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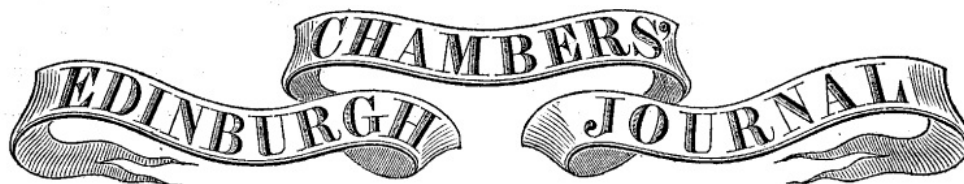
*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK CHAMBERS'S EDINBURGH JOURNAL, NO. 438 ***

CHAMBERS' EDINBURGH JOURNAL

CONTENTS

[PHILOSOPHY OF LAUGHTER.](#)
[MARGARET FULLER OSSOLI.](#)
[THE COUNTER-STROKE.](#)
[THE TAXES ON KNOWLEDGE.](#)
[THE VEGETATION OF EUROPE.](#)
[A HALF-PENNYWORTH OF NAVIGATION.](#)
[A LONDON NEWSPAPER IN 1667.](#)
[A SCENE IN BOSTON.](#)
[THE TONGUE OF FIRE.](#)

[pg 321]



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PHILOSOPHY OF LAUGHTER.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

From the time of King Solomon downwards, laughter has been the subject of pretty general abuse. Even the laughers themselves sometimes vituperate the cachinnation they indulge in, and many of them

—'laugh in such a sort,
As if they mocked themselves, and scorned the spirit

That could be moved to laugh at anything.'

The general notion is, that laughter is childish, and unworthy the gravity of adult life. Grown men, we say, have more to do than to laugh; and the wiser sort of them leave such an unseemly contortion of the muscles to babes and blockheads.

We have a suspicion that there is something wrong here—that the world is mistaken not only in its reasonings, but its facts. To assign laughter to an early period of life, is to go contrary to observation and experience. There is not so grave an animal in this world as the human baby. It will weep, when it has got the length of tears, by the pailful; it will clench its fists, distort its face into a hideous expression of anguish, and scream itself into convulsions. It has not yet come up to a laugh. The little savage must be educated by circumstances, and tamed by the contact of civilisation, before it rises to the greater functions of its being. Nay, we have sometimes received the idea from its choked and tuneless screams, that *they* were imperfect attempts at laughter. It feels enjoyment as well as pain, but has only one way of expressing both.

Then, look at the baby when it has turned into a little boy or girl, and come up in some degree to the cachinnation. The laughter is still only rudimental: it is not genuine laughter. It expresses triumph, scorn, passion—anything but a feeling of natural amusement. It is provoked by misfortune, by bodily infirmities, by the writhings of agonised animals; and it indicates either a sense of power or a selfish feeling of exemption from suffering. The 'light-hearted laugh of children!' What a mistake! Observe the gravity of their sports. They are masters or mistresses, with the care of a family upon their hands; and they take especial delight in correcting their children with severity. They are washer-women, housemaids, cooks; soldiers, policemen, postmen; coach, horsemen, and horses, by turns; and in all these characters they scour, sweep, fry, fight, pursue, carry, whirl, ride, and are ridden, without changing a muscle.

At the games of the young people there is much shouting, argument, vituperation—but no laughter. A game is a serious business with a boy, and he derives from it excitement, but no amusement. If he laughs at all, it is at something quite distinct from the purpose of the sport: for instance, when one of his comrades has his nose broken by the ball, or when the feet of another make off from him on the ice, and he comes down upon his back like a thunderbolt. On such occasions, the laugh of a boy puts us in mind of the laugh of a hyæna: it is, in fact, the broken, asthmatic roar of a beast of prey.

It would thus appear that the common charge brought against laughter, of being something babyish, or childish, or boyish—something properly appertaining to early life—is unfounded. But we of course must not be understood to speak of what is technically called giggling, which proceeds more from a looseness of the structures than from any sensation of amusement. Many young persons are continually on the giggle till their muscles strengthen; and indeed, when a company of them are met together, the affection, aggravated by emulation, acquires the loudness of laughter, when it may be likened, in Scripture phrase, to the crackling of thorns. What we mean is a regular guffaw; that explosion of high spirits, and the feeling of joyous excitement, which is commonly written ha! ha! ha! This is altogether unknown in babyhood; in boyhood, it exists only in its rudiments; and it does not reach its full development till adolescence ripens into manhood.

This train of thought was suggested to us a few evenings ago, by the conduct of a party of eight or ten individuals, who meet periodically for the purpose of philosophical inquiry. Their subject is a very grave one. Their object is to mould into a science that which as yet is only a vague, formless, and obscure department of knowledge; and they proceed in the most cautious manner from point to point, from axiom to axiom—debating at every step, and coming to no decision without unanimous conviction. Some are professors of the university, devoted to abstruse studies; some are clergymen; and some authors and artists. Now, at the meeting in question—which we take merely as an example, for all are alike—when the hour struck which terminates their proceedings for the evening, the jaded philosophers retired to the refreshment-room; and here a scene of remarkable contrast occurred. Instead of a single deep, low, earnest voice, alternating with a profound silence, an absolute roar of merriment began, with the suddenness of an explosion of gunpowder. Jests, bon-mots, anecdotes, barbarous plays upon words—the more atrocious the better—flew round the table; and a joyous and almost continuous ha! ha! ha! made the ceiling ring. This, we venture to say it, *was* laughter—genuine, unmistakable laughter, proceeding from no sense of triumph, from no self-gratulation, and mingled with no bad feeling of any

kind. It was a spontaneous effort of nature, coming from the head as well as the heart: an unbending of the bow, a reaction from study, which study alone could occasion, and which could occur only in adult life.

There are some people who cannot laugh, but these are not necessarily either morose or stupid. They may laugh in their heart, and with their eyes, although by some unlucky fatality, they have not the gift of oral cachinnation. Such persons are to be pitied; for laughter in grown people is a substitute devised by nature for the screams and shouts of boyhood, by which the lungs are strengthened and the health preserved. As the intellect ripens, that shouting ceases, and we learn to laugh as we learn to reason. The society we have mentioned studied the harder the more they laughed, and they laughed the more the harder they studied. Each, of course, to be of use, must be in its own place. A laugh in the midst of the study would have been a profanation; a grave look in the midst of the merriment would have been an insult to the good sense of the company.

If there are some people who cannot laugh, there are others who will not. It is not, however, that they are ashamed of being grown men, and want to go back to babyhood, for by some extraordinary perversity, they fancy unalterable gravity to be the distinguishing characteristic of wisdom. In a merry company, they present the appearance of a Red Indian whitewashed, and look on at the strange ways of their neighbours without betraying even the faintest spark of sympathy or intelligence. These are children of a larger growth, and have not yet acquired sense enough to laugh. Like the savage, they are afraid of compromising their dignity, or, to use their own words, of making fools of themselves. For our part, we never see a man afraid of making a fool of himself at the right season, without setting him down as a fool ready made.

A woman has no natural grace more bewitching than a sweet laugh. It is like the sound of flutes on the water. It leaps from her heart in a clear, sparkling rill; and the heart that hears it feels as if bathed in the cool, exhilarating spring. Have you ever pursued an unseen fugitive through the trees, led on by her fairy laugh; now here, now there—now lost, now found? We have. And we are pursuing that wandering voice to this day. Sometimes it comes to us in the midst of care, or sorrow, or irksome business; and then we turn away, and listen, and hear it ringing through the room like a silver bell, with power to scare away the ill spirits of the mind. How much we owe to that sweet laugh! It turns the prose of our life into poetry; it flings showers of sunshine over the darksome wood in which we are travelling; it touches with light even our sleep, which is no more the image of death, but gemmed with dreams that are the shadows of immortality.

But our song, like Dibdin's, 'means more than it says;' for a man, as we have stated, may laugh, and yet the cachinnation be wanting. His heart laughs, and his eyes are filled with that kindly, sympathetic smile which inspires friendship and confidence. On the sympathy within, these external phenomena depend; and this sympathy it is which keeps societies of men together, and is the true freemasonry of the good and wise. It is an imperfect sympathy that grants only sympathetic tears: we must join in the mirth as well as melancholy of our neighbours. If our countrymen laughed more, they would not only be happier, but better; and if philanthropists would provide amusements for the people, they would be saved the trouble and expense of their fruitless war against public-houses. This is an indisputable proposition. The French and Italians, with wine growing at their doors, and spirits almost as cheap as beer in England, are sober nations. How comes this? The laugh will answer that leaps up from group after group—the dance on the village-green—the family dinner under the trees—the thousand merry-meetings that invigorate industry, by serving as a relief to the business of life. Without these, business is care; and it is from care, not from amusement, men fly to the bottle.

The common mistake is to associate the idea of amusement with error of every kind; and this piece of moral asceticism is given forth as true wisdom, and, from sheer want of examination, is very generally received as such. A place of amusement concentrates a crowd, and whatever excesses may be committed, being confined to a small space, stand more prominently forward than at other times. This is all. The excesses are really fewer—far fewer—in proportion to the number assembled, than if no gathering had taken place. How can it be otherwise? The amusement is itself the excitement which the wearied heart longs for; it is the reaction which nature seeks; and in the comparatively few instances of a coarser intoxication being superadded, we see only the craving of depraved habit—a habit engendered, in all probability, by the *want* of amusement.

No, good friends, let us laugh sometimes, if you love us. A dangerous character is of another kidney, as Cæsar knew to his cost:—

'He loves no plays,
As thou dost, Antony; he hears no music;
Seldom he laughs;'

and when he does, it is on the wrong side of his mouth.

Let us be wiser. Let us laugh in fitting time and place, silently or aloud, each after his nature. Let us enjoy an innocent reaction rather than a guilty one, since reaction there must be. The bow that is always bent loses its elasticity, and becomes useless.

MARGARET FULLER OSSOLI.^[1]

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

The authoress of *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, known also in this country by her *Papers on Literature and Art*, occupied among her own people a station as notable as that of De Staël among the French, or of Rahel von Ense in Germany. Mystic and transcendental as she was, her writings teem with proof of original power, and are the expression of a thoughtful and energetic, if also a wayward and undisciplined, mind. One of the two compilers of these Memoirs (Emerson and W. H. Channing) observes, that his first impression of her was that of a 'Yankee Corinna;' and such is not unlikely to be the last impression of ordinary readers, ourselves among the number. In a letter, dated 1841, we find her saying: 'I feel all Italy glowing beneath the Saxon crust'—an apt illustration of her mental structure and tone of sentiment, compounded of New Worldedness, as represented by Margaret Fuller, and of the feelings of Southern Europe, as embodied in the Marchesa Ossoli. Without at this time pausing to review her literary position, and her influence upon contemporary minds, we proceed to draw from these interesting, but frequently eccentric and extravagantly worded Memoirs, a sketch of her remarkable life-history.

