

THROUGH VICTORIA'S DOMAIN

By Rev. T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.



Republicans and Democrats in America have been brought up on the theory that the aristocracy of Great Britain lives a fictitious and stilted life in aim. My own ideas on the subject have been reconstructed by my present visit. There are in the world three kinds of aristocracy: the aristocracy of wealth, the aristocracy of birth and the aristocracy of goodness. The last will yet come to the ascendancy, and men will be judged not according to the number of dollars they have gathered nor the fame of their ancestors. But if I must choose between the aristocracy of wealth and the aristocracy of birth, I choose the latter. I find that those who have been born to high position wear their honors with more ease and less ostentation than those who come suddenly upon distinguished place.



THE ARISTOCRACY OF ENGLAND

So far as I have this summer seen the homes and habits of the aristocrats of England, I find them plain in their manners, highly cultured as to their minds, and many of them intensely Christian in their feelings. There is more strut and pretention of manner in many an American constable, or alderman, or legislator, than you will find in the halls and castles of the nobility of England. One great reason for this is that a man born to great position in Great Britain is not afraid of losing it. He got it from his father, and his father from his grandfather, and after the present occupant is done with the estate, his child will get it and then his grandchild, and so on perpetually. It is the man who has had distinguished place for only two or three years, and may lose it to-morrow, who is especially anxious to impress you with his exaltation. His reign is so short he wants to make the most of it. Even the men who come up from the masses in England to political power are more likely to keep it than in America, for the member of the House of Commons may represent any part of England that desires to compliment his services instead of being compelled to contest with twenty small men in his own district, as in America.



UNOSTENTATION OF TITLED PEOPLE

This unostentation seen among those who have done their own climbing is true, also, of those who are at the top without climbing at all. The Marquis of Townshend, who once presided at my lecture at the Crystal Palace, had the simplicity of a child, and meeting him among other men you would not suspect either his wealth or his honors. The Earl of Shaftesbury is like a good old grandfather from whom it requires no art to evoke either a tear or a laugh. The family of Lord Cairns, the highest legal authority in England, is like any other Christian home which has high art and culture to adorn it. Among the pleasantest and most unaffected of people are duchesses and "right honorable" ladies. The most completely gossiped man I ever met was the Earl of Kintore, since deceased. Seated at his table some years ago, he said: "Do not forget our journey next Sabbath night." It was useless to tell me not to forget that which I had so ardently anticipated. At six o'clock his lordship called at the hotel, not with carriage, for we were going where it was best for us to go afoot. With his servant to carry his coat and Bible and psalm book we sauntered forth. We were out to see some of the evening and midnight charities of London. First of all we went into the charity lodging houses of London, the places where outcast men, who would otherwise have to lodge on the banks of the Thames, or under the arch bridges, may come in and find gratuitous shelter. These men, as we went in, sat around in all stages of poverty and wretchedness. As soon as the Earl entered they all knew him. With some he shook hands, which in some cases was a big undertaking. It is pleasant to shake hands with the clean, but a trial to shake hands with the untidy. Lord Kintore did not stop to see whether these men had attended to proper ablutions. They were in sin and trouble, and needed help, and that was enough to enlist all his sympathies. He addressed them as "gentlemen" in a short, religious address, and promised them a treat "about Christmas," telling them how many pounds he would send; and accommodating himself to their capacity, he said: "It would be a regular blow-out." He told me that he had no faith in trying to do their souls good unless he sympathized practically with their physical necessities.

From this charity lodging house, which the inmates call the "House of Lords," we went to one of the inferior quality, which the inmates call the "House of Commons." There were different grades of squalor, different degrees of rags. From there we went to missions, and out-door meetings, and benevolent rooms, where coffee and chocolate were crowding out ale and spirits. Ready with prayer and exhortation himself, his lordship expected everybody with him to be ready, and, although he had promised to do the talking himself, he had a sudden and irresistible way of tumbling others into religious addresses; so that, at the close of this Sunday, which I had set apart for entire quiet, I found I had made five addresses. But it was one of the most refreshing and instructive days of all our lives. As we parted that night on the streets of London, I felt I had been with one of the best men of the age. I have never met him since. Not long after he went home to his Master to receive his reward.

