

# VARIOUS

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Various

**Eclectic Magazine of  
Foreign Literature, Science,  
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# Various Eclectic Magazine of Foreign Literature, Science, and Art, February, 1885

## A FAITHLESS WORLD

BY FRANCES POWER COBBE

A little somnolence seems to have overtaken religious controversy of late. We are either weary of it or have grown so tolerant of our differences that we find it scarcely worth while to discuss them. By dint of rubbing against each other in the pages of the Reviews, in the clubs, and at dinner parties, the sharp angles of our opinions have been smoothed down. Ideas remain in a fluid state in this temperate season of sentiment, and do not, as in old days, crystallize into sects. We have become almost as conciliatory respecting our views as the Chinese whom Huc describes as carrying courtesy so far as to praise the religion of their neighbors and depreciate their own. "You, honored sir," they were wont to say, "are of the noble and lofty religion of Confucius. I am of the poor and insignificant religion of Lao-tze." Only now and then some fierce controversialist, hailing usually from India or the colonies where London amenities seem not yet to have penetrated, startles us by the desperate earnestness wherewith he disproves what we had almost forgotten that anybody seriously believes.

As a result of the general "*laissez croire*" of our day, it has come to pass that a question has been mooted which, to our fathers, would have seemed preposterous: "Is it of any consequence what we believe, or whether we believe anything? Suppose that by-and-by we all arrive at the conclusion that Religion has been altogether a mistake, and renounce with one accord the ideas of God and Heaven, having (as M. Comte assures us) outgrown the theological stage of human progress; what then? Will it make any serious difference to anybody?"

Hitherto, thinkers of Mr. Bradlaugh's type have sung pæans of welcome for the expected golden years of Atheism, when "faiths and empires" will

"Gleam  
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream."

Christians and Theists of all schools, on the other hand, have naturally deprecated with horror and dread such a cataclysm of faith as sure to prove a veritable Ragnarok of universal ruin. In either case it has been taken for granted that the change from a world of little faith, like that in which we live, to a world wholly destitute of faith, would be immensely great and far-reaching; and that at the downfall of religion not only would the thrones and temples of the earth, but every homestead in every land, be shaken to its foundation. It is certainly a step beyond any yet taken in the direction of scepticism to question this conclusion, and maintain that such a revolution would be of trivial import, since things would go on with mankind almost as well without a God as with one.

The man who, with characteristic downrightness, has blurted out most openly this last doubt of all – the doubt whether doubt be an evil – is, as my readers will have recognized, Mr. Justice Stephen. In the concluding pages of one of his sledge-hammerings on the heads of his adversaries, in the *Nineteenth Century* for last June, he rung the changes upon the idea (with some reservations, to be presently noted) as follows: —

“If human life is in the course of being fully described by science, I do not see what materials there are for any religion, or, indeed, what would be the use of one, or why it is wanted. We can get on very well without one, for though the view of life which science is opening to us gives us nothing to worship, it gives us an infinite number of things to enjoy... The world seems to me a very good world, if it would only last. It is full of pleasant people and curious things, and I think that most men find no great difficulty in turning their minds away from its transient character. Love, friendship, ambition, science, literature, art, politics, commerce, professions, trades, and a thousand other matters, will go equally well, as far as I can see, whether there is, or is not, a God or a future state.” —*Nineteenth Century*, No. 88, p. 917.

Had these noteworthy words been written by an obscure individual, small weight would have attached to them. We might have observed on reading them that the – not wise – person who three thousand years ago “said in his heart, there is no God,” had in the interval plucked up courage to say in the magazines that it does not signify whether there be one or not. But the dictum comes to us from a gentleman who happens to be the very antithesis of the object of Solomon’s detestation, a man of distinguished ability and unsullied character, of great knowledge of the world (as revealed to successful lawyers), of almost abnormal clear-headedness; and lastly, strangest anomaly of all! who is the representative of a family in which the tenderest and purest type of Protestant piety has long been hereditary. It is the last utterance of the devout “Clapham School,” of Venn, Stephen, Hannah More and Wilberforce, which we hear saying: “I think we could do very well without religion.”

As it is a widely received idea just now that the Evolution theory is destined to coil about religion till it strangle it, and as it has become the practice with the scientific party to talk of religion as politicians twenty years ago talked of Turkey, as a Sick Man destined to a speedy dissolution, it seems every way desirable that we should pay the opinion of Sir James Stephen on this head that careful attention to which, indeed, everything from his pen has a claim. Those amongst us who have held that Religion is of priceless value should bring their prepossessions in its favor to the bar of sober judgment, and fairly face this novel view of it as neither precious Truth nor yet disastrous Error, but as an unimportant matter of opinion which Science may be left to settle without anxiety as to the issue. We ought to bring our Treasure to assay, and satisfy ourselves once for all whether it be really pure gold or only a fairy substitute for gold, to be transformed some day into a handful of autumn leaves and scattered to the winds.

To estimate the part played by Religion in the past history of the human race would be a gigantic undertaking immeasurably above my ambition.<sup>1</sup> A very much simpler inquiry is that which I propose to pursue: namely, one into the chief consequences which might be anticipated to follow the downfall of such Religion, as at present prevails in civilized Europe and America. When these consequences have been, however imperfectly, set in array we shall be in a position to form some opinion whether we “can do very well without religion.” Let me premise: —

1. That by the word Religion I mean definite faith in a Living and Righteous God; and, as a corollary therefrom, in the survival of the human soul after death. In other words, I mean by “religion” that nucleus of simple Theism which is common to every form of natural religion, of Christianity and Judaism; and, of course, in a measure also to remoter creeds, which will not be included in the present purview. Further, I do *not* mean Positivism, or Agnosticism, or Buddhism, exoteric or esoteric; or the recognition of the “Unknown and Unknowable,” or of a “Power not ourselves which makes for righteousness.” These may, or may not, be fitly termed “religions;” but it is not the results of their triumph or extinction which we are here concerned to estimate. I shall even permit myself generally

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<sup>1</sup> The best summary of the benefits which the Christian religion has historically wrought for mankind is, I think, to be found in that eloquent book “Gesta Christi,” by the great American philanthropist, Mr. Charles Brace. The author has made no attempt to delineate the shadowy side of the glowing picture, the evils of superstition and persecution wherewith men have marred those benefits.

to refer to all such phases of non-belief as involve denial of the dogmas of Theism above-stated as "Atheism;" not from discourtesy, but because it would be impossible at every point to distinguish them, and because, for the purposes of the present argument, they are tantamount to Atheism.

2. That I absolve myself from weighing against the advantages of Religion the evils which have followed its manifold corruptions. Those evils, in the case even of the Christian religion, I recognize to have been so great, so hideous, that during their prevalence it might have been plausibly – though even then, I think, not truly – contended that they out-balanced its benefits. But the days of the worst distortions of Christianity have long gone by. The Christianity of our day tends, as it appears to me, more and more to resume the character of the *Religion of Christ*, i. e., the religion which Christ believed and lived; and to reject that other and very different religion which men have taught in Christ's name. As this deep and silent but vast change comes over the spirit of the Christianity of modern Europe, it becomes better and better qualified to meet fearlessly the challenge, "Should we do well without religion in its Christian shape?" But it is not my task here to analyze the results of any one type of religion, Christian, Jewish, or simply Theistic; but only to register those of *Religion itself*, as I have defined it above, namely, faith in God and in immortality.

I confess, at starting on this inquiry, that the problem "Is religion of use, or can we do as well without it?" seems to me almost as grotesque as the old story of the woman who said that we owe vast obligation to the Moon, which affords us light on dark nights, whereas we are under no such debt to the Sun, who only shines by day, *when there is always light*. Religion has been to us so diffused a light that it is quite possible to forget how we came by the general illumination, save when now and then it has blazed out with special brightness. On the other hand, all the moon-like things which are proposed to us as substitutes for Religion, – friendship, science, art, commerce, and politics, – have a very limited area wherein they shine at all, and leave the darkness around much as they found it. It is the special and unique character of Religion to deal with the whole of human nature *all* our pleasures and pains and duties and affections and hopes and fears, here and hereafter. It offers to the Intellect an explanation of the universe (true or false we need not now consider); and, pointing to Heaven, it responds to the most eager of its questions. It offers to the Conscience a law claiming authority to regulate every act and every word. And it offers to the Heart an absolutely love-worthy Being as the object of its adoration. Whether these immense offers of Religion are all genuine, or all accepted by us individually, they are quite unmatched by anything which science, or art, or politics, or commerce, or even friendship, has to bestow. The relation of religion to us is not one-sided like theirs, but universal, ubiquitous; not moon-like, appearing at intervals, but sun-like, forming the source, seen or unseen, of all our light and heat, even of the warmth of our household fires. Strong or weak as may be its influence on us as individuals, it is the greatest thing with which we have to do, from the cradle to the grave. And this holds good whether we give ourselves up to it or reject it. It is the one great acceptance, or "*il gran rifiuto*." Nothing equally great can come in our way again.

In an estimate of the consequences which would follow a general rejection of religion, we are bound to take into view the two classes of men – those who are devout and those who are not so – who would, of course, be diversely affected by such a revolution of opinion. As regards the first, every one will concede that the loss of so important a factor in their lives would alter those lives radically. As regards the second, after noting the orderly and estimable conduct of many of them, the observer might, *per contra*, not unfairly surmise that they would continue to act just as they do at present were religion universally exploded. But ere such a conclusion could be legitimately drawn from the meritorious lives of non-religious men in the present order of society, we should be allowed (it is a familiar remark) to see the behavior of a whole nation of Atheists. Our contemporaries are no more fair samples of the outcome of Atheism than a little party of English youths who had lived for a few years in Central Africa would be samples of Negroes. It would take several thousand years to make a full-blooded Atheist out of the scion of forty generations of Christians. Our whole mental constitutions have been built up on food of religious ideas. A man on a mountain top, might as well

resolve not to breathe the ozone in the air, as to live in the intellectual atmosphere of England and inhale no Christianity.

As, then, it is impossible to forecast what would be the consequences of universal Atheism hereafter by observing the conduct of individual Atheists to-day, all that can be done is to study bit by bit the changes which must take place should this planet ever become, as is threatened, a *Faithless World*. In pursuing this line of inquiry it will be well to remember that every ill result of loss of faith and hope which we may now observe will be *cumulative* as a larger and yet larger number of persons, and at last the whole community, reject religion together. Atheists have been hitherto like children playing at the mouth of a cavern of unknown depth. They have run in and out, and explored it a little way, but always within sight of the daylight outside, where have stood their parents and friends calling on them to return. Not till the way back to the sunshine has been lost will the darkness of that cave be fully revealed.

I shall now register very briefly the more obvious and tangible changes which would follow the downfall of religion in Europe and America, and then devote my available space to a rather closer examination of those which are less manifest; the drying up of those hidden rills which now irrigate the whole subsoil of our civilization.

The first visible change in the Faithless World, of course, would be the suppression of Public and Private Worship and of Preaching; the secularization or destruction everywhere of Cathedrals, Churches, and Chapels; and the extinction of the Clerical Profession. A considerable *hiatus* would undoubtedly be thus made in the present order of things. Public Worship and Preaching, however much weariness of the flesh has proverbially attended them, have, to say the least, done much to calm, to purify, and to elevate the minds of millions; nor does it seem that any multiplication of scientific Lectures or Penny Readings would form a substitute for them. The effacement from each landscape of the towers and spires of the churches would be a somewhat painful symbol of the simultaneous disappearance from human life of heavenly hope and aspiration. The extinction of the Ministry of Religion, though it would be hailed even now by many as a great reformation, would be found practically, I apprehend, to reduce by many perceptible degrees the common moral level; and to suppress many highly-aimed activities with which we could ill dispense. The severity of the strictures always passed on the faults of clergymen testifies to the general expectation, not wholly disappointed, that they should exhibit a loftier standard of life than other men; and the hortative and philanthropic work accomplished by the forty or fifty thousand ministers of the various sects and churches in England alone, must form, after all deductions, a sum of beneficence which it would sorely tax any conceivable secular organization to replace in the interests of public morality.

Probably the Seventh Day Rest would survive every other religious institution in virtue of its popularity among the working classes, soon to be everywhere masters of legislation. The failure of the Tenth Day holiday in the first French Revolution would also forestall any further experiments in varying the hebdomadal interval so marvellously adapted to our mental and physical constitution. As, however, all religious meaning of the day would be lost, and all church-going stopped, nothing would hinder the employment of its hours from morning to night as Easter Monday and Whit Monday are now employed by the millions in our great cities. The nation would, therefore, enjoy the somewhat doubtful privilege of keeping fifty-six Bank Holidays instead of four in the year. Judicial and official oaths of all sorts, and Marriage and Burial rites, would, of course, be entirely abolished. A gentleman pronouncing the *Oraison Funèbre* outside the crematorium would replace the old white-robed parson telling the mourners; —

“Beneath the churchyard tree,  
In solemn tones, and yet not sad,  
Of what man is, what man shall be.”

Another change more important than any of these, in Protestant countries, would be the reduction of the Bible to the rank of an historical and literary curiosity. Nothing (as we all recognize) but the supreme religious importance attached to the Hebrew Scriptures could have forced any book into the unique position which the Bible has now held for three centuries in English and Scottish education. Even that held by the Koran throughout Islam is far less remarkable, inasmuch as the latter (immeasurably inferior though it be) is the supreme work of the national literature, whereas we have adopted the literature of an alien race. All the golden fruit which the English intellect has borne from Shakespeare downwards may be said to have grown on this priceless Semitic graft upon the Aryan stem.

But as nothing but its religious interest, over and above its historical and poetical value, could have given the Bible its present place amongst us, so the rejection of religion must quickly lower its popularity by a hundred degrees. Notwithstanding anything which the Matthew Arnolds of the future may plead on behalf of its glorious poetry and mines of wisdom, the youth of the future “Faithless World” will spare very little time from their scientific studies to read a book brimming over with religious sentiments which to them will be nauseous. Could everything else remain unchanged after the extinction of religion in England, it seems to me that the unravelling of this Syrian thread from the very tissue of our minds will altogether alter their texture.

Whether the above obvious and tangible results of a general relinquishment of religion would all be *disadvantageous* may, possibly, be an open question. That they would be *trifling*, and that things would go on much as they have done after they had taken place, seems to me, I confess, altogether incredible.

I now turn to those less obvious consequences of the expected downfall of religion which would take place silently.

The first of these would be the *belittling* of life. Religion has been to us hitherto (to rank it at its lowest), like a great mountain in a beautiful land. When the clouds descend and hide the mountain, the grandeur of the scene is gone. A stranger entering that land at such a time will commend the sweetness of the vales and woods; but those who know it best will say, “Ichabod! – The glory has departed.” To do justice to the eminent man whose opinion concerning the practical unimportance of religion I am endeavoring to combat, he has seen clearly and frankly avowed this ennobling influence of religion, and, as a corollary, would, I presume, admit the *minifying* consequences of its general abandonment.<sup>2</sup> If the window which Religion opens out on the infinite expanse of God and Heaven, immeasurably enlarges and lightens our abode of clay, the walling of it up cannot fail to narrow and darken it beyond all telling. Human nature, ever pulled two ways by downward and by aspiring tendencies, cannot afford to lose all the aid which religious ideas offer to its upward flight. Only when they disappear will men perceive how the two thoughts – of this world as *God’s world*, and of ourselves as Immortal beings, – have, between them, lighted up in rainbow hues the dull plains of earth. When they fade away, all things, Nature, Art, Duty, Love, and Death, will seem to grow grey and cold. Everything which casts a glamour over life will be gone.