Margaret Fuller was born at Cambridge-Port, Massachusetts, in May 1810. Her father was a shrewd, practical, hard-headed lawyer, whose love for his wife 'was the green spot on which he stood apart from the commonplaces of a mere bread-winning, bread-bestowing existence.' That wife is described as a fair and flower-like nature, bound by one law with the blue sky, the dew, and the frolic birds. 'Of all persons whom I have known, she had in her most of the angelic—of that spontaneous love for every living thing, for man, and beast, and tree, which restores the Golden Age.'^[2] Mr Fuller, in undertaking the education of his daughter, committed the common error of excessive stimulation—thinking to gain time by forwarding the intellect as early as possible. He was himself a scholar, and hoped to make her the heir of all he knew, and of as much more as might be elsewhere attained. He was a severe and exacting disciplinarian, and permanently marred the nervous system of his child by the system he adopted of requiring her to recite her tasks on his return home at night, which was frequently very late. Hence a premature development of the brain, which, while it made her a youthful prodigy by day—one such youthful prodigy, it has been justly said, is often the pest of a whole neighbourhood—rendered her the nightly victim of spectral illusions, somnambulism, &c.; checked her growth; and eventually brought on continual headaches, weakness, and various nervous affections. As soon as the light was removed from her chamber at night, this ill-tended girl was haunted by colossal faces, that advanced slowly towards her, the eyes dilating, and each feature swelling loathsomely as they came; till at last, when they were about to close upon her, she started up with a shriek, which drove them away, but only to return when she lay down again. 'No wonder the child arose and walked in her sleep, moaning all over the house, till once, when they heard her, and came and waked her, and she told what she had dreamed, her father sharply bade her "leave off thinking of such nonsense, or she would be crazy"—never knowing that he was himself the cause of all these horrors of the night.' Her home seems to have been deficient in the charms and associations appropriate to childhood. Finding no relief from without, her already overexcited mind was driven for refuge from itself to the world of books. She tells us she was taught Latin and English grammar at the same time; in Latin, which she began to read at six years old, her father, and subsequently a tutor, trained her to a high degree of precision, expecting her to understand the mechanism of the language thoroughly, and to translate it tersely and unhesitatingly, with the definite clearness of one perfectly *au fait* in the philosophy of the classics. Thus she became imbued with an abiding

interest in the genius of old Rome—'the power of will, the dignity of a fixed purpose'—where man takes a 'noble bronze in camps and battle-fields,' his brow well furrowed by the 'wrinkles of council,' and his eye 'cutting its way like the sword;' and thence she loved to escape, at Ovid's behest, to the enchanted gardens of the Greek mythology, to the gods and nymphs born of the sunbeam, the wave, the shadows on the hill—delighted to realise in those Greek forms the faith of a refined and intense childhood. Reading was now to her a habit and a passion. Its only rival attraction was the 'dear little garden' behind the house, where the best hours of her lonely child-life were spent. Within the house, everything, she says, was socially utilitarian; her books told of a proud world, but in another temper were the teachings of the little garden, where her thoughts could lie callow in the nest, and only be fed and kept warm, not called to fly or sing before the time. A range of blue hills, at about twelve miles' distance, allured her to reverie, and bred within her thoughts *not* too deep for tears. The books which exercised most power over her at this period were Shakspeare, Cervantes, and Molière—all three students of the 'natural history of man,' and inspired by fact, not fancy; reconstructing the world from materials which they collected on every side, not spinning from the desires of their own special natures; and accordingly teaching her, their open-eyed disciple, to distrust all invention which is not based on a wide experience, but, as she confesses, also doing her harm, since the child, fed with meat instead of milk, becomes too soon mature. For a few months, this bookish life was interrupted, or varied, by the presence of an English lady, whom Margaret invested with ideal perfections as her 'first friend,' and whom she worshipped as a star from the east—a morning-star; and at whose departure she fell into a profound depression. Her father sought to dispel this rooted melancholy, by sending her to school—a destiny from which her whole nature revolted, as something alien to its innermost being and cherished associations. To school, however, she went, and at first captivated, and then scandalised her fellow-pupils by her strange ways. Now, she surprised them by her physical faculty of rivalling the spinning dervishes of the East—now, by declaiming verses, and acting a whole *répertoire* of parts, both laughter-raising and tear-compelling—now, by waking in the night, and cheating her restlessness by inventions that alternately diverted and teased her companions. She was always devising means to infringe upon the school-room routine. This involved her at last in a trouble, from which she was only extricated by the judicious tenderness of her teacher—the circumstances attending which 'crisis' are detailed at length in her story of 'Mariana.'

Her personal appearance at this time, and for some following years, is described by one of her friends as being that of a blooming girl of a florid complexion and vigorous health, with a tendency to robustness, which she unwisely endeavoured to suppress or conceal at the price of much future suffering. With no pretensions to beauty then, or at any time, her face was one that attracted, but baffled physiognomical art. 'She escaped the reproach of positive plainness, by her blond and abundant hair, by her excellent teeth, by her sparkling, busy eyes, which, though usually half-closed from near-sightedness, shot piercing glances at those with whom she conversed, and, most of all, by the very peculiar and graceful carriage of her head and neck.' In conversation she was already distinguished, though addicted to 'quizzing'—the not unreasonable ground of unpopularity with her female friends. Emerson alludes to her dangerous reputation for satire, which, in addition to her great scholarship, made the women dislike one who despised them, and the men cavil at her as 'carrying too many guns.' A fragment from a letter in her sixteenth year will illustrate her pursuits at that period:—'I rise a little before five, walk an hour, and then practise on the piano till seven, when we breakfast. Next, I read French—Sismondi's *Literature of Southern Europe*—till eight; then, two or three lectures in Brown's *Philosophy*. About half-past nine, I go to Mr Perkins's school, and study Greek till twelve, when, the school being dismissed, I recite, go home, and practise again till dinner, at two. Sometimes, if the conversation is very agreeable, I lounge for half an hour over the dessert, though rarely so lavish of time. Then, when I can, I read two hours in Italian, but I am often interrupted. At six, I walk, or take a drive. Before going to bed, I play or sing, for half an hour or so, to make all sleepy, and, about eleven, retire to write a little while in my journal, exercises on what I have read, or a series of characteristics which I am filling up according to advice.' Greek, French, Italian, metaphysics, and private authorship—pretty well for a miss in her teens, and surely a promissory-note on the *bas bleu* joint-stock company!—a note which she discharged in full when it became due. Next year (1826), we find her studying M^{me} de Staël, Epictetus, Milton, Racine, and Spanish ballads, 'with great delight.' Anon she is engrossed with the elder Italian poets, from Berni down to Pulci and Politian; then with Locke and the ontologists; then with the *opera omnia* of Sir William Temple. She pursued at this time no systematic study, but 'read with the heart, and was learning more from social experience than from books.' The interval of her

life, between sixteen and twenty-five, is characterised by one of her biographers as a period of 'preponderating sentimentality, of romance and dreams, of yearning and of passion.' While residing at Cambridge, she suffered from profound despondency—conscious of the want of a home for her heart. A sterner schooling awaited her at Groton, whither her father removed in 1833. Here he died suddenly of cholera in 1835. Now she was taugth the miserable perplexities of a family that has lost its head, and was called to tread a path for which, as she says, she had no skill and no call, except that it must be trodden by some one, and she alone was ready. In 1836 she went to Boston, to teach Latin and French in an academy of local repute; and in the ensuing year she accepted a 'very favourable offer,' to become 'lady-superior' in an educational institution at Providence, where she seems to have exercised an influence analogous to that of Dr Arnold at Rugby—treating her pupils as ladies, and thus making them anxious to prove that they deserved to be so treated.

By this time, she had attracted around her many and devoted friends. Her conversational powers were of a high order, by common consent. Mr Hedge describes her speech as remarkably fluent and correct; but deriving its strength not from fluency, choice diction, wit, or sentiment, but from accuracy of statement, keen discrimination, and a certain weight of judgment; together with rhetorical finish, it had an air of spontaneity which made it seem the grace of the moment: so that he says, 'I do not remember that the vulgar charge of talking "like a book" was ever fastened upon her, although, by her precision, she might seem to have incurred it.' The excitement of the presence of living persons seems to have energised her whole being. 'I need to be called out,' are her words, 'and never think alone, without imagining some companion. It is my habit, and bespeaks a second-rate mind.' And again: 'After all, this writing,' she says in a letter, 'is mighty dead. Oh, for my dear old Greeks, who talked everything—not to shine as in the Parisian saloons, but to learn, to teach, to vent the heart, to clear the head!' Mr Alcott of Boston considered her the most brilliant talker of the day. Miss Martineau was fascinated by the same charm. It is thus characterised by the author of *Representative Men*: 'Talent, memory, wit, stern introspection, poetic play, religion, the finest personal feeling, the aspects of the future, each followed each in full activity, and left me, I remember, enriched and sometimes astonished by the gifts of my guest.' Her self-complacency staggered many at first—as when she spoke, in the quietest manner, of the girls she had formed, the young men who owed everything to her, the fine companions she had long ago exhausted. 'I now know,' she has been heard to say in the coolest style, 'all the people worth knowing in America, and I find no intellect comparable to my own.' Well may Mr Emerson talk of her letting slip phrases that betrayed the presence of 'a rather mountainous ME.' Such phrases abound in her conversation and correspondence—mountainous enough to be a hill of offence to the uninitiated and untranscendental. At anyrate, there was no affectation in this; she thoroughly believed in her own superiority; her subscription to *that* creed was implicit and *ex animo*. Nor do we detect affectation in her most notable vagaries and crotchets. She loved the truth, and spoke it out—we were about to write, manfully; and why not? At heart, she was, to use the words of an intimate and discerning friend, a right brave and heroic woman—shrinking from no duty because of feeble nerves. Numerous illustrations of this occur in the volumes before us. Thus we find her going from a bridal of passing joyfulness to attend a near relative during a formidable surgical operation—or drawing five hundred dollars to bestow, on a New-York 'ne'er-do-weel,' half-patriot, half-author, always in such depths of distress, and with such squadrons of enemies that no charity could relieve, no intervention save him.

In 1839, she removed from Groton, with her mother and family, to Jamaica Plain, a few miles from Boston; and thence, shortly, to Cambridge and New York. Boston, however, was her *point d'appui*, and in it she formed acquaintances of every class, the most utilitarian and the most idealistic. In 1839, she published a translation of Goethe's Conversations with Eckermann; in 1841, the Letters of Bettina; in 1843, the *Summer on the Lakes*—a narrative of her tour to Lake Superior and Michigan. During the same period she was editor of the *Dial*, since conducted by Emerson and Ripley, and in which appeared her papers on Goethe and Beethoven, the Rhine, the Romaic Ballads, John Sterling's Poems, &c.

Exhausted by continuous exertion in teaching and writing for the press, Miss Fuller, in 1844, sought refreshment and health in change of scene; and, desiring rather new employments than cessation from work, she accepted a liberal offer from Mr Horace Greeley of New York, to become a regular contributor to the *Tribune*; and for that purpose to take up her abode in his house, first spending some time in the Highlands of the Hudson. At New York,

she took an active interest, after Mrs Fry's manner, in the various benevolent institutions, and especially the prisons on Blackwell's Island. For more than a year she wrote regularly for the *Tribune*, 'always freshly, vigorously, but not always clearly.' The notice attracted by her articles insured fresh hosts of acquaintances, and she became a distinguished character at Miss Lynch's réunions, and at literary soirées of a similar order. In 1846, she left her native land—for ever, as the melancholy event proved—to join Mr and Mrs Spring in a European tour. Her letters home contain much pleasant gossip about some of the Old-World notabilities. Thus she records her interviews with Wordsworth in his Rydal retreat, with Dr Chalmers, Dr Andrew Combe, Mr De Quincey, the Howitts, &c. She visited Paris in the winter, and became acquainted with Lamennais, Béranger, M^{me} Dudevant, and others. Thence, in the spring of 1847, she went to Italy, where she remained until she embarked in 1850 on board that doomed ship, the *Elizabeth*. As a resident in Rome, her safety was seriously imperiled during the French siege of 1849. She was appointed by the 'Roman Commission for the succour of the wounded,' to the superintendence of an hospital, and all along took the liveliest interest in the fortunes of Mazzini and the republic. She was then a wife and a mother, having been married privately to the Marquis Ossoli, a Roman, 'of a noble but impoverished house,' whom she described, in a letter to her mother, as 'not in any respect such a person as people in general would expect to find with her,' being a man 'absolutely ignorant of books, and with no enthusiasm of character,' but endowed with excellent practical sense, a nice sense of duty, native refinement, and much sweetness of temper. The peculiar circumstances attending the marriage in that country, and at that agitated crisis, involved Margaret in numerous afflictions, and taxed her powers of endurance to the very uttermost.

