terrorized by a monster of a similar kind to "La Bête." Particulars of this will be found in "Reçit véritable du monstrueux et effroyable dragon ocès en une montagne du Haut Auvergne, par J. de La Brière, natif de Cervières en Forest, joutxe la lettre escripte de Beaufort, par le seigneur dudit lieu, syndic de la noblesse d'Auvergne." 1632, in 8vo.

This is referred to in Bibliographie des Traditions et de la Litt. Populaire de l'Auvergne, par H. Gaidoz et Paul Sébillot, Clermont-Ferrand, 1885.

A. L. HUMPEREYS.

187 Piccadilly, W.

The beast was a very large and terrible wolf, as tall as a young calf, which, after many thrilling episodes, was killed on Sept. 21, 1765. Many details about the reputed havoc and the chase are to be found in the Archives of the Puy de Dôme; they have been repeatedly used in provincial publications. See Congrès archéologique de Franco, 1858, p. 21; Bulletin de la Société d'agriculture de la Lozère, 1872, xxii. p. 91; 1884, xxxv. p. 180. I have also seen a very rare book on the subject, printed by the author himself, a village priest, but I do not remember the exact title.

S. REINACH.

Saint Germain en Laye.