Even from the point of view of Art (of which in these days perhaps too much is made), life will lose *poetry* if it lose religion. Nothing ever stirs our sympathies like it, or like a glimpse into the inner self of our brother man, as affected by repentance, hope, and prayer. The great genius, of George Eliot revealed this to her; and, Agnostic as she was, she rarely failed to strike this resonant string of human nature, as in “Adam Bede,” “Silas Marner,” and “Janet’s Repentance.” French novelists who have no knowledge of it, and who describe the death of a man as they might do that of an ox, while

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<sup>2</sup> He says: “The leading doctrines of theology are noble and glorious;” and he acknowledges that people who were able to accept them are “ennobled by their creed.” They are “carried above and beyond the petty side of life; and if the virtue of propositions depended, not upon the evidence by which they may be supported, but their intrinsic beauty and utility, they might vindicate their creed against all others” (p. 917). To some of us the notion of “noble and glorious” *fictions* is difficult to accept. The highest thought of our poor minds, whatever it be, has surely *as such* some presumption in favor of its truth.

they galvanize our imaginations, rarely touch the outer hem of our sympathies. Religion in its old anthropomorphic forms was the great inspirer of sculpture, painting, poetry, science, and almost the creator of architecture. Phidias, Dante, Michael Angelo, Raphael, Milton, Handel, and the builders of the Egyptian temples and mediæval cathedrals, were all filled with the religious spirit, nor can we imagine what they would have been without it. In the purer modern types of religion, while music and architecture would still remain in its direct service, we should expect painting and sculpture to be less immediately concerned with it than in old days, because unable to touch such purely spiritual ideas. But the elevation, aspiration, and reverence which have their root in religion must continue to inspire those arts likewise, or they will fall into triviality on one side (as there seems danger in England), or into obscene materialism on the other, as is already annually exemplified on the walls of the Paris *Salon*.

Again, it will not merely belittle life, it will *carnalize* it to take Religion out of it. The lump without the leaven will be grosser and heavier than we have dreamed. Civilization, as we all know, bore under Imperial Rome, and may assume again any day, the hateful type in which luxury and cruelty, art and sensuality, go hand in hand. That it ever changed its character and has come to mean with us refinement, self-restraint, chivalry, and freedom from the coarser vices, is surely due to the fact that it has grown up *pari passu* with Christianity. In truth it needs no argument to prove that, as the bestial tendencies in us have scarcely been kept down while we believed ourselves to be immortal souls, they will have it still more their own way when we feel assured we are only mortal bodies.

And the life thus belittled and carnalized will be a more cowardly life than men have been wont to lead while they had a Providence over them and a heaven waiting for them. Already, I fear, we may see some signs of this new poltroonery of reflective prudence, which holds that death is the greatest of all evils, and disease the next greatest; and teaches men to prefer a “whole skin” to honor and patriotism, and health to duty. Writing of this Hygeiolatry elsewhere, I have remarked that it has almost come to be accepted as a canon of morals that any practice which, in the opinion of experts, conduces to bodily health, or tends to the cure of disease, becomes *ipso facto* lawful; and that there are signs apparent that this principle is bearing fruit, and that men and women are beginning to be systematically selfish and self-indulgent where their health is concerned, in modes not hitherto witnessed. In public life it is notorious that whenever a Bill comes before Parliament concerning itself with sanitary matters there is exhibited by many of the speakers, and by the journalists who discuss it, a readiness to trample on personal and parental rights in a way forming a new feature in English legislation, and well deserving of the rebuke it has received from Mr. Herbert Spencer. As to military courage, I fear it will also wane amongst us, as it seemed to have waned amongst the French atheistic soldiery at Metz and Sedan. Great as are the evils of war, those of a peace only maintained by the nations because it had become no longer possible to raise troops who would stand fire, would be immeasurably worse.

From the general results on the community, I now pass to consider those on the life of the individual which may be expected to follow the collapse of Religion.

Mr. Mallock in his “New Republic,” made the original and droll remark that even Vice would lose much of its savor were there no longer any morality against which it might sin. As Morality will probably not expire – though its vigor must be considerably reduced – by the demise of its Siamese twin, Religion, it would seem that Vice need not fear, even in such a contingency, the entire loss of the pleasures of disobedience. Nevertheless (to speak seriously), it is pretty certain that the temperature of all moral sentiments will fall so considerably when the sun of religion ceases to warm them that not a few will perish of cold. The “Faithless World” will pass through a moral Glacial Period, wherein much of our present fauna and flora will disappear. What, for example, can become, in that frigid epoch of godlessness, of *Aspiration*, the sacred passion, the *ambition sainte* to become perfect and holy, which has stirred at one time or other in the breast of every son of God; the longing to attain the crowning heights of truth, goodness, and purity? This is surely not a sentiment which can live without

faith in a Divine Perfection, existing somewhere in the universe, and an Immortal Life wherein the infinite progress may be carried on. Even the man whose opinions on the general unimportance of religion I am venturing to question in these pages, admits frankly enough that it is not the heroic or saintly character which will be cultivated after the extinction of faith. Among the changes which he anticipates, one will be that “the respectable man of the world, the *lukewarm*, *nominal Christian*, who believed as much of his creed as happened to suit him, and *led an easy life*, will turn out to have been right after all,” Precisely so. The *easy life* will be the ideal life in the “Faithless World;” and the life of Aspiration, the life which is a prayer, will be lived no more. And the “lukewarm” men of the world, in their “easy lives,” will be all the easier and more lukewarm for leading them thenceforth unrebuked by any higher example.

Again, Repentance as well as aspiration will disappear under the snows of atheism. I have written before on this subject in this Review,<sup>3</sup> and will now briefly say that Mr. Darwin’s almost ludicrously false definition of Repentance is an illustration of the inability of the modern scientific mind to comprehend spiritual phenomena; much less to be the subject of them. In his *Descent of Man*, this great thinker and most amiable man describes Repentance as a natural return, after the satisfaction of selfish passions, to “the instinct of sympathy and good will to his fellows which is still present and ever in some degree active” in a man’s mind... “And then, a sense of dissatisfaction will inevitably be felt” (*Descent of Man*, p. 90). Thus even on the showing of the great philosopher of evolution himself, Repentance (or rather the “dissatisfaction” he confounds with that awful convulsion of the soul) is only to be looked for under the very exceptional circumstances of men in whom the “instinct of sympathy and good will to their fellows” is ever present, and moreover *reasserts itself after they have injured them*— in flat opposition to ordinary human experience as noted by Tacitus, *Humani generis proprium est odire quem læseris*.

The results of the real spiritual phenomenon of Repentance (not Mr. Darwin’s child’s-play) are so profound and far-reaching that it cannot but happen that striking them out of human experience will leave life more shallow. No soul will survive with the deeper and riper character which comes out of that ordeal. As Hawthorne illustrated it in his exquisite parable of *Transformation*, men, till they become conscious of sin, are morally little more than animals. Out of hearts ploughed by contrition spring flowers fairer than ever grow on the hard ground of unbroken self-content. There bloom in them Sympathy and Charity for other erring mortals; and Patience under suffering which is acknowledged to be merited; and lastly, sweetest blossom of all! tender Gratitude for earthly and heavenly blessings felt to be free gifts of Divine love. Not a little, perhaps, of the prevalent disease of pessimism is owing to the fact that these flowers of charity, patience, and thankfulness are becoming more and more rare as cultivated men cease to feel what old theologians used to call “the exceeding sinfulness of sin;” or to pass through any vivid experiences of penitence and restoration. As a necessary consequence they never see the true proportions of good and evil, joy and grief, sin and retribution. They weigh jealously human Pain; they never place human Guilt in the opposite scale. There is little chance that any man will ever feel how sinful is sin, who has not seen it in the white light of the holiness of God.

The abrogation of Public Worship was mentioned above as one of the visible consequences of the general rejection of religion. To it must here be added a still direr and deeper loss, that of the use of Private Prayer – whether for spiritual or other good, either on behalf of ourselves or of others; all Confession, all Thanksgiving, in one word all effort at communion of the finite spirit with the Infinite. This is not the place in which this subject can be treated as it would require to be were the full consequences of such a cessation of the highest function of our nature to be defined. It may be enough now to say that the Positivists in their fantastic device of addresses to the *grand être* of Humanity as a substitute for real prayer to the Living God, have themselves testified to the smaller –

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<sup>3</sup> “Agnostic Morality,” *Contemporary Review*, June, 1883.

the subjective – part of the value of the practice. Alas for our poor human race if ever the day should arrive when to Him who now “heareth prayer,” flesh shall no longer come!

With Aspiration, Repentance, and Prayer renounced and forgotten, and the inner life made as “easy” as the outward, we may next inquire whether in the “Faithless World” the relations between man and man will either remain what they have been, improve or deteriorate? I have heard a secularist lecturer argue that the love of God has been a great hindrance to the love of man; and I believe it is the universal opinion of Agnostics and Comtists that the “enthusiasm of Humanity” will flourish and form the crowning glory of the future after religion is dead. It is obvious, indeed, that the social virtues are rapidly eclipsing in public opinion those which are personal and religious; and if Philanthropy is not to be enthroned in the “Faithless World,” there is no chance for Veracity, Piety, or Purity.

But, not to go over ground which I have traversed already in this Review, it will be enough now to remark that Mr. Justice Stephen, with his usual perspicacity, has found out that there is here a “rift within the lute,” and frankly tells us that we must not expect to see Christian Charity after the departure of Christianity. He thinks that temperance, fortitude, benevolence, and justice will always be honored and rewarded, but —

“If a purely human morality takes the place of Christian morals, self-command and self-denial, force of character shown in postponing the present to the future (*gy.*, selfish prudence?) will take the place of self-sacrifice as an object of admiration. Love, friendship, good-nature, kindness, carried to the height of sincere and devoted affection will always be the chief pleasures of life, whether Christianity is true or false; but Christian charity is not the same as any of these or of all of them put together, and I think, if Christian theology were exploded, Christian charity would not survive it.”

Even if the same sentiment of charity were kept alive in a “Faithless World,” I do not think its ministrations would be continued on the same lines as hitherto. The more kind-hearted an atheist may be (and many have the kindest of hearts) the less, I fancy, he could endure to go about as a comforter among the wretched and dying, bringing with him only such cold consolation as may be afforded by the doctrine of the “Survival of the Fittest.” Every one who has tried to lighten the sorrows of this sad world, or to reclaim the criminal and the vicious, knows how immense is the advantage of being able to speak of God’s love and pity, and of a life where the bereaved shall be reunited to their beloved ones. It would break, I should think, a compassionate atheist’s heart to go from one to another death-bed in cottage or workhouse or hospital, meet the yearning looks of the dying, and watch the anguish of wife or husband or mother, and be unable honestly to say: “This is not the end. There is Heaven in store.” But Mr. Justice Stephen speaks, I apprehend, of another reason than this why Christian charity must not be expected to survive Christianity. The truth is (though he does not say it) that the charity of Science is not merely *different* from the charity of Religion; it is an *opposite* thing altogether. Its softest word is *Vae Victis*. Christianity (and like it I should hope every possible form of future religion) says, “The strong ought to bear the burdens of the weak. Blessed are the merciful, the unselfish, the tender-hearted, the humble-minded.” Science says, “The supreme law of Nature is the Survival of the Fittest; and that law, applied to human morals, means the remorseless crushing down of the unfit. The strong and the gifted shall inherit the earth, and the weak and simple go to the wall. Blessed are the merciless, for they shall obtain useful knowledge. Blessed are the self-asserting, for theirs is the kingdom of this world, and there is no world after it.”

These Morals of Evolution are beginning gradually to make their way, and to be stated (of course in veiled and modest language) frequently by those priests of science, the physiologists. Should they ever obtain general acceptance, and Darwinian morality take the place of the Sermon on the Mount, the old *droit du plus fort* of barbarous ages will be revived with more deliberate oppression, and the last state of our civilization will be worse than the first.

Behind all these changes of public and general concern, lies the deepest change of all for each man's own heart. We are told that in a "Faithless World" we may interest ourselves in friendship, and politics, and commerce, and literature, science, and art, and that "a man who cannot occupy every waking moment of a long life with some or other of these things must be either very unfortunate in regard to his health, or circumstances, or else must be a poor creature."

But it is not necessary to be either unfortunate oneself or a very "poor creature" to feel that the wrongs and agonies of this world of pain are absolutely intolerable unless we can be assured that they will be righted hereafter; that "there is a God who judgeth the earth," and that all the oppressed and miserable of our race, aye, and even the tortured brutes, are beheld by Him. It is, I think, on the contrary, to be a "poor creature" to be able to satisfy the hunger of the soul after justice, the yearning of the heart for mercy, with such pursuits as money-getting, and scientific research, and the writing of clever books, and painting of pretty pictures. Not that which is "poorest" in us, but that which is richest and noblest, refuses to "occupy every moment of a long life" with our own ambitions and amusements, or to shut out deliberately from our minds the "Riddle of the painful Earth." A curse would be on us in our "lordly pleasure-house" were we to do it.

Even if it be possible to enjoy our own good fortune regardless of the woes of others, is it not rather a pitiful wreck and remnant of merely selfish happiness which it is proposed to leave to us? "The world," we are told, "is full of pleasant people and curious things," and "most men find no difficulty in *turning their minds away* from its transient character." Even our enjoyment of "pleasant people and curious things" must be held, then, on the condition of reducing ourselves – philosophers that we are, or shall be – to the humble level of the hares and rabbits! —

"Regardless of their doom the little victims play."

Surely the happiness of any creature, deserving to be called Rational, depends on the circumstance whether he can look on Good as "the final goal of ill," or believe Ill to be the final goal of any good he has obtained or hopes for; – whether he walk on a firm, even if it be a thorny road, or tread on thin, albeit glittering ice, destined ere long to break beneath his feet? The faith that there is an Order tending everywhere to good, and that Justice sooner or later will be done to all, – this, almost universal, faith to which the whole literature of the world bears testimony, seems to me no less indispensable for our selfish happiness than it is for any unselfish satisfaction in the aspect of human life at large. If it be finally balked, and we are compelled to relinquish it for ever at the bidding of science, existence alike on our own account and that of others will become unendurable.