She had to suffer compulsory separation from husband and child—the one in hourly peril of a bloody death, the other neglected and pining away in the hands of strangers: penury, loneliness, prostrating sickness, and treachery on the part of those around her, were meanwhile her own lot in the land of strangers. How this season of trial affected her character, may be inferred from the remarks of her friend Mrs Story, then sojourning in Italy, who says, that in Boston she had regarded Margaret as a person on intellectual stilts, with a large share of arrogance, and little sweetness of temper; and adds: 'How unlike to this was she now!—so delicate, so simple, confiding, and affectionate; with a true womanly heart and soul, sensitive and generous, and, what was to me a still greater surprise, possessed of so broad a charity, that she could cover with its mantle the faults and defects of all about her.' Her devotion to her husband, and her passionate attachment to her little Angelo, were exhibited in the liveliest colour: the influence she exercised, too, by love and sympathy, over Italians of every class with whom she came in contact, appears of a kind more tender, chastened, and womanly than that which previously characterised her. When the republican cause at Rome left no hope of present restoration, Margaret found a tranquil refuge in Florence, devoting her mornings to literary labours, and her evenings to social intercourse with cultivated natives and a few foreign visitors, among whom the Brownings occupied a distinguished place. Greatly straitened in means at this time, the repose she and her husband enjoyed at Florence, in their small and scantily-furnished room, seems to have been peculiarly grateful to both. Soon, however, arrangements were made for their departure to the United States; for Margaret was heart-weary at the political reaction in Europe, and the pecuniary expediency of publishing to advantage her chronicles of the revolution, seconded by a yearning to see her family and friends once more, constrained to this step.

From motives of economy, they took passage in a merchantman from Leghorn, the *Elizabeth*, the expense being one-half what a return by way of France would have been. The remonstrances of her acquaintance, founded on the fatigues of a two months' voyage—the comparative insecurity of such a bark—the exposed position of the cabin (on deck)—and so on, were not unaided by Margaret's own presentiments. Ossoli, when a boy, had been told by a fortune-teller, to 'beware of the sea,' and this was the first ship he had ever set his foot in. In a letter where she describes herself 'suffering, as never before, all the horrors of indecision,' his wife expresses a fervent prayer that it 'may not be my lot to lose my boy at sea, either by unsolaced illness, or amid the howling waves; or if so, that Ossoli, Angelo, and I may go together, and that the anguish may be brief.' That '*or if so*' is affecting—and was realised, except, indeed, that the anguish was *not* brief, for it lasted twelve terrible hours—a long communion face to face with Death! The bark sailed May 17, 1850. Captain Hasty, 'so fine a model of the New-England seaman,' inspired the passengers with cheerful confidence, and for a few days all went prosperously. But early in June, Captain Hasty died of confluent small-pox. The child Angelino caught it, but recovered, and won all hearts by his playful

innocence, loving especially to be walked up and down in the arms of the steward, who had just such a boy at home waiting his arrival. On Thursday, July 15, the *Elizabeth* was off the Jersey coast: at evening-tide, a breeze sprang up, which by midnight had become a hurricane. About four o'clock next morning, she struck on Fire Island beach, and lay at the mercy of the maddened ocean. Mr Channing's description of the wreck is a most picturesque narrative, but too long for quotation. Very touching is the sketch of the Ossoli group, remaining on board after nearly all the passengers and crew had perished or escaped to land, which was distant only a few hundred yards—the infant crying passionately, shivering in the wet, till soothed and lullabied to sleep by his mother, a calm expectant of death; and Ossoli tranquillising by counsel and prayer their affrighted handmaid from Italy; all exchanging kindly partings, and sending messages home, if any should survive to be their bearer. Though persons were busy gathering into carts, on the shore, whatever spoil was stranded, no life-boat appeared; and the few remaining on the wreck were now fain to trust themselves to the rioting surf. Margaret would not go alone. With her husband and attendant (Celeste), she was just about to try the planks prepared by four seamen, and the steward had just taken little Nino in his arms, pledged to save him or die, 'when a sea struck the forecastle, and the foremast fell, carrying with it the deck and all upon it. The steward and Angelino were washed upon the beach, both dead, though warm, some twenty minutes after. Celeste and Ossoli were caught for a moment by the rigging, but the next wave swallowed them up. Margaret sank at once. When last seen, she had been seated at the foot of the foremast, still clad in her white night-dress, with her hair fallen loose upon her shoulders.' No trace was found of her manuscript on Italy: her love-correspondence with Ossoli was the only relic—the last memorial of that howling hurricane, pitiless sea, wreck on a sand-bar, an idle life-boat, beach-pirates, and not one friend!

With the exception of certain sections of laboured, writhing wordiness, the feverish restlessness and hectic symptoms of which are but too familiar to persons read in the literature of second-rate transcendentalism, these volumes comprise a large amount of matter that will well repay perusal, and portray a character of no ordinary type—a 'large-brained woman and large-hearted man.'

FOOTNOTES:

- [1] Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli. 3 vols. London: Bentley. 1852.
- [2] Mr Fuller's Autobiography, which comprises the first sixty pages of these Memoirs.

THE COUNTER-STROKE.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Just after breakfast one fine spring morning in 1837, an advertisement in the *Times* for a curate caught and fixed my attention. The salary was sufficiently remunerative for a bachelor, and the parish, as I personally knew, one of the most pleasantly situated in all Somersetshire. Having said that, the reader will readily understand that it could not have been a hundred miles from Taunton. I instantly wrote, enclosing testimonials, with which the Rev. Mr Townley, the rector, was so entirely satisfied, that the return-post brought me a positive engagement, unclogged with the slightest objection to one or two subsidiary items I had stipulated for, and accompanied by an invitation to make the rectory my home till I could conveniently suit myself elsewhere. This was both kind and handsome; and the next day but one I took coach, with a light heart, for my new destination. It thus happened that I became acquainted, and in some degree mixed up, with the train of events it is my present purpose to relate.

The rector I found to be a stout, portly gentleman, whose years already reached to between sixty and seventy. So many winters, although they had plentifully besprinkled his hair with gray, shone out with ruddy brightness in his still handsome face, and keen, kindly, bright-hazel eyes; and his voice, hearty and ringing, had not as yet one quaver of age in it. I met him at breakfast on the morning after my arrival, and his reception of me was most friendly. We had spoken together but for a few minutes, when one of the French windows, that led from the breakfast-room into a shrubbery and flower-garden, gently opened and admitted a lady, just then, as I afterwards learned, in her nineteenth spring. I use this term almost unconsciously, for I cannot even now, in the glowing summer of her life, dissociate her image from

that season of youth and joyousness. She was introduced to me, with old-fashioned simplicity, as 'My grand-daughter, Agnes Townley.' It is difficult to look at beauty through other men's eyes, and, in the present instance, I feel that I should fail miserably in the endeavour to stamp upon this blank, dead paper, any adequate idea of the fresh loveliness, the rose-bud beauty of that young girl. I will merely say, that her perfectly Grecian head, wreathed with wavy *bandeaux* of bright hair, undulating with golden light, vividly brought to my mind Raphael's halo-tinted portraits of the Virgin—with this difference, that in place of the holy calm and resignation of the painting, there was in Agnes Townley a sparkling youth and life, that even amidst the heat and glare of a crowded ball-room or of a theatre, irresistibly suggested and recalled the freshness and perfume of the morning—of a cloudless, rosy morning of May. And, far higher charm than feature-beauty, however exquisite, a sweetness of disposition, a kind gentleness of mind and temper, was evidenced in every line of her face, in every accent of the low-pitched, silver voice, that breathed through lips made only to smile.

Let me own, that I was greatly struck by so remarkable a combination of rare endowments; and this, I think, the sharp-eyed rector must have perceived, or he might not perhaps have been so immediately communicative with respect to the near prospects of his idolised grandchild, as he was the moment the young lady, after presiding at the breakfast-table, had withdrawn.

'We shall have gay doings, Mr Tyrrel, at the rectory shortly,' he said. 'Next Monday three weeks will, with the blessing of God, be Agnes Townley's wedding-day.'

'Wedding-day!'

'Yes,' rejoined the rector, turning towards and examining some flowers which Miss Townley had brought in and placed on the table. 'Yes, it has been for some time settled that Agnes shall on that day be united in holy wedlock to Mr Arbuthnot.'

'Mr Arbuthnot of Elm Park?'

'A great match, is it not, in a worldly point of view?' replied Mr Townley, with a pleasant smile at the tone of my exclamation. 'And much better than that: Robert Arbuthnot is a young man of a high and noble nature, as well as devotedly attached to Agnes. He will, I doubt not, prove in every respect a husband deserving and worthy of her; and that from the lips of a doting old grandpapa must be esteemed high praise. You will see him presently.'

I did see him often, and quite agreed in the rector's estimate of his future grandson-in-law. I have not frequently seen a finer-looking young man—his age was twenty-six; and certainly one of a more honourable and kindly spirit, of a more genial temper than he, has never come within my observation. He had drawn a great prize in the matrimonial lottery, and, I felt, deserved his high fortune.

They were married at the time agreed upon, and the day was kept not only at Elm Park, and in its neighbourhood, but throughout 'our' parish, as a general holiday. And, strangely enough—at least I have never met with another instance of the kind—it was held by our entire female community, high as well as low, that the match was a perfectly equal one, notwithstanding that wealth and high worldly position were entirely on the bridegroom's side. In fact, that nobody less in the social scale than the representative of an old territorial family ought, in the nature of things, to have aspired to the hand of Agnes Townley, appeared to have been a foregone conclusion with everybody. This will give the reader a truer and more vivid impression of the bride, than any words or colours I might use.

The days, weeks, months of wedded life flew over Mr and Mrs Arbuthnot without a cloud, save a few dark but transitory ones which I saw now and then flit over the husband's countenance as the time when he should become a father drew near, and came to be more and more spoken of. 'I should not survive her,' said Mr Arbuthnot, one day in reply to a chance observation of the rector's, 'nor indeed desire to do so.' The gray-headed man seized and warmly pressed the husband's hand, and tears of sympathy filled his eyes; yet did he, nevertheless, as in duty bound, utter grave words on the sinfulness of despair under any circumstances, and the duty, in all trials, however heavy, of patient submission to the will of God. But the venerable gentleman spoke in a hoarse and broken voice, and it was easy to see he *felt* with Mr Arbuthnot that the reality of an event, the bare possibility of which shook them so terribly, were a cross too heavy for human strength to bear and live.

It was of course decided that the expected heir or heiress should be intrusted to a wet-nurse, and a Mrs Danby, the wife of a miller living not very far from the rectory, was engaged for that purpose. I had frequently seen the woman; and her name, as the rector and I were one evening gossiping over our tea, on some subject or other that I forget, came up.

'A likely person,' I remarked; 'healthy, very good-looking, and one might make oath, a true-hearted creature. But there is withal a timidity, a frightenedness in her manner at times which, if I may hazard a perhaps uncharitable conjecture, speaks ill for that smart husband of hers.'

'You have hit the mark precisely, my dear sir. Danby is a sorry fellow, and a domestic tyrant to boot. His wife, who is really a good, but meek-hearted person, lived with us once. How old do you suppose her to be?'

'Five-and-twenty perhaps.'

'Six years more than that. She has a son of the name of Harper by a former marriage, who is in his tenth year. Anne wasn't a widow long. Danby was caught by her good looks, and she by the bait of a well-provided home. Unless, however, her husband gives up his corn speculations, she will not, I think, have that much longer.'

'Corn speculations! Surely Danby has no means adequate to indulge in such a game as that?'

'Not he. But about two years ago he bought, on credit, I believe, a considerable quantity of wheat, and prices happening to fly suddenly up just then, he made a large profit. This has quite turned his head, which, by the by, was never, as Cockneys say, quite rightly screwed on.' The announcement of a visitor interrupted anything further the rector might have had to say, and I soon afterwards went home.

A sad accident occurred about a month subsequent to the foregoing conversation. The rector was out riding upon a usually quiet horse, which all at once took it into its head to shy at a scarecrow it must have seen a score of times, and thereby threw its rider. Help was fortunately at hand, and the reverend gentleman was instantly conveyed home, when it was found that his left thigh was broken. Thanks, however, to his temperate habits, it was before long authoritatively pronounced that, although it would be a considerable time before he was released from confinement, it was not probable that the lusty winter of his life would be shortened by what had happened. Unfortunately, the accident threatened to have evil consequences in another quarter. Immediately after it occurred, one Matthews, a busy, thick-headed lout of a butcher, rode furiously off to Elm Park with the news. Mrs Arbuthnot, who daily looked to be confined, was walking with her husband upon the lawn in front of the house, when the great burly blockhead rode up, and blurted out that the rector had been thrown from his horse, and it was feared killed!

