

## A MAN WHO LOVED NATURE.



LESS than five years ago there was living amongst us a pleasant-faced, loud-laughing gentleman, whom most men knew and all men liked.

From Caithness to Cornwall he was a familiar figure; and in the natural history columns of the *Field* or of *Land and Water* no pen was more frequently at work than his. Many volumes bore his name on their title-pages, and endless "reports," sometimes couched in very unofficial language, were attested by the

signature of this easy-going bureaucrat, whose style in Whitehall and the Home Office was "Francis Trevelyan Buckland, Esq., M.A., M.R.C.S., Her Majesty's Inspector of Fisheries," but who among his friends obtained the more familiar name of "Frank." As the appointed guardian of fishes and those who catch them, Inspector Buckland was all that could be desired, though, in truth, an ex-Guardsman with such unconventional ways somewhat alarmed the buckram placemen, who were unaccustomed to see blue-books intelligible, and had to be educated to the point of having jokes engrossed on Government stationery. Nor, though Mr. Buckland's books on monkeys, and adders, and dwarfs, and fat women, and Japanese monsters, and learned pigs were not very deep, could any one religiously affirm that they were dull?

But the all-abounding popularity which he obtained, and the almost personal affection with which he was regarded by thousands of fisher-folk, were not to be explained either by his services—which they did not understand—or by his proposals—of which they did not always approve. There was something in the man himself which won this wide regard, since even the unsympathetic specialist who sneered at a universality which he could not appreciate was willing to award to "Frank" *in personâ* that cordial approval which a stony-hearted critic could not always bestow on "Frank's" zoology. In truth, he was a naturalist in the truest sense of the term. To him nature did not consist in the differentiation of a species or in the elucidation of a parapophysis. Everything that was created, every being—no matter how humble, or to the vulgar no matter how repulsive—was something to be studied, to "take an interest in," to be loved. Bird, and beast, and fish, and tadpole—all things both

great and small—were to him objects of affection; and he was far too cosmopolitan in his affections to make an exception of man. Hence, loving much, he was himself loved; and now, when a generation of lads are growing up who were but children when he died, Mr. George Bompas, in a book which has all the charms of a judicious autobiography,\* enables them to fathom the secret by which one who was only a great naturalist among laymen won the regard of the world in a way which had been denied to those who were his masters in every art, except the capacity of feeling alien to nothing which had ever borne the burden of life.

Frank's father was Canon Buckland, Professor of Geology at Oxford, and afterwards Dean of Westminster. The home at Christ Church was the place to become acquainted with unwonted visitors. Stuffed beasts shared the hall with the rocking-horse. There were cages of snakes and green frogs in the dining-room; and sometimes callers, who did not quite understand the peculiarities of the *Maison Buckland*, would run screaming to the door as an escaped adder would be found leisurely crawling down the stairs. At table the talk was of natural history—of the *Reliquiæ Deluvianæ* and the "Bridgewater Treatise." The sideboard groaned with its load of fossils, and the candles were stuck into the vertebræ of the ichthyosaurus in lieu of sconces. Guinea-pigs were often scampering over the table; and occasionally the pony, having trotted down the steps from the garden, would push open the dining-room door, and career round the table with three laughing children on his back, and then, marching through the front door and down the steps, would continue his course round Tom Quad.

In the stable-yard and wood-houses were a fox, rabbits, guinea-pigs, and ferrets, hawks and owls, magpies and jackdaws, besides dogs, cats, and poultry; and in the garden was the tortoise, and toads immured in various pots, to test the truth of their supposed life in rock-cells.

Strange meats appeared at the Buckland table. A horse belonging to his brother-in-law having been shot, Dr. Buckland had the tongue pickled and served up at a large luncheon party, greatly to the satisfaction of the guests, until they were told what they had eaten. Alligator was a rarer delicacy, but puppies were enjoyed and mice freely discussed as a useful addition to "the food of the people." Oxford got accustomed to this kind of thing, just as it got hardened to the unconventionality of the Canon packing his family in a wonderfully roomy carriage, and spending the day at Bagley Wood hunting for moles or birds' nests. But at the Deanery in Westminster it required time to educate the more inelastic Londoners into a taste for the hedgehogs, tortoise, potted ostrich, rats, frogs, and snails which were

\* "Life of Frank Buckland." By his Brother-in-law, George Bompas. London: Smith, Elder, and Co. 1885.

served up for their delectation. "Party at the Deanery," one guest notes: "tripe for dinner; don't like crocodile for breakfast!"