In all I have said hitherto, I have confined myself to discussing the probable results of the downfall of religion on men in general, and have not attempted to define what they would be to those who have been fervently religious; and who we must suppose (on the hypothesis of such a revolution) to be forcibly driven by scientific arguments out of their faith in God and the life to come. To such persons (and there are, alas! many already who think they have been so driven, and to whom the sad result is therefore the same) the loss must needs be like that of the darkening of the sun. Of all human sorrows the bitterest is to discover that we have misplaced our love; labored and suffered in vain; thrown away our heart's devotion. All this, and much more, must it be to *lose God*. Among those who have endured it there are, of course, as we all know, many who have reconciled themselves to the loss, and some tell us they are the happier. Yet, I think to the very last hour of life there must remain in every heart which has once *loved* God (not merely believed in or feared Him) an infinite regret if it can love Him no more; and the universe, were it crowded with a million friends, must seem empty when that Friend is gone.

As to human Love and Friendship, to which we are often bidden to turn as the best substitutes for religion, I feel persuaded that, above all other things they must deteriorate in a "Faithless World." To apples of Sodom must all their sweetness turn, from the hour in which men recognize their

transitory nature. The warmer and more tender and reverential the affection, the more intolerable must become the idea of eternal separation; and the more beautiful and admirable the character of our friend, the more maddening the belief that in a few years, or days, he will vanish into nothingness. Sooner than endure the agony of these thoughts, I feel sure that men will check themselves from entering into the purer and holier relations of the heart. Affection, predestined to be cast adrift, will throw out no more anchors, but will float on every wave of passion or caprice. The day in which it becomes impossible for men to vow that they will love *for ever* will almost be the last in which they will love nobly and purely at all.

But if these things hold good as regard the prosperous and healthy, and those still in the noon of life, what is to be said of the prospects in the “Faithless World,” of the diseased, the poverty-stricken, the bereaved, the aged? There is no need to strain our eyes to look into the dark corners of the earth. We all know (though while we ourselves stand in the sunshine we do not often *feel*) what hundreds of thousands of our fellow-mortals are enduring at all times, in the way of bodily and mental anguish. When these overtake us, or when Old Age creeps on, and is it possible to suppose it will make “little difference” what we believe as to the existence of some loving Power in whose arms our feebleness may find support; or of another life wherein our winter may be turned once more to spring? If we live long enough, the day must come to each of us when we shall find our chief interest in our daily newspaper most often in the obituary columns, till, one after another nearly all the friends of our youth and prime have “gone over to the majority,” and we begin to live in a world peopled with spectres. Our talk with those who travel still beside us is continually referring to the dead, and our very jests end in a sigh for the sweet old laughter which we shall never hear again. If in these solemn years we yet have faith in God and Immortality, and as we recall one dear one after another, – father, mother, brother, friend, – we can say to ourselves, “They are all gone into the world of light; they are all safe and rejoicing in the smile of God;” then our grief is only mourning; it is not despair. Our sad hearts are cheered and softened, not turned to stone by the memories of the dead. Let us, however, on the other hand, be driven by our new guide, Science, to abandon this faith and the hope of eternal reunion, then, indeed, must our old age be utterly, utterly desolate. O! the mockery of saying that it would make “no great difference!”

“First our pleasures die, and then  
Our hopes, and then our fears,”

We have been told that in the event of the fall of religion, “life would remain in most particulars and to most people much what it is at present.” It appears to me, on the contrary, that there is actually *nothing* in life which would be left unchanged after such a catastrophe.

But I have only conjured up the nightmare of a “Faithless World.” God lives; and in His light we shall see light. —*Contemporary Review*.

## FOOD AND FEEDING

When a man and a bear meet together casually in an American forest, it makes a great deal of difference, to the two parties concerned at least, whether the bear eats the man or the man eats the bear. We haven't the slightest difficulty in deciding afterwards which of the two, in each particular case, has been the eater, and which the eaten. Here, we say, is the grizzly that ate the man; or, here is the man that smoked and dined off the hams of the grizzly. Basing our opinion upon such familiar and well-known instances, we are apt to take it for granted far too readily that between eating and being eaten, between the active and the passive voice of the verb *edo*, there exists necessarily a profound and impassable native antithesis. To swallow an oyster is, in our own personal histories, so very different a thing from being swallowed by a shark that we can hardly realise at first the underlying fundamental identity of eating with mere coalescence. And yet, at the very outset of the art of feeding, when the nascent animal first began to indulge in this very essential animal practice, one may fairly say that no practical difference as yet existed between the creature that ate and the creature that was eaten. After the man and the bear had finished their little meal, if one may be frankly metaphorical, it was impossible to decide whether the remaining being was the man or the bear, or which of the two had swallowed the other. The dinner having been purely mutual, the resulting animal represented both the litigants equally; just as, in cannibal New Zealand, the chief who ate up his brother chief was held naturally to inherit the goods and chattels of the vanquished and absorbed rival, whom he had thus literally and physically incorporated.

A jelly-speck, floating about at his ease in a drop of stagnant water under the field of a microscope, collides accidentally with another jelly-speck who happens to be travelling in the opposite direction across the same miniature ocean. What thereupon occurs? One jelly-speck rolls itself gradually into the other, so that, instead of two, there is now one: and the united body proceeds to float away quite unconcernedly, without waiting to trouble itself for a second with the profound metaphysical question, which half of it is the original personality, and which half the devoured and digested. In these minute and very simple animals there is absolutely no division of labor between part and part; every bit of the jelly-like mass is alike head and foot and mouth and stomach. The jelly-speck has no permanent limbs, but it keeps putting forth vague arms and legs every now and then from one side or the other; and with these temporary and ever-dissolving members it crawls along merrily through its tiny drop of stagnant water. If two of the legs or arms happen to knock up casually against one another, they coalesce at once, just like two drops of water on a window-pane, or two strings of treacle slowly spreading along the surface of a plate. When the jelly-speck meets any edible thing – a bit of dead plant, a wee creature like itself, a microscopic egg – it proceeds to fold its own substance slimily around it, making, as it were, a temporary mouth for the purpose of swallowing it, and a temporary stomach for the purpose of quietly digesting and assimilating it afterwards. Thus what at one moment is a foot may at the next moment become a mouth, and at the moment after that again a rudimentary stomach. The animal has no skin and no body, no outside and no inside, no distinction of parts or members, no individuality, no identity. Roll it up into one with another of its kind, and it couldn't tell you itself a minute afterwards which of the two it had really been a minute before. The question of personal identity is here considerably mixed.

But as soon as we get to rather larger creatures of the same type, the antithesis between the eater and the eaten begins to assume a more definite character. The big jelly-bag approaches a good many smaller jelly-bags, microscopic plants, and other appropriate foodstuffs, and, surrounding them rapidly with its crawling arms, envelops them in its own substance, which closes behind them and gradually digests them. Everybody knows, by name at least, that revolutionary and evolutionary hero, the amoeba – the terror of theologians, the pet of professors, and the insufferable bore of the general reader. Well, this parlous and subversive little animal consists of a comparatively large mass of soft

jelly, pushing forth slender lobes, like threads or fingers, from its own substance, and gliding about, by means of these tiny legs, over water-plants and other submerged surfaces. But though it can literally turn itself inside out, like a glove, it still has some faint beginnings of a mouth and stomach, for it generally takes in food and absorbs water through a particular part of its surface, where the slimy mass of its body is thinnest. Thus the amœba may be said really to eat and drink, though quite devoid of any special organs for eating or drinking.

The particular point to which I wish to draw attention here, however, is this: that even the very simplest and most primitive animals do discriminate somehow between what is eatable and what isn't. The amœba has no eyes, no nose, no mouth, no tongue, no nerves of taste, no special means of discrimination of any kind; and yet, so long as it meets only grains of sand or bits of shell, it makes no effort in any way to swallow them; but the moment it comes across a bit of material fit for its food, it begins at once to spread its clammy fingers around the nutritious morsel. The fact is, every part of the amœba's body apparently possesses, in a very vague form, the first beginnings of those senses which in us are specialised and confined to a single spot. And it is because of the light which the amœba thus incidentally casts upon the nature of the specialised senses in higher animals that I have ventured once more to drag out of the private life of his native pond that already too notorious and obtrusive rhizopod.

With us lordly human beings, at the extreme opposite end in the scale of being from the microscopic jelly-specks, the art of feeding and the mechanism which provides for it have both reached a very high state of advanced perfection. We have slowly evolved a tongue and palate on the one hand, and French cooks and *pâté de foie gras* on the other. But while everybody knows practically how things taste to us, and which things respectively we like and dislike, comparatively few people ever recognize that the sense of taste is not merely intended as a source of gratification, but serves a useful purpose in our bodily economy, in informing us what we ought to eat and what to refuse. Paradoxical as it may sound at first to most people, nice things are, in the main, things that are good for us, and nasty things are poisonous or otherwise injurious. That we often practically find the exact contrary the case (alas!) is due, not to the provisions of nature, but to the artificial surroundings in which we live, and to the cunning way in which we flavor up unwholesome food, so as to deceive and cajole the natural palate. Yet, after all, it is a pleasant gospel that what we like is really good for us, and, when we have made some small allowances for artificial conditions, it is in the main a true one also.

The sense of taste, which in the lowest animals is diffused equally over the whole frame, is in ourselves and other higher creatures concentrated in a special part of the body, namely the mouth, where the food about to be swallowed is chewed and otherwise prepared beforehand for the work of digestion. Now it is, of course, quite clear that some sort of supervision must be exercised by the body over the kind of food that is going to be put into it. Common experience teaches us that prussic acid and pure opium are undesirable food stuffs in large quantities; that raw spirits, petroleum, and red lead should be sparingly partaken of by the judicious feeder; and that even green fruit, the bitter end of cucumber, and the berries of deadly nightshade are unsatisfactory articles of diet when continuously persisted in. If, at the very outset of our digestive apparatus, we hadn't a sort of automatic premonitory adviser upon the kinds of food we ought or ought not to indulge in, we should naturally commit considerable imprudences in the way of eating and drinking – even more than we do at present. Natural selection has therefore provided us with a fairly efficient guide in this respect in the sense of taste, which is placed at the very threshold, as it were, of our digestive mechanism. It is the duty of taste to warn us against uneatable things, and to recommend to our favorable attention eatable and wholesome ones; and, on the whole, in spite of small occasional remissness, it performs its duty with creditable success.

Taste, however, is not equally distributed over the whole surface of the tongue alike. There are three distinct regions or tracts, each of which has to perform its own special office and function. The

tip of the tongue is concerned mainly with pungent and acrid tastes; the middle portion is sensitive chiefly to sweets and bitters; while the back or lower portion confines itself almost entirely to the flavors of roast meats, butter, oils, and other rich or fatty substances. There are very good reasons for this subdivision of faculties in the tongue, the object being, as it were, to make each piece of food undergo three separate examinations (like “smalls,” “mods,” and “greats” at Oxford), which must be successively passed before it is admitted into full participation in the human economy. The first examination, as we shall shortly see, gets rid at once of substances which would be actively and immediately destructive to the very tissues of the mouth and body; the second discriminates between poisonous and chemically harmless foodstuffs; and the third merely decides the minor question whether the particular food is likely to prove then and there wholesome or indigestible to the particular person. The sense of taste proceeds, in fact, upon the principle of gradual selection and elimination; it refuses first what is positively destructive, next what is more remotely deleterious, and finally what is only undesirable or over-luscious.

When we want to assure ourselves, by means of taste, about an unknown object – say a lump of some white stuff, which may be crystal, or glass, or alum, or borax, or quartz, or rocksalt – we put the tip of the tongue against it gingerly. If it begins to burn us, we draw it away more or less rapidly, with an accompaniment in language strictly dependent upon our personal habits and manners. The test we thus occasionally apply, even in the civilised adult state, to unknown bodies is one that is being applied every day and all day long by children and savages. Unsophisticated humanity is constantly putting everything it sees up to its mouth in a frank spirit of experimental inquiry as to its gustatory properties. In civilised life, we find everything ready labelled and assorted for us; we comparatively seldom require to roll the contents of a suspicious bottle (in very small quantities) doubtfully upon the tongue in order to discover whether it is pale sherry or Chili vinegar, Dublin stout or mushroom ketchup. But in the savage state, from which, geologically and biologically speaking, we have only just emerged, bottles and labels do not exist. Primitive man, therefore, in his sweet simplicity, has only two modes open before him for deciding whether the things he finds are or are not strictly edible. The first thing he does is to sniff at them, and smell being, as Mr. Herbert Spencer has well put it, an anticipatory taste, generally gives him some idea of what the thing is likely to prove. The second thing he does is to pop it into his mouth, and proceed practically to examine its further characteristics.

Strictly speaking with the tip of the tongue one can't really taste at all. If you put a small drop of honey or of oil of bitter almonds on that part of the mouth, you will find (no doubt to your great surprise) that it produces no effect of any sort; you only taste it when it begins slowly to diffuse itself, and reaches the true tasting region in the middle distance. But if you put a little cayenne or mustard on the same part, you will find that it bites you immediately – the experiment should be tried sparingly – while, if you put it lower down in the mouth you will swallow it almost without noticing the pungency of the stimulant. The reason is, that the tip of the tongue is supplied only with nerves which are really nerves of touch, not nerves of taste proper; they belong to a totally different main branch, and they go to a different centre in the brain, together with the very similar threads which supply the nerves of smell for mustard and pepper. That is why the smell and taste of these pungent substances are so much alike, as everybody must have noticed; a good sniff at a mustard-pot producing almost the same irritating effects as an incautious mouthful. As a rule, we don't accurately distinguish, it is true, between these different regions of taste in the mouth in ordinary life; but that is because we usually roll our food about instinctively, without paying much attention to the particular part affected by it. Indeed, when one is trying deliberate experiments in the subject, in order to test the varying sensitiveness of the different parts to different substances, it is necessary to keep the tongue quite dry, in order to isolate the thing you are experimenting with, and prevent its spreading to all parts of the mouth together. In actual practice this result is obtained in a rather ludicrous manner – by blowing upon the tongue, between each experiment, with a pair of bellows. To such undignified expedients does the pursuit of science lead the ardent modern psychologist. These domestic rivals of Dr. Forbes

Winslow, the servants, who behold the enthusiastic investigator alternately drying his tongue in this ridiculous fashion, as if he were a blacksmith's fire, and then squeezing out a single drop of essence of pepper, vinegar, or beef-tea from a glass syringe upon the dry surface, not unnaturally arrive at the conclusion that master has gone stark mad, and that, in their private opinion, it's the microscope and the skeleton as has done it.

Above all things, we don't want to be flayed alive. So the kinds of tastes discriminated by the tip of the tongue are the pungent, like pepper, cayenne, and mustard; the astringent, like borax and alum; the alkaline, like soda and potash; the acid, like vinegar and green fruit; and the saline, like salt and ammonia. Almost all the bodies likely to give rise to such tastes (or, more correctly, sensations of touch in the tongue) are obviously unwholesome and destructive in their character, at least when taken in large quantities. Nobody wishes to drink nitric acid by the quart. The first business of this part of the tongue is, therefore, to warn us emphatically against caustic substances and corrosive acids – against vitriol and kerosene, spirits of wine and ether, capsicums and burning leaves or roots, such as those of the common English lords-and-ladies. Things of this sort are immediately destructive to the very tissues of the tongue and palate; if taken incautiously in too large doses, they burn the skin off the roof of the mouth; and when swallowed they play havoc, of course, with our internal arrangements. It is highly advisable, therefore, to have an immediate warning of these extremely dangerous substances, at the very outset of our feeding apparatus.