The shock of such an announcement was of course overwhelming. A few hours afterwards, Mrs Arbuthnot gave birth to a healthy male-child; but the young mother's life, assailed by fever, was for many days utterly despaired of—for weeks held to tremble so evenly in the balance, that the slightest adverse circumstance might in a moment turn the scale deathward. At length the black horizon that seemed to encompass us so hopelessly, lightened, and afforded the lover-husband a glimpse and hope of his vanished and well-nigh despaired of Eden. The promise was fulfilled. I was in the library with Mr Arbuthnot awaiting the physician's morning report, very anxiously expected at the rectory, when Dr Lindley entered the apartment in evidently cheerful mood.

'You have been causelessly alarmed,' he said. 'There is no fear whatever of a relapse. Weakness only remains, and that we shall slowly, perhaps, but certainly, remove.'

A gleam of lightning seemed to flash over Mr Arbuthnot's expressive countenance. 'Blessed be God!' he exclaimed. 'And how,' he added, 'shall we manage respecting the child? She asks for it incessantly.'

Mr Arbuthnot's infant son, I should state, had been consigned immediately after its birth to the care of Mrs Danby, who had herself been confined, also with a boy, about a fortnight previously. Scarletina being prevalent in the neighbourhood, Mrs Danby was hurried away with the two children to a place near Bath, almost before she was able to bear the journey. Mr Arbuthnot had not left his wife for an hour, and consequently had only seen his child for a few minutes just after it was born.

'With respect to the child,' replied Dr Lindley, 'I am of opinion that Mrs Arbuthnot may see it in a day or two. Say the third day from this, if all goes well. I think we may venture so far; but I will be present, for any untoward agitation might be perhaps instantly fatal.' This point provisionally settled, we all three went our several ways: I to cheer the still suffering rector with the good news.

The next day but one, Mr Arbuthnot was in exuberant spirits. 'Dr Lindley's report is even more favourable than we had anticipated,' he said; 'and I start to-morrow morning, to bring Mrs Danby and the child'—The postman's subdued but unmistakable knock interrupted him. 'The nurse,' he added, 'is very attentive and punctual. She writes almost every day.' A servant entered with a salver heaped with letters. Mr Arbuthnot tossed them over eagerly, and seizing one, after glancing at the post-mark, tore it eagerly open, muttering as he did so: 'It is not the usual handwriting; but from her, no doubt'—'Merciful God!' I impulsively exclaimed, as I suddenly lifted my eyes to his. 'What is the matter?' A mortal pallor had spread over Mr Arbuthnot's before animated features, and he was glaring at the letter in his hand as if a basilisk had suddenly confronted him. Another moment, and the muscles of his frame appeared to give way suddenly, and he dropped heavily into the easy-chair from which he had risen to take the letters. I was terribly alarmed, and first loosening his neckerchief, for he seemed choking, I said: 'Let me call some one;' and I turned to reach the bell, when he instantly seized my arms, and held me with a grip of iron. 'No—no—no!' he hoarsely gasped; 'water—water!' There was fortunately some on a side-table. I handed it to him, and he drank eagerly. It appeared to revive him a little. He thrust the crumpled letter into his pocket, and said in a low, quick whisper: 'There is some one coming! Not a word, remember—not a word!' At the same time, he wheeled his chair half round, so that his back should be towards the servant we heard approaching.

'I am sent, sir,' said Mrs Arbuthnot's maid, 'to ask if the post has arrived.'

'Yes,' replied Mr Arbuthnot, with wonderful mastery of his voice. 'Tell your mistress I shall be with her almost immediately, and that her—her son is quite well.'

'Mr Tyrrel,' he continued, as soon as the servant was out of hearing, 'there is, I think, a liqueur-stand on the sideboard in the large dining-room. Would you have the kindness to bring it me, unobserved—mind that—unobserved by any one?'

I did as he requested; and the instant I placed the liqueur-frame before him, he seized the brandy *carafe*, and drank with fierce eagerness. 'For goodness' sake,' I exclaimed, 'consider what you are about, Mr Arbuthnot: you will make yourself ill.'

'No, no,' he answered, after finishing his draught, 'It seems scarcely stronger than water. But I—I am better now. It was a sudden spasm of the heart; that's all. The letter,' he added, after a long and painful pause, during which he eyed me, I thought, with a kind of suspicion—'the letter you saw me open just now, comes from a relative, an aunt, who is ill, very ill, and wishes to see me instantly. You understand?'

I *did* understand, or at least I feared that I did too well. I, however, bowed acquiescence; and he presently rose from his chair, and strode about the apartment in great agitation, until his wife's bedroom bell rang. He then stopped suddenly short, shook himself, and looked anxiously at the reflection of his flushed and varying countenance in the magnificent chimney-glass.

'I do not look, I think—or, at least shall not, in a darkened room—odder, more out of the way—that is, more agitated—than one might, that one *must* appear, after hearing of the dangerous illness of—of—an aunt?'

'You look better, sir, than you did awhile since.'

'Yes, yes; much better, much better. I am glad to hear you say so. That was my wife's bell. She is anxious, no doubt, to see me.'

He left the apartment; was gone perhaps ten minutes; and when he returned, was a thought less nervous than before. I rose to go. 'Give my respects,' he said, 'to the good rector; and as an especial favour,' he added, with strong emphasis, 'let me ask of you not to mention to a living soul that you saw me so unmanned as I was just now; that I swallowed brandy. It would appear so strange, so weak, so ridiculous.'

I promised not to do so, and almost immediately left the house, very painfully

affected. His son was, I concluded, either dead or dying, and he was thus bewilderedly casting about for means of keeping the terrible, perhaps fatal tidings from his wife. I afterwards heard that he left Elm Park in a postchaise, about two hours after I came away, unattended by a single servant!

He was gone three clear days only, at the end of which he returned with Mrs Danby and—his son—in florid health, too, and one of the finest babies of its age—about nine weeks only—I had ever seen. Thus vanished the air-drawn Doubting Castle and Giant Despair which I had so hastily conjured up! The cause assigned by Mr Arbuthnot for the agitation I had witnessed, was doubtless the true one; and yet, and the thought haunted me for months, years afterwards, he opened only *one* letter that morning, and had sent a message to his wife that the child was well!

Mrs Danby remained at the Park till the little Robert was weaned, and was then dismissed very munificently rewarded. Year after year rolled away without bringing Mr and Mrs Arbuthnot any additional little ones, and no one, therefore, could feel surprised at the enthusiastic love of the delighted mother for her handsome, nobly-promising boy. But that which did astonish me, though no one else, for it seemed that I alone noticed it, was a strange defect of character which began to develop itself in Mr Arbuthnot. He was positively jealous of his wife's affection for their own child! Many and many a time have I remarked, when he thought himself unobserved, an expression of intense pain flash from his fine, expressive eyes, at any more than usually fervent manifestation of the young mother's gushing love for her first and only born! It was altogether a mystery to me, and I as much as possible forbore to dwell upon the subject.

[pg 328] Nine years passed away without bringing any material change to the parties involved in this narrative, except those which time brings ordinarily in his train. Young Robert Arbuthnot was a healthy, tall, fine-looking lad of his age; and his great-grandpapa, the rector, though not suffering under any actual physical or mental infirmity, had reached a time of life when the announcement that the golden bowl is broken, or the silver cord is loosed, may indeed be quick and sudden, but scarcely unexpected. Things had gone well, too, with the nurse, Mrs Danby, and her husband; well, at least, after a fashion. The speculative miller must have made good use of the gift to his wife for her care of little Arbuthnot, for he had built a genteel house near the mill, always rode a valuable horse, kept, it was said, a capital table; and all this, as it seemed, by his clever speculations in corn and flour, for the ordinary business of the mill was almost entirely neglected. He had no children of his own, but he had apparently taken, with much cordiality, to his step-son, a fine lad, now about eighteen years of age. This greatly grieved the boy's mother, who dreaded above all things that her son should contract the evil, dissolute habits of his father-in-law. Latterly, she had become extremely solicitous to procure the lad a permanent situation abroad, and this Mr Arbuthnot had promised should be effected at the earliest opportunity.

Thus stood affairs on the 16th of October 1846. Mr Arbuthnot was temporarily absent in Ireland, where he possessed large property, and was making personal inquiries as to the extent of the potato-rot, not long before announced. The morning's post had brought a letter to his wife, with the intelligence that he should reach home that very evening; and as the rectory was on the direct road to Elm Park, and her husband would be sure to pull up there, Mrs Arbuthnot came with her son to pass the afternoon there, and in some slight degree anticipate her husband's arrival.

About three o'clock, a chief-clerk of one of the Taunton banks rode up in a gig to the rectory, and asked to see the Rev. Mr Townley, on pressing and important business. He was ushered into the library, where the rector and I were at the moment rather busily engaged. The clerk said he had been to Elm Park, but not finding either Mr Arbuthnot or his lady there, he had thought that perhaps the Rev. Mr Townley might be able to pronounce upon the genuineness of a cheque for L.300, purporting to be drawn on the Taunton Bank by Mr Arbuthnot, and which Danby the miller had obtained cash for at Bath. He further added, that the bank had refused payment, and detained the cheque, believing it to be a forgery.

'A forgery!' exclaimed the rector, after merely glancing at the document. 'No question that it is, and a very clumsily executed one, too. Besides, Mr Arbuthnot is not yet returned from Ireland.'

This was sufficient; and the messenger, with many apologies for his intrusion, withdrew, and hastened back to Taunton. We were still talking over this sad affair, although some hours had elapsed since the clerk's departure—in fact, candles had been brought in, and we were every moment expecting Mr

Arbuthnot—when the sound of a horse at a hasty gallop was heard approaching, and presently the pale and haggard face of Danby shot by the window at which the rector and myself were standing. The gate-bell was rung almost immediately afterwards, and but a brief interval passed before 'Mr Danby' was announced to be in waiting. The servant had hardly gained the passage with leave to shew him in, when the impatient visitor rushed rudely into the room in a state of great, and it seemed angry excitement.

'What, sir, is the meaning of this ill-mannered intrusion?' demanded the rector sternly.

'You have pronounced the cheque I paid away at Bath to be a forgery; and the officers are, I am told, already at my heels. Mr Arbuthnot, unfortunately, is not at home, and I am come, therefore, to seek shelter with you.'

'Shelter with me, sir!' exclaimed the indignant rector, moving, as he spoke, towards the bell. 'Out of my house you shall go this instant.'

The fellow placed his hand upon the reverend gentleman's arm, and looked with his bloodshot eyes keenly in his face.

'Don't!' said Danby; 'don't, for the sake of yourself and yours! Don't! I warn you: or, if you like the phrase better, don't, for the sake of me and *mine*.'

'Yours, fellow! Your wife, whom you have so long held in cruel bondage through her fears for her son, has at last shaken off that chain. James Harper sailed two days ago from Portsmouth for Bombay. I sent her the news two hours since.'

'Ha! Is that indeed so?' cried Danby, with an irrepressible start of alarm. 'Why, then—But no matter: here, luckily, comes Mrs Arbuthnot *and her son*. All's right! She will, I know, stand bail for me, and, if need be, acknowledge the genuineness of her husband's cheque.'

The fellow's insolence was becoming unbearable, and I was about to seize and thrust him forcibly from the apartment, when the sound of wheels was heard outside. 'Hold! one moment,' he cried with fierce vehemence. 'That is probably the officers: I must be brief, then, and to the purpose. Pray, madam, do not leave the room for your own sake: as for you, young sir, I *command* you to remain!'

'What! what does he mean?' exclaimed Mrs Arbuthnot bewilderedly, and at the same time clasping her son—who gazed on Danby with kindled eyes, and angry boyish defiance—tightly to her side. Did the man's strange words give form and significance to some dark, shadowy, indistinct doubt that had previously haunted her at times? I judged so. The rector appeared similarly confused and shaken, and had sunk nerveless and terrified upon a sofa.