At Winchester "Old Buckland"—when a boy is called "Old" by his comrades, it is a sure sign of his being liked—was what he could not help being. He was not a distinguished scholar, though he fagged bravely, and as "rod-maker" attained a precarious eminence. But as a naturalist he excelled all his companions. Ferrets tenanted his desk, live snakes were at home in his drawers, the head of his bed was festooned with bones, dead cats half dissected scented the dormitory which he shared; and his maceration pots at Amen Corner, with heads of hares, rabbits, and cats, in course of reduction to skulls, were things to be avoided.

His rooms at Christ Church, to which he duly proceeded, were not savoury; and ancient serving-men still tell of the days spent in rendering them habitable for his more punctilious successor. The place simply swarmed with running, creeping, crawling, and flying creatures. He had a monkey, which sometimes scared half the "quad" as it sprang from open window to open window, and was shown in broad outline on the blinds of nervous tutors burning much midnight oil. Then there was a bear, dubbed "Tiglath Pileser," who, in a cap and gown, sorely scandalised the Proctors. "My son," Dr. Buckland remarked to the Prince of Canino, as Frank and the bear sauntered up during the British Association's meeting at Oxford in 1847. "Which of them?" queried the Prince, as he looked first at the one and then at the other.

However, the time came when it was a question whether "Tig" or his master was to "go down." So the bear was sent to Islip, and lived there for some months with an eagle and the monkey, who also had been rusticated. But there were plenty of other guests to take his place. There were the marmots in the cellar, and a jackal under the table, apt to bite the shins of incautious "men." A snake—"quite harmless, I assure you"—would sometimes peep out of his pocket, while a nest of slow-worms in damp moss enjoyed the hospitality of other portions of his person. There were guinea-pigs everywhere, the only consolation his friends had in the midst of this menagerie being when the jackal managed to dine on a few of them, while the polecat and the chameleon added variety to the collection of non-collegiate inmates of Fell's Buildings. The chameleon was a special favourite. It used to stand upon an inverted wine-glass, with his tail round the stem, "and assimilate flies." This he did with a concentrated gravity and entire want of speculation in his opaque and protruding eyes, which convulsed wine-parties, "especially when he concluded his performance by tumbling head-foremost into the preserved ginger."

Medicine was the only profession for such a boy and such a man; and so in due time, after a few "semesters" at Giessen, he entered St. George's Hospital, became a surgeon, and received a commission in the Second Life Guards.

So extremely fashionable a corps exercised, nevertheless, only a subdued influence on Buckland's spirits, and none whatever on his pursuits.

"Where is the surgeon?" shouted the colonel on the day when a horse had died.

"Inside your charger, your honour," was the prompt reply of the sentry.

In London, the assistant-surgeon's taste for con-sorting with odd people had ample room for its gratification. "One Sunday in 1862, at church parade, the men all burst out laughing, to the scandal of the colonel, who angrily appealed to the adjutant. The adjutant, turning round, roared with laughter, as did the sergeant-major. The colonel then turned, and beheld Frank Buckland coming out of his quarters, attended by Brice, the French giant, and a dwarf, then exhibiting in London, who being, like Frank, off duty on Sunday morning, had come to breakfast with him."

But by-and-by he married and left the Guards, and soon after was appointed to the congenial office of Inspector of Fisheries. Here he was in his element, for his duties compelled him to take cognisance of the very objects which hitherto it had been his pleasure to study as an amateur. It is quite possible that there were better ichthyologists in England, but it would have been hard to find any one who threw into his work more enthusiasm, who managed more pleasantly to perform some rather disagreeable duties, or who, during the time he held the post, made more friends. Enemies it may be questioned if he ever possessed, or did not before long convert them into his keenest henchmen. The protection of oysters and seals, the over-fishing of flounders and lobsters, the acclimatisation of foreign animals (entailing a dinner which would make some of us very ill), and many inquiries carried on in every part of the country regarding the herring and salmon, were among the numerous tasks—and pleasures—to which he devoted himself. Fish culture was one of his hobbies, and it may be added that he left the bulk of his fortune, as well as his fish museum, to advance the science; and, though his failures were unbroken in their monotony, he never despaired of seeing salmon in the Thames.

His *ménage* in 37, Albany Street, Regent's Park, was about as unconventional as his father's in the Deanery at Westminster. There was viper stew for luncheon, giraffe cutlets, and soup made from elephant-trunk, which defied boiling. We do not hear of ladies sitting at the piano with snakes twisted round their necks and arms in lieu of jewellery; but if this evening incident at Dean Buckland's did not occur at his son's, it was not for lack of the necessary materials. The house crawled and squeaked, and, if the truth must be told, smelled dreadfully, of animals, creeping, flying, jumping, gnawing, biting, singing, swimming, running—dead, living, dying—and sometimes, as his neighbours knew to their cost, in a high state of putrefaction. The garden was a graveyard, every apartment except the dining-room a menagerie. When the parcel delivery van drew up at No. 37,

experience taught the inmates of the adjoining houses to instantly close all their windows, and watch developments from behind the panes. The place was the delight of all the urchins in or about Regent's Park; for it was a perpetual show, free for the looking at. Strange beasts in cages, and stranger ones in casks, were constantly arriving. Visitors of nationalities which puzzled the ethnologists of Albany Street came to dine, lunch, and breakfast.