This kind of taste hardly differs from touch or burning. The sensibility of the tip of the tongue is only a very slight modification of the sensibility possessed by the skin generally, and especially by the inner folds over all delicate parts of the body. We all know that common caustic burns us wherever it touches; and it burns the tongue, only in a somewhat more marked manner. Nitric or sulphuric acid attacks the fingers each after its own kind. A mustard plaster makes us tingle almost immediately; and the action of mustard on the tongue hardly differs, except in being more instantaneous and more discriminative. Cantharides work in just the same way. If you cut a red pepper in two and rub it on your neck it will sting you just as it does when put into soup (this experiment, however, is best tried upon one's younger brother; if made personally, it hardly repays the trouble and annoyance). Even vinegar and other acids, rubbed into the skin, are followed by a slight tingling; while the effect of brandy, applied, say, to the arms, is gently stimulating and pleasurable, somewhat in the same way as when normally swallowed in conjunction with the habitual seltzer. In short, most things which give rise to distinct tastes when applied to the tip of the tongue, give rise to fainter sensations when applied to the skin generally. And one hardly needs to be reminded that pepper or vinegar placed (accidentally as a rule) on the inner surface of the eyelids produces a very distinct and unpleasant smart.

The fact is, the liability to be chemically affected by pungent or acid bodies is common to every part of the skin; but it is least felt where the tough outer skin is thickest, and most felt where that skin is thinnest, and the nerves are most plentifully distributed near the surface. A mustard plaster would probably fail to draw at all on one's heel or the palm of one's hand; while it is decidedly painful on one's neck or chest; and a mere speck of mustard inside the eyelid gives one positive torture for hours together. Now the tip of the tongue is just a part of one's body specially set aside for this very object, provided with an extremely thin skin, and supplied with an immense number of nerves, on purpose so as to be easily affected by all such pungent, alkaline, or spirituous substances. Sir Wilfrid Lawson would probably conclude that it was deliberately designed by Providence to warn us against a wicked indulgence in the brandy and seltzer aforesaid.

At first sight it might seem as though there were hardly enough of such pungent and fiery things in existence to make it worth while for us to be provided with a special mechanism for guarding against them. That is true enough, no doubt, as regards our modern civilized life; though, even now, it is perhaps just as well that our children should have an internal monitor (other than conscience) to dissuade them immediately from indiscriminate indulgence in photographic chemicals, the contents of stray medicine bottles, and the best dried West India chilies. But in an earlier period of progress,

and especially in tropical countries (where the Darwinians have now decided the human race made its first *début* upon this or any other stage), things were very different indeed. Pungent and poisonous plants and fruits abounded on every side. We have all of us in our youth been taken in by some too cruelly waggish companion, who insisted upon making us eat the bright, glossy leaves of the common English arum, which without look pretty and juicy enough, but within are full of the concentrated essence of pungency and profanity. Well, there are hundreds of such plants, even in cold climates, to tempt the eyes and poison the veins of unsuspecting cattle or childish humanity. There is buttercup, so horribly acrid that cows carefully avoid it in their closest cropped pastures; and yet your cow is not usually a too dainty animal. There is aconite, the deadly poison with which Dr. Lamson removed his troublesome relatives. There is baneberry, whose very name sufficiently describes its dangerous nature. There are horseradish, and stinging rocket, and biting wall-pepper, and still smarter water-pepper, and wormwood, and nightshade, and spurge, and hemlock, and half a dozen equally unpleasant weeds. All of these have acquired their pungent and poisonous properties, just as nettles have acquired their sting, and thistles their thorns, in order to prevent animals from browsing upon them and destroying them. And the animals in turn have acquired a very delicate sense of pungency on purpose to warn them beforehand of the existence of such dangerous and undesirable qualities in the plants which they might otherwise be tempted incautiously to swallow.

In tropical woods, where our “hairy quadrumanous ancestor” (Darwinian for the primæval monkey, from whom we are presumably descended) used playfully to disport himself, as yet unconscious of his glorious destiny as the remote progenitor of Shakespeare, Milton, and the late Mr. Peace – in tropical woods, such acid or pungent fruits and plants are particularly common, and correspondingly annoying. The fact is, our primitive forefather and all the other monkeys are, or were, confirmed fruit-eaters. But to guard against their depredations a vast number of tropical fruits and nuts have acquired disagreeable or fiery rinds and shells, which suffice to deter the bold aggressor. It may not be nice to get your tongue burnt with a root or fruit, but it is at least a great deal better than getting poisoned; and, roughly speaking, pungency in external nature exactly answers to the rough gaudy labels which some chemists paste on bottles containing poisons. It means to say, “This fruit or leaf, if you eat it in any quantities, will kill you.” That is the true explanation of capsicums, pimento, colocynth, croton oil, the upas tree, and the vast majority of bitter, acrid, or fiery fruits and leaves. If we had to pick up our own livelihood, as our naked ancestors had to do, from roots, seeds, and berries, we should far more readily appreciate this simple truth. We should know that a great many more plants than we now suspect are bitter or pungent, and therefore poisonous. Even in England we are familiar enough with such defences as those possessed by the outer rind of the walnut; but the tropical cashewnut has a rind so intensely acrid that it blisters the lips and fingers instantaneously, in the same way as cantharides would do. I believe that on the whole, taking nature throughout, more fruits and nuts are poisonous, or intensely bitter, or very fiery, than are sweet, luscious, and edible.

“But,” says that fidgety person, the hypothetical objector (whom one always sets up for the express purpose of promptly knocking him down again), “if it be the business of the forepart of the tongue to warn us against pungent and acrid substances, how comes it that we purposely use such things as mustard, pepper, curry-powder, and vinegar?” Well, in themselves all these things are, strictly speaking, bad for us; but in small quantities they act as agreeable stimulants; and we take care in preparing most of them to get rid of the most objectionable properties. Moreover, we use them, not as foods, but merely as condiments. One drop of oil of capsicum is enough to kill a man, if taken undiluted; but in actual practice we buy it in such a very diluted form that comparatively little harm arises from using it. Still, very young children dislike all these violent stimulants, even in small quantities; they won’t touch mustard, pepper, or vinegar, and they recoil at once from wine or spirits. It is only by slow degrees that we learn these unnatural tastes, as our nerves get blunted and our palates jaded; and we all know that the old Indian who can eat nothing but dry curries, devilled biscuits, anchovy paste, pepper-pot, mulligatawny soup, Worcestershire sauce, preserved ginger, hot

pickles, fiery sherry, and neat cognac, is also a person with no digestion, a fragmentary liver, and very little chance of getting himself accepted by any safe and solvent insurance office. Throughout, the warning in itself is a useful one; it is we who foolishly and persistently disregard it. Alcohol, for example, tells us at once that it is bad for us; yet we manage so to dress it up with flavoring matters and dilute it with water that we overlook the fiery character of the spirit itself. But that alcohol is in itself a bad thing (when freely indulged in) has been so abundantly demonstrated in the history of mankind that it hardly needs any further proof.

The middle region of the tongue is the part with which we experience sensations of taste proper – that is to say, of sweetness and bitterness. In a healthy, natural state all sweet things are pleasant to us, and all bitters (even if combined with sherry) unpleasant. The reason for this is easy enough to understand. It carries us back at once into those primæval tropical forests where our “hairy ancestor” used to diet himself upon the fruits of the earth in due season. Now, almost all edible fruits, roots, and tubers contain sugar; and therefore the presence of sugar is, in the wild condition, as good a rough test of whether anything is good to eat as one could easily find. In fact, the argument cuts both ways: edible fruits are sweet because they are intended for man and other animals to eat; and man and other animals have a tongue pleasurable affected by sugar because sugary things in nature are for them in the highest degree edible. Our early progenitors formed their taste upon oranges, mangoes, bananas, and grapes; upon sweet potatoes, sugar-cane, dates, and wild-honey. There is scarcely anything fitted for human food in the vegetable world (and our earliest ancestors were most undoubted vegetarians), which does not contain sugar in considerable quantities. In temperate climates (where man is but a recent intruder), we have taken, it is true, to regarding wheaten bread as the staff of life; but in our native tropics enormous populations still live almost exclusively upon plantains, bananas, breadfruit, yams, sweet potatoes, dates, cocoanuts, melons, cassava, pineapples, and figs. Our nerves have been adapted to the circumstances of our early life as a race in tropical forests; and we still retain a marked liking for sweets of every sort. Not content with our strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries, currants, apples, pears, cherries, plums, and other northern fruits, we ransack the world for dates, figs, raisins, and oranges. Indeed, in spite of our acquired meat-eating propensities, it may be fairly said that fruits and seeds (including wheat, rice, peas, beans, and other grains and pulse) still form by far the most important element in the foodstuffs of human populations generally.

But besides the natural sweets, we have also taken to producing artificial ones. Has any housewife ever realised the alarming condition of cookery in the benighted generations before the invention of sugar? It is really almost too appalling to think about. So many things that we now look upon as all but necessities – cakes, puddings, made dishes, confectionery, preserves, sweet biscuits, jellies, cooked fruits, tarts, and so forth – were then practically quite impossible. Fancy attempting nowadays to live a single day without sugar; no tea, no coffee, no jam, no pudding, no cake, no sweets, no hot toddy before one goes to bed; the bare idea of it is too terrible. And yet that was really the abject condition of all the civilised world up to the middle ages. Horace’s punch was sugarless and lemonless; the gentle Virgil never tasted the congenial cup of afternoon tea; and Socrates went from his cradle to his grave without ever knowing the flavor of peppermint bull’s eyes. How the children managed to spend their Saturday *as*, or their weekly *obolus*, is a profound mystery. To be sure, people had honey; but honey is rare, dear, and scanty; it can never have filled one quarter the place that sugar fills in our modern affections. Try for a moment to realise drinking honey with one’s whiskey-and-water, or doing the year’s preserving with a pot of best Narbonne, and you get at once a common measure of the difference between the two as practical sweeteners. Nowadays, we get sugar from cane and beetroot in abundance, while sugar-maples and palm-trees of various sorts afford a considerable supply to remoter countries. But the childhood of the little Greeks and Romans must have been absolutely unlighted by a single ray of joy from chocolate creams or Everton toffee.

The consequence of this excessive production of sweets in modern times is, of course, that we have begun to distrust the indications afforded us by the sense of taste in this particular as to the

wholesomeness of various objects. We can mix sugar with anything we like, whether it had sugar in it to begin with or otherwise; and by sweetening and flavoring we can give a false palatableness to even the worst and most indigestible rubbish, such as plaster-of-Paris, largely sold under the name of sugared almonds to the ingenuous youth of two hemispheres. But in untouched nature the test rarely or never fails. As long as fruits are unripe and unfit for human food, they are green and sour; as soon as they ripen they become soft and sweet, and usually acquire some bright color as a sort of advertisement of their edibility. In the main, bar the accidents of civilisation, whatever is sweet is good to eat – nay more, is meant to be eaten; it is only our own perverse folly that makes us sometimes think all nice things bad for us, and all wholesome things nasty. In a state of nature, the exact opposite is really the case. One may observe, too, that children, who are literally young savages in more senses than one, stand nearer to the primitive feeling in this respect than grown-up people. They unaffectedly like sweets; adults, who have grown more accustomed to the artificial meat diet, don't as a rule, care much for puddings, cakes, and made dishes. (May I venture parenthetically to add, any appearance to the contrary notwithstanding, that I am not a vegetarian, and that I am far from desiring to bring down upon my devoted head the imprecation pronounced against the rash person who would rob a poor man of his beer. It is quite possible to believe that vegetarianism was the starting-point of the race, without wishing to consider it also as the goal; just as it is quite possible to regard clothes as purely artificial products of civilization, without desiring personally to return to the charming simplicity of the Garden of Eden.)

Bitter things in nature at large, on the contrary, are almost invariably poisonous. Strychnia, for example, is intensely bitter, and it is well known that life cannot be supported on strychnia alone for more than a few hours. Again, colocynth and aloes are far from being wholesome food stuffs, for a continuance; and the bitter end of cucumber does not conduce to the highest standard of good living. The bitter matter in decaying apples is highly injurious when swallowed, which it isn't likely to be by anybody who ever tastes it. Wormwood and walnut-shells contain other bitter and poisonous principles; absinthe, which is made from one of them, is a favorite slow poison with the fashionable young men of Paris, who wish to escape prematurely from "*Le monde où l'on s'ennuie*." But prussic acid is the commonest component in all natural bitters, being found in bitter almonds, apple pippins, the kernels of mango-stones, and many other seeds and fruits. Indeed, one may say roughly that the object of nature generally is to prevent the actual seeds of edible fruits from being eaten and digested; and for this purpose, while she stores the pulp with sweet juices, she encloses the seed itself in hard stony coverings, and makes it nasty with bitter essences. Eat an orange pip, and you will promptly observe how effectual is this arrangement. As a rule, the outer rind of nuts is bitter, and the inner kernel of edible fruits. The tongue thus warns us immediately against bitter things, as being poisonous, and prevents us, automatically, from swallowing them.

"But how is it," asks our objector again, "that so many poisons are tasteless, or even, like sugar of lead, pleasant to the palate?" The answer is (you see, we knock him down again, as usual) because these poisons are themselves for the most part artificial products; they do not occur in a state of nature, at least in man's ordinary surroundings. Almost every poisonous thing that we are really liable to meet with in the wild state we are warned against at once by the sense of taste; but of course it would be absurd to suppose that natural selection could have produced a mode of warning us against poisons which have never before occurred in human experience. One might just as well expect that it should have rendered us dynamite-proof, or have given us a skin like the hide of a rhinoceros to protect us against the future contingency of the invention of rifles.

Sweets and bitters are really almost the only tastes proper, almost the only ones discriminated by this central and truly gustatory region of the tongue and palate. Most so-called flavorings will be found on strict examination to be nothing more than mixtures with these of certain smells or else of pungent, salty, or alkaline matters, distinguished as such by the tip of the tongue. For instance, paradoxical as it sounds to say so, cinnamon has really no taste at all, but only a smell. Nobody will

ever believe this on first hearing, but nothing on earth is easier than to put it to the test. Take a small piece of cinnamon, hold your nose tightly, rather high up, between the thumb and finger, and begin chewing it. You will find that it is absolutely tasteless; you are merely chewing a perfectly insipid bit of bark. Then let go your nose, and you will find immediately that it “tastes” strongly, though in reality it is only the perfume from it that you now permit to rise into the smelling-chamber in the nose. So, again, cloves have only a pungent taste and a peculiar smell, and the same is the case more or less with almost all distinctive flavorings. When you come to find of what they are made up, they consist generally of sweets or bitters, intermixed with certain ethereal perfumes, or with pungent or acid tastes, or with both or several such together. In this way, a comparatively small number of original elements, variously combined, suffice to make up the whole enormous mass of recognisably different tastes and flavors.