'You guess dimly, I see, at what I have to say,' resumed Danby with a malignant sneer. 'Well, hear it, then, once for all, and then, if you will, give me up to the officers. Some years ago,' he continued, coldly and steadily—'some years ago, a woman, a nurse, was placed in charge of two infant children, both boys: one of these was her own; the other was the son of rich, proud parents. The woman's husband was a gay, jolly fellow, who much preferred spending money to earning it, and just then it happened that he was more than usually hard up. One afternoon, on visiting his wife, who had removed to a distance, he found that the rich man's child had sickened of the small-pox, and that there was no chance of its recovery. A letter containing the sad news was on a table, which he, the husband, took the liberty to open and read. After some reflection, suggested by what he had heard of the lady-mother's state of mind, he recopied the letter, for the sake of embodying in it a certain suggestion. That letter was duly posted, and the next day brought the rich man almost in a state of distraction; but his chief and mastering terror was lest the mother of the already dead infant should hear, in her then precarious state, of what had happened. The tidings, he was sure, would kill her. Seeing this, the cunning husband of the nurse suggested that, for the present, his—the cunning one's—child might be taken to the lady as her own, and that the truth could be revealed when she was strong enough to bear it. The rich man fell into the artful trap, and that which the husband of the nurse had speculated upon, came to pass even beyond his hopes. The lady grew to idolise her fancied child—she has, fortunately, had no other—and now, I think, it would really kill her to part with him. The rich man could not find it in his heart to undeceive his wife—every year it became more difficult, more impossible to do so; and very generously, I must say, has he paid in purse for the forbearance of the nurse's husband. Well now, then, to sum up: the nurse was Mrs Danby; the rich, weak husband, Mr Arbuthnot; the substituted child,

that handsome boy—*my son!*"

A wild scream from Mrs Arbuthnot broke the dread silence which had accompanied this frightful revelation, echoed by an agonised cry, half tenderness, half rage, from her husband, who had entered the room unobserved, and now clasped her passionately in his arms. The carriage-wheels we had heard were his. It was long before I could recall with calmness the tumult, terror, and confusion of that scene. Mr Arbuthnot strove to bear his wife from the apartment, but she would not be forced away, and kept imploring with frenzied vehemence that Robert—that her boy should not be taken from her.

'I have no wish to do so—far from it,' said Danby with gleeful exultation. 'Only folk must be reasonable, and not threaten their friends with the hulks'—

'Give him anything, anything!' broke in the unhappy lady. 'O Robert! Robert!' she added with a renewed burst of hysterical grief, 'how could you deceive me so?'

'I have been punished, Agnes,' he answered in a husky, broken voice, 'for my well-intending but criminal weakness; cruelly punished by the ever-present consciousness that this discovery must one day or other be surely made. What do you want?' he after awhile added with recovering firmness, addressing Danby.

'The acknowledgment of the little bit of paper in dispute, of course; and say a genuine one to the same amount.'

'Yes, yes,' exclaimed Mrs Arbuthnot, still wildly sobbing, and holding the terrified boy strained in her embrace, as if she feared he might be wrenched from her by force. 'Anything—pay him anything!'

At this moment, chancing to look towards the door of the apartment, I saw that it was partially opened, and that Danby's wife was listening there. What might that mean? But what of helpful meaning in such a case could it have?

'Be it so, love,' said Mr Arbuthnot soothingly. 'Danby, call to-morrow at the Park. And now, begone at once.'

'I was thinking,' resumed the rascal with swelling audacity, 'that we might as well at the same time come to some permanent arrangement upon black and white. But never mind: I can always put the screw on; unless, indeed, you get tired of the young gentleman, and in that case, I doubt not, he will prove a dutiful and affectionate son—Ah, devil! What do you here? Begone, or I'll murder you! Begone, do you hear?'

His wife had entered, and silently confronted him. 'Your threats, evil man,' replied the woman quietly, 'have no terrors for me now. My son is beyond your reach. Oh, Mrs Arbuthnot,' she added, turning towards and addressing that lady, 'believe not'—

Her husband sprang at her with the bound of a panther. 'Silence! Go home, or I'll strangle'—His own utterance was arrested by the fierce grasp of Mr Arbuthnot, who seized him by the throat, and hurled him to the further end of the room. 'Speak on, woman; and quick! quick! What have you to say?'

'That your son, dearest lady,' she answered, throwing herself at Mrs Arbuthnot's feet, 'is as truly your own child as ever son born of woman!'

That shout of half-fearful triumph seems even now as I write to ring in my ears! I *felt* that the woman's words were words of truth, but I could not see distinctly: the room whirled round, and the lights danced before my eyes, but I could hear through all the choking ecstasy of the mother, and the fury of the baffled felon.

'The letter,' continued Mrs Danby, 'which my husband found and opened, would have informed you, sir, of the swiftly approaching death of *my* child, and that yours had been carefully kept beyond the reach of contagion. The letter you received was written without my knowledge or consent. True it is that, terrified by my husband's threats, and in some measure reconciled to the wicked imposition by knowing that, after all, the right child would be in his right place, I afterwards lent myself to Danby's evil purposes. But I chiefly feared for my son, whom I fully believed he would not have scrupled to make away with in revenge for my exposing his profitable fraud. I have sinned; I can hardly hope to be forgiven, but I have now told the sacred truth.'

All this was uttered by the repentant woman, but at the time it was almost

wholly unheard by those most interested in the statement. They only comprehended that they were saved—that the child was theirs in very truth. Great, abundant, but for the moment, bewildering joy! Mr Arbuthnot—his beautiful young wife—her own true boy (how could she for a moment have doubted that he was her own true boy!—you might read that thought through all her tears, thickly as they fell)—the aged and half-stunned rector, whilst yet Mrs Danby was speaking, were exclaiming, sobbing in each other's arms, ay, and praising God too, with broken voices and incoherent words it may be, but certainly with fervent, pious, grateful hearts.

When we had time to look about us, it was found that the felon had disappeared—escaped. It was well, perhaps, that he had; better, that he has not been heard of since.

THE TAXES ON KNOWLEDGE.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

To all appearance, the abolition of the taxes on the spread of knowledge through the press is only a matter of time. The principal of these taxes is the Excise-duty on paper, which, as we have repeatedly urged, acts most detrimentally on the issue of a cheap class of publications. The duty next in importance is that which is charged on advertisements. Our belief is, that a relief from this taxation would be a prodigious advantage to all departments of trade and commerce, as well as to various social interests. That the sum of eighteenpence should be exacted by the state from every person—a poor housemaid, for example—on advertising for a situation, is, to say the least of it, inexpressibly shabby. The stamp-duty of one penny on each newspaper is reckoned to be the third of these taxes on knowledge. There can be no doubt that this duty is a tax, as applied to those newspapers which circulate in a locality without going through the post-office; but, as matters stand, we are inclined to think that much the larger proportion of newspapers, metropolitan and provincial, actually are posted, either by the publishers, or by parties sending their copies to be read at second-hand. It is not quite clear that the remission of the stamp-duty would be an entire gain; for a postage of a penny in sending to second, third, and fourth readers—each fresh hand requiring to adhibit a fresh postage label—might come to a very much more severe tax than the existing stamp. Much, however, can be said on both sides; and we desire to let each party state its own case.

The *British Quarterly Review*, in an able article on the Newspaper Stamp and its proposed abolition, argues for that measure on one particular ground—namely, its certain result in allowing of the existence of small local papers. The writer says: "Take the *Leeds Mercury*, the *Manchester Guardian*, or the *Manchester Examiner*, for example—all first-class papers, of the largest size allowed by law, and all giving four-page supplements once a week. In spite of their immense size, there is not one of these journals which can give a faithful weekly record of all that is worthy of note in the forty or fifty towns and villages by which they are surrounded, and through which these papers circulate. An attempt, indeed, is made to give as many "Town-Council Meetings," "Board of Guardian Proceedings," "Temperance Demonstrations," and "Meetings of Rate-payers"—with a due mixture of change-rings, friendly anniversaries, elections of church-wardens, elections of town-councillors, elections of guardians, offences, accidents, and crimes—as can be crammed, by rapid abridgment, into a certain number of columns. But after all has been done in this way that the most skilful and industrious editor, aided by the most indefatigable sub-editor, can accomplish, or that any reasonable newspaper reader in any of the smaller towns could possibly require, there still remains a great number of equally important events, which are necessarily left unnoticed altogether by the mammoth journal, for sheer want of space, or given in a form so much abridged as to render them of little or no value. The people of Oldham are perhaps waiting with intense anxiety for a long and amusing account of the "Extraordinary Scene" at the last meeting of the board of poor-law guardians; or those of Ashton are looking forward with equal interest to Saturday's paper, for a report of the animated debate in the town-council on the proposed increase of two policemen for that borough; or perhaps the news-agents of Rochdale, in anticipation of a brisk demand, have ordered twice the usual number of papers because of a church-rate contest, in which the vicar has been beaten by an overwhelming majority. But the columns of the *Manchester Guardian*, though nearly double what they were twenty years ago, are not made of India rubber; and therefore, much as the editor may wish to give all due latitude to Ashton, Bolton, Bury, Middleton, Oldham, Rochdale, Stockport, or Wigan news, he is generally forced, by the pressure of advertisements, or some other equally potent

cause, to compress everything within the narrowest limits. Whatever interest a piece of district news may possess in its own locality, it must not be allowed to encroach upon the space belonging to "the general reader," who buys nine-tenths of every newspaper, and who does not care a farthing for Rochdale or Ashton news, unless when it happens to be a very horrid murder, or an exceedingly destructive fire. Were the stamp-duty abolished, the large town papers would be relieved from all the drudgery and annoyance attendant upon this department of editorial work. There would no longer be any necessity for devoting six or eight closely-printed columns of the paper to local news, which are not read by one-twentieth part of those who purchase it. Each small town in Lancashire and Yorkshire, as well as elsewhere, would have its penny or twopenny newspaper, in which local news, local politics, and local talent, would have fair play; while large papers, like the *Manchester Guardian* or the *Leeds Mercury*, would be greatly improved by the change. They would be enabled to substitute good readable matter, literary or political, of which there is always abundance, for the very dull stuff which they are now obliged to give under the head of "District News." By this improvement in character, and by the reduction of price, in such papers as we have named, from 5d. to 3-1/2d., their circulation would be greatly increased, in spite of the number of penny and twopenny papers which would then supply the demand for news among that numerous portion of the working-classes who cannot afford such a luxury at present.'

Such is a fair statement of certain advantages to be derived from the abolition of the penny stamp, and the substitution of the penny label. The advocates of the stamp-duty allege that, while the foregoing line of argument may be perfectly valid, something, on the contrary, is due to the advantage of having well-supported metropolitan newspapers as centres of intelligence. These newspapers, say some of their publishers, are put to vast expense for early news, foreign and domestic; such news they at present permit every one freely to copy; but, if a host of small country papers are to spring up, piracy of this kind will no longer be tolerated. As newspapers go pretty much on the principle of giving and taking in the way of intelligence, any tendency to prosecute on the ground of piracy would, in all probability, soon cure itself; and, therefore, we would not greatly rely on this as a reason for maintaining an exclusiveness in the business of newspaper publication. A more serious argument against the creation of a host of cheap local papers, is the probable dissemination of much petty scandal, and matter of a partially libellous or offensive character; at the least, much bad writing. Supposing, however, that there is a chance of literature being thus to a certain extent deteriorated, it will not do to oppose an improvement, if it be such, from fears of this nature. Should the matter treated of in small local papers be sometimes of an objectionable character, the public taste will surely go far towards its correction; and why should not each provincial town have an opportunity of educating writers up to the proper degree of literary accomplishment? It is undeniable, that small towns stand in pressing need of local channels for advertisements, and here, we think, is their strongest ground. How much more important, in a town of 5000 inhabitants, that the principal mercer should have his fresh arrival of goods advertised in a paper which circulates 500 copies in that town, than in some county-town journal which sends to it only some thirty or forty copies! A sale of growing crops must, in like manner, be much more effectually advertised in a paper which circulates largely in a small district, than in one which is diffused sparsely over a large one. All this, indeed, is amply proved by the tendency which has been shewn of late years, in Scotland at least, to set up unstamped monthly local papers containing advertisements, and by the comparative success which these journals have met with.