One day it was the New Zealanders, who offered to tattoo their host in return for his civilities, and on another occasion the Chinese giant had a dinner-party in his honour.

The etiquette to be observed at these feasts often perplexed the host. When Chinaman, Eskimo, Aztec, and Zulu met at the same table, there was sometimes a risk of disagreeable prejudices coming to the surface. The bill of fare was another difficulty. And Mrs. Buckland had always to think several times as to which of the four arms of the Siamese twins she should choose when taken in to dinner by these peculiar guests. Cheap Jacks, wild beast shows, talking fish, elephant-horses, edible dogs, monster pigs, dwarfs and giants, living skeletons, india-rubber dogs, brass bands, clowns—everything had an interest for this man of wide sympathies, though it would be a mistake to suppose that his life was one spent in their study.

However, in sketching in this brief outline the

characteristics of Frank Buckland, one almost irresistibly dwells on these eccentricities of a man as kindly, as honest, as truly pious, without cant, as any with whom we have been acquainted. Hard work and recklessness of his health, however, soon began to tell on him. One day in a piercing February wind he might be seen up to the middle collecting trout-eggs for New Zealand; and when a young seal he was carrying shivered in the railway carriage, he promptly stripped off his fur waistcoat to keep the pinniped warm. Illness after illness broke in upon his work, each attack being worse than the one which preceded, until on the 19th of February, 1882, he died. To the last he was as eager over his own case as if he had been the doctor instead of the patient. "Refused to take chloroform," he quaintly notes, when describing in his diary a visit of the surgeon, "as I wished to be present at the operation." He busied himself revising his books, while well aware that never more for him was to be the light of the sun or the joy of life: that the salmon-stream was no more to be seen, or the song of the oyster-dredger heard. He was at peace. "God is so good," he said, "so very good to the little fishes; I do not believe He would let their inspector suffer shipwreck at last. I am going a long journey, where I think I shall see a great many curious animals. This journey I must go alone." And then he passed away.

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## AN ARTIST'S VOYAGE ROUND THE HORN.



**W**E were nearing Cape Horn—Cape Horn, the mist-shrouded, where the long billows from that mystic southern ice-home break for the first time against rock-cliffs.

We left Sydney behind us one sweltering summer afternoon, with the sun sinking like

a bar of red-hot iron dipped into soot-grimed water, casting upwards rolling masses of flame-tinted steam, and spreading beneath and around fitch-work splashes of prismatic gleams.

For nine years ice had been a phenomenon, and even that about the thickness of a well-worn sixpence; but as the days passed, the phenomenon of nine years became an every-day common fact, to be endured as best we could: first the smell of it morning and night, then the putting on of shirt over shirt and suit upon suit of our thin colonial clothing, and eventually the vengeance of the Frost-Ghoul ever gnawing at our extremities; when the seamen came down from the rigging, hanging masses of icicles; and the salt waves, as they dashed spray-fashion over the gunwale, cracked and splintered like glass against our faces or upon the thickly-coated deck.

Personally I had courted the black cook, and

existed as often as I could inside the galley; yet, even to the warm bar at the back corner of the stove, the chill breath came and drove out comfort; but, for the sake of what we could glean of heat, we, the thin-blooded ones, refused to leave, despite the many hints which we received that we were disturbing Othello's reflections, his orders to get out, or the other inducements by which he tried to make us evacuate, such as roasting cayenne until we were almost suffocated; for even that seemed better than the bone-piercing blast outside.

So the cold increased, and we strove to counter-balance that rapid increase with what expedients we had at hand, trusting alone to time as our remedy; and with the cold, the wind and waves grew—those long lines of waves, rolling on from limitless sea to almost limitless strand—gust stronger than gust, gradation upon gradation, each roll mightier than the former, as the ship sped on, and the mercury sank until it could go no lower, and then rested compact, leaving us to guess how much under zero we were, after which we could only look out for the peaks in front, and wish with sickened hearts, and resolve with the A.B.s never again to risk Cape Horn—resolves which, we understand, are made every voyage and forgotten the week after they have rounded.

In sea-phraseology, it had been blowing hard for