The third and lowest part of the tongue and throat is the seat of those peculiar tastes to which Professor Bain, the great authority upon this important philosophical subject, has given the names of relishes and disgusts. It is here, chiefly, that we taste animal food, fats, butters, oils, and the richer class of vegetables and made dishes. If we like them, we experience a sensation which may be called a relish, and which induces one to keep rolling the morsel farther down the throat, till it passes at last beyond the region of our voluntary control. If we don't like them, we get the sensation which may be called a disgust, and which is very different from the mere unpleasantness of excessively pungent or bitter things. It is far less of an intellectual and far more of a physical and emotional feeling. We say, and say rightly, of such things that we find it hard to swallow them; a something within us (of a very tangible nature) seems to rise up bodily and protest against them. As a very good example of this experience, take one's first attempt to swallow cod-liver oil. Other things may be unpleasant or unpalatable, but things of this class are in the strictest sense nasty and disgusting.

The fact is, the lower part of the tongue is supplied with nerves in close sympathy with the digestion. If the food which has been passed by the two previous examiners is found here to be simple and digestible, it is permitted to go on unchallenged; if it is found to be too rich, too bilious, or too indigestible, a protest is promptly entered against it, and if we are wise we will immediately desist from eating any more of it. It is here that the impartial tribunal of nature pronounces definitely against roast goose, mince pies, *pâté de foie gras*, sally lunn, muffins and crumpets, and creamy puddings. It is here, too, that the slightest taint in meat, milk, or butter is immediately detected; that rancid pastry from the pastrycook's is ruthlessly exposed, and that the wiles of the fishmonger are set at naught by the judicious palate. It is the special duty, in fact, of this last examiner to discover, not whether food is positively destructive, not whether it is poisonous or deleterious in nature, but merely whether it is then and there digestible or undesirable.

As our state of health varies greatly from time to time, however, so do the warnings of this last sympathetic adviser change and flicker. Sweet things are always sweet, and bitter things always bitter; vinegar is always sour, and ginger always hot in the mouth, too, whatever our state of health or feeling; but our taste for roast loin of mutton, high game, salmon cutlets, and Gorgonzola cheese varies immensely from time to time, with the passing condition of our health and digestion. In illness, and especially in sea-sickness, one gets the taste carried to the extreme: you may eat grapes or suck an orange in the chops of the Channel, but you do not feel warmly attached to the steward who offers you a basin of greasy ox-tail, or consoles you with promises of ham sandwiches in half a minute. Under those too painful conditions it is the very light, fresh, and stimulating things that one can most easily swallow – champagne, soda-water, strawberries, peaches, not lobster salad, sardines on toast, green Chartreuse, or hot brandy-and-water. On the other hand, in robust health, and when hungry with exercise, you can eat fat pork with relish on a Scotch hillside, or dine off fresh salmon three days running without inconvenience. Even a Spanish stew, with plenty of garlic in it, and floating in olive oil, tastes positively delicious after a day's mountaineering in the Pyrenees.

The healthy popular belief, still surviving in spite of cookery, that our likes and dislikes are the best guide to what is good for us, finds its justification in this fact, that whatever is relished will prove on the average wholesome, and whatever rouses disgust will prove on the whole indigestible. Nothing can be more wrong, for example, than to make children eat fat when they don't want it. A healthy child likes fat, and eats as much of it as he can get. If a child shows signs of disgust at fat, that proves that it is of a bilious temperament, and it ought never to be forced into eating it against its will. Most of us are bilious in after life just because we were compelled to eat rich food in childhood, which we felt instinctively was unsuitable for us. We might still be indulging with impunity in thick turtle, canvas-back ducks, devilled white-bait, meringues, and Nesselrode puddings, if we hadn't been so persistently overdosed in our earlier years with things that we didn't want and knew were indigestible.

Of course, in our existing modern cookery, very few simple and uncompounded tastes are still left to us; everything is so mixed up together that only by an effort of deliberate experiment can one discover what are the special effects of special tastes upon the tongue and palate. Salt is mixed with almost everything we eat —*sal sapit omnia*— and pepper or cayenne is nearly equally common. Butter is put into the peas, which have been previously adulterated by being boiled with mint; and cucumber is unknown except in conjunction with oil and vinegar. This makes it comparatively difficult for us to realise the distinctness of the elements which go to make up most tastes as we actually experience them. Moreover, a great many eatable objects have hardly any taste of their own, properly speaking, but only a feeling of softness or hardness, or glutinousness in the mouth, mainly observed in the act of chewing them. For example, plain boiled rice is almost wholly insipid; but even in its plainest form salt has usually been boiled with it, and in practice we generally eat it with sugar, preserves, curry, or some other strongly flavored condiment. Again, plain boiled tapioca and sago (in water) are as nearly tasteless as anything can be; they merely yield a feeling of gumminess; but milk, in which they are oftenest cooked, gives them a relish (in the sense here restricted), and sugar, eggs, cinnamon, or nutmeg are usually added by way of flavoring. Even turbot has hardly any taste proper, except in the glutinous skin, which has a faint relish; the epicure values it rather because of its softness, its delicacy, and its light flesh. Gelatine by itself is merely very swallowable, we must mix sugar, wine, lemon-juice, and other flavorings in order to make it into good jelly. Salt, spices, essences, vanilla, vinegar, pickles, capers, ketchups, sauces, chutneys, lime-juice, curry, and all the rest are just our civilised expedients for adding the pleasure of pungency and acidity to naturally insipid foods, by stimulating the nerves of touch in the tongue, just as sugar is our tribute to the pure gustatory sense, and oil, butter, bacon, lard, and the various fats used in frying to the sense of relish which forms the last element in our compound taste. A boiled sole is all very well when one is just convalescent, but in robust health we demand the delights of egg and bread-crumbs, which are, after all only the vehicle for the appetising grease. Plain boiled macaroni may pass muster in the unsophisticated nursery, but in the pampered dining-room it requires the aid of toasted parmesan. Good modern cookery is the practical result of centuries of experience in this direction; the final flower of ages of evolution, devoted to the equalisation of flavors in all human food. Think of the generations of fruitless experiment that must have passed before mankind discovered that mint sauce (itself a cunning compound of vinegar and sugar) ought to be eaten with leg of lamb, that roast goose required a corrective in the shape of apple, and that while a pre-established harmony existed between salmon and lobster, oysters were ordained beforehand by nature as the proper, accompaniment of boiled cod. Whenever I reflect upon such things, I become at once a good Positivist, and offer up praise in my own private chapel to the Spirit of Humanity which has slowly perfected these profound rules of good living. —*Cornhill Magazine*.

# **BYGONE CELEBRITIES AND LITERARY RECOLLECTIONS**

**BY CHARLES MACKAY, LL.D**

### III

#### **Napoleon III. – Lord William Pitt Lennox. – Archbishop Whately**

It was during the unsettled times that preceded the great French Revolution of 1848 – I think it was in January of that year – that one of Mr. Rogers's breakfasts was attended by Prince Louis Napoleon Buonaparte, afterwards Napoleon III.; Dr. Whately, the Protestant Archbishop of Dublin; Lord William Pitt Lennox, the son of the Duke of Richmond (who distinguished himself at the battle of Waterloo, and died many years afterwards as Governor-General of Canada); and myself. I was previously acquainted with all these gentlemen, and had met the Prince a few days previously at the house of Mr. John MacGregor, formerly Secretary of the Board of Trade, and member of Parliament for Glasgow. The Prince, who was then forty years of age, had long been a resident in London as an exile, spoke English exceedingly well, had thoroughly studied the working of the British constitution, and had learned to respect and apparently to love the English people. He was very taciturn and undemonstrative; his dull grey eyes seemed to have little speculation in them, and to have been given to him, if such an expression may be used, to look inwards upon himself rather than outwards upon the world. They brightened up at rare intervals when anything was said that particularly interested him. On this occasion the talk of the breakfast table turned a good deal upon French politics and the probability, more or less imminent, of a revolutionary outbreak in Paris, consequent upon the unwise opposition of Louis Philippe and his too obsequious minister, M. Guizot, to the question of the extension of the franchise and the reform of the French Parliament. As I had within a fortnight or three weeks returned from Paris, where I had associated with some leading liberal politicians, among others with Béranger the poet and the Abbé de Lamennais, my opinion upon the situation was asked, I think, by Mr. Rogers, and whether I thought the agitation would subside. "Not," I said, "unless the King yields." "He won't yield, I think," said the Prince; "he does not understand the seriousness of the case." I told the Prince that Béranger, who knew the temper and sympathised with the opinions of the people, had predicted the establishment of a Republic, consequent upon the downfall of the monarchy, within less than a twelvemonth. Lamennais did not give the King so long a lease of power, but foresaw revolution within six months. The Prince remarked that "if there were barricades in the streets of Paris, such as those by which his way to the throne was won in 1830, the King would not give orders to disperse the mob by force of arms." "Why do you think so?" asked Mr. Rogers. "The King is a weak man, a merciful man. He does not like bloodshed. I often think he was a fool not to have had me shot after the affair of Strasburg. Had our cases been reversed I know that I would have had him shot without mercy," I thought little of this remark at the time, but in after years, when the exiled Prince became the powerful emperor, my mind often reverted to this conversation, and I thought that if King Louis Philippe had done what the Prince considered he ought to have done – and as he would have been fully justified by law, civil and military, as well as by state policy, in doing – the whole course of European history would have been changed. Personally, the Prince was highly esteemed by all who knew him. Stern as a politician, and in pursuit of the great object of his ambition, as in the famous *coup d'état* of 1851 by which he raised himself at a bound from the comparatively humble and uncertain chair of a President to the most conspicuous imperial throne in the world – he was, in private life, of a singularly amiable temper. He never forgot in his prosperity the friends or even the acquaintances of his adversity; never ceased to remember any benefit that had been conferred upon him, and not only to be grateful for it, but to show his gratitude by acts of kindness and generosity, if the kindness or generosity could be of benefit to the fortunes of the persons on whom it was bestowed. When he sought the hand in marriage of a Princess of the House of Austria, and the honor was declined for the occult and unwhispered reason that he was a parvenu

and an upstart, and that his throne was at the mercy of a revolution (and what throne is not?), he married for pure love and affection a noble lady of inferior rank, and raised her to a throne which she filled for many years with more grace and splendor than any contemporary sovereign born in the purple of royalty had ever exhibited, Queen Victoria alone excepted.

The Prince thoroughly understood the character of the French people. Napoleon I. had called the English a nation of shopkeepers. Napoleon III. knew that the French were entitled in a far greater degree than the English to that depreciatory epithet. He knew that in their hearts they did not care so much for liberty and fraternity as they did for “equality,” – that what they wanted in the first place was peace, so that trade and industry might have a chance to prosper; and secondly, that France as a nation might be the predominant power in Europe. For the first reason, they required a master who would maintain order; for the second reason, they idolised the name of the first Napoleon. These two things were patent to the mind of Napoleon III., and formed the keystone of his domestic and foreign policy.

When London, about three months after the breakfast at Mr. Rogers’, was threatened, on April 10, 1848, by an insurrectionary mob of Chartists, under the guidance of a half-crazy Irishman, named Feargus O’Connor, who afterwards died in a lunatic asylum, the Prince volunteered to act as a special constable, for the preservation of the peace, in common with many thousands of respectable professional men, merchants, and tradesmen. I met him in Trafalgar Square, armed with the truncheon of a policeman. On this occasion, the Duke of Wellington, then commander-in-chief of the British army, had taken the precaution to station the military in sufficient numbers at all the chief strategic points of the metropolis ready, though concealed from the notice of the multitude, to act on an emergency. Happily their services were not required. The sovereign was popular; the upper and middle classes were unanimous; a large section of the laboring classes had no sympathy with Chartism, and the display of the civic force, with bludgeons and staves only, without firearms of any kind, was quite sufficient to overawe the rioters. I stopped for a minute to exchange greetings with the Prince, and said I did not think from all that I had heard that the Chartists would resort to violence, and that their march through the streets would be orderly. The Prince was of the same opinion, and passed upon his beat among other police special constables in front of the National Gallery.

As Lord William Lennox was of the breakfast party, I took the opportunity to ask him a question with regard to a disputed point. I had lately visited Brussels, the city in which I had passed my school-boy days, and which was consequently endeared to my mind by many youthful associations. The mother of Lord William, the beautiful Duchess of Richmond, had given a great ball on the night preceding the battle of Waterloo, in June, 1815, at which Lord William, then in his sixteenth year, was present. Every lover of poetry will remember the splendid description of this ball and of the subsequent battle which occurs in the third canto of Byron’s “Childe Harold.” The passage is unsurpassed in any language for the vigor, the picturesqueness, and the magnificence of its thought and diction, and in its relation to one of the most stupendous events in modern history.

There was a sound of revelry by night,  
And Belgium’s capital had gather’d then  
Her Beauty and her Chivalry, and bright  
The lamps shone o’er fair women and brave men;  
A thousand hearts beat happily; and when  
Music arose with its voluptuous swell,  
Soft eyes look’d love to eyes which spake again,  
And all went merry as a marriage bell;  
But hush! hark: a deep sound strikes like a rising knell.

It has been generally asserted and believed that the ball was given by the duchess in the grand hall of the stately Hôtel de Ville in the Grande Place, and when in Brussels I heard the assertion

repeated by many people, though denied by others. One old citizen, who remembered the battle well, affirmed it to have been at the Hôtel de Ville, which he saw brilliantly lighted up for the occasion, and passed among the crowd of equipages that filled the Grande Place, when setting down and taking up the ladies who graced the assembly with their presence. Another equally old and trustworthy inhabitant declared that to his personal knowledge the ball was given in the “Palais d’Aes,” a large building that adjoins the palace of the King of the Belgians, and is now used as a barrack; while a third affirmed it to have been held in the handsome hotel, adjoining the Chamber of Deputies, which was formerly occupied by Sir Charles Bagot, the British Ambassador to Brussels and the Hague in 1830. Thinking there could be no better authority than one who was present on the occasion, one, moreover, who was so nearly allied to the giver of the entertainment, I asked Lord William to decide the point. He replied at once that all these assertions were unfounded. His father, the Duke, took a large house in a back street, called the “Rue de la Blanchisserie” (street of the laundry), abutting on the boulevard, opposite the present Botanic Garden, and that the ball took place in the not extraordinarily spacious drawing-room of that mansion. He said, moreover, that the lines —

Within the window’d niche of that high hall  
Sat Brunswick’s fated chieftain,

conveyed an idea of magnitude which the so-called “high hall” did not in reality possess.

Archbishop Whately here said: “If we may be permitted without breach of good manners to speak of Waterloo in the presence of Prince Napoleon, I may remark that the correction of the very minor error just made by Lord William, though exceedingly interesting is not of great importance. Though contradicted again and again, the report still circulates, and is still believed, that the Duke of Wellington was surprised on the eve of the battle of Waterloo by the rapid march of the emperor, and was thus taken at a disadvantage.”