Among the arguments for such arrangements as would promote the sale of newspapers, we see little or no stress laid upon the *educational*, which to us appears as the very strongest of all. The interest felt in the occurrences of the passing day is one of the most vigorous of all intellectual appetences. Give a man ready access to a journal in which this taste can be gratified, and his intellectual progress is certain. The utterly uneducated, seeing the pleasure which his fellows derive from the paper, will desire to learn to read, that he may enjoy the like pleasure. The man just able to read will be drawn on to reflect and judge, and in time he will desire intellectual food from books also. The cheap newspaper thus becomes a most powerful instrument for nursing the popular mind; and, if we consider how essential it is, where there are free institutions, that the bulk of the people should be enlightened, we must see what a great public end is to be served by this simple means. A place in the apparatus is, we think, rightly claimed by the small local newspaper, as a kind of A B C, or *first form*, where the young and untutored mind may be entered by way of preparation for higher studies.

THE VEGETATION OF EUROPE.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

The publication of the volume, the title of which appears below,^[3] is to be regarded as additional evidence that the tendency of science in the present day is towards wider and more comprehensive generalisations. Many readers who may be more or less familiar with certain species or even families of plants, will hardly have prepared themselves for a view of the phytology of a quarter of the globe, such as is given in outline in the interesting work now before us. The subject is one that has been largely investigated within the past twenty years, as may be seen in the records of the British Association, in the transactions of learned societies, and in the writings of numerous observers on the continent. Attempt after attempt has been made to explain the causes of the variations and effects of climate, their influence on vegetation, the appearance of certain floras in localities where they might be least expected, and to separate the natural and regular from the accidental. Different countries have been examined and compared with each other, and many of the differences accounted for; and in Mr Henfrey's volume we have an acceptable *résumé* of these various researches.

It becomes necessary, first of all, to study the influences—whether general or special—which affect the distribution of vegetation; to inquire into those freaks or aberrations of nature which favour in one place the production of plants that will not grow in another, under apparently similar circumstances; and why similar plants are found in places widely separated. Oranges will ripen on one side the Alps, but not on the other; grapes scarcely come to perfection out of doors in England, while on the other side of the Channel they ripen by thousands of acres; and several fruits which fail in our northern counties, are grown without difficulty in Denmark in the open air. Investigation soon shewed that temperature alone, mere heat and cold, was insufficient to account for the phenomena; but that moisture and dryness, the prevalence of certain winds, the chemical and physical conditions of soil, and the constitution of the plants themselves, would have to be considered in a proper inquiry into the subject.

Here we must notice a fact which has proved of essential service in the study of botanical geography—namely, the discovery 'that there is some law presiding over the distribution of plants which causes the appearance of particular species arbitrarily—if we may so say it—in particular places;' from which, the conclusion has been arrived at, 'that countries have become populated with plants partly by the spreading of some special kinds from centres within those countries where they were originally exclusively created; and while these have spread outward into the neighbouring regions, colonists from like centres lying in the surrounding countries have invaded and become intermingled with the indigenous inhabitants.'

Looking at the effect of climate on vegetation, we find that as we proceed from the north towards the south, the number and luxuriance of plants increase in a remarkable degree, and the same result is observable in altitude as in latitude. 'Step by step,' writes Mr Henfrey, 'as the land rises in any mountain region, the vegetation assumes, more and more, a polar character; and in the mountains of the tropics, a succession of stages has been distinguished, corresponding in the general peculiarities of the plants which clothe them, to tracts extending horizontally, in succession, on the sea-level, from the base of these mountains to the frozen regions within the arctic and antarctic circles. Increase of elevation is accompanied by an alteration of climate, bringing with it a set of conditions analogous to those prevailing at certain distances further from the sun. Ascending the Peak of Teneriffe, a series of regions are traversed, one above another, displaying with the approach to the summit a continually closer approximation in character to the polar regions, till the traveller who left the palm, the cactus, and the thousand varied forms of tropical vegetation at the foot, finds himself at last among the stunted shrubs and scaly lichens, the borderers who hold the outposts on the limits of the eternal snow.'

It might be expected that places on the same parallel of latitude would be equal in temperature; but on tracing out the distribution of heat over the globe, and laying it down in what are called *isothermal* lines on a map, most striking deviations are found to exist, and the contour of the lines is anything but regular. The line of greatest cold, for example, which leaves the eastern coast of Labrador at about the 54th degree of latitude, rises six degrees as it approaches Greenland, and strikes the coast of Lapland a little above the 70th degree, or sixteen degrees nearer the pole than at its starting-point—thus shewing that the northern parts of Europe have a more genial climate than

those of America. The line then curves fifteen degrees to the south across Siberia, rises again on the western coast of America, and falls once more as it advances towards the east. Again, 'the isotherms of Canada pass through Iceland, across about the middle of Norway and Sweden, St Petersburg and Kamtschatka. Those of New York through the north of Ireland and England, twelve degrees further north, North and Central Germany, and the Crimea. That which leaves the United States at about 36 degrees north latitude, crosses Southern Europe from the north of Spain to the Adriatic in a tolerably straight line, some eight degrees further north, and then falls south again, where the influence of the north-east polar current is more felt, in Greece and Turkey.'

But although these are marked as lines of equal heat, it is only in the average temperature that the equality consists; and it is clear that a country with 80 degrees of summer heat and 20 of winter cold, would have a very different climate from another with 60 and 40 as the highest and lowest degrees of temperature, although the mean of the two would be the same. And herein we have an explanation of what at first sight appear to be anomalies: we know, for instance, 'that plants will flourish perennially in the British isles which are killed by the frosts of winter in places lying considerably to the south upon the continent; thus the laurel, that bears our winters steadily in Ireland and the west of England, and is only affected by very severe frosts in our eastern counties, is killed by the winters of Berlin, equally fatal to the myrtle, the fuchsia, and a host of other shrubs which attain considerable age and size in the western portions of the British isles. Again, Canada, which lies south of Paris, has the climate of Drontheim, in Norway; while at New York, lying in the latitude of Naples, the flowers open simultaneously with those of Upsala, in Sweden. Moreover, those very countries suffering so severe a winter's cold, enjoy a summer's heat far exceeding ours, since the snow lies for months on parts of Germany which yet receive sufficient heat in summer to ripen the grape and Indian corn.'

[pg 332]

The principal modifying causes are winds and water. Islands, and countries bordering on the ocean, have a much more equable climate than those which lie in the interior of continents, and will have a greater prevalence of moist south-westerly winds. The average annual quantity of rain in the British islands is from 28 to 30 inches; on the continent, it is less; the fall in Holland is estimated at 26 inches, and in Denmark and North Germany, at 20 inches—the greatest fall occurring in summer and autumn, as in England. Then with respect to winds, we find those from the west most prevalent over what Mr Henfrey distinguishes as the north European plain, as is the case in our country. 'The west wind blows more frequently in England than in Denmark, more there than in Russia. The predominance is most marked in summer; in the winter, the easterly winds are almost as frequent as the westerly upon the continent, which is not true of the British isles.' Sometimes, however, the south-westerly winds, which bring our genial April showers, continue to arrive with their watery burden until late in the summer, to the detriment or destruction of grain-crops; and yet this same wind, losing its excessive moisture as it sweeps onward over the continent, is highly favourable to the husbandman in Southern Russia. The years 1816 and 1817 were cases in point.

The meteorology of Russia affords some striking contrasts: the yearly rain-fall in St Petersburg is 21 inches, 'and the westerly winds are most prevalent, although not to the same extent as in Western Europe; they are also predominant in Moscow and Kasan. In the southern steppes, it is stated that the average of four years has given only 6 inches fall of rain, occurring in 47 days of the year; but the irregularity is so great, that single years gave 59, 35, 39, and 53 rainy days. In 1832-3, twenty months elapsed without rain, and in some years the quantity is only one-tenth of that which falls in wet years. In the summer, there is no dew, and the ground dries up and cracks, the plants withering up: 1841, not considered as a dry year, gave only 8½ inches of rain; but in 1831, one of the wettest, the moisture interfered with agriculture more than the drought does, saturating the soil, which rests on a deep impermeable clayey formation.' In April and May, when the snows melt, the steppe is a vast sea of mud, liable to be hardened by occasional frosts, until, as the season advances, myriads of crocuses, tulips, and hyacinths, cover the soil, which perhaps a few days later will be hidden by north-east snowstorms, or drenched by gales from the north-west. No rain falls for two months after the middle of June, the luxuriant herbage withers more rapidly than it grew, and, except in a few spots near the streams, the steppe becomes a black, arid waste. Yet in some parts of these regions the vegetation is extraordinary: 'the wormwoods and thistles grow to a size unknown in the west of Europe; it is said that the thistle-bush, found where these abound, is tall enough to hide a Cossack horseman. The natives call all these rank weeds, useless for pasture,

burian, and, with the dry dung of the flocks, this constitutes all the fuel they possess. One curious plant of the thistle tribe has attracted the notice of most travellers—the wind-witch, as it is called by the German colonists, or leap-the-field, as the Russian name may be translated. It forms a large globular mass of light wiry branches interlaced together, and in autumn decays off at the root, the upper part drying up. It is then at the mercy of the autumn blast, and it is said that thousands may sometimes be seen coursing over the plain, rolling, dancing, and leaping over the slight inequalities, often looking at a distance like a troop of wild horses. It is not uncommon for twenty or thirty to become entangled into a mass, and then roll away, as Mr Kohl says, "like a huge giant in his seven-league boots." Thousands of them are annually blown into the Black Sea, and here, once in contact with water, in an instant lose the fantastic grace belonging to their dry, unsubstantial texture.'

Any one who has seen the feather-like seeds of thistles and dandelions floating about in the air, will have little difficulty in comprehending the effect of winds on the distribution of vegetation. Such seeds, as Mr Henfrey observes, might readily be carried across Europe by a powerful autumn gale, blowing steadily in one direction. In physiological language, they belong to the *sporadic*, not to the *endemic* class, of which a remarkable instance is afforded in the flea-bane (*Erigeron canadensis*), a plant which, having found its way to this side the Atlantic only since the discovery of America, is now a common weed on the continent of Europe. Running streams and ocean currents also transport seeds from one locality to another. The gulf-stream, as is well known, carries occasionally branches of trees to the north coast of Scotland and Norway; and 'Mr Brown found that six hundred plants collected about the river Zaire, in Africa, included thirteen species, natives also of Guyana and Brazil. These species mostly occurred near the mouth of the Zaire, and were of such kind as produced fruits capable of resisting external agencies for a long time.' Then, again, the agency of birds, of quadrupeds, and of man, in the distribution of seeds and plants, is too important to be overlooked, as Sir Charles Lyell has ably shewn in his *Principles of Geology*; and there is 'a certain number of plants which seem to accompany man wherever he goes, and to flourish best in his vicinity. Thus, the docks, the goosefoots, the nettle, the chickweed, mallows, and many other common weeds, seem to be universal, though unwelcome companions to man—dogging his footsteps, affording by their presence, even in now deserted districts, an almost certain index of the former residence of human beings on the spot.'

From an examination of the causes affecting distribution, Mr Henfrey passes to a survey of the characteristics of the countries of Europe, from north to south—from the peninsula of Scandinavia to those of Spain, Italy, and Greece. The remarkable contrast is pointed out between the climate and cultivation of the east and west sides of the mountains of Sweden and Norway. Barley ripens as far north as the 70th degree, in latitudes whose mean temperature is below the freezing-point; while in Switzerland, corn ceases to ripen at 9 degrees above the same point, and in the plateaux of South America, at 22½ degrees—a fact which goes to shew, 'that the growth of grain is much more dependent on the summer temperature than on the annual mean. The long summer days of the polar regions afford a very brief, but a comparatively exalted summer heat.' It is, however, only the barley which ventures so far north: the limit of rye is 67 degrees, of oats, 65 degrees, of wheat, 64 degrees, on the west side of the peninsula, and from 1 to 2 degrees less on the east. In Southern Norway, the spruce-fir ceases to grow beyond the line of 2900 feet above the sea-level; while in Switzerland, it is commonly met with at the height of 5500 feet, and in some situations, 7000; shewing that the influences which affect the growth of grain do not similarly affect that of trees—proximity of the sea decreases the summer temperature. Again: 'In Scandinavia the tree-limit is indicated by the birch; in the Alps, by firs. The two lower mountain zones of the Alps, the regions of the beech and the chestnut, do not exist in the Scandinavian mountains. Compared with the climate and tree-limits, the cultivation of corn does not go so high in the Alps as it does toward the north; for it ceases about with the beech in the Alps, and grazing is the regular pursuit in the region of firs; while in Scandinavia, the beech only goes to 59 degrees, and corn-culture to 70 degrees—that is, as far as the conifers. Corn succeeds in the latter under a mean temperature below the freezing-point, while in the Alps it ceases at 41 degrees Fahrenheit. The cause of this is the hot though short summer of the north. The Alps have maize and the vine, which will not grow around the Scandinavian mountains; the meadows are throughout richer in the Alps, and grazing is therefore much more extensively pursued.'