MR. GLADSTONE'S APPROACHABILITY

Some of the most unpretentious men of England are the most highly honored. Gladstone is not afraid of losing his honors, while, with coat off, he swings his ax against the forest trees at Hawarden. His genteel visitors may, with gilt-edged book in hand, prefer to recline among the geraniums and hawthorns of this country residence, but as Mr. Gladstone has so much hacking and hewing to do at political antagonists, at Hawarden he keeps his hand in by cutting down trees.

In a picnic of working people assembled on his lawn one summer day, Mr. Gladstone, while making a little speech, said:

"We are very proud of our trees, and are therefore getting anxious, as the beech has already shown symptoms of decay. We set great store by our trees."

"Why, then," shouted one of his rough hearers, "do you cut them down as you do?"

"We cut down that we may improve. We remove rottenness that we may restore health by letting in air and light. As a good Liberal you ought to understand that."

So Mr. Gladstone, though holding the strongest political pen in England, is easily accessible, and is not afraid of being contaminated by contact with his constituents.



ENGLISH NOMENCLATURE

It is well for every one crossing the ocean to know beforehand the difference between the use of certain words in England and America. The American says "depot," the Englishman says "station." The American says "ticket office," the Englishman says "booking office." The American says "baggage," the Englishman says "luggage." The American says "I guess," the Englishman says "I fancy." The American says "crackers," the Englishman says "biscuit." The American says "checkers," the Englishman says "draughts." The American says "yeast," the Englishman says "barm." The American calls the close of the meal "dessert," the Englishman calls it "sweets." The American says "sexton," the Englishman says "door-keeper." The American uses the word "clever" to describe geniality and kindness, the Englishman uses the word "clever" to describe sharpness and talent.

But it is not until you get into Wales that you feel yourself perfectly helpless. If ever there was a land of unpronounceable names, surely Wales is the foremost.



A LAND OF UNPRONOUNCEABLE NAMES

The Welsh language is said to be only second in sweetness and rhythm, but the English tongue seems to be crowding it out. The melody of the Welsh vernacular I must, however, take on faith. I give my readers an opportunity of practicing the music of the names of some of the Welsh valleys, such as Llangollen, Maentwrog and Ystwyth; of some of the Welsh medicinal springs, such as Llanwrtyd, Trefriw and Llandrinod; of some of the Welsh mountains, such as Pencwmerwyn and Aanfawddwy. If you are at all puzzled with the pronunciation of these names, then get one of the Welsh dictionaries, entitled: "Dymchweliad allor uchel y Pab." And if then you cannot succeed you will perhaps stop, and be as ignorant as I am of a language which the Welsh say has in its capacities for tenderness, and nice shades of meaning, and pathos, and thunderings of power beside which our English is insipid.

Considering the fact that the language is spoken by less than a million of people, the literature of the Welsh is incomparable for extent. The first book was published in 1531, and consisted of twenty-one leaves. Four years after, another book. Eleven years after, another book, which they strangely called "The Bible," containing the alphabet, an almanac, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, and something about their national games. An astounding "Bible" that was. Eighteen years after this another book appeared. The slow advancement was because the prominent men of the English nation wanted the Welsh language to die out, on the supposition that these people would be more loyal to the throne if they all spoke the English language. But, afterward, the printing press of Wales got into full swing, and now books and periodicals by the hundreds of thousands of copies are printed and circulated in the Welsh language. But, excepting a few ballads of an immoral nature, corrupt literature dies as soon as it touches this region.

Many bad English novels that blight other countries cannot live a month in the pure atmosphere of these mountains. The fact is, that the Welsh are an intensely religious people, and one of their foremost men declares that in all their literature there is not one book atheistic or infidel.

The namby-pamby traveler, afraid of getting his shoes tarnished, and who loves to shake hands with the tips of his fingers or with his hand on a level with his cravat, and desires conversation in a whisper, would be disgusted with Wales. But they who have nothing of the fastidious in their temperaments, and who admire strength of voice, strength of arm, strength of purpose and strength of character, will find among the Welsh illimitable entertainment and opportunities for profitable study. They are the most genial and hearty of all people, I think, I have ever met. When they laugh they laugh, and when they cry they cry, and when they cheer they cheer, and there is no half-way work about it. They are sincere, and they are natural in showing their sincerity.