“I never believed the report,” said the Prince, “though I have my own views about the battle. I visited Waterloo in the winter of 1832, with what feelings you may imagine.”

“The truth as regards the alleged surprise,” said the Archbishop, “appears to be, as Lord Byron explained in a note to the passage in ‘Childe Harold,’ that the Duke had received intelligence of Napoleon’s march, and at first had the idea of requesting the Duchess of Richmond to countermand the ball; but, on reflection, considered it desirable that the people of Brussels should be kept in ignorance of the course of events. He, therefore, desired the duchess to let the ball proceed, and gave commands to all the general officers who had been invited to appear at it, each taking care to quit the room at ten o’clock quietly, and without giving any notification, except to each of the under officers, to join their respective divisions *en route*. There is no doubt that many of the subalterns who were not in the secret were surprised at the suddenness of the order.”

“I heard, when I visited the field of Waterloo less than a month ago,” I said, “that many of the officers joined the march in their dancing shoes, so little time was left for them to obey orders.”

“It has been proved to the satisfaction of every real inquirer into the facts,” said Mr. Rogers, “that as far as the duke himself and his superior officers were concerned, there was no surprise in the matter. You know the daring young lady, who presumed on her beauty to be forgiven for her impertinence, who asked the Duke point-blank at an evening party whether he had not been surprised at Waterloo. ‘Certainly not!’ he replied ‘but I am now.’”

“A proper rebuke,” said Lord William, “I hope the lady felt it.”

Byron, in the beautiful stanzas to which allusion has been made, describes the wood of Soignes, erroneously called Soignies, in the environs of Brussels, a portion of the great Forest of Ardennes:

And Ardennes waves above them her green leaves,  
Dewy with Nature’s tear-drops as they pass.

Grieving, if aught inanimate e'er grieves,  
Over the unreturning brave.

In a note to this passage he speaks of Ardennes as famous in Boiardo's "Orlando," as immortal in Shakespeare's "As You Like It." Whatever may have been the case with Boiardo, it is all but certain that Shakespeare's "Arden" was not the Ardennes near Brussels, but the forest of Arden, in Warwickshire, near his native town of Stratford-on-Avon. He frequented this "Arden" in his youth, perhaps in chasing the wild deer of Sir Thomas Lucy, perhaps in love-rambles with Anne Hathaway. Portions of this English forest still remain, containing in a now enclosed park – the property of a private gentleman – some venerable oak trees, one of which as I roughly measured it with my walking-stick is upwards of thirty feet in circumference within a yard of the ground. This tree, with several others still standing, must have been old in the days of Shakespeare; and in the shadow of which he himself may have reclined in the happy days ere he went to London in search of fame and fortune. "Arden," spelled Ardennes in French, is a purely Celtic word, meaning the high forest, from *Ard*, high, and *Airdean*, heights. The English district is still called "Arden," and the small town of Henley, within its boundaries, is described as Henley-in-Arden to distinguish it from the many other Henleys that exist in England.

Lord William Lennox married the once celebrated cantatrice, Miss Wood, from whom he was divorced. He was a somewhat voluminous author of third-rate novels, and a frequent contributor to the periodical press. He died in 1880, in his eighty-first year.

Dr. Whately, Archbishop of Dublin, was the author of a very able treatise on Logic and Rhetoric, long the text-book of the schools; and also of a once famous *jeu d'esprit* entitled "Historic Doubts concerning Napoleon Buonaparte," in which he proved irrefragably by false logic likely to convince idle and unthinking readers, that no such person as Napoleon Buonaparte ever did exist or could have existed. In this clever little work he ridiculed, under the guise of seeming impartiality and critical acumen, the many attempts that had been made, especially by French writers of the school of Voltaire, to prove that Jesus Christ was a purely imaginary character, as much a myth as the gods of Grecian and Roman mythology. Mr. Greville, in his "Memoirs of the Courts of George III., George IV., and William IV.," records that he met Whately, Archbishop of Dublin, at a dinner-party, and describes him "as a very ordinary man in appearance and conversation, with something pretentious in his talk, and as telling stories without point." Nevertheless he admitted him to be "a very able man." My opinion of the Archbishop was far more favorable. The first thing that struck me with regard to him was the clear precision of his reasoning, as befitted a man who had written with such undoubted authority on Logic and Rhetoric, and the second his rare tolerance for all conscientious differences of opinion on religious matters. Two years previously I had sat next to him on the platform of the inaugural meeting held by the members of The Athenæum at Manchester in support of that institution. Several bishops had been invited, and had signified their intention to be present, but all of them except Dr. Whately had withdrawn as soon as it was publicly announced that Mr. George Dawson, a popular lecturer and Unitarian preacher of advanced opinions, was to address the audience. Mr. Dawson, who was at the time a very young man, spoke with considerable eloquence and power, and impressed the audience favorably, the Archbishop included. "I think," said Dr. Whately, turning to me at the conclusion of the speech, "that my reverend brethren would have taken no harm from being present to-night, and more than one of them, whom I could name, would be all the better if they could preach with as much power and spirit, as this boy has displayed in his speech." On another occasion, when I was in Dublin in 1849. I heard that several ultra-orthodox Protestant clergymen in the city had been heard to express regret that Dr. Whately was so lax in his religious belief, and set so bad an example to his clergy. I asked in what manner, and was told in reply that he had publicly spoken of Dr. Daniel Murray, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, then in his 81st year, as

“a good man, a very good man,” adding the hope that he himself should be found worthy to meet Murray in Heaven.

This large-minded prelate died in 1863, in his seventy-seventh year.

## IV

### **The Rev. Henry Hart Milman – The Rev. Alexander Dyce – Thomas Miller**

It was in the summer of 1844, a few days after the interment in Westminster Abbey of Thomas Campbell, the poet, author of the “Pleasures of Hope” and many other celebrated poems, that I received an invitation to breakfast with Samuel Rogers, to meet the Rev. Dr. Milman, the officiating clergyman on that solemn occasion. There were two other guests besides myself; the Rev. Alexander Dyce, well known as a commentator on Shakespeare, and Mr. Thomas Miller – originally a basket-maker – who had acquired considerable reputation as a poet and novelist and a hard-working man of letters.

Dr. Milman was at the time rector of St. Margaret’s – the little church that stands close to Westminster Abbey and interferes greatly with the view of that noble cathedral. He was afterwards Dean of St. Paul’s, and was known to fame as the author of the successful tragedy of “Fazio,” of many poetical volumes of no great merit, and of a “History of the Jews” and a “History of Christianity,” both of which still retain their reputation.

The conversation turned principally on the funeral of the poet, at which both Mr. Dyce and myself had been present. The pall-bearers were among the most distinguished men of the time, for their rank, their talent, and their high literary and political positions. They included Sir Robert Peel, Lord Brougham, Lord Campbell, the Duke of Argyll, the Earl of Strangford, and the Duke of Buccleuch, the last named the generous nobleman – noble in nature as well as in rank – who had offered, when a lad in his teens, to pay the debts of his illustrious namesake, Sir Walter Scott, when the great novelist had fallen upon evil days in the full flush of his fame and popularity. A long procession of authors, sculptors, artists, and other distinguished men followed the coffin to the grave. Many Polish exiles were conspicuous among them. As Dr. Milman pronounced the affecting words of the burial service, “ashes to ashes, dust to dust,” a Polish gentleman made his way through the ranks of mourners, and drawing a handful of earth from a little basket which he carried, exclaimed in a clear voice, “This is Polish earth for the tomb of the friend of Poland,” and sprinkled it upon the coffin. This dramatic incident recalled to my mind, as it no doubt did to that of other spectators, Campbell’s unwearied exertions in the cause of Poland, and of the indignant lines in the “Pleasures of Hope,”

Hope for a season bade the world farewell,  
And Freedom shriek’d when Kosciusko fell.

Mr. Rogers, reminded, perhaps, of a grievance by the presence at the breakfast table of Dr. Milman, seemed to brood over an injustice that he thought had been done him with reference to the late poet. When Campbell, under the pressure of some pecuniary difficulty, complained of the scanty rewards of literature, and especially of poetry, Mr. Rogers was reported to have recommended him to endeavor to procure employment as a clerk. This was thought to be very unfeeling; but on this occasion Mr. Rogers explained to the whole company that he had been misunderstood, and that he had not meant any unkindness. “I myself,” he said, “was a clerk in my early days, and never had to depend upon poetry for my bread; and I only suggested that in Mr. Campbell’s ‘case,’ and in that of every other literary man, it would be much better if the writing of poetry were an amusement only and not a business.”

“No doubt,” said Mr. Dyce, “but men of genius are not always the masters of their own youth, and cannot invariably choose their careers or make choice of a profession which requires means and time to qualify for it. You, for instance, Mr. Rogers, when a clerk, were clerk to your father, and

qualified yourself under his auspices for partnership in, or succession to the management of, his prosperous bank. Mr. Campbell had no such chances.”

“It is a large question,” said Dr. Milman. “The love of literature in a man of genius, rich or poor – especially if poor, is an all-absorbing passion; and shapes his life, regret it as we may. Literature has rewards more pleasant than those of money, pleasant though money undoubtedly is. If money were to be the ‘be-all’ and ‘end-all’ of life, it would be better to be a rich cheesemonger or butcher than a poor author. But no high-spirited, intelligent, and ambitious youth could be of this opinion and shape his life by it. Sensitive youths drift into poetry, as prosaic and adventurous youths drift into the army or the navy.”

“The more’s the pity,” replied Mr. Rogers, “as by drifting into poetry they too often drift into poverty and misery. I trust, however, you will all understand that the idle and the malevolent gossips did, and do me, gross injustice when they say that I recommended Campbell to accept a clerkship rather than continue to rely upon poetry. I never thought of doing so. I merely expressed a general wish that every man of genius, not born to wealth, should have a profession to rely upon for his daily bread.”

“A wish that all men would agree in,” said Mr. Dyce, “and that after all had no particular or exclusive reference to Mr. Campbell. He did not find the literature which he adorned utterly unprofitable. He made money by his poetry and by his literary labor generally, besides gaining a pension of three hundred pounds per annum on the Civil List, and the society of all the most eminent men of his time, which he could not have done as a cheesemonger or a butcher, however successful he might have become in these pursuits.”

“These are all truisms,” said Mr. Rogers, somewhat sharply, as if annoyed. “What I complain of is that the world, the very ill-natured world, should have spread abroad the ridiculous story that I recommended Mr. Campbell, in his declining years, to apply for a clerkship.”

“I think no one believes that you did so,” said Dr. Milman, “or that you could have done so. Your sympathy with men of letters is well known and has been proved too often, not by mere words only, but by generous deeds, for such a story to obtain credence.”

“Falsehoods,” replied Mr. Rogers, still with a tone of bitterness, “are not cripples. They run fast, and have more legs than a centipede. I saw it stated in print the other day that I depreciate Shakespeare and think him to have been over-rated. I know of no other foundation for the libel than that I once quoted the opinion expressed of him by Ben Jonson, his dearest friend and greatest admirer. Though Ben Jonson called Shakespeare ‘the Swan of Avon,’

Soul of the age,  
The applause, delight, and wonder of the stage,

and affirmed that:

He was not for an age, but for all Time,

he did not hesitate to express the wish, in answer to one who boasted that Shakespeare had never blotted a line, ‘would to Heaven he had blotted a thousand.’ Ben Jonson saw the spots on the glorious face of the sun of Shakespeare’s genius, and was not accused of desecrating his memory because he did so; but because *I* quoted that very saying and approved of it, I have been accused of an act of treason against the majesty of the great poet. Surely my offence was no greater than that of Ben Jonson! If there were treason in the thought, it was treason that I shared with him who had said he loved Shakespeare with as much love as was possible to feel on this side of idolatry.”

“I think,” remarked Dr. Milman, “that such apparently malevolent repetitions of a person’s remarks are the results of careless ignorance or easy-going stupidity, rather than of positive ill-nature or a wilful perversion of the truth.”

“It is very curious,” said Mr. Dyce, “how very few people can repeat correctly what they hear, and that nine people out of ten cannot repeat a joke without missing the point or the spirit of it.”

“And what a widely prevalent tendency there is to exaggerate, especially in numbers. If some people see a hundred of anything, they commonly represent the hundred as a thousand and the thousand as ten thousand.”

“Not alone in numbers,” interposed Mr. Rogers, “but in anything. If I quoted Ben Jonson’s remark in relation to Shakespeare once only, the rumor spreads that I quoted it frequently; and so the gossip passes from mouth to mouth with continual accretion. Perhaps I shall go down to posterity as an habitual reviler and depreciator of Shakespeare.”

“Perhaps you won’t go down to posterity at all,” said Mr. Dyce, good-naturedly.

“Perhaps not,” replied Mr. Rogers, “but if my name should happen to reach that uncertain destination I trust I may be remembered, as Ben Jonson is, as a true lover of Shakespeare. But great as Shakespeare is, I don’t think that our admiration should ever be allowed to degenerate into slavish adoration. We ought neither to make a god of him nor a fetish. And I ask you, Mr. Dyce, as a diligent student of his works and an industrious commentator upon them, whether you do not think that very many passages in them are unworthy of his genius. If Homer nods, why not Shakespeare?”

“I grant all that,” replied Mr. Dyce, “nay more! I assert that many of the plays attributed to him were not written by him at all. And more even than that. Several of his plays were published surreptitiously, and without his consent, and never received his final corrections or any revision whatever. The faults and obscurities that are discoverable even in the masterpieces of his genius, were not due to him at all, but to ignorant and piratical booksellers, who gave them to the world without his authority, and traded upon his name. Some also must be attributed to the shorthand writers who took down the dialogue as repeated by the actors on the stage. It is curious to reflect how indifferent Shakespeare was to his dramatic fame. He never seems to have cared for his plays at all, and to have looked at them, to use the slang of the artists of our days, as mere ‘*pot-boilers*,’ compositions that brought him in money, and enabled him to pay his way, but in which he took no personal pride whatever.”

“His heart was in his two early poems – ‘Venus and Adonis,’ and the ‘Rape of Lucrece,’” said Dr. Milman, “the only compositions, it should be observed, that were ever published by his authority, and to which he appended his name. His sonnets, which some people admire so much – an admiration in which I do not share – were published surreptitiously, without his consent, and probably more than one-half of them were not written by him. Some of them are undoubtedly by Marlowe, and some by authors of far inferior ability. Shakespeare’s name was popular at the time; there was no law of copyright, and booksellers did almost what they pleased with the names and works of celebrated men; and what seems extraordinary in our day, the celebrated men made no complaint – most probably because there was no redress to be obtained for them if they had done so. The real law of copyright only dates from the eighth year of the reign of Queen Anne, 1710, or nearly a century after Shakespeare’s death.”

“But authors in those early days, even in the absence of a well-defined law of copyright,” said Mr. Miller, “received payment for their works; witness the receipt of John Milton for five pounds on account of ‘Paradise Lost’ – now in the possession of our host – and which we have all seen.”