The peculiarities and comparisons afforded by other countries, are not less interesting than those we have selected, and we might multiply instances, if space permitted. Enough, however, have been adduced to shew that the mode

of accounting for differences of vegetation is so far satisfactory, that it appears to be in perfect accordance with discoverable natural laws; and it is no longer a surprise or mystery to find plants of Southern Russia and of Asia Minor on the high table-lands of Spain; or that the effects of an unvarying temperature, as at Quito, in the table-land of Peru, are to cause the culture of wheat to cease at the mean temperature of Milan, and woods to disappear at the mean of Penzance. A few remarks respecting our own country is all that we can now find room for.

Including snow-falls, the number of rainy days in Dublin in a year is 208, in London, 178, while in Copenhagen it is not more than 134. The number of British plants indigenous or naturalised is from 1400 to 1500, comprising mostly the vegetation of Central Europe, but including specimens from Scandinavia and the Pyrenees. The highest point at which grain has been known to grow, is 1600 feet above the sea-level, at the outlet of Loch Collater, in the Highlands. In Drumochter Pass, an elevation of 1530 feet, potatoes can scarcely be raised; and from 1000 to 1200 feet is the more common limit of the cereal and the esculent. On this point a statement is made, which may be useful to cultivators in the hill districts: it is, that 'the common brake-fern (*Pteris aquilina*), distributed throughout Britain, is found to be limited by a line running nearly level with the limit of cultivation, and thus affords a test, when cultivation may be absent, where nature does not deny it success. In one sheltered spot in the woods of Loch-na-gar, it was observed at 1900 feet; and in another part of the same woods, at 1700 feet; but on the exposed moors it is very seldom seen beyond 1200 feet, unless in hollows, or on declivities facing the sun.'

In accounting for the varieties of plants in Britain, it is assumed that, during the glacial period, when the tops of our mountains were mere islands in a great sea, under which lay the greater part of modern Europe, they were then peopled by the arctic and alpine species, which now inhabit them. Then came an upheaval; a vast tract of land rose above the water, without any break, as at present between England and the continent; and at this period 'there appears to have been a migration of both plants and animals from east to west, the descendants of which still constitute the great body of the flora and fauna of the British lowlands.' Meantime, the elevation of the former islands into mountain summits, placed them in a temperature suited to the perpetuation of their vegetation. Then, to account for the presence of a Spanish flora in the west of Ireland, a bold hypothesis, started by Professor Edward Forbes, is put forward—'that the west of Ireland was geologically united with the north of Spain;' admitting which, there is no difficulty in supposing the plants to have travelled along the intervening land, which has subsequently disappeared, and that, owing to climatic changes, the hardier sort of plants, such as saxifrages and heaths, have alone survived.

FOOTNOTES:

- [3] The Vegetation of Europe, its Conditions and Causes. By Arthur Henfrey, F.L.S. London: John Van Voorst. 1852.

A HALF-PENNYWORTH OF NAVIGATION.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Who's for a cheap ride on what a pleasant writer calls the 'silent highway?'—silent no longer, since the steamers have taken to plying above Bridge at a charge which has made the surface of the Thames, where it runs through the heart of London, populous with life, and noisy with the clash of paddles and the rush of steam, to say nothing of the incessant chorus of captains, engine-boys, and gangway-men—with their 'Ease her,' 'Stop her,' 'Back her,' 'Turn ahead,' 'Turn astarn,' 'Now, marm, with the bundle, be alive,' 'Heave ahead there, will you?' &c., all the day long.

Come this way, my friend; here we are opposite the Adelphi Theatre, and this is the man who used to be a black man, or else it's another, who does duty as talking finger-post, and shews you, if you are a stranger, how you are to get at the half-penny boat. Come, we must dive down this narrow lane, past the 'Fox under the Hill,' a rather long and not very sightly, cleanly, smooth, or fragrant thoroughfare; and here, in this shed-looking office, you must pay your half-penny, which guarantees you a passage all the way to London Bridge. Look alive! as the money-taker recommends—the *Bee*, you see, is already discharging her living cargo, and others are hurrying on board. The boat won't lose time in turning round—she goes backwards and forwards as straight as a saw, and carries a rudder at her nose as well as one at her tail.

Never mind these jolting planks, you havn't time to tumble down—on with you! That's it: here, on this floating-pier, manufactured from old barges, we may rest a moment, while the boat discharges her freight, and takes on board the return cargo. You see the landing-stage or pier is divided into two equal portions; the people who are leaving the boat have not yet paid their fare; they will have to disburse their coppers at the office where we paid ours, there being but one paying-place for the two termini.

'Tis a motley company, you see, which comes and goes by the half-penny boat. Here is a Temple barrister, with his red-taped brief under his arm, and at his heels follows a plasterer, and a tiler's labourer with a six-foot chimney-pot upon his shoulders. There goes a foreigner—foreigners like to have things cheap—with a bushy black beard and a pale face, moustached and whiskered to the eyes, and puffing a volume of smoke from his invisible mouth; and there is a washer-woman, with a basket of clothes weighing a hundredweight. Yonder young fellow, with the dripping sack on his back, is staggering under a load of oysters from Billingsgate, and he has got to wash them and sell them for three a penny, and see them swallowed one at a time, before his work will be done for the day—and behind him is a comely lassie, with a monster oil-glazed sarcophagus-looking milliner's basket, carrying home a couple of bonnets to a customer. See! there is lame Jack, who sweeps the crossing in the borough, followed by a lady with her 'six years' darling of a pigmy size,' whom she calls 'Little Poppo,' both hurrying home to dinner after a morning's shopping. All these, and a hundred others of equally varied description, go off on the landing-stage, whence they will have to pay their obolus to the Charon of the Thames ere they are swallowed up in the living tide that rolls along the Strand from morn to night.

Now, if we mean to go, we had better get on board, for in another minute the deck will be covered, and we shall not find room to stand. That's right; make sure of a seat while you may! How they swarm on board, and what a choice sample they present of the mixed multitude of London! The deck is literally jammed with every variety of the pedestrian population—red-breasted soldiers from the barracks, glazed-hatted policemen from the station, Irish labourers and their wives, errand-boys with notes and packages, orange-girls with empty baskets, working-men out for a mouthful of air, and idle boys out for a 'spree'—men with burdens to carry, and men with hardly a rag to cover them; unctuous Jews, jabbering Frenchmen, and drowsy-looking Germans—on they flock, squeezing through the gangway, or clambering over the bulwarks, while the little vessel rolls and lurches till the water laves the planks on which you stand. In three minutes from her arrival she has discharged her old cargo, and is crammed to overflowing with a new one. 'Back, there: overloaded already!' roars the captain. 'Let go; turn ahead; go on!'—and fiz! away we go, leaving full half of the intending voyagers to wait for the next boat, which, however, will not be long in coming.

'Bless me, how we roll about from side to side!' says an anxious old lady. 'Is anything the matter with the boat, that it wabbles so?'

'Only a little krank, marm; it's all right,' says the person addressed.

'It's all right, of course,' says another, glancing at the nervous lady, 'whether we goes up or whether we goes down, so long as we gets along. The *Cricket* blowed herself up, and the *Ant* got tired on it, and laid down to rest herself at the bottom t'other day. Howasever, a steamer never blows up nor goes to the bottom but once, and, please God, 't aint goin' to be this time.'

While the old lady, unsatisfied with this genuine specimen of Cockney philosophy, is vowing that if she once gets safe on shore, she will never again set foot in a half-penny boat, we are already at Waterloo Bridge. Duck goes the funnel, and we dart under the noble arch, and catch a passing view of Somerset House. The handsome structure runs away in our rear; the Chinese Junk, with its tawdry flags, scuttles after it; we catch a momentary glimpse of Temple Gardens, lying in the sunlight, where half-a-dozen children are playing on the grass; then comes Whitefriars, the old Alsatia, the sanctuary of blackguard ruffianism in bygone times; then there is a smell of gas, and a vision of enormous gasometers; and then down goes the funnel again, and Blackfriars Bridge jumps over us. On we go, now at the top of our speed, past the dingy brick warehouses that lie under the shadow of St Paul's, whose black dome looks down upon us as we scud along. Then Southwark Bridge, with its Cyclopean masses of gloomy metal, disdains to return the slightest response to the fussy splashing we make, as we shoot impudently through. Then come more wharfs and warehouses, as we glide past, while our pace slackens, and we stop gently within a stone's-throw of London Bridge, at Dyers' Hall, where we are bundled out of the boat with as little ceremony as we were bundled in, and with as little, indeed, as it has ever been the custom

to use since ceremony was invented—which, in matters of business, is a very useless thing.

And now, my friend, you have accomplished a half-penny voyage; and without being a conjuror, you can see how it is that this cheap navigation is so much encouraged. In the first place, it is cheaper than shoe-leather, leaving fatigue out of the question; it saves a good two miles of walking, and that is no trifle, especially under a heavy burden, or in slippery weather. In the second place, it may be said to be often cheaper than dirt, seeing that the soil and injury to clothing which it saves by avoiding a two miles' scamper through the muddy ways, would damage the purse of a decent man more than would the cost of several journeys. These are considerations which the humbler classes appreciate, and therefore they flock to the cheap boats, and spend their halfpence to save their pence and their time. This latter consideration of time-saving it is that brings another class of customers to the boats. In order that it may be remunerative to the projectors, every passage must be made with a regular and undeviating rapidity; and this very necessity becomes in its turn a source of profit, because it is a recommendation to a better class of business men and commercial agents, to whom a saving of time is daily a matter of the utmost importance. Hence the motley mixture of all ranks and orders that crowd the deck.

Besides these half-penny boats, there are others which run at double and quadruple fares; but they carry a different class of passengers, and run greater distances, stopping at intermediate stations. They are all remunerative speculations; and they may be said to have created the traffic by which they thrive. They have driven the watermen's wherries off the river almost as effectually as the railways have driven the stage-coaches from the road; but, like them, they have multiplied the passengers by the thousand, and have awakened the public to a new sense of the value of the river as a means of transit from place to place. The demand for safe, cheap, and speedy conveyance to and from all parts of the river between London Bridge and Battersea, and beyond, is becoming daily more urgent; and we hear that it will shortly be met by the launching of a fleet of steam gondolas constructed on an improved principle, combining accommodation for enlarged numbers, with appliances calculated to insure at once security and speed.

A LONDON NEWSPAPER IN 1667.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

In a recent number of this Journal (14th February), some particulars were given relating to a newspaper of a hundred years ago; and the contrast—sufficiently strong—was shewn between the infant press of that time and its developed form in our own. We propose now to make research a century earlier, and to shew in what condition the 'fourth estate of the realm' appeared in the early part of Charles II.'s reign. Surely that great power was then in its very infancy and weakness; and if the subject entered into our plan, it would be both instructive and entertaining to trace its growth in this country from the small beginning now before us.

We have on our table some numbers of the *London Gazette* of 1667 to 1681; and, so far as we know, this newspaper was the only source of information to the people of public and passing events. In the Venetian territory, that republic issued its gazette so early as 1536. In the days of our own Civil Wars, when matters of the last importance were continually arising, the English newspaper commenced, each party having one such organ. Under Cromwell, a more regular journal was published in 1652; but it was not until Queen Anne's reign that the *Daily Courant* appeared each morning, and pioneered that enormous power of our own day which disseminates perhaps 80,000,000 newspapers annually throughout the country.