EARLY MORN IN SCOTLAND

It is now seven o'clock in the morning, and I am writing at a window looking out upon the river Tay, which is the Rhine of Scotland. When the Romans, many centuries ago, first caught sight of it, they exclaimed: "Ecce Tiber!" within sight of scenery which Walter Scott made immortal in his "Fair Maid of Perth." The heather running up the hills to join the morning cloud of the same color, so that you can hardly tell which is heather and which is cloud, beauty terrestrial and celestial, intertwined, interlocked, interspun, intermarried. The incense of a gentleman's garden burning toward heaven in the fires of the fresh rising sun. Ivy on the old walls; rockeries dashed with waterfall and fringed with ferns; hawthorn hedges which halt the eye only long enough to admire, before it leaps over. The glades, the farmsteads, the soft plush of the grass which has reveled in two months of uninterrupted moisture. Seated in an arm chair that an ancient king might in vain have wished for, writing on a table that fairly writhes with serpents and dragons and gorgons done in mahogany—what a time and place to take pen and paper for communication with my JOURNAL readers!



TRAITS OF THE SCOTCHMAN

There is something about the Scotch character, whether I meet it in New York, or London, or Perth, that thrills me through and through. Perhaps it may be because I have such a strong tide of Scotch blood in my own arteries. Next to my own beloved country give me Scotland for residence and grave. The people are in such downright earnest. There is such a roar in their mirth, like a tempest in "The Trossacks."

Take a Glasgow audience, and a speaker must have his feet well planted on the platform, or he will be overmastered by the sympathy of the populace. They are not ashamed to cry, with their broad palms wiping away the tears, and they make no attempt at suppression of glee. They do not snicker, or snicker, or chuckle. Throw a joke into a Scotchman's ear and it rolls down to the center of his diaphragm and then spreads out both ways, toward the foot and brow, until the emotion becomes volcanic, and from the longest hair on the crown of the head to the tip end of the nail on the big toe there is paroxysm of cackination. No half and half about the Scotch character. What he hates, he hates; what he likes, he likes. And he lets you know it right away. He goes in for Lord Saulsbury or William E. Gladstone, and is altogether Tory or Liberal. His politics decided, his religion decided; get him right, and he is magnificently right; get him wrong, and he is awfully wrong. A Scotchman seldom changes. By the time he has fairly landed on his feet in this world he has made up his mind, and he keeps it made up. If he dislikes a fiddle in church you cannot smuggle it in under the name of a bass viol. And I like this persistence. Life is so short that a man can't afford to change his mind.



BAPTIZING A SCOTTISH BABY

Before I forget it, I must tell you how I baptized a Scotch baby down in the center of England, and with this I must close. It was about ten o'clock at night, at the close of a lecture, and in the private parlor of a hotel, that a rap was heard at the door. Word came in that a young man was there, desiring me to officiate at a baptism. I thought there must be some mistake about it, and so delayed my appearance.

About five minutes before the starting of the rail train I came to the door of the private parlor and confronted a young man in a high state of excitement. He said that he had come all the way from Scotland to have me baptize his child. I told him the thing was impossible, for the train would go in five minutes. But this only made the man more intense. So I said: "Where is the baby? I have no time to wait." The young man rushed down stairs, and returned with the mother and child. As she unrolled the boy from her plaid there came to sight the prophecy of a genuine Roderick Dhu. I wanted an hour to baptize a boy like that. Scotch all over. What cheek bones, and what a fist! Give him plenty of porridge and the air of Loch Vennachar, and what a man he will make! Chief of Clan Alpine! I asked the mother what she was going to call him, and she said "Douglass!" What a name, suggestive of victory, defeat, warrior, blades and gates of Stirling Castle!

But it was no time to indulge in Scottish reminiscences. If that infant Highlander was to be baptized by me it must be within the next sixty seconds. I had the father and the mother, and the baby, and the minister, but no water. I hastily scanned all the vases and cups in the room. There was no liquid in all the place save the cocoa left over from the evening repast. "Get some water in a second," I almost demanded. From the next room the father returned in a moment, bringing a glass of it, clear, bright water, fit to christen a Douglass, opaline as though just dipped by Rob Roy from Loch Katrine. "Douglass!" I called him, as the water flashed upon the lad's forehead, quick and bright as the gleam of Fitz James' blade at Inverlochy. I had no time for making out a formal certificate, but only the words, "Baptism, August—th," the name of Douglass and my own. As I darted for the cars, the young man submerged me with thanks, and put into my hands as a baptismal gift the "Life of Robert McCheyne," the glorious Scotchman who preached himself to death at thirty years of age, but whose brave and godly words are still resounding clear as a pibroch among the Scottish hills.

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