“But that was long after the death of Shakespeare,” said Mr. Dyce, “and it does not appear that Shakespeare ever received a shilling for the copyright of any of his works. Perhaps he received gratuities from the Earls of Southampton and Pembroke, and the other rich young men about town, for whom it is supposed that he wrote many of his sonnets. That he also must have received considerable sums for his representation of his plays at the Globe Theatre is evident from the well-ascertained fact

that he retired from theatrical business with a competent fortune and lived the life for some years of a prosperous country gentleman.”

As it has been asserted in my presence by an eminent literary man, within a month of the present writing, that Samuel Rogers systematically depreciated Shakespeare, and that he was above all things a cynic, I think it right, in justice to his memory, to repeat the conversation above recorded. Though it took place nearly forty years ago, I wrote down the heads of it in my notebook on the very day when it occurred; and by reperusal of it I have refreshed my memory so as to be certain of its accuracy. Mr. Rogers doubtless said very pungent and apparently ill-natured things in his time; no professed wit, such as he was, can always, or indeed very often, refrain from shooting a barbed dart either to raise a laugh and to strengthen an argument, or to dispense with one; but there was no malevolence in the heart, though there might appear to be some on the tongue, of Samuel Rogers. To love literature, and to excel in poetical composition, were unfailing passports to his regard, his esteem, and if necessary, his purse. One of the guests of the morning on which these conversations took place, and who bore his part in them, was a grateful recipient and witness of his beneficence. Thomas Miller, who began life as a journeyman basket-maker, working for small daily wages in the fens of Lincolnshire, excited the notice of his neighbors by his poetical genius, or it may have been only talent, and by their praises of his compositions, filled his mind with the desire to try his literary fortune in the larger sphere of London. He listened to the promptings of his ambition, came to the metropolis, launched his little skiff on the wide ocean of literary life, and by dint of hard work, indomitable perseverance, unfailing hope, and incessant struggles, managed to earn a modest subsistence. He speedily found that poetry failed to put money in his purse, and prudently resorted to prose. When prose in the shape of original work – principally fiction – just enabled him to live from day to day, he took refuge in the daily drudgery of reviewing in the *Literary Gazette*, then edited by Mr. Jerdan, a very bad paymaster. He had not been long in London before he made the acquaintance of Mr. Rogers, and after a period of more or less intimacy, received from that gentleman the good, though old, and as it often happens, the unwelcome advice that he should cease to rely wholly upon literature for his daily bread. As poor Miller could not return to basket-making – except as an employer of other basket-makers, for which he had not sufficient, or indeed any, capital – and as, moreover, he had no love for any pursuits but those of literature, he resolved, if he could manage it, to establish himself as a bookseller and publisher. Mr. Rogers, to whom he confided his wish, approved of it, and generously aided him to accomplish it, by the advance without security of the money required for the purpose. The basket-maker carried on the business for a few years with but slight success, and once informed me that he had made more money by the sale of note paper, of sealing-wax, of ink, and of red-tape, than he had made by the sale of his own works, or those of anybody else.

Mr. Rogers established another poet in the bookselling and publishing business, but with far greater success than attended his efforts in the case of the basket-maker. Mr. Edward Moxon, a clerk or shopman in the employ of Messrs. Longman, who wrote in his early manhood a little book of sonnets that attracted the notice of Mr. Rogers, to whom they had been sent by the author with a modest letter, became by the pecuniary aid and constant patronage of the “Bard of Memory,” one of the most eminent publishers of the time. He was known to fame as “the Poet’s publisher,” and issued the works not only of Mr. Rogers himself, but of Campbell, Wordsworth, Southey, Savage, Landor, Coleridge, and many other poetical celebrities. He also published the works of Ben Jonson, Marlowe, Beaumont and Fletcher, Peele, and other noted dramatists of the Elizabethan era.

The friendly assistance, delicately and liberally administered in the hour of need, by Samuel Rogers to the illustrious Richard Brinsley Sheridan is fully recorded in the life of the latter by Thomas Moore; that which was administered, though under less pressing circumstances, to Thomas Campbell, has found a sympathetic historian in Dr. William Beattie. Rogers, in spite of the baseless libel concerning Shakespeare, had not a particle of literary envy in his composition. His dislike to

Lord Byron was not literary but personal, and is adequately explained – and almost justified – by the gross and unprovoked attacks which Byron directed against him. —*Gentleman's Magazine*.

## AN ACTOR IN THE REBELLION OF 1798

BY LETITIA McCLINTOCK

In a tiny hovel on the mountain-side just above the romantic glens of Banagher, in the wildest part of the country Londonderry, lives Paddy O'Heany, aged a hundred and three years. Paddy is an intelligent old man who must have enjoyed his existence thoroughly, and taken a vivid interest in the stirring scenes of his early life. No clod of the valley is he even now, not like many old people who cannot be aroused to any enthusiasm about either past or present events. Being in quest of an actor in the terrible scenes of '98, and having tried several very old people without result, we hoped to find in Paddy a story-teller.

"Paddy," said our friend Mrs. S – , "is the oldest inhabitant in the parish; he was a youth of nineteen at the time of the Rebellion, and can relate graphic tales of adventures in which he took part. One of them, the history of Jack McSparron, will make your blood run cold; but there, I'll say no more; you shall judge for yourself. Paddy was one of the United Irishmen; has been, it is said, a Ribbonman and a Fenian since then, and is now, in all probability, a Land Leaguer. At any rate, his sympathies are with the Land League, so that you must be careful what you say if you want him to talk; but I need not give you any hints, you will know how to draw him out."

Looking down from Paddy's cottage door upon the richly wooded glens of Banagher, the traveller is struck by the extent and beauty of the view. Below lies a ruined church, a little to its right the glens – four dark lines of wood branching off from a common meetingpoint, and running up the mountain in different directions, and to the left the quaint country town of Dungiven. Above the town rises the majestic mountain range of Benbraddagh; while yet farther to the left, and like pale, smoke-tinted phantoms, are the hills of Magilligan, and the shadowy coast-line. This was the view we saw from Paddy's low doorway, and with a little reluctance we turned away from contemplating it, to enter the smoky cabin.

Paddy was a fine old man with thick, grizzled hair, a better-formed profile than many of his class, and a hale, hearty voice. He was totally blind, but his keen face was so full of intelligence that it was easy to forget that he could not see. His daughter, herself a very old woman, moved his arm-chair near the door, and we sat beside him facing the scene above described. The turf smoke, of which the kitchen was full, blew past us to find its outlet at the door. A turf stack was built against the end of the dresser just behind Paddy's chair. A calf was walled off by a little rampart of boards from the rest of the room, and the cock and hens had already flown to their roost directly above our heads. The atmosphere and neighborhood might have been objected to by squeamish people, but in the pursuit of knowledge what will not one dare?

The old woman stood behind her father's chair ready to jog his memory if necessary. A present of tobacco, tea, and sugar touched the patriarch's heart; he was quite willing to take the desired journey into the regions of the past.

"Do I mind the time o' the Uniting? Is that what the lady wants to know? Ay, bravely I mind it. I mind it far better nor things that happened yesterday. I was ane o' the United Men myself, an' I was sent wi' a big wheen o' the boys to keep the pass on the White Mountain when the army was expected from Derry to destroy us. I had my pike, an' the maist part o' the boys had guns."

"Were you not afraid to meet the soldiers?"

"Feared? Was I feared? Troth an' faix I was, sorely feared; but it wad ha' been as much as your life was worth to let on that you were feared. I mind us leaning against the heather, an' the big rocks

an' mountains rising up all roun' us, an' the cold night an' the darkness comin' on, an' feen a word was spoke among us, for we be to keep the pass."

"Well?"

"Weel, at long an' at last, Jack McSparron came running back (he was put to watch); 'an', says he, 'the army's comin' now; there's the tramp o' the horses,' says he. Wi' that we to the listening, an' we all heered the tramp o' the cavalry; an' the company o' the United Men just melted away like snow off a ditch. Jack an' one or two others tried to keep us thegither, but it couldna be done; the boys was too feared. I ran wi' the rest, an' I never stopped till I was in my father's house sittin' into the chimney-corner aback o' my mother. After that there was soldiers passing we'er door nearly every day, an' they said they were marching to burn Maghera to the ground."

"Why was Maghera to be burned to the ground?"

"I dinna rightly know, but I think the United Men was strong in it. But counter-orders came that it was na to be destroyed, an' then the army came back to Dungiven."

"Were you acquainted with Jack McSparron?"

"Is it Jack McSparron that was flogged in Dungiven Street? Ay, I mind that weel."

His withered hands clutched the arms of his chair as he bent forward, with his sightless eyes fixed, and the fire of eagerness in his keen face. He was gone upon a journey into the distant past, and a scene of horror passed before his mental vision.

"Those times were worse nor these," he said; "there were murders, too, in parts o' the country, but there was another way o' working then. I told you that the army came over frae England, an' they took up the men that was for the Uniting, an' there was short work wi' them. Ay, ay, I mind the day Jack was flogged in Dungiven Street because he wouldna tell the names o' the men that was banded wi' him. One o' them was a meeting minister, it was said; an' there was farmers an' laboring men, too. For the whole country about Dungiven was strong for the United Irishmen as they called them. I was wi' them mysel', but I was never took."

"There were some Presbyterians among them?"

"Eh?" and his hand went up to his ear.

"The lady's axin' if there wasn't Presbyterians wi' the United Men, father," said his daughter.

"Troth, was there, ma'am! it was allowed that there was ministers an' farmers an' shopkeepers o' them. Jack was a Presbyterian himsel'."

"How was he taken prisoner?"

"I dinna just mind, but I think it was at a meeting they had at a house in Feeny. The alarm was given that the soldiers was coming, and all fled an' got away but Jack. He was a fine boy of nineteen years of age, the support o' his mother. He was stiff in his turn, too, far stiffer nor I could ha' been, for he swore he'd die afore he'd tell upon his comrades. Ay, he was stiffer nor me."

"True for you, father," laughed the old woman, leaning over Paddy's chair; "you'd ha' told sooner nor be scourged."

We recalled Paddy's naïve history of his flight from the pass on the White Mountain and mentally agreed with her. Paddy, however, was an Irishman pure, while Jack McSparron was descended from the Scottish Covenanters, and had inherited from them the fortitude of an Ephraim MacBriar.

"Go on, Paddy; your story is most interesting."

The old man smiled, but he was hardly thinking of his visitors, the picture brought back by memory so engrossed him.

"Jack wouldna gie the names o' his comrades, an' he was sentenced to be flogged till he would tell. I mind Niel Sweenie, that was a comrade boy o' mine, an' me went to Dungiven to see the flogging. We seen Jack in a cart an' his mother wi' him, an' all the way along the road she was laying her commands upon him to die before he'd betray his comrades. The army was marching all round the

cart, an' people frae all the farmhouses an' cottierhouses was following. Then we got into Dungiven. I mind the crowds that was looking on, an' me an' Niel among them.

"Jack got so many lashes, an' then they'd stop an' the officer would ax him if he would tell now, an' the old woman would call out, 'Dinna give in, Jack. Die like a man, my son. Think o' the curses o' the widows an' orphans that wad follow you;' an' the poor boy would make answer, 'Ay, mother, I'll die before I tell.'"

"Dear, dear, but that mother was the hard-hearted woman!" interrupted Paddy's daughter, glancing at her grandson, who happened to pass the door at that moment with a creel of turf on his back.

Paddy did not heed her interruption; he was embarked on the full tide of recollection – the horrible scene lived again before him. "They gave him a great many lashes," he continued; "I dinna mind how many hundred it was, an' each time they stopped he was asked if he would tell, an' his mother still bid him die like a man, an' his answer was still the same. At long an' at last the officer called out 'Stop! would you kill a game bird?' an' he was took down an' put in the guard-room for the night.

"Niel an' me was invited in to tak' a look at him, an' we seen him lying on his face on a table wi' an ointment shirt on that the soldiers had thrown over him. The officers gave orders that the whole country was to see him if they liked. I think they wanted to scare the United Men.

"He was to be took to Limavady the next day for the sentence to be carried out there, so the whole country took a holiday again to see the rear o' the flogging. Jack an' his mother was in the cart, an' the army marchin' wi' them, an' me an' Niel an' a crowd o' neighbors following along the road to Limavady.

"The mother called out to us, 'I'm going wi' his living funeral,' says she; 'but I'll gie him the same advice I did yesterday,' says she.

"When we reached Limavady he was tied up, an' we were watching for the lash to fall, when there was a great shout an' we seen a man galloping up the street as hard as his horse could go, waving something white over his head. It was a pardon come from Dublin for Jack McSparron."

"I am glad the pardon came, for he was an heroic youth, rebel though he was."

"Ay," cried the old man, "*he* wouldna' be an informer. There's few o' his sort left in Ireland now, more's the pity – more's the pity!"

The fire in his voice told us plainly where his sympathies really were. Not, certainly, with murdered landlords, bailiffs, or non-land-league farmers!

"Did Jack live to be an old man?"

"Ay, did he. He died it'll be sixteen year past next Candlemas. There's a daughter o' his married on a farmer not very far from this. The McSparrons in this parish is all proud o' being his friends. When ane o' them shows himsel' a gude comrade or neighbor, the people says, 'Ay, he's o' the blood of Jack McSparron.'"

## Tragedies at Maghera

Mrs. Majilton was in a state of much excitement one day in the summer of '98 because parties of soldiers were passing her house one after another. Her house was close to the high-road, half-way between Feeny and Dungiven, and stood in a comfortable little farmyard. She was a Church Protestant, dreadfully afraid of the rebels, and consequently very glad to see the red-coats in the country. They had been marching past her house all morning, and she had stood at the door with the baby in her arms, wishing them "God speed."

The men had exchanged a cheerful greeting with her now and then, and as they went by she caught some of their conversation; the word Maghera was repeated over and over again. They were marching to Maghera; no time must be lost; they could not delay for refreshment or rest. The day wore on, and a party of stragglers stopped at her door, young lads, mere recruits, who had lagged behind the main body, not being able to endure the hardships of their forced march from Londonderry as well as the older men. Their sergeant, a bronzed veteran, asked the good woman to give them a drink of water, for the love of God.

"I have sworn at the poor fellows till I'm hoarse, ma'am; but they're giving up, and I must let them rest a minute."

Mrs. Majilton ran to lay the baby in its cradle; then she opened the barrel, filled a large bowl half full of oatmeal, poured water upon it, and handed it to the men, who sat down in the yard, and passed the bowl from one to another.

"That's both meat and drink," said they, gratefully.

"Our orders are to hurry on to Maghera without stopping, for we've got to burn it to the ground," said the sergeant.

"God bless me, sir, what's occurring at Maghera?"

She knew that Maghera was a country town farther off than Dungiven. Some of her neighbors had been there, but she had never travelled so far herself. The sergeant told her that news had reached Derry that the rebels were in force at Maghera, and were murdering all who refused to join them. There were few newspapers in those days, and no penny post; rumor spread and perhaps exaggerated the evil tidings. It was said that a young girl combing her hair beside her hearth had been shot dead by a party of men who came to look for her father. They looked in at the window, saw her, and murdered her out of revenge because her father had escaped them. "And now," concluded the sergeant, "our orders are that Maghera is to be destroyed."