It would be curious to compare the *London Gazette* of 1667 with the *Times* of 1852. In form, it is slightly larger than one leaf of this Journal; but in type, and in appearance, it is quite equal to the newspapers of a hundred years later. It is published 'by authority,' and contains pithy paragraphs, void of detail and without comment, under the headings of the different places whence the news is brought—the first and the last paragraphs being devoted to 'home news,' the latter dating usually from Whitehall, and supplying the place of the Court Circular. The first number was probably issued shortly after the Restoration, as *our* earliest date is No. 236, from Thursday, 17th February, to Monday, 20th February 1667. We purpose making some extracts from these veracious records as they arise; and first, let us view in familiar guise a historical character, better known to us by heading charges of cavalry at Naseby—a

daring cavalier, a valiant soldier; though now we see him *en déshabille*, and only as Prince Rupert, who, poor gentleman, has lost his pet dog! 'Lost,' says the advertisement—'lost on Friday last, about noon, a light fallow-colored greyhound, with a sore under her jaw, and a scar on her side; whoever shall give notice of her at Prince Rupert's apartments in Whitehall, shall be well rewarded for their pains.' The next month, we find the prince assisting at a launch. 'This day (3 March), was happily launched at Deptford, in presence of his majesty, his Royal Highness Prince Rupert, and many persons of the court, a very large and well-built ship, which is to carry 106 great guns, and is like to prove a ship of great force and excellent service, called *Charles the Second*.'

A little later, we find an account of the visit of 'Madam,' Duchess of Orleans, and sister to Charles II. Her reception, her return, and her death, follow quickly one upon another; so sudden, indeed, was her decease, that her death was not, says history, without suspicion of poison. 'DOVER, *May 21, 1670*.—The 15 ins., about 6 in the morning, arrived here Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Orleans, attended, among other persons of quality, by the Marechal de Plessis Praslin; her brother, Bishop of Tournay; Madam de Plessis, the marshal's son's lady; and the Countess of Grammont; having the day before, at about the same hour, embarked with her train upon the men-of-war and several yachts under the command of the Earl of Sandwich, vice-admiral of England, &c.

'The same evening, the court was entertained with a comedy, acted by his Royal Highnesses servants, who attend here for their diversion.'

'Yesterday was acted, by the said servants, another comedy, in the midst whereof Madam and the rest of the ladies were entertained with an excellent banquet.'

In the notice of 5th June, Madam embarked on her return to France. On the 20th, she and the duke arrive at Paris; and on the 25th go to 'St Clou.' The following is the official notice of her death:—

'WHITEHALL.—This day arrived an express from Mr Montague, His Majesty's ambassador at Paris, with the sad news of the death of Madam, His Majesty's only sister, to the infinite grief and affliction of their Majestys' and Royal Highnesses, as well for the greatness of this loss as for the suddenness of it. She dyed at St Clou about 4 of the clock on Munday morning, of a sudden and violent distemper, which had seized her at 5 of the evening before, and was by her physician taken for a kind of bilious colic.'

Confining ourselves to home news, there appears an edict from Whitehall, commanding the Duke of York's (James II.) absence. 'WHITEHALL, *3 Mar. 1678*.—His Majesty, having thought fit to command the Duke to absent himself, his Royal Highness and the Duchess took leave of their majestys, and embarked this morning, intending to pass into Holland.' But three years afterwards, he must have stood better with the city, for in 1681 we find the lord mayor and court of aldermen offering a reward of L.500 for the discovery of the person who offered an indignity to the picture of his Royal Highness in the Guildhall, to shew their deep resentment at that 'insolent and villainous act.'

The many allusions to Algerines and pirates of all kinds, and the audacity which seems to mark their acts, are good evidence of the inefficient state of our navy in King Charles's reign. Witness the following extract. 'LYME, *April 21, 1679*.—Yesterday, a small vessel called the *William and Sarah*, bound for Holland from Morlaix, put in here to avoid two Turks men-of-war, as he very much suspects them to be, because he saw them chase a small vessell, who likewise escaped them. It is reported that some of these pyrats have been as high as the Isle of Wight, and that Sir Robert Robinson met with five of them, whom he chased into Brest.' There are many accounts of the pirates of Sally (Salee), and an account of an engagement with one of them by an old collier, called the *Lisborne Merchant*, on her voyage from London to Lisbon. The description is almost as formidable as Falstaff's with his men of buckram, and we should have liked a little confirmatory evidence beyond the narrator's. All our naval feelings of British supremacy on the water would be gratified by the gallant conduct of our trading captain.

'He had the fortune,' the account declares, 'to be set upon by the admiral of the *Argur*, of 60 guns, and his consort of 40 guns, the former with 700 men, and the latter with 500 men. The admiral immediately boarded the poor merchant, who had only 25 men and 16 guns, clapping on as many men as they thought sufficient to have mastered her. But the English entertained them with so much courage, that they in little time cleared the ship, forcing all the Turks overboard, with little loss besides that of the master of the ship,

one seaman, a young man who was knockt on the head.' The Turk repeated his attack, and boarded the merchant; the 'dispute' continues for about three glasses—the admiral assaults them the third time, but his men are so terrified, that only 'seaven' durst adventure on board, whereof six were killed, and the other taken prisoner. 'This done, the Turks left her to pursue her course, wearing very eminent marks of that encounter.'

We are at a loss what to make of this report from Dublin; but perhaps some more learned authority can explain it: '*Dublin, April 9, 1679.*—This morning the Lord Lieutenant signed a warrant for the pardon of Lawry, a Scotch man, minister in the county of Fermanagh, and his five servants, for killing five notorious Tories in that countrey, wounding two others to death, as is believed, and takeing the eighth. The parson killed three of them with his own hand; and while another of the Tories was going to draw the trigger of his gun to shoot him, his hand was cut off by one of the parson's servants.' Here, again, is a singular announcement to be published 'by authority.' 'A warm report having been spread about of some unusual effects of witchcraft in the province of Daleicarly, near the best copper-mines in Suedeland, it is said several persons are sent to make an enquiry in to the matter of fact, with power to proceed to the punishment of such persons as shall be found guilty.' In another number, there has been an inquiry among the Jews in Germany, who were supposed to have sacrificed young children in their ceremonies.

The slow growth of the newspaper press from these times is very remarkable. Even so late as sixty years since, a London paper was a very meagre and timid affair. Before us lies a copy of the *Times* of 1797, insignificant in size and appearance. The small modicum of news is entirely foreign: no brilliant leaders, models of composition—no fearless correction of abuse, or withering sarcasm of folly. The parliamentary debates are merely alluded to as with permission, and the simple propositions said to be advanced and seconded, disputed and amended. How strange is the comparison suggested with the present aspect of the *Times*, or indeed any of the London daylies! We live in an age of wonders, and not the least of these is the well-written, well-filled, and capacious-minded newspapers.

A SCENE IN BOSTON.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

A coloured girl, eighteen years of age, a few years ago escaped from slavery in the South. Through scenes of adventure and peril, almost more strange than fiction can create, she found her way to Boston. She obtained employment, secured friends, and became a consistent member of the Methodist church. She became interested in a very worthy young man of her own complexion, who was a member of the same church. They were soon married. Their home, though humble, was the abode of piety and contentment. Industrious, temperate, and frugal, all their wants were supplied. Seven years passed away. They had two little boys, one six, and the other four years of age. These children, the sons of a free father, but of a mother who had been a slave, by the laws of the Southern States were doomed to their mother's fate. These Boston boys, born beneath the shadow of Faneuil Hall, the sons of a free citizen of Boston, and educated in the Boston Free Schools, were, by the compromises of the constitution, admitted to be slaves, the property of a South Carolinian planter. The Boston father had no right to his own sons. The law, however, had long been considered a dead-letter. This was not to continue. The Fugitive Slave Law was enacted. It revived the hopes of the slave-owners. A young, healthy, energetic mother, with two fine boys, was a rich prize. She would make an excellent mother. Good men began to say: 'We must enforce this law; it is one of the compromises of the constitution.' Christian ministers began to preach: 'The voice of law is the voice of God. There is no higher rule of duty.' As may be supposed, the poor woman was panic-stricken. Her friends gathered around her, and trembled for her. Her husband was absent from home, a seaman on board one of the Liverpool packets. She was afraid to go out of doors, lest some one from the South should see her, and recognise her. One day, as she was going to the grocery for some provisions, her quick anxious eye caught a glimpse of a man prowling around, whom she immediately recognised as from the vicinity of her old home of slavery. Almost fainting with terror, she hastened home, and taking her two children by the hand, fled to the house of a friend. She and her trembling children were hid in the garret. In less than an hour after her escape, the officer, with a writ, came for her arrest. It was a dark and stormy day. The rain, freezing as it fell, swept in floods through the streets of Boston. Night came, cold, black, and tempestuous. At midnight, her friends took her in a hack, and conveyed her, with her children, to the house

of her pastor. Hence, after an hour of weeping, for the voice of prayer had passed away into the sublimity of unutterable anguish, they conveyed this mother and her children to one of the Cunard steamers, which fortunately was to sail for Halifax the next day. They took them in the gloom of midnight, through the tempest-swept streets, lest the slave-hunter should meet them. Her brethren and sisters of the church raised a little money from their scanty means to pay her passage, and to save her, for a few days, from starving, after her first arrival in the cold land of strangers. Her husband soon returned to Boston, to find his home desolate, his wife and children exiles in a foreign land. These facts need no word-painting.—*Burritt's Bond of Brotherhood*.

THE TONGUE OF FIRE.

BY MRS NEWTON CROSLAND.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

I hear December's biting blast,
I see the slippery hail-drops fall—
That shot which frost-sprites laughing cast
In some great Arctic arsenal;
I lean my cheek against the pane,
But start away, it is so chill,
And almost pity tree and plain
For bearing Winter's load of ill.

The sombre sky hangs dark and low,
It looks a couch where mists are born—
A throne whence they in clusters flow,
Or by the tempest's wrath are torn.
I turn me to the chamber's Heart,
Low pulsing like a vague desire,
And strike an ebon block apart,
Till up there springs a Tongue of Fire!

It hath a jovial roaring tone,
Like one rebuking half in jest—
Yet ah! I wish there could be shewn
The wisdom that it hath exprest—
Or sinking to a lambent glow,
Its arched and silent cavern seems
A magic glass whereon to shew,
And shape anew, our broken dreams!

I vow the Fiery Tongue hath caught
Quaint echoes of the passing time;
Thus laughs it at my idle thought,
My longing for a fairer clime:
'So—so you'd like some southern shore,
To gather flowers the winter through,
As if there were on earth no more
For busy human hands to do!

'And guard your Own!—In this, oh mark
High duty and the world's far fate;
Thou art poor deluged Europe's Ark,
Her fortunes on Thy Safety wait;
And—couching lion at her feet—
In all her matron graces drest,
Let free Britannia smiling greet
Her radiant Daughter of the West!

'The broad Atlantic flows between,
But love can bridge the ends of earth;
Of all the lands my race have seen,
These two the rest are more than worth;
Not for their skies, or fruits, or gold,
But for their sturdy growth of Man,
Who walks erect, and will not hold
His life beneath a tyrant's ban.

'Yet do not curl your lips with scorn
That others are not great as ye;

Your fathers fought ere ye were born,
And died that thus it now should be!
I tell ye, spirits walk unseen,
Excepting by the soul's strong sight;
Hampden and Washington, I ween,
Are leaders yet in Freedom's fight!

It ceased; but oh, Its words of fire
Had dropped upon my Northman's heart,
Rebuked a moment's vain desire,
And slain it like a hunter's dart;
Oh, welcome now the slippery hail,
And welcome winter's biting blast,
Ye braced our sires; they still prevail
Who triumphed through the stormy past.

And as beside the ruddy blaze
We muse or talk of mighty things,
In clarion tone one little phrase
Still through the heart's deep echoes rings:
'Our Hearths—our Homes—beyond compare!'
Those charmèd circles whence there rise
The steadfast souls that do and dare,
And shape a Nation's destinies!

There, pile the fagots high—aslant—
And let them crackle out their hymn;
There is no logic—that I grant—
In wilful words of woman's whim:
And yet I feel the links that glide
'Twixt English Hearths and Liberty,
And track how We—our truest pride—
First sheltered Her Divinity!

—*Ladies' Companion.*

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