Mrs. Majilton, who knew her Bible well, remembered the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, and of Nineveh – that wicked city; and she thought the soldiers were the Lord's instruments to execute His judgment upon Maghera.

When the party of recruits got as far as Dungiven they found that counter-orders had come – Maghera was *not* to be burnt after all; but sufficient troops to quiet the country were to be sent on, while the remainder halted at Dungiven. We shall accompany two of the soldiers who pressed forward. As they neared the town, scenes of desolation met them on every hand – deserted houses, smouldering thatch, burnt stackyards. They were told that the rebels had taken to the mountains when they heard the troops were coming. The men separated; some explored one road, some another, hoping to inclose the enemy in a net.

As Privates John Buckley and Tom Green advanced up one of these mountain roads they were appalled by the terrible loneliness of the place. Here a farmhouse stood empty, its door hanging off the hinges; there were blackened circles where stacks of corn had been; again they saw a cottage with a smouldering thatch, and no sign of life near, excepting a starved cat that prowled about the door.

The rebels had clearly passed that way; those were the marks they had left behind them. At length, where the lane seemed about to lose itself in a mountain pass, they came to a cottage whose

door stood open. It looked like a comfortable small farmer's homestead: a pretty garden, gay with common flowers, was at one side of the house; there were laburnums and lilacs just out of blossom; red and white roses in full blossom; tall orange lilies with bursting buds; rows of peas and beans and plots of cabbages. The whole place had a civilized air, and reminded the Englishmen of their own homes. The pretty green railing and rustic gate; the orderly stackyard and offices, gave an impression of neatness, taste, and comfort unusual in that country.

The men went into the kitchen of the farmhouse. There was no fire upon the hearth. The turf had burnt to ashes under a great black pot of potatoes that hung upon the crook, and two children sat disconsolately leaning against each other beside the cold hearth.

Buckley explored the "room," and Green the loft; there was no trace of human being to be found; the children were the only inmates of the place.

The eldest child, a little girl of about four years old, with pretty blue eyes and curly hair, looked up curiously, but did not move. Her tiny brother was too languid to raise his head from her shoulder.

"Are you alone in the house?" asked Green.

"Ay," replied the child.

"Where are your father and mother?"

"They are sleeping in the garden; they ha' been there this good wee while," answered the little one, fixing her serious eyes upon them. "Come, an' I'll show you where they are."

She got up, gave her hand confidently to the man, and led him to the garden, the other soldier following; and behind the cabbages they found a man and woman lying in a heap, stiff and cold, having evidently been piked to death.

"Come back to the house, my little dear," cried Green, drawing the poor innocent away from the cruel sight. Her little brother still sat where they had left him, leaning his sick head against the wall. He was very faint and weak.

"Have you nothing to eat?" asked the men.

"My mammy has bread an' butter in the kist, but she has the key in her pocket," replied the little girl. They broke open the chest and found the food; but they had arrived too late to save the boy: he died in Buckley's arms before they reached Maghera. Green carried the girl and presented her to his company. Each soldier subscribed toward her maintenance, and she grew up among them, the pet and plaything of all. She accompanied the regiment to England at the close of the rebellion, and nothing further was known of her by her old neighbors.

## Micky O'Donnel's Wake

Wildest of all the wild Donegal coast is the region lying between Fannet Lighthouse and Knockalla Fort. There are impassable bogs and mountain fastnesses which strangers cannot explore, but that are safe resorts for illicit distillers, the blue wreaths of smoke from whose stills may be seen curling against a dark background. In the years '97 and '98 these fastnesses were favorite haunts of the United Irishmen.

Fannet had a particularly bad name in those unsettled times. The Church Protestants were, of course, loyal, but they formed only a handful of the population; and the Presbyterians were, many of them, banded with the rebels. The Fannet landlords raised a company of yeomen, consisting of the Protestants aforesaid, and placed themselves at their head.

Help was at hand. Lord Cavan was sent over from England in command of soldiers; Knockalla Fort was garrisoned; and the yeomanry were called up to receive their arms and ammunition.

"You needna be giving the like of us arms, my lord," said old Anthony Gallagher, "for the Catholics will take them from us."

Lord Cavan was amused at the fellow's outspokenness, and replied that he had come over to make Fannet so quiet that not one of the rebels would venture so much as to speak. The yeomen got their guns and bayonets, and the soldiers were ready to support them. Lord Cavan, a stern and fierce soldier, kept his word; he quieted Fannet so that the Catholics did not dare to speak. The Protestants had been reduced to an abject state of terror before his arrival by the horrible murder of Dr. Hamilton their rector, a zealous magistrate, who was followed to the house of a neighboring clergyman and shot. He went to spend the night with a brother-rector at some distance from Fannet, and the rectory was surrounded by United Irishmen, who clamored that the Doctor should be given up to them.

"Those are Fannet men; I know their voices," said he. The door was soon burst open; the attacking party rushed in, found the family in the garrets, and dragged their captive downstairs. He clung with both hands to the banisters, and one of the women servants took a candle and held the flame to his fingers till he was forced to let go his hold. He was taken to the lawn and his brains were blown out.

This atrocity had determined the Government to send troops to Fannet.

It was soon after this that Anthony Gallagher and the troop he served in were at Kerrykeel fair and were attacked by a party of the rebels. The yeomen were commanded to draw their bayonets and beat them off, and all the United Men retreated and got away except a man called Micky O'Donnel from Ballywhoriskey, at the Bottom of Fannet. He was found dead on the street, pierced through the heart. Lord Cavan rode up at that moment, followed by men from the Fort. "Take that corpse with you, boys," said he, "an' hang it in chains from the walls of Knockalla Fort. It will be a warning to the rest of the villains." Anthony and two soldiers were left in charge of the corpse, but the villagers assembling in force, there was a rescue, and Micky O'Donnel was carried off before the yeomen got back, attracted by the noise of shouting, to protect their comrades. Lord Cavan was in a rage when he heard what had happened, and swore a round oath that that corpse should yet hang in chains from Knockalla Fort as a warning to the rest of Fannet; and he despatched a party to recover it.

It was known that Micky O'Donnel belonged to the Bottom of Fannet, so the party set out along the banks of Mulroy, where they fell in with the yeomen, and all went on together. But every house along the road was empty, and there were no men at work in the fields; it was like a country of the dead.

Along the wild Atlantic shore; among the bent-covered sand hills; up to the miserable row of hovels called the town of Shanna, went the soldiers; but still not a human being was to be seen. The whole population had taken to the mountains.

At length they reached the last cabin in the village of Ballywhoriskey, and there they discovered the dead man laid out on the wretched bed, with two tallow candles burning at his head.

“Feen a crathur” (we quote the words of Anton Gallagher, our informant, son of the Anthony who was present at the scene) – “feen a crathur was in the house but the corpse on the bed an’ two ould women waking it. The women cried an’ lamented, an’ went on their knees to the officer to lave the poor corpse where it was to get Christian burial; an’ the gentleman thought it a pity o’ them, an’ left the wake wantin’ Micky after all. It was my father tould me the story.”

“Have you got your father’s gun and bayonet?”

“Ay, ma’am, in troth I have! If you ladyship honors me wi’ a visit you’ll see them hanging up over the chimney. I wouldna part wi’ them for goold. There’s many a winter’s night the Catholics coming home frae the market will stop at we’er door an’ cry, “King William’s men, come out!” an’ then it’s all the mother an’ me can do to keep the boys from taking down their grandfather’s gun, an’ going out to meet them.” —*Belgravia*.

## SAMUEL JOHNSON

BY EDMUND GOSSE

It is exactly one hundred years ago since Dr. Johnson wrote his last letter to Lucy Porter, in which he announced to her that he was very ill, and that he desired her prayers. Less than a fortnight later, on the 13th of December, 1784, he was dead. All through the year his condition had given his friends more than anxiety. The winter of 1783 had been marked by collapse of the constitution; to the ceaseless misery of his skin was now added an asthma that would not suffer him to recline in bed, a dropsy that made his legs and feet useless through half of the weary day. It is somewhat marvellous that he got through this terrible winter, the sufferings of which are painfully recorded in his sad correspondence. It is difficult to understand why, just when he wanted companionship most, his friends seem all to have happened to desert him. Of the quaint group of invalids in mind and body to whom his house had been a hospital, all were gone except Mrs. Desmoulins, who was bedridden; and we may believe that their wrangling company had never been so distasteful to himself as to his friends. Boswell and Mrs. Thrale, as we know, had more or less valid reasons for absence, and Boswell, at least, was solicitous in inquiry. We must, however, from whatever cause, think of Johnson, who dreaded solitude, as now almost always alone, mortified by spiritual pains no less acute than his physical ones, torturing his wretched nights with Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted*, and with laborious and repeated diagnosis of his own bodily symptoms. It is strange to think that, although he was the leading man of letters in England, and the centre of a whole society, his absence from the meetings of his associates seems scarcely to have been noticed. It was not until in February he was relieved that he allowed himself to speak of the danger he had passed through. Then he confessed his terror to Lucy Porter, in the famous words, "Pray for me; death, my dear, is very dreadful; let us think nothing worth our care but how to prepare for it;" and asked Boswell to consult the venerable physician, Sir Alexander Dick, as to the best way of avoiding a relapse.

Boswell felt it a duty to apply not to Dick only, but to various leading doctors. In doing so he reminded them, with his extraordinary foppishness, of "the elegant compliment" which Johnson had paid to their profession in his *Life of Garth*, the poet-physician. The doctors, with one accord, and thinking without doubt far more of Johnson himself than of Garth, clustered around him with their advice and their prescriptions, and the great man certainly received for the brief remainder of his days such alleviation as syrup of poppies and vinegar of squills could give him. Mrs. Boswell, encouraged by a more favorable account of his health, invited him down to Auchinlech in March. He could not venture to accept, but he was pleased to be asked, and recovered so much of his wonted fire as to fancy, in a freak of strange inconsistency, that he would amuse himself by decorating his London study with the heads of "the fathers of *Scottish* literature." To Langton, who – as Johnson justly thought, with unaccountable "circumduction" – had made inquiries about his old friend through Lord Portmore, he expressed a hope of panting on to ninety, and said that "God, who has so wonderfully restored me, can preserve me in all seasons." It is very pathetic to follow the old man through the desolate and wearisome months: nor can we easily understand, from any of the records we possess, why he was allowed to be so much alone. On Easter Monday, after recording without petulance that his great hope of being able to go out on the preceding day had been doomed to disappointment, he goes on to say, "I want every comfort. My life is very solitary and very cheerless... I am very weak, and have not passed the door since the 13th of December."

Bright weather came in May, and Johnson went to Islington for a change of air. Boswell came back to town, and the sage was able to go to dinner-parties day after day, without at first exasperating

his symptoms. In June he went to Oxford, on the famous occasion when he told the people in the coach that “Demptster’s sister had endeavored to teach him knotting, but that he had made no progress;” and at Oxford, as we know, he talked copiously, and with all his old vivacity. No doubt, though Boswell does not like to confess it, the constant dissipation, intellectual and mildly social, of those two summer months was mischievous to the frail revival of his health. At the dinner of the Literary Club, June 22, every one noticed how ill he looked. Perhaps the true cause of this was a secret chagrin which we can now appreciate, the final apostasy of Mrs. Thrale from his friendship. At all events, Reynolds and Boswell were sufficiently frightened to set their heads together for the purpose of getting their old friend off to Italy. We are divided between satisfaction that the inevitable end did not reach the old man sociable in the midst of strange faces and foreign voices, and bewildered indignation at the still mysterious cabal which wrecked so amiable an enterprise. If Lord Thurlow was shifty, however, other friends were generous. Dr. Brocklesbury, the physician, pressed Johnson to become his guest that he might the more carefully attend upon him. From Ashbourne, whither he had been prevailed upon to go, he kept this last-mentioned friend well posted in the sad fluctuations of his health, and we see him gradually settling down again into wretchedness. His mind recurred constantly to the approaching terror. To Dr. Burney he writes in August, “I struggle hard for life. I take physic and take air; my friend’s chariot is always ready. We have run this morning twenty-four miles, and could run forty-eight more. *But who can run the race with death?*” Reflections of this class fill all his letters of that autumn; and in October he sums up his condition in saying to Heberden that “the summer has passed without giving him any strength.” It is strange that still no one seemed to notice what is plain to us in every line of his correspondence, that Johnson was dying. With himself, however, the thought of death was always present; and even in discussing with Miss Seward so frivolous a theme as the antics of a learned pig, Johnson was suddenly solemnized by recollecting that the pig had owed its life to its education. One hardly knows whether to smile or to sigh at the quaint and suggestive peroration: “The pig, then, has no cause to complain; protracted existence is a good recompense for very considerable degrees of torture.” To protract existence was now all Johnson’s thought, and he set his powerful will to aid him in the struggle. His only hopes were those which his strength of will supplied him with. “I will be conquered,” he said, “I will not capitulate.”

It was not till he reached London in November that he consented to capitulate. The terror of death was now upon him, indeed. “Love me as well as you can,” he wrote to Boswell; “teach the young ones to love me.” On the 8th of November he closed the diary of his symptoms – his *ægri ephemeris* – now become worse than useless. His suffering, dejection, and restless weakness left his brain, however, unclouded, and less than a week before the end he corrected an error in a line from Juvenal which Dr. Brocklesbury had carelessly recited. The chronicle of the rapid final decline is given with great simplicity and force by Hoole in that narrative of the last three weeks of the life of Dr. Johnson which he contributed to the *European Magazine* in 1799, and which Mr. Napier has reprinted in one of the many appendices to his invaluable edition. At last, exactly a year after his original attack of asthma, the end came at seven o’clock in the evening of Monday, the 13th of December.

Devoid, as it is, of all the elements of external romance, there is perhaps no record of the extinction of genius which attracts more universal interest than this death of Samuel Johnson. So much of frivolity or so much of cant attends most of us even to the tomb, that the frank terror, expressed through a long life by this otherwise most manly and courageous person, has possessed a great fascination for posterity. The haunting insincerity of verse, particularly of eighteenth-century verse, had extracted even from Johnson, in the pages of *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, the usual rose-colored commonplace about death being “Kind Nature’s signal for retreat;” but he completely cleared his own mind of cant, even though a little clung about his singing robes. Boswell has given us an extraordinary instance of his habitual and dismal apprehensions in the celebrated conversation in 1769, which started with a discussion of David Hume’s supposed indifference to the idea of death. Not less familiar are the passionate asseverations with which Johnson startled Mrs. Knowles and

Miss Seward in 1778 by repeating again and again that to exist in pain is better, far better, than to cease to exist altogether. These and other revelations of Johnson's conversation have perhaps led us to exaggerate his habitual terror. There are, at least, instances to be drawn from less hackneyed sources which display his attitude towards eternity less painfully. Of these perhaps the most remarkable is that recorded in the *